"Last On the Warpath": The Spirit and Intent of Action Anthropology

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Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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“LAST ON THE WARPATH”: THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF ACTION ANTHROPOLOGY

(Monograph)

By

Joshua James SMITH

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social/Cultural Anthropology

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Abstract

Led by anthropologist Sol Tax, action anthropologists endeavoured, between the 1940s and 1970s, to challenge the liberal imperialist and settler colonial paradigm of Post-WWII applied anthropology, the termination policy of the 1950s, and the neo-evolutionary theories, such as Julian Steward’s multilinear evolution, that bolstered racist-colonial myths of assimilation. Several projects of emphasis include *The Fort Berthold Removal Project*, *The American Indian Chicago Center*, a mapping project called *The North American Indians: 1950 Distribution of Descendants of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada and the United States*, the *Workshops on American Indian Affairs*, the *American Indian Chicago Conference* and, the *Carnegie Cross-Cultural Project with the Cherokee*. In addition to Sol Tax, notable action anthropologists featured in this work include Nancy Lurie, Robert Rietz, Sam Stanley, Robert K. Thomas and Albert Wahrhaftig. Through ethno-historical and archival research, this project excavates *The Sol Tax Papers* in constructing a narrative around the emergence of Tax’s political philosophy as it manifested through the theory and methods of action anthropology. In doing so, the theory and methods of action anthropology, it is shown, are informed by the needs of Indigenous Peoples in North America as they were articulated to Tax and his colleagues, thus calling them action in response. As a history of anthropology project, this project is situated in an ongoing conversation about the political significance of historiography and the history of anthropology where Settler-Indigenous relations in North America are of a primary concern. Sol Tax and action anthropology, it is argued, are examples of traditions anthropologists might draw upon in approaching contemporary questions concerning Settler obligations to Indigenous Peoples in North America in meeting the challenges of colonialism, especially in consideration of anthropological practices of decolonization.

Keywords

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Michael Asch introduced Sol Tax and action anthropology to me as an undergraduate student at the University of Victoria. Over the course of many meetings, directed readings and conversations, he challenged me to know my Treaties and Obligations to Peoples on whose Lands and Waters I find myself living on today. Michael once said to me, “If you want to do things, you have to learn about Sol Tax”, and so here it is! Now, let’s do some things things!

Marc Pinkoski and Robert Hancock are each, in their own unique ways, my brothers, my mentors, and my friends. Without Marc’s teachings and leadership this would not be possible. I benefited immensely from Rob’s incredible knowledge base of *HOA* and his willingness to always provide comments on my work. Brian Noble deserves much credit for his encouragement and inclusion of me in so many pertinent conversations and collaborations as well.

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of my committee members, Douglas St. Christian, Andrew Walsh, and Larry Nesper. Thank you all for taking the time and participating in a project so very close to my heart.

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Dedicated to Nanna and Equoia.
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This dissertation strives to provide an insightful and engaging presentation of Sol Tax and action anthropology as it emerged over the course of roughly four decades from about 1932, when Tax began his doctoral research under the supervision of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown at the University of Chicago working on the Social Organization of the Meskwaki Nation, until approximately the 1980s when Tax participated in a conference on Indigenous Rights as a guest speaker. I end there, not because Tax did, but it is a positive note to end on and anything more would certainly be overkill in terms of evidence of my argument. The dissertation covers much of Tax’s work and engagements over a course of fifty years, but there are clear omissions. The major contribution of this dissertation is created through its emphasis on action anthropology in relation to the work Tax and his student-colleagues engaged with Indigenous Peoples and issues related to work with Indigenous Peoples. Due to this limitation, I do not discuss much of Tax’s enormous work in ‘World Anthropology’ and the organization of professional meetings that are not related to his work and politics regarding what I choose to frame as Settler-Indigenous relations in North America.

Additionally, I do not in any way contend with Tax’s significant role working with the Smithsonian, especially in what was called ‘Urgent Anthropology’. I am, however, thrilled to note that another dissertation is currently underway by my peer, Adrianna Link, at John Hopkins University (Science and Technology Studies). Similarly, this dissertation does not go into much detail regarding Tax’s herculean fieldwork in Guatemala and Mexico from 1934 to 1945. Another doctoral student, Sarah Foss, in History at the University of Indiana is carrying out this work and I am pleased it is being addressed.
This dissertation provides a new foundation for understanding altogether the political philosophy as well as the theoretical and methodological scope of action anthropology or what I am framing as the spirit and intent of action anthropology. This is reached through an analysis and synthesis of Tax’s own writings (published and unpublished) together with his personal papers in the Sol Tax Papers. It is the first work to do so with respects to Judith Daubemier’s superb work, *The Meskwaki and Anthropologists* (2008). As the series editors of the *Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology*, in which the book is published, Regna Darnell and Stephen O’Murray note, it “is not a biography of Sol Tax. In fact, he is sometimes a rather shadowy and distant figure in the narrative.” This is not a criticism of Daubemier’s work as her narrative successfully presents a nuanced and thorough picture of The Chicago Project rendering this aspect of Tax’s action anthropology completed and not worth reproducing. However, my dissertation while not a biography of Sol Tax, does cast a bright light on Tax and strives to pull both him and the anti-colonial politics of action anthropology out of the shadows.

The organization of this dissertation is loosely chronological with each chapter expanding or narrowing tangentially when it is necessary or reasonable (at least to me) to do so.

Chapter one, *On Spirit and Intent and Historigraphic Refusal*, is an introduction to the work. It further explains the title and stands as an essay on what I mean by ‘spirit and intent’, while explaining the approach and traditions I draw upon in doing to the history of anthropology and archival research.

Chapter Two, *And Along Came Tax, Colonialism and Resistance in American Anthropology*, addresses Tax’s early work with the Meskwaki Nation followed together with
his early thoughts on how polities persist. Kinship is shown here to be a fundamental catalyst and founding principle (i.e. Rationality) or ingredient to even imagining the possibility of action anthropology. Moreover, it demonstrates Tax’s early sensibilities to go against the popular assimilationist and evolutionary thinking of the time just as other anthropologists such as Julian Steward emerges on the scene with the establishment of the Indian Claims Commission in 1946. Moreover, this chapter takes us well into the mid-1950s following the beginning of termination policy (House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 280) and the further entrenchment of Tax’s anti-colonial politics in response to these policies as he organized panels to address the direction of U.S. Indian policy as well as anthropologists troubling roles in Indian Claims litigation as key witnesses.

Chapter Three, *Peoplehood and the Freedom to Make Mistakes* largely contending with the mid-1950s, provides a deeper reading and understanding of Robert K. Thomas’ political thought as a contribution to action anthropology, especially his concept of ‘Peoplehood’. This is followed by noting Tax’s anti-colonial and relational essay *The Freedom to Mistakes* followed by the presentation of insights into the mapping project Sam Stanley and Thomas produced together called, *The North American Indians: 1950 Distribution of Descendants of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada and the United States*. The map itself is a visual challenge to the notion of assimilation and strives to show the persistence of Indigenous peoples as opposed to their disappearance due to assimilation.

Chapter Four, *Coordinated Anarchy and The Non-Exercise of Power*, accounts for the late 1950s. This chapter’s epicentre is built around a brief précis of the unpublished *Reader in Action Anthropology* (drafted sometime in 1957), which has never previously been taken into account in understanding action anthropology. This is followed by the
presentation of a key debate on the Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Indian policy through several letters. The debate was sparked by a series of New York Times articles that quoted Tax’s opinions on the problems of such policies as termination. This chapter incorporates two significant action anthropology developments in the late 1950s: Robert Rietz’s action anthropology role with the American Indian Center in Chicago and Tax’s oral historical account of how he founded *Current Anthropology*, beginning in 1959, as an action anthropology project.

Chapter Five, *Racism is a White Man’s Buffalo* is divided into three parts, this chapter works towards being able to conclusively discuss action anthropology, but not define it. Part I, *New Directions: Treaties, Myths and Racism* discusses the American Indian Chicago Conference before presenting vignettes of some of Tax’s perspectives on treaties, rights, racism and how he, in summation, sought to expose four racist myths about Indigenous Peoples in North American. Part II, *Standing with Sol: Self-Determination and Action Anthropology in Canada*, opens up the discussion to bear upon my own present context of working in Canada and helps to think about what traditions we have to draw upon here in carrying forward the spirit and intent of action anthropology in my present-day context of colonial Canada.

Overall, these chapters present selected materials in a narrative that is part history and part political thought in order to show how an analysis of colonialism is at play in action anthropology; this ‘political thought’ forms the foundation of action anthropology’s critique of collaborative/applied anthropology. Moreover, this political thought, and the political ethos it entails, also informs action anthropology’s distinctive conception of how anthropologists (and settlers more generally) can do work with Indigenous communities, as
well as within their own communities, that is works against colonialism and refuses the to be paternalistic in moving towards an anti-colonial or decolonizing anthropology. By de-subjugating this tradition in the history of anthropology, I am offering ground for contemporaries to consider how to work relationally with the freedom to make mistakes, which is necessary given that Thomas and Tax’s problems are actually our problems.

I ask myself how government and law made by and for persons of one culture, essentially “hierarchist”—like our own—can provide even justice for persons of another culture, essentially “mutualist”—like that of most American Indians.

Chapter 1
On Spirit and Intent to Historiographic Refusal

In 1991, at the Memorial Service held in honour of Sol Tax, Vine Deloria Jr. delivered a heartfelt and witty eulogy that captured the energetic spirit that Tax was famous for, but Deloria’s words also cut to the core of Tax’s contributions and legacy in the clearest of terms. In doing so, Deloria scooped the thesis of this dissertation twenty three years ago with these words:

Between John Collier and the Indian move for self-determination, 1969, you look around and what do you find? You find Sol Tax liberating the whole discipline. Liberating them from the idea that they have to be objective scientists therefore can never be advocates. —Vine Deloria Jr., Speech given at the Memorial Service of Sol Tax (1991).

This dissertation explores the legacy of Sol Tax and his vehicle for, as Deloria put it, “liberating the whole discipline” of anthropology: action anthropology. The title ‘Last on the Warpath’: The Spirit and Intent of Action Anthropology invokes, first, a draft paper by Sol, Last on the Warpath: A Personalized Account of How an Anthropologist Learned from the American Indian (1968). This unpublished memoir is considered by this author to be the touchstone of Tax’s personal commitment to what would become both a relational and relevant anthropology, especially concerning Settler and Indigenous relations in North America. The implied meaning of the words ‘Last On the Warpath’ refers to the image of

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1 A DVD recording of Tax’s memorial service was kindly made available to me by the Harvey Choldin and
2 Throughout this dissertation I use the terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Settler’ to refer to two communities. It was common for Tax and his peers to use the terms ‘Indian’ and ‘White’ to refer to these same two communities. I prefer ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Settler’ instead, but their terms are left in their original. The justification of the use of
Anthropologists, embracing a moment of humility and finally understanding their obligations and how Colonialism frames our relations. Action anthropology is an answer to the question of what we can do, together, to overcome the ever-present challenges of ongoing colonialism. This positionality is more recently framed and fleshed out in more contemporary terms by Michael Asch, a former undergraduate student of Tax’s, as “Finding a Place to Stand” (Asch 2001) and his recent celebrated work On Being Here to Stay (Asch 2014), which begins by earnestly asking, “What, other than numbers and power, justifies the Canadian state’s assertion of sovereignty and jurisdiction over its vast territory? Why should Canada’s original inhabitants have to ask for rights to what was their land when non-Aboriginal people first arrived?” This sentiment of this question is invariably posed, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, by Tax throughout his activism and his anthropology. Tax once wrote:

these terms is the same as the one Michael Asch sets out in On Being Here to Stay (Asch 2014:8-9): “‘Indigenous’ refers to those whom [Asch] has described as ‘already here to stay’”. Settler is used for two reasons. One, “‘settling on the land’ well describes the purpose of those in this group who arrived here; and, the term ‘Settler’ follows the distinction made in the recent post-colonial literature between ‘settler colonies,’ where members of this group became the majority, and colonies of ‘occupation’ or ‘exploration,’ where colonists constituted a minority” (Asch 2014:8-9, 174-175 foot notes 2, 3 and 4). Sometimes ‘Native American’ and/or ‘American Indian’ are used given the context of the source, quote or subject that is being discussed. Likewise, I make use of First Nations when the context is fitting to do so. This is sometimes helpful in distinguishing between Indigenous polities who find themselves within the colonial boundaries of Canada from Indigenous polities who find themselves today within the colonial boundaries of the United States. Neither is ideal or perfect.

3 The terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Settler’ were not common in Tax’s time and continue to be problematic; yet, we need a way of speaking efficiently about ongoing relations. Tax felt this way, too, and it is imperative to note his sentiment towards similar terminology in his own time. He expressed it in a way, albeit dated, that makes the political stakes of terminology obvious: “One must say “American Indian tribes” rather than “Indians” because the identity of an individual member is dependent, in a way difficult for urban people to understand, upon that of a tribe. A person is Zuni, or a Navajo; a Mohawk or a Seneca; a Cherokee or a Choctaw; a Hupa or a Pomo; a Cheyenne or an Oglala Sioux; or one of the hundreds of other nations, tribes, and bands. ‘Non-Indian’ is a useful term; but ‘Indian’ is both the classical mistake of Christopher Columbus and a misconception of secular, urbanized non-Indians whose families are parts of large, impersonal populations of classes, religions, and ethnic groups. The family and religion of tribal man are his tribe; his home is the land where in the beginning of the world the tribe was born, where everything important happened, where the spirits dwell and the ancestors are buried. It is purely incidental that the tribe has also a “culture” (the anthropologists’ word) different from that of other tribes; the cultures of all the tribes are alike in their overwhelming contrast to the culture of the governing people” (Tax 1972:xxiv).
…it is we- 200 million non-Indian Americans [i.e. Settlers]… who are behaving still as our forebears did, still taking from them the driblets of land they have left, and living by the same rationalizations. But what may have seemed then to be a necessary evil is now a series of unmitigated unnecessary evils which rise in part from the continued avarice of a few, and in larger part from the psychological need to hide now the enormity of our earlier sin. By no stretch of imagination is it now economically or politically necessary to deny to Indians [i.e. Indigenous Peoples] what they need and ask for (Tax 1972:xxii).

Both Asch and Tax, each in their own way, sought to provide a relational way forward by addressing, head on, the problem of colonialism by facing the tough questions. Much of action anthropology is about facing, head on, the tough questions just as Tax and Asch challenge us (Settlers and Anthropologists) to do so then and now (Asch 2014).

While Tax’s account viewed anthropologists such as himself as being ‘Last On the Warpath’, from a point of view of responding so late to the needs of Indigenous Peoples, I am writing as a 21st century Settler-Anthropologist, looking back to Tax and the action anthropologists as being on the ‘warpath’ in making a profound political move by shifting anthropology to respond to the challenges of decolonization and calling anthropologists to action by responding not to the status quo needs of institutional anthropology or the thrust of vogue theoretical shifts of his time, but to the needs of Indigenous Peoples as they articulated them. In this way, action anthropology was never conceptualized as a program or an easily canned method that could be repeatedly carbon-copied and transported into ‘the field’ with steps to follow. This is the second reference point in my title captured by the notion of spirit and intent.

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4 Sol, however, would likely disagree with this sentiment. In his notes, he presented action anthropology as NOT a new idea, but one that goes back to, for example, the Aborigines Protection Society of the 19th century.
The concept of spirit and intent is adapted here from the literature and methods on understanding treaties between Indigenous peoples and the Crown (i.e. Canada). Spirit and intent describes my approach to understanding action anthropology from the archival sources, most notably The Sol Tax Papers. However, this approach also came from informal discussions with action anthropologists such as Nancy Lurie and Albert Wahrhaftig, which led me to understand that there are shared understandings of action anthropology amongst them that are not known and, in fact, at complete odds with the scant literature and publications on the subject. The problem lies in interpretations of action anthropology by a broader audience that misses the political relevance of it. Hence, my scholarship and objective was to recover the spirit and intent of action anthropology. For example, James (Sa’ke’j) Youngblood Henderson writes how “the search for the meaning of Treaty relations must be guided by a just, broad, generous, and liberal construction” whereby this so-called general construction of “shared meaning establishes a value in favour of First Nations’ jurisprudence, intent, expectations, and purposes in the understanding of the integrity and honour of the Crown is presumed” (Henderson 2007:33). In the ‘Search for First Nations’ Intent’, Henderson asserts that

“the goal of the interpreting judge should be to discover the common intent of the parties… he or she needs a method of comprehending the reciprocal subjectivities of content and means to make sense of them… an interpreting judge is required to determine the intent of the First Nations… If an interpreting judge insists on sticking close to the Sovereign’s intent, he or she deprives the grantors of the

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5 I have had the honour and privilege of speaking with Albert Wahrhaftig and Nancy Lurie on separate occasions. I met Albert at a symposium on Sol Tax and action anthropology at the 2012 Society for Applied Anthropology Meetings in Seattle. The conversations we had there have been invaluable in the directions this research took and we have emailed some. I exchanged emails with Nancy and shared my earlier work with her. I met Nancy for the first time at the 2013 AAA meetings in Chicago where she generously shared her thoughts at the session I organized in honour of Sol Tax. Her thoughts, however brief, have been encouraging, supportive and also pushed me in the directions I chose to take with this research.
In keeping with these methodological approaches toward Treaty research, I have researched action anthropology with the objective of recovering the shared meanings (the spirit and intent) in a similar vein by not sticking to the canonical readings of action anthropology but focusing on the intent of action anthropology by, as Henderson states, “comprehending the reciprocal subjectivities of content and a means to make sense of them” (Henderson 2007:85). This dissertation is the result.

In other words, this work is not a biography. By invoking ‘spirit and intent’ I mean to accomplish three objectives as part of my overall argument and presentation. One, is to quite literally capture, in this dissertation, the spirit and the intent of action anthropology as Tax and his close colleagues understood it by presenting it in contemporary terms for consideration as a viable approach to working towards decolonization today. Second, I use spirit and intent to deliberately draw attention to the problematic gap in the history of anthropology where Tax and action anthropology ought to be situated in the discipline’s historiography, especially in consideration of anthropology’s relationship to Indigenous Peoples in North America. Both are neglected in the literature and where they draw brief attention, it is dismissed based on inadequate research, misunderstood and/or misappropriated in the historiography. There are two major works on Tax worth mentioning from the outset. George W. Stocking’s “Do Good Young Man”: Sol Tax and the World Mission of Liberal Democratic Anthropology” is a problematic sketch of Tax’s work that under-represents his contributions (2001) and sanitizes Tax’s politics portraying him as a

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6 I am only speaking to works other than my own. This dissertation draws upon portions of my previously published work which are revised and recontextualized within the pages of this dissertation in novel ways including Smith 2010, 2012 and 2015. I also do not draw heavily from Darby Stapp’s excellent edited volume Action Anthropology and Sol Tax in 2012: The Final Word?, which I am proud to be a part of, although this work is useful to think broadly about many new perspectives on Tax’s contributions, but does not add to the dialogue or conversation I am attempting to spark with this dissertation.
liberal and often naïve anthropologist in his approach to world problems, thereby erasing his impact on the discipline; it is at odds with Deloria’s placement of Tax ten years earlier. The second work is Judith Daubenmier’s *The Meskwaki And Anthropologists* (2006), which is a superbly balanced view and assessment of Tax’s engagement with the Meskwaki Nation and, more importantly, the University of Chicago’s field school program known as The Chicago Project. In assessing the Chicago Project from multiple perspectives, Daubenmier handily challenges Stocking’s assertion that Tax made no impact on anthropology, but that his work led to resonances (Stocking 2001:254-55; Daubenmier 2009:5, 95-96, 97, 283-285). It is not necessary to duplicate Daubenmier’s work or re-asses the Chicago project. Rather, I draw on Daubenmier’s work to support my argument and presentation in relation to the oeuvre of Tax’s writings and the political philosophy of action anthropology. Thirdly, I use spirit and intent as an analytic in assessing altogether, for the first time, Tax’ writings (published and unpublished) with those of his student-colleagues including their correspondence, notes, and various archival ephemera in drawing out the spirit and intent of action anthropology.

More generally, this dissertation addresses a shortcoming within the disciple of anthropology regarding its relationship to colonialism in North America by analyzing Sol Tax and action anthropology and theorizing them together. His life’s work is introduced with a focus on his engagement with Indigenous peoples through action anthropology. This is further contextualized with respect to U.S. Indian policy and Indigenous activism. Thus, Tax’s action anthropology is shown to be a response to the post-WWII scientist evolutionary theories and their corollaries of applied science tethered to assimilationist polices. These are

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7 The Meskwaki Nation used to be referred to as the ‘Sac and Fox Indians’ and the older spelling ‘Mesquakie’. Wherever possible, I have replaced, even in quotations, old spellings with the contemporary ‘Meskwaki’ or ‘Meskwaki Nation’. Moreover, I refer to ‘The Fox Project’ as The Chicago Project.

8 This is the first work to do so.
most clearly exemplified in the works and politics of contemporaries of Tax, most notably, Julian Steward (1902-1972; see Pinkoski 2006, 2008), and the post-WWII assimilationist policies, most notably termination (see Fixico 1999), aimed at Indigenous polities by the United States Government. Action anthropology, I argue, is Tax’s counter and response to both scientistic anthropology and assimilationist policy. It is a response simultaneously to anthropologists such as Steward as well as the needs of Indigenous peoples in North America fighting against this newest wave of U.S. colonial policy. Revealing the under-belly of action anthropology’s anti-colonial spirit helps to further clarify anthropology’s overall connection to colonialism in North America and inspires a sobering re-assessment of the discipline’s historiography and dearth of engaged methods concerning Indigenous peoples.

In pursuing this line of inquiry this dissertation strives to stand as an example of historiographic refusal. The objectives of this project are tethered to the question of political location in relation to the methods of anthropology, particularly regarding colonialism in North America. The approach itself is altogether ethnohistorical in its approach to archival

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9 Wilkins and Stark define Termination policy accordingly: Federal Indian policy from approximately 1953 to the mid-1960’s that legislatively severed federal benefits and support services to certain tribes, bands, and California Rancherias and forced the dissolution of their reservations. This policy was exemplified by House Concurrent Resolution No. 108 in 1953, Public Law 280, which conferred upon several designated states full criminal and some civil jurisdiction over Indian reservations, and by relocation, a federal policy focused on the relocation of Indians from rural and reservation areas to urban areas (Wilkins and Stark 2011:312).

10 Julian Steward was an American Anthropologist who conceptualized the method of ‘Cultural Ecology’ and articulated his theory of multi-linear Evolution.

11 Alyosha Goldstein’s observation that “as Raymond Williams writes of imperialism, colonialism, "like any word which refers to fundamental social and political conflict, cannot be reduced, semantically, to single proper meaning. Its important historical and contemporary variations of meaning point to real processes which have to be studied in their own terms." (Alyosha 2014:7; Williams Keywords, 160); at a later point, I identify ‘coloniality’ and define it as a preferred means of thinking about colonialism in the context of the objectives of action anthropology (see page 10 and footnote 15 in this dissertation); Achille Mbembe notes “the colony is a place where an experience of violence and upheaval is lived, where violence is built into structures and institutions… [and] insinuates itself into the economy, domestic life, language, consciousness (Goldstein 2014:9; Mbembe, On the Postcolony 174, 175); Wilkins and Starks’ definition of Colonialism is equally sufficient: The policy and practice of a strong power extending its control territorially, materially and psychologically over a weaker nation or people. It is often thought of as attribute of the late-nineteenth century
research, but strives to build on previous theorists to reinforce a move towards historiographic refusal within the history of anthropology.

The delimitation of my research is approached through the lens of understanding action anthropology with a particular focus on the colonial encounter in North America and the specific ways anthropology has engaged with the power and politics of colonialism(s) in North America, with action anthropology being one salient form of engaged anthropology. This limiting factor is necessary to draw comparative boundaries for theoretical (ontological, philosophical etc) trajectories of what I presently deem to be engaged anthropologies.12 Anthropology, in this sense, “… sees colonialism as distant from North America… [and] as analysts working from a self-reflexive project to stave off the ‘crises’ in the discipline… [they] have focused their gaze away from North America leaving the colonization of North America entirely unaccounted for in the literature” (Asch 2002; Pinkoski 2008:176). To what extent did action anthropology engage colonialism? In what way and how might it be relevant to other colonial contexts in the present?

One goal of this dissertation is understanding how anthropology might contribute to ongoing challenges and debates about Indigenous and State relations in my own context of colonialism in Canada. This is a precariously long-standing political debate which anthropology has sustained a complicated and shifting role in shaping (Alfred 1999; Asch 2002, Cairns 2000; Flanagan 2000; Green 2003a, 2003b; Kymlycka 2007, 1998; Murphy 2005; Nadasdy 2005; Tully 2001). Yet, the multiple locations of anthropologies within the imperialists who conquered large tracts of the globe. And it is usually used pejoratively to denote an unwarranted sense of racial superiority and the set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that sprang from this sense.

12 Including, but not limited to: action anthropology, applied anthropology, action research, collaborative anthropology, decolonized research, community based research, community-based-participatory research, engaged anthropology, Indigenous, practising anthropology, etc.
political matrix that is most easily described as the negotiated relations between the Crown and Indigenous peoples remain undecided. It is a serious question this dissertation keeps in clear sight. One major problem is the differences between the United States government’s engagement with ‘Indian peoples’ and the Canadian State’s engagement with ‘First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples’. These two cases result from vastly different historically shaped political relations manifest in jurisprudence, treaties, and the politics of recognition or identity. Action anthropology, mobilized in direct response to American Indian Policy, has had some influence in Canadian anthropology (Asch 2001). The question of whether or not the lessons of action anthropology illuminate today’s political and cross-cultural challenges such as decolonization will be re-visited in the conclusion.

It will be shown that action anthropology is a theoretical and methodological form of a politically engaged social science that is explicitly distinct from the practices of applied anthropology. Contrary to most of the literature within anthropology, action anthropology is neither atheoretical social work, nor is it merely characterized by the singular legacy of the Chicago Project (1948-1959) 13. It is driven by Tax’s theoretical model of cultural persistence based upon his ethnographic fieldwork with both the Meskwaki, near Tama, Iowa, and even more extensively, with Indigenous communities in Guatemala. Problems of social organization (Tax 1935), acculturation (Tax 1942, 1946, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1956a, 1957, 1966, 1975b and 1978), colonialism and imperialism (Tax 1945a, 1951, 1956a, 1956b, 1962 and 1968) democracy and government administration (Tax 1945a, 1945b and 1956b) are all catalysts of action anthropology. Through these lenses emerge the two principles of action anthropology evident throughout Tax’s work: non-assimilation and self-government (see also Lurie 1999, Tax 1952, 1962, Polgar 1979, Stanley 1996).

The historiographic refusal advocated here is one possible form of resistance to, among other things, a universalizing construction of history that occurs in step with the scientistic and positivist approach to epistemology within the project of colonialism; reiterated below as ‘coloniality’ (S Asch 2009:24; Noble 2010). Such a project is dubiously at odds with a reflexively self-conscious approach grounded in practices that begin with the understanding that anthropology, as an intellectual, institutional and economical enterprise, is embedded in relations of power. Moreover, the history of anthropology is fundamentally a political project sustained by widely accepted methodological and pedagogical disciplinary practices which are themselves historical (re)constructions as well as colonial devices (technologies) of settler states. In other words, the history of anthropology is also the history of colonial power and history of colonial power is history of anthropology. Put another way: “To speak of Indigeneity is to speak of colonialism and anthropology” (Simpson 2007:67). Yet, in another frame:

…it is surely difficult to discuss research methodology and indigenous peoples together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices (Smith 1999:2).

This historiographic refusal is supported by distinguishing between what Seth Asch,
in his analysis of Foucault as a relational thinker, delimits as a “cultural analytic” that speaks to the cosmic and ontic qualities of epistemologies; what I am refusing is, in short-hand, an ‘acultural’ analytic and non-reflexive approach.

This cultural analytic is best outlined through a few exemplary and complementary perspectives concerning historiographic methods; these are most compellingly drawn out here from the works of Michael Asch, Seth Asch, Regna Darnell, Michel Foucault, Robert Hancock, Brian Noble and Marc Pinkoski. The acultural analytic is exemplified by the more rigidly ‘historicist’ methodological position(s) such as George Stocking (1968). The key difference between the two, I contend, is their disparate emphases on relationality and political positionality. A cultural analytic requires (1) a reflexive stance that strives to keep both the relations of historical subjects (how they are constructed socially, politically and culturally) and (2) a concern for how such constructions maintain political relevancies for contemporary and future interests. The first is designated here as ‘relational historicism’ and the second as ‘relational presentism’: Together, these comprise the relational dynamics of a cultural analytic. Rather than claiming an objective historicism, the cultural analytic requires the practitioner to “find a place to stand” (Asch 2001), thus making historiographic methodology an explicitly ethico-political engagement that reflects the scholar’s pedagogical commitments and daily political practices pertaining to contemporary problems and challenges such as decolonization.

Thus historiographic refusal is an anthropological problem that requires a commitment to seeking relationships “… between historical events, changing intellectual currents and other factors having a bearing on the kind of anthropological questions that were being asked and the answers that were being sought at successive periods” (Hallowell
Such a methodological approach necessitates: “[the] diversity of practitioners, diversity of national, theoretical, and methodological tradition; diversity of sub-disciplines and ways to merge and cross them” (Darnell and Gleach 2005:viii). This means that history of anthropology must transcend the “theoretical and methodological camps” and the pedagogical problems of the “all-too-typical pattern of teaching disciplinary history as a chronological progression of theories” (ibid). Darnell and Gleach suggest that, “[i]nstead of some sort of evolutionary framework of ideas, we see complex and shifting social and ideological webs” (ibid). They assert an acute awareness in pointing out the necessity of disciplinary reflexivity with an emphasis on anthropological methods including oral histories, ethnography and archival research together with a full embracement of multiple standpoints and dialogical engagements of ideas (ibid). Approaching any particular aspect of anthropology as a historical subject/problem with such a methodology is not a rejection of historicism where anthropology is concerned, but accords with a move to enrich historical praxis through a critically engaged anthropological approach bent on interrogating the history of ‘our’ discipline theoretically (Darnell 2001:2).

In understanding the difficulties to approaching history, Darnell’s assertions are congruent with Nietzsche’s treatise on the uses and abuses of history where he outlines the importance of the “unhistorical” in relation to truth, living and action:

Cheerfulness, good conscience, joyful action, trust in what is to come—all these depend, with the individual as with a people, on the following facts: that there is a line which divides what is observable and bright from what is unilluminated and dark, that we know how to forget at the right time just as well as we remember at the right time, that we feel with powerful instinct the time when we must perceive historically and when unhistorically. This is the specific principle which the reader is invited to consider: that for the health of a single individual, a people, and a
Nietzsche is advocating for a cautious and suspicious stance towards ‘history’ in so far as it might be used for dangerous nationalistic purposes; I extend Nietzsche’s ‘nationalistic’ concerns to apply especially to colonial concerns. His argument is useful in consideration of historiographic refusal. Consider, the way any given subject, in this case, action anthropology, is historicized to fit within a narrative of anthropology that could be described as patriotic, nationalistic and/or hegemonic. This historicism (often unwittingly, but sometimes systemically) leads to grossly deformed, contrived and convoluted (re)productions of the particular subjects, which are, in turn, historicized to fit together for convenience and ideological continuity. This way, ‘a history’ is recursively shaped and perpetuated until it becomes ontologically true since what is accepted as ‘true’ or factual is merely a residual product; the result of redactive historiography. At this point, it becomes heretical to argue contrarily to an accepted ‘historical truth’ (i.e., the meta-narrative). This is why an ‘unhistorical’ method is important to attain some measure of truthfulness “even though this truthfulness may sometimes damage precisely the kind of cultivatedness now held in esteem…” (ibid: 123): Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history stands in the service of an unhistorical power, and, thus subordinate, it can and should never become pure science such as, for instance, mathematics is” (ibid:67). In this sense, the genealogical method and Foucault’s notion of an archaeology of knowledge, are useful ways to reflexively theorize history and “dig” into the past, while remaining aware of both the historical and the unhistorical (Foucault 1972). For genealogies provide:

a way of playing local, discontinuous, disqualified, or nonlegitimized knowledges off against the unitary theoretical instance that claims to be able to filter them,
organize them into a hierarchy, organize them in the name of a true body of knowledge, in the name of the rights of a science that is in the hands of the few (Foucault 2003: 9).

These are useful methods for interrogating historical constructions built and sustained by such discourses as well as for the accumulation of blindly accepted, but empirically established ‘facts’ and the regurgitation of scholarly interpretations or categorizations that inevitably fall into hierarchical structures of knowledge sustained and canonized in the pedagogical materials (textbooks) and practices (teaching) (see Simpson 2003:115). Applying these methods to understanding anthropology in relation to its conceptual and historical category of engaged anthropologies requires identifying how these methods themselves are constructed and arranged hierarchically as cultural constructions of anthropological thought and praxis occurring in different times and places. Thus, we are able to enter into a dialogical conversation over the multitude of histories of anthropology as well as their diversity and their networks, that is, their relations of power and, ultimately, their political dimensions; yet, we can also locate ourselves within these relations.

Following Foucault (and Nietzsche), such methodological resistance does not pursue the origins or ends of anthropology. Instead, it strives to understand what anthropology might be (i.e., what anthropologists do) by undertaking genealogical and archaeological analysis of not merely anthropological concepts, ideologies, institutions, practitioners, but of how they are relationally constructed vis-à-vis each-other. This requires “listening” to the voices that might allow more sensitivity to the “multi-valences” (Cohen 2010).

These sentiments are in keeping with De Certeau’s understanding of history as “an operation embedded in a field of cultural practices, discursively shaped expectations and institutional setting” (De Certeau 1988: 69-86; Job and Ludtke 2010). This alludes to the
reflexively painful issues of the act of deciding what to use or what not to use; the efforts put into ‘searching’, ‘discovering’, ‘writing’, ‘narrating’, ‘claiming’ and ‘conceptualizing’’ (etc). Thus, being aware, sensitive and capable of ‘listening’, to archives as to people, for example, is a methodological sentiment important to a sound ethnographic practice with people as with archives: “the practice of archiving reverberates with both visions of the past and expectations (or fear) of the future that the practitioners may harbor- individuals in all of their idiosyncrasies and socially inscribed settings” (Job and Ludtke 2010:15). Thus, the archives, as cultural and social artefacts themselves, provide both an opportunity and a challenge for ethnographic research in the history of anthropology.

Archives, for example, are no longer the sovereign territory of the positivist researcher, but a depository of “genealogical riches” for anthropologists (amongst others) to excavate as a means of ethnographic research while sensitively listening to the material and minding the importance of the unhistorical. In this way, historiographic methodologies help to illuminate histories of anthropology that are not impossibly “true”, but are imbued with the spirit of Nietzsche’s ‘truthfulness’.

Although Stocking’s “commitment to historians’ standards of interpretive history continues to set the parameters for the history of anthropology”, Darnell’s argument that “history of anthropology must be both good history and good anthropology” is a challenge to the parameters set by Stocking (Darnell 1990:xv). Following Hymes, Darnell self-consciously places a premium value upon “practitioner relevance without sacrifice of historical accuracy” (Darnell 1990:xv) as practicing anthropologists pursue ideas “into the nooks and crannies of specialized literature or oral tradition” (Hymes 1983:21; cited in Darnell 1990:xv; see also Darnell 1974; 1977).
For example, Harrison and Darnell (2006) affirm how much of the history of anthropology has essentialized concepts such as ‘national tradition’ thus masking the fluidity of national traditions despite the myriad intersections betwixt practitioners’ shared research sites and interests. Writing specifically about the historicization of Canadian anthropology, they argue that “an intellectual genealogical distinctiveness persists, but that such a ‘character’ of Canadian anthropology is also complicated due to various integrations, thus their turn towards ‘national tradition as an heuristic device rather than as an essentializing mechanism for the discipline in Canada’ (Harrison and Darnell 2006:3); this is also applicable to the U.S. context:

[N]ational traditions coalesce around a centre that establishes intellectual paradigms, institutional frameworks, and social networks of scholars for a particular time. To label such a tradition is to capture the essence of its key preoccupations. As scholars work around this core, its boundaries may become increasingly blurred, although works at the periphery can be related to each other by tracing them back to the centre (Harrison and Darnell 2006:4-5).

Darnell further helps set the parameters for a cultural analytic approach to historiographic refusal by arguing for the commensurability of presentism and historicism:

presentism in [a] reflexive sense, choosing issues for historical attention because they still matter today, is fully commensurate with historicism. It is only when we fail to distinguish the contexts of our own theoretical positions from those of the past that presentism becomes a methodological millstone (Darnell 2001:1).

Thus we might begin to see such a critical historicism in keeping with a cultural analytic approach as it resists “a narrow definition” and a “static construction of history” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:5). It is a process of historicizing that (1) frames histories “within a critical analysis of the historiography, theoretical relevance, and political economy of the discipline”
(Harrison and Darnell 2006:15). (2) It resists “reifying history” and “locking it in the past” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:18). Contrarily, “reflexivity is key… in exploring our history and broadening the scope of what might constitute that history” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:18). This includes, (3) the “propensity to acknowledge that one’s perspective will vary depending on one’s standpoint” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:18; Darnell 2000) and “these emerge more from stories anthropologists tell themselves about their tradition(s), than from the documentation of particular events and circumstances” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:18; emphasis mine).

Adding to the description of this cultural analytic, Hancock “insists on the intimate relationship between historiographic documentation and contemporary activism. Acknowledging the dialectic between its political realities and its history is important for the future of Canadian [and American] anthropology” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:18). Finally, emphasizing simultaneity over chronological periods, Hancock refuses the more common practice of thinking of “an evolution from one [careers of individual anthropologists] to another [institutions where anthropologists worked]” (Hancock 2006:32).

Yet, Hancock’s most significant observation is noting the dubiously missing analyses of “the political nature of anthropological research and teaching” and how analyses neglect “the impact of the unstated and often unconscious biases and assumptions of researchers on anthropological research and practice” (Hancock 2006:39). This link between the historiographic method and the political dynamics of anthropological practice is necessary for understanding how historiographic method is further tied to such practices of, for example, action anthropology (Smith 2010) or public anthropology (Darnell 2001:335-340) and how these may or may not be compatible with other frameworks beyond disciplinary
anthropology such as James Tully’s ‘Public Philosophy’ (Tully 2008) or Dale Turner’s ‘Word Warrior’ (Turner 2006)? Thus historiographic refusal is not merely a passive intellectual exercise comprised of fact checking. For example, Darnell asserts a clear and present need for a public anthropology that is explicitly a political engagement of our own efforts to take positions on matters of social justice (Darnell 2001:339).

This brings us to the crux of a cultural analytic that might help to understand, predominantly: “how anthropology could contribute both to the workings and the ideologies of the Canadian [or American] state, with particular relevance to Canada’s [or the United States] Native population” (Harrison and Darnell 2006:9; see also Kallen 1983; Weaver 1976; Dyck 2006). The relationship between the production of anthropological knowledge, Indigenous peoples and the state (i.e., law, policy, education and development) continues to be an ongoing omission in terms of explicitly acknowledging the colonial (unhistorical!) dimension that binds these categories together as they are mobilized via the project(s) of empire(s) in North America. What persists, noted most adamantly in the words of Asch and Pinkoski, is a complete erasure of the peculiar and complex relationship between anthropology and colonialism in North America (Asch and Pinkoski 2004; Pinkoski 2008).

Speaking specifically about the Canadian context, Harrison and Darnell argue:

This task requires both empirical research and interpretive elaboration of the underlying narrative thread(s) of the national [Canadian or American] discipline. These collective discussions evolve relative to their own communities as well as to those studied. This self-examination anticipates many of the insights of poststructural critical theory, especially the questions of epistemology and the empowerment of alternative voices (Harrison and Darnell 2006:14).
Explicitly, then, the crux of the issue is the enormous place North American Indigenous peoples have in anthropology and anthropological theory not only as the foundational objects of study or co-workers (depending on the time and place as well as the definitions we use) upon which anthropology (and western science/philosophy at large) has built its own industry, but as practitioners in the anthropological project as well. This, too, is not a new concern. As Darnell notes, Hallowell stated as much in 1960:

Hallowell argued persuasively that urgent practical problems of coexistence with and administration of the Indians created the broad scope of the discipline, encompassing ethnology or cultural anthropology, linguistics (of unwritten languages), (prehistoric) archaeology, and physical or biological anthropology (Darnell 2001: 8; Hallowell 1960).

And Sol Tax began to write on this problem in the mid-20th century (Tax 1945; 1957).

This is at odds with the more recent remarkable absence of any sustained focus on anthropology’s relationship to Indigenous-Settler relations, that is, colonialism in North America (Canada and the United States). As Pinkoski notes:

The relationship between anthropological theory and colonialism in North America has been widely neglected in the historiography of the discipline. This omission occurs despite the increasing call for a greater disciplinary self-reflection on our work and on our relationships with those with whom we work (2008:172).

In his thorough and unparalleled review of Anthropologists’ attempts to address our disciplinary “crisis”, Pinkoski concludes that “Within these accounts there is virtually no recognition that North America continues to be colonized (2008:177; see Asch 2002) and no acknowledgement of the role that anthropology has played in this ongoing project.
Likewise, Asch fleshes out the peculiar intersections of anthropological theory and Canadian jurisprudence as they pertain to the colonial logic of the Canadian State’s assertions of sovereignty and jurisdiction over Indigenous peoples and their lands:

…when examined in terms of anthropological theory, the history of court decisions in the contemporary period is in effect a contest between racist evolutionism and cultural relativism. The former was a school of thought that dominated anthropological discourse in the late 19th and early 20th century and the latter the school that superseded it in the early 1920s. As an analysis of recent court decisions demonstrates, courts and ultimately government have come to rely on the orientation expressed through Hall’s remarks in determining rights connected with what I have termed “way of life” rights with respect to Aboriginal peoples. These include such matters as the right to hunt for subsistence, rights to hold ceremonies on traditional lands, and other similar matters. However the courts have continued to rely on 19th century racist evolutionary theory to explain the underpinning or context of these rights (Asch 2002: 27; emphasis mine).

This dubious relationship between anthropological theory and legal thought is indicative of coloniality, This is a crucial concept that is employed here in order to speak of the relations of power in the context of understanding how colonialism operates between the various relations listed above as constructions and tools interchangeable through the various and complex agencies of people, peoples and the liberal democratic practices of Settler States such as, for example, Australia, Canada, United States and New Zealand; this is particularly relevant to the co-operative understanding of the liberal-colonial logic that underscores contemporary trends towards ‘collaborative research’ that elide the anti-colonial politics of action anthropology and the (un)historical break from other engaged forms of anthropology, especially where anthropology, policy and law intersect. As Simpson succinctly asserts: “Anthropology and the ‘law’ (both, necessarily, reified in this iteration)
mark two such spaces of knowing and contention with serious implications for Indigenous peoples in the present” (Simpson 2007:69).

In addition to teasing out the relations between anthropological theory and legal thought, Asch further reveals their relationship in terms of the ‘culture’ of the liberal state that Foucault cogently addresses in Society Must Be Defended when he asserts that governmentality is “not an externality- something that is done to us. It is what we do to ourselves in making our lives” (Asch 2007; see also Foucault 2003:103).

In terms of thinking through historiographic methodology as a form of resistance, it is clear that the anthropological theory and legal thought are closely related in terms of coloniality: as both forms of knowledge and techniques of power that are also historical constructions.16 Yet, in consideration of Pinkoski’s and Asch’s finding that almost nowhere has the history of anthropology substantively acknowledged the presence of colonialism in North America, it becomes painfully obvious that the cultural analytic outlined here is invoked in order to actively historicize the discipline in keeping with the strategies of decolonization that embody both a relational historicism and a relational presentism in revealing the relations of power and knowledge that maintain the colonial structures of our disciplinary heritage and contemporary research engagements. The ways in which anthropologists, as a research driven community, dealt with our colonial past (aside from their erasure of it as Pinkoski notes) is mainly through a change in discourse that (re)produces the same power dynamics through reinvented and reconstituted models of anthropological engagement (for example the perceived shift from applied anthropology to collaborative anthropology). This is most evident in the imagined realm of ‘collaborative anthropology’ and is premised on liberal notions of recognition and equality that sidestep the

16 see, for example, Russell 2005, for an exemplary case study of the Australian legal-colonial context.
relational problem of colonialism despite an ongoing practice of colonality that is recursively recycled through an exchange between what was once demarcated as applied anthropology to the seemingly more reflexive practice of collaborative anthropology with no actual analysis of how this occurred, unless we accept that such a uni-directional process is inevitable.

Arguably, ‘collaboration’ is the way in which mainstream anthropology has chosen to deal with the flood of (post) colonial critiques such as Cesaire (1955), Deloria (1969), Freire (1970), Fanon (1952, 1959, 1961), Gandhi (1909), Hooks (1984) Said (1978, 1993), to name a few. Emerging as a dehistoricized trend in anthropological practice, the collaborative moment is both post-historical and a-historical in Fukuyama-like fashion (Fukuyama 1989, 1992). This is keeping step with the predominant ways of settler states’ (neo)liberal politics of equality via the problematic language of ‘recognition’ and ‘respect’ (see Turner 2006, Coulthard 2010) that are quite congruent with the ‘allure of liberalism’ (Mack 2011:298-300). Yet, numerous anthropologists have embraced collaboration in keeping with the notion that colonialism is in effect no longer a problem of the present, but merely a previous and troublesome phase of our early formation that we have dealt with by turning away from our anthropological ancestors, some of whom maintained much more complex political positions concerning colonialism and anthropological research than has been acknowledged (Asch 2005, 2006; Hancock 2011; Pinkoski 2011, J. Smith 2010, 2012, 2015).

This sustains Pinkoski’s objection to Anthropology’s interpretivist slant that has denounced our pre-modern role now famously characterized as the handmaiden of colonialism. This rejection of our past and the (re)invention of our ‘selves’ as post-colonial is an example of what Darnell challenges in bringing attention to our Invisible Genealogies and
it is key to understanding how anthropology at large has made the move from the interpretivist era to what I now refer to as the collaborative era (with action anthropology as one of the unintended casualties of this move. Despite delusions of progressive continuity, these are not actually clear stages of innovations in anthropological thought or practice; rather, they are coalescing patterns with deep ties to the very foundations of our discipline(s); ‘foundations’ that do not seem to congeal into the forms anthropologists frequently desire (conjure?) in the same way the alchemist strives to turn lead into gold; this is the rhizomatic quality (Deleuze 1987) of the histories of anthropology as well as the reason for much of its ‘epistemic murk’ (Taussig 1987:121-122)\(^{17}\).

Maintaining an acultural approach to the history of anthropology means, first, to sustain a linearly constructed narrative of anthropology (universalist) as a discipline with distinct stages of development (evolutionary) that constitute successive phases of both scientific progress and superior ethical awareness, which may be read as advancements in both science and civilization (tenets of liberalism). These dangerous teloi are indicative of recursive understandings of anthropology that are seemingly unproblematic for current and successive generations since what anthropologists do now, such as ‘collaborative’ anthropology, is no longer recognized as colonial because it is an assumed methodological

\(^{17}\) These challenges, political and relational, led Tax to conclude, in his unpublished *Action Anthropology Reder*, that “there is an essential difference between action and a few applied projects on the one hand and most applied projects on the other” (AAR:3). This statement characterizes the relationship between action anthropology and collaborative research as well; sometimes collaborative anthropology is action anthropology but action anthropology is not usually collaborative anthropology. Tax remained relational and open by noting that it may not be different from all projects of applied anthropology. He leaves room for the exceptional or subversive work of some applied or collaborative anthropologists who might be working in a politically relational way as he has described. Thus, the relationship between action and applied anthropology, as a problem for the history of anthropology, is parallel to the distinction I make between action anthropology and collaborative anthropology in that, their shared genealogies are to a great extent invisible—there is both continuity and revolution (Darnell 2001).
evolution to a space where we ‘recognize’ *them* and reflexively (re)situate the discipline in reference to a colonial past we no longer relate to even as we reinvent it. We (anthropologists), at least since the interpretivists (see Darnell 2001:299-300; Pinkoski 2008:175-176), tautologically define ourselves today in relation to a caricature of our past. That is, anthropologists are defining themselves as ‘NOT who we were’. Taiaiake Alfred’s acute analysis of symbols versus substance regarding Indigenous non-colonial resistances is ironically problematic for anthropologists too:

> When terminology, costume, and protocol are all that change, while unjust power relationships and colonized attitudes remain untouched, such “reform” becomes nothing more than a politically correct smokescreen obscuring the fact that no real progress is being made toward realizing traditionalist goals (Alfred 2009: 51).

The effect of our own “costume” and “smokescreen” is a historical understanding of anthropology that is not even post-colonial, but in actuality conjures a feeling of *acoloniality*; it perpetuates colonial thought and relations even as it denies their very persistence in our own lives and work. Yet, the result is a perpetuation of colonialism in both thought and action that must not be ignored.

On the one hand, the cultural analytic resists leaving the telling of our history entirely to non-practitioners, such as Stocking, and, on the other hand, it resists the irresponsibility of dehistoricising our relations in order to cope with our political hang-ups (i.e., about imperialism and colonialism). It does so by focusing on the various relations of power and knowledge as well as on the relations between individuals, peoples, institutions and pedagogical practices. Yet, such a focus necessitates a process of engagement that is both historiographic and action based that requires a non-hierarchical approach based on mutual obligation. How we step up to meet our obligations as people and anthropologists (or
scientists) strikes at the heart of decolonization. This was the spirit and intent of action anthropology.

Sol Tax and action anthropology have been dismissed, criticized and misunderstood (for example, see Bennett 1996, Foley 1999, Stocking 2001, Stucki). Action anthropology continues to be thought of as passé, social work, sometimes deemed naïve, and unscientific. Tax is often remembered as an impressive organizer and innovator who did not have any real theoretical impact of lasting contribution to the discipline. His action anthropology is before the advent of the reflexive turn and therefore is written off as static with no lasting theory of social change; no theory of agency; no contributions to anthropology; and, no scientific or empirical efficacy. Within Anthropology’s own history, Tax’s name, along with many of his student-colleagues, have been usually omitted, but when remembered, not remembered in their proper context for their work, methods or theoretical innovations.

The subsequent chapters of this dissertation offer a new perspective on Tax’s theoretical positions will indicate, by example, the problems with views such as Stocking’s, but also the lack of views such as this one, within the history of anthropology. Interpretations are complex; they consist not only of what has been said, but also of what has not been said. Theoretical lacunae in existing accounts leave certain fundamental critiques unchallenged, and this remains the case despite recent and more nuanced readings of Tax (for example, Daubenmier 2009, Stapp 2013 and Smith 2015). There continues to remain misunderstandings or simply a lack of knowledge about Tax’s action anthropology, but this is especially the case on the issue of Tax’s positions and thoughts on colonialism, decolonization, power and agency. This confusion remains unchallenged, which in turn allows Tax and action anthropology to be subsumed into a mythology wherein Tax is
imagined out of context, reinvented and, finally, subsumed into a false mould as a pioneer in both applied and collaborative anthropology. In other words, Tax is associated with theories with which he takes issues with and distanced from those with which he is quite intimate. Tax’s own statements and actions can directly contradict these views. This dissertation is concerned with Tax’s political philosophy and strives to interpret it in a historically sensitive manner in consideration of the discursive and practical contexts in which they were written, published and read. Moreover, to understand the spirit and intent of action anthropology requires including some of the thoughts from many of Tax’s student-collleagues, especially Nancy Lurie (Born 1924), Robert Rietz (1914-1971), Samuel L. Stanley (1923-2011), and Robert K. Thomas (1925-1991).

As an anthropologist, Lurie is most known for her contributions to ethnohistory and museology. She received her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1945; her M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1947; and, a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Northwestern University in 1952. She was Tax’s co-Coordinator for the American Indian Chicago Conference. In addition to her ongoing research with Indigenous Peoples, she was also an expert witness on many cases for many Tribes including the Menominee in the federal courts. She carried the action anthropology tradition forward in her tireless work with the Menominee helping them fight termination, while working on many action projects with them as well as the Wisconsin Winnebago and the United Indians of Milwaukee. Lurie held the position of professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee from 1963-1972.

Robert Rietz, a veteran of world war II, worked with Indigenous peoples in Iowa, North Dakota and Chicago. He served as the Director of the American Indian Center in
Chicago. He was one of the original six graduate students to participate in the Chicago 
Project in Tama, Iowa. From 1950 to Rietz worked at the Indian Reservation at Fort 
Berthold, North Dakota with the mandate to assist the members of the Three Affiliated 
Tribes (Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara) in relocating from their lands following the construction 
of the Garrison Dam. Rietz worked as both a ‘community analyst’ and a ‘relocation officer’ 
for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He refused, in 1952, to work on another relocation project, 
this time with the Sioux Cheyenne River reservation in South Dakota due to the conflict 
between his own principles and those of the policies of Indian Affairs, which eventually led 
to his resignation. He returned to lead the Chicago Project in Tama from 1954-1957. He was 
a co-founder of the Summer Workshops in American Indian Affairs (in Colorado and 
Canada). He returned to Chicago to direct the American Indian Center in 1958; a position he 
held until his untimely death in 1971.

Stanley, a veteran of World War II, received his BA (Philosophy) and MA 
(Anthropology) from the University of Washington. He completed a PhD in anthropology, as 
a student of Sol Tax, from the University of Chicago. He held a two-year Ford Fellowship in 
Indonesia and eventually took up a position in the Anthropology department at the 
University of California State College at Los Angeles. Sam worked with Sol Tax, who was 
appointed as Special Advisor in anthropology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian, which led 
to the establishment of ‘The Center for the Study of Man’ (July 1, 1968). Tax was the first 
director, and Sam became the program coordinator for the center. Stanley was integral to the 
production of the seminal Handbook of North American Indians and founding the National 
Festival of American Folklife (now known as the Smithsonian Folklife Festival). Ray 
Fogelson once described Stanley to me as “Sol’s Prime Minister”. He worked closely with
Robert Thomas on producing an ambitious map showing the persistence of Indigenous peoples throughout North America. The map was called *The North American Indians: 1950 Distribution of Descendants of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada and the United States.*

Robert K. Thomas, also a World War II veteran, was born in a family hunting camp near Mount Sterling, Kentucky, on 26 November 1925 and raised in a log house in the Ozarks of eastern Oklahoma. His Cherokee grandparents raised him after his father died and his mother remarried. Thomas received a B.A. in Anthropology in 1950 and an MA in Anthropology in 1954 from the University of Arizona. Thomas started his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Chicago in 1943 and left completing all requirements except the dissertation in 1957. Bob counselled Chicago Indian Center directors, Tom Segundo and Bob Rietz, from 1955-1957; He worked on the Chicago Project and cofounded the Summer Workshop for American Indian College Students, at times serving as a lecturer and even director. He was a co-Coordinator with Nancy Lurie on the American Indian Chicago Conference. He worked from 1957-1960 at the Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina on revitalization projects and did similar work with Sioux in South Dakota. Thomas is credited with “Spurning” the founding of the National Indian Youth Council of which Thomas was an advisor. He contributed immensely to the idea of the American Indian ecumenical movement. Thomas directed the Carnegie Cross-Cultural research project in eastern Oklahoma from 1962-1967. Thomas was an associate professor in the Division of the Science of Society at Monteith College, Wayne State University becoming full professor in 1975. He held appointments to the University of Regina, Canada (1975), The Smithsonian Institution (1976). Thomas directed the American Indian Studies Program at the University
of Arizona; the first program to offer a Master’s degree in Native Studies. Thomas conceptualized and theorized the notion of peoplehood and was one of the first scholars to write about the colonial context in post-world war II America. Of Thomas, Sam Stanley notes emphatically, “One of the main reasons he was not better known as an anthropologist was that Indians were a more important primary referential group for him than was the anthropology community. What knowledge he acquired was always first at the command of Indian people and only secondarily available to anthropology, social science, and the world at large” (Stanley 1998:4).

The locus of analysis is on the conversations, dialogues and debates that are excavated from the Sol Tax Papers meaning that what people said, how they said it and to whom they were speaking are vital to the presentation of my argument. Thus, I necessarily quote heavily and often in constructing novel evidence based narrative that shows as well as tells a new story of action anthropology for new generations of anthropologists.
And Along Came Tax: Colonialism and Resistance in American Anthropology

Sol Tax (1907-1995) was born in Chicago in and grew up in Milwaukee. He entered the University of Chicago in the spring in 1926, but soon transferred to University of Wisconsin-Madison. Due to financial challenges, Tax withdrew in 1927, and took courses from the Milwaukee State Normal School. In 1930, Tax spent four months in Algeria on an archaeological expedition, sponsored by the Beloit School of Prehistoric Research. His first experience of fieldwork with Indigenous peoples in the United States occurred that summer when he joined the Laboratory of Anthropology field school in New Mexico (Hinshaw 1979a, 1979b, 1979c; see also Gleach 2002). Under the supervision of Ruth Benedict, he studied with the Mescalero and Chiricahua Apache. Tax began graduate work in fall of 1931. His supervisor, the British anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, arrived at the University of Chicago in 1931. From 1932-1934, Tax completed his dissertation research with much of his fieldwork with the Meskwaki Nation, near Tama, Iowa taking place in the summers of 1932 and 1934. His dissertation, *Primitive Social Organization with Some Description of the Social Organization of the Fox Indians* was presented in 1935.

Tax’s doctoral dissertation features notable contributions on the history of social organization with a rich focus on debates around evolution. His colourful egoless kinship chart, drawn with pencil crayon in the 1930s, is a creative abstraction of relationality (see

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Figure 1). Reflecting on action anthropology in his own notes, Tax ponders the origins of action anthropology and suggests that it is present in some form when he first began doing work on social organization with the Meskwaki. Drawn entirely in pencil crayon, the ego-less kinship is an effort to better portray relationality without relying upon an ego or individual as a central referent point; thus, imagining relationality without an ego. While it is not explicitly written this way in Tax’s dissertation, the intent to do away with the ego and use colours to visually represent interconnectivity and the significance or relations to each other more effervescently is still interpretative and abstract, but it lends itself toward the possibility of imagining an entirely different relational ontology than the traditional kinship chart, which is more atomistic in conception. These two aspects of his dissertation (anti-evolutionary and communal-relational) foreshadow his habit of considering the political consequences of subscribing to a scientific theory as well as his sincerity as a “staunch relativist” determined to understand others’ philosophy and epistemology through a wholeheartedly relativist lens.

Despite the more contemporary urges to cynically label Tax’s supervisor, Radcliffe-Brown, as a “handmaiden of colonialism,” Radcliffe-Brown approached the study of Indigenous peoples with an altogether different paradigm than that of the Americanist Tradition. Uncomfortable with the “culture” concept, Radcliffe-Brown deemed all societies structurally complex. Moreover, he “saw his anti-colonial political location as intimately connected with his theoretical orientation and his scholarship” (Asch 2009:3). The later emergence of Tax’s politically engaged science is a direct result of his intellectual

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20 His partner, Gertrude, joined him in 1934 for his summer field stint where “she made friends with Meskwaki and recorded the autobiography of one woman that Tax included in his dissertation under Gertrude’s authorship. Daubenmier notes one instance where Tax involved himself in the political arena concerning the Meskwaki Nation: “In 1934, Without consulting any Meskwaki… Tax wrote to the Indian Commissioner, John Collier, in 1934, to take the Indians’ side in the dispute” (Daubenmier 2008:36).
FIGURE 1 - Sol Tax’s Eglo-Less Kinship Chart

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Figure 2 – Key to Charts
relationship with Radcliffe-Brown and intensive studies of kinship (i.e. relationality). In studying both social organization and the *history* of studies in social organization, Tax became quite sensitive and critical (if he was not before) of the dogmatic patterns within the discipline that sought to articulate comparative models of small-scale societies against what he and others considered in their as their own ‘modern’ or ‘evolved’ societies. Within kinship studies, Tax began to theorize away from the evolutionary, stadial and even the phenomenological qualities of kinship patterns and articulated kinship within societies as integral to group agency, cultural persistence and the ability of peoples to solve relational problems creatively. The following excerpt actually contains the growth of the sporeling of the theory that became action anthropology:

All that is necessary to the argument here, however, is that the family consisting of parents and children, uncles and aunts, and grandparents and cousins should have enough contact to make some accommodation necessary—not at some point in the dark historic past, but all the time, with each new generation…. Given friction among people, some of them will solve the problem, perhaps in various ways, and some solution will, in the course of time, spread to other people in like circumstance, and will crystallize as a custom. In a small group, with the passage of time, an innovation in one generation can easily become the tradition of the next; that is what is meant, partly, by the “sensitivity” of a small group (Tax 1935:119).

The passage contains quite clearly the theoretical underpinnings of action anthropology by viewing how problems arise and people work them out in their own way in accordance with their own systems. This is a theory of culture change, but it does not lead to either a move towards assimilation or cultural devastation. Underscoring the point, Tax asserts,
“Obviously, the innovation depends partly on the cultural forms already present, and nothing in this argument should be construed as a denial of that; but there are certain tendencies always cropping up, in any society at any time, that reinforce some of the customs and work to undermine and change others” (Tax 1935:22).

Part One, *A Short History of the Study of Social Organization* (Tax 1935:1-45), is a comprehensive reading of the philosophical disputes over evolution in terms of stadial theories. Tax pays specific attention to historical denunciations of evolution and stadial theories in pointing out where he believes that the study of social organization went astray.

Beginning with Sir Henry Maine, Tax states:

Maine (1822–88) was primarily a comparative jurist, an authority on Roman Law. He was never an evolutionist in the sense that some of his contemporaries were, for he neither delineated a series of “stages” of human history, nor did he believe that there is evidence to warrant such procedure: . . . “So far as I am aware, there is nothing in the recorded history of society to justify the belief that, during that vast chapter of its growth which is wholly unwritten, the same transformation of social constitution succeeded one another everywhere, uniformly if not simultaneously” (Maine 1883). . . In any event, one may be sure that in the history of ethnology Maine’s influence was comparatively slight, due perhaps to his conservatism in a very extravagant era. (Tax 1935:10)

Tax notes the marginalization of Maine’s work and the wider influence of John Ferguson McLennan’s notion that in human history there was a line of development” (Tax 1935:12). Regarding McLennan’s influence, Tax cites Rivers disappointment in the “tragedy that anthropologists followed McLennan and not Morgan, for doing so caused them to miss even the facts of kinship” (Tax 1935:34): “Those who believe the classificatory system is merely an unimportant code of mutual salutations are not likely to attend to relatively minute
difference in the customs they despise” (Rivers 1914:1; Tax 1935:34).

Lewis Henry Morgan figures prominently in Tax’s historical account, but he distils Morgan’s theory of cultural persistence from his evolutionist argument:

Morgan, when he set out to collect kinship terms, was not an evolutionist. He wrote that “the children are of the tribe (meaning ‘clan’) of the mother, in a majority of the nations; but the rule, if anciently universal, is not so at the present day.” By anciently universal he meant at some period after the tribes had diverged from the common ancestor; had he had the evolutionary notions he developed later, he would not have questioned the universality of such rules. Although it is easy to make much of a stray statement, the whole tenor of Morgan’s writing at this time was non-evolutionary. (Tax 1935:16, emphasis mine)

More importantly, Tax emphasizes Morgan’s theoretical insight into culture change as stemming from the general problem of having “to explain differences”. What Tax values or pulls from Morgan’s work is the recognition “that kinship systems cannot always be tied up functionally with the social structure” and despite the fact that Morgan assumed kinship systems must “always fit the societies in which they grow“, the significance, for Tax lies in Morgan’s theoretical musing about persistence: “it is rendered not improbable that they might survive changes of social condition sufficiently radical to overthrow the primary ideas in which they originated” (Morgan 1871:15; Tax quoting Morgan 1935:18–19). Here Tax emphasizes Morgan’s point of cultural persistence over his evolutionary Thought, which he laments and leaves behind. According to Tax, Morgan adopted an evolutionary scheme at a later point out of necessity because “Morgan believed in unilinear evolution in the sense that he thought that at one time all people were one, had a uniform culture, of course, and before or after diverging, gradually changed their cultures in somewhat the same direction.” Tax criticized Morgan for confusing culture and biology and explains how he ended up becoming
an evolutionist because “next step was to postulate the kind of social organization that would give the Malayan type of kinship; then the kind that would give the Turanian and Ganowian types”. Morgan’s problem, according to Tax, is that he “could not explain the latter in terms of their social organization alone, but on the basis of that plus the fact that it was a modification of the Malayan”. Thus, Morgan was evolutionary because he had to “have an “evolution”; for, if it could explain each separately, they might have been independently developed without causal connection”. This is important to Tax in pulling Morgan from “the fact that he tried to start from the opposite of Monogamy and work up, as some, cynically, has said. (Tax 1935:20 n.19). This is important to Tax because “[t]he assumptions that Morgan made, such as that of the dependence of kinship terms on social structure and the lag of terminology in social change, are historically more important than the exact sequence of evolution that he set up” (Tax 1935:22, emphasis mine). In other words, Tax is concerned with understanding kinship and the correct relational terms while simultaneously shedding the burden of past errors, in this case Morgan’s evolutionary paradigm.

This sentiment and commitment to wanting to correct the wrong turns of previous scholars theorizing about social organization and get things right, logically lead to a habit towards endeavouring to understand the subject, in Tax’s case, of Meskwaki social organization on their own terms and from the Meskwaki themselves; yet, Tax simultaneously pushed the boundaries of theoretical anthropology, but did not, at the time, learn about the contemporary context of Meskwaki political life in relation to nearby Settler communities and the US. Government. In this sense, we see the spirit of action anthropology manifest in Tax’s early work on Meskwaki kinship and is expressed in his attempt to develop the ego-
less kinship chart as well as to theorize changes in social organization (i.e. culture change) away from evolutionary or assimilationist thought, but not engage, at this time, in Meskwaki affairs. Given Tax’s implicit view of community agency in the face of conflict or “friction”, it is not a leap to see how Tax came to see self-determination or self-government as fundamental to peoples’ freedoms, sovereignties and jurisdictions over their own futures, not to mention his later concern with the meaning of Treaties and their implications for Settlers.

Following his exposition on Morgan, Tax briefly discusses the “twenty years it [historical evolutionism] consumed the energy of the growing science as tag does that of children.” Historical evolutionism, Tax notes, was current in America “until Boas, who had never been an evolutionist, became the strongest influence” (Tax 1935:22). Tax articulates Boas’ effect upon American anthropology in heroic prose: “after considerable training in ethnography, he wrote the case against the ‘new school’ [evolutionists], which had its adherents in America as well as abroad. Never, thereafter, did Evolutionism seriously raise its head in America” (Tax 1935:37; Boas 1896). This staunch and dismissive rhetoric is almost celebratory and foreshadows Tax’s resistance when, in the next decades, evolutionism does “seriously raise its head in America” (especially Julian Steward’s theory of multilinear-evolution).

Making his stance towards evolutionary anthropology explicitly known while characteristically maintaining a level of mutual respect for those of whom he is critical, Tax rhetorically asks:

Practically all of our elementary concepts about social organization— and its terminology—were developed by these evolutionists, and to try to evaluate their contributions would be as if a bullfrog were to try to evaluate a tadpole. Since we, at the present time, with all the concepts developed by the evolutionists, find it
difficult, if not impossible, to synthesize the materials we have about social organization, who can say that it was unfortunate that the first ethnologists were beset by a false formula? (Tax 1935:25)

His study of the history of social organization keenly focuses on the intellectual arguments surrounding evolutionism and historical constructions with a rhetorical tone. This exposes Tax’s standpoint toward evolution, a stance pertinent to both his emergent theory of cultural persistence and how his teacher and, later, colleague, Robert Redfield, (who thought Boas’ anti-evolutionism went too far) impacted Tax’s own anthropological theory of culture change, without reliance on evolutionism, stages of change (progress), or universal trajectories. Yet it is Radcliffe-Brown who furnishes the substantial basis for Tax’s political anthropology and anti-colonialism. The same year Tax completed his dissertation, Radcliffe-Brown published *Patrilineal and Matrilineal Succession* (1935). Published in the Iowa Law Review for a “Symposium on Succession to Property by Operation of Law,” Radcliffe-Brown’s work “constituted a profound critique of the racist, ethnocentric ideology on the basis of which British colonial rule in Australia and elsewhere was legitimated” (Asch 2009:3). Thus, “Radcliffe-Brown understood himself to have a considered location within the larger politics of his day that placed him as a realist who, despite the limitations and dangers he saw in it, adopted socialism as his political location” (Asch 2009:2). Radcliffe-Brown’s anti-colonial anthropology informed Tax’s own political outlook right when American anthropology’s obsession with acculturation studies took hold.22

It’s vital to note the significance of relationality to action anthropology in terms of

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22 Tax’s dissertation incorporates some of Radcliffe-Brown’s ideas and challenges others. He articulates how his thinking departs from Radcliffe-Brown on pages 113-14 noting “The type of explanation presented is similar to that of Professor Radcliffe-Brown in certain respects; but, in other, equally important, respects, its whole tenor is contrary” (Tax 1935:113).
Indigenous political revitalization, but also in understanding the processes and meanings of a Treaty relationship between peoples as well as obligations and even laws that are inherent in a peoples’ ontology or what Tax’s generation referred to as ‘World View’ (not always carrying precisely the same meaning as ontology, but quite often, this is what they meant). What Tax learned from the Meskwaki as he outlines in Last On the Warpath is congruent with the current scholarship in Indigenous Law as well. Christina Gish Hill, offers a contemporary expression of the relationship between Kinship and concepts such as ‘Sovereignty’. From Hill’s perspective,

    Exploring exactly how Native people understood their own collective socio-political organization sheds light on the multiple and often contradictory understandings that Europeans and Americans developed to define Native nations and the ambiguous actions government officials often took in relation to them. Euro-American’s recognized that Native people organized themselves as coherent political entities but interpreted these collectivities through Western political constructions (Hill 2013:66).

Hill makes the distinction, through her example of Cheyenne socio-political organization, that “Kinship as the defining requirement for membership implies a sociopolitical organization quite different from that of citizenship within the nation-state” (Hill 2013:6). Like Tax, albeit more explicitly and in contemporary terms, Hill discusses how Indigenous peoples imagine themselves as collectivities to such an extent that “What results is a collective socio-political group that is highly flexible and fluid because its membership is relatively open to those who can access it through familial relations of some type” and “a Native nation exercised sovereignty by maintaining a web of kin-based relationships and strategically activating these relationships to take a political and economic action and to
access territory” (Hill 2013:68). Hill also astutely notes how the eighteenth century scholars grappled with ‘American Indian’ political organization in terms of ‘tribal nations’ but without “the assumption of sovereignty”. Tax, as a graduate student, is cautiously challenging a similar notion, but without a discourse to do so in trying to represent kinship as fluid and integral to the Meskwaki agency and how to relate to them as well as understand how they might relate to the social and political world around them. He is also limited in thinking, at this time, primarily about disciplinary anthropological theory and not yet in explicit political terms from the Meskwaki perspective. It took Tax another fifteen years to get there- from working on the problem as an abstract theoretical subject within his discipline to a political reality for people; as he states in telling his own story. In Tax’s short unpublished memoir, Last on the Warpath, he explains:

how I came to know American Indians and learn anthropology from them is personal. This is the only way to indicate the real difference between one culture and another; it is also basic to the problem of education. While no two people become educated in the same way, the example of any one is perhaps a datum worth noting. My own particular example may not be very typical, but it is the only one I have, and it covers a long period of time (Tax 1968:1).

He discusses how “I came to know and appreciate American Indians and therefore to understand myself, and as being different from them, at one level without changing myself, and at another level changing myself very importantly” (Tax 1968).

He candidly narrates his own recollection of how he came to “learn anthropology from the American Indian”, but explicitly from his time with the Meskwaki; yet, it took time and the change for Tax was profound. Beginning with how Radcliffe-Brown wanted someone to study the Meskwaki because they had an Omaha-type kinship system that
interested Radcliffe-Brown:

So I went to the Meskwaki, not to do anything about the Meskwaki, but to do something about learning a kinship system. I was alone then, and my exposure was greater than when I was with a group. I had to get to know the Indians better, but as I look back, I see that I did not come to know them very well. However, I did talk with them, and in part we must have talked about what they wanted to talk about because, when I went there, I did not know they had political factions. I learned about these factions from the Indians who spoke about them much of the time. Like a good anthropologist, I listened to what they said, and I learned the kinship system in their terms. But I tried to relate it to anthropology, not to the Indians. (Tax 1968:4)

Tax then accounts for many of his shortcomings at this time. With a sense of reflexive humility, he acknowledges how mistaken and naïve he was about the political reality of the Meskwaki at the time of his dissertation fieldwork:

Thus, while studying the kinship system, I got a feeling for something good that was going on but there is almost no suggestion that these people had either personal or community problems. I have no way of knowing how bad off they really were; perhaps somebody more pessimistic than I could read through my notebooks and see something I missed. To them at the time, however, it was perfectly clear that these people had a culture quite different from mine, and that they were successful in their way just as I was successful in mine (Tax 1968:7).

Moreover, Tax laments how “[d]espite four summers of rather intimate contact with American Indians, I had not even begun to understand what we can call their psychology” and marks 1946 as the time when he first began to understand more intimately and change as a direct result of that first fieldwork with the Meskwaki and that it was fifteen years later
when he returned to the Meskwaki, after being away in Guatemala and Mexico, that his
“education about Indians, and therefore a changed view of myself, really began… [but] I
cannot say that those years of experience and thinking were wasted – they may have made
possible what was to come” (Tax 1968:8).

In the next instance of his memoir, Tax expresses how he had, until then, “separated
anthropology and action through those years”, but when he began the Fox project, as soon he
“switched radically” (Tax 1968:9). His framing of this change is instructive of how Tax
understood the emergence of action anthropology:

I came back to the University from Guatemala during the war and for three or
four years, I was in contact with students, and a younger generation was
pressing me to become an activist again. Furthermore, the motivation for the
Indians has changed, and thus the change in me was also related to the change
in them. When we began the Fox project, the question arose as to whether one
could deal with their problems; it was evident when I said yes that another part
of me had come back. A soon as this happened, I could no longer deal with
Indians in the traditional anthropological way. I could no longer deal with their
kinship system or other aspects of their culture in the abstract, or with
information I could gather from interviews and then put together at home on
paper. I had to deal with them as human beings, as Indians trying to do things
they were unable to do; in short, with their problems (Tax 1968:9-10).

At this point, Tax marks a clear decisive break from what he refers to as “traditional
anthropology” and while it did not occur in his dissertation fieldwork, he acknowledged the
genealogy and the experience of that work as making it possible to learn from the Meskwaki
and he notes in his memoir the significance impact of the Indigenous Peoples he worked
with in other areas and contexts, too, but it all would not have been possible if not for his
early experiences working on social organization and his eventual return to the Meskwaki.
Yet, a new problem and challenge arose from this break and re-discovery: “The problem was that they [Meskwaki] were not offered alternatives that made for a life, which was tolerable to them as individuals or as a community” (Tax 1968:10). Referring to this as “the first lesson I learned whether from or about Indians”, Tax emphasizes, “it is one that most people still do not seem to have learned” because, too often “the ‘expert’ is seen as the one who knows better what should happen to people than the people themselves” (Tax 1968:10). But reaching this conclusion, for Tax, “To learn this lesson you would not have to go to the Fox Indians, know the trauma of trying to decide of what should happen to your Indian friends, and then suddenly realize that it is their decision, not yours. Once you have that insight, it seems most obvious” (Tax 1968:10). A final point, Tax makes

In dealing with the Indians, apparently we absorbed something from them, even though we thought we had thought of it ourselves. From that time on, I began to learn more and more from Indians, and everything I have learned from them is somehow connected with what is peculiar to American Indian culture in contrast to middle-class culture. Not only is their type of culture probably more widespread in the world, it is also in opposition to much of what is established in our culture, and thus rebels against our establishment. (Tax 1968:11).

In his words, Tax tells his story of how he came to understand the problems Indigenous peoples faced to such an extent that he began to see anthropology, as fundamentally about relatiornality and the corresponding political problems, such as those of the Meskwaki, that Indigenous peoples invariably faced. These became of the utmost concern for action anthropologists. He dedicated the rest of his career working on these problems and changed anthropology, as Vine Deloria Jr. put it, “without anyone noticing it.”

While Tax was working in Guatemala, another anthropologist whose own
anthropological work and political conscience went in precisely the opposite direction of Tax’s at the time was Julian Steward (1902-1972).

Steward occupies a crucial space of this story in understanding the context of what Tax was both up against and responding to vis-à-vis the intertwined directions of applied anthropology, the evolutionary theory and the course of U.S. Indian Policy. Pinkoski’s definitive work in understanding the currency of Steward’s scientific theories shows Steward to be an immense contributor to the hostile view of the inevitability of Indigenous Peoples assimilation and how Steward furnished, as a key witness for the U.S. department of Justice, a ‘Scientific’ argument to be utilized against the plaintiffs in the Indians Claims Commission.23 24 Pinkoski shows the connection between the theoretical models of Herbert Spencer and Steward while drawing attention to the “existing fidelity explicitly misrepresented within the discipline” (Pinkoski 2006:106-114), while most importantly pointing out that “Of all the foci of anthropology, Steward’s theory has remained most influential for studies of hunting-gathering societies (Pinkoski 2006: for example, Ingold 2000; Barnard 2000, Feit 1986, Myers 2004). The favouring (or currency) of Steward’s theoretical contributions, based on almost no actual fieldwork25, stand in inverse parallel to Tax’s lack of currency in anthropological theory despite ambitious, intensive and solid fieldwork practices (Rubenstein 1991). In 1935, Steward joined the Bureau of American

23 Steward worked at the US department of Justice for seven years where he provided testimony and strategy for the US government to deny American Indian land rights (Pinkoski and Asch 2004).

24 Pinkoski’s dissertation shows Steward, as a historical figure, to be quite a foil and inverse parallel of Tax as he proves how Steward “promoted his own aesthetic social preferences that were couched in assimilation policies, evolutionary pronouncements, and manifest destiny to counter what was the then dominant anti-evolutuionary and cultural relativist anthropology of Boas (Stocking 1968, 1989, Darnell 2000)”.

25 Pinkoski reveals how Steward’s fieldwork practices were unsound : “In fact, according to Jane Steward’s journal entries, her husband did almost no fieldwork by September because of his constant movement, hasty visits, and general ill health” (Pinkoski 2006:73; Kerns 2003:201-3).
Ethnology at the Smithsonian where he worked for eleven years. Initially, he worked for Collier “less than one year as a liaison between the BIA and BAE” (Pinkoski 2006:58-65). He was tasked with reporting on the social organization of the “Shoshone Tribes” for the BIA in order to assist Collier’s plans to “provide reservation lands and federal recognition for the ‘landless’ Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada, and to implement Collier’s wider goals for the IRA” (Pinkoski 2006:60). However, Pinkoski shows that Steward’s “base description [of the Shoshoni tribes] provide[d] the rationale for his opposition to Collier’s plans. With ample evidence and quoting Steward in full, Pinkoski summarizes Steward’s grim conclusions about the Shoshone:

- The Shoshone had been so tarnished from contact with Euro-Americans that there was little or nothing Aboriginal ‘left to protect’ or recognize through federal policy.

- Assimilation should be encouraged so as to assist in the natural development of the Indigenous Peoples into dominant America society.

- Processes naturally destroyed native cultural forms and supplanted them with more advanced and legitimate ones.

- Indigenous Peoples’ political rights are special, different, and unique and that supporting them would be akin to racism.

- Acknowledging Indian land rights in the Great Basin would exacerbate race tensions, establish a policy of segregation, and impede natural processes of evolution.

- Education: Steward advises that the education system must be addressed so as to counteract the traditions of the home as an impediment for assimilation. (Pinkoski 2006:62-63)

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26 See Philp 1977 for more on Collier’s Applied Anthropology Unit whereby Collier tried to bring in Anthropologists to assist in revitalizing Indigenous Traditional life (Philp 1977:161).
All of this led Collier to denounce the report saying: “I am tempted to excerpt other and
lengthier dicta from Dr. Steward’s report, but the one which I have quoted indicates most of
the reason why the report does not prepossess me as social philosopher or as factual
reporting”. Despite Collier’s justified dismissal of Steward’s report, “[it] is important
because it contains Steward’s specific statements and recommendations for American Indian
policy” (Pinkoski 2006:65), which run in direct opposition to those of Tax and to what
essentially informed future political objectives of action anthropology.

Steward first appeared on Tax’s radar when, in 1938, he published in *American
Anthropologist* a review of the Radcliffe-Brown Festschrift, *Social Anthropology of North
Steward’s review was entirely critical and he especially singled out Tax’s *Some problems of
Social Organization*, in his aggressive review. Of that paper, Steward said, “We fail to note
in this essay either clarification of social problems or positive results” (Steward 1938:720-
722). Yet, Tax’s paper became “a classic in the field of kinship studies”, which was
“seminal to the development of the componential analysis approach to kinship studies”. In
response to receiving his issue of the *AA* with the Steward’s review, Tax wrote to Redfield in
response, “I was shocked by the review of our R-B book; who is Julian Steward of the
BAE?” (Rubenstein 1991:259).

Robert Redfield became an important, mentor and friend to Tax. Redfield served as
dean of the Social Sciences Division between 1934 and 1946. In 1934, he invited Tax to
participate in his Middle American ethnographic project funded by the Carnegie Institution
of Washington. Redfield’s studies of four communities in Yucatan contributed to his theory
of the ‘Folk-Urban Continuum’, which spurred immense discussion and inspired follow up
studies to test Redfield’s theories. Tax accepted the challenge and from 1934-1941, Tax accomplished a great deal of ambitious fieldwork in Guatemala leading to several publications including *Penny Capitalism*, which became an early foundational text in economic anthropology and sustains some notable impact in economics. Together with Gertrude, Tax’s intensive studies focused on the communities of Chichicastenango and Panajachel while covered political relations problems dealing with ontological (‘world view’) and political relations between what he termed differentially as ‘Indians’ and ‘Ladinos’ (see Rubenstein 1991b).

Tax was already well on his way to formulating a dynamic theory of culture change of his own based on his observations of cultural persistence such as the “fact” that “Indians” in Guatemala did not change due to constant and sustained contact with “Ladinos.”

A leader in the emergent field of acculturation studies, Redfield brought Tax on board to work on his Carnegie-funded project in Mesoamerica, where Redfield was substantiating his notion of the folk-urban continuum. Tax’s fieldwork in Guatemala was to corroborate Redfield’s articulation of how folk cultures change in relation to urbanization. Just as Tax’s dissertation did not wholly substantiate Radcliffe-Brown’s hypothesis towards kinship and laws of culture change, his observations in Guatemala delicately critiqued Redfield’s theories of culture change.

Although both his mentors influenced him, Tax continued pursuing his own theory of culture change while dismantling the romantically self-indulgent notion of European contact as privileging Western civilization over Indigenous agency in the Americas. This excerpt

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27 Tax (1942) defines ladinos as representatives of Spanish and European traditions, although not unmixed with ‘Indian’.
cuts against the notion that European contact is a sweeping factor and Tax begins to articulate and argue more explicitly for the agency of Political communities in choosing their own destinies and persisting in keeping with their own structures, cultures and relations:

The Indians, far from being isolated by these geographic conditions, are much given to travelling in spite of them; in commerce (wherein man himself is the chief beast of burden), in travelling to religious fiestas, or simply in going to see new places and new faces, much of the time of the Indians is spent in plodding over the rocky trails. Insofar as it makes the distances longer, the forbidding topography therefore makes travelling more important rather than less, and any tendency it might have toward isolating Indian groups is counteracted by the energy of the Indians themselves. Contradictory though it may seem, nevertheless the Indian groups—the municipios—bear, in their differences, the marks of isolation; and that they do cannot be attributed to their geographic isolation but rather to a resistance to the natural effects of constant contact! (Tax 1937:427, emphasis mine)

Moreover, Tax provides further explanation as to why Indigenous peoples do not inevitably assimilate “simply because they are exposed” and the reason is “found in the pattern of their culture itself”. But this is not meant to be a redundant or circular explanation to the extent that ‘culture determines culture’. He explains this by first noting that the Indigenous polities of Guatemala “differ from one another” and “this in the face of continual contacts of individuals of one group with those of another”, thus, “[t]hey are used to seeing differences and to ignoring them”. In other words, “[t]hey recognize that “the Indians over there” have this or that custom different from their own, and on the whole, while they are tolerant of it, they do not adopt it”. The sobering reality that Indigenous Peoples have existed with each other for thousands of years and often in intimate relations, but did not assimilate into one homogenous culture, is a sobering critique of the whole tenure of anthropology.

Additionally, Tax’s ponderings allow for the reality that change in Indigenous societies does
happen, but only in-keeping with peoples preferences “Indian society, even in one municipio, is relatively mobile; individuals and families shift both their economic positions in the community and the respect in which they are held, with comparative ease and frequency (Tax 1939:466).

Seeking to resolve the question of whether the results of contact with civilization met expectations, he asks, “Have Indians—while still illiterate and unworldly—been affected in their social organization and means of social control? Are they, in these important sociological respects deculturated?” (Tax 1939:467). Considering the political implications of either answer, Tax is wary of interpreting his observations to mean “primitive peoples deculturate without further sophistication due to contact with civilization” (Tax 1939:467). He inclines toward the negative for four reasons: first, the political implications and consequences of formulating such an answer; second, peoples have agency in situations of culture contact; and third, the least evolutionary answer is:

‘No’—that modern civilization as it is represented in Guatemala City and in the ladino towns of the highlands has almost nothing to do with the apparently un-folk-like character of Indian social organization. I do not assert that organization is pre-Columbian, for it obviously is not; I do believe, however, that its essential characteristics are not recent innovations, that they are explicable in terms of themselves, that the whole peculiarities of whose social organization are matched by fundamental behaviour and cultural patterns existing in the communities” (Tax 1939:467).

The fourth reason lies in Tax’s theorization of a culture of persistence: “[T]here is no Mestizo class in Guatemala, and the term is hardly used except in its literal meaning” (Tax 1941:28). Despite frequent and intensive culture contact between Ladinos, Tax emphasized the persistence of Indian culture through an analysis of the inter-relations of the Indian
communities. This analysis anticipates his later proclamation that he learned anthropology from the Indians (Tax 1968):

> It is therefore not surprising that the Indians of one municipio know a great deal about the people and customs of others. The average Indian could no doubt write large fragments of the ethnography of half-a-dozen towns other than his own. Although occasionally scornful of the customs of other communities, he more frequently does not evaluate them. “That is their custom; it is right for them,” appears to be the most general attitude. To the Indians cultural differences between themselves and outsiders are as much to be expected as differences in kinds of trees. It would be inaccurate to say that the close contact and resultant knowledge on the part of one group of Indians of differences of culture among others have not resulted in some diffusion. (Tax 1941:31).

Tax’s understanding of social relations between different peoples circumnavigates assumptions of either cosmopolitanism or tribalism. His alternative suggests that “Indians” change without negating who they are. The first presentations of a theory of cultural persistence are based on his work in Guatemala (Tax 1937, 1939, 1941, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1953, 1957). Fieldwork, in the United States Midwest and in Guatemala, enabled him to perceive the fallacy of assimilation. In turn, he advocated for an anthropology uniquely equipped to provide the facilitation in fostering co-existence through mutually permissive politics with self-determination as the motivating principle. Action anthropologists, therefore, confronted spaces where problems of cross-cultural communication were problematic; this is precisely why both theory and relativism are central to action anthropology (see Tax 1975a).

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28 This is a direct challenge to the kinds of work being done by the cultural evolutionists such as Steward.
In the meantime, while Tax was working in Guatemala, far from the milieu of Collier’s tenure as the most liberally progressive Indian Commissioner in U.S. Indian policy history, Applied Anthropology found more footing as a field. John Collier established his Applied Anthropology Unit (AAU) with its first employee, a young D’Arcy McNickle (Salish) (Daubemier 2008:43; Cobb 2008:8-11). Collier hired McNickle to serve as an administrative assistant in the BIA where he worked for the next 16 years, eventually becoming the tribal relations officer. McNickle was critical in the emergence of the New Deal at a unique moment in U.S. Indian Policy when “the federal government rejected the policies of allotment and assimilation and replaced them with a commitment to cultural pluralism and tribal self-government via the IRA act of 1934”. As Cobb notes, McNickle was a “passionate advocate for using social science knowledge to improve federal-Indian relations, he also thought globally about Indigenous peoples” (Cobb 2008:11). McNickle and Tax would come to be friends and close allies in fighting termination policy and organizing the American Indian Chicago Conference in 1961.

Tax was made research associate of the Chicago Department in 1940 and maintained his engagement with the Carnegie Institution until 1947. In 1942, Tax moved to Mexico where he was a visiting professor at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) in Mexico City until 1944. During that time, he developed an anthropology

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29 D’Arcy McNickle (1913-1977) McNickle was born on the Flathead Reservation, Montana to a French Cree (Métis) mother, and Irish father. He was hired in 1936 by John Collier to work as an administrative assistant in the Bureau of Indian Affairs where he worked until 1952 when he left the Bureau as a tribal relations officer (Cobb 2008:9). McNickle, a celebrated author, was a co-founder of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). McNickle co-chaired the American Indian Chicago Conference in 1961; For a biography of McNickle see Dorothy R. Parker, Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D’Arcy McNickle (1992).

30 Alfred V. Kidder was director of the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Division of Historical Research and had supervised Tax’s work in Latin America for the Carnegie Institution. Kidder visited Tax several times in Guatemala.
curriculum and trained Mexican anthropologists in ethnographic fieldwork. In April of that same year, the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) was created in the United States with its first meeting taking place at Harvard University in May; attendees established the journal, *Applied Anthropology*, which eventually became *Human Organization*.31

Tax noted, in a letter to Redfield, that the “Instituto Indigenista spurred an interest in applied anthropology, although he worried that administration placed too much “blind faith” in the discipline” (Daubenmier 2008:83):

> My feeling is that if we are interested in nurturing the connection between anthropology and administration and at the same time in saving our science from prostitution, we must do something quickly. It is up to us to define the relationship that should exist, the possibilities and the limitations of anthropological research as it may be ‘applied’—and in short to define what may or may not be a new field of anthropology. (Daubenmier 2008:88; see also Tax 1945:197-98)

As Tax wrapped up his teaching tenure in Mexico City at the end of world war II, McNickle, who had been an employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs since 1936, together with three other charter members, formed the National Congress of American Indians in 1944 (Cowger 1999; Cornell 1988:191-192). McNickle maintained a deeply committed political stance by “preventing BIA employees from serving formally in leadership positions” (Cobb 2008:11). He also “promoted the organization’s battle for legislation to resolve outstanding claims against the U.S. government” while “secur[ing] full civil liberties and to ensure the continued recognition of treaty rights” and “believed wholeheartedly that

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31 The first issue of *Human Organization* (HO) appeared in 1941. *HO* is the “outlet for scholarship in the applied social sciences”. SfAA also sponsors the journal *Practicing Anthropology* (PA), which first appeared in 1979. *PA* is the “career-oriented publication of the SfAA” for “anthropologists working outside academia”. The SfAA also established the Sol Tax Award Distinguished Service Award beginning in 2002, which recognizes each year a member of SfAA for their “long-term and truly distinguished service to the Society.” (https://www.sfaa.net/about/prizes/distinguished-awards/sol-tax-award/).
“Indians shared ‘the world experience of other native peoples subjected to colonial domination ’” (Cobb 2008:11): “I here predict that unless some such fundamental attack is made on the problem of poverty—and it is the problem which underlies all else—we will stand here 10 and 25 years from now, and will have come closer to solutions for the problems of our Indian people” (Cobb 2008:8)32

Tax returned home in 1944 to take up his new position with the University of Chicago as a half-time associate professor of anthropology and a half-time employee of the Carnegie Institution in Washington. Tax’s ethnographic fieldwork engagements now included work experiences with Indigenous peoples of New Mexico, Iowa, and the Great Lakes region as well Guatemala. Tax and McNickle shared a profound belief in and commitment to the idea that social science could be useful to resolving “domestic ‘colonial’ problems,” one “that carried the additional benefit of providing “patterns for constructive democratic action in similar situations all over the world” (Cobb 2008:24). For Tax, this sentiment would reach its full articulation in what he would later call “Action Anthropology”, an approach that called for “a participative ethnography in which the informants were coinvestigators and the investigators were students of the informants” (Cobb 2008:23-25); Gearing et al. 1960), a sentiment he invoked in Last On the Warpath33.

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32 Point IV programs for McNickle were crucial for decolonization in the U.S. similarly to global decolonization movements. The Point IV Program is derived from the fourth foreign policy directive in President Harry S. Truman’s speech whereby he committed the United States to economic and expertise assistance for developing nations as a ploy to fight the USSR by “winning hearts and minds”. McNickle and others latched onto the notion and strategized a means to take advantage of cold war politics to bring Point IV resources to the needs of Indigenous Peoples in the United States (See Cobb 2008: 16, 27-28).

Tax published an early foreshadowing of his contempt for applied anthropology in the pages of *America Indigena* called *Anthropology and Administration* (Tax 1945). Stocking’s mis-reading of this article is notable (Stocking 2001:176). As Daubenmier states “Reaching Stocking’s conclusion about the article’s message requires the reader to ignore about a quarter of its contents. An alternative reading, taking into account the final pages of the essay, is that Tax did see the need to make anthropology too much like the ‘prostitution’ he warned against in 1942 (Daubenmier 2008:96)34. There is an overemphasis on the seemingly duality of Tax’s thought that misses his point about overcoming two extreme views for what is deemed here to be a third relational view of the problem. Tax, unlike Steward, did not argue that anthropologists should remain pure scientists:

Science judges the usefulness of its propositions and data in terms of their usefulness to the solution of scientific problems and not social problems. Science as such can have no concern with the good or the bad—indeed, such terms have no meaning in science. . . . It cannot matter to the scientist, qua scientist, whether his discovery leads to the “improvement” of the lot of mankind or to man’s total destruction. Science as such is amoral (Tax 1945a: 23–24).

The realization of the limits and dangers of pretending pure science is appropriate to address the issues of social problems led Tax on the path towards action anthropology saying “[t]his on the first, and not to see that one might learn theory from praxis; and on the second, to probe a new direction for the value problem” and “although readers paid little attention to the end of the article, it anticipated the direction I eventually took” (Tax “Personal Memoir”).

34 The editor of *America Indigena*, Emil Sady, published a critical response to Tax arguing that “Dr. Tax undoubtedly made a significant contribution to Mexican social anthropology through this teachings and field work direction. However in my opinion, his contribution was lessened in the extent to which he was able to convince his students to separate the needs of social science from the needs of their society, and to pursue scientific hypotheses or studies divorced from the overwhelmingly obvious need of their society” (Sady 1945:177-79; quoted in Daubenmier 2008:97).
Calling attention to the dangers of pretending objectivity exists, Tax noted:

The social scientist (not qua scientist- an animal that doesn’t exist- but as he has to operate in this world does influence choices between values, and does so to whatever degree his knowledge becomes available and is applied to somebody’s criteria of judgement… Hence we have the right and the obligation (in terms of this absolute value) to make and spread knowledge relevant to the consequences of the acceptance of one set of values (in terms of policy promulgation) rather than another…” [review reference? (Daubenmier 2008:104) 

The seemingly dual perspective between scientific and applied anthropology in Tax’s thought is misrepresented as suggesting Tax was of two minds (Stocking 2000:173–177). His position is clear: “According to Tax, those anthropologists who are doing administrative work are not doing research and are not scientific, regardless of their training” and “any anthropologist collecting data that will be used for administration is not acting as a scientist” because “the project is not one of anthropology unless it is undertaken with a scientific purpose in terms of anthropology theory” (Daubenmier 2003:135). Tax’s third option transcends this duality in denouncing an applied anthropology as the means to achieve and implement policies for a government program. Alternatively, he argued that anthropologists are equipped to assist in defining problems from multiple points of view as they are revealed through observations as a scientist, not as an intellectual gun for hire.

Searching for alternatives to applied science, Tax opened anthropology to include “subjects” as colleagues and partners in seeking solutions to political problems long before the advent of more recent applied research methods such as community based participatory research. This was also a response to the more narrowly “rigid” positivists such as Steward who deemed anthropology to be both purely scientific and apolitical despite their work in
applied settings (Pinkoski 2006; Trencher 2002:450–451). Differences between Steward and Tax reflect the vast differences on both the notion of assimilation and the relationship between politics and science. Tax’s *Ethnic Relations in Guatemala* argued that a program of education could benefit the socioeconomic well-being of “Indians” in Guatemala who made up an overwhelming majority of the population. Asserting the distinction between Indians and non-Indians (predominantly Ladinos) as cultural rather than biological, Tax argued that the Indians’ lack of access to education and literacy made them as vulnerable to poverty as any Guatemalan. The argument was not about preserving an “Indian” culture or assimilating them into another cultural entity. Rather, it emphasized the importance of effectively addressing socioeconomic inequities by providing educational programs that did not disrupt lives, but enriched them. Tax’s article enticed Steward to respond in *America Indigena*, where he fixated on the assimilationist theme and pronounced:

> Anyone who has paid the least attention to history is well aware that every tribe in the hemisphere has been subject to a stream of acculturating influences that antedates Columbus. He also knows that this stream has been immeasurably increased during the historic period so that no wholly aboriginal culture remains in America. Some tribes have been so completely assimilated to European civilization that they are classed in the census of many American Republics as Whites. . . . I therefore see a problem of Indian acculturation, both scientifically and administratively, as one that requires first, a recognition of the inevitability of continued impacts that will never permit an Indian culture to reach a stabilized equilibrium, and second, of wise and sympathetic control of these impacts which, understanding the extent of their effects, helps the Indian to reintegrate at each shock. (Steward 1943: 324, 327–328)
Steward’s point directly challenges Tax’s principle of non-assimilation by invoking notions of purity or social equilibrium. These terms explicitly undermine Tax’s longstanding thesis: “Indians” in Guatemala deal with change on their own terms as they always have.

Tax’s early works might mistakenly be interpreted to endorse notions of liberal pluralism or multiculturalism. Notwithstanding his valuing of diversity, such notions are misleading since Tax did not mean to suggest everyone might retain their cultural identity while submitting to one sovereign power. Instead, he proclaims the vital importance of self-government of free peoples everywhere. The Education of Underprivileged Peoples in Dependent and Independent Territories demonstrates Tax’s approach to this political problem. Published several years before Tax’s ideas became experimentally implemented under the action anthropology rubric, the article focuses on the problems of education and governance within a cross-cultural dynamic: “A major characteristic of dependent territories is that the cultural streams in which their underprivileged participate are distinct from those of their rulers. One peculiarity of the problem of education in colonial countries is that it is usually cross-cultural” (Tax 1946:336). The problem is “whose cultural tradition is to be transmitted?” (Tax 1946:337). Should there be “different educations for different groups, or a single education for all” (Tax 1946:337)? Tax suggests three broad political categories where the problem is manifest: cases of the multi-national state, cases of the nations with minority groups, and cases of non-national states. In the case of a non-national state, the ruling society possesses a national consciousness, but the masses do not identify with this national identity; they identify with their local communities. Written prior to Tax’s stated epiphany that assimilation is a complete myth lacking scientific support, the article at first glance seems to be discussing the process of acculturation as an inevitable and positive
process that is necessary for a healthy nation and democracy. On the contrary, Tax is cautioning his audience as to the extent one group must give up their culture in joining and identifying with the nation. He asserts by example that this assimilation is not necessary for integration:

There seems to be common agreement that such integration is a prerequisite to substantial improvement of the material lot—health and level of living—of the folk peoples. It remains a question, however, whether the loss of native cultures is a necessary concomitant. The answer seems to be that while the day of the small cultural group—the patria chica type of very local society—is rapidly passing, this does not necessarily mean that the larger regional differences in culture will (in the foreseeable future) end. What happened in Mexico and Guatemala is that the new national cultures became not Spanish nor Indian, but amalgams of the two; and the discernible differences between the two national cultures probably reflect as much as anything else differences in the cultures of their dominant Indian populations. (Tax 1946:343).

Significantly, the word “amalgams” suggests only a coming together. Neither a transformation nor a new hybrid form, amalgam in this context means a combination of diverse elements. To be sure, Tax did not make use of terms such as “racial-hybrids” or “mestizos” when referring to non-status or unrecognized Indian peoples in the United States (Hauptman and Campisi 1988:319). Additionally, he argues for self-determination by suggesting Indian cultures will persist alongside others and they will be important in their persistence:

With increasing incorporation of the masses of Indians, Indian culture characteristics may well become more rather than less important ingredients of these national cultures. Those who value native cultures, and see in their persistence

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35 This concept has traction with the meaning of the Two Row Wampum.
the virtue both of variety and the enrichment of the human heritage, will therefore, adopt policies that will encourage this tendency. (Tax 1946:343)

Cultural persistence is important and should be encouraged through government policy! Obviously, Tax is challenging the widely accepted notion of assimilation and education’s role in managing this process as humanely as possible. As Tax’s non-assimilation ideas gelled throughout the 1940s, applied anthropology emerged with the increased use of scientists in American government projects. These included initiatives in foreign affairs, national interests and government intelligence throughout the wartime period. The role of scientists in U.S. government attempts to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands (as in the California Claims Commission, for example) profoundly affected Tax. Such a “prostitution of science,” as he considered it, pushed him to conceive of an alternative approach to political problems and working from a principle of self-determination as opposed to assimilation.

As Tax’s own political and theoretical anthropology took shape, some of his contemporaries worked to move anthropology in the opposite direction. As Trencher documents, a block of anthropologists, “[l]ed by Julian Steward… sought the creation of a new section within the American Anthropological Association (AAA) that would be both a professional and a scientific association, but the AAA, largely controlled by the Boasians would not allow it. This move led to the establishment of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) in 1941 (Trencher 2002:450-1).

Beginning in 1944, the U.S. Congress began a campaign to abolish the BIA and terminate all Indian tribes. By 1947, Congress sought to aggressively move forward and terminate those tribes deemed ready to no longer exist legally; hence they would no longer
receive aid. The scientific support for assimilation provided the base justifications for these actions, even if underlain by alternative motives such as finance, resources, and land. The following year, the AAA sought to form a Committee on Reorganization for the purpose of assessing what various sub-committees and members thought of reorganizing the AAA along new lines. They endeavoured to defend the organization and resist the increasing pressures and “separatist trends” primarily from the group of more “positivistic” anthropologists whose experiences and training were unique given their experiences working for the government programs and similar applied niches (for example, Julian Steward, Ralph Linton and George Peter Murdock (Pinkoski 2006:77; Trencher 2002).

Amidst the post-War politics and the increasing fervour or obsession with modernization, development and U.S. Indian Policy, the Indian Claims Commission began, in 1946, to “hasten [the] shift toward termination by creating a mechanism to settle legal claims against the United States”36. U.S. Congress passed the Indian Claims Commission Act (ICC) in 1946 and the commission was founded under the act. The ICC was organised as a “tribunal for the hearing and determination of claims against the United States … by any Indian tribe, band, or other identifiable group of Indians living in the United States.” Kelly notes that the ICC was one of “lasting achievements of the Collier era” in American Indian policy (Kelly 1983). Collier intended for the ICC to “to handle Indian cases exclusively under a broad new jurisdiction” and established such a mechanism to deal with the multitude of legal claims that Indian Nations had with the US government. The commission assumed the “Indian Problem” could be dealt with by providing compensation for lands taken instead

36 It is at this time that Tax starts working with Paul Fejos of the Wenner-Gren foundation. Tax built a long lasting relationship with Paul Fejos. He was “a Hungarian-born Renaissance man whose scarcely credible career included stints as fighter pilot, medical doctor, biological research and innovative film director, both in Holywood and in ethnographic film projects in Southeast Asia and the Amazon” (see Stocking 181 and Silverman 1991); The Several Lives of Paul Fejos, by John W. Doods (1973).
of dealing with the underlying problems of colonialism, that is, the ongoing systemic apparatus integral to the taking of lands and other ongoing challenges facing Indigenous peoples (then and now).

The circumstances of this period further mated anthropology, law and Indian policy in a colonial ménage à trois, exemplifying coloniality in action whereby “…the US Department of Justice questioned the level of social organization of the Indigenous peoples before the court, following a line of argument in the common law regarding the colonization of new territories by limiting the aboriginal interest in the land based on social evolutionism” (Pinkoski 171; see also Asch 1992). The new bedfellows of cultural evolutionism, social science and the department of justice led to a dynamic whereby “the very nature of the ICC itself placed anthropologists in a position to legitimize the denial of Indigenous rights to collectively held land and to other collective rights guaranteed by treaty with the U.S. government” (C.f. Barney 1955; cited in Pinkoski 2006:171).

As anthropologists came to grips with their immense role(s) in the ICC and their renewed anxieties over scientific versus professional identities, they began to draw disciplinary lines in the sand and debate the issue of scientific integrity. In 1947, the AAA issued a Statement on Human Rights. Trencher notes: “Steward, again representing the argument for a more positivistic scientific practice, claimed that the AAA statement was inappropriate: In the absence of objective scientific evidence that human rights exist, ‘as a scientific organization, [and claimed that] the Association has no business dealing with the rights of man’” (Trencher, quoting Steward, 2002:453). This callous opposition to a society of anthropologists, most of whom gained their careers studying Indigenous peoples, is quite remarkable in consideration of the increased destruction sustained by Indigenous peoples in
the post-war era, not only from assimilationist shifts in policy and government, but direct physical violence from developmental projects.

In April of 1946, the Corps of Engineers invaded Fort Berthold to start construction on the Garrison Dam. Built on the main stem of the Missouri River, it became the fifth largest in the U.S. at a cost of 299 million dollars:

... on tribal land resulted in the taking of 152,360 acres. Over 25 percent of the reservation’s total land base was deluged by the dam’s reservoir (known as Lake Sakakawea today). The remainder of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara/Sahnish lands was segmented into five water-bound sections. The project required the relocation of 325 families, or approximately 80 percent of the tribal membership. For many successful years as ranchers and farmers, these industrious people lost 94 percent of their agricultural lands. (Lawson 1982:59).

Tax began to contemplate these shifts in Federal Indian Policy and chaired the local arrangements committee for the AAA meeting in Chicago based on a theme on the challenges of post-war anthropology. The devastating construction of the Garrison dam would come to test action anthropology beginning in 1950 and eventually lead to them to to the conclusion that an action anthropologist can never have a master (in this case the BIA). But a few years before then, in 1947, the Chicago department approached Tax with the request to consider establishing a field school to work in the Meskwaki Nation, near Tama, Iowa where Tax did his doctoral research. The new fieldwork training course, a short day’s drive from the University of Chicago, sought to use the Meskwaki Nation as a training ground for anthropology students. Six students began the first course in June of 194837. Those six students included one of the most quintessential and most remarkable action

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37 List first six students.
anthropologists, Robert Rietz, who was entering his first year of grad studies. That year, Tax was promoted to professor and became dean of social sciences. Daubenmier marks this year as the birth of action anthropology.

“The question that Ed Davenport posed to Sol Tax when they met in the summer of 1948 was one that Tax had begun asking himself even before he became an anthropologist” (Daubenmier 2008:64). Tax’s personal struggle over whether to “work out some sort of a plan to fix things up, instead of just studying people,” coincided with efforts in anthropology and throughout the social sciences to understand what, if anything, professionals in those disciplines had to offer a world suffering first from economic collapse and then from global war” (Daubenmier 2008:64). The significant point of Daubenmier’s study is that, the Meskwaki never, however, fully relinquished certain aspects of their power and demanded that the anthropologists recognize and respect it. As the anthropology students sought to balance their research needs with their respect for the Meskwaki human community, the Meskwaki nudged them toward an understanding of proper behaviour in Meskwaki culture. In the process, they helped the Chicago researchers create action anthropology. (Daubenmier 114:2008).

Tax echoes this sentiment in his 1968 memoir when he says he learned to be an anthropologist from “the American Indian”. The Meskwaki consistently taught, or attempted to teach the graduate students, the significance of relationality and reciprocity as they forged various relationships over the years. The power dynamics were complex and difficult to sort. In the end, “the anthropologists came to understand that if they wanted to use action anthropology to help the Meskwaki, they would have to work directly with them rather than

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38 Nancy Lurie referred to Robert Rietz at the 2013 AAA meetings as “The Sainted Bob Rietz”; cite Action Anth panel.
with the BIA. Thus, the Meskwaki had a role in shaping action anthropology” (Daubenmier 2008:32). Daubenmier notes how Meskwaki were actors in and “made some of reciprocal action on the part of the researchers necessary in order for the project to gain acceptance by and access to people. So it was that Meskwaki demand for reciprocity, filtered through the experiences of the field party, meshed with Peattie’s background and Tax’s character to create action anthropology” (Daubenmier 2008:154).

Two additional crucial points that Daubenmier uncovers in her treatment of the Fox Project. Tax’s assertion that Meskwaki had a right to remain Meskwaki was his first public rejection of the widespread assumption among American policymakers that Indians someday would disappear into mainstream culture and “The school controversy and the anthropologists’ involvement in it helped shape a fundamental feature of action anthropology—its financial independence from the Bureau of Indian Affairs”:

We don’t know what you will decide, but if you want any help we are able to give—advice in getting the new setup going—we’ll send someone out here. You should make sure the Indian Office gives you as much money to run the school as they’ve been spending. If they give you the money, it would be, it seems to me, a good deal, as then you’d be boss—could hire your own teachers and make you [sic] own decisions as to, say, whether to build that other school building they’ve talked about. The Indian Office hasn’t let you make any decisions. Of course you will make some mistakes—anyone would—it takes a while to learn. But the only way to learn is to try. If you want us, we’ll help you get started, until you’ve learned how to run things yourselves” (Tax cited in Daubenmier 2008:175).

While the Fox project was underway, Tax continued to organize and work towards publications. In 1949, he took on editing a series of Latin American Volumes (Stocking 2001). In April 1949, Tax participated in organizing a Middle American Ethnology seminar
in New York sponsored by the Viking Fund (just before the International Congress of Americanists in September). That same year, Tax participated in Social Science Research Council’s Seminar on Social Sciences and Values, held at the University of Chicago. In his paper *Can Social Science help to set values or offer a choice between alternative value systems?* Tax argued:

As soon as any criterion (from whatever culture or value position it comes) is posited, the response changes; given a ‘better’ for a specified something, social science can offer a choice between alternative value systems to the degree that it can develop knowledge relevant to the application of the criterion. The problem remains one of whether there are culture-free or ‘objective’ criteria” (Tax 1949:102).

In his argument against objectivity, Tax began to expand and think relationally about engagement with other peoples, cultures, and communities and also began, by 1949, to implement action anthropology in his own community, addressing problems of gentrification and community relations (Tax 1959).

Meanwhile, in 1949, Julian Steward, who, since 1946, had “retreated from applied work and joined the faculty department at Columbia University” was hired by the Department of Justice to “act as a strategist and expert witness in ICC cases against Indian interests in their lands” (Pinkoski)39. He worked for the Department of Justice from 1949-56 where he helped develop “the legal and ethnographic arguments before the Indian Claims Commission (ICC)” and essentially “attained his position as advisor to the government and overlord to many in the anthropological community”. Steward’s work “pitted” him against other anthropologists, who would motivate “Sol Tax, among others, to raise the issue to the general membership of the AAA” (Pinkoski 2006:159-162).

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39 Steward was at Columbia from 1946-1952 when he took a research professorship at the University of Illinois. There he published his Theory of Cultural Change (1955).
In 1950, Robert Rietz went to work in Fort Berthold with the mandate to help relocate members of the Three Affiliated Tribes whose land was being flooded by the construction of Garrison Dam, but “the relationship was not an altogether happy one. As a community analyst for the BIA, Rietz expected to spend a lot of time learning about the social organization of the community and using that to encourage members of the tribes to take over running more reservation activities themselves. Instead, he found himself saddled with administrative responsibilities” (Daubenmier 2008:175-6).

Meanwhile, McNickle, in July 1951, addressed the annual meeting of the NCAI in St. Paul Minnesota. Speaking to tribal leaders about Congress and the direction of U.S. Indian Policy, he said, “The situation is dangerous, not just serious, but dangerous”. By this time, Tax had taken a firm public position on the rights of Indigenous religious and spiritual practices and against the rising conservative views of Indigenous peoples by signing a statement on peyote in response to a *Time Magazine* article that printed the anti-peyote sentiments of Arizona public health commissioner Clarence Salisbury (Time 1951, Stewart 1987).

Tax requested Rietz to be re-assigned from the Fort Berthold project to the Fox project near Tama, IA, but Rietz’s supervisor in the BIA rejected the request. One can’t help but speculate as to the acknowledgment of Rietz’s impossible situation in trying to “help” the Affiliated Tribes adjust to a traumatic, colonial and devastatingly violent situation, but also working for the BIA. How much did this experience harden the action anthropologists’ adamant position that the action anthropologist can have no master?

Stocking notes that it was at the AAA in 1951, that Tax “drew on accumulating experience at Tama and Fort Berthold to articulate a conception of Action Anthropology,
which he explicitly saw as a reversal of the position he had taken in 1945 on ‘pure science’ and ‘applied anthropology’” (Stocking 2001:193). On the contrary, Tax entrenched himself deeper in his principles becoming more convinced of his convictions in the 1945 article in lieu of the harsh consequences of termination, not to mention his own experiences with the paternalism of the BIA as the Meskwaki experience made all too clear (Gearing 1960:167-71; 176).

Tax tried to draw more attention from the Anthropology community to the dangerous turn in U.S. Indian Policy by calling for a resolution at the 1951 American Anthropological Association meeting in pronouncing that termination would bring “great and irremediable harm and injustice” to the people. The AAA approved the resolution on November 15 with a call for an independent commission to assess the Bureau of Indian Affairs policy and to propose new policies “in the light of humanitarian and scientific principles,” and to suggest legislative changes in keeping with such recommendations (Daubenmier 2008:187). Altogether Tax was taking a stand against assimilation and calling on his profession to follow his lead even as he was gaining a larger personal profile.

At a 1951 symposium on economic progress, Tax took a decisively anti-imperialist stance and argued that a nonpaternalistic role in anthropology is not only possible, but necessary in avoiding ethnocentric tendencies. In other words, so called “good intentions” are not only inadequate, but dangerous. Simultaneously, his address criticized the notion of economic and developmental progress, of putting a premium on democratic and liberal values:

I suppose that the phrase “economic progress” in this symposium refers to improvement of material well-being, health, and the like, as seen through the eyes of our European and American tradition. From this point of view it is easy to say
that we are advanced and other people and places are backward. Most anthropologists, trained to take a broader view, reject this notion of progress as ethnocentric, which it is. It assumes that our own values are or ought to be universal and that the practices of other peoples should be changed accordingly. This general view once accompanied the little-brown brother variety of imperialism, which has so dramatically defeated itself. We are now anxious to respect the cultural independence of other peoples while we help them to material betterment. This means embarking upon a program of carefully selective culture change. It is the purpose of my paper to ask whether this is a possible program. The answer to which I shall come is easy to state at the beginning: What we have learned about culture change tells us that such a program is, while certainly difficult, theoretically feasible. But in practice we are almost certain to fail, basically because too few of us are free enough of an ethnocentric view of the world to be able to administer the program. (Tax 1951:315)

By directly addressing the ethnocentric and imperialist visions entrenched in programs of development, Tax returned to his early criticisms of the cultural evolutionistic anthropologists. Tax’s perception of the dangers of the scientistic evolutionists, as seen by the cadence of his speech on economic and developmental progress, is captured by James Tully’s similar articulation of how Western imperialism is too often seen as “a necessary stage in the development of the human species towards the end state of a world system of European style states bound together by global economic relations and international law” (Tully 2005:26–27). Tax’s reference and metaphor of the “little-brown brother variety of imperialism” is altogether a thorough critique of the “white-man’s burden” and the “dirty business of empire” in the liberal imperialist approach to modernizing ‘Indians’. This is a significant critique of applied anthropology’s purpose in lessening the burden and making the business of empire less dirty.
Tax never denied the existence of progress on a technological or scientific scale. However, he contended that the progress of smaller units to larger units is only acceptable “provided we recognize the arbitrariness of the measurements involved and do not too heavily evaluate ‘progress.’ But for most aspects of culture, not at all cumulative or measurable on a scale, the word progress has no meaning whatsoever” (Tax 1951:316). Tax’s theory of culture change incorporates influences from diffusionism, historical-particularism, and structural-functionalism in arguing his point. By excluding evolution from his theory, he rejected the idea of ranked scales of culture (stadial theories) through his overall critique of an ethnocentric concept of progress as it pertains to economic development and sociocultural change.

Tax’s evidence that cultures deal with change on their own terms is simple: they have always done so. His conclusive statement is both a warning and an uncanny prophecy for anthropologists: “I am afraid that we shall blunder into other societies and misbehave blissfully on the assumption that our ways must also be their ways, that these undeveloped people must want what is good for them, and will surely be grateful to us for supplying it. And our first fatal assumption may well be that economic progress is an absolute good” (Tax 1951:320).

That same year, Tax became associate editor of the American Anthropologist and edited several new publications edited between 1951 and 1952 beginning with The Civilizations of Ancient America (Tax 1951), Acculturation in the Americas, (Tax 1951), and The Indian Tribes of Aboriginal America (Tax 1952b). Stocking, writing about these volumes, states that “rather than treating the ancient peoples of South America, it dealt with ‘the people today, mostly the uneducated rural people’ (Tax 1952a:7; Stocking 182).
Stocking misjudges Tax’s objectives in editing this series. Regarding the International Congress of Americanists meetings that led to the volumes, Stocking notes “The discussion of acculturation became the telos of the three congress volumes that Tax edited, with resonances of the tripartite evolutionary structure of the new core curriculum at Chicago” (Stocking 2001:182). In fact, Tax was already resisting such distinctions. Through the edited volume *Heritage of Conquest*, Tax asserts his notion of cultural persistence and agency in suggesting that “people who are interested in planning ought to have some notion from us as to what parts of the culture they can change without changing things that they don’t want to change” (Tax 1952a:269).

In addition to his publishing activities, Tax contributed comments to a UNESCO working paper on the teaching of the social sciences called for closer ties between economic planners and social scientists. The paper notes: “There is no question here of reducing science to a technique. In particular, the object of the social sciences is not to work out programmes of action; but social science will insist more and more that the results of their work should be taken into account when such programmes are being worked out” (Daubenmier 2008:260). Objecting to the paper, Tax responds, “By now it is evident that the method developed here as ‘action anthropology’ has something important to offer in the application of social science to community development” (Daubenmier 2008:261). His own understanding of the Fox Project is communicated in a letter to William H. Kelly of the Bureau of Ethnic Research, University of Arizona. Writing on Aug. 11, 1952, Tax described action anthropology in relation to the Fox Project in this way:

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In general we are interested in helping peoples (and their—administrators) see what their real alternatives in adjustment to one another, to make their actions less self-defeating than they usually are; and we hope to learn something about the mechanisms of adjustment and acculturation while we are about it.

One aspect of our program that resembles yours – but we are handicapped by lack of money, facilities, and the institutional status you have – is our attempt to educate the white population of areas surrounding the Indian communities to what they should expect of the Indians, and vice-versa. We think we have learned that misunderstood and unfulfilled expectations turn out to be great stumbling blocks to effective relations.

Another aspect is, of course, that the program is a training ground for students. Some students go to the Fox even when not interested in the action program (as long as they don’t interfere with it) but for the most part the students are the program. We have had psychologists working with us, and are always on the lookout for people in other fields. (STP; Original emphasis).

This letter foreshadows a heated debate between Tax and Kelly just a few years later over the politics and solutions of Indian Policy.

Tax and Rietz increasingly faced challenges with the BIA which sought to transfer Rietz from Fort Berthold to the Cheyenne River reservation to assist with yet another devastating colonial relocation project. Rietz refused to comply saying, “that it is no part of my function or my interest to study situations or to influence Indian people with the goal of helping to implement policy of the Indian Office where this policy is in disagreement with my own beliefs, or is neglectful towards the types of action which I believe are called to redesign the role of Indian Service anthropologist to allow such leeway” (Daubenmier 2008:175). This early experience made adamantly clear what the action anthropologists felt
all along. Tax resolved that the project “must be unattached to the administrative locus of power. Clearly, one is in a better position to help a group clarify their wishes if one is unattached to any actual or potential exercise of coercion over the group” (Daubenmier 2009:177).

However, while many anthropologists sat idly by while termination and Withdrawal were being implemented, Tax and the action anthropologists were just getting started. Vine Deloria Jr.’s polemic against anthropologists accused the discipline of sitting idly while Indigenous peoples faced the challenges alone. He wrote: “During the crucial days of 1954, when the Senate was pushing for termination of all Indian rights, not one single scholar, anthropologists, sociologist, historian, or economist came forward to support the tribes against the detrimental policy. How much had scholars learned about Indians from 1492 to 1954 that would have placed termination in a more rational light? Why didn’t the academic community march to the side of the tribes?” (Daubenmier 2008: 187). Tax is one example of an anthropologist who turned most of his energies towards fighting government policy on several fronts.

Action anthropology began to gain currency and a reputation as Tax and his colleagues began organizing panels and giving papers on their ‘new’ method. By this time in 1952, McNickle succeeded in founding his own community development organization, American Indian Development (AID), Inc. and resigned from the BIA in protest of Congress’s approval of the termination policy (Parker 1992:126-136). Throughout the 1950s, Tax served on the board of the NCAI and Arrow Inc. Tax and McNickle increasingly worked and supported each other; Tax backed McNickle in disputes with the Arrow board and helped obtain $128, 800.00 in grants from the Schwatzhaupt Foundation
for AID (Tax to McNickle, Dec. 10, 1957). They shared a great deal of political outlook and, together, rejected the paradigm of assisted acculturation and assimilation (see Tax 1988:9).

Tax’s energies, in 1952, continued to be channelled towards disciplinary commitments as he sought to challenge anthropology to reorganize and grow, but in new non-hierarchical ways with global aspirations; for example, the 1952 Wenner-Gren Symposium, which began to set the stage for Tax’s ideas for a new International community and journal, which would become *Current Anthropology*. But it was another meeting that same year which signalled his full court press in undermining assimilationist thinking wherever it popped or threatened to.

At the 1952 meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society, Tax made a “very bold statement” that “acculturation does not occur” among the “small enclaves” of North American Indians, and that the Navaho, the Fox, and the Iroquois would be “with us for a thousand years” (Stocking 2001:194). Stocking characterizes Tax’s rhetoric and argument as “romantic primitivist and implicitly evolutionary resonances” (Stocking 2001:194) noting that Tax argued in pan-Indian terms with an emphasis on “fundamental differences between ‘Western European culture’ and that of the North American Indians (Stocking 2001:194; Gearing 1960: 173-76). This characterization misses the mark in (mis)understanding Tax’s assertion and his motivations to turn anthropology away from one of termination’s assimilationist vehicles in evolutionary anthropology, which imagined and wrote-off, in scientistic terms, Indigenous peoples as disappearing, impermanent.

Alternatively, Tax began to consider how to return to consider settler obligations due to the

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41 D’Arcy McNickle Correspondence with Sol Tax, Box 25, D’Arcy McNickle Papers, Newberry Library.
42 This is a significant moment to Tax personally as there are numerous handwritten accounts of this 1952 meeting in Tax’s papers that appear to be several attempts to write a history of action anthropology.
acceptance of Indigenous permanence and what this means towards decolonization.

Tax followed the Central States meeting with another presentation at a conference on assimilation, this time organized by the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA). According to Tax’s notes, he publicly proclaimed and asserted his position “that the assimilation (or disappearance) of the American Indians was not inevitable,” for the second time, at a 1952 meeting from May 8-10. This meeting of the “Institute of American Indian Assimilation” was sponsored by the Association on American Indians Affairs (AAIA) in Washington D.C. and led by AAIA President Oliver LaFarge and Executive Director, Alexander Lesser. In his own accounts of the assertion and the discussion that followed, Tax noted the difficulty in making his point:

… there was 45 minutes of discussion before I realized we had been talking at cross-purposes because this audience of anthropologists thought I was saying it would be a slower process than previously assumed; but they did not understand that I was saying Assimilation was not inevitable: The Indians could be here “a thousand years” or what have you?

Almost immediately following the meeting, La Farge wrote to Tax saying:

First I want to thank you for the clarifying statement concerning the concept of assimilation that you made at the last session of the Institute. You will be interested to know that I am appending to my opening paper a fairly extensive footnote setting forth my reasons for abandoning the idea that assimilation is as inevitable as gravity (LaFarge to Tax, June 17, 1952).

Tax’s efforts were not merely professional endeavours, but personal ones. In fighting termination, Tax notes how he sought to “Persuade Congress and the BIA that they should slow down the increasingly destructive withdrawal of reservations” (Tax 1988:10-11; cf.
Prucha 1985:67-71). Tax remained eternally perplexed about how difficult it was to convince, not the public or other people, but other anthropologists of the myth of assimilation. Writing about the 1952 symposium Tax lamented even some 30 years later (!):

On the last page is the program of the “acculturation” symposium in which showed me that even anthropologists were so “assimilated-is-inevitable-oriented that it took 45 minutes of discussion to come out that the audience didn’t know we were saying “never” rather than “more slowly” (Notes, American Indian Files, STP; emphasis mine).

In 1953, the nightmare of termination became a full reality as Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 (HCR 108) and Public Law 280 (PL 280)\(^\text{43}\). Thus began a full frontal onslaught on Tribal Sovereignty. Public Law 280 (PL 280), which gave certain states power over criminal and civil jurisdiction over reservations without tribal consent. In no uncertain terms, supporters of termination were seeking to liquidate tribal land base and abandon the obligations and responsibilities that the United States had accepted when it entered into treaties with Tribes. In return, they presumed to be offering Indigenous peoples equal rights and citizenship. The result would be the end of Tribal Governments, that is, Indigenous Polities would not exist. Treaties, already being ignored, became completely irrelevant. Indigenous Nations would have neither resources as Congress tried to legislate away and erode their sovereignty by turning Indigenous Nations into municipalities or

\(^{43}\)“HCR 108, passed on Aug 1, declared it to be the new policy of the federal government to abolish federal supervision over the tribes as soon as practical, and to then subject the terminated Indians ‘to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship.’ Assimilation was one of the driving forces, although certainly not the lone force, behind this policy; And “Public Law 280, the second measure, was enacted two weeks later. This act brought Indian lands and their tribal residents in California, Minnesota (except the Red Lake Lake Reservation), Nebraska, Oregon (except the Warm Springs Reservation), and Wisconsin (except the Menominee Reservation) under the criminal and, to a lesser extent, the civil jurisdictional coup. This omnibus act was “in principle” a unilateral repudiation of treaties between tribes and the United States and severely reduced the tribal governments’ inherent powers over civil and criminal issues” Wilkins 1997:166-67).
communities with no distinction from any other in the United States. One of the major targets of this change in policy was to remove the entire BIA, which was seen as a costly welfare system costing the government and ‘American Citizens’ (i.e. Settlers) money. Tax remarks on the growing gap between BIA personnel and anthropologists, several of whom expressed disapproval with BIA paternalism. On June 12th, 1953, Tax received a letter from Robert R. Jones who wanted assistance in being employed by the BIA. Tax responded to Jones lengthy letter:

As far as I know, all jobs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs are in Civil Service, and you would have to fill out a W-54 form (US Civil Service from available in post offices) sooner or later. At the moment, I believe that the label “anthropologist” is not too good in the Bureau, and I wouldn’t lean heavily on it. Nor would a recommendation from me be very useful now; anthropologically oriented people have almost all left the Bureau. Why don’t you write directly to the Bureau asking about opportunities for employment? You ought to fit in the education division. Nor would I be shy about utilizing political connections, since you will prove your value once you are in the job (Tax to Jones, June 18th, 1953).

While the BIA found employees with social science backgrounds to be burdensome, and their protests to assimilationist and paternalistic policies were distracting from getting their administrative work done, Anthropologists remained at the core of the Indian Claims Commission.

Anthropologist’s participation in the Indian Claims Commission process became increasingly disconcerting to Tax. His actions to address anthropologists’ participation led to increased visibility when he organized a symposium on the anthropologists and the ICC for the 1954 AAA meetings. These were just after the Paiute trial in which Steward was a key witness for the U.S. government (Pinkoski 1954:159). Tax’s actions to raise awareness
and address the issues of participating in the ICC, led to increasingly rigid lines being drawn as anthropologists such as Steward and Ermine Wheeler Voegelin, all of whom worked for the Federal government, sought to assert their position under a shroud of objectivity.

According to Pinkoski:

> a [L]etter of concern circulated between Ermine Wheeler Voegelin, Mildred Mott Wedel, Waldo Wedel, and Steward in the spring of 1955. By June, Steward had concluded “there is evidently developing a rather dangerous group including Nancy Lurie, Verne Ray, and others which is doing considerable violence to facts and interpretations which is putting anthropology in a very dangerous spot.” Mott Wedel and Wheeler-Voegelion reinforce Steward’s claim in their own accounts of testifying, and also add Omer C. Stewart to their list of adversaries. (Pinkoski 2006: 159-60)  

A 1955 issue of *Ethnohistory*, includes an account and summary of the symposium. Most notable are the inclusion of papers by Steward and Lurie with each anthropologist arguing one of two polar positions.

Action Anthropology was gaining momentum in many avenues. The first undergraduate courses in action anthropology, taught by Tax, began at the University of Chicago just as he became Chair of the Anthropology Department. It was at this point, Tax and his students gained more traction in the discipline by articulating their new found action anthropology through publications (Daubenmier 2008:230). Tax essentially ‘show-cased’ his new concept and approach to working with communities at the 1955 meetings of the Central States Anthropological Society where he presented action anthropology to a mostly sceptical and unreceptive audience of his peers.

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44 A 1955 issue of Ethnohistory includes an account and summary of the symposium. Most notable are the inclusion of papers by Steward and Lurie with each anthropologist arguing the two opposing positions.
Chairing both the symposium of the American Ethnological Society and the Central States Anthropological Society in 1955, Tax took all sides to task for their involvement in such activities. He stressed the unjust structure of the proceedings that favoured the government:

Anthropologists have got themselves in a position where they are impugning the motives of other anthropologists. Anthropology is in a bad position right now. The bickering and accusations that result from claims cases threaten the whole profession, especially when it is all kept underground. The basic land issue seems to be the contiguous boundary theory vs. the vague nuclear territory theory. The Contiguous Boundary Theory draws tribal distribution maps as though there were boundaries. The other says that there was a territory, which was used, which may overlap, or between which may have been interstices. The government likes the second view better because it saves them money. The Indians like the first view best. The plaintiff tries to prove continuous boundaries.

. . . Since the burden of proof is on the plaintiff, they have to prove boundaries. The government doesn’t have to. Thus the United States has the advantage of our ignorance. The anthropologist functions well if he doesn’t know on the government side, but the tribal anthropologist has to know. Thus the government anthropologist can be holier-than-thou, and ask: “How do you know? Were you there?” (STP) 45

Tax’s assessment of the affair is a shaming of all—particularly of government witnesses, such as Steward, whose academic work functioned to bolster assimilation. The role of some anthropologists in dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their lands is another example of the “prostitution” of anthropology that Tax resisted. Steward’s professional participation in the United States colonial enterprise stands as an inverse parallel to Tax’s participation in the

45 This quote is an excerpt from a transcript of a round table discussion titled Anthropology and Indian Land Claims Litigation: A Symposium. It was part of the American Ethnological Society and Central States Anthropological Society joint meetings. Tax was chairman of the Symposium.
American Indian movement for Tribal sovereignty. Steward’s theory of culture change emerged as a powerful argument for assimilation. In Tappers and Trappers: Parallel Process in Acculturation In Economic Development and Cultural Change, Robert Murphy and Julian Steward argued that assimilation of ‘Indians’ everywhere is necessary and imminent (Murphy and Steward 1956). They assume that European “contact” initiated parallel processes of assimilation due to the fur-trapping economy in North America and rubber-tapping economy in South America and dismiss peoples’ own agency in determining their futures. Due to “contact,” Indigenous peoples necessarily begin to assimilate to the “higher” levels of social integration, thus losing their identity and their Indigeneity.

In The Bow and the Hoe: Reflections on Hunters, Villagers, and Anthropologists (1975), Tax turns the Steward’s Tappers and Trappers argument and title on its head. He contradicts Stewardian notions of culture change by deliberately formulating arbitrary distinctions between the people of the bow (hunters) and the people of the hoe (horticulturists). Further, he self-critically includes anthropologists as agents of change long before the discipline’s reflexive turn. The distinctions are arbitrary for three reasons. First, a community is not reducible to its means of subsistence. Second, a community does not exist solely by one simple subsistence strategy. Third, a community is capable of changing its means of subsistence without negating itself as an autonomous political entity. Thus Tax fleshes out and dismisses the assumptions underscoring Tappers and Trappers. The major contrast between the two articles is the principle of self-determination that Steward, throughout his anthropological endeavours, rejects. According to Tax, the anthropologist who accepts the principle of self-government and understands the importance of social organization is in a position to learn from the community and do anthropology.
Even though Tax took an uncompromising stance against the rise of social and cultural evolution that was fundamentally racist in theory and application, he did not object to a more nuanced and scientific understanding of evolution (as opposed to racist pseudo-scientific understandings such as Spencer or Steward). He contended with this for his entire career and published an essay titled *Evolution and Creation* in 1983. It is difficult to not notice the play on the title of Steward’s *Evolution and Process* that appeared in the Kroeber’s edited volume, *Anthropology Today* (1953). In this 1953 article, Steward provided the:

foundation for his entire theoretical project, resting on the notion that societies exist on a true evolutionary continuum that can be discerned and ranked through scientific means. Through he claims that his method is not deductive, stating that ‘[m]ultilinear evolution, therefore, has no a priori scheme or laws” (ibid: 19), he offers a comparative, explicitly deductive “scientific” description of his project’ (Pinkoski 2006: 172; Steward 1953:19).

Steward’s grand theory is succinctly summarised as follows:

Schematically, the techno-environment becomes the base upon which the culture core rests. The subsistence technologies that are adapted to the environment provide the most important cultural features, and the social organization and superstructure arise as epiphenomena or determinants of this relationship between the environment and the subsistence technologies. In this manner, the techno-environment is the base that allows for the cultural expression and the advent of new technologies; thus, ecological adaptations are the driving force for cultural causations – and in the manner that Steward describes, human evolution (1955:11).

Unlike Steward, Tax holds fast to his own traditions and ideals as a scientist, while relationally approaching the existence of alternatives that are seemingly at odds with these
values. In doing so, he takes a position contrary to Stewards that is altogether anti-colonial and relational concerning Indigenous Peoples ontologies:

Although of course I believe that biological evolution is a more probable explanation of the distribution of species than that each American Indian tribe was specially created according to its own mythology, I find it difficult to persist in this view, since the Indian’s explanation for him is 100% true! (Tax 1983:38).

While Steward’s theory of culture change emerged as a powerful argument for assimilation in what Pinkoski articulates the “science of colonialism” (2006) Tax countered to educate the public and shift anthropology in what ought to be considered simultaneously the anthropology of decolonization and the decolonization of anthropology.

Moving into the 1950s, Tax would soon find support from new graduate students such as Robert K. Thomas and Sam Stanley, whose contributions went a long way to imbuing the spirit and intent of action anthropology with their theoretical approaches to colonialism and relationality.
Peoplehood and the Freedom to Mistakes

More publications appeared in 1953 under Tax’s authorship and editorship including An Appraisal of Anthropology Today and Penny Capitalism. One of the most significant milestones of that year, is the arrival of Robert K. Thomas at the University of Chicago where he commenced his doctoral studies with Tax and Redfield (Thomas 1979).

Thomas’ writings reveal a profound theoretical framework for thinking about community and nationalism or, more accurately, political relations in the colonial context. To some extent, Thomas is well known within the Indigenous activist and Indigenous intellectual networks throughout North America; yet, his perspectives on community and nationalism comprise a cogent body of subjugated knowledge that is less well known. Unaccounted for in the history of anthropology, Thomas’ immense contributions as a scholar, anthropologist, community activist and pedagogic theorist are at odds with the complete absence of his work within the history of anthropology. His theoretical contributions, presently bound up with what remains of his writings were shaped by his unique experience as an Indigenous scholar who has worked with many communities throughout North America and his training in anthropology at the University of Chicago.

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46 A review of economimc anthropology by one of Tax’s students in 1965 cited Penny Capitalism as one of three foundational works in the establishment of the field, demonstrating by “comprehensive and detailed study of a peasant economy” the efficacy of “ordinary anthropological means and fieldwork methods” in the study of economic phenomena (Stocking 2001:177; Nash 1965:123).


48 To my knowledge, there are no known dissertations or theses of any kind on the subject of Robert K. Thomas. The one outstanding Festschrift, A Good Cherokee, A Good Anthropologist is the only work to date. Thomas features prominently in the works of Daniel M. Cobb and is often mentioned or cited in works on Cherokee Studies. Most of his writings are collected and freely available online; One outcome of my dissertation is the beginning of a book project solely on the life and political thought of Robert K. Thomas.
Thomas theorized political relations with an emphasis on key concepts such as community and nationalism. His perspectives are important as they hold immense potential towards articulating Indigenous theoretical-philosophical notions of community that also comprise an Indigenous critical theoretical position on the intertwined subjects of community and nationalism. Thomas brought together his intimate experience and knowledge of ‘Indigenous Community’ and his training in social science at educational institutions to articulate ideas across various philosophical and scientific traditions and, essentially, make his point in accessible language and prose, but no less profound, sophisticated, elegant, relevant or thoroughly rigorous. Yet, Thomas’ work remains unknown, undervalued and/or dismissed by contemporary anthropology.

In addition to Thomas’ immense cross-cultural experiences and capabilities, it is doubly important to note that he is a person writing both within and against colonial empire. As it will become clear, it is the colonial relations between Indigenous peoples and the United States that consistently underlies Thomas’ work. In one of the few scholarly work on Thomas’ concept of “peoplehood” call on Native American Studies (NAS) to utilize the model of peoplehood in order to solidify NAS as a grounded interdisciplinary area of study (Holm et al. 2003)\(^49\). What is most useful in their summary and assessment of the concept is the way it connects the social, cultural, economic and ecological aspects of a community to the politics of territory and knowledge (Foucault 2008)\(^50\); this is also a critique of Western

\(^{49}\) Thomas is the first to conceptualize the concept of ‘Peoplehood’, which is gaining traction in contemporary scholarship, but often without anyone citing Thomas or reading his original works; for example, two notable works of recent publication include using the concept in their exceptional and highly recommended works include, *Métis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Anderson 2014); *We Worked and Made Beautiful Things: Kiowa Women, Matrilineal Culture, and Peoplehood, 1900-1939* (Tone-Pah-Hote 2013); *Kinship as an Assertion of Sovereign Native Nationhood* (Hill 2013).

\(^{50}\) This has considerable traction with Foucault’s Security, Territory and Population, especially in consideration of both Thomas’ concept of Peoplehood and the mapping project he worked on with Sam Stanley to the extent
sociocultural evolutionary thought, notions of race and the very fabric of the so-called “modern” state.

Holm et al. assert, “Thomas began work on a perceptive and encompassing view of group identity. His formulation went beyond conventional notions of grouping human beings as members of classes, polities, cultural units, races, or religious groups” (Holm et al. 2003:11). Moreover, Thomas invoked the concept of peoplehood “to transcend the notions of statehood nationalism, gender ethnicity and sectarian membership” (Holm et al. 2003:11).

Linking Thomas’ use of the term to his M.A. thesis advisor, Edward Spicer, they note:

Spicer outlined the thesis that human enclaves were the direct result of colonialism and that these groups most often were identified as having distinct languages, religions, and territories that the colonizers sought to destroy or, in the case of territory, claim for themselves” (Holm et al. 2003:11).


The notions which swirl about the amorphous term ethnic-ethnic group, ethnic identity, ethnicity, and the like-need to be disassociated from the concept of a people. The same ethnic label has been used to refer to co-religionists, racial isolates, linguistic groups, casts and persons of common national origin, a range of meaning so vast as to be useless. We intend the term people to label a limited and clearly defined social type (Holm et al. 2003:11; Castile and Kushner 1981:xv-xvi).
In theorizing the model of peoplehood, Thomas added sacred history to the three factors of language, religion and land noted by Castile and Kushner above.

Holm et al. elaborate on the synergy of these factors within the concept of peoplehood as well as the analytical and political utilities of the concept or “model” (as they refer to it). The following are inadequate, but necessarily brief points of summary: (1) Each factor is important and none more than any other; (2) “Elements of peoplehood can be symbolic of identity”; (3) “factors of peoplehood make up a complete system that accounts for particular social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological behaviours by groups of people indigenous to particular territories”; (4) The elements of the peoplehood matrix function beyond their use as symbols”; (5) A people’s sacred history is equally an explanation of its own distinct culture, customs, and political economy” (Holm et al. 2003:12-13); (6) “Law is derived from within the peoplehood matrix” (Holm et al: 2003:14).

I contend that this sixth point is in fact the most important in terms of linking peoplehood to homeland (place) and, ultimately, sovereignty and jurisdiction.

Each of these aspects is interesting and Holm et al. explore each factor of peoplehood in further depth. For this dissertation, what is most pertinent and of special interest is the ways in which the concept challenges more status quo political thought in terms of the integrity of a group of people as an entity that is usually identified in terms of their level of social-political organization or technological development, that is, the various paradigms of European thought that lead to grand theories of a universalizing quality. According to Holm et al.:

The model [of peoplehood] adequately reminds us as scholars that human societies are complex and that Native Americans entwine everyday life with religious practice and a view that human beings are part of, rather than an
imposition on, their environments. This idea is quite different than the Western evolutionary conception of how the world works. To the Darwinian, as well as Christian, thinker, humans were the last and most complex beings to arise (Holm et al. 2003:15).

Building towards a critique of the State as the pinnacle of political evolution in the human world, Holm et al. challenge the hierarchical rubric, dependent on a long tradition of seeing human societies as comprised in ascending units of complexity. Thomas’ concept of peoplehood “adds a new dimension to political thought concerning disenfranchised or colonized Native America groups. The concept goes beyond the notion of race and even nationality” (Holm et al. 2003:16) and in the most adamant terms (especially where colonialism is concerned):

…peoplehood is self-contained and self-governing. Moreover, it predates and is a prerequisite for all other forms of socio-political organization. In fact, peoplehood, rather than the band or the tribe, is the basis of nationalism and the original organization of states. Conversely, states or nations might not necessarily be considered peoples. Equally, the model of peoplehood serves to explain and define codes of conduct, civility, behavior within a given environment, and relationships between people. What we term “law,” and the enforcement thereof, is unquestionably a part of peoplehood. Sovereignty, therefore, is inherent in being a distinct people. The concept renders terms such as “uncivilized”, “pre-state,” and “primitive” academically useless except to explain how these inaccurate concepts have been utilized to justify theft, cultural suppression, and genocide (Holm et al. 2003:17).

Following Holm et al., Jeff Corntassel finds further political currency for the concept of peoplehood that also undermines the problem of Western hierarchical thought and its tendency towards homogenization. Corntassel builds on the concept of peoplehood in
suggesting “a new working definition of indigenous peoples that is both flexible and dynamic” (Corntassel 2003:75) and might help overcome, in International Law, for example, the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from various legal protections due to strict definitional standards that reify their identities. According to Corntassel:

a somewhat modified peoplehood approach offers the most promise when defining indigenous communities given its non-linear construct and flexibility across time and place. In closing, several possible conclusions can be drawn from the application of nationalist and peoplehood conceptual frameworks to a rearticulation of indigenous identity (Corntassel 2003:19).

Corntassel endorses Holms et al. model of peoplehood as it “offers the most promise in terms of its non-Western approach to identity, its flexibility, comprehensiveness, and allowance for cultural continuity and change” (Corntassel 2003:94). Significantly, Corntassel notes on his use of a “modified version of peoplehood” in trying to find “utility for both Practitioners and theorists” for his purpose of “devising a conceptual framework of indigenous identity” (Corntassel 2003:20). More specifically:

…the gap between praxis and theory must be closed if the global indigenous rights discourse is to move beyond technical, definitional approaches and towards more substantive issues of self-determination, land rights, and promoting cultural integrity. A new definitional framework not only documents the interrelationship between these key factors but it voices indigenous peoples community-based priorities regarding homeland autonomy, language rights, importance of oral histories, and ceremonial cycles (Corntassel 2003:20).

Adding to Holm et al. and Corntassel’s summation of the intrinsic value and salient political capital in reviving the term peoplehood, it is important to carry forward the relational politics in Thomas’s thought, which was integral to the philosophical trajectories of action
anthropology. Looking at the breadth and depth of Thomas’ writings helps reveal what animates the concept and model of peoplehood. Falling well short of a thorough assessment of Thomas’ works, I offer some brief points.

Thomas’ works harbours the equivalent notion, or something similar, to Regna Darnell’s notion of face-to-facedness that emphasizes the necessity of face-to-face communication and interaction for community to be a viable and salient entity (Darnell, MS nd.)\textsuperscript{51}. This is a notion that is left unarticulated in Thomas’s work in any direct or precise terms, but comes through upon a close reading of his articulations around colonialism and ‘Indian’ community. Ideas gleaned from his many writings will be used to demonstrate this point more emphatically beginning with \textit{The Redbird Smith Movement} (1961).

Thomas’ lengthy M.A. thesis on the Redbird Smith movement is a discussion of “some ideas regarding nativism in general that are suggested by this one case- the Redbird Smith Movement” (Thomas 1961:161). His account of Cherokee resistance via a seemingly spontaneous and inexplicable resurrection of cultural traditions, which were assumed to be long forgotten, is a compelling theory of face-to-facedness in the forging and reaffirming of community, not to mention a firm position on cultural persistence.

Thomas sets up his discussion giving a brief overall history of the Cherokee. He begins by reminding us, “each matrilineal extended family farmed a small piece of land along the valley” (Thomas 1961:162). In each ceremonial center there was the “White organization” which directed farming and supervised ceremonies and the “Red or war organization [which] functioned during periods of warfare”; “there seems to be no overall political structure among the Cherokee at first contact”. Thomas’ history of the Cherokees

\textsuperscript{51} Darnell conceptualizes ‘Face-to-Facedness’ and the construction of community in response to Benedict Anderson’s \textit{Imagined Communities} of people who never know or want to know each other.
notes the forces of impact they sustained due to wars with settlers followed by increasing changes in social organization, “the greatest absolute change”: “And now in each settlement there was a new ceremonial center—a Baptist church” (1961:162). Thomas asserts that what remained intact through this massive forced change was the Cherokee curing rites. “These rites – the formal prayers and complex ritual – were the core of Old Cherokee religious concepts… what had remained stable is the Cherokee value system and world view”. The most important value is: “action that affects the group as a whole, is not, in an obvious way, initiated by any one man” (Thomas 1961:164).

A political resistance formed mainly from the stresses sustained due to the Dawes Commission era of U.S. Indian policy52: “a resistance organization in the Cherokee Nation that most of the fullbloods belonged to” called the Ketoowa Society (the old ceremonial name of the Cherokee). A committee was appointed (with several Baptist preachers as members) and Redbirth Smith was made the leader:

The first step of Redbird Smith and his committee in his assignment to “get back what the Ketoowa people had lost” was to procure the sacred Cherokee wampum belts…. Redbird Smith thought that by interpreting these wampum belts they could reconstruct the old Cherokee faith and ritual. They took these belts around to all the old men in the Cherokee Nation, and even to the Creek and Shawnee, trying to “gain knowledge,” as they say in Cherokee. While they were visiting the Creek a society was formed, called the Four Mothers’ society,

52 Congress enacted the General Allotment Act in 1887. In this act, Indians who received land allotments and those who voluntarily took up residence apart from their tribes were to be granted citizenship. But although the law seemed clear on the this subject, it was complicated somewhat because the allotments of land were held in trust by the federal government for twenty-five years on the Indians’ behalf. Some courts maintained that Indians gained American Citizenship at the end of the twenty-five year trust period; others held that citizenship was gained as soon as an allotment was received. Trust or not, for many in Congress there was a sense that “allotment of land in severalty, and citizenship [were] the indispensible conditions of Indian progress.” (Wilkins and Stark 2011:44; citing Felix S. Cohen, Handbook of Indian Law, reprint ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).
which welded the majority of the fullbloods of all the Five Civilized Tribes into one resistance organization. In structure it resembled the old intertribal councils and was a united resistance movement against the coming allotment system and the dissolution of tribal governments. This society retained lawyers and sent delegates to Washington to fight the prevailing trend in Indian Affairs (Thomas 1961:164).

Eventually, Redbird Smith erected a ceremonial ground in his home settlement. Within a year there were 23 such ceremonial centers in different Cherokee “villages”. (Thomas 1961:165). As a result, the Cherokee reconstructed the old White town organization and the clan system was revived for a period. Thomas concludes “either the revival of this long-dead structure and ceremonies is a great coincidence or else it tells us something about cultural persistence” (Thomas 1961:165); in essence, he is articulating the importance of face-to-facedness through his example of Cherokee resistance and resurrection:

But the most significant thing about this very complete religious revival is that there was no prophet connected with it, no vision, and no quick reconstruction of old patterns. The movement was spread out over a 25 year period… One man just does not initiate action this way. In North Carolina during the winter of 1957, several Cherokee became interested in reviving the old Cherokee religion. Many of them talked about this in informal groups all through the winter and spring. But the subject had not been brought up, although it was hinted at, in the formal meetings of the fullblood political organization. When I left North Carolina in June one of the fullblood leaders said to me, “Sometime next winter we may want you to ask some of those Oklahoma chiefs to come down here and teach us all about the fire.” That is the Cherokee way. (Thomas 1961:165).

More can be elaborated on Thomas’ relational thinking in terms of community by looking at his Colonialism: Classic and Internal (1969a). He begins: “In a sense colonialism is one of
the ways in which people come in contact, or one of the ways in which people don’t come in contact with each other” (1969a:37).

Thomas refers to the two models of colonialism as (1) classic and (2) hidden:

1.) Let's say there is a normal community with different kinds of institutional structures in it, political and economic structures. In a classic colonial situation these institutions are put into the hands of an outside bureaucracy or official, or directly linked to them, like the English administrators in West Africa before African freedom. There is usually some kind of organ which mediates between the colonized people and the colonial power. If a community is a system of life which comes to grips with the day-to-day environment, then this is certainly not a community, because this group of people, this small society, now does not come to grips with life as it is lived day to day. This is the classic situation (Thomas 1969a: 38-39, emphasis mine).

2.) What I call the hidden colonial situation has the same general effect. We can see this in the relations between the working class and the middle class in Detroit, say. The institutions of the middle class do the job for the working class, but this is not as obvious a process as in the classic model. In the hidden model there is great differential power between the colonized and colonizer and because of that the institutional decisions are made through the institutions of the colonizer. I am particularly concerned with the ramifications that this kind of model has on change. (Thomas 1969a: 39-40).

Next, Thomas makes clear observations about the nature of colonialism as it relates to change. These are played out as (i) Institutional decay and isolation; (ii) Social isolation and economic change. Institutional decay and isolation involves the “decay of the people’s own institutions” as they are rendered “inoperative”. Social isolation refers to how colonialism
“seals off the community from relationships with other people in other communities”

including the “relationship with the physical environment” (Thomas 1969a:38); colonialism
literally functions to destroy the face-to-facedness aspect of community as a system of life!

Emphatically, Thomas states “change really doesn’t take place under such conditions, except
in the form of internal decay” (Thomas 1969a:38). A third dimension to Thomas’ articulation
of colonialisms is the relationship between change and experience:

A community doesn’t change very much unless its people are experiencing
themselves through their fellows and their environment. This is how a human
being changes as he moves through life. Man is an experiencing being. (Thomas

Thomas provides a few lengthy examples from the experiences of Indigenous communities
as they are impacted by the impositions of industry and resource extraction. These are
beyond easy summation, but the point they make is that such impositions are agents of the
classic colonial structure as they create “an economic elite of marginal people, or cooperative
marginal people (merely one class of people created by such a structure)” (Thomas
1969a:41). A second effect in this kind of experience is the lack of decision making: “You
have to have to make decisions in order to have experience, and few if any decisions here are
taken by Indians” (Thomas 1969a:41). This is Thomas’ thesis regarding the two processes of
change, which is “really the lack of change because the structure isolates the people from
experience” (Thomas 1969:41). What is perhaps surprising in Thomas’ essay is his inclusion
or comparative analysis of colonialism as it affects both ‘tribal’ peoples and ‘urban’ peoples
(middle-class) and demonstrates how he thinks across the categories relationally. The
difference, according to Thomas, has to do with structures and how each copes with the
changes to those structures as different kinds of communities:
When an urban person’s institutions decay, and by urban I mean middle class, he is blocked off from coming true. It gives him identity problems. Institutions for him are not so much where he makes decisions about jobs and environment, although that’s true, too, but he makes decisions about himself in those institutions. But tribal people—and this is true of a lot of Africans, Asians, and American Indians—who have their structure taken away are in bad shape, because they respond to structure (Thomas 1969a:43).

In applying this colonial structural view to working class peoples, Thomas asks, “What happens to someone who responds to structural definitions, who hasn’t much structure, except what the colonialist says to him?” (Thomas 1969a:43). This is the situation he ascribes to inner-cities (Detroit) and he brings this point back to the notion of face-to-facedness as well by thinking between the different kinds of structures of colonialism across societies:

Suppose you just had tribal or folk-like people without structure? What happens to behaviour there? You can take away the institutions or urban people and they can still be self-propelled, still have some kind of direction. It may be hard for them to come true and it may worry them, but if you do this to a folk-like people the results are very different (Thomas 1969a:44).

Thomas theorizes colonialism as a destructive process, but not a totalizing one. The colonial situation, for him, is “the deprivation of experience” as it creates the “unreality for people” (see Thomas 1966). Yet, he also states:

I think people do learn certain things in a colonial structure. While they don’t learn much about their environment, they do learn something about that structure. They often learn how to manipulate it, and deal with it in their own terms. They sort of learn how to cope with that kind of situation. They don’t deal with their
environment, but they learn to deal with the structure, which mediates their environment, which is the condition that is definitive of a colonial situation (Thomas 1966:37).

In *Powerless Politics* (1969), Thomas gives an analysis and model of the politics of a people subject to colonialism. Using the Pine Ridge Sioux as his case study, Thomas’ thesis is not merely about ‘American Indian’ sufferings of colonialism, but he suggests that “more and more of America is coming to resemble an American Indian reservation in terms of social problems and the relationship of the local community to the federal government (city slums and Appalachia are only two examples), and suggest that this process is perhaps coming about in many large nation-states in the world” (Thomas 1969b:45).

*Powerless Politics* is essentially a step-by-step review of the history of the political behaviour of the Pine Ridge Sioux that describes the process of colonialism as Thomas outlined it in the previous works already mentioned. With a focus on social relations instead of social structure, Thomas describes the loss of experience and the experience of becoming “powerless” from the Sioux perspective. He concludes that the Pine Ridge reservation is: an example of a very complete colonial system- an internal colonial system; a system set up and continued with the best of benevolent intentions, to be sure; but a colonial system none the less. A colonial structure has been a common method in the world by which urban European people have structured their relationships with tribal peoples of differing cultural backgrounds (Thomas 1969b:51).

And in the case of the Sioux tribal government, “the main difference between Sioux tribal government and government in other American communities is that the Sioux tribal government is, in effect, without Power” (Thomas 1969b:49). What ought to be taken away
from *Powerless Politics* is what Thomas ends with pertaining to “the colonial-assimilation dichotomy” and “Centralized Power” as both of these aspects are much more relevant to the emergence and proliferation of the nation-state as opposed to what we might think of as a healthy and free community.

Thomas explains how the Pine Ridge reservation “is more than just a colonial system”:

…no European colonial service was given the job of getting or mildly coercing their “people” into accepting programs which would bring about their acceptance of European culture and their integration into European society. The two conflicting purposes are self defeating (Thomas 1969b:52)

Yet, Thomas, anticipates the ways Foucault laments this very phenomena occurring within and by the United States:

More and more the federal government is taking over the responsibility of integrating deviant communities into general society, on middle-class terms, and appointing federal bureaucracies to do that job… The relationship between these new federal bureaucracies and deviant groups looks very much like the relationship between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Pine Ridge Sioux- a semi-colonial structure set up to bring about directed acculturation and total assimilation (Thomas 1969b:53, emphasis mine).

Thomas contends that this “is the case in many of the large nation-states of the world” as “modern countries seem to be turning over the integration of deviant communities into their national societies to central governmental agencies” (Thomas 1969b:53).

At this point, it is clear that Thomas is thinking in terms of community and nation-states quite differentially, but does not deem ‘community’ and ‘nation’ mutually exclusive. In his essay, *Nationalism* (1972), Thomas (under the pseudonym of ‘Anderson Dirthrower’)
begins by describing nationalism in terms of emotion and experience. He states poetically:

“Nationalism is a journey: a journey from fear into hope” (1972:79) and, again, experience becomes intrinsically essential to the phenomenon Thomas is referring to- nationalism. This essay is a personal one whereby Thomas describes the history of the colonization of ‘the Indian’ from his own perspective and declares that “I’m going to try to give you some idea of what it is to live in fear, and what it is to live in despair, and what it is to finally have hope” (Thomas 1972:79).

The article attests to the transformative power of nationalism that occurs through shared notions of self-realization that are mediated through experience of each other in recognizing shared histories. These are actually mediated in Thomas’s examples through a kind of face-to-face communication as with his experiences meeting other Indigenous peoples who also experienced such fear due to colonialism during his time of service in World War II. The transformation from fear to hope is mediated by his experiences meeting with folks, face-to-face, through increasingly more relational experiences as more people increasingly begin to share their experiences across space and time. When Thomas writes of sharing their experiences through further experiences, what emerges is a form of nationalism that is not described by Thomas in any detail nor is it spoken of in the discourse of social science. But it is exemplified through his personal narratives, that is, stories of change; a different kind of analytical tool. This seems to function almost as a form of resistance to the quality of colonialism that Thomas defined as the destroyer of experience. ‘Indian’ nationalism, in this sense, is the creation of positive experiences that are fundamentally based upon relationships, which, in turn, give way to hope, but this hope in Indigenous nationalism is tempered by his views towards mainstream or ‘middle-class’ American
society, secularism and, ultimately the nation-state.

In a document entitled *Surviving Letter* and dated December 1982, Thomas outlines his precise account of the ‘Indian Problem’ intertwined with his own personal account of his changing thoughts regarding such a problem:

… it appeared to me that seeming attempts on the part of the federal government to facilitate “self-determination” were simply a “fake-out”… “Self-determination” turned out to be an arrangement whereby an Indian elite operates a structure created and enlarged by the federal government; a structure regulated by laws, rules, and guidelines set up by the federal government. “Self-determination’s” lineal descendant, “Indian sovereignty”, has become primarily a lead for more control over Indians by the Indian elite. (Thomas 1982:2).

As a result, Thomas, due to his “unformulated unease in the mid-sixties”, turned away from the “self-determination arena” in favour of the “Traditional Movement”:

I had decided at that point in time that we needed to strengthen our social cohesion internally and “preserve” our languages and cultures; and that working with the “system” was not only useless, but perhaps socially destructive.

However, I was not exactly sure what it was about the system that made it so unreformable and unapproachable. (1982:2)

Moreover, in his critique of cultural pluralism, Thomas addresses the absurdity of, for example, multiculturalism policies and the politics of recognition\textsuperscript{53}, which are tied to the

\textsuperscript{53} Glen Coulthard emphasizes the ongoing relevance of ‘recognition’ most coherently: “Over the last forty years, the self-determination claims of Indigenous peoples in Canada have increasingly been cast in the language of “recognition”: recognition of Indigenous cultural distinctiveness, recognition of an Indigenous right to land and self-government, recognition of the right to benefit from the development of Indigenous territories and resources, and so on. In addition, the last fifteen years have witnessed a proliferation of scholarship which has sought to flesh-out the ethical, legal and political questions that these claims tend to raise. Subsequently, “recognition” has now come to occupy a central place in our efforts to comprehend what is at stake in contestations over identity and difference in liberal settler-polities more generally (Coulthard 2003:iii); There is a massive body of literature on the subject of multiculturalism and cultural recognition that has grown exponentially in the last few decades. I note a few passages that help to illuminate similar ideas Thomas is implicitly referring to in his writings, which remain a glaring and urgent challenge for us today. James Tully
contemporary policies of neoliberal attacks (in contemporary terms) on the essence of community in favour of markers of ethnicity (the modern stand-in for the demystified notion of ‘race’):

What cultural pluralism means in America is that if you are willing to live in isolated nuclear family groups, take your place in the corporate economic structure, keep up your property, do not object to your own powerlessness, and put aside those valued ways of being that make you who and what you are (like mainly honor, Obedient children, etc) then you can eat spaghetti in the home, go to Catholic church on Sunday, and put on an ethnic costume and jump around at an ethnic festival once in a while. This is the future the system offers Indians as well (Thomas 1982:3).

In a reiteration of his fears, Thomas moves towards critiquing the core problems of American society in terms of its hostility to the very heart of what, for Thomas is Community. I argue that it is what we might deem the face-to-facedness aspect of a functioning and free (sacred) community that is threatened:

notes, “What is distinctive of our age is a multiplicity of demands for recognition at the same time; the demands are for a variety of forms of self rule; and the demands conflict violently in practice… Consequently, the question of our age is not whether one or other claim can be recognized. Rather, the question is whether a constitution can give recognition to the legitimate demands of the members of diverse cultures in a manner that renders everyone their due, so that all would freely consent to this form of constitutional association. Let us call this first step towards a solution ‘mutual recognition’ and ask what it entails (Tully 1995:7); Second, “We may, if we please, redescribe these forms of reasoning on the common ground as the reconciliation of clashes between individual and collective rights, liberalism and nationalism, or, as Habermas reconstructs them, ‘the individualistic design of the theory of rights’ and the ‘collective experiences of violated integrity’. But these further descriptions in the abstract language of modern constitutionalism occlude the ways of reasoning that actually bring peace to the conflict. Projecting such a general scheme over particular cases is analogous to, Wittgenstein suggests, a pupil in geography bringing a mass of falsely simplified ideas about the course and connections of the routes of raiders and mountain chains. It shackles the ability to understand and causes us to dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases which alone can help to understand how conciliation is actually achieved. The perspicuous representation of the reasoning that mediates the conflicts over cultural recognition consists of dialogical descriptions of the very language used in handling actual cases… Unilateral attempts of enforcement by the federal government are ineffective and they provoke disunity and secession. There will always be conflicts over mutual recognition in any free and diverse society. There is no final solution. The mutual checks and balances of the diverse members are a more effective and democratic method of enforcement than a central sovereign” (Tully 1995:173-4).
The American system individuates and massifies. It is hostile to communities, to families, to those who live in a sacred world, and to any deviant culture in its midst. Further, special community rights, as in the case with Indians, are antithetical to every trend in American society. It is a big homogenization machine (Thomas 1982:5, emphasis mine).

The course Thomas suggests is one of tactical withdrawal with the additional tactic of essentially disseminating insurgents as counter-state spies. This is a call for persistence and active patience:

At this point in history, I think our main job is to survive America; as we did the glaciers droughts, invasion, conquest, and so forth. If I am right, that means we must attend to the social and cultural Strength of our tribes, engage only in protective measures vis-à-vis the general society, and place Indians in key institutional niches of the system as “scouts”. If this analysis is correct then an alliance must be forged between “intellectuals” and elders (Thomas 1982:5).

The connection between cultural strength and survival are bound up in the concept of peoplehood.

In a short article, *The Tap-Roots of Peoplehood* (1990, but written in mid-1980s), Thomas articulates the correlations between peoplehood and how “small nationalities survive when they are part of large nations and are surrounded by large, very different majority groups” (Thomas). He begins by stating how small minorities that survive have four commonalities and provides examples, which I have reproduced from his text almost verbatim: (1) their own language (e.g. Coptic Christians of Egypt, the Basques of Spain, the Welsh of the British Isles, the Ainu of Japan, and the Maya of Yucatan in Mexico); (2) their own religion (e.g. The Jews, the Gypsies, the Mapuche Indians of Chile, the Hopi of Arizona, the Kickapoo of Oklahoma and Mexico, the Sontal of India, and the Laps of
Norway and Sweden); (3) A tie to piece of land (e.g. The Irish and the island of Eire, the Zapotec Indian relation to the land in southern Mexico, the Kurd’s love for western Iran, and the Oglala Sioux tie to the Black Hills); and, (4) A sacred history which spells out a people’s relationship to God, to a land to history, to destiny, and to other nationalities! (Thomas 1990: n.p., emphasis mine).

Clearly, these correlate to the introduction to peoplehood outlined at the beginning of this essay. Yet, Thomas provides several significant caveats regarding the importance of each of these to a people:

Among some enduring peoples the very absence of, or the losing of, one of these important four symbols can, in itself, become a strong symbol of peoplehood. The Jewish Holy Land became very important to Jews just because they were driven from it. A strong part of the Gypsy self-image is that they are a people without a homeland and destined to wander among foreigners. North Carolina Cherokees, in their own eyes, are those Cherokees who faithfully cling to Cherokee Homeland. The Gaelic language became a strong symbol of peoplehood to the Irish at the very time Gaelic had almost disappeared (Thomas 1990, n.p.).

Thus, Thomas does not deem each factor of peoplehood intrinsically more important, but they are not always equal in meaning to any given People, that is, each could potentially be more meaningful than any other in any given context. They are each equally important in terms of speaking of peoplehood generally and in terms of measuring the extent to which a small nationality might be succeeding in surviving or enduring against the influx of overwhelmingly external nationalistic or outside pressures (i.e. Coloniality).

This dissertation strives to merely introduce Thomas as a relational thinker and theorist of community “as a life system” and colonialism as a process that is destructive of
such a life system as it attacks the ability to experience and to make decisions by destroying
the ability of a people to communicate to one another and beyond or between other
communities including non-human ones. It is the connection between Thomas’ particular
understanding of colonialism in terms of community and the nation-state that is urgently
relevant for contemporary analysis of colonialism today; his concept of peoplehood, then, is
also an analytic as I have defined it above. In many ways, Thomas and Tax forged a
symbiotic relationship in their respective but mutual anthropological philosophies and anti-
colonial politics.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1954, Tax gave a speech, \textit{Freedom to Make Mistakes}, at the high school
graduation of his elder daughter, Susan Tax-Freeman (Tax 1954;). This speech is a
remarkable treatise on colonialism, imperialism and paternalism. It is doubly considered
here, given that Tax’s thinking on the problems of termination at the same time he wrote a
speech about the issues of oppression and communicates them to high school students. In
the very first sentences of one of his seminal position pieces, \textit{The Freedom to Make Mistakes}
(1956), Tax explicitly outlined the relationship as one that is colonial:

\begin{quote}
This paper addressed a problem that arises when one person or group is in
authority over another and has the power to decide what the other one should do
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54} At a Symposium on action anthropology in 2010 at the SfAA, Albert Warhaftig responded to my musings
(and quoting me from an informal communication) about Tax and Thomas’ relationship in this way: “I wanted
to bring up something Joshua said on December 11, 2010, in the pre-meeting material that was distributed to us.
"One of my personal theories is that Robert Thomas was a huge influence on Tax. Now, I haven't spoken to
anyone who was there or who knew any of these people intimately except for Michael Asch who was an
undergraduate student and dedicates much to Tax. I think when Thomas and Tax got together, things really
picked up in pace. And when I read what people say about Thomas' and Tax's work, you can easily see how a
personality like Tax's might be emboldened by such a personality like Thomas'... thick as thieves. It's a theory." Yes, I wonder about that. I failed to make a point in my presentation that I certainly wanted to make. Towards
the end I said that the tribal attorney who was our opposition turned out to be right, that we were subversive,
although we did not intend to be subversive we certainly were. we just good anthropologists looking on in
amazement as a social movement took place, I wonder about that and the question in my mind is whether Bob
Thomas and whether Sol Tax knew that that would be the outcome all along. The proposal was written as a
formal research project, we stuck to it, we had a hypothesis, we tested it, we collected data and
so on and so forth. I really wonder about that question. I don't have the answer, but if you find it I want to hear
it (Warhaftig, Comments to Smith 2012:15-16).
for his own good. The main concern is with communities who are under some authority, like colonies under the rule of benevolent powers, which remain in power to help the colonials prepare themselves for independence. I think especially of American Indian communities who are under the Indian Service, which behaves in a notoriously paternalistic way (Tax 1956:173).

An anti-colonial essay, The Freedom to Make Mistakes, points to the paternalistic logic of U.S. Indian administration; that is, the same logic is rooted in the mythology of assimilation, but actually tries to implement it. Tax elaborates on the colonial logic, which he exposes as a perfectly illogical, and ineffective way to foster relationships with peoples already adept at governing themselves:

...most administrators in these positions are members of our dominant culture who believe our culture is in fact superior to other cultures, and they assume that the people of the colony are all naturally anxious to become like us. In the United States, our whole policy with respect to the Indians will adopt our ways, and lose their ways; that some of them have made more progress than others, who are more “backward”. The fact is that many Indians are not anxious to become like us; they are comfortable in their own culture; and it doesn't help matters at all to call them “backward.” The result is a kind of passive resistance and complete breakdown of communication and understanding. The administrator then imagines that the Indians no longer are “reasonable,” so he feels justified he feels justified in using force” (Tax 1956: 174-175).

Thus, Tax exposes the Indian Administration's absurd tautology that, left to their own powers of decision making, Indigenous peoples will make mistakes because they will not assimilate. In other words, the political agency of Indigenous peoples does not fit with Indian Policy, thus, whatever they decide will be a “mistake”. Tax ends his exposition with a dire warning to the colonial machinations of the state bureaucracy: “And we are now in an era when, in
many parts of the world, colonies which are not given the freedom to make their own
mistakes, will take that freedom” (Tax 1956:177).

Tax stands as one of the very few non-Indigenous intellectuals of the 1950s to
articulate the political relationship between Americans and Indigenous peoples as one that is
colonial. More importantly, his example is a rare instance of someone who reflexively
located himself in the colonial relationship and sought to decolonize anthropology as well as
his own society by focusing on the problems of governmentality, beginning with an
unravelling of two major aspects of American colonialism: the myth of assimilation and the
fallacious superiority of Euro-American society that animates it.

This aspect of action anthropology illustrates a particularly important difference
between action anthropology and the collaborative research methods of contemporary times.
It is the ethico-political stance that Tax thought anthropologists ought to take up in relation
to colonialism by (1) building better relationships with Indigenous Nations, as peoples rather
than subjects (see Asch 2001); and, making anthropology relevant to their problems, as they
defined them, if anthropological intervention is desired at all, while (3) decolonizing the self
through a practice of understanding the truth of our relationship as opposed to the myth of
progress and civilization. This political stance, essential to action anthropology, is
profoundly clear and distinct from the methods that emphasize a partnership grounded on
principles of equality where each participant, partner, co-collaborator or stakeholder gets
something out of the contract or 'understanding' as opposed to a relationship that begins with
the fact of colonialism itself and our (settlers’) obligations to deal with it justly.

In 1954, Tax received funds from the Schwartzhaupt Foundation of New York City
to support the Fox project. The project was injected with a $60,000 grant from the
Schwartzhaupt Foundation of New York City over four years (Daubenmier 2008: 227). Tax noted, “we could be no true friends of the Indians if when we wanted to help in the wrong ways [we] were refused. Instead we should simply try some other way”. Daubenmier remarks how, “To secure the grant, Tax skewed the purpose of the project slightly to meet the foundations goal of promoting citizenship, by stressing that the project would help settlement residents learn to run their own affairs and that would make them better citizens (Daubenmier 2008: 227, fn 1). This fortuitous award made possible the many of the endeavours associated with the Fox Project and later, in 1955, Rietz relocated to Tama in order to take on the role of field director of the Fox Project, while Fred Gearing became assistant director of the project based in Chicago. It was at this point, according to Daubenmier, that “[w]hile this form of anthropology at Tama was winding down, action anthropology on the national level was continuing to grow and become more concrete” (Daubenmier 2008: 46).

Tax did not give up in trying to raise awareness and shift anthropology’s focus to these problems. Tax had just become editor of the American Anthropologist that year and as such, he organized a conference in February 1954 on Indian Policy. Sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the conference brought together notable anthropologists and policy personnel including John Provinse. Prior to the conference Provinse drafted a discussion paper on American Indian Policy, which was sent out to those invited to participate. The discussion resulted in a statement condemning forced assimilation as a government service (see Daubenmier 2008:194; Tax 1954:387; Provinse et al. 1954).

55 Tax was Editor of AA from 1953-1955.
At this time, Stanley and Thomas, were working diligently on mapping the persistence of Indigenous peoples. Their map entitled *The North American Indians: 1950 Distribution of Descendants of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada and the United States* (Stanley and Thomas 1950) was completed under the direction of Sol Tax. The note on the fourth edition of the map indicates:

This map is intended to include all self-identified American Indian communities as of 1950. After the U.S. Census of 1960 is available, the map will be revised to show also how many Indians live outside these communities (the fourth edition is a supplemental insert in Levine and Lurie 1968; see also Stanley and Thomas.

In working on improving and updating the map while seeking ever more insights and data through various agencies, organizations and colleagues, one such assessment reached Tax from Mr. Hadley of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, D.C. (Aug. 12, 1957).

In working on improving and updating the map while seeking ever more insights and data through various agencies, organizations and colleagues, one such assessment reached Tax from Mr. Hadley of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington, D.C. (Aug. 12, 1957). In his assessment, Hadley was mostly concerned with their over-estimations in many cases based in the records and census materials his offices had and maintained. Hadley’s detailed and lengthy letter attempts to make correctives based on a misunderstanding of the mapping project in mapping all self-identifying Indigenous populations, not merely those who are Federally recognized by the U.S. government. For example, Hadley states,

Comparison to Census data should not be with the Alaska inclusion… and actually should not be made without further adjustment, since Census does
include even after discarding most of the mixed-blood groups of the South about 10,000 Indians not included by the Indian Bureau as not under Federal jurisdiction, such as the Powhatan, Iroquois, and Penobscot.

Hadley also criticizes the project for not excluding some of their populations who, in other population reports were considered “exclusions made from the Census 1950 field data in transfers to the “Other Races” category”, adding that “[i]t is to be assumed that these are minimal counts, since they include only those persons the enumerators recognized as Indians”. Taking issue with their estimation of 75,000 Cherokees in Oklahoma, because, according to BIA census numbers, “The Indian population reported by Census for the 9 counties approximately the territory of the Cherokee Nation decreased from 15,125, in 1940 to 10,715 in 1950”. Hadley continues, “I do not dispute the probability of there being 75,000 persons with claim to membership in the Cherokee Tribe, but they certainly are not all in Oklahoma and I do not believe that more than half, at the most, would routinely identify themselves as Indians in such matters as racial description on a birth certificate”.

Interestingly, Hadley takes issue with their low numbers of what they refer to as societal Indians- those relocated and living in urban areas: “On page 8 you list States with increasing Indian populations according to the Census. It is our belief that these are understated, that the census enumerator does not recognize individuals who are actually societal Indians to a very major degree. In such States as New York, New Jersey, and Illinois the increase is in the urban areas, the place of greater under-recognition. We believe the urban figures should probably be doubled”. Yet, Hadley is consistent in noting their “overestimates” when it comes to their ‘reservation’ numbers. For example, “I think you over count the Navajo. I cannot identity the specific sources of your 65,000 on-reservation figure, the Agency normally cited about 69,000 as of 1950. Either figure was presumed to include the Navajos
in Grazing District 7, for which I suspect 16,000 is too high an estimate. The 1950 Census did not use the special Indian schedule in the District 7 area and found 55,000 Navajos inside the reservation, where it was used”. As with their Navajo’s numbers, Hadley took issue with “[t]he Papago figure” as “also high” because “[t]he Census figure cited is for the Papago Agency Area and includes all Indians in the Area” and [i]n order to arrive at a service population estimate for southern Arizona, which did not need to distinguish Piima, Papago, or other locals from other Indians of Federally recognized tribes now living in the area, we took the combined figures for the Pima and Papago Agency Areas and reduced them by the percentage of Mexican Indians in the total Indian population of the combined Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal Counties as show in 1930”. Much of Hadley’s corrections are shrouded in, on the one hand, references to government data unavailable to most scholars and, on the other hand, nonsensical calculations to simultaneously show continuous declines in reservation Indians while inflating increases in urban areas. In direct contrast to the governmentality of the BIA’s attempt to statistically remove Indigneous peoples, Stanley and Thomas’ data did not show Indigenous populations leaving the reservations and assimilating into the general population. Given the overwhelming response and Hadley’s last remarks, “In any case we will be looking forward eagerly to a look at the revised map, and will want to get copies in quantity” is a sure sign that government offices were keenly interested in Stanley and Thomas’ calculations even as they misunderstood their politics of mapping Indigenous persistence.

In a letter dated Oct. 22, 1957, Thomas wrote to Stanley about possible changes to be made to the map and bringing up several of Hadley’s critiques, while noting that he “got the idea that [Hadley] didn’t really understand the purpose of the map”. He vented his frustration
to Stanley regarding the critiques Hadley had made in a previous letter to Thomas. In the spirit of trying to map a variety of diverse Indigenous populations, not accounted for in the standard or mainstream census reports, Thomas makes several additions they ought to consider including in the map.

Thomas’ suggestions of inclusions are examples of their commitment to ‘prove’ that, while Indigenous populations change, they do not assimilate and stand as implicit arguments against the idea that the government is the arbiter of who is or isn’t Indigenous. Here are examples from Thomas’ letter to Stanley with recommended inclusions while they were completing the map; these are examples of Indigenous ‘Descendant’ communities they deemed as culturally persisting:

(a) “Cubans” in Person county, North Carolina and Halifax county, Virginia. The 1930 Census has figures on this group. Maybe you could find something in the 1950 Census. Is there anything in Beale’s paper? They are probably Saponi. You could put that in parenthesis with a question mark.

(b) Haliwa in Halifax county, North Carolina. I don’t know much about them, but they have a separate school so they must be a community. Maybe you can find something on them. I just saw an article in the paper about them the other day.

(c) Ultamaha or Tomathli south of Augusta, Georgia. I believe Gilbert lists 100 or I have gotten 100 somewhere Gilbert mentions them in an article “Surviving Indian Groups of Eastern United States” in the Smithsonian Report of 1948. I am not sure this is the correct reference, but Hadley has the reference mentioned in his article in American Indians in American Life. You know, that’s that Annals Volume.

(d) “Cherokee” in Washington county, Alabama. You remember, that the group we ran into in the 1930 and 1950 Censuses. They are known locally as Cajuns, but they call themselves Cherokee. (Gilbert mentions a group of Cherokee near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Maybe you could find something in the Censuses or in Beale’s paper on them).

(e) Since we are talking about southern groups we could use more recent figures on two Louisiana groups—the Tunica in central Louisiana and the Attakapa in Calescien Parish. The most recent reference on the Tunica is 1924 and the 6 Attakapa we have listed are probably only the language speakers. The 1910 Census lists 300 Indians in that county. Does Beale or the 1950 Census have anything on them? As you know, I
really don’t trust the Census and only used it when there wasn’t anything else available. I haven’t seen Beale’s paper, but I’ll bet the figures will take some evaluation.

(f) Add 2,000 Croatan Indians in Baltimore. They are a real urban ethnic group and live in a two block area in Baltimore. You don’t have to add them in red as they wouldn’t be counted in North Carolina. Ebony Magazine had an article on them in August. They like to be called Lumbee now. Maybe we should use that instead of Croatan or Siouan in North Carolina.

Thomas also makes suggestions for some “Optional Changes”:

1. I don’t know what you want to do about the Navajo figure. Hadley makes a good case for 70,000; but, then, the Navajo Tribal Census count in 1955 was 85,000. This would mean a figure of 80,000 in 1950 is not too far off. I can imagine leaving our figure or taking Hadley’s. I will leave that decision up to you as well as most of the rest of them.

2. Couldn’t we, without too much trouble, add urban Indian figures from the 1950 Census in red on the map? I think it would be easy to add Brooklyn, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Rapid City, Oklahoma City, Albuquerque, Tulsa, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland, and Seattle.

3. Since you have Felsman and White’s paper couldn’t you extrapolate these against recent tribal roll figures and get a breakdown into reservation and off-reservation figures? I know this would entail a little work. And if the figures stop at the reservation line is it profitable? Many Indians could be living nearby and really not away from the community. Whatever you want to do is alright with me.

In this letter, Thomas closes, again, with a sense of frustration with Hadley’s confusion over their project:

it is clear to me after reading Hadley’s letter that we didn’t really explain what we’re trying to do on the map. We need to add some more to our supplement. Perhaps, Sol can add something to his section. When I write to Hadley I am going to try to spell out what I think we didn’t make clear in our supplement to the map.

If we would have known that we would revise the map again we could have sent out from letters to all agencies, tribal councils, and other places asking for modern population figures. Since we will probably be revising this map again why don’t
we do that now? Sol could have some one at Chicago do the mailing and finding out tribal and agency addresses. I could draw up the form letter and supply addresses for some of these non-federal groups. We will probably want to revise it next year anyway.

Thomas also considered the problem of communities he and Stanley knew existed (persisted), but had no data for:

I have another idea, Sam. Couldn’t we put those groups on the map for which we havnt any information? We could put the name and a question mark after it. For instance-Mottaway? Machapunga? And if you cant find anything on the Haliwa put Haliwa? There is a small group north of Prescott, Arizona that call themselves Cherokee. We could put “Cherokee”? I believe they are Croatans. Also, there is a group that shows up in Rokington county, North Carolina. The 1930 Census lists a considerable group of Indians there. We could put a question mark and then the number. I am sure there is a group of Indians there, but I don’t know what name they go by.

The map proved challenging and trying, especially trying to be precise and categorical about peoples who escaped easy measurement- even in their attempt to challenge, paradoxically, the U.S. government’s colonial rigidity in counting ‘Indians’ with their own more dynamic approach. Problems with definitions and communicating what their purpose is proved challenging as Thomas lamented to Stanley, “But it looks like that damned map will follow us to our graves”. Their challenge was to overcome excessive rigidity and find ways to flexibly represent peoples in more broader terms. In an extract from a letter to Stanley (typed and forwarded to Tax, April 22,1958) Thomas writes in response to the problem of defining a “population unit”:

Actually this term is a catch-all to cover a number of sins. Because our figures come from many different sources, tribes were broken down on many bases—
Some sources counted on the basis of legally defined units, some broke tribes down by residence units, by older social groups, and my by modern social groups. Because of this inconsistency we settled on this ambiguous term. It is utilitarian because it is so ambiguous and broad.

This letter from Thomas outlines more clearly what they were trying to accomplish and how with a clear sensitivity to how communities might identify or not, but mostly in consideration of their Indigeneity, not in terms of the state, but in terms of historical relations:

Many remnant groups in the east are omitted. I think the title of the map has brought about this difficulty. Actually, as you know, we counted as Indian all those groups who are legally recognized as such by the federal government or a state. Of those groups who are not legally recognized as Indians we counted as Indians those who identified as Indians. “Descendants” is too broad a term for our map. This restricted definition we used ruled out many of the groups mentioned in Gilbert’s work. Such large groups as the Melungions of Tennessee and Virginia and the Moors of Delaware are descendants of Indians, but they think of themselves as a new nationality as do the Metis of Canada or the Mestizo of northern Mexico. They conceive of themselves as separate from either Indians, whites, or Negroes. Other groups mentioned by Gilbert could not be said to identify as Indian groups, at least, not from the information he gives. If we cross-checked with other sources and found they identified as Indians, we included them or if we picked them up in the census we were pretty sure they identified as Indian groups and counted them. Most of the groups Gilbert mentions do not identify as Indians and others we could not determine exactly how they identified and didn’t include them. This last category of “indeterminate” people do not seem to be descendants of in situ. historic tribes so I do not think it is a loss that they are not included on the map.
Thomas emphasizes, and this is key, “Since we were counting Indians in a **political** sense, I don’t see how this map can be meaningful unless we include a supplement where we define our terms and where we explain what we are trying to do on this map and then justify our definitions and method” (original emphasis). In consideration of their terms, Thomas also prefers and advocates for the terms preferred by the communities themselves since “most of the names on the map are legal designations. I think most Indians would use these terms rather than more “correct” anthropological designations”.

This chapter concludes with Tax’ compelling reflections on the mapping project nearly thirty years later, which punctuate appropriately the spirit and intent of their work together:

> We must remember, however, that there are many Indians in cities who are members of non-federally recognized tribes or who do not have their names on a tribal roll. Some years back Bob Thomas, who is here today, Sam Stanley and I worked out a map using the Indian census figures from 1950. There were so few Indians in cities then that it scarcely crossed our minds. But we were interested when we discovered how many Indians there were across the country who clearly identified themselves as Indians who were not counted by the official U.S. Census Office as Indians. We didn’t care what their legal status was according to Washington or in the various states. We were interested in how they defined themselves. Many of these communities were terminated decades ago, others are remnants of conquered tribes who were never given reservations. They steared us from one community to another across the American landscape. They knew they were Indians even if Washington refused to recognize them as such; they knew other communities of so-called non-status Indians and treated these other communities with respect as fellow Indians of different tribes. The hope I have for the future is a new relationship between Washington and the White man in general on the one hand and all Indians—whether they reside in the cities or in their home communities; whether they are are federally-recognized or lack that status but identify among themselves and with others as Indians on the other
hand… I believe it is possible to have a new world with urban and rural Indians cooperating and benefitting each other (Tax 1980:19-20; emphasis mine).

Tax explicitly expresses, in retrospect, their objectives in trying to work out a means to show the U.S. government, but to also learn from them the extent to which Indigenous peoples persisted in political communities and what this meant for Settlers as well. The identity politics of the BIA and federal government were challenged head on by their action anthropology. Tax continued to contend with the issues with a renewed vigor and action anthropology gained more momentum in the fight against termination and relocation as they entered the late 1950s.
Coordinated Anarchy: The Non-Exercise of Power

Undeterred, action anthropologists moved their work in new directions such as the Workshop on American Indian Affairs. The idea emerged from conversations between Tax, Fred Gearing and the Reverend Galen R. Weaver of the American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church (Daubenmier 2008:255). In 1956, Tax played a lead role in initiating the Workshop on American Indian Affairs. A six-week summer program for Indian college students, it “provided the framework for what they hoped would be the training ground for a new generation of Indian leaders” and “came to be seen as vital to the survival of Native communities” (Cobb 2008:25). While various instructors participated in the workshops, the “animating spirit behind them both theoretically and curricularly” was Robert K. Thomas, whose curriculum compelled students to understand the colonial systemics of U.S. society in a global context (Cobb 2008:25). Many workshop participants, such as Clyde Warrior, became charismatic and historically significant personalities of the Southwest Regional Youth Council, the National Indian Youth Council, and the Native American political movement in general. Twenty-five students participated in the first Workshop in American Indian Affairs, which took place at Colorado College in Colorado Springs over the course of six weeks in the summer of 1956. Students, recruited from many Tribes, studied Anthropological and Social theory in addition to Indian policy and legislation. From 1956-1966, the workshops saw 259 students participate. The workshops also brought McNickle and Tax in closer contact and their friendship began to grow as their mutual political outlooks strengthened symbiotically through their involvement in the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, a six-week summer program for Indian college students originally held on the campus of Colorado College in Colorado Springs. With organizational
involvement from the University of Chicago, the NCAI and the AAIA, the workshops sought to train future Indian leaders. The workshops included many of the action anthropologists as organizers, teachers and guest speakers, as well as bringing in notable figures to lecture on their areas of expertise including McNickle, Tax and other NCAI leaders such as Helen Peterson. The co-directors developed curriculum from year to year. For the 1956 workshop, for example Sam Stanley and Thomas developed materials on the persistence of Indigenous peoples (Parker 1992:187). While many people were involved over the years, Cobb emphasizes the crucial role of Thomas who was “the animating spirit behind them both theoretically and curricularly”; he had the “status of culture hero” (Cobb 2006:25).

Just as the first workshops were getting underway as a new action anthropology project, Madigan of the AIAA organized a “a committee to develop a congressional resolution to replace HCR 108. In the April, 1956 annual meeting of AAIA in New York City, the organization adopted a statement in support of the Point IV program” (Cobb 2006:17). In Jan 3, 1957, Senate Concurrent Resolution 3 (SCR 3), entitled “An American Indian Point IV program” was introduced to Congress by Montana Democrat James E. Murray. The resolution denounced assimilation and called for a reduced, less paternalistic, role of the BIA by limiting their duties to providing technical and financial assistance (Cobb 2006:16-18 and fn 17). This resolution is comparatively consistent with Tax’s essay, *Termination vs. the Needs of the American Indian*, but does not go nearly as far in terms of a taking a resolute political stand in terms of what Indigenous peoples want for themselves.

In Feb of 1957, Executive Director of the NCAI, Helen Peterson articulated the challenge in these terms, “We cant hope to get people to understand the problems and all of this truly complicated arrangement unless we can disentangle Indian issues from civil rights
issues—Indian problems aren’t civil rights problems… in the general trend toward integration, this age may wipe out tribes which 50 years from now we will be trying to resurrect in an artificial fashion. You must try to disentangle Indian rights from civil rights and integration” (Cobb 2006:22)⁵⁶.

McNickle’s perceptions and politics at this time were in full swing as he expressed his own views, quite similar to Tax’s, regarding the paternalistic colonial policy being pushed by Congress, especially officials or “outside experts who claimed to know Native people better than they knew themselves”:

No man, or no Bureau made of many men, however intelligent and well-meaning, could slip inside another man’s skin and think and feel for him… The Challenge may be stated its participating citizens to enjoy freedom of conscience and action extended its scope to include citizens who, because they live differently, are not fully participating? How tolerant can a political democracy be of non-conformity? The questions are not rhetorical… They arise out of a profound belief that people should make their own decisions. (Cobb 2006:23 and fn 43; see also McNickle 1957)⁵⁷.

McNickle was working hard and using his organization AIM Inc. to “mobilizing tribal communities at the grassroots level through leadership workshops and self-help programs.” Committed to grassroots activism, McNickle was also committed to providing training for a generation of future Indigenous leaders to fight against termination (Cobb 2006:23; Parker

⁵⁶ Madigan also organized a legal workshop and hearings on the American Indian Point IV Program with 70 tribal delegates from forty Native communities and Indian Organizations in Washington DC  (Cobb 2006:18).

⁵⁷ McNickle, Darcy. *Process of Compulsion: The Search for a Policy of Administration in Indian Affairs.* América Indígena 17, no. 3 (July no. 3 (July 1957):269-270.
1992:180-88). His goals and politics meshed well with Tax’s, but also with those of Thomas who became a new enigmatic mentor and leader through his role in the Workshops58.

Thomas directed the 1956 Workshop and continued to be involved throughout the existence of the program. Thomas is one of the earliest Indigenous theorists to write about the North American context of colonialism. His oeuvre of works in the post-war era is originally striking contributions to colonial theory, resistance politics and relational philosophy (See Chapter 3). His innovative conceptualization of ‘peoplehood’ challenged and continues to challenge Western or Euro-centric philosophies of Community and Nationhood. Thomas, “understood the world of his upbringing—a world dominated by presence of relatives” (Cobb 2006:26). ‘Indians’, Thomas asserted are not limited by a “choice of remaining a proud but poverty-stricken people or becoming imitation white men… Perhaps the struggle we see in the world today is, in some sense, a struggle about how communities with a strong sense of social solidarity, particularly tribal groups, will enter the mainstream of industrial civilization” (Thomas 1968:139-40). “It was here for Thomas” Cobb asserts, “—as for McNickle and Tax—that the colonial parallel was strongest” (Cobb 2006:23). The foundation that these anthropologists, Tax, McNickle, Thomas and Rietz all came together in trying to articulate and emphasize was the paramount importance of kinship/relationality, that is, relational structures and relational ontologies.59

58 On the credibility and talents of Thomas, Tax wrote, “At first I thought his extraordinary knowledge about Indians was an accident of his particular background; but we have learned here that he knows world ethnology, and general anthropology, as not too many people do—he has one those phenomenal memories, like Dixon, Linton, Eggan perhaps—and he has in addition a fine theoretical mind and a great sensitivity to the way people behave” (Cobb 2006:221, fn 53).

59 Much of the curriculum dealt with the difficulties and challenges of relatedness in the wake of what we would refer to now as coloniality, settler colonialism and how to overcome these challenges, in terms of relatedness across various world views, cultural systems-values, and what kinds of epistemologies might be drawn upon. They posed questions around communication and experience given the realities of colonialism in their past, present and looking ahead.
This was the real focus of the Workshops as they were themselves pedagogically structured in relational ways. The long standing effects of U.S. Indian policy was, in no uncertain terms, part of a violent colonial project that sought to disrupt Indigenous relations while ensuring economic dependency resulting in traumatic intergenerational feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. The Workshops attendees learned how:

the BIA undermined traditional forms of governance, the school system limited the ability of families and kin groups to socialize and educate children, externally imposed definitions of race and belonging created internal divisions, and, relocation program dispersed Indian people into urban communities across the country (Cobb 2008:23).

In response, Thomas “believed any strategy that failed to take into account these historical and structural dimensions of underdevelopment would simply serve to perpetuate the very system that had created the problems in the first place” At the heart of Thomas’ workshop curriculum stood the critique of liberalism’s notion of self-determination termination era.

While discussing colonialism at home and in the global context, Thomas, together with other workshop teachers and directors took seriously their commitment to preparing participants for college and instilling them with pride while they also learned about how governance, law and policy operate in the Settler-colonial context. Thomas also challenged students to overcome any instilled notions of guilt that they were effectively turning their backs on their ‘Indianness’ through college or professional success, “These kind of bullshit dilemmas are false and come from high school teachers” (Cobb 2008:27).

The political situation, while the workshops were underway, the situation was increasingly grim and Congress’s devastating ‘scorched-earth-through-policy’ tactics were fully launched at numerous Indigenous Nations including “the Uintah and Ouray Utes and
Southern Paiutes in Utah, the Menominees in Wisconsin, the Klamaths in Oregon, the Alabama-Coushattas in Texas, and several Tribes in Oklahoma” (Cobb 2008:14). For action anthropologists the concept of ‘power’ emerged as the locus of their theory and method. While very few comprehensive materials were published on action anthropology, a core group of them with Tax drafted, in 1957, *A Reader in Action Anthropology*, divided into four parts: *Introduction; Theory of Action Anthropology; Method of Action Anthropology; and, Action Anthropology as Field Program*. An analysis of this early attempt to articulate what they were working towards reveals a vital component of action anthropology’s baseline: Relationality as it pertains to power(lessness) and the importance of storied praxis.

In the 'Introduction' of the unpublished *Action Anthropology Reader* (AAR), Sol Tax noted his departure from applied anthropology in this way:

*I often think therefore that it is better for emphasis and clarity to make a clean break by using the term action anthropology to denominate not simply a kind of applied anthropology, but to label a competing philosophy and method by which the anthropologist operates in community development programs (AAR, Sol Tax Papers).*

The distinction has largely to do with the locus of power, that is, acknowledging it and divesting oneself of it so as to not have power over others and to be better able to avoid denying or impeding peoples’ or persons’ abilities to determine their own destinies. Tax did not believe such a position or approach was achievable in applied anthropology for several reasons, all of which have to do with the political and relational dynamics of power. First, "[i]t is not clear that, from the position of applied anthropologists, hired as expert advisors to administrators with power, it is possible to reject power over the community" because when "the anthropologist works for an administrator, since his obligation ... is to satisfy not only
the ends of the community, but the ends of an administration which characteristically has its own problems". Second,

... it is difficult to avoid having undue influence over the people. In order to reject power we must actually work. We find it necessary actively to convince the people that we have no goals of our own other than a desire to help them clarify, compromise, and achieve their own goals. That is still more difficult, if not impossible, if the anthropologist is placed structurally in a position of power (AAR).

These challenges, political and the relational, led Tax to conclude that "there is an essential difference between action and a few applied projects on the one hand and most applied projects on the other...". This statement characterizes the relationship between action anthropology and collaborative research as well: Sometimes collaborative anthropology is action anthropology, but action anthropology is not usually collaborative anthropology.

Moreover, Tax did not underestimate the difficulties in taking this path:

Need I repeat that even under ideal circumstances where the anthropologist operates unconnected with administration and its power, it is exceedingly difficult not to exercise undue influence... [because] He has power whether he wants it or not; to succeed in stripping himself of this power takes time, patience, luck, and a genuine desire to do so... Insofar as we have succeeded, a major reason is that we are a group; a lone man could not, very probably, hold himself in adequate check (AAR).

Action anthropology, when understood in these terms, is neither a kind of applied nor collaborative anthropology. But Tax remained relational and open by noting that it may not be different from all projects of applied anthropology. He leaves room for the exceptional or subversive work of some applied or collaborative anthropologists who might be working in a politically relational way as he has described. Thus, the relationship between action and
applied anthropology, as a problem for the history of anthropology, is parallel to the
distinction I make between action anthropology and collaborative anthropology in that their
shared genealogies are to a great extent invisible- there is both continuity and revolution
(Darnell 2001).

Drafted in the late 1950s, the *Action Anthropology Reader*, provides an early
perspective on the political conceptualization of action anthropology with its value of 'self-
determination', which according to Tax "means

simultaneously two things. It is a check on what we will do and what we will
not do in the field. In that sense its meaning is that we cause ourselves to be
permissive in our dealings with the Indians. The logical extreme is the
position that, *where the group studied faces a choice point, their decision is by
definition the good decision* (AAR, emphasis mine).

Moreover, action anthropologists operated on the grounds that "self-determination by a
human group is not a thing that is ever achieved":

It is not a goal that can be "reached" in some definite sense - not even by a tribe
in isolation leave alone a group in the modern one-world. Rather, it is a way of
valuing one state of affairs relative to another in two groups or in one group at
different times. But even relatively, self-determination is difficult to see or
measure... [yet] *If a human group is not self-determining in some large
measure, it is recognized by common sense and by solid science to be sick*
(AAR, emphasis mine).

Maintaining the "value position" of self-determination "requires the *absolute rejection of a
position of power over the people and the community*" (AAR, emphases mine).

The Reader theorizes action anthropology without the benefit of contemporary
political philosophy and discourses on sovereignty, power, and colonialism; and, most
relevantly Foucault's concept of governmentality, which is a corollary to Noble’s notion of coloniality. This is a crucial concept that is employed here in order to speak of the relations of power in the context of understanding how colonialism operates between the various relations as constructions and tools interchangeable through the various and complex agencies of people, peoples and the liberal democratic practices of coloniality; this is particularly relevant to the co-operative understanding of the liberal-colonial logic that underscores contemporary trends towards ‘collaborative research’ and the historical break from other engaged forms of anthropology, especially where anthropology and law intersect. Tax and the action anthropologists were working on and with the same concepts, problems and challenges that comes with them.

Chapter Two of the Reader is broken into several sub-sections. In the first section termed 'Pre-emption by Government and the "Indian Burden" Tax begins to formulate the problem in terms also captured by coloniality:

the historical fact that government pre-empts the administration of services vital to the Indian community; that pre-emption has caused serious political disorganization and from the visible effects of those disorganizations the physical presence of white administrators, it appears to whites that the Indians are a burden (AAR).

Significantly, the implication here is also to assert that Settlers are NOT culturally predisposed to ‘see’ Indigenous peoples as vanishing, but this notion is reinforced via governmentality and underscored in the second section of chapter II titled, 'The 'Temporary Indians':

The general political climate--in respect to economy of government, the welfare state, individual initiative, together with Indian policies per se-- exerts much effect on the way white Tama county citizens perceive the "fact" of Indian
impermanence and how they act on that fact (AAR).

While the state sees and reinforces the Tama citizens perceptions of the Meskwaki people as temporary and vanishing, the Meskwaki "resent and resist" such perceptions "as they feel tangibly the objective fact that they are a historic political community which has persisted without interruption from some remote beginning, often thought of as Creation" (AAR, emphasis mine). The third section, *Meskwaki Values and Resistance to Change*, emphasizes the resistance to termination because

the present arrangement implies to them an earlier mutual agreement, recognition by the U.S. that the Meskwaki are a sovereign historic community and because the implication to them of the U.S. breaking the agreement unilaterally is that in the eyes of government officials, the tribe is no longer a community. On the other hand, other kinds of social change constantly occur and, indeed is sought by the Indians (AAR, emphasis mine).

In short, despite the overwhelming dissemination in the 1950s of scientistic theories lending themselves to evolutionary paradigms that put peoples and their Cultures on a hierarchical teleos of evolutionary progress, action anthropology begins with the fact that, in their example, Meskwaki people are agents of their own cultural, political and social destinies even as they are forced to contend with the coloniality and governmentality of the State. The problem then is not how will anthropology contribute to the study of culture change or assist in navigating inevitable change. The question is how might anthropology situate itself, given the value of actual self-determination and the relational dynamics of Indigenous peoples and Settlers trying to co-exist together within the culture of the state.

At this point, the *Reader* makes a significant point about history and how, "against this backdrop", that is, coloniality, "both the Meskwaki people and their Settler neighbours in
Tama view current affairs against the backdrop, largely implicit, of their sense of history; they see the same history differently" (AAR). The significant point here is that it is, in fact, the *same* history, but there appears to be two views of that shared history, which are held apart, largely due to the problem of coloniality.

The Settler version, the Reader explains, views "the Meskwaki as another example of the general history of the Indians, with their uniqueness being only in that they are nearby" (AAR). In contrast, the Meskwaki understand their history as stemming from the meeting of "two groups of people the Meskwaki and the Americans, both political equals, and both responsible to the same supernatural power" (AAR). The Reader provides, first, a brief version of the oral history version:

One Indian tells us: 'The old men say that long ago when the white men came here, and they agreed with the Indians to be allowed to use this continent, they made themselves sort of a blood brotherhood, and they say that when the Indians ask for their rights and what's coming to them and live up to their promises, something would happen to them... These white men would die... (AAR).

The interpretation of this history, which has to do with the "fact that there were promises, and that they are not being kept, holds deep significance. According to this statement, if the White men do not keep their promises, supernatural repercussions will follow. Each party must hold to his share of the supernaturally sanctioned agreement" (AAR). But, the *Reader* points out, "white men" find this explanation "vague" (AAR).

The extent to which the two versions differ is overcome by looking at what the *Reader* refers to as "the documentary record of Meskwaki history" and how it "fills in certain details not revealed by the first two versions". Noting major historical interactions between Settlers and Meskwaki and other Indigenous Nations such as the Treaty of 1804, the
war of 1812 and the Black Hawk War of 1832, the Reader summarizes some of the
documentary history and concludes "By studying the documentary record we are able to see
*the meaningful distortions* in the first two accounts" (AAR). On the one hand, Settlers'
interpretations of Meskwaki history marginalize the "present power position of the tribe" and
deem "Indians as temporary, regardless of the long history of contact with whites" (AAR).
On the other hand, Meskwaki "*feel they have access to power that, from a secular point of
view, they do not have*". In contrast to the Settlers, the Meskwaki "see no real end to their
existence as a tribe, although most have some vague fears about the future of Meskwaki
culture. Amoral vs. Sacred power: respectively guarantee tribal disappearance and
permanence" (AAR). In other words, there are two very different perceptions of the same
history of relations between two peoples, but they are not as incommensurable as they seem.

The problem is one of coloniality. The state apparatus through policy and entities
such as the BIA mediates relations in such a way that, "The circular system of causation has
been rejoined. The [Meskwaki's] variety or resistance to change reinforces the anxious
perception of Tama County white men of the intolerable "fact" of lazy persons being cared
for by the government" (AAR). The problem or the solution, rather, is within understanding
the mediating culture of the state, that is, the project of colonialism, and how 'we' (Settlers
and anthropologists) are situated within the same historical relations and what we might do
about it. Tax said as much on his boarding pass in 1977, when he called for undoing the
illegalities and returning to the Treaty relationship or 'Restoration' as he put it.

The central thesis of *Action Anthropology as Theory* focuses on the relationship
between the Meskwaki community and the Tama community and their perceptions of each
other. Finding two seemingly different perceptions of a shared history, *The Reader* concludes
that these two stories are different, not because they represent two different cultural worlds or two different histories, but rather they are unable to relate to each other as two political and self-determining peoples (or polities) due to the role of the State, especially the Bureau of Indian Affairs and individuals (who they affectionately term "dickerers") who reinforce the view that Indigenous peoples are temporary. Alternatively, Tax directed action anthropology toward relationships and the politics of storytelling by placing himself and Settler descendants within it by retelling it in terms of rectifying the situation through mutual obligations.

Tax’s ideas and criticisms of termination were quoted in the pages of *The New York Times*. In the Oct. 31, 1957 issue of *The New York Times*, Tax’s voice made its way into an article, *2 Ask U.S. To Save Indians’ Culture*. The article opened naming two professors, Dr. Karl A. Menninger (psychiatrist of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas) and, of course, Sol Tax. Stating that it was “the policy of Congress to end the Indians’ status as ‘wards’ of the United States ‘as rapidly as possible’, the article pointed out the BIA’s mandate to “terminate Federal supervision of tribes where possible and to push relocation of Indians to jobs off the reservation”60. Referring to Menninger and Tax, the article reported

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60 Tax once described relocation policy this way: “Right away you can see why the policies of the 1950s were set in motion. This attitude was prevalent then, just as it remains today. Back then, as well as today, I continue to explain to these sorts of people that the reservations are the American Indians’ homes. For all of us who do not live on reservations, what if policy makers decided that our homes are concentration camps; what if they decided that we should be freed from our wives and children; what if they decided that each of you should be freed from the bondage of the roof under which you live. These are largely educated people that have this attitude about reservations as concentration camps. Often the most educated people in society are also the most dangerous because they are able to articulate ideas and therefore to influence others, write and publish, et cetera; And, ‘‘Relocation’ has never been a part of the law of the land. I looked for that several times without success. There never was an act with a title of that sort. The Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 1950s was in a mood that promoted termination. There was a joint Resolution 108 and a number of other statues that reflected Congressional desire to terminate trust relationships with American Indian tribes. But relocation was not an act. It was a program which began in 1952. The idea was to terminate the older policy of developing and supporting reservations by helping Indians to assimilate in the general American population. The common feeling at that time within the Bureau was ‘let them become like us.’ Congress never stated, ‘Let’s move them into the cities.’ They did it subtly by changing the Bureau’s budget. (Tax 1981:9, 11; emphasis mine).
how they urged that the resolution be revoked in favour of a pending Senate resolution” and “accused the bureau of irresponsibility and failure to try to understand the Indian point of view. They expressed themselves in an interview and on a panel at the annual convention of the National Congress of American Indians” (New York Times, 31/10/1957)\(^{61}\).

Two months later, in the Dec. 29\(^{th}\) issue of the newspaper, an article, U.S. Criticized On Indian Policy appeared (Austin C. Wehrwein), The New York Times again cited and quoted Tax in a report on a panel discussion on Indian policy, “‘If a sink-or-swim policy is adopted,’ he asserted, the Indian will simply ‘float’”. The article went on to report:

After the formal session, [Tax] said the Federal Government’s policy began to deteriorate late in the Truman Administration and was ‘going from bad to worse.’ The typical white man’s attitude, he told the panel, is that the Indian will either die or become assimilated… ‘A current example,’ Professor Tax said, ‘is the present policy of the Federal Government in attempting to withdraw from what the Indians consider obligations long incurred.’ Indians object on principle to what they consider bad faith, he said. He added: ‘The Indians are frightened—even paralyzed—at the prospect of losing the few services they have, and especially the school.’ Professor Tax said that neither assimilation ‘nor its opposite are inevitable.’ Indians, he argued, can maintain their identity while making changes that will make them self-sufficient. But, he added, a necessary condition would be continuation for as long as needed of ‘the small amount of money provided by the Federal Government for Indian education and health.’ For several years the Interior Department’s Bureau of Indian Affairs has encouraged Indians to have reservations and the policy is to turn Indian education over to the states. (New York Times, 29/12/1957)\(^{62}\)


This second article motivated, William Kelly to fire off a reactive paper to Tax’s views as they appeared in the NYT report. His letter sparked a significant dialogue through the mail between Tax, Thomas, Kelly, McNickle and Alexander Lesser of the AIAA. In his letter, of Jan. 5th, 1958 Kelly, quoting Tax’s comments, remarks candidly, “the New York Times which quotes you as saying, in effect, that there is something evil in the administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs…  And if the President-elect of the AAA says that, there’s something mighty wrong someplace”. More substantively, Kelly accepts two points: First, the “philosophy of the Collier administration” with the “social principle of the dependence of the individual on the group to which he belongs as guiding theories for Indian administration” and, second, he “even accepts” Tax’s position that “Indian group life is of such important as to outweigh the damage that would flow from maintaining Indian communities and Indian self-government by means of unique structural props and special financial subsidies”. But Kelly does an immediate round about based due to being “forced to see the hard facts in the Indian adjustment trends… [and] the evidence of the damage to Indian life”. Kelly pleads with Tax to abandon his reasoning and critiques of Indian policy and the BIA stating he is not “alone in questioning [Tax’s] views and… attack on the Bureau of Indian Affairs” and “the facts in Indian adjustment are against you and I beg that you give them another look” (Kelly to Tax, Jan. 5, 1958).

Tax’s (Jan 5, 1958) rapid response reveals a sense of bewilderment and dismay. Kelly clearly caught him off guard in his critique, but he defends the article and his position saying that The New York Times did not “misinterpret my general views. I have indeed been criticising present policies”. Moreover, he states to Kelly, “… now that Indians are fighting the policy, the Bureau, it parleys into a mandate from Congress every little advantage the
Committee gives it”. According to Tax, “’termination’” is being carried on by administrative acts beyond the will of Congress as expressed in legislation, on the ground that it is “the policy” expressed by Congress. The Committee (but not Congress) supports the Bureau in this” (Tax to Kelly, Jan. 5, 1958). Yet, the most revealing statement on the issue shines through Tax’s main point that “I realize that responsibility for our present Indian policy rests ultimately with the American people, and I am not inclined to blame the Bureau, or even the Committeemen or Congress. (Though I do believe things could change radically with a different administration.)” (Tax to Kelly, Jan 5, 1958; emphasis mine). At the heart of Tax’s perspectives and views to fighting termination, but decolonization in general is the notion that it is not enough to just blame government or policy. It “rests” with American people, that is, with everyone in a popular sense; and, Tax means what, today, we might think of as ‘Settler’ society.

Acknowledging that Kelly feels the policy is “good” took Tax aback to such an extent that he decided to convene another conference on the “’truth value’ of assumptions underlying Indian policy”. Another crucial point is the way Tax takes issue with Kelly’s flat statement on individual vs. community dependency in warning Kelly of seeing Indigenous peoples as one homogenous entity with the same needs 63:

I do not think either that any individual is wholly dependent or that all Indians are partly dependent on their communities; but many are in some degree. My own preference is to encourage whatever independence there may be, but not to

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63 Tax later reflected that “With American Indians, one major point should be made—perhaps that most important thing I have learned in my lifetime about Indian peoples. There is no such thing as ‘an American Indian culture.’ There is are hundreds of Indian cultures. If you think about Europe or Asia, you know that. The Japanese are different from the Chinese; the Germans are different from the French… The more I learn about American Indian groups, the more I appreciate the richness of the tapestry. One can know a small amount about the Meskwaki in Iowa, where I started my work, or the Apaches—and specifically the Mescalero Apaches—where over fifty years ago I first came to now a little about North American Indians, but each of the peoples are as different one from another as any nation in the world is different in many respects from any other nation in the world (Tax 1981:8).
force it. This is clearly very tricky; and there is no way of talking or acting “across the board.” The “Indian adjustment trends” that you talk about may be very different in different parts of the country, or with different tribes… In light of such differences, am I wrong in concluding that policy must be flexible and start with what the local group wants, eschewing force? (Tax to Kelly, Jan. 5, 1958).

In reply, Kelly agrees with the idea of a conference revisiting the issue. In his lengthy letter, two statements are worth recalling. In the first instance, Kelly locates himself within the camp that sees acculturation as inevitable and, thus, worth supporting because that is the trend. He says that Indigenous peoples in the Southwest have assimilated too much already:

…an increasing number of Indians to seek, as individuals, to solve their economic and minority group status problems by abandoning Indian community life and Indian cultural values. We feel that this trend has advanced so far, and Indians have become so dependent upon, and enmeshed in, non-Indian institutions, that many groups could not now function as a community much beyond the level of a Mormon or a Mexican community. (Kelly to Tax, 1958).

And second, a statement that essentially is critical of policy in keeping with self-determination or the goals of the community:

We are sceptical of an approach, which places primary importance on what the Indian group wants. We feel that a recommendation to the American public, and to Congress and the Bureau, must also take into account the more powerful forces, which are external to the Indian community. (Kelly to Tax, 1958)

In seeking counsel and trying to understand Kelly’s position, given that Tax and others counted him as an ally in their work, Tax turned to Bob Thomas to try to sort out Kelly’s politics vis-à-vis theirs and smooth things out. In response, Thomas visited Kelly and reported back to Tax noting that Kelly was deeply sensitive and trying to find a way to assist
and fight termination. In his letter to Tax, Thomas noted (Jan. 12, 1958), “I think because of his fear of the disastrous effects of hasty termination he has let ‘practical men of affairs’ sell him a bill of goods for gradual termination which will solve the evils of the reservation system and get around hasty and complete termination and… [his co-workers are talking this line and the reasons for the solutions are in the same vein as present Indian Bureau Administrators’. They don’t even talk like anthropologists”. 64

Alexander Lesser of the AAIA, whom Tax copied the communications with Kelly, offered his input in this way: “The fact that pleading and action on behalf of the Indian is pretty weak justification of a decision to follow the adage ‘if you can’t lick’em join’em’. Bill Kelly even admits, after about 5 years of a ‘friendly’ approach, that he’d been given little opportunity even to ‘join ‘em.”. And, in keeping with Tax’s views:

I don’t think any policy attitude has ever been that. But it has always been clear that the Indian decision ought to be made under conditions, which make it possible for Indians to stay in their community and tradition if they choose to. Otherwise it is forced assimilation, not freedom. (Lesser to Tax, Jan. 26, 1958)

Yet, it is Thomas’ thoughts on the debate that provide the deepest and most philosophical engagement with the issues raised by the Tax and Kelly debate (Jan. 28, 1958).

Pointing out that this is not “a new thing to be discovered or recognized” because Indigenous Peoples attempted to solve their own problems by “abandoning Indian community life and Indian cultural values for the past hundred years or so” with the resulting

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64 Thomas: I think what really cued Kelly off was your remark about the schools. He has been involved in the program in the Southwest of getting Indian children into public schools. And naturally he would take offense. Many tribal leaders in the Southwest are in favour of this move. They will do anything to get out from under the low educational standards of Indian Bureau schools. They are really pretty bad. I think this move is a mistake. I would hate to expose my children to the prejudice against Indians one finds in Arizona, especially in an intimate school situation, even if academic standards are higher. But time will tell. I think the kids will pull into a shell rather than learning or, at most, become very upset.
success or failure in terms of “succeeding and remaining away and separated, or remaining away with a continuing conception of… identity and community membership, has been one important subject of our research concern” (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958). The point is, according to Thomas (and other action anthropologists) that Indigenous peoples should never have to make such decisions because these dilemmas “should not be forced to such a predicament of an either-or choice of this kind” (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958). Essentially, the choice to stay or not to stay is not the issue because “such a person making a satisfactory adjustment whether he decides to go or decided to stay are much poorer than they need be, largely because of the present structure of Indian-government relations” (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958). Definitively, Thomas outlines the problem with the whole issues of assimilation and the paternalism that interferes with the identity politics based on unfair choices being placed on Indigenous peoples because they are entirely unnecessary, paternalistic and rooted in a long-standing myth:

We certainly do not object to Indians leaving reservations etc., but we do object to an unfortunate situation which, too often for too many, allows for little more than a choice between only two unsatisfactory unwanted alternatives. Personally, pressures etc. I will cheerfully suggest that it is very probably that not less but more, and more self-secure Indian individuals would leave their home communities were the present obnoxious and paralyzing federal administration of Indian affairs be relieved! (as we suggest that it should be). (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958)

The corollary that Thomas injects into the conversation, and is crucial to understanding the theoretical thrust of action anthropology, is on “the conception of ‘group life’ and the various evaluations of its importance to Indians”. Here, Thomas rhetorically asks Tax, “I do not know of any serious researchers who think of Indian group life as referring to groups
embracing only Indians and characterized only by cultural values traditionally Indian. Do you?”. To a great extent, Thomas exposes the absurdity, and quite noticeably his frustration, of the entire false paradigm and binary of Traditional/Assimilated persons because:

Indians who are living close to traditionally Indian cultural values are happy about this, and that Indian who are not living this way are also happy about it. We are happy about it. Obviously, there is some considerable misunderstanding about the nature of Indian group life as we are concerned about it and effective within it. (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958)

The problem, Thomas goes on to articulate, is not these imposed questions or choices of identity based on a false formula, but one of relationality and obligation because,

as we [action anthropologists] have pointed out that the Indian community is too poor to provide for essential community services, and that it will be necessary to subsidize such services for some time to come, […] but] the necessarily subsidized community services involve much of the vital concerns, conceptions and role-relationships we refer to as community social organization. Where the roles of responsibility are pre-empted by outside administrators in the operation of such matters there can be no community of the sort that is expected to develop. The community itself is isolated, in terms of the larger social organization, which encompasses it, from any real participant integration. (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958)

This is essentially an apt summation of coloniality and sustains enormous contemporary relevance to current Settler-Indigenous relations (especially in Canada presently):

A long backlog of developmental experiences and learning, and a long backlog of developing community organization have been substituted for with the files, ledgers and monthly reports of an intrusive federal organization. Dickering and negotiation have substituted for intra-community relationships developed around
performance and its recognition. Perhaps among those who could best so perform and be recognized is the choice between going away and staying in such a place not much of a choice at all. (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958; emphasis mine)

And,

In this situation, a “termination program” which means merely the withdrawal of a necessary subsidy, or the substitution of one set of master, of outsiders imitators of action, for another is not worthy of serious consideration. (Thomas to Tax, Jan. 28, 1958)

Not to be left out of the debate sparked by The New York Times article and Kelly’s reaction, McNickle expressed his views of disappointment in Kelly for “retreat[ing] from a line which I feel must be held and strengthened” (McNickle to Tax, STP). But what most disturbed McNickle and fired him up was Kelly’s comment dismissing the importance of what the community wants:

First of all, primary importance has never been given to the wants of the Indian groups; Indians and their friends have asked for just that, but invariably they encountered an attitude of “Papa knows best.” Policy and procedure have always been trimmed and patched over to take “into account the more powerful forces which are external to the Indian community.” To reason in this wise, is to argue for big stick methods; and I wouldn’t expect to find even such a dabbler in the social sciences as myself on that side. (McNickle to Tax, STP)

The whole conversation sparked by The New York Times article and Kelly’s criticism of Tax, reveals philosophical aspects integral to understanding the spirit and intent of action anthropology and the kinds of attitudes and rigidity they were up against both due to the threat of termination and the pre-dominance of popular liberal attitudes that continued to operate on poorly, if not out right dangerously conceived notions of acculturation, culture
change and the myth of assimilation. Addressing these problems of coloniality on the fronts of primarily academic discourse, public discourse, and governmental paternalism, action anthropology emerges at this time as a science of decolonization. They did so at a time when such terms were not yet available. One of the most compelling examples of their theory put into practice occurred shortly after this conversation when Rietz became executive director of the American Indian Center, which was founded in response to the growing population of Indigenous people relocating in Chicago.

The Center began as a BIA relocation center that provided welfare assistance and services to help in to urban life. In the 1950s, Sol Tax’s involvement resulted in a boost of funding in the amount of a $45,000.00 grant from the Emil Schwarzthaupt foundation and the hiring of the action anthropologist, Rietz, as director (Daubenmier 2008:301). Indigenous peoples began to pour into Chicago, due to the relocation program, promoted by the BIA, and to the lack of opportunities for the some 40,000 Indigenous veterans returning home from World War II only to find no opportunities and tough economic conditions. With an estimated population of 56,000, in 1950, the Indigenous community in Chicago was beginning to swell, but few services were available to assist with their unique challenges and needs (Laukaitis 2009:6).

Despite the promotion of relocation by the BIA who embellished it by making false promises about the opportunities and economic stability relocating to Chicago would bring, Indigenous peoples continued to arrive finding neither opportunity nor stability.

As the BIA lied about the conditions in Chicago, the funding for relocation tripled by 1956. Philleo Nash later commented, “[Indian Commissioner] Dilon Myer’s relocation was an underfunded, ill-conceived program” (Bennet et al. 162; Laukaitis 2009:9). In fact, the BIA
created and articulated “an “imagined landscape” to promote and advance their assimilation program, which is the real impetus for relocation: to see Indigenous peoples move off the reservation and vanish into the general population” (Arndt 1998:114 and 121; Laukaitis 2009:9):

…the Chicago Relocation Office knew that the job market in the city was thinning, but did not communicate this information in publicizing relocation program on reservations. Instead, the BIA persisted that “splendid opportunities” existed in Chicago and, moreover, that “Offices maintained by the government render unlimited services to people who are entering a different phase of life (Laukaitis 2009:12)\textsuperscript{65} citing the Fort Berthold Agency News Bulletin, 18 November 1954, Rietz Papers NAES Chicago Archives. (Laukaitis 2009:11,12)

As this was happening in Tax’s home city of Chicago, he “made it clear that the lack of employment, substandard housing, and deficient support by the BIA led to ‘urgent and prominent problems.’ In his view the relocation program was “a one-way ticket situation where bureaucrats filled their quotas” (Laukaitis 2009:13). In response to what he saw first hand around him, Tax stated:

\begin{quote}
When Indians came to Chicago, they received relocation assistance for about six weeks. Indian families came on a train with a one-way ticket. Once they arrived, they had no place to go. They were met by somebody in the Bureau of Indian Affairs who took them to a rental house and found them a job. When Indians returned to the relocation office to say they had a problem, which they all did, they were told we do not have any more jurisdiction over you. We have rented
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{65} Laukaitis cites the Fort Berthold Agency News Bulletin, 18 November 1954, Rietz Papers NAES Chicago Archives.

you a home; if you want to move to another one, that is your problem. If you do not like your job, that is also your problem. (Larry EchoHawk et al. 1986:183).

The All-Tribes American Indian Center (AIC), as it was called, was first established in 1953 and with other organizations helped assert and sustain increasing Indigenous agency and cultural persistence not to mention Indigenous community development in all areas of urban life. Its first Constitution stated:

We, the American Indians of Chicago, in cooperation with our non-Indian friends, do hereby affiliate ourselves and our common interests in a civic and cultural organization to be known as the Chicago Citizens Council of an All-Tribes American Indian Center: to promote fellowship among Indian people of all tribes living in Chicago and to create bonds of understanding and fellowship between Indians and non-Indians of this city; to simulate the natural integration of American Indians into the community life of Chicago; to foster the economic and educational advancement of Indian people; to encourage membership in artistic and avocational pursuits, and to preserve and foster arts and crafts and Indian cultural values. (Laukaitis 2009:22)\(^{66}\).

However, the Center struggled due to conflicts over objects and the purpose of the Center, much of it caused by the ongoing association of the center with the assimilationist goals of the BIA, but it also struggled with retaining consistent leadership. The AIC had four directors in four years: Thomas Segundo (1953-1954), Ted White (1954-1955), Allen Seltzer (1955-1957), and Thomas Segundo (1957-58). But again the AIC overcome this tumultuous beginning when on Sept. 27, 1958, Robert Rietz was hired as Executive Director.

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\(^{66}\) Laukaitis citing *Constitution of the Chicago Citizens Council of the All-Tribes American Indian Center*, 28 October 1953, Rietz Papers, NAES College Archives.
Immediately following Rietz’s appointment a new Advisory Board was established. (Laukitis 2009:26-27)

Rietz’s leadership exemplified the action anthropology philosophy of the non-use of power and worked to ensure that it was the Indigenous community and AIC membership whose interests he served. Shortly after Rietz started, the AIC changed the by-laws to give ”more power to members than they previously had” and, “While the by-laws of the AIC always mandated a simple majority of American Indians on its board of directors, the revised by-laws allowed only American Indian members the power to vote in elections, motions, and new policies”. Moreover, the new Advisory Committee to the board of directors included Tax. They served merely as support and held no voting powers on the board. According to Rietz, “We of the Center Staff are not preparing a Program for you… [O]ur program is to assist you in the program that comes about from your interests and the activities that you keep going”. Rietz was highly regarded by all those who worked with him and in many ways, to Tax and other action anthropologists, Rietz set a high standard for working with communities selflessly as a “nondirective director” who is “remembered long and well by the American Indian community for his role in helping to build the AIC” (Tax 1988).

With funding from The Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation and with Rietz’ steadily committed leadership, the AIC was on solid ground within a couple of years. According to Laukaitis, “The overall stability of the AIC led to a growth of 126 dues-paying members in July of 1958 to 540 in July of 1959. The AIC in 1959 averaged 1,000 participants in its activities each month with some regular events attracting as many as 500 people. According to a 1959 report to the Schwarzhaupt Foundation submitted by the AIC’s Board of Directors,
“The amount of participation in activities of the larger community has increased. This is a matter of deliberate policy on the part of the Executive Director” (Laukaitis 2009:30-31).

The Center grew into a major cultural, economic, educational, political and social meeting place and resource for Chicago’s Indigenous population. It offered “counselling, referral services emergency assistance, casework and educational programs” (Laukaitis 2009:21). Additionally, it provided social services assisting with “[p]roblems with employment, health services, housing, alcoholism, and discrimination”, but most importantly the AIC “emphasized the importance of Indian-control in its pursuit of helping this in need (Laukaitis 2009:38). Services and programs included “childcare, employment services, vocational counselling, alcohol treatment, youth services, and family and personal counselling in addition to its ongoing social and recreational activities”. In the early 1970s, over 7500 people used the AIC whose “social services addressed many problems included unemployment, poor housing, alcohol, and drug abuse, inadequate medical care, and legal issues” (Laukaitis 2009:46). Tragically, Robert Rietz passed away from cancer on May 13, 1971 and the Center struggled to overcome the void he left behind for some years.

While Thomas took on the Workshops, Tax meanwhile kept busy. Grants from the Schwarzthaupt Foundation continued to pay Gearing’s, Thomas’ and Rietz’s salaries (Daubenmier 2008:227). Tax returned to the Central States meetings in 1957 with a talk titled *Termination vs. The Needs of the American Indian*, which Rep. Barratt O’Hara of Illinois entered into the Congressional Record. Moreover, the NCAI reprinted Tax’s speech (Daubenmier 2008:195). Aside from a close-knit network of like minded anthropologists, American Anthropology was not keeping up to speed with Tax and showed little concern or interest in termination. In yet another AAA symposium, this one on *Values in Action,*
sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Tax’s colleagues descended into mis irrelevant and hypothetical critiques with questions such as whether he would willing help a group of people who wanted to practice cannibalism (Redfield 1958:20-22; Arensberg 1958:25-26).

Tax’s candidly responded:

Now I neither eat human flesh, nor like the thought of being eaten; I am as revolted as others in our culture by the whole idea. I have no notion what I would do if I found myself involved in an action program on a cannibal isle; I can only think of jokes to say. If I attempt to answer seriously I am beset with all the value contradictions involved in so-called cultural relativism. But whatever my personal position on this, it has no significant bearing on what we should do tomorrow to help the Fox Indians develop more constructive relationships within their community, or with other Iowans. (Tax 1975a: 516)

Tax’s answer exposes the question’s ethnocentric burden that hints of both a social-evolutionary perspective and a notion of inevitable progress. In the name of progress, applied anthropology was increasingly used to implement U.S. government policies based on assumptions of assimilation.

The year 1958 saw the end of the Chicago Project with the Meskwaki as no more students would be returning for the field course after that year; yet, Tax was already onto a new action anthropology endeavour: *Current Anthropology*.

Tax became president-elect of the AAA just as he began to apply herculean efforts to changing the dynamics of the American and World Anthropology communities. Stocking notes that: “Reluctant, to implement this plan without discovering what “the scholars of the world” thought “most useful,” Tax embarked on what was to become a trans-global series of regional conferences. After preliminary meetings in the Unites States, he crossed the Atlantic in July and August of 1958 to meet with anthropologists in six western European countries,
culminating in a gathering of 14 at Burg Wartenstein, the Austrian castle recently renovated to serve as a Wenner-Gren conference center. What emerged from the discussion was the journal *Current Anthropology* (Stocking 2001:204). Tax edited *Current Anthropology* for the next 15 years.

In 1959, the first pre-issue of *Current Anthropology: A World Journal of the Sciences of Man* was sent out to the 650 people Tax had formed relationships with all over the world over the course of forty-four meetings. The journal is now well known for what Tax’s formula of scholarly exchange known as ‘The CA Treatment’ (Stocking 2001: 207). As Stocking notes, Tax spoke of *Current Anthropology* as a “‘new species of scholarly institution’- not a ‘formal Institution’, but one ‘permitted to evolve after the fashion of natural institutions, like the family or the hunting party, with which anthropologists are so familiar’” (Stocking 2001: 207).

*Current Anthropology* is considered today one of the premier journals of all fields and sub-fields of anthropology, marked by an unprecedented growth and a profound shift in international anthropology. Edited and conceptualized through an action anthropology approach, by Tax, with the support of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, *Current Anthropology's* origins are firmly rooted in Tax' personal political engagements immediately following World War II as he returned to the University of Chicago. In his 'Letter to Associates' from the first issue of *Current Anthropology*, Tax states: “As you know, Current Anthropology has been shaped not by us or any other small group, but by our colleagues in all our sub-disciplines all over the world” (Tax 1959:3-4).

Tax conceptualized 'action anthropology' as he resolved to relationally work through the question that is perhaps anthropology's most enduring crisis and ongoing source of
anxiety: what is our relationship with Indigenous peoples? In keeping with both Deloria’s remarks about Tax and how Tax learned ‘Anthropology from the American Indian’, he clearly situates *Current Anthropology* within the similar rubric that is built from his direct work with Indigenous peoples. This is especially exemplified in the way that *Current Anthropology* sought to open up the discipline in so many ways and reach out beyond the center of the Anthropology community to bring in the Periphery; a major tenet or objective of decolonizing methods. While trying to decenter anthropology, Tax simultaneously sought to open anthropology into ever-expansive fields around the world:

> a transnational journal devoted to research on humankind, encompassing the full range of anthropological scholarship on human cultures and on the human and other primate species. Communicating across the subfields, the journal features papers in a wide variety of areas, including social, cultural, and physical anthropology as well as ethnology and ethnohistory, archaeology and prehistory, folklore, and linguistics. ([http://www.jstor.org/page/journal/curranth/about.html](http://www.jstor.org/page/journal/curranth/about.html), accessed Aug. 15, 2015).

This move inspired *Current Anthropology*’s unique cross-dialogue format whereby the articles are published with selected commentary by reviewers and the author's responses to the commentary. This format together with the transnational and interdisciplinary approach came through Tax's action anthropology approach.

Tax describes this in a transcript of a course lecture he gave at the University of Chicago on June 4th, 1975. The title of the talk is *History of Current Anthropology* (HCA), which illuminates the Spirit and Intent of *Current Anthropology* (Lecture Transcript, ‘History of Current Anthropology’, STP). Two themes require particular attention to Tax's narrative history: his articulations of non-hierarchical or anti-oppression theory and his
grassroots democratic approach to ‘World Anthropology’ as a community. This provides more glimpses on Tax’s political philosophy that is part of the way he approached working with communities and navigating political complexities in a way that brings people together, allowing the space for alternative and sometimes unpopular ideas to be heard—even if Tax disagreed with them. This is the center of action anthropology that persists and is what made *Current Anthropology*, not merely the journal, but the *Current Anthropology* community that Tax envisioned such an innovative idea.

There are several considerations to account for in the history of *Current Anthropology*. Tax outlines these in his lecture. One is he began to work with the Wenner-Gren Foundation, and more specifically with Paul Fejos who directed the Wenner-Gren Foundation. A second was his successful revitalization of the journal *American Anthropologist* as editor from 1953-1956, which was noticed by Fejos with whom Tax had worked with before on significant Latin American projects. A third connection is the 1952 International Symposium where 80 participants coming from many parts of the world discussed all the problems of anthropology. Of the first meeting, Tax sets the stage of trying to work away from the old hierarchical frameworks and have dialogues where the editors were challenged and had to contend with criticisms due to a new structural approach:

> And I had to sit up there with my other three editors as a symbol of the fact that what you say isn't important unless it gets said on paper and gets into the discussion. So the editors were sitting there in a very conspicuous position and had roles where we could interrupt and say, “That isn’t clear. We're not going to get that on paper decently.” It was a kind of theory on how you get a book done, and was Paul Fejos’ idea, not mine, but I fell in with it. But at any rate, we did it

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67 The phrase ‘World Anthropology’ is one used by Tax and has been ascribed to the movement of which he was the catalyst for creating a more global community of anthropology with the intention and objective of decentering nationalistic anthropologies such as American Anthropology or British Anthropology, which were different, but both dominant in their own way.
well. We got a good discussion volume from it and the symposium became rather famous. (HCA)

Next, was the 1956, International Congress of Anthropologists in Philadelphia. This was crucial from Tax's personal perspective:

Luckily this was just after the Stalin era when Krushchev had come in and three Soviet scientists came. Of course there were many from other countries as well, but there were three Soviets, the first to come to this country, and I got to know them quickly. They had heard of me by this time and were anxious to talk to me, and I became friends of theirs and brought them to Chicago. So I had a connection with the Soviets. We were just breaking off from the worst of the cold war and it made it seem that I might be able to do something in Eastern Europe, which of course is pretty tight, if I wanted to. So, with the international symposium, the international Congress, having some connections from around the world, having shown my success; what I had now and what was important with all this and having the confidence of a foundation executive who really had money and was committed to international anthropology as I was--what I had was power. That is what power is. People thinking you know all the right people, that you can get the money, that you can do things, and having their confidence that you can do anything that you want to do is power. So I had power. (HCA)

Tax then discusses the significance of having power in organizing projects with others by reminiscing back to 1949 and the Fox Project where he and his graduate students worked with the Meskwaki Nation and the Three Affiliated Tribes at Fort Berthold, North Dakota. With these projects, he says:

we had established principles of community organization and the non-use of power and the idea of non-hierarchical organization. They fixed these in my mind and I thought I had methods. I tried out these methods of community organization, non-hierarchical organization, the non-use of power, which we've talked about here as action anthropology. (HCA)
He goes on to say:

It had become clear in my mind that the Indian way of doing it by which the whole community--a general council--had to come together to discuss things as long as they needed to discuss them in order to compromise all interests and come to a conclusion, which they did if they came to any conclusion at all, was the only solution. It was a hard process, but it was done with a nonhierarchical organization. The whole thing was like a Quaker meeting, if that makes it clear. And of course they talked for days and days, and people listened to each other and saw who was doing what, and everybody felt at the end, if they stayed together at all, that they had gotten the best decision out of it. So I saw that it was possible to have decisions made by communities, hard as it might be...

(HCA)

This is the approach Tax took in trying to determine what kind of project ought to be done with the Wenner-Gren:

I was going to experiment with this method--the method of nonhierarchical, non-exercise of power, non-planning (which implies power) and really letting an intellectual market of ideas operate. An international intellectual market. Everybody decides what he's interested in writing and reading. And somehow or another that gets fed into a kind of computer (if there were such a thing), and it comes out, and we were going to have a system as though that were the case and I wasn't going to interfere with it. I wasn't going to use the power that I had.

(HCA)

But this opens up, as Tax quickly recognized, unique challenges and he tells us another history: “So I was committed now to trying a non-hierarchical method of community development, treating the world of anthropologists as the community. Now, anthropologists aren't defined; they have no boundaries. So I have to go now into history to see how this was done”. 
The International Conference in New York in 1952 had led to the book *Anthropology Today* as well as the *Institutional Directory of Anthropology*. As Tax recalls, “they had two kinds of things-- the intellectual and the bureaucratic-- who are the people, and what are the institutions?” Wenner-Gren wanted, at first to keep up with the yearbook. In that yearbook is a significant paper by Tax which he wrote called *The Integration of Anthropology* in which he makes the argument that anthropologists are a social group—“a socio-cultural community.” And in that article he was, in his own words "arguing that it won’t break apart, that it will really be together, that there are all kinds of people who are really doing the same thing. So I was on the integration of anthropology side, and I was on the international side in this article” (Tax 1952:58).

But by 1956, they no longer wanted to do the yearbook and Tax was asked what he thought should be done. So he responded, “I’m not going to do anything. I don’t know what we'll do because I have to find out what the world of anthropology wants to do.” Thus he began with a small meeting of colleagues over a couple of days. Then he travelled in North America asking people what they wanted to do. Of this initial inquiry, Tax notes, "they began in true American fashion, I think, by structuring; what is Anthropology? What are the boundaries of it? What are the inter-disciplines and what do you want to do with this?” (HCA)

He noted problems:

The impossible thing was boundaries right from the beginning. Everyone disagreed on what the parts of anthropology were, how you should do it, and how you should structure it. What articles? You could have different articles every couple years, but they would all be within a framework because there
would eventually be an encyclopedia of so many volumes and gradually it would be worked up. And that was the conception. (HCA)

Moreover, Tax, in his account elaborates on a principle about decision-making that he refers to as the second part of his philosophy, and this is key in action anthropology as well (I have found this to be true also in my own fieldwork and experience). He says:

Unless I know something to do positively, I’m not going to do anything. This is what is known as indecisiveness, because you should pick on the least evil thing and go and do it on our culture. But I didn’t. So I never made a decision. The point is that if I don’t know what is a good decision and it doesn’t have to be made, it’s obvious that I’m not going to make it. (HCA)

Once Tax had a sense of what North American anthropologists were suggesting, he next went to Europe country by country with similar results:

At the end of the trip to Europe I discovered not necessarily a different point of view, but a wide variety of points of view, and interest in problems that were much different from ours. They were interested in problems of interchange and they had problems of language and so on. But they weren’t very different from that point of view- from the hierarchical point of view: That someone would just put everything together and know what is best to do. They were thinking in terms of committees establishing a structure, planning, and making decisions. (HCA)

At the end of the European tour, Tax had one person from each conference come to a single conference of all the Europeans. This was the inaugural conference of the Wenner-Gren conference center in Austria. Here the ideas were all shared, discussed and opened up until they drafted a constitution with three points that spoke to the Current Anthropology values of open communications, shared dialogue, interdisciplinarity and transnationalism, but this was still only the result of conferencing in North America and Europe. Thus Tax set out on an
ambitious travel schedule going around the world three or four times. He articulates the results this way:

When I went around Europe, Asia, Eastern Europe, etc., they loved the idea of not having a bureaucracy because everybody is so fed up with them. And they all like the idea that there would be nobody standing between them and the boss. You can go to the king; there is no palace guard. Through the mail you can do this. I promised that everybody's opinion would be published, and then its there--he has a voice. So there was a kind of town hall meeting on a worldwide scale in which I was simply a neutral chairman, a la American Indian fashion or the Quakers. Everyone was equal and there was nothing standing in the way between us--no bureaucracy. Every person is respected and we all like this, but we tend to think it's impossible in a complex society. (HCA)

At this point, it makes sense why Tax had and used another term for action anthropology at times, which was “coordinated anarchy” by which he also meant “organized non-hierarchy” (Tax History of Current Anthropology). Tax held the Editor post until he resigned in 1974 (Tax 1975).

While seeing to the success of *Current Anthropology*, Tax also took on the massive undertaking of a special centennial conference in celebration of Darwin’s *The Origins of Species* in Chicago that same year. Much of his International endeavours brought Tax immense recognition and in April of 1960, Tax found himself appointed to a United Nations that provided a new global forum for his politics. The executive secretary of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, A.E. Manell was also a member of the panel. Together, they were to overs U.S participation in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Tax took the opportunity to advocate for a more direct role of social sciences in development projects (Daubenmier 2008). But the beginning of a new decade
marked what is often considered the marquee action anthropology project: The American Indian Chicago Conference (Tax 1988:8; 1958b).

Tax and action anthropologists through various experiments with organization and consensus building sought work with peoples on their behalf in a fundamentally grassroots democratic way. The lessons they learned regarding the non-use of power and how to work with peoples relationally as Rietz did with the American Indian Center or Tax did with organizing *Current Anthropology* all grew out of their experiences with Indigenous peoples. All of these lessons culminated in their approach to what was certainly the largest action anthropology in the American Indian Chicago Conference.
“Racism is a White Man’s Buffalo”

Part I
New Directions: Treaties, Myths and Racisms

One of Tax’s friends and colleagues, Carl Tjerandsen, Executive Secretary of the Schwartzhaupt Foundation, provided one of the many sparks that made the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) a reality when he asked Tax to organize a conference lasting several weeks in order to write a report on Indian affairs (Daubenmier 2008:239). Tax also discovered that the university had funds available from the Ford Foundation for policy conferences. He began to brainstorm a major undertaking of an eclectic group comprised of social scientists, policymakers, members of Congress, Indigenous persons who could collectively rid the U.S. of termination policy of the 1950s and assimilationist policies along with it (Daubenmier 2008:239-41). With $20,000 more from the University of Chicago, Tax wholeheartedly believed that Indigenous peoples could come together to shape U.S. Indian Policy themselves. Thus, Tax, as he often did, soon imagined something much more ambitious and reached out to those faithful to the action anthropology philosophy including Nancy Lurie who became Co-Cordinator. At the following NCAI conference in Denver, Tax announced the grant and proposed his idea that Indians ought to draft the report. D’Arcy McNickle and Helen Peterson fully supported the idea and the NCAI approved of it overwhelmingly (Cobb 2006:31; Daubenmier 2008:240).68

Tax hurled him and his action anthropology student-colleagues into promoting, planning and drumming up support all over the country. On Nov. 20th, 1960, he attended the

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68 Cobb notes the NCAI supported Tax’s proposal because it “envisioned an undertaking that belonged to Native people. They would direct the preliminary meetings, orchestrate the conference, chair the committees, and draft the Declaration of Indian Purpose” (Cobb 2006:31).
AAA meetings with McNickle and AID board members where he asked them to hold the American Workshops in American Indian Affairs at the Chicago Conference. They all supported the idea given the experience “would afford an opportunity for Native youths to gain inspiration from seeing tribal leaders in action” (Cobb 2006:32).

Ultimately, the responsibility of writing the first draft of declaration fell on McNickle’s shoulders and he worked tirelessly on drafting this heavy document. He completed the draft on Sunday, Nov. 27. On Nov. 30th, he met with NCAI members to review and work over the draft. That is not all that motivated their thoughts in thinking seriously about the declaration. Cobb summarizes the points and objectives of the Declaration of Indian Purpose best:

The document consisted of a creed, legislative and regulatory proposals for future directions, and a concluding statement. An appendix provided a critique of recent policies and addressed specific issues, including Menominee termination, construction of the Kinzua Dam, Alaska Native issues, and Quechan water rights. Laying claim to the right of retaining cultural distinctiveness, the declaration demanded the revocation of House Concurrent Resolution 108, called for tribal consultation and consent regarding Public Law 20, and addressed a broad array of health, education, welfare, and resource development issues. In underscoring the diversity of Indian peoples, the document did not discriminate between its demand that the federal government honor its obligations to recognized and unrecognized tribes or urban and reservation communities. (Cobb 2008:51-52).

Moreover, the Declaration quoted Chief Justice John Marshall on Treaties as compacts as “between two nations or communities having the right of self-government... [and a]

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69 Royal Hassrick, curator of the Western Arts Section of the Denver Art Museum, Galen Weaver of the American Friends Service Committee, Omer Stewart, an anthropologist at the University of Colorado, and Robert Rietz, director of the American Indian Center in Chicago.

70 AID took over full sponsorship of the Workshops beginning in 1964.
universal desire of all Indians that their treaties and trust protected lands remain intact and beyond the reach of predatory men”. The richest and most complete resource on the AICC is a Native American Education Services publication (1988). It provides an easily digestible overview of the complex issues, political objectives and outcomes of the AICC. Yet, it is not widely available in its present form.\footnote{A copy of \textit{New Directions in Indian Purpose: Reflections on the American Indian Chicago Conference}, was gifted to me by Terri Straus following a panel I organized on action anthropology at the 2013 AAA meetings in Chicago. I am deeply grateful for this gift, which was kindly delivered to me by Larry Nesper.}

With an Introduction by Terry Straus, the document discusses “American Indian Tribes in the 21st Century” in various manifestations all in the vein and spirit of cultural persistence including such themes as education, language, governance, sovereignty and the challenges of recovering from the devastating, but not total effects of termination.

This précis touches on some of the most relevant and pertinent points made in relation to this action anthropology and the importance of the AICC, especially to show that the AICC was not a singular, finite event. Rather, it was a beginning of dialogue between Indigenous peoples forging ahead on their own terms together with those Settlers who worked within a relational framework as allies.

NAES college continued to foster much of the spirit of the AICC through their educational mandate to the Indigenous Community. As Straus notes in the introduction, the book “includes selected papers from NAES college seminars held in 1986, in which Indian academics and tribal leaders discuss tribal government and tribal language in reference to the Declaration of Indian Purpose” and a “entire transcript of a public forum organized by NAES and partially funded by the Illinois Humanities Council and the Illinois State Board of Education in an effort to identify
and address certain new directions in ‘Indian Purpose,” since 1961. The description of the AICC is key:

The American Indian Chicago Conference occurred at a critical time in federal-Indian relations, when the survival of tribes was seriously threatened by the federal policy of termination of tribal trust status. It provided a valuable forum for opposition to that policy and articulation of tribal and Indian goals. The AICC was, however, unique in its size, scope and impact. It served both tribal and Indian interests and provided support for the establishment of new inter-tribal organizations (Great Lakes Intertribal Council and the National Indian Youth Council), which continue as important organizations today. It led to the continuing communication among Indian tribes and individuals. (*New Directions* 1988:1).

Chapter One includes the Declaration of Indian Purpose, an Introduction and Acknowledgements followed by a Statement of Purpose, which included the assertion:

.. in order to give recognition to certain basic philosophies by which the Indian people live, We, the Indian people, must be governed by principles in a democratic manner with a right to choose our way of life. Since our Indian culture is threatened by presumption of being absorbed by the American society, we believe we have the responsibility of preserving our precious heritage. We believe that the Indians must provide the adjustment and thus freely advance with dignity to a better life. (*New Directions* 1988:3)

Chapter One includes a Creed that makes several key points, including the assertion of the existence of the “inherent right of all people to retain spiritual and cultural values” and how these are “necessary to the normal development of any people” just as “Indians exercised
this inherent right to live their own lives for thousands of years before the white man came and took their lands”. Addressing the destructive force of coloniality, the ‘Creed’ states “that the history and development of America show that the Indian has been subjected to duress, undue influence, unwarranted pressures, and despair”. Yet, the following sentence requires singular attention and emphasis as it profoundly reflects the spirit of action anthropology aimed at the Settlers and ‘our’ roles in decolonization:

*Only when the public understands these conditions and is moved to take action toward the formulation and adoption of sound and consistent policies and programs will these destroying factors be removed and the Indian resume his normal growth and make his maximum contribution to modern society.* (*New Directions* 1988:9).

In these words, there is an invitation for Setters (like Sol Tax and myself, for example) to participate in decolonization with a brief roadmap to (1) work to help the “public understand” so that they are (2) “moved to take action” and (3) come up with alternatives to (4) remove “these destroying factors”. If this is accomplished, then we will have accomplished, “such a future, with Indians and all other Americans cooperating, a cultural climate will be created in which the Indian people will grow and develop as members of a free society” (*New Directions* 1988:9). The language and articulation of the Creed is one that has resonance with a Treaty relationship of peoples working together and living freely together without destroying on another. The take away here, is when it is put this way, ‘we’ (speaking from my own position) as both anthropologists and Settlers are compelled to action through obligation.

This reflects Tax’s attitude, which is a result of his decades long work with Indigenous peoples and quite in line with his sentiment that he “learned anthropology from the
American Indians” which culminated in the fruition of the AICC. Sam Stanley summarized all of Tax’s contribution in terms of his “ability to discern and repudiate some common and dangerous myths about American Indians”:

1.) ‘Indians are disappearing’: They are either dying out or melting into the general population. Research directed by Sol in 1956 resulted in figures that doubled the 1950 census return and those of the Bureau of Indian Affairs [see chapter 3]. They showed a steady rise in the population following along the low point in 1900.

2.) ‘Indians have created and contributed nothing to the economy’: And they have always been economically dependent on whites. An article, co-authored by Tax in 1968, and published in the Congressional Record focused on the contributions of American Indians to World Agriculture. Detailing the domestication of such crops as corn, potatoes, squash beans and animals such as Turkeys and Llamas, so even Congress had to see that Indians were capable and creative.

3.) Indians are unable to participate meaningfully in and control institutionalized educational systems’: Sol directed the cross-cultural Carnegie education project. He had at least pointed out that the Cherokee Indian Nation had a thriving educational system with its own boarding school. This is prior to the time when the system was demolished by statehood for Oklahoma and allotment for the Cherokee.

4.) ‘Termination of the special relationship between American Indians and the federal government was desired by Indians’. If nothing else, the 1961 Chicago Indian Conference Organized by Sol effectively deposed that myth for most people. (Stanley 1995)
After commenting further on Tax as the “Inventor of International Anthropology”, Stanley closes with mentioning that at the 1993 Central States Anthropological Association: Sol came to pay his respects to Bob Thomas. They were having a memorial for him there and I think what he had to say that sort of characterised his life was the following words, “If there is something useful I can do, then I have to do it.” (Stanley, Eulogy, Sol Tax Memorial). And he did, which is what is captured in this narrative of the Spirit and Intent of action anthropology.

In New Directions, Chapter One continues offering Legislative and Regulatory Proposals, beginning with the abandonment of termination policy by revoking HRC 108; removing long-standing obstacles Indigenous peoples face in “making full use of their resources” themselves; and, a lengthy section on ways to make it more feasible for Indigenous communities to develop their own programs, but with assistance as opposed to oversight. In this last instance, it would be similar to the way Rietz worked, albeit on a smaller scale, with the American Indian Chicago Conference.

The same chapter presents insights on Resource and Economic Development, calling for increased opportunities for Indigenous peoples to participate in their own development goals, but with access to assistance. Most important is the call to acknowledge that not every community is going to approach development the same way and this needs to be remedied. Other recommendations included funds for land purchases so communities could increase their land base as well as gain access to more credit and loans, not to mention increases in employment opportunities in government for Indigenous persons.
In addition to these governance and development, Chapter One, includes serious and pointed recommendations on ways to improve Health, Education, Welfare and Housing. These are all major areas requiring urgent concern and attention to this day. These are followed by a section on Law and Jurisdiction, which takes a position that remains at the epicenter of action anthropology today. Commenting that due to termination policy and Public Law 280, Indigenous peoples are “vitally concerned and fearful that their law and order systems will be supplanted, without their consent, by state law enforcement agencies which, perhaps, might be hostile towards them”. This is followed by this 1885 statement by the US. Supreme Court:

They are communities dependent on the United States;... dependent for their political rights. They owe no allegiance to the States, and receive from them no protection. Because of the local ill feeling of the people, states where they are found are often their deadliest enemies. From their very weakness and helplessness, so largely due to the course of dealing of the Federal Government with them and treaties in which it has been promised, there arises a duty of protection, and with it the power. (In U.S. v. Kagama 118 U.S. 375, 383)

This underscores and punctuates the ongoing significance of the relationship and obligations that Indigenous peoples continue to insist on historically and carry forward in demanding restitution and justice to this day.

In organizing the conference, Tax insisted upon one stipulation regarding the inclusivity of any and all Indigenous peoples, whether they were Federally recognized or not. He ensured the participation of both resident and non-resident Indigenous peoples; urban and non-urban Indigenous peoples; recognized and un-recognized Indigenous Nations. “The inclusion of unacknowledged groups proved most controversial because they did not
have a formal legal relationship with the federal government” (Cobb 2008:35). For example, the Houmas in Louisiana, Lumbees in North Carolina, Abenakis in Maine, Pequots and Narragansetts in Connecticut, and other groups saw themselves as viable tribal peoples; their detractors dismissed them as “pseudo-Indians” (Cobb 2008:35).

Additionally, and disappointingly, other Indigenous rights advocates were excessively skeptical and outright dismissive of the whole idea of the AICC. For example, McNickle received letters from Laverne Madigan, executive director of the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA) who, together with Oliver LaFarge, immediately assumed that Indigenous peoples could not overcome their own conflicts and work co-operatively and others had given him the “impression that the grass is dry for a brush fire” (Cobb 2008:36). As Cobb notes, they “predicated an explosion of tribal infighting, a ‘wild free-for-all’ with ‘no earthly way of telling what the result will be’ (Cobb 2008:36). It is remarkable, given the excitement and buzz, not to mention overall sense of optimism and hopefulness that plans toward the AICC generated, that the AAIA elected to remain on the sidelines watching and waiting for the AICC to, in their eyes, inevitably fall flat and fail. This reflects a major political demarcation between individuals such as Tax and La Farge. Tax maintained an unwavering commitment to first understanding what Indigenous peoples, no matter how messy, controversial, difficult or contradictory, deemed their destiny to be before anything else might be done about it. La Farge and Madigan of the AAIA never reached this standpoint in terms of decolonization, but remained committed to well-intentioned liberal thinking of what is possible within the limits of the governmental structures and systems in place. Cobb shows how they, as with many others, “... provided similar responses- any substantive changes in policy seemed unlikely, if not impossible (Cobb 2008:37). Exhibiting
dismissive attitudes towards the AICC, La Farge and Madigan went so far as to block *The New York Times* from publishing an editorial on the AICC, co-organizer Nancy Lurie captured the essence of it all in this way, “I feel that the feelings and strivings of Indian people created the American Indian Chicago Conference, rather than the other way around... The Indian views were there before the conference, and I believe would have found outlets one way or another. AICC may have expedited their expression but did not bring them about initially” (Lurie 1968:323-24). This is a crucial distinction that La Farge and Madigan were simply unable to fathom. This is a crucial political demarcation between Tax’s action anthropology and the political philosophy of liberal Indigenous rights activists such as La Farge and Madigan. This distinction best articulated in Tax’s anti-colonial essay, *The Freedom to Mistakes* with its message of moving away from paternalism not embracing it.

The week of the AICC took place June 13-20, 1961. The conference came about following nine regional and over two hundred local communities, tribal, or intertribal meetings. Action anthropologists and many Settler people worked at fundraising, promotion and logistics. Tax deemed this “important from academic and practical point of view; it was entirely an experiment in action anthropology:

> Tax as coordinator sent out several letters which, by articulating what “everybody seems to want,” sought to smooth over “factional” differences between “Traditionalists” and those who favoured “working with Congress and the Administration” on economic, educational and health programs. (Lurie 1961; Ablon 1979)

Altogether there were over 90 Indigenous Nations represented in addition to several hundred Indigenous persons who had relocated to Chicago. A few hundred Settler observers joined them.
One of the major outcomes of the coming together of the two action anthropology initiatives in the Workshops on American Indian Affairs and the AICC was the founding of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). Founded a week after the conference, the NIYC became an enormously crucial entity in the Indigenous activism in the 1960s and 1970s (Cornell 1988; Pavlik 1998; Steiner 1968:303-5). As Cornell notes: “[Tax’s] most important contribution to the pan-Indian political activism that was “kicked off” by the conference and rose to a peak over the next 15 years had surely been his role in organizing the Chicago conference itself” (Cornell 1988:188-89).

The AICC organizers used the Indian Voices mailing list; a national newsletter established in large part and edited by Thomas. The newspaper played no small part in helping “... to constitute a supratribal communication network which was a vehicle for the emergence of a new pan-Indian self-consciousness” (Ablon 1979; Stenier 1968; Cornell 1988; Lurie 1999). Cobb remarks how the Chicago conference represented the culmination of a decade’s worth of struggle against termination and part of an even longer political tradition (Cobb 2008:31).

The following year, 1962, brought in a whole new era of action anthropology and Tax continued to remain connected to the spirit of fighting termination, exposing the myths, as Stanley outlined and participating in numerous political engagements, projects and conferences72, one which was his participation on a President Johnson’s Task Force On

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72 In Feb. of 1962, Tax served as the moderator for a highly charged debate on the subject of “Seperation or Integration”, between Malcolm X and Willoughby Abner (CORE) at the University of Chicago (See Branham 1995; personal communication, Harvey Choldin.) There is no recording or record of the debates. This is the case with many of Malcolm X’s public debates as Branham notes: : Ironically, the FBI surveillance files on Malcolm X obtained through Freedom Of Information Act requests provide the only known record of many of his appearances and include transcriptions of recording and stenographic records of many of his otherwise unpublished speeches; I Was Gone On Debating":Malcolm X’s Prison Debates And Public Confrontations- Robert James Branham. Argumentation And Advocacy. 31 (Winter 1995): 117-137. Fotnote 4 (124); FBI Report on the event stated: “The February 16, 1962, edition of the “Chicago Maroon”, a University of Chicago
Indian Affairs. The outcome of the Task Force led to Tax’s views, profoundly affected by his decades of experience fighting assimilation and racism, but informed by his sensitivity to the demands of Indigenous peoples themselves:

From the Indian point of view, we are never going to do anything to resolve the problem until we accept, as they do, this obligation, which seems to them both moral and legal, and which seems to us only partially moral and perhaps not at all legal. . . . We must give them control of the money that they require in order to develop in ways that they want to develop. The problem is to convince Indians that we have a policy which will not change every few years. We must also educate the American people to the facts of their history, perhaps by making a speech like the one I am making to a Joint Congressional Committee, if you can imagine that. But, even if we failed with Congress, we would at least have shown the Indians which side we are on. Accept the Indian program, whatever it is, as a starting point; let the Indians organize themselves, if they wish, into a federation on a national scale. I do not know whether this would work or whether Indians would want it, but it might be a way to begin economic development. We might offer to provide the means of development. We might offer to provide the means but to remove experts and administrators from positions of power. Sol Tax (1962:132–33)

Emphatically, Tax consistently pressed for a policy position that, first, begins with the Indigenous perspective. As discussed early, Tax did not mean that there was only one; each polity would have its own perspective. Second, ‘We’ are obligated to assist, especially in

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student publication, Chicago, Illinois, contained an article which reflected that subject was to engage in a debate that evening on the University campus with Willoughby Abner of the congress of Racial Equality (COPE) [redacted...] that the above referred-to debate on the campus of the University of Chicago was held on February 16, 1962, and that the subject debated WILLOUGHBY ABNER on the subject of “Separation Against Integration” with the subject urging separation. [redacted...] advised that the debate was sponsored by CORE. - http://thecore.uchicago.edu/Summer2012/features/paper-trail.shtml; http://reuther.wayne.edu/node/975; http://wonderwheel.net/work/foia/1962/040362-050762/misc-appear.pdf.
consideration of the first point. Such obligations stem from Treaty relations and cross
between our own laws, but to understand their efficacy, we need to understand Indigenous
laws and morals, which we are capable of doing. Third, we have to show Indigenous peoples
we are serious, committed and will not backslide on our obligations; our actions require
follow through. Fourth, we have an obligation to educate ourselves, our communities, our
families about our history of relations with Indigenous peoples. In this way, we might learn
about our obligations, where they stem from and commit to decolonization through praxis of
relational mutuality. The fifth is to assist without interfering, which harkens back to Tax’s
discussion of the non-use of power- coordinated Anarchy and organized non-hierarchy as
euphemism for action anthropology. These carried over into the post-AICC action
anthropology projects.

The Cross-Cultural Education Project with the Cherokee began in 1962. Thomas co-
directed a cross-cultural education project among the Eastern Cherokee under a grant from
the Carnegie Foundation and addressed a myriad of social and political problems during its
five-year research focused on literacy and education in the old Cherokee capital of
Tahlequah, in eastern Oklahoma. This is a region entrenched in a complex history of racial
violence due to relocation, slavery, the Civil War, broken treaties, exhaustive legal battles
and a contested political milieu regarding who may identify as Cherokee. The project was
designed to explore the question “[W]hy were the Cherokees less educated in the twentieth
century than in the nineteenth?” (Tax and Thomas 1969). Tax and Thomas found that
Cherokee education deteriorated because of a conscious decision to withdraw “not only from
whites, but from white institutions, including schools” (Tax and Thomas 1969:18).
Moreover, “whites saw the Cherokee language as standing in the way of the progress of
Cherokees” (Tax and Thomas 1969:18). They knew they had to deal with the Cherokees in terms of “their interests”:

The Project helped the Cherokee start a small newspaper in the Cherokee language, and twice-weekly Cherokee language radio program that presented national news, announcements of events in the Cherokee community, and advertising. Many Cherokee were actively involved in the newspaper and in the presentation of the radio program. Matching articles appeared in the Cherokee Nation Newsletter and in Indian Voices. In addition, experimentation in literacy included courses for Cherokee speakers, reading materials in Cherokee (the most important of which was the Cherokee Primer, a programmed textbook of the Cherokee syllabary) as well as bi-lingual reading material in both Cherokee and English. So-called community “integration,” the redefinition of Cherokees to whites and whites to Cherokees, involved Cherokee language courses for adult English speakers. (Tax and Thomas 1969:18)

Tax and Thomas conclude:

Education in such a situation must take place within the total community as it moves through time. The major need is to define education, and education in English, as a desirable, worthwhile goal for the total community. This does not mean manipulating people or “selling” them something in their own best interest, which would quickly disappear when the outsider left the scene. Among American Indians, and particularly the Cherokee, we have worked in terms of their educational goals and tried to demonstrate which goals are possible. (Tax and Thomas 1969:154, emphasis mine).

Just as Tax and Thomas articulate an approach to research that begins with the goals of the community of people they are working with and not in terms of “selling” them a product or
committing to research for careerist or opportunistic means. What this entails is a relationship and a commitment. Tax was keen to observe that in the history of anthropology, there are traditions we might draw upon in undertaking research, but remaining committed to notions of justice and what might be considered subjective, but especially where race, science, and politics mix, this has not been a new idea:

Nevertheless, the continuity of American anthropology appears to me to stem most directly from the British. The tradition of mixing philanthropic and scientific interests that came in the original combination of the anti-slavery movement and the formation of the Ethnological Societies around 1840 never ended in England; it carried over into America. The insistence on “pure science” which twenty years later caused “anthropologists” to split off from ethnologists was a reflection of confusion in knowledge about evolution and race. The “anthropologists” thought that the anti-slavery bias of many ethnologists interfered with the search for truth. They fought emotionally about this, and many of them were willing to justify slavery because they thought that Europeans probably were higher on the evolutionary scale than Africans and perhaps Asians. As time passed, it became evident that some races could not be shown to be inferior to others; but it also became clear that political and social policies had very little to do with such technical questions. After the Civil War in the United States, Broca complained about the foolish use of science, as we have seen. . . .

Whether we are archaeologists or linguists, students of the arts or of geography, whether we study the behaviour of baboons or the refinements of the human mind, we all call ourselves anthropologists. It will become evident also that we all carry with us the liberal tradition of the first ancestors. Humankind is one; we value all peoples and cultures; we abhor any kind of prejudice against peoples, and the use of power for the domination of one nation by another. We believe in the self-determination of free peoples. We particularly abhor the misuse by bigots or politicians of
any of our knowledge. As scientists we never know all of the truth; we must
grope and probe, and ever learn; but we know infinitely more than the glib
racists—whether in the United States or in South Africa. We are
equalitarians, not because we can prove absolute equality, but because we
know absolutely that whatever differences there may be among large
populations have no significance for the policies of nations. This comes
from our knowledge as anthropologists; but it also pleases us as citizens of
the world. (Tax 1964:22, 23; emphases mine)

In discussing the dynamics between science and policy, Tax is not identifying
anthropology with the liberal values of humanity, rather, he is defending the autonomy of
nations against colonialism outside the liberal tradition. This is why action anthropology
does not begin with either a core value of liberal equalitarianism or a simple notion of a
people’s right to self-government as a mere municipality. Rather, Tax accepts political
autonomy as a given. The acute observation that equality is not scientifically measurable
regardless of how much anthropologists “grope and probe, and ever learn” is a direct
challenge to liberal equalitarianism and the role of applied anthropologists in sustaining the
policies driven by such ideologies (Tax 1964:23).

Tracing Tax’s thoughts on science and politics from his 1945 article *Anthropology
and Administration* together with his ongoing commitments to standing together alongside
the peoples with whom he committed, at least, 40 years fighting colonial policy and racist
myths that stood in the way of forging better relations between Nations and communities in
North America: this was the challenge of anthropology and it is the legacy of Tax.

In keeping with his objectives and those of the action anthropologists, Tax continued
to organize creative and relevant panels on the topics of political importance. In doing so, he
sought to bring inter-disciplinary academics, professionals and when possible, Indigenous peoples who could offer perspective on the issue.

His 1968 AAA session on hunting and fishing rights in Seattle was catalyzed by the Puyallup decision, handed down that same year. Twenty-four Nisquallies and Puyallups were convicted for fishing in off-reservation “usual and accustomed places” with gill nets despite their treaty rights to do so, which were not upheld in the Court’s estimation.

Tax wrote in an Aug. 1968 letter to Wendell Chino (President of the NCAI) that the:

The meeting in Seattle ought to explore publicly a question that goes beyond that of hunting and fishing rights of particular Indian groups with particular treaties. We should ask whether the American Indians don’t continue to have a general right to gather food, and other materials, and to hunt and fish, on all lands that are not privately owned. Before Europeans came, the Indian people exercised these rights over the whole continent. When Europeans moved in they closed off pieces of land; it was then private property and in the new legal system nobody except the owner had rights to use it. But the land which was still in the public domain continued to be used by Indian people. In many places it still is. If it can be shown that this was accepted practice in the Northwest Territory and in frontier areas to the West—and “taken for granted”, the question might be raised when and whether Indians have lost what one might call “residual rights” to the use of the continent. That is, rights not specifically assigned, and in practice relinquished, might be recognized by the courts as still valid.

… In Seattle, I hope there might be a quasi-judicial “hearing” that will look like a Senate Committee “hearing”. Briefs ought to be prepared in advance, and testimony heard. The testimony of Indians will of course be critical; and they might include also some of the more traditional Indians.
...Perhaps, this “Hearing” in Seattle could be well publicized—even put on TV and radio to see that at the very least it would begin to educate people to the fact that Indians are a special case, even without respect to particular treaties, in American law.

...If we could break through to a new way of thought where Indians are conceived to have special residual rights to the continent, it would have consequences of the greatest importance. Most people do not realize that the fantastic changes in agricultural technology are making it possible (and necessary) to remove more and more “marginal” lands from agriculture. It is estimated that only 4 or 5% of the people of the USA now earn their living from agriculture. There are fewer and fewer people living outside the urban areas. What happens to the millions of acres no longer being filled? It goes back to forest, grassland, nature. Perhaps more and more of it can again become part of the public domain, to be used for recreation and for conservation. If American Indians are recognized as having special rights to such land—and special qualifications to care for it—it may be that a large part of the continent could in effect be turned back to the care and use of the Indian people.

In this instance, Tax exemplifies his outlook in terms of taking treaties seriously, and how to move towards creative ways to shift policy and law accordingly. Ahead of the meetings, Tax and Nancy Lurie exchanged letters that carried on a dialogue around Treaties and where to find more resources on the subject. Tax was particularly keen on trying to gather more resources on treaty. Following a lengthy letter rom Lurie that outlined several pertinent points of where they were with Treaty studies, Tax replies:

It opens a new direction; alone would justify the Seattle effort. I wonder if Indians have not already in their own way told us what they have going for
them; or else why are some of us convinced. What kind of proceeding would be convincing to powerful whites?

Therein lies a major component of the work action anthropologists carried out in terms of colonialism. Understanding and implementing Treaties became a major focus of much of their work with an emphasis on public education and changing policy. Much of the work of anthropology, as it is clear by now, became a means for ‘Studying up’ and ‘ethnographies of the state’ long before these became trendy or en-vogue methods. Tax also applied the concepts with their theories and methods to his own community.

Arguably, Tax’s most eloquent passage that communicates his firm grounding in the historical challenges and the corollary commitment to rectify the historical and ongoing injustices, as an obligation, is best This Country was Ours : A Documentary History of the American Indian (Vogel 1972):

Great nations, surely empires, are built on the destruction of peoples and cultures. Those who survive often think this is natural and inevitable, and indeed the survival of the fittest, and so are able to put aside the unjust and immoral behaviour of their forebears even as they enjoy their profits. But the peoples and cultures “left for dead” on the wayside have not died; the descendants of those “fittest” whose guilt seemed safely buried with the ashes find that the ashes are embers which burst into flames because the moral values in the culture have never changed. The fittest of earlier days were only at the time the strongest; and our culture never has accepted that might makes right. So there is no denying the evidence of past wrongs when the victims rise to show themselves. ... Indeed, looking backward, they (who are we) seem so to have reveled [sic] in guilt as to be driven to collect more and more... The march of industrial and urban “progress” and the need for money rendered untenable the rural life of the hills, the deserts, the plains; the villages and towns; and Indian
reservations. Peoples were “flushed out” out their ancestral homes and brought to light, to be seen and heard by the children of those who had taken their better lands and their autonomy ... Had they followed the “inevitable” path to disappearance (which Europeans convinced themselves was prescribed by history and justified their occupation of the continent), this story would still have been worth the poignant reading. But we must read it not only because the Indians are still here and growing in numbers and in identification with their tribal forebears, but also because *it is we*-- 200 million nonIndian Americans in the 1970s-- who are behaving still as our forebears did, still taking from them the driblets of land they have left, and living *by the same rationalizations*. (Tax 1972:xxi-xxii; emphases mine)

This excerpt exemplifies the urgent relevancy of action anthropology and provides an insightful critique of the current state of anthropology in general. Written as a foreword to a book entitled *This Land was Ours* with the 'Ours' signifying Indigenous peoples. Tax places the responsibility of this history on the shoulders of those of us who continue to believe that this land *was* theirs (Indigenous peoples’) as opposed to the unsettling fact that Indigenous peoples are persisting, not only in numbers, but in politically salient ways that remind us, not only of our history, but of our present colonial relationship. Tax implies that the title of the book is erroneous and implicitly reminds the reader that it ought to read: ‘This land *is* Ours’! Moreover, he asserts: “So much for the hangup of at least the leadership of 200 million non-Indian Americans; and one important effect of this book could be its end. Suppose we now recognize *our* [i.e. Settler] irrational block and determine not to let it interfere any longer with intelligent policy- what else would be involved?” (Tax xxiii; emphasis mine)/ What else would be involved? This is the question Tax has left to us to answer.
This is the message he carried, literally and figuratively, to the 1977 American Anthropological Association meetings, held in Washington D.C., Sol Tax participated in the panel *American Indians and Anthropologists: of Ethics and Actions*. On route to the meetings, Tax jotted down several thoughts on his American Airlines boarding pass. He wrote: "Restoration of the status of all surviving Indians, nations, bands and tribes. Let us restore their power to make treaties with the Federal government. Treaties mean that two parties have something each to give the other. Undo the illegalities A thousand wrongs don't make a right. Let Restoration be the policy as we enter a third 100 years" (American Airlines Boarding Passes with notes, STP).

Tax's thoughts on Treaties, on justice and the role of anthropology are representative of what I am referring to as the 'Spirit and Intent' of action anthropology. These are the relational aspects of action anthropology, which remain unnoticed, undocumented and, in some cases, written out of the discipline's history. In many ways, Tax's coining of the phrase 'action anthropology' is a misnomer as it provides the impression that it is merely about a pure activism without thought, theory or philosophical principles. This has led to misunderstandings about the anti-colonial politics of action anthropology vis-à-vis the totality of anthropological theories, methods and their histories. Action Anthropology stands as both an explicit departure from applied anthropology (since the 1940s) and from the current trends in collaborative anthropologies, that is, it was not, nor is it, a sub-category, but an altogether different path for anthropology; one that sustains a specific and uncompromising politic centered on a value of self-determination through 'mutual obligation' (see Asch 2014:73-99) as opposed to partnerships premised on principles of
‘equality of standing’ (Asch 2014:37-38, 102) This also constitutes the spirit and intent of action anthropology.

This spirit and intent stems from Tax's interpersonal politics and pedagogy, informed and inspired by his relationship to the Indigenous peoples he worked with on two continents. Indeed, Tax tells his story in his unpublished memoir Last on the Warpath: How an anthropologist learned from the American Indians. Yet, the relational politics of action anthropology also stem from Tax's intellectual genealogy and his work on social organization.

Tax tirelessly challenged assimilationist thought and rhetoric that would even slightly suggest to anyone the notion that assimilation of Indigenous peoples was inevitable, natural or immanent. For example, Tax replied to an attorney, Howard M. Kahn, in 1971, who had sent Tax a thirty page paper research report on the Oglala Sioux prepared for court. Tax’s immediate response took issue with the abstract saying, “I may have some suggestions on rhetoric; for example, ‘organized and measured acculturation’ will imply to many people a kinder and more effective means of encouraging the disappearance of the Oglala Sioux. I fully understand that you don’t yourself mean that and suggest only that some alternative might be wise” (Tax to Kahn). Kahn, however, did not take Tax’s criticism lightly and responded in defense of the wording of the abstract at length only conceding that he would be “...careful to avoid the rhetoric which too much characterizes discussion about the American Indian”. Kahn ineffectively qualifies his position by emphasizing acculturation while giving his credentials as a means to impress upon Tax the importance of his position:

The point is that the traditional approach to economic development must inequitably acculturate Indians to accept the traditions of the West. To the degree to which Indians are pushed toward economic development in
European terms (I suppose I have fallen on the way of using “European” for “Western” (interchangeably), it seems likely that they will continue to suffer considerable social dysfunction. Federal assistance, at least insofar as it is provided via service strategies, is not likely to help. For this I have no ready solution, other than dismantling and de-administrating to which I have already referred.

Tax responds to Kahn on Oct. 13, 1971:

The reason “nothing works” is that Indians take their community values in the first condition. The question is whether any of us can provide a situation, which will permit the Indian communities to change within their framework enough to live (as the Meriam Report put it) “in the presence of” the White Man. From the first landing at Jamestown, Europeans have been intent on “civilizing” the Indians, and from that first contact Indians have been even more intent on revisiting. What may seem to you a needed and minor compromise is to the Indians, what the cross was to Christian martyrs—the name of the game. And our problem is to help Indians without the least expectation (or hint) that they might be weaned from the sacred values of their community. We frequently allow ourselves to be bought; Indians are fully aware that any path the White Man offers is likely to lead to that hell. That suspicion is itself a major block; but the suspicion is perhaps always well based, precisely because of the contradiction to which you point. With all our technology we seem unable to invent devices, which help the Indian position without in the least threatening their values and identity. Like others, you seem to harbour the illusion that you can avoid the essence of the difficulty. Could you begin to re-think, taking as given and unalterable, our Indian clients’ first necessity? (original emphasis).

Tax seemed to never falter or tire of making the stand against the notion that Indigenous peoples were not the agents and keepers of their own destinies. On Apr. 5th, 1972, Tax
wrote a letter to in support of Richard Lee’s application for funds to support a symposium for the 1972 AAA meetings in Toronto to titled, *Contemporary Political Struggles of Tribal Peoples*. In the letter of application, Lee wrote:

> The political and ideological mobilization now occurring among native people around the world has surprised many anthropologists. One of the biggest surprises is the resurgence of cultural awareness and pride in the young people: the very tasks of cultural salvage and preservation that anthropologists are dedicated to, is now being carried out by the native peoples themselves on their own time and resources.

Understanding the importance of Lee’s panel, Tax was adamantly supportive but took issue with the language of the letter in offering one criticism: “I’ll be happy to support your proposal to the Wenner-Gren Foundation though I question a rhetoric that puts salvage and preservation first. I would prefer to help native peoples on their own terms, and not depend upon an apparent convergence of interests”. This little exchange in the early seventies exemplifies the emergence of a new generation of anthropologists seeking to address the very questions Tax had wrestled with and answered over the last thirty years of his career.

On May 31, Julius M. Klein from the County of Los Angeles’ Commission on Human Relations, wrote to Tax inviting him to “... offer your services toward the development of a United American Indian Cultural Center [at] a weekend brainstorming seminar June 14, 15, and 16, at our County Oak Grove Conference Center in the San Gabriel Mountains” (Klein to Tax, May 31, 1974).

Two years later, Robert Boyd of the L.A. Commission on Human Relations sent a letter of appreciation to Tax for consulting on their efforts for a “very ambitious project of
making a documentary film on the American Indians”. Tax suggested they call “a national conference on the American Indian” before making such a documentary.

After reading the Ford Foundation’s 1975 ‘Upcoming Reports’ about their “study on Federal Assistance to Native Americans”, Tax wrote to Mr. Sar A. Levitan, May 8, 1975, of the Center for Manpower Policy Studies:

I hope that the following sentence is not an accurate summary or a conclusion that you will publish: “Until basic social goals and political status are resolved by Indians themselves, the white man’s well-intentioned plans for economic development and social support will be ineffectual.” While clearly Indian communities rather than others need to make the decisions, which concern them, they need resources as well as autonomy. Somebody might interpret this sentence as suggesting that funds be cut off while Indian communities are deciding their respective futures!

These examples are selected from hundreds of letters with similar contexts and variations on the same theme whereby Tax is contacted for his thoughts based on his experience and reputation on the matters of Indigenous politics, especially in relation to the four ‘myths’ that Stanley outlined in his eulogy.

Yet, Tax continued to endeavour to work with people, attending panels, speaking and staying involved academically and politically well into the 1980s. On July, 2 1982, Janet E. Jordan73 of the firm Vlassis & Scott, wrote to Tax in response to a bill, introduced by Senator Goldwater, relating to the relocation of Navajos mandated by Public Law 95-0531 (amended by Public Law 96-305). A hearing for the bill was imminently approaching on July 13th in Washington D.C. and the Navajos were opposed to a mandated relocation. Jordan solicited from

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73 The law firm Jordan worked for handled all litigation of the Navajo-Hopi land problem (except for the Moenkopi case). She also worked with the Navajo-Hopi Task Force and Navajos facing relocation.
Tax (and some others): “Written testimony at the hearing about the effects of forced relocation on human communities… and Identification of published and unpublished data bases on forced resettlement for use in planning for relocation for as long as it must continue”. She articulated her challenge as:

Listening to Navajos relocated to Flagstaff, Winslow and Holbrook, it is like the disenfranchisement of the allotment system and the BIA relocation program revisited. I call it an urban allotment system without even an attempt at restraints on alienation. As many as half the families may have lost their houses already, and relocation only began in 1981.

And,

Input of a partisan nature is not what is needed. We need testimony from social scientists about effects of forced resettlement of other populations in an effort to broaden the understanding of ramifications and planning necessary to avert tragedy.

Jordan reached out to Tax and it turns out was a friend of Bob Thomas. Tax’s involvement was minor, but their interaction led to a panel the following year that Tax initially planned on attending called Reflections on a Century of U.S. Indian Policy Forum. Tax sent constructive ideas to Jordan about the panel (Sept. 30th, 1982) noting the theme is on migration. He indicated the significance of other comparative studies and encouraged Jordan, in conceptualizing the panel towards migration to think, in more domestic terms concerning the theme, especially in recalling the destructive impacts of termination policy:

I wonder if some other USA cases would be worth thinking about... In contrast, I have not heard of scholarly involvement in the forced relocation of the Georgia Cherokees to Indian Territory (A historical problem – why not?) but there is much retrospective anthropological involvement in Cherokee reaction, which could be described by Robert K. Thomas and Albert
Wahrhaftig. And of course the American Indian Relocation program (reservations to cities) associated with the “termination” policy of the 1950s had anthropological involvement, which might be described by Joan Ablon or Philleo Nash, for example.

Tax was interested in and excited about the potential SfAA panel, but more compelling in understanding the complexities of Tax’s politics is his reasons for cancelling on the panel some months earlier. In his cancellation letter to Jordan (Feb 26, 1983), Tax explained,

What happened is the nomination by Democrats of Harold Washington for Mayor. The fact that he is Black is important in many ways; but more significant is that he seriously proposes to break the pattern of machine politics and (as he says) give the city back to the people. Few believe that this will happen, and until this week I had given up hope that I might live to see any real change. But he is serious; there is a religious atmosphere of hope at last in the Black community which might well do for Chicago politics in the 80s what the sit-ins did for Civil Rights in the 60s. I enclose a piece I wrote in 1968 and had almost forgotten — as Washington prepares for the election he will doubtless win — may be critical and I want to stay in Chicago. I hope you and the others involved in our San Diego program, for which I am not really needed, will forgive me.

In December of 1982\textsuperscript{74}, Tax was invited to participate in the Centennial Events of the Indian Rights Association: \textit{Reflections on a Century of U.S. Indian Policy Forum}. From Tax’s papers,

there is a hand-written draft of what became the speech he presented at the Centennial titled, 

*Racisms and Indians*. Reminiscing about the paper that Tax gave at this conference, Vine Deloria Jr. recalled:

I am very grateful that in 1982 he came to the centennial celebration of the Indian Rights Association and wasn’t feeling too well. So we knew it was a sacrifice for him to come to Philadelphia. He made one of the most brilliant speeches I have ever heard. Summarized his whole life. Described his politics, his values, his relationships with Indians. He finished talking and we all waited for applause. And it took about a minute and a half for people to leave the spell of that speech and begin to applaud him. And somehow, he had captured what all of us of every age wanted to say about the world. And that’s the way a lot of us remember him. (Vine Deloria Jr., *Sol Tax Memorial*)

From a draft of the speech Tax gave he made several points on racism, which was the subject of his talk and panel.

Racism in the institutional sense also exists. American society is not set up to provide the equal opportunities of which we boast. But unlike other disadvantaged groups, Indian people are threatened by any separation of their individual rights from the special rights and status they have inherited. Among all of us, only Indians held original title to pieces of this Continent, with claims to more. They will not sacrifice birthright for promises of individual opportunity with or without the promised equality. Racism is a white man’s buffalo...

*Backlash: The South Dakota Experience; Suzan Shown Harjo: Congressional Priorities; Joe De La Cruz: Tribal Governments; Sam Deloria: Tribal-State Relations; Oren Lyons: Traditionalism.*
...institutional racism is for Indians a problem far overshadowed by one that is unique to them. From the very beginning, Europeans coming to these shores saw the Indians as their major problem.

This ‘problem’ also became the challenge of action anthropology.

Yet, we can only speak of the spirit and intent for action anthropology that emerged through facing the challenges of colonialism and racism as they came up and could never be easily outlined in a manual by simple or step-by-step characterization. As Sol Tax’s son-in-law, Harvey Choldin, informs us, “I think Sol would be uncomfortable if somebody told him that he had a coherent political project, because he sort of took things as they came down the pike. He was flexible and responsive. So that term, political project, does not sit right for me from my knowledge of Sol” (Choldin 2012:96). In a similar vein, Wahrhaftig states, “We didn’t intend to be subversive. We didn’t think we were subversive at the time looking on in amazement as a social movement took place and ignited new activities in dormant Cherokee communities... Yes, we did touch off a social movement, however unintentionally, but then it kind of died down and seemed to disappear” (Wahrhaftig 2012:99). Perhaps even more valuable response to ‘seeking-out’ the Spirit and Intent of action anthropology is in Wahrhaftig’s response when he say:

I think Action Anthropology, let’s say as illustrated by the process that the Indians, seeing what came back and incorporating it and sending it out again, coming back looking different, and so on and so forth- illustrates that Action Anthropology is inherently processual; and therefore as you interact with a community, you are interacting with a living entity. What you are involved in conjointly, with them producing and interpreting, has an emergent quality. So on the one hand this approach really predates the interest of anthropology in moving beyond static description and trying to account for processes that underlie cultural change, while on the other hand it accounts for [the fact] that

This single most adequate description of what action anthropology is without being prescriptive or definitive, which would not do justice to outlining, let alone understanding the Spirit and Intent of action anthropology. Not to be left out, Vine Deloria, Jr, offers his own thoughts on Tax and action anthropology as well, “Now the wonderful thing is, and I think if we reflect on a lot of stuff Sol did, there was action- there wasn't necessarily a product, but there was always a whole series of unpredictable results that made things better for people” (Deloria 1995).

It is a strength rather than a weakness that action anthropology escapes simple definition. Many of our current methods claiming to be aware of the realities of colonial and imperial powers in the social sciences and humanities are referred to as community-based- participatory-research (Brosius et al. 2005; Green 1997; Ibanez-Carrasco 2004, Lutz and Neis 2008; McIntyre 2007, Russell and Harshbarger 2002; Stoeker 2002; Stringer 1997, Wilmsen et al. 2008), collaborative-research methods (Jones and Jenkins 2008; Harrison 2001,), action research (Reason 2004; Stringer 1997, 1999, 2004) and decolonized research (Battiste 2008; Smith Denzin et al. 2008; Jones and Jenkins 2008; Smith 1999). To what extent are these ‘innovations’ in engaged research and how have they impacted research or scientific endeavours in all of their forms? What are their philosophical, ideological, theoretical, pedagogical and institutional foundations and their historical relationships with other paradigms of engaged science? Despite changing meaning in varying contexts, there is a perpetuation of specific values attached to each that seems to denote various subjective value-based connotations in regards to what may or may not constitute ‘proper’, ‘ethical’, ‘moral’ or ‘just’ scientific research; oddly, most eschew an explicit or direct engagement with colonialism. These questions or disciplinary ‘hang-ups’ are rhizomatically persistent in the histories of (oversimplified here) global empire and reflect our ongoing (unsettling?) dispositions.
as we harbor confusing feelings about our unfixed place(s) within these histories and the stories we tell (Chamberlin 2003; King 2003).

One approach is to focus on the relationships (and collusions) between practitioners and historiographers in maintaining notions of innovation and progress in terms of ethical and just engagements within the settler colonial dynamic. This is amplified when viewed in the context of the colonial encounter in North America with action anthropology being one salient form of engaged anthropology that disrupts the status-quo-narratives of the history of anthropology when viewed through the lens of a cultural analytic.

This helps draw comparative boundaries for theoretical (ontological, philosophical, etc.) trajectories of engaged anthropologies. A case in point is readily provided through a glance at the standard ways in which action anthropology is repeatedly dismissed in favour of contemporary practices of collaboration. This is at odds with the relational and anti-colonial politics of action anthropology (Smith 2010; Lurie 1999). As I have shown, Tax's political philosophy and methodology are adamantly grounded in his efforts, beginning in the mid-1940s (Tax 1946), to catalyze a shift in anthropology that begins with the problem of colonialism. Action anthropology is an early method of decolonized research because the anthropologist learns in the process of decolonization; it is necessarily relational and non-hierarchical; and, eschews liberal conceptions of equality, recognition and respect that collaboration embraces.

Tax sought to engage in decolonization prior to the discourse(s) of colonialism/post-colonialism that exist today, but it maintains traction with contemporary articulations of Indigenous Research. For example, Margaret Kovach argues that:

Non-Indigenous scholars can, however, come to understand Indigenous knowledges and tribal epistemologies by forming community relationships with Aboriginal communities outside the academy. These relationships will
demand a more organic, non-institutional approach to knowledge-seeking. If Indigenous knowledges are to flourish, there must be room for story, purpose, place, holism, and protocol, for the ceremonial, relational and spiritual aspects of life, all of which demand a natural, non-institutional learning environment (Kovach 58:2009).

Kovach eloquently describes, in contemporary terms, tenets of action anthropology as it delays research methods in “an anti-colonial manner” and this was something he learned to do from Indigenous Peoples themselves (Tax 1968); this clearly differentiates it from, for example, collaborative research because it is not product driven, but merely creates what Vine Deloria Jr. called ‘Intangible Effects’ as opposed to having a ‘product’ (Deloria 1995, viewed July 16th, 2012).

The word ‘collaboration’ means (Oxford dictionary) “the action of working with someone to produce something” or “traitorous cooperation with an enemy” whereas obligation is defined as “a duty or commitment”; “a debt of gratitude for a service or a favour”; or “an oath, promise or contract”. Thus, we see two profoundly distinct concepts that, when taken up in terms of our research and our politics, they become quite different in relational terms. Methodologically, collaboration refers to the vast range of engaged research that has emerged in the past few decades premised on the notion of partnership in keeping with the above definition. As Luke Eric Lassiter has noted in his editor's introduction to the inaugural issue of Collaborative Anthropologies:

Collaboration - the wide range of theories and practices that relate to the dynamics and processes of navigating joint projects and partnerships- has always been a vital, albeit often implicit, facet of what we do as anthropologists... [and] our still- emergent practices continue to offer formidable challenges to the conventional power differentials between “researchers” and “subjects,” and thus are becoming increasingly central to
reconceptualising conventional anthropological theory (Lassiter 2008:vii-viii).

While there is no clear or widely accepted definition of collaborative research, it is a broad category and only understood in general terms and applied in diverse ways. Collaboration may contain the potential for anti-colonial relations but the point is that it is not necessarily aligned with decolonization as it is in Kovach’s or Tax’s terms as they are speaking to obligation.

Action anthropology sustains both an analysis of and a non-colonial corrective to imperialism, collaboration does not. Yet, there remains a peculiar amnesia in the historiography and popular disciplinary narratives that seek to outline the divergent histories of engaged research methods. Action anthropology is seldom invoked in any of these text-book narratives or associated with contemporary engaged research methods. Most significantly, there is rarely present any self-awareness of being caught up in colonial relations and making this the basis of engaged research.

Sluka and Robben delimit what they refer to as the “emergence of postmodern perspectives and increasing debate and eclecticism in cultural anthropology” as taking place in the 1970s and 1980s” which is characterized by “a heightened awareness of the relationship between the construction of knowledge”, “a new concern with reflexivity, and “new forms of fieldwork relations and ethnographic writing” (Sluka and Robben 2007:24). Moreover, by identifying the reasons for these changes as “...the theoretical critique of 'neutrality,' 'objectivity,' ‘truth,' and 'reality' in empiricism, and the political critique of the discipline's historical relationship with Western imperialism and colonialism” (emphases added) their revision of the history of fieldwork methods, like others, fails to acknowledge action anthropology’s political (non-colonial) scope in proper context, thus perpetuating and reifying two widely accepted fallacies that persist in the standard historical narrative of anthropology: that anthropology did not engage colonialism before
the 1970's and that colonialism does not apply to North America (Pinkoski 2008 and Asch 2002). When Sluka and Robben do mention action anthropology, they do so only to revise history in emphasizing how the so-called “compassionate turn” is much more politically insightful and empathetic than action anthropology. They argue how “[t]his approach carries a political responsibility, which is not a return to the Action Anthropology of the 1970's, and only rarely engaged directly in the field” (Robben and Sluka 2008:24; emphasis mine). In their description of collaboration and partnership, they emphasize the key aspects that comprise the methods of collaboration as inclusion, reciprocal learning, and respect for the community. Definitively, they state that “[i]n collaborative research, the participants attempt to work together as equal, and this teamwork includes every aspect of the project – planning, implementation, problem solving, and evaluation” (Robben and Sluka 2008:21-22). With a clear emphasis on “equality”, collaboration is not premised on challenging the colonial systemic of the settler state, whereby, in the context of Canada, Indigenous peoples are not equal entities with the Canadian state, but are legally considered to be under the jurisdiction of Canada and are restricted by the settlers the very basic political freedoms; what Tax acutely referred to in his critique of paternalism in any form as “The Freedom to Make Mistakes” (1957). Instead, whole Nations continue to be treated as wards of the state who are 'protected' from making the “mistake” of turning away from the absurd assimilationist stories we continue to rely upon, such as the notions of 'Terra Nullius (Asch 2002) or 'Universal History' (Asch 2011).
PART II

Standing with Sol: Indigenous Self-Determination and Action Anthropology in Canada

In consideration of the lessons of action anthropology as I have presented them throughout these pages, the question arises: What utility, then, does history of anthropology hold for First Nations communities in their relations to the Canadian state on matters of governance? Where is the non-Native anthropologist’s “place to stand” and how does this relate to Indigenous Knowledge? In response to this question, I come back to Tax’s words and the importance of storied praxis from his 1972 forward to Vogt’s book.

The stories anthropologists write (e.g. monographs, text books, and articles) and tell (e.g. in courtrooms) have power and agency; in turn, the both act upon and create the world we live in. The History of Anthropology outlined and advocated for in this dissertation in terms of providing a cultural analytic approach that emphasizes our relations together with an analysis of imperialism and colonialism sustains the potential for decolonization in the following ways: It begins with the realities of colonialism and imperialism as formations of power relations that continue to structure our relations presently; It demands of us to know our traditions and where we come from while also demanding us to eschew the illusion of scientistic objectivity, that is, to locate ourselves within our stories (ontologically, existentially, epistemologically, methodologically, etc.) and, as Asch puts it, Find a Place to Stand (Asch 2001).

One of the stories alluded to throughout this exercise is the story of anthropology’s methodological maturity, told through our shifting discourse of engagement that is both a part of anthropology’s ongoing mythology and political sanitization and a distancing from
the painful realities of colonial entanglements. How this fits in the context of First Nations in Canada is a compelling example of the History of Anthropology’s utility to the process of decolonization by overcoming the limitations anthropologists, like Settlers and Settler States, have imposed upon ourselves. Overcoming this requires understanding where anthropology is often situated as a technology of coloniality vis-à-vis other technologies such as the ‘Law’; therein lies a primary utility of History of Anthropology as it pertains to what Indigenous legal Scholar Johnny Mack refers to as ‘the Settler Problem’ and I have previously called the ‘Settler Question in Canada’ (Smith 2011).

Approaching the answer to the questions of utility and the role of non-Indigenous peoples requires a shift in perspectives in understanding ourselves as ‘storied communities’ vis-à-vis the many interrelated subjects of Indigenous rights, self-government, sovereignty and Chief Justice Antonio Lamer’s assertion, “let us face it, we are all here to stay” (Delgammuukw v. British Columbia, [1997] 3 S.C.R 1010 at para. 186).

Mack asks, “How would taking stories seriously transform what goes on in treaty negotiations?” He provides two responses. The first is “Settler Pack Up” whereby Settlers give back what they have taken since: “If settlers took their story seriously, it seems that they would be required to confront the inherent injustice in their claim of any rights or authority over indigenous people and to their unconquered and unceded territory” (Mack 2011:287). His other response labeled “’Let Us Face It’ stems from Justice Lamer’s statement. In response, Mack asks:

presuming the constraints of our existing political context- a context in which the settler party is unwilling or unable to meaningfully confront the thievery inherent in its story- what would we as Nuu-chah-nulth do differently if we took our stories seriously? (Mack 2011:289).
My response follows the positions expressed by Michael Asch and Sol Tax. Each tied story
to a relational politics as a foundation of their anthropology and their critiques of what Mack
refers to as the “Allure of Liberalism”.

Responding to the question posed directly to Ted Chamberlin, “If this is your land
where are your stories?” (Chamberlin 2003) Asch answers by narrating our story in what
seems to be a peculiar way. Noting that Canada's position, adamantly, is that jurisdiction
belongs to settlers, Asch limits himself to only the most current story we tell to justify this
attitude:

I am relying in particular on one recent judgment of the Supreme Court of
Canada. I do so in part because, after five First Ministers Conferences and two
referendums, Canada left that story untold, and the Supreme Court finally stepped
in to tell it (Asch 2011:30).

He argues that it is important to pay attention to judges because these are our (settler) Elders
in the sense that “... they carry such weight that we accept the path on which they take us
even when we personally disagree with its direction” (Asch 2011:30). The story Asch tells is
encapsulated within one brief excerpt from the ruling in the judgment referred to as Sparrow
authored by Chief Justice Lamer and Justice La Forest:

It is worth recalling that while British policy towards the native population was
based on respect for their right to occupy their traditional lands, a proposition to
which the Royal Proclamation of 1763 bears witness, there was from the outset
never any doubt that sovereignty and legislative power, and indeed the underlying
title, to such lands vested in the Crown (Asch 2011:30-31; legal citation is R v.
Sparrow [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075 at 1103.).

It begins with who lived here before settlers. It then tells us that, despite this fact,
sovereignty, legislative power, and underlying title to these lands are vested in the Crown. Thus, Indigenous peoples did not have dominion over these lands. Therefore, Chapter 1 can begin with our arrival! It is a “bizarre” story as “it evokes an imaginary world occupied before our arrival by mythological creatures... who were not yet sufficiently advanced to have constituted political society” (Asch 2001:32). Yet, sticking to it “... is perhaps the cruelest cut of all” (Asch 2011:32).

Why do we tell such a racist and ethnocentric story? The answer is in understanding how Eurocentric thought locates Indigenous peoples in a universal history and the evolution of this kind of thinking. It is too complex to address here, but the consequences are in keeping with the theme of narrative and stories and how these shape our understandings of political organization between ourselves, each other and the world within which we live in order to understand that we are, in fact, ‘chapter 15’ of another story- the Gitxsan’s. Asch suggests we can learn these stories so we can become part of this land by accepting “...that we are like younger siblings and that therefore we can learn our place only by listening to our Elders. To do this necessitates opening Chapter 15 and taking responsibility for the consequences of what happened with our arrival...” (Asch 2011:37). This is quite in keeping with the point Tax makes in the introductory quote!

Heidi Stark’s notion of Anishinaabe sovereignty adds further dimensions to Asch’s discussion of Canadian Sovereignty by demonstrating how the Anishinaabe and Settlers engaged with each other through Anishinaabe practices. Treaty negotiators and Indian commissioners invoked Anishinaabe aspects of sovereignty in order to conduct negotiations, participate in Anishinaabe political protocols and legal orders. Stark notes:

Thus, colonial nations that sought to establish and maintain political and economic alliances with Anishinaabe nations often found themselves engaging
with and employing Anishinaabe cultural practices and discourses that were simultaneously spiritual and political” (Stark 2008:129). For example, Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris, urging the Anishinaabe and Cree to agree to the treaty, stated, “It is for you to think of the future of those who are with you now, of those who are coming after you, and may the Great Spirit guide you to do what is right (Stark 2008:139).

This reminded the Anishinaabe of their moral responsibility to co-exist with new peoples. While colonialism, or the concern over representations of colonialism, is the common thread between the various arguments and articulations, storytelling continues to hold immense importance for politics and decolonization.

Leanne Simpson furthers this point: “Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism, where we can create models and mirrors where none existed, and where we can experience the spaces of freedom and justice” (Simpson 2011:33). After all, politics are often the stories we tell about ourselves that determine the consequences of how we live well (or not) with each other. As Patricia Tuitt has observed, “No sovereign entity exists without an accompanying set of narratives surrounding its emergence. It’s through stories of settlement, conquest, exploration, and discovery that distinctive nations, peoples, and communities are constructed” (Tuitt 2011:229). Somewhere between the idea of sovereignty needing narratives and the assertion that legal sovereignty, connected to an original tale, cannot be subjugated or controlled lies a potential answer to the colonial impasse and settler responsibility.

Just as Alfred challenges Indigenous peoples to know their traditions, Asch and Tax, through a relational anthropology, challenge settlers to know our selves immensely and engage in knowing our stories as a means to decolonize ourselves and live with the peoples
on whose lands we find ourselves today as trespassers. In this way we might reach a more enriching understanding of each other and our shared, mutual politics of how to co-exist. This is the key point in Sol Tax's seminal position piece on colonialism, *The Freedom to Make Mistakes* (1956) whereby he addressed “the problem that arises when one person or group is in authority over another and has the power to decide what the other one should do for his own good”. This points to the paternalistic logic of U.S. Indian administration, that is, the same logic rooted in the pernicious ideology of assimilation, but actually tries to implement it. Tax elaborates on the colonial logic, which he exposes as a perfectly illogical, and ineffective way to foster relationships with peoples adept at governing themselves (for an example of bureaucratic paternalism in the context of Canadian Indian Policy see Weaver 1980). In this piece, Tax exposes the Indian Administration's absurd tautology that, left to their own powers of decision-making, Indigenous peoples will make mistakes because they will not assimilate. In other words, the political agency of Indigenous peoples does not fit with Indian Policy, thus, whatever they decide will be a “mistake.” Tax ends his exposition with a dire warning to the colonial machinations of the state bureaucracy: “And we are now in an era when, in many parts of the world, colonies which are not given the freedom to make their own mistakes, will take that freedom” (Tax 1956:177).

In the Canadian context, Sally Weaver’s approach to Canadian Indian Policy stands as one of the most important contributions (1976, 1980, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1993). Much in the spirit of action anthropology, Weaver approaches the difficult questions of Indian government by seeing “the definition and development of Indian government as a job to be done by Indian people” for two reasons: 1.) “the federal government would put their own construction on the concept of Indian government” and 2.) “it is imperative that Indian
leadership explicitly address the differences they perceive between what they are promoting as Indian government and Quebec’s demands for ‘sovereignty-association.’ (Weaver 1983: 65-66). Moreover, Weaver’s analysis of anthropology and government is the exemplar of the importance of history of anthropology to Indigenous governance in the colonial era. She links the need for anthropologists to study the political and bureaucratic cultures of governments by discovering how our (anthropologists’) work has been used by governments in the past, a long-neglected aspect of applied anthropology” (Weaver 1993:75; see also Chambers 1985:viii). Her methodological recommendations, crudely paraphrased, are ignored at our peril: 1) there is no “homogenous governmental perspective of anthropologist’s work”; 2) we need to prepare/anticipate rapid changes in government to remain relevant; 3) understand how one policy change is affected by other changes elsewhere; 4) we need to seriously strive to predict implications of our involvements; 5) we “must rationalize our approach against the dominant ideology and policy thinking of the day” (Weaver 1993:90-92). Hence, Weaver’s approach, through a history of anthropology that is relational and has relevance for urgent political questions is quite in keeping with action anthropology and history of anthropology.

In this sense, Action Anthropology is explicitly premised on a notion Asch has framed as “finding a place to stand” in regards to power and justice (Asch 2001) as well as the unhingable correlate of decolonizing one’s own self in the process. The key is epistemology as the primary focus of Action Anthropology (Polgar 1979:414); an intimate knowledge of how we come to live on these lands; what our relationship is to the peoples on whose lands we now live; and, the stories we invent to console ourselves of our past and deny our contemporary roles in colonial domination (Asch 2002, 2011; Chamberlin 2003).
This relational anthropology requires more of us than the current hegemonic positions/policies of ‘Recognition’ and ‘Reconciliation’.

Like Weaver, Kiera Ladner similarly analyzes Indigenous Governance and comes to quite similar conclusions: Indian Act governments are not ‘true’ governments and that it is possible for Indigenous peoples to reconcile their chosen governments with the Canadian Constitution. Ladner provides several examples of traditional Indigenous governments and their constitutions (e.g., The Blackfoot Confederacy or the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace). Ladner’s argument has a great deal of traction with some of Borrows’ work (2010, 2002) and there is a revitalization of Indigenous law taking place with the goal of reconciling Indigenous Law with the Canadian Constitution. This is mainly possible due to the now widely accepted (within this school of thought) notion that:

the spirit and intent as well of the texts of the treaties are testament to this, and to the corresponding promises made by colonial nations to this effect, history tells a story of broken promises. In situations where no treaties were negotiated, Indigenous constitutions were quite often recognized, affirmed and protected by the terms of the original relationship between Indigenous nations and the newcomers [as Stark demonstrates] (Ladner 2006:5; see also Ladner 2009; emphasis mine).

On the subject of Indigenous law and governance, Henderson provides a thorough and succinct overview of First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights (2006). In ‘displacing the context of colonialism’, he astutely reminds us that ‘By negating First Nations’ rights protected by imperial law and the common law, colonial governments negated the rule of law itself for their self-interest’ (Henderson 2006:8). His essay on this
part follows and dissects how this was accomplished through British positivism as a “‘scientific’ expository jurisprudence of the existing legal customs”:

Essentially, positivist jurisprudence sought to combine anthropological Eurocentric insight with taxonomic precision: each society was to be studied, its degree of civilization ascertained, and its legal status accordingly allocated (Henderson 2006:12).

As with Henderson, many Legal scholars have outlined the ongoing issues with Settler courts’ (often racist and bigoted) attempts to assess and utilize Indigenous Law to determine Indigenous rights, usually where land and resources are concerned (for example, see Asch 1992, 2002; McNeil 2010, Russell 2005). Yet, problems persist, mainly because Canadian Governments, Educational Institutions and, especially the courts continue to function with an assimilative agenda: “The Court is maintaining a steady colonial course from which the Court does not show any signs of deviating, and to which the Court is unquestionably committed in a principled manner (Christie 2005:19). This is true of our current assimilation paradigm commonly referred to as ‘recognition’.

Charles Taylor asserts, “the struggle for recognition can only find one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals” (Taylor 1994:50). Thus, recognition is a reformulation of assimilation whereby differences are not erased, but re-tooled to fit with the notions of ‘rights’ in a liberal society. Hence the result that “the recognition paradigm has tended to reproduce the effects of colonial dispossession...” (Coulthard 2010:34). I contend that collaborative research is too often a means to carry on the business of empire within the coloniality of Recognition. In response to such coloniality (which the ‘recognition paradigm’ clearly fits into as a cultural product of imperial
governance), Leanne Simpson has formulated a compelling response. Noting the lack of “evidence [that] there exists the political will” of the Canadian state to “shift these relationships”, She calls for “regeneration” instead of reconciliation by “Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences and significantly re-investing in our own ways of being” (Simpson 2011:18). In keeping with Simpson, Glen Coulthard argues that “…the contemporary politics of recognition promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend (Coulthard 2010:5). In step, the collaborative model in research also reproduces the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous demands have sought to transcend. Following the post-colonial commentary of Robert Young, who suggests that critical self-assertion is the key and enabling factor in developing alternatives to the colonial project, Coulthard also notes how Fanon “argued that the colonized must struggle to critically reclaim and revaluate the worth of their own histories, traditions, and cultures against the subjectifying gaze and assimilative lure of colonial recognition” (Coulthard 2010:67). He responds by asking “…if the dispersal and effects of colonial and state power are now so diffuse, how is one to transform or resist them?” (Coulthard 2010:71). Inspired by Fanon’s call to resisting the “subjectifying gaze and assimilative lure of colonial recognition” [like Mack’s ‘allure of liberalism’], Coulthard argues that Indigenous collective self-recognition ought to occur with “the understanding that our cultures have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships” and these are “non-imperialist”. Moreover, he points out how the liberal discourse of recognition has been “constrained by the state, the courts, corporate interests, and policy makers so as to help preserve the colonial status quo” (Coulthard 2010:71).
In keeping with an action anthropology approach, Simpson asserts that: “Canada must engage in a decolonization project and a re-education project that would enable its government and its citizens to engage with Indigenous peoples in a just and honourable way in the future” (Simpson 2011:23).

But it is not so simple to deal away our ‘culture’ of politics as Simpson acutely points out:

In the eyes of liberalism, the historical “wrong” has now been “righted” and further transformation is not needed, since the historic situation has been remedied... [B]ecause the perception of most Canadians is that post-reconciliation, Indigenous Peoples no longer have a legitimate source of contention. (Simpson 2011:22)

Ultimately, collaboration (and its corollaries of research methods) is operating with the same “post-reconciliation”-post-colonial assumptions! Working back to the immanent need for a relational politics tied to story to address what she refers to as ‘Cognitive Imperialism’. Simpson ties this insight back to the power of stories: “For me, this discussion begins with our Creation Stories, because these stories set the theoretical framework... [and] the ontological context from within which we can interpret other stories, teachings and experiences” (Simpson 2011:31-32).

Altogether, these Anthropological-Indigenous critiques of state policy compel us to consider other ways of being together with the ways we are choosing to live our lives. Arguably, then this is where history of anthropology, necessarily a relational anthropology, succeeds in being relevant to matters of First Nations Governance and decolonization in Canada. What most ties these approaches together are the ongoing challenges of decolonization.
Conclusion

As a history of anthropology project it is difficult to summarize without running the risk of being reductive by ‘packaging’ action anthropology, which would do a dis-service to the spirit and intent that I have tried to reveal without capturing over the course of the five previous chapters. Action anthropology, through the lens of this history of anthropology presentation and the analytic of a ‘historiographic refusal’, is shown to be fundamentally about people, relationships and ultimately politics. This dissertation conveys ideas about what action anthropology is through a few of the people that did it along side Tax such as Robert K. Thomas, Sam Stanley, Robert Rietz and Nancy Lurie, but there are countless others who remain unaccounted for. Moreover, action anthropology is shown to emerge from a variety of overlapping and intertwined contexts that are reduced to four examples. One was the destructive era of Termination policy, an aggressive assimilationist agenda about by congress HRC 108 and Public Law 280; which together sought to eradicate Indigenous Peoples by fast tracking assimilation the second was the Indian Claims Commission, which was to settle outstanding claims with payouts. The third was the growing field of post-WW II Applied Anthropology. The Society of Applied Anthropology was formed in 1941, several years before Tax started action anthropology in earnest. The fourth, which was at the epicenter of this project (where the history of anthropology is concerned) is the kind of applied anthropologists such as Julian Steward whose evolutionary arguments, as Pinkoski has shown were developed as part of Steward’s work with the Department
of Justice’s legal team to deny Indigenous peoples claims on the basis of arguments rooted in Spencerian thinking, that is, inappropriate racist and assimilatory terms.

If it is necessary to take away one final thought in consideration of action anthropology and what Tax, together with his action colleagues, accomplished with it, especially why it is important to understand this tradition of anthropology today, then it would be as follows. Tax accomplished something that many students of anthropology and anthropologists struggle with today. In calling for a sense of obligation and accountability in our research and actions to Indigenous peoples on whose lands we live, he was able to move away from studying Indigenous peoples to learning from them and seeking guidance and direction in addressing their needs—whatever they might be. For Tax, anthropology was uniquely situated to accomplish this transition, but only if we (anthropologists) could get past scientistic (i.e. scientific imperialism) hang ups over objectivity and begin to tackle especially the colonial impositions of Settler policy and law, but public education about the issues was also crucial for Tax who loathed oppressive politics and it could be said that he was profoundly democratic to the extent that he believed that majority rule, for example, was not democracy. Rather, it was the tyranny of 51% over the other 49%. A point, Tax made in his own notes on action anthropology. Thus, consensus, dialogue and non-hierachical organization became crucial to his way of thinking. It was in the spirit of decolonization of both anthropology and U.S. policy that Tax and his colleagues aspired to break away from mainstream applied anthropology in working on several fronts towards decolonization roughly between 1948 through to the 1970s. This was decades
before post-colonial thinking and the reflexive turn in anthropology, usually marked by the publication of *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1972).

I began noting in the beginning how, 27 years ago, Vine Deloria Jr., scooped my dissertation when he gave a warm and heartfelt eulogy at Tax’s memorial service and quoted him saying how when we look back, we find Tax “liberating the whole discipline... from the idea that they have to be objective scientists therefore can never be advocates”. Granted, Deloria Jr. is giving an eulogy and the point is to reflect on a life and find the best of the person through their accomplishments. At the same time, however, the historiography has not found Tax until recently or why he is important along with his theoretical and methodological innovation of action anthropology. That is, what I have shown here to be a decolonizing method that sustains a relational approach, still relevant to our ongoing colonial relations today in North America. This is the essential argument of this dissertation, but it is worth repeating: Tax changed anthropology without any of us noticing it. This dissertation stands as corrective in the history of anthropology because while it is possible to find passing references to Tax in text books where he is claimed as a kind of path-breaker for engaged anthropology, action research, community based research, or collaborative research there are some problems with the ways he is claimed. One is that he is claimed without an understanding of his politics and then those whom claim Tax quickly distance themselves because there is an assumption or assertion that, for example, applied or action research has transcended these older methods. The other problem is that he is never claimed in literature around decolonizing research, but those texts really have not made a dent in mainstream anthropology or the teaching of anthropology in any
broadly accepted way. Tax and action anthropology is all but dismissed by our own
historiography and my work is an attempt to reclaim action anthropology for its
ongoing relevance to decolonization today. At the same time, ‘action’ anthropology is a
bit of a misnomer as there does not seem to be a lot of ‘action’. Instead, there are
meetings and dialogue as opposed protesting or marching.

Additionally, action anthropology also began to consider the correlation
between ‘power’ and storied praxis in understanding colonialism and decolonization.
And here we begin to understand two things about Tax's thinking: one is he is
absolutely grounded of his self ascribed: ‘Extreme Relativism”, the other is that he is
able to work through and understand the importance of a Peoples’ stories, INCLUDING,
if not, especially his own. In order to understand the power and politics of stories or
storied praxis, action anthropologists accept, as a starting, point, the perspective of a
people as real and true, simply because for them it is. whether we 'recognize' it or not.
And I use that word recognize deliberately as it matters not whether we recognize, in
the sense that this is who they say they are to the extent that forms the basis of entering
into a relationship. Indeed, this understanding constitutes one of the most
uncompromising corner stones of any decolonizing method or approach. The ability to
start from a position of humility and acknowledge the world view or, ontologies, legal
orders that persist here and now. Indigenous laws, treaty relations, all predate our
arrival and we have, from an action anthropology perspective an accountability to
understand what that means. This comes across most clearly in two anti-colonial pieces
of writing featured prominently in this dissertation. The paper/lecture he gave to his
daughter's high school graduation class, which was later published in America Indigena
called “The Freedom to Make Mistakes (1956)”. This talk takes the racist notion of comparing Indigenous peoples to children in need of civilizing and being cared for by the state and flips the logic around in addressing the paternalism of U.S. Indian Policy. It is a treatise about self-determination and the fact that, even our children require the freedom to mistakes. The argument that Indigenous peoples were not or are not ready for self-determination because they are unable to or will not make the so-called ‘right’ choices was for Tax, colonial and oppressive, as it is to me, because for action anthropologists: any choice a community makes is going to be ‘the right choice’. If a community, nation or people cannot do that, then they are not free. He ends with a dire warning to the colonial machinations of the state bureaucracy: “And we are now in an era when, in may parts of the world, colonies which are not given the freedom to make their own mistakes, will take that freedom”. (Tax 1956:177). Remember, the original speech was written for his daughters’ graduating high school class in the 1950s! He always took the opportunity to say something publicly to any audience about these issues.

In another essay, Tax reminds us again of the importance of stories and knowing where we come from that puts the burden of accountability on Settlers to know where they came from, which remains one of the most difficult challenges for decolonization today when he challenges settlers’ to know the history of colonization and their place in it because “it is we-- 200 million nonIndian Americans in the 1970s-- who are behaving still as our forebears did, still taking from them the driblets of land they have left, and living by the same rationalizations (Tax 1972: xxi-xxii).

Aspects of action anthropology are illuminated in my dissertation from undrafted materials in the archive that speak more to what it is glossed over here in terms of
relationality, but also power. One of the reasons not much is known about these aspects of action anthropology is that they never really published much of it and what they drafted is written without the benefit of discourses around anti-colonialism and decolonisation that we have today. In fact, for the first couple of years, responses to my panels at conferences were mostly esteemed anthropologists pulling me aside to tell me that I am wrong. That Tax didn’t talk or was not interested in colonialism; they were or are more comfortable talking in terms of ‘social justice’. Why is the ‘C’ word so seemingly scary? What is it about linking Tax to a discourse on colonialism that troubled people? Yet, his own papers, correspondences and notes on what action anthropology was about overwhelming contradict this and much of this dissertation sets the record straight as Tax stated so clearly, “In 1952, my attention turned to anthropology as it had developed in the rest of the world; since then problems of ‘world anthropology’ became central to my interest. It was no coincidence that, beginning in 1948, I was also in a new approach to ways in which anthropologists could help in the process of decolonization” (The Reader).

Moreover, imagine my surprise to discover in the archive an unpublished book monograph called The Action Anthropology Reader, which looks to be written in 1957. The Reader in Action Anthropology (1957), was never drafted. Albeit dated in its own way, it is a treatise on the subject of power and non-power as the main concern of the theory of action anthropology.

Altogether, an analysis of The Sol Tax Papers where action anthropology is concerned shows that Tax did impact anthropological theory despite Stocking’s claim that he had no impact on the discipline beyond ‘resonances’. It just happened as Vine Deloria Jr. said, “Without any of us noticing it.” Action anthropology, to summarize, was a direct
response to the overwhelming dissemination in the 1950s of scientisitc theories lending
themselves to evolutionary paradigms that put peoples and their cultures on a hierarchical
teleos of evolutionary progress, action anthropology begins with the fact that, an Indigenous
polities are agents of their own cultural, political and social destinies even as they are forced
to contend with the impositions of colonialism.

I regret not providing a richer narrative with more about Bob Thomas, Bob Rietz,
Nancy Lurie, Sam Stanley, D’Arcy McNickle, Albert Wahrhaftig, Steve Polgar, and so many
others. Tax did not do action anthropology alone. It emerged from a community of people
that went beyond anthropology and included both Indigenous and Settler peoples.

What they did long before the reflexive turn in anthropology and the notion of
studying up- action anthropologists successfully took on the problems of colonialism in
North American and the challenges of decolonization. In this sense, it was a social science of
decolonization. Their experiences and writings hold lessons vital to our present day
challenges of decolonization today in Canada. Wahrhaftig captured Tax’s contribution when
he stated that “… Tax arrived at the heart of the question of persistence. His argument
brought Anthropology to a problem which has long occupied political scientists and
intellectuals-at-large: how to comprehend the core of meanings that unites a people and
determines its participation in larger political entities (Wahrhaftig 1979:258). In addition to
political relations, action anthropology can be thought of, as I have tried to show, as
interfering with colonial structures to dismantle and reimagine relations. As action
anthropologist Steve Polgar put it:

A Common justification for applied anthropologists is that drastic changes are
begin visited upon nonindustrial and minority groups whether anthropologists
interfere or not, but with our help these changes can be made less harmful and
more beneficial… Under conditions of administrative or economic colonialism the basic policies underlying guided culture change will inevitably be aimed at furthering the interests of the metropolitan elite. (Polgar 1979:414).

This is why when “one moves into the sphere of action, what one does will not usually be considered anthropology” (Polgar 1979:414). What actionists are most concerned with is finding solutions that specifically work within cross-cultural political relations. Thus action anthropology’s “most important theoretical contribution… has been in epistemology” (Polgar 1979:412).

There remains a great and urgent need for anthropology to reclaim much that has been dismissed and written out of our historiography, beginning with Sol Tax who brought relevance to anthropology by addressing the most pressing challenges of his times and ours-the challenge of decolonization.

EPILOGUE

"Now the wonderful thing is, and I think if we reflect on a lot of stuff Sol did, there was action- there wasn't necessarily a product, but there was always a whole series of unpredictable results that made things better for people" (Vine Deloria Jr., eulogy for Sol Tax, January 1995).
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