CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, Number 2
ISSN 2791-1675

Published by the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, in cooperation with the International Council for Adult Education

L-Università ta' Malta

ICAE
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT EDUCATION

Editorial Committee

Editor
Peter Mayo, *Malta*

Members
Shermaine Barrett, *Jamaica*
Maria Brown, *Malta, Book Reviews Editor*
Alicia Cabezudo, *Argentina*
Prasenjit Deb, *India*
Heribert Hinzen, *Germany*
Timothy Ireland, *Brazil*
Tonic Maruatona, *Botswana*
Katarina Popovic, *Serbia*
Patricia Rodney, *Guyana*

Contents

Convergence Volume 45 Number 2 2024
An International Adult Education Journal

Special Issue: Indigenous Women Speak

Articles

Reflection

Miscellaneous

In Memoriam

Reports

Book Reviews

CONVERGENCE IA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 145-163
Convergence/ia/e 2024

Editorial

Indigenous Women Speak

Guest Editors:
Cora Weber-Pillwax, Claudine Louis, and Elizabeth Lange

A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground.
Then its finished; no matter how brave its warriors or how strong their weapons.

Cheyenne Proverb

A few women, old now, and no longer strong. A few elder women who kept alive what the invader tried to destroy. Grandmothers and aunts, mothers and sisters, who must be honoured and cherished and protected even at risk of your own life.

Women who must be respected, at all times respected. Women who Know that which we must try to learn again. Women who provide a nucleus on which we must build again, women who will share with us if we ask them. Women who love us.

Indigenous Woman Elder speaking to Anne Cameron 1981, p. 59-60

Introduction: Circle Dialogue in Oral Knowledge Traditions

Indigenous knowledge generally relies on oral transmission, oralcy rather than literacy. Oral knowledge traditions are "the means by which knowledge is reproduced, preserved, and conveyed from generation to generation. Oral traditions form the foundation of Aboriginal societies, connecting speaker and listener in communal experience and uniting past and present in memory" (Hulan and Eigenbrod 2008, p. 7).

In contrast to written word, disputation, and individual debate traditions, oral knowledge traditions often use circle dialogues for generating and transmitting communal knowledge and for building community. Circle dialogue or circle talk is defined by Christina Baldwin as "a way of speaking at a deeper level of conversation [that emerges from] a consecrated [or sacred] way of being together" (Baldwin 1994, p. 229). The circle format conveys that members share mutual responsibility for the purpose and outcomes of dialogue, such as building knowledge or solving problems for the people. Circle dialogue is being used in a variety of settings, such as healing circles, sharing circles, council circles, Elder circles, storytelling circles, cultural events, and ceremonies. At a deeper level, there is a "living dynamic" in the circle where a circle consciousness emerges among participants (Baldwin 1994, p. 230). This is described by some as individual consciousness merging into a group consciousness (Baldwin 1994).

One contemporary practice often shared among Indigenous Peoples is the use of respected objects such as talking sticks, eagle feathers, or rocks to support the speaking movement around a circle. Talking sticks and other objects created and prepared specifically to serve circle events are handled with consideration and respect because of the significance attributed to their function. Objects to support the circle in this manner are designated according to the intention or purpose of the circle. Often ornately carved with tribally-affiliated symbols, talking sticks and other tools also serve as reminders of the protocols of conduct for speaking and listening. The person who holds the talking stick holds the right to speak uninterrupted until they are finished. All others in the circle hold the responsibility to listen and hear, in an atmosphere of quiet and respect.

Most often, knowledge and meaning are considered alive in the present, rather than static and fixed as occurs in the process of writing and literacy. Participants speak into the centre rather than in response to other speakers. This form of dialogue is an integrative process where all that has gone before is heard, and the speaker offers their thoughts to the present whole. Explained by a Mi'kmaq Hereditary Chief, the process unfolds in this way:

> The Elders would serve as mnemonic pegs to each other. They will be speaking individually uninterrupted in a circle one after another. When each Elder spoke they were conscious that other Elders would serve as 'peer reviewer' [and so] they did not delve into subject matter that would be questionable. They did joke with each other and they told stories, some true and some a bit exaggerated, but in the end the result was a collective memory. This is the part which is exciting because when each Elder arrived, they brought with them a piece of the knowledge puzzle. They had to reach back to the teachings of their parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents. These teachings were shared in the circle and these constituted a reconnaissance of collective memory and knowledge. In the end the Elders left with a knowledge that was built by the collectivity (Augustine 2008)

This special issue, Indigenous Women Speak, can be considered a circle dialogue. In doing so, oralcy and literacy are considered complementary not binary. Thus, this is an invitation for you to hear the voices of Indigenous women, including the truths about their historical and contemporary lived experiences. Each story is a testament to the importance of women as the wellbeing and strength of their communities. Each voice builds the collective knowledge about pathways toward the health and ongoing resilience of Indigenous peoples. Each voice provides guidance for educators in the decolonizing and indigenizing of their learning and teaching practices. Further, Indigenous knowledge, especially the knowledge and wisdom of women, is much needed by humanity in this troubled moment.

The Act of Speaking

Etymologically, the Greek agoreuo means to "to speak, explain" and was referred to speaking in the agora or public assembly. From Old English, to speak means to “utter words articulately” using the power of speech and speech-making for an audience (Online Eytmological Dictionary, nd.) What stands behind this special journal issue is courage, the courage exhibited by Indigenous women over centuries of colonialism and now, the courage to speak, to say their words powerfully, into this public space.

When the juggernaut of patriarchal colonization mercilessly rolled across whole continents, Indigenous women were stripped of their roles and functions in their communities, especially their leadership roles and influence as advisors and decision makers, as colonists refused to deal with women. Thus, the authors in this issue are using the power of speech as a “talking back to” what they have endured, across all inconsolable losses (hooks 1988). The papers also “speak to” some of the pathways for strengthening selves, cultures, and communities, including the reclamation of identities and relations particularly to Land, and for envisioning pathways toward personal and community health using Indigenous knowledge systems and pedagogies.

This issue will be of interest to educators and scholars across the spectrum of lifelong education. Indigenous women’s voices can provide guidance and inspiration to those who have lost connection to their familial and cultural history. This issue will speak of courage to those whose communities struggle with constant crises from the legacy of colonization. It will support the efforts of women and men rebuilding reverence for women in their societies. And it offers hope for educators, sacred knowledge keepers, and story tellers in their societies.

Context: Indigenous and Colonial Realities

To be Indigenous is to be original inhabitants of a place, living in long-term relation to that place (Sefa Dei, 2000), thereby developing a culture in an extensive association with Land. Typically, the Land is understood as a sacred and active entity. Many Indigenous people describe a

spiritual understanding in which the responsibility of the human species is to be attentive to and synchronize with the sacred balance between cosmic forces and Earth life forces, attending to imbalances as they occur (Nelson, 2008; Williams, 2013). Yet, this original purpose and the related knowledge systems, consciousness and societal structures of over 1600 Tribal Peoples in North America (Carapella, 2024) were successively obliterated by colonialism until only remnants remain. In the Americas alone, 70-100 million people lost their lives (Paul, 2006). To add some sense of scale, the transatlantic slave trade resulted in the additional deaths of 15-28 million Africans (UNESCO, 2021). Such "clearances" (Daschuk, 2013) were considered necessary by colonists for creating the conditions for ensuing settler-colonialism (Shoemaker, 2015). These processes were repeated in all "the colonies" of the European empires, including the Americas, Africa, Asia and the South Pacific.

In the genealogy of colonialism (Lee, 2015), typical colonial strategies include: torture, violence, and wholesale slaughter of Indigenous people; extermination of key means of life such as the buffalo; violent dispossession from a land base and forced migration, often multiple times; forced assimilation into colonial societies including laws, norms and institutions; unfairly negotiated and unfulfilled treaties for wresting control over the majority of the land; deliberate introduction of disease; control over resources to dominate the original inhabitants; stealing of resources and cultural objects for the enrichment and enjoyment of settler-origin nations evident in palaces, museums, and cathedrals throughout Europe; physical segregation onto reserves, pass systems, and other apartheid systems; slavery and indentured labour; criminalization of spiritual practices; the scoop of children into non-Indigenous foster care; preventing enfranchisement; and extensive use of incarceration especially aimed to weaken or remove political, spiritual, and intellectual leadership from the people (Louis, 2021).

The overall goal was genocide. Physical genocide is the mass killing of one targeted group (Sinclair 2024, p. 279). When that is unsuccessful, then cultural genocide aims at the destruction of the structures and practices that enable the continuance of a group. A national inquiry in Canada describes this:

> The objectives of a plan of genocide would include actions aimed at the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups (NIMMIWG 2017, p. 50)

One of the most nefarious strategies after the attempt at overt elimination, were residential schools whose sole aim was erasure of any Indigenous culture. Indigenous people were considered "savages" and "heathens"; civilizing and Christianizing were the strategies selected by Canada for explicit and complete Indigenous assimilation. To achieve this objective, Canada established federal policy and administrative processes that authorized Christian churches to operationalize and maintain a system of Indian residential schooling from the 1880s until the 1990s (Sinclair 2024, p. 281).

These education systems facilitated the elimination of Traditional Indigenous languages, cultural and spiritual expressions, ancestral traditions, Traditional methods of teaching, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. It was here that young people were systematically taught that their cultures and communities were backward, barbaric, uncivilized with no written culture, that they lacked any real culture or economy, their Indigenous bodies were dirty and clothes unbecoming, that as heathens they were destined for hell without the embrace of Christianity, and that Indigenous peoples were largely inferior, drunken, and lazy. As Weber-Pillwax explains, "European thinking has historically been confident of its understanding of Indigenous thought and being […and] the belief that the European understanding is…a naturally superior capacity for thought" (Weber-Pillwax 2003, p. 184). This process of denigrating Indigenous cultures, especially their knowledge systems through education (and research) processes, occurred globally (Smith, 1999; Sefa Dei, 2000; Prakash and Esteva 2008; Maitra and Guo, 2019; Santos, 2018; Hoppers, 2021). This is an important context for the papers that comprise this collection.

To describe this process in Canada, government officials, often including the police forces, went community by community to round up school age children, tearing them away literally from parents and grandparents, traumatizing children and whole communities. Generally, when young people first arrived at a residential school, often hundreds of miles away, their Traditional clothes were removed, their bodies "sanitized", and their hair cut, a significantly traumatizing assault on their spiritual sense of being. They were not allowed to have contact with other family members in the school and could not utter one word of their native language without experiencing harsh consequences. Many children died from violence, abuse, malnutrition, and illness while others survived years of constant fear, hunger and poor diets, deep loneliness, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse. As Justice Murray Sinclair describes in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, 2015:

> While some people regard the schools established under that system as centres of education, they were, in reality, centres of cultural indoctrination. The most alarming aspect of the system was that its target and its victims were the most vulnerable of society: little children. Removed from their families and home communities, seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity through a systematic and concerted effort to extinguish their culture, language, and spirit. The schools were part of a larger effort by Canadian authorities to force Indigenous peoples to assimilate by the outlawing of sacred ceremonies and important traditions. It is clear that residential schools were a key component of a Canadian government policy of cultural genocide (Sinclair 2015).

Many children never returned home from the schools, and their families were never informed about what might have happened to them. Many First Nations are now using ground penetrating radar to search for unmarked graves of children who had attended residential schools, to provide themselves and their people a more accurate picture of this history and to grieve their losses. In the 160 years of residential schools in Canada, it is estimated that there could be 6,000 to 25,000 children in

graveyards, the last Indian residential school closing in 1997 (Sinclair, 2015).

Physically confined in the residential schools to a life of constant assault on every aspect of their beings - minds, spirits, and bodies - survivors returned home to challenging lives and required the support of a variety of coping mechanisms to exist as adults. The duration of residential school survivors' abuse as children has impacted multiple generations. Many Indigenous families and communities continue to discuss the legacy of harm and violence from residential school experiences. The challenges of building good lives around daily struggles with multiple forms of assault and violence associated with substance abuse, depression and mental illness, major physical health issues, suicides, poverty, homelessness, and incarceration are often linked to the residential schools of Indigenous lives in the past. The multigenerational impact of residential schooling was foundational for the attainment of total assimilation of Indigenous people. Destroying the lines of knowledge transmission for Indigenous parenting was crucial to ensure the longevity of residential school multigenerational impacts.

The late Justice Murray Sinclair is quoted as saying "Since education got us into this mess, education must get us out of it" (Robertson in Sinclair, 2024). The resilience of Indigenous people is the starting place, illustrated throughout the papers in this collection.

> [T]hat any Indigenous person survived the culturally crushing experience of the schools is a testament to their resilience, and to the determination of those members of their families and communities who struggled to maintain and pass on to them what remained of their diminishing languages and traditions. As each generation passed through the doorways of the schools, the ability to pass on those languages and traditions was systematically undermined. The schools and Canada's overall treatment of its Indigenous peoples have seriously affected Indigenous pride and self-respect and have caused individuals and communities to lose their capacity to cope with the daily tasks of living. The evidence of that is seen in

> the serious social conditions that Canada's Indigenous people face (Sinclair 2015, p. vii).

Yet, this assault is not over. We consider ourselves still in a "constant state of war" (Weber-Pillwax 2003, p. 12). We are still "experiencing genocide" (Louis, 2024). The Western system of education continues to tear away self-respect, gender-respect, and cultural respect, alienating Indigenous learners from innate creativity, joy, and curiosity in learning (Cajete, 2000; Illich, 1970) and from the Land that gives us life (Nelson, 2008; Cajete, 1999). A potentially positive and far-reaching action of national governments has been the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions and processes. These national policies have the potential to make deep positive inroads into education and other areas of human services to strengthen the capacity of all people, and particularly Indigenous people, to access, utilize, and enliven their respective Indigenous knowledge systems through active engagement and application into daily lives.

Cultural Knowledge Reclamation: Sacredness of Women and Girls

Traditionally, women and girls are considered sacred. As Kathy Louis explains: the literal meaning of "sacred" in Indigenous philosophy is "Creator-gifting, Creator-power-gifting." In other words, women were given specific, sacred gifts by the Creator which are meant to be used for the good of the community, and more generally, for the good of humanity (Louis, 2015 in NIMMIWG, p. 40). One of the sacred gifts is their own being as a "portal of life" (p. 40) through which the People continue.

As caregivers and educators, women enable the maintenance, vitality, and sustainability of their communities in multitudes of ways. Their perspectives and knowledge on Life and its sustaining, enlivening ways are meant to balance other human inclinations. As the Canadian National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Women and Girls (NIMMIWG) explains, women and girls are considered the origin and "heart of the community" (NIMMIWG 2015, p. 129). Recognizing each other's gifts builds strong communities.

> It's about us following those teachings that our ancestors put in place for us, those teachings of kindness and respect, truth, honesty, humility, love, wisdom, about living those ways of life. Trying to look at each other as a valuable portion of a community, what gifts does that person have to bring to the table, so that we can become a very rich table, right? When we honour our own gifts and the gifts in others, we are recognizing the sacred in all of us (NIMMIWG 2015, p. 41).

Thus, the resurgence of Indigenous nations begins with the health and wellbeing of women and their gifts. "There is no nationhood without women … without women playing a fundamental and equal role within that Nation. There is no nationhood without that" (NIMMIWG, p. 42).

Yet, this ancient, sacred regard for Indigenous women was undermined by colonialism, resulting in a new attitude of disrespect for Indigenous women, a transformation that slowly became visible in acts motivated by contempt and hatred of Indigenous women. European writers and thinkers were confident and unquestioning in placing racial groups on a hierarchy of societies with Indigenous societies on the lowest level, and Indigenous women as the very lowest group in these societies (Sinclair, 2024, p. 299). The Traditional pride, confidence, and respect that Indigenous women carried gave way to imposed ideas of shame, guilt, worthlessness, inferiority, self-hatred, self-alienation, and an uncertain sense of identity. Pam Palmater, Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University in Canada, explains:

> If you speak to Indigenous women today, they will tell you that the crisis is far from over. The Indian Act still discriminates against Indigenous women and their descendants in the transmission of Indian status and membership in First Nations. Indigenous women suffer far greater rates of heart disease and stroke; they have higher rates of suicide attempts; they disproportionately live in poverty as single parents; their overincarceration rates have increased by 90% in the last decade; and 48% of all children in foster care in Canada are Indigenous. With this list of

> harrowing statistics, is it any wonder that thousands of our sisters are missing or murdered? (NIMMIWG 2015, p. 53).

Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S people are targeted, taking many forms. Not only has there been a failure to protect Indigenous women from harm publicly, in police contact and custody, or from exploitation and trafficking, there is also little protection even from known killers. Shockingly, physical, sexual, and mental abuse inflicted on Indigenous women and girls has been normalized; underfunding for essential services to aid Indigenous women and children is chronic (NIMMIWG 2015).

Purpose and Introduction to the Collection

The purpose of this special issue, *Indigenous Women Speak*, is to profile and celebrate the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous women. Through these papers, we are envisioning a world where all women are respected, a principle upheld through the understanding that Indigenous women exist as the mothers of their peoples. From generation to generation, women serve as a primary thread of Indigenous peoples' survival. We are envisioning the surviving and thriving of Indigenous Peoples beyond this current suffering. We are envisioning Indigenous women's strong identity and wellbeing as the foundation for regenerating the strength of Indigenous communities.

As part of our circle dialogue, we first pass an eagle feather, common among us all, to **Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax** (Northern Woodlands Cree/Metís) who is Professor Emeritus of Indigenous Peoples Education at the University of Alberta, Canada. In *A Savage Silent Calling for the Right to Be: Life as an Indigenous Woman – Sakawikaskeyihtamowin*, she orients our considerations by addressing the power of the word, spoken and written. She relates words and speaking to the Land from which a people come, and thus how Land shapes the consciousness and language of a people.

Cora talks about the place and experiences of women in Cree/Metís society and the role of education and learning in Indigenous thought: "…the whole intention of knowledge and teaching [is] the sustenance of

life in all its forms" (Weber-Pillwax 2003, p. 186). In this way, women stand as the source of life for a People. She identifies and talks about three elements that have impacted the lives of Indigenous women, including societal perceptions and personal relationships, women as collateral damage, and contemporary reference points for women. As an Indigenous woman, she offers a "savage silent calling for the right to be", to exist as Indigenous women of this land. Implications for educators and scholars are embedded throughout.

We pass the eagle feather next to **Dr. Jeannette Sinclair** (Northern Woodland Cree/ Metís) who was the Indigenous Academic Coordinator at the University of Alberta and is now an Independent Researcher. In *Longing to Belong: Reconnecting to my Cree ancestors (âniskôtapânak) and our Ancestral Homeland in Lesser Slave Lake, Canada***,** she speaks to the complexity of intersecting losses specifically the challenges of trying to understand and reclaim one's identity. In the collision of cultures and the colonial strategy of categorizing people with an everchanging kaleidoscope of confusing terminology (in this case, Native American, First Nations, Treaty, Status, non-Status, Metis, Inuit, Indian, and Aboriginal), a loss of identity occurs. This is intersected with many other losses and Jeannette powerfully conveys the grief that comes in the face of such multilayered losses.

However, Jeannette also explains her research process for re-searching and reclaiming her identity, including finding family members and ancestral land, and relearning language and stories which rebuild a sense of self, pride, and purpose. She illustrates the complicated first steps in reweaving an epistemology or way of knowing that is true to the Land of her peoples. She also demonstrates the reorienting to an ontology or way of being grounded in ancestral traditions and ceremonies. While there is much more work to be done, she exemplifies a process that all people with little cultural or familial knowledge can follow to rebuild a sense of cultural identity, no matter how complex or seemingly lost.

Many Indigenous people are living in constant crisis as well as physical, spiritual, and mental suffering from generations of colonization. The road to healing is a long and difficult one. The next in the circle to receive

the eagle feather is **Rochelle Starr** (Plains Cree, Little Pine First Nation) who is a PhD Candidate at the University of Alberta and instructor at Maskwacis Cultural College. From her lived experience as described in *Reclaiming Wellness: The Land, Neurodecolonization, and Indigenous Resilience,* she shares the process of neurodecolonization to heal the pain and suffering lodged in the body and emotions, as well as the mind. She suggests that, for Indigenous people, healing from trauma requires neurodecolonization in changing the neural pathways of trauma as well as the bodily experiencing of trauma. Through contemplative practices, somatic experiencing through practices like Earthing and forest bathing, and other practices that build emotional regulation and reduce bodily inflammation, Rochelle points to pedagogical pathways for holistic healing and recovery from multigenerational trauma.

There is an honouring among women from vastly different cultures who carry complex understandings from within their own Peoples and who do their best to convey this through the English language and in theoretical terms. We hand the eagle feather next to **Dr. Madhu Suri Prakash** (Punjabi from India) who is Professor Emeritus at Penn State University. In *Learning to Learn with Ivan Illich: Regenerating Soil Cultures,* Madhu details the many strategies through which the English education system systematically devalued the cultures of India, in particular turning her away from the land-based culture of her mother's people. She describes how her mind was colonized to the point of dismissing her Sikh and Hindu cultures, language, food, song, and spiritual beliefs as backward. Through her multiple interactions with Ivan Illich, she eventually came to understand that to be educated in the Western system was to be colonized. She recounts her slow awakening to the need to "escape education" and recreate teaching and learning outside colonialism, professionalization, and institutionalization. She eventually returns to celebrate the beauty and depth of her mother's land-based cultural and spiritual understandings, advocating for the need to rebuild soil-based cultures.

The next in circle to receive the eagle feather is **Dr. Jane Martin** (Anishnaabe) who previously was the Director of the Aboriginal Policy Branch of the Alberta Ministry of Education. She has served in many posts including as the First Nations and Métis Education Advisor in the

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. In her reflection piece, *We Were Not the First on This Road: Reflections on My Past and Their Future in Indigenous Education*, she looks back over her education career, describing the courage of those Indigenous people who were the first to enter various fields.

In considering the younger and upcoming Indigenous educators and leaders, she enjoins them not to forget whose footsteps in which they walk and to remember them through acts of gratitude, as these forerunners have enabled them to do their work. She warns that it is easy to forget and get enticed into the Western system and its focus on the "permanent present". If upcoming Indigenous leaders forget their own history and the history that preceded their current work, forget the full meanings of and contexts for their ancestral languages, and forget the ancestral stories that shape their identities, then they risk losing the cultures they ostensibly stand for. To preserve their cultures, she says, they must stand fully in the Traditional ways of knowing and being.

Dr. Elizabeth Lange receives the eagle feather next and concludes the circle dialogue with a brief introduction to the words and insights of **Dr. Shannon Leddy** and **Dr. Lorrie Miller in their book,** *Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies.* In addressing the decolonization of pedagogy, these authors describe the key principles that can guide educators who wish to decolonize their educational practice. They then describe the Plains Cree Medicine Wheel, especially their understandings of each phase of human development, and the challenges and ways to nurture adults intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. This is a Traditional understanding of adult and lifelong education and learning. This book is one example of decolonizing and indigenizing education for both children and adults.

On Leaving the Talking Circle

In closing the talking circle and placing the eagle feather back into the center, our final thoughts are that epistemology is given expression every day in concrete ways; it is not merely an abstract codification. Healing as women in a holistic way, reconnecting to the Land,

reclaiming identities and languages, and transmitting traditional knowledge are processes that can enhance or support ontological transformation and shifts of personal locations; in experiencing or undergoing these processes as a wholly (holy) or critically conscious being, women/persons are simultaneously engaging in epistemological processes. The word onto-epistemology acknowledges that our transformational experiences of human development, growth, or advancement are driven by and within processes that are linked integrally. However, as individuals, we choose which process we will focus on and work within terms of acquiring a full understanding of our own developmental or growth progress, epistemologically or ontologically. Being fully conscious, we chop wood, sew, bead, cook, read, experience and know that we can consider each of these activities for their epistemological or their ontological impacts in/on our lives. We carry out these considerations according to the ways that we were taught as children and youth, whether directly or indirectly. We learned through living, and we do according to what we think about what we learned. The Indigenous women who have shared in this journal issue have demonstrated in their contributions that all facets of life involve the mind, body, feeling and sensing, and spirit, and speak to human and cultural survival.

Movements beyond survival are showing that Indigenous women are leading the transformation toward new kinds of societies. There is potential for societies which have remembered or learned and have accepted the ancient teaching that women have vital roles as active participants in global leadership. Their particular Creator-gifted innate knowledge and capacities are needed in fostering the regeneration and health of all life on Earth. In the wake of postcolonialism, many Indigenous women have arisen to receive again their respected places (Gunn Allen, 1986), helping humanity globally to reimagine preferred futures (Lange, 2023).

Many tribal people will see themselves reflected in these stories. Many other people will resonate with them, perhaps triggered into a remembering of their own indigeneity of long ago. In sum, the wisdom expressed within this collection can point to new ways forward from the

existential polycrisis of Western modernism (Homer-Dixon, 2007) and its colonial dynamics.

References

Augustine, S, Hereditary Chief and Keptin of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. (2008). "Oral Histories and Oral Traditions" in *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics*, edited by Renée Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod, 2-3. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Baldwin, C. (1994). *Calling the Circle: The First and Future Culture*. Newberg, OR: Swan•Raven& Co.

Cajete, G. 1999. *A People's Ecology: Explorations in Sustainable Living*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishing.

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native Science*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishing.

Cameron, A. (1981/2002). *Daughters of Copper Woman*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing.

Carapella, A. Personal communication with author. February 1, 2024. See https://www.tribalnationsmaps.com/

Daschuk, J. S. (2013). *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life.* Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.

Goulet, L and Goulet, K. (2015). *Teaching Each Other: Nehinuw Concepts and Indigenous Pedagogies.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Gunn Allen, P. (1986/1992). *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Homer-Dixon, T. (2007). *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity and the Renewal of Civilization.* New York: Vintage Canada.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black. 2nd Edition.* Toronto, CA: Between the Lines.

Hoppers, C. O. 2021. Research on Indigenous knowledge systems: the search for cognitive justice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 40, no. 4: 310-327. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2021.1966109

Illich, I. 1970. *Deschooling Society*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Lange, E. (2023). *Transformative Sustainability Education*. London: Earthscan from Routledge.

Lee, C.. (2015). *Unreasonable Histories: Nativism, Multiracial Lives, and the Genealogical Imagination in British Africa*. Duke University Press.
Louis, C.. (2021). "KIWEYTOTAHK ISKWEW ISKOTAYOW: Returning to the Women Fire." In *Adult education and lifelong learning in Canada: Critical Legacy, pp. 4-14* , S. Brigham, R. McGray and K. Jubas (eds.). Toronto, CA: Thompson Educational Publishing.
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, Volume 1a. Publisher unknown.
Online Etymological Dictionary. "Speak". https://www.etymonline.com/word/speak
Oxford Languages. (2024). "Courage". Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Paul, D. (2006) *We were not the Savages: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*. Halifax, CA: Fernwood Publishing.
Maitra, S.& Guo, S. (2019). Theorising decolonisation in the context of lifelong learning and transnational migration: Anti-colonial and anti-racist perspectives. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 38, no. 1: 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2018.1561533.
Nelson, M. K. (2008). *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company.
Prakash, M. Suri and Esteva, G. (2008). *Escaping Education: Living As Learning Within Grassroots Cultures***.** Lausanne SW: Peter Lang Publishers.
Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. London: Routledge.
Sefa Dei, G. (2000). "African development: The relevance and implications of 'Indigenousness'." In *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts: Multiple readings of our world* edited by G. S.Dei, B.L. Hall, & D.Rosenberg. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Shoemaker, N. (2015). A Typology of Colonialism. *Perspectives on History*. Washington DC: American Historical Association. https://www.historians.org/perspectives-article/a-typology-of-colonialism-october-2015/
Sinclair, M. (2015). Statement from the Chair, Justice Murray Sinclair. In Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 - Origins to 1939, *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

Volume 1, pp. xii-ix. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press. https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, UK: ZED Books.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 - Origins to 1939, *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 1*. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press. https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports

Weber-Pillwax, C. (2003). *Identity Formation and Consciousness with Reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Metis Indigenous Peoples*. Edmonton, CA: Unpublished Dissertation.

Williams, L. (2013). "Deepening Ecological Relationality Through Critical Onto-Epistemological Inquiry: Where Transformative Learning Meets Sustainable Science." *Journal of Transformative Education*, 11, no. 2: 95-113. DOI: 10.1177/1541344613490997

Contributor Bios

Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax is Professor Emeritus of Indigenous Peoples Education, University of Alberta and member of the Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement in Northern Alberta. As a Metís educator and academic, she lives and works within the circle of her family on traditional territories of Indigenous ancestors in Northern Alberta, Canada. She initially served as a classroom teacher, principal, and superintendent for the Northern Lights School Division then moved to the University of Alberta. She served as the Principal Investigator for the Community University Research Alliance (SSHRC-CURA) entitled *Healing Through Language and Culture* and also for Alberta section of the national *Network Environments for Aboriginal Health Research* initiative. She was awarded an Alumni Recognition Award and honoured for her powerful mentoring of several generations of Indigenous scholars and her 40 years of contribution to the education field, particularly, theorizing Indigenous Research Methodologies and Indigenous Knowledge Mobilization.

Dr. Claudine Louis is President of Maskwacis Cultural College on Treaty 6 land. She is a member of the Maskwacis Plains Cree, gifted two

Cree names which are Kihew Iskwew (Eagle Woman) and Chanak4. She is a mother to five beautiful children and an educator and educational entrepreneur. Dr. Louis' research explores processes of personal transformation in women's learning through engagement with Indigenous research methodologies. She developed the Omisimaw Leadership Model exploring the clash between Euro-western images of Native women and images in Indigenous ontoepistemology which traditionally view women with reverence and respect. She is regular public speaker and hosts ongoing National Indigenous Women conferences for knowledge sharing to foster personal healing and community transformation in Aboriginal communities. Maskwacis College is a Centre of Excellence in Academics and Cree Indigenous Knowledge through advancing and preserving Indigenous forms of life and thinking.

Dr. Elizabeth A. Lange is Honorary and Adjunct Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, Australia and a Visiting Graduate Professor at Athabasca University, Canada. She is of Eastern Germanic ancestry and a settler descendant on Treaty 6 land, connected to Maskwacis Cultural College. At three Canadian universities, she served as a specialist in adult and lifelong education, transformative and sustainability education, and transcultural learning with over 40 years as a transformative educator in the community. Her most recent book is *Transformative Sustainability Education: Reimagining our Future* (Earthscan Routledge, 2023). Her website with over 50 publications and a blog can be found at https://elizabethlange.ca. She was honoured through induction to the Hall of Fame for International Adult and Continuing Education.

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 164-178
Convergence/ia/e 2024

Reclaiming Wellness: The Land, Neurodecolonization, and Indigenous Resilience

Rochelle Starr
University of Alberta and Maskwacis Cultural College

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge systems provide a comprehensive, interconnected framework for understanding health, wellness, and resilience, particularly through the relationship with land. Colonization severed many of these relationships, leading to cultural, psychological, and physical trauma among Indigenous peoples. The process of neurodecolonization offers a way to heal these historical and ongoing traumas by re-integrating traditional practices—grounded in the land—with modern therapeutic techniques such as mindfulness, somatic experiencing, and intentional land-based healing.

Neurodecolonization is not inherently aligned with somatic experiencing, which is a separate therapeutic modality focused on healing trauma through the body. However, this article introduces somatic experiencing into the neuro-decolonization process as a complementary tool for restoring wellness. By integrating somatic experiencing—where individuals reconnect with their bodies to release trauma stored in the nervous system—Indigenous peoples can further amplify the healing potential of neurodecolonization. This combination enhances the ability to address the physiological impacts of colonization on Indigenous bodies, enabling them to return to a state of emotional and physical balance.

Incorporating somatic practices into neurodecolonization is part of a broader cultural resurgence. Leanne Simpson (2011) argues in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* that resurgence is an act of resistance against colonial systems that sought to suppress Indigenous identities and knowledge systems. By reclaiming traditional practices and integrating modern therapeutic methods like somatic experiencing, individuals are healing personal trauma while simultaneously asserting their sovereignty. This approach not only addresses the emotional scars of colonization but also counters the systemic forces that continue to marginalize Indigenous communities.

In this context, neurodecolonization, enhanced with somatic experiencing, serves as both a personal healing practice, Indigenous knowledge reclamation, and a political act of sovereignty. The following sections will explore the role of land in well-being, the impact of somatic practices, and how reclaiming Indigenous beliefs about joy and spirit contributes to holistic wellness.

Land as the Ultimate Facilitator of Well-Being

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land is fundamental to their understanding of health and well-being. Far from being merely a resource, the land is a living relative that provides guidance, healing, and spiritual sustenance. This worldview was violently disrupted by colonization, which sought to sever the physical, emotional, and spiritual ties that Indigenous peoples held with their land. Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams* (1981) describes how the Beaver Nation in British Columbia relied on the land for sustenance, spiritual guidance, and emotional balance. For Indigenous peoples, the land is a source of wisdom, a space that offers clarity and resilience.

Cree teachings hold that the land and personal well-being are deeply intertwined. The land is not separate from the individual; it is an extension of the self, influencing emotional states and offering clarity in times of difficulty. This aligns with modern therapeutic practices such as somatic experiencing, where the body is seen as capable of self-regulation and healing if given the right environment. Peter Levine (1997), in *Waking the Tiger*, explains how trauma is stored in the body but

can be released through intentional physical practices that help the body return to a state of balance. Indigenous practices, such as walking, smudging, and engaging with and recognizing the essence and spirit of the land, provide these conditions for healing by creating a living relationship with the land.

The concept of "forest bathing" (called Shinrin-yoku) from Japan reinforces the healing power of nature. Li (2018) demonstrates that time spent in natural environments can reduce cortisol levels, lower blood pressure, and improve overall mental health. For Indigenous peoples, these scientific findings affirm what has been known for generations—that the land holds the key to emotional and physical well-being. Contemporary research, such as that by Ober, Sinatra, and Zucker (2014), further shows that engaging with the earth can reduce inflammation, a leading cause of many chronic diseases. This underscores the importance of reconnecting with the land to address not only mental but also physical health concerns.

Reducing inflammation is particularly crucial for Indigenous communities, where health disparities—exacerbated by colonial trauma—are common. Nakazawa (2015) highlights that inflammation contributes to over 90% of chronic diseases. Practices that reduce inflammation, such as grounding (direct physical contact with the earth) can lower stress levels and improve immune function. Grounding practices, such as walking barefoot on the earth, have been shown to reduce inflammation and improve overall health (Ober, Sinatra, and Zucker, 2014). For Indigenous peoples, the healing that comes from engaging with the land is not just physical but emotional and spiritual, offering a holistic approach to wellness.

In my own journey, daily walks along the North Saskatchewan River allowed me to reconnect with the land and regulate my emotions. This practice reflects Cree teachings that emphasize the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. The land sustains us, and we, in turn, care for the land. This mutual care is key to cultivating resilience in the face of trauma and disruption. Additionally, I have noticed two integral outcomes of creating a relationship with the land. The practice of visiting the land has resulted in a relationship

where this land recognizes me. What happens when the land recognizes you? In my experience, it creates a felt sense of belonging, of feeling of welcome, and a feeling known and cared for. It feels good. This is significant in a land where for the past 150 years (in the prairie provinces), we as Indigenous peoples haven't been welcomed and cared for by colonizers and their institutions.

Furthermore, part of the decolonial process requires a shift from the societal belief, and colonial tool, that feelings don't matter. Feelings and emotions are critical aspects in addressing well-being, and hold imperative information. This feeling of belonging and welcoming that is exhibited from the land, has helped me to maintain my walking practice. Thus, the land's role in supporting well-being is evident in such practices like smudging, grounding, and being with the land, which help individuals regulate their nervous systems and maintain emotional balance.

Somatic Experiencing and Healing

Somatic experiencing (SE) offers a pathway for releasing trauma that is stored in the body. Developed by Peter Levine, SE focuses on the physiological aspects of trauma, which can become trapped in the body when it is not properly processed. Levine (1997) explains how unresolved trauma can lead to dysregulation of the nervous system, causing chronic emotional, psychological, and physical health issues. For Indigenous peoples, colonization has inflicted both individual and collective trauma, leaving deep wounds that are stored not only in memory but in the body itself.

Indigenous communities have endured centuries of trauma, including forced relocation, residential schools, and systemic marginalization (Alfred 2005; Anderson 2000; Chomsky 1993; Daschuk 2013; Donald 2004; Milloy 1999). Nakazawa (2015) in *Childhood Disrupted* discusses how early trauma disrupts the body's ability to regulate stress, often leading to chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disorders, and mental health challenges. The trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples is often passed down through generations, compounding the physical and emotional effects of

colonization (Methot 2019, 2023). This makes the role of healing practices, like somatic experiencing, particularly crucial.

Incorporating somatic experiencing into the neurodecolonization process allows Indigenous peoples to address the physical dimension of trauma. Although neurodecolonization traditionally focuses on reclaiming mental and emotional sovereignty, I introduce SE as a complementary approach that helps release trauma at the bodily level. Levine (2010), in *In an Unspoken Voice*, describes how trauma becomes lodged in the nervous system, leaving individuals in a constant state of hypervigilance. SE guides individuals through reconnecting with their physical sensations, helping the body to restore balance.

Given the high rates of inflammatory diseases within Indigenous populations—linked to systemic oppression and stress—incorporating grounding into somatic experiencing offers a powerful tool for healing (Mcbride, 2021). By combining SE with Indigenous practices such as walking and being with the land and smudging, I have been able to release trauma stored in my body and shift from a state of chronic stress to one of peace and emotional clarity.

Reclaiming Joy and Spirit: Cree Foundational Beliefs

This section reflects key findings emerging from my doctoral study, which explored how reclaiming Cree foundational beliefs around joy and spirit can serve as a path to emotional and spiritual wellness. Central to Cree teachings is the idea that we are spirit— *niya ahcak*—which guides our relationship with ourselves, the land, and others. Cree Elder John Crier teaches that knowing ourselves as spirit allows us to access deeper truths about our existence, aligning with the natural world and the Creator. This belief is not abstract or theoretical but is expressed in everyday life. Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) in, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan,* emphasize that Indigenous spirituality is inseparable from daily actions and relationships, reflecting a holistic view of well-being.

Colonization disrupted this intrinsic knowledge system by imposing Western systems that fragmented mind, body, and spirit, creating a sense of disconnection among Indigenous peoples (LittleBear, 2000).

McBride (2021), in *The Disembodied Mind*, notes that Western philosophical frameworks have long privileged intellectual knowledge over embodied or spiritual wisdom, leading to an alienation from one's own spirit. Reclaiming the understanding that we are spirit is essential for healing from the disruptions caused by colonization. It calls for more than just the re-adoption of spiritual practices; it demands a deep, embodied awareness that we are part of a living universe, interconnected with all forms of life.

A major insight from my doctoral research is that joy is a natural emotional baseline for Indigenous peoples. Elder John Crier reminds us that joy is our birthright; it is an emotion that flows naturally from living in alignment with spirit and the land. However, colonial trauma has altered this baseline, replacing joy with fear, guilt, and shame. This emotional disruption is not only psychological but physiological. Nakazawa (2015) discusses how trauma rewires the brain and nervous system, making it harder for individuals to access positive emotions like joy. As Indigenous peoples work to reclaim joy, they also restore their body's ability to regulate emotions and reduce the long-term impacts of stress and trauma, which are often expressed in the body as chronic inflammation.

Joy, then, is not simply a fleeting or surface emotion; it is the core of our emotional and spiritual well-being. For Indigenous peoples, reclaiming joy involves a conscious, deliberate process of decolonizing emotions. It requires unlearning the patterns of emotional dysregulation that were instilled through colonization. As Elder John Crier teaches, joy is more than a feeling—it is a state of being. It is the baseline from which Indigenous peoples have historically operated, but this baseline was forcibly shifted by colonial trauma, which sought to instill fear, disempowerment, and subjugation.

The process of reclaiming joy also aligns with the Cree concept of *Wiyotamon*, the belief that we are creators of our own lives. This teaching asserts that through our thoughts, emotions, and actions, we have the power to shape our reality. This concept resonates with modern understandings of neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to rewire itself based on repeated emotional and cognitive patterns. Siegel (2020) in *The*

Developing Mind explains that the thoughts and emotions we engage with most frequently create lasting neural pathways that shape how we perceive and interact with the world. By intentionally shifting toward joy, Indigenous peoples are reclaiming not only emotional well-being but also agency over their lives. They are dismantling the harmful colonial narratives that have sought to limit their power and self-determination.

Moreover, reclaiming joy can act as a form of resistance. By centering joy, Indigenous peoples defy the colonial legacy of grief and trauma, reclaiming a birthright that was nearly erased by systemic oppression. In this way, joy becomes both a personal and political act—an assertion of Indigenous resilience and the continued survival of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Defining Decolonization and Neurodecolonization: A Key Distinction

Decolonization and neurodecolonization are terms often used interchangeably, but they refer to distinct processes. Decolonization broadly refers to the dismantling of colonial systems, structures, and ideologies that have oppressed Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. This includes reclaiming land, languages, governance systems, and cultural practices that were disrupted or destroyed by colonization. In essence, decolonization is the broader socio-political process of removing colonial rule and its lingering effects from Indigenous peoples' lives.

As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue in *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, decolonization cannot be reduced to abstract concepts. It is a material process that involves the return of Indigenous land and sovereignty. It is about Indigenous peoples reclaiming their right to self-determination, land, and culture. Decolonization addresses the external systems of power that continue to marginalize Indigenous communities, emphasizing structural change and the reassertion of Indigenous sovereignty.

Neurodecolonization, on the other hand, is a more specific and internal process. Coined by Michael Yellowbird, neurodecolonization focuses on how colonization has affected the mind and body at a neurological level.

This concept explores how colonial trauma, racism, and systemic oppression have created harmful thought patterns, stress responses, and emotional dysregulation in Indigenous peoples (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, 2012; Yellowbird n.d.). Neurodecolonization involves undoing these harmful patterns by reconnecting with Indigenous knowledge systems, contemplative practices, and mindfulness techniques. It is about healing the neurological and emotional impacts of colonization.

Yellowbird (2012; n.d.) emphasizes that neurodecolonization integrates Indigenous contemplative practices—such as meditation, deep breathing, and connection with nature—to promote healing. These practices have been scientifically shown to reduce stress, improve brain function, and promote emotional regulation. While decolonization focuses on external systems of power, neurodecolonization focuses on the internal processes of healing and reclaiming emotional and mental wellness.

Importantly, neurodecolonization does not inherently include somatic experiencing. Somatic experiencing, a trauma-healing method developed by Peter Levine, focuses on the physiological release of trauma stored in the body. While neurodecolonization traditionally focuses on reclaiming mental and emotional well-being, incorporating somatic practices allows for a fuller healing of trauma that has been stored in the body for generations. This integrative approach enables Indigenous individuals to reconnect with their bodies, release trauma, and reclaim their emotional baseline of joy. By combining these two approaches, Indigenous peoples can engage in a more holistic healing process—one that addresses not only the mind but also the body.

Policy Implications for Education and Lifelong Learning

The insights from neurodecolonization and somatic experiencing can have significant implications for educational policy, especially in how Indigenous learners are supported. Historically, educational systems in colonized countries have been tools of assimilation, where Indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultural practices were suppressed in favor of Western norms. The legacies of residential schools, where Indigenous

children were forcibly removed from their families, have left lasting scars, both personally and collectively. Reimagining educational systems through the lens of decolonization and neurodecolonization provides an opportunity to foster environments that nurture holistic well-being for both children and adults.

One key policy implication is the integration of land-based learning and mindfulness practices into the educational curriculum and pedagogy. By centering education around Indigenous ways of knowing—such as learning through connection with the land and fostering a relationship with nature—schools and other learning spaces can create healing spaces for Indigenous learners. Yellowbird's (n.d.) research on mindfulness practices, combined with traditional Indigenous contemplative methods, shows that these approaches can promote emotional regulation, reduce stress, and improve cognitive function. Such practices can be introduced in classrooms to help Indigenous learners manage the effects of historical and ongoing trauma.

Additionally, educational policies should support the inclusion of somatic practices within schools and other educational spaces, particularly for Indigenous learners who experience the effects of trauma. Grounding techniques, breathing exercises, and movement-based healing practices could be incorporated into the school day or adult learning environment, helping students to release stress and reconnect with their bodies. Given the high levels of chronic disease and inflammation within Indigenous populations, which are linked to systemic oppression and stress, these practices offer an opportunity to improve both mental and physical health outcomes (Ober, Sinatra, and Zucker, 2014).

Another policy shift would involve redefining educational success in a way that values emotional, spiritual, and cultural growth alongside academic achievement. Schools and other spaces of lifelong learning need to move away from Eurocentric standards of success, which prioritize intellectual achievement over well-being. Policies that incorporate Indigenous perspectives on wellness—such as raising the value of joy, cultural identity, and community connection—can create learning environments where Indigenous learners feel valued and

supported. This would represent a true decolonization of education, where Indigenous knowledge systems are placed at the center of the learning experience.

Indigenous knowledge is also supported and facilitated by the land. Western educational systems are beginning to recognize that land-based learning holds many benefits. "It helps students learn about the history, infrastructure, and natural environment of their place of living and makes the entire learning process more enjoyable and more meaningful" (Domokos 2021, 17). However, it is imperative to note that there is a distinct difference between Indigenous land-based learning and western land-based learning. Indigenous land-based learning is centred on the relationship between the learner and the land. The land is alive and a relative. This understanding shifts perception significantly and is integral in creating a felt sense of belonging. Therefore, this recognition of the land as relative and land as spirit is another important policy shift for educators and educational institutions.

Finally, educational institutions should prioritize the hiring and development of Indigenous educators, who bring a deep understanding of both Indigenous knowledge systems and the impacts of colonization. These educators can lead the integration of neurodecolonization and somatic experiencing into the curriculum, providing learners with role models who embody Indigenous values of wellness, balance, and resilience.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Joy, Spirit, and Self

The process of neurodecolonization, enhanced by somatic experiencing, offers a profound pathway for Indigenous peoples to reclaim wellness in all its forms—mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Reconnecting with the land, releasing trauma stored in the body, and reclaiming joy as a natural emotional baseline are central to our healing journeys. By integrating these practices into educational systems, we can create spaces where Indigenous learners are empowered to heal, grow, and thrive.

Reclaiming joy is not just a personal act; it is a political one, challenging the narratives of trauma and subjugation that colonialism sought to impose. Through neurodecolonization and somatic experiencing, Indigenous peoples can restore balance, reclaim their identity, and both inspire and activate resilience for future generations.

References

Alfred, T(2005). *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom.* Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Anderson, K (2000). *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood.* Toronto, ON: Second Story Press.

Basso, K. (1996). *Wisdom Sits in Places : Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press.

Brody, H. (1981). *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Cardinal, H and Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream Is That Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Chomsky, N. (1993). *Year 501: The Conquest Continues.* Montreal, QC: Black Rose Books.

Daschuk, J. S. (2013). *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.

Dispenza, J. (2017). *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself: How to Lose Your Mind and Create a New One*. Carlsbad: Hay House.

Domokos, O. (2021). *Place-Based Curriculum Design for a South Florida Waldorf School*. Master's thesis, SUNY Empire State College.

Donald, D. T.(2001). "Edmonton Pentimento: Re-Reading History in the Case of the Papaschase Cree." *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 1: 21–54.

Ermine, W (1995). "Miyomahcihowin." In *First Nations in Canada*, edited by Raoul McKay and Freda Ahenakew, 45-67. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Levine, P. A. (1997). *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Levine, P. A. (2010). *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Li, Q (2018). *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*. New York: Viking.

Little Bear, L. (2000). "Jagged Worldviews Colliding." In *Reclaiming Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste, 77–85. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

McBride, A. (2021). *The Disembodied Mind: Neurophilosophy and Cognitive Science*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Methot, S (2019). *Legacy: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous Healing*. Toronto, ON: ECW Press.

Methot, S. (2023). *Killing the Wittigo: Indigenous Culture-Based Approaches to Waking Up, Taking Action, and Doing the Work of Healing.* Toronto, ON: ECW Press.

Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1986*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

Nakazawa, D. J.(2015). *Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal*. New York: Atria Books.

Ober, C, Sinatra, S.T, and Zucker, M. (2014). *Earthing: The Most Important Health Discovery Ever?* Laguna Beach: Basic Health Publications.

Simpson, L B.(2011). *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring.

Siegel, D. J. (2020). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. 3rd ed. New York: Guilford Press.

Tuck, E, and Wayne Yang, K.(2012). "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1: 1-40.

Waziyatawin, and Yellow Bird. M (Eds). (2012). *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook.* Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press.

Yellowbird, M K (nd.)"Neurodecolonization." Accessed September 22, 2024. https://neurodecolonization

Reclaiming Wellness: The Land, Neurodecolonization, and Indigenous Resilience

Rochelle Starr

Abstract This paper explores the intersection of neurodecolonization, somatic experiencing, and the land as pathways for Indigenous healing and resilience. Colonization disrupted Indigenous knowledge systems and attempted to sever the recognition of relationship to the land, resulting in cultural, psychological, and physical trauma. Neurodecolonization is a process that reconnects individuals with Indigenous knowledge and contemplative practices as presented by Michael Yellowbird. This approach is discussed alongside somatic experiencing which is a trauma-healing method developed by Peter Levine, to offer a holistic approach to wellness. Drawing on Cree teachings and personal reflections, this paper highlights how the land serves as a living relative and ultimate facilitator of well-being, supporting emotional regulation, reducing inflammation, and creating a sense of belonging. The integration of somatic practices enhances the physiological and emotional aspects of neurodecolonization, creating a powerful synergy for addressing intergenerational trauma. Furthermore, reclaiming joy and spirit, foundational elements in Cree teachings, emerges as a critical component of Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty. The paper concludes with policy implications for education, emphasizing land-based learning, mindfulness practices, and the inclusion of healing spaces for Indigenous learners. Through this work, neurodecolonization and somatic experiencing are reframed not only as personal healing practices but as political acts of resistance and empowerment.

Keywords neuro-decolonization, decolonization, somatic experiencing, Indigenous resilience, Indigenous knowledge systems, , Cree knowledge system, Indigenous healing, Indigenous lifelong learning, land-based learning, mindfulness practices, intergenerational trauma

---

Récupérer le bien-être: La terre, la neurodécolonisation et la résilience autochtone

Rochelle Starr

Résumé Cet article explore l'intersection entre la neurodécolonisation, l'expérience somatique et la terre comme voies de guérison et de résilience autochtone. La colonisation a perturbé les systèmes de connaissances autochtones et tenté de rompre la relation avec la terre, engendrant des traumatismes culturels, psychologiques et physiques. La neurodécolonisation reconnecte les individus aux savoirs autochtones et aux pratiques contemplatives, telles que présentées par Michael Yellowbird. Cette démarche est examinée conjointement avec l'expérience somatique, une méthode de guérison des traumatismes développée par Peter Levine, pour proposer une approche holistique du bien-être. En s'appuyant sur les enseignements cris et des réflexions personnelles, cet article met en lumière le rôle de la terre comme parent vivant et facilitateur fondamental du bien-être, en favorisant la régulation émotionnelle, en réduisant l'inflammation et en créant un sentiment d'appartenance. L'intégration des pratiques somatiques enrichit les dimensions physiologiques et émotionnelles de la neurodécolonisation, générant une synergie puissante pour aborder les traumatismes intergénérationnels. De plus, la réappropriation de la joie et de l'esprit, éléments centraux des enseignements cris, se révèle être un pilier essentiel de la résurgence et de la souveraineté autochtones. L'article conclut avec des implications politiques pour l'éducation, soulignant l'importance de l'apprentissage en lien avec la terre, des pratiques de pleine conscience et de l'intégration d'espaces de guérison pour les apprenants autochtones. Ce travail recadre la neurodécolonisation et l'expérience somatique non seulement comme des pratiques de guérison personnelle, mais aussi comme des actes politiques de ré.

Mots clés neurodécolonisation, décolonisation, expérience somatique, résilience autochtone, systèmes de connaissances autochtones, savoirs cris, guérison autochtone, apprentissage tout au long de la vie, apprentissage en lien avec la terre, pratiques de pleine conscience, traumatisme intergénérationnel.

Reclamando el bienestar: La tierra, la neurodecolonización y la resiliencia indígena

Rochelle Starr

Resumen Este artículo explora la intersección entre la neurodecolonización, la experiencia somática y la relación con la tierra como vías para la sanación y la resiliencia indígenas. La colonización perturbó los sistemas de conocimiento indígena e intentó romper la conexión con la tierra, generando traumas culturales, psicológicos y físicos. La neurodecolonización es un proceso que reconecta a las personas con los conocimientos indígenas y las prácticas contemplativas, como las presentadas por Michael Yellowbird. Este enfoque se analiza en conjunto con la experiencia somática, un método de sanación del trauma desarrollado por Peter Levine, para ofrecer una perspectiva holística del bienestar. Basándose en las enseñanzas cree y en reflexiones personales, este artículo destaca cómo la tierra actúa como un pariente viviente y facilitador esencial del bienestar, al promover la regulación emocional, reducir la inflamación y fomentar un sentido de pertenencia. La integración de prácticas somáticas enriquece las dimensiones fisiológicas y emocionales de la neurodecolonización, creando una sinergia poderosa para abordar los traumas intergeneracionales. Además, la recuperación de la alegría y el espíritu, elementos fundamentales de las enseñanzas cree, emerge como un componente clave del resurgimiento y la soberanía indígena. El artículo concluye con implicaciones políticas para la educación, subrayando la relevancia del aprendizaje basado en la tierra, las prácticas de atención plena y la creación de espacios de sanación para los estudiantes indígenas. Este trabajo replantea la neurodecolonización y la experiencia somática no solo como prácticas de sanación personal, sino también como actos políticos de resistencia y empoderamiento.

Palabras clave neurodecolonización, descolonización, experiencia somática, resiliencia indígena, sistemas de conocimiento indígena, saberes cree, sanación indígena, aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, aprendizaje basado en la tierra, prácticas de atención plena, trauma intergeneracional.

CONVERGENCE/IA/E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 179-208
Convergence/ia/e 2024

Learning to Learn with Ivan Illich: Regenerating Soil Cultures

Madhu Suri Prakash
Professor Emeritas, Penn State University

Who are My Ancestors?

I am a dark brown Punjabi woman; unable to speak my mother tongue for the first 69 years of my life. What rendered me disabled, so severely handicapped?

My ancestors come from the Punjab, the fertile land of the five sacred rivers in North India. I am half-Sikh and half-Hindu. My maternal ancestors are Sikhs. My paternal ancestors are Hindus. Both sets of ancestors share the same mother-tongue: Punjabi.

My Sikh ancestors wore colorful turbans; battled the Muslim Empire on horses, flashing their swords; tilled the soil and milked water buffaloes with their strong, sturdy, peasant hands. They were proud of the soil in their fingernails. Every aspect of their humble, joyous, exuberant being illumined the meaning of "living down to earth." My father's people had no dirt in their fingernails. Subtly, hidden from any overt notice, I inherited from them their sense of cultural and religious superiority over my earthy, maternal ancestors.

In my mother's womb, I heard daily recitations of Sikh prayers sung out loud in the pre-dawn darkness from the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. She also read aloud from the Hindu holy book, the *Bhagavad Gita*; as well as from the *Bible* that her best friend, a Christian, gifted her. Not so long after leaving her womb, I turned a deaf ear to such recitations: first expressing my preference for Hindi; and, as soon as I started

schooling in Catholic convents, I responded to my extended family only in English.

At the age of five, I began speaking English as if it were my mother tongue. Even though the British were finally forced to leave India in 1947 -- half a decade before my birth, they left behind their colonial legacy. English became one of our national languages – supposedly unifying peoples enjoying the greatest linguistic diversity to be found anywhere on earth: 33 % of the world's languages, threatened by extinction, are still alive and being spoken in the Indian sub-continent. Only 1% of remaining languages on earth are spoken in Europe. English education ensured that children like me became oreo-cookies for life: brown on the outside; white on the inside. I prayed that some fairy godmother would wave a magic wand and I would become blonde and blue-eyed on the outside as well. Neither Hindu gods nor Sikh gurus answered my colonized prayers.

With Illichian hindsight, I now see my prayers and my learned "English only" prejudice for what they are … the remnants of colonialism: a colonized mind. Once Illich "happened" to me, I was finally free to be "me." This, despite the repeated rebukes of my bosses. These still resound in my being, long after retirement: "She does not know how to teach philosophy of education; she only knows how to teach Madhu!"

They will never guess the secret Illich whispered in my heart: that their professional deprecations and dismissals that were from other cultural standpoints (including that of my maternal ancestors) were supreme compliments. This realization came on the heels of Illich's guidance and influence, pointing me towards ancient, ancestral pathways for "escaping education." (Prakash and Esteva 1997). On these paths, I learned how to distinguish between professional masks worn by educators to hide their "real selves." I discovered the importance of authenticity for teaching and learning habits of the heart--for living "the good life."

My ancestors' tongues, unlike mine, could not be twisted around to speak the Queen's English. Unashamedly, they spoke English with their distinctive Punjabi accent and grammar – setting them apart as

"different" anywhere in the world. This turned them into "backward" beings – in the eyes and words of professional educators. Such school lessons, explicit and hidden, I dutifully mastered; and, inevitably, they mastered me; enslaved me; cut off my roots in soil cultures; cast me away from the peoples to whom I belonged and who belonged to me.

Among the many gifts Illich brought to my life was guiding me back full circle to the soil cultures of my Sikh ancestors; rejoicing in the magnificence and beauty of their tongues (dozens of Punjabi dialects, changing every hundred miles, still persist – despite the State's official deprecations). Had I not witnessed Master Illich swimming with delight in 14 languages, perhaps my son would be as distant from the Hindi and *Español* of his parents; doomed to following the long path distancing me for most of my days on earth from my ancestors' Punjabi.

Prior to encountering Illich, I was trapped in the throes of the deadly Development dis-ease: desecrating soil cultures in the rapidly expanding galaxy of education for global development. The higher I rose in this galaxy, the further away I got from anything to do with soil cultures. Soil was beneath me – literally as well as metaphorically. The longer my list of credentials grew, the more fervently I prayed to the Gods of Education, along with all the other Gods of Professionals, who constitute the elites of industrial societies. I had neither interest nor appetite for the soil cultures that kept India lagging miserably behind in the global race to achieve the Development Dream. My ancestors' frugality and earthy virtues of place belonged to the Dark Ages. In the Age of Moonshots and Space Wars, nothing was going to hold me back, keep me "down to earth."

Before Illich, I joined the enemies of soil cultures, waging war by their side. After Illich, I began to search for the peace only offered by soil cultures. During this second half of my life, Illich turned around my heart and mind; my gut and imagination; shone the light in the darkness of our times so that I could begin finding my way home – from a superior assailant of my ancestors and their ignorant and lowly ways to finally becoming their long-lost daughter; ready to know and love what she had forsaken and abandoned since childhood; forgiving myself my predictable educated, colonized ignorance.

A Pedagogy of Liberation? Or A Liberation from Pedagogy?

Ivan Illich arrived at a time in my life when the soil of my being was ill-prepared for the seeds of social ideas he had been experimenting with and casting far and wide for three decades. Ignorant of my ignorance, I failed to recognize the significance of the teacher life brought to my doorstep; unplanned, like most of the countless other blessings of my life. Called "part-moon, part travelling salesman," (Cayley 1992, iix). Illich arrived on my campus in Fall 1981; literally a few weeks after I was hired by Penn State to start professing. The brilliant moonshine of this "travelling salesman" blinded me; my heart closed; my being shut down. Why? It would take me more than half a decade to answer that question.

Armed to the gills with my credentials in economics, business administration, and philosophy, I was ecstatic discovering the field called philosophy of education. It aroused all my "do-gooding savior" fantasies—to blindly "do unto others" what had been done to me. My Ph.D. in Education, certainly, would enable me to lift the wretched and the hungry millions in India from their grinding poverty; from degrading caste systems that still kept them oppressed; robbed of hope; too crippled to clamber up social ladders I could climb because of my middle-class agility. I landed in the USA, convinced that the best thing I could do for the rest of my life was to export back to India the just, equalizing, and excellent educational system of America.

Schooling taught me to fully embrace the secular faith being globalized through Truman's post-WWII divisiveness: dividing up the world into modern caste hierarchies – constituted of "Developed," "Underdeveloped, and "Developing" cultures and nations. Through Truman's gaze, I learned to see myself as a needy, poor "underdeveloped" woman; a pitiable citizen of a Third World country. (Sachs 1992) I was compelled to ask: as a snake sheds her old skin, could I successfully leave behind my underdeveloped self? How? All answers pointed unerringly westwards to an American education.

In Fall 1976, I landed in JFK airport fast asleep like billions: dreaming "the American dream;" blindly in love with the USA; smitten with its

global advertisements of "democratic" education for the world's most developed, number one democratic nation. From "sperm to worm," the educational system – whether American, Indian or Mexicano – ensures that no one awakens from "the American Dream;" discovering the reality that it is a global nightmare.

My dreams of doctoral studies at Syracuse University were seconds away from taking flight; my enthusiasm for "real learning," soaring; liberated from the "*parroty*" memorizing of the first quarter century of schooling life to be left behind; forever. I am a snail-slow learner. It took me a decade to realize how little I discovered about "the real world" of education of/by/for Development while earning a doctorate, tenure and promotion. Through this decade, I remained incapable of being "all shook up" by the brilliant, most "savage" critic of industrial societies.

The more I began discovering the injustices of American society and their perpetuation through its educational system, the more passionately I embraced all brands of critical pedagogy. Once I "lucked out" and landed a "real tenure track position," I was hell bent on exporting critical pedagogies to India; successfully transforming its vicious, centuries old caste system. Bedazzled by the promises of critical pedagogues, I fully bought into their curricula and pedagogies designed for "liberation." Theirs was the best way and the ONLY way forward for global equality and justice. In contrast, Illich's insights into liberation FROM pedagogy appeared absurdly impractical; best left behind; as my commitments to growth economics and global development strengthened.

When Illich arrived on our campus, my newly minted Ph.D., like all the long line of diplomas preceding it, had successfully shut down my mind to anything and everything Illich offered: to reimagine, regenerate and recreate societies healed from the "diploma disease:" a rampant global epidemic; even more deadly than the pandemic casting its mantel of global fear since March 2020.

Already infamous and dismissed for his books *Deschooling Society* (1970) and *Medical Nemesis* (1976), Ivan Illich came to Penn State to present his

book, *Gender*(1982) [1], having been just birthed. Proud of the professional position I had just secured with competitive competence and noble-minded professional zeal; enjoying the sense of being liberated from the medieval limits that had held back my mother and grandmothers, I knew with certainty: Ivan Illich was plain wrong in his haughty dismissal of what he called "the dis-abling professions." Furthermore, he was even more off the mark in celebrating the "common sense" of the "vernacular" gendered worlds from which I had made my great escape. Confident of both Illich's myopic romanticism as well as in the certainties of my profession, I rose to challenge one of the most important social critics of the 20th century. My heart raced as I stood in front of him with all the audacity I could muster: *Are you suggesting that my mother and grandmothers were better off than me: a professor; with a doctorate; at a Big Ten university?*

[1] The historical transformation from "vernacular gender" to "economic sex" is the decisive pre-condition that enabled capitalism to take hold and the most important anthropological transformation resulting from capitalism rise. This central thesis of Gender took me several decades to begin unravelling for comprehension. Now, I continue to re-read Gender in order to better understand Illich's central thesis: distinguishing between centuries of "vernacular" gender from "economic sex" in modern times. "Vernacular gender" alludes to the differential existential condition of men and women in traditional peoples, in which places, times, tools, tasks, forms of speech, gestures and perceptions associated with men are distinguished from those of women, in an enigmatic and asymmetrical complementarity. "Economic sex" alludes to the polarization of human labor force, libido, character or intelligence and all common characteristics attributed to all human beings after the late eighteen century. (pp.3 & 4 of *Gender*).

Today, in our COVID times, Illich's insights on gender are brought further home for me. Women's struggle for "gender equality", always fought on masculine turf, renders us the perennially underpaid "second sex." ***Qua*** woman, today, I aspire for birthing new worlds. Our Mother Earth Manifestos, beyond white male founding fathers, cannot but be inviting to the table, for co-creation, good men who despise slavery with all their beings. Together we have all it takes to begin imagining and experiencing contemporary arts of living, after renouncing the so-called "comforts" or "conveniences" of economic sex, as Illich suggested. We leave behind all notions of "black inferiority" or "white superiority;" any classification or mechanism transmogrifying some of us into disposable trash. Joyfully, we open ourselves to being surprised on the new paths we make by walking them.

Seconds later, I received from him the most important "Zen Slap" of my life. My professional questions about gender and equal educational opportunity—Illich simply dismissed them as expressions of historical amnesia and Western one-eyed cultural blindness. With zero interest in debating me; unceremoniously, he sent me packing. I did not know it at the time: he saw right through me; in a blink he knew I was a typical academic; and, as such, had not understood a single thing in his presentation on *Gender* and *Deschooling*. Sadly, I had missed the point completely: it departed too radically from the familiar fodder I had been fed every day of my previous education.

The sheer forceful brilliance of Illich's genius, notwithstanding, I was appalled at being dismissed by him for being a successful academic; a sincere, dedicated, "alternative" educator; who would do right by her students; secularly saving them from grade envy or credential addiction; who would design an "empowering" curriculum or "radical" pedagogies; who would create the best "liberation," "authenticity" and "happiness" promoting classrooms; working with a Dream Team of "alternative educators" for reforming, revamping and radicalizing education.

llich's immediate impact was completely counterproductive. Even his behavior basically confirmed that he was totally wrong: an arrogant intellectual critic, male, unable to really understand the value of education in general; and, particularly American education--especially for a woman of color rising out of the "dark ages." Instead of writing with an equally enraged colleague a scathing critique of *Gender*, I took the easier route: marching on the warpath of teaching *Deschooling Society*; deploying all the arsenal I had acquired as a pedigreed analytic philosopher to junk it; send it to our landfills; to be buried forever. Half a decade later, I did finally realize that despite my doctorate--or, more accurately, because of it--I remained completely clueless, confused and lost from this book's opening lines:

> Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. … The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning …. A diploma

> with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. [Their] imagination is "schooled" to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for health care, social work for the improvement of community life, police protection for safety, military poise for national security, the rat race for productive work. Health, learning, dignity, independence, and creative endeavor are defined as little more than the performance of the institutions which claim to serve these ends, and their improvement is made to depend on allocating more resources to the management of hospitals, schools, and other agencies in question. (Illich 1970, 1)

Unfortunately, I was not alone in being lost. I was one of the confused majority: the swine before whom Illich cast his pearls of wisdom. Friends of Illich are right that his "moment of legibility" is NOW: half a century after he published such words. In 1970, he was far too ahead of his time. Illich was doomed to be "a voice in the wilderness;" heard by a miniscule minority; and understood by the tiniest fraction of those who read about him on the front cover of *The New York Times* or *Le Monde*; or, drawn by his short-lived super-star status to travel to Cuernavaca, Mexico to listen to him in the flesh, surrounded by the luminaries of "alternative education." Fifty years later, in the Age of Climate Collapse, COVID-19, and Black Lives Matter, my hope is that the second paragraph of *Deschooling Society* will *not* be as perplexing and confusing as it was when I first began reading and teaching it in 1981:

> In these essays, I will show that the institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery. I will explain how this process of degradation is accelerated when nonmaterial needs are transformed into demands for commodities; when health, education, personal mobility, welfare, or psychological healing are defined as the result of services or "treatments." I do this because I believe that most of the research now going on about the future tends to advocate further increases in the institutionalization of values

> and that we must define conditions which would permit precisely the contrary to happen. We need research on the possible use of technology to create institutions which serve personal, creative, and autonomous interaction and the emergence of values which cannot be substantially controlled by technocrats. We need counterfoil research to current futurology.
>
> I have chosen the school as my paradigm, and I therefore deal only indirectly with other bureaucratic agencies of the corporate state; the consumer-family, the party, the army, the church, the media. … Rich and poor alike depend on schools and hospitals which guide their lives, form their world view, and define for them what is legitimate and what is not. Both view [healing] oneself as irresponsible, learning on one's own as unreliable, and community organization, when not paid for by those in authority, as a form of aggression or subversion." (Illich 1970, 1-3)

Illich rendered naked the dark, pock-marked, underbellies of what he deliberately described as the "disabling professions" (Illich 1977) – starting with the Educational Enterprise. In this category, he encompassed all modern "radical monopolies;" including the medical, legal, transportation, birthing, and dying establishments; each promising to fulfill "basic human needs"; controlled by credentialed specialists professing their exclusive knowledge -- while delegitimizing as "underdeveloped" peoples who "failed" to feel "needy."

As an avowed believer in the modern concept of human "needs" (starting with the "need" for schools and education), my responses to Illich's provocations included personal and professional rage. I declined Illich's invitations to gatherings that imagined and enacted creative "alternatives TO education." I clung to my devout secular faith in "alternatives IN education." I was certain that we, educators, could "fix" everything: from "dis-interest," "hyperactivity" and other "disabilities" to the dominant dis-eases of "underachievers," genetically programmed D's and "dropouts." I refused to grant Illich any room to disabuse me of my educated "certainties."

Koyaanisquatsi: Education Finally Escaped

Koyaanisquatsi, a Hopi word, means "life out of balance;" or "life of moral corruption and turmoil." (Reggio 1992) It is the title of a 1982 film inspired by several seminal radical critics of industrial societies, including Jacque Ellul, Leopold Kohr, and, yes, Ivan Illich. Godfrey Reggio's film's opening scenes reveal the magnificence of Creation, while juxtaposing these to images of technological "progress" -- smokestacks, speeding commuters, factory farming, ticky-tacky urban development, an endless list of horrors. Such images depict the consequences of industrial "civilization," which Illich sought to analyze and explain as a brutally violent and uncivilized despoiler, rapidly ripping apart the rich, diverse web of life called Mother Nature by my ancestors.

The invariable provocations that defined Illich's public lectures since 1981 suspiciously starting arousing my curiosity. Despite my blind professional rejections of his ideals, I was increasingly moved by Illichian gatherings to start studying "stuff" far afield from what is normally considered the field of philosophy of education. The Fates pushed me to study the "State of the World" and The Club of Rome Reports, which catalogued social and ecological unravelling. My dis-ease increased as more and more research publications (all outside my "field of expertise") pointed unerringly towards the Hopi conclusion: *Koyanisquaatsi*. (Reggio 1992) Life was out of balance: my ancestors' Mother Earth sick and desecrated; forests, rivers and oceans poisoned; the entire web of creation torn asunder by the "progress" defining economic Development. Every moment, species are becoming extinct, rendering human life tenuous. Cancer epidemics, like climate collapse, constituted the Absurdistan that Illich and his conspirators were awakening me to from the nightmares of development.

It is the straw that breaks the camel's back, states an ancient proverb. The straw that broke my back happened at a gathering of famous critical pedagogues in the mid-1980s. Fully aware of my rank and status as an unknown junior professor, grateful for the invitation to be included in this august circle, I finally gathered the courage to voice questions that had begun to haunt me. Humbly, I requested the most renowned among

them to share critical pedagogical strategies being implemented for addressing global warming and other ecological disasters that affected "the oppressed" far worse than "the oppressors."

Resounding silence prevailed for a few, fleeting minutes. My question fully ignored, a hasty change of topics ensued: directed towards familiar re-designing of new curricula for greater equality between the oppressors and the oppressed in our schools and universities. Again, I was summarily silenced, stupefied, numbed and dumbed by renowned educators who were pushing me past the conventions of my professional training. Initially drowning in despair, I groped for hope. I soon found it in the most unexpected of places.

Myth Maker, Story Weaver: Celebrating the Rebirth of Epimetheus

For the first time in more than half a decade, 1986 found me beginning a careful study of Illich, starting with his 1969 call for "institutional revolution" in *Celebration of Awareness*: "to celebrate our joint power to provide all human beings with the food, clothing, and shelter [we] need to delight in living; to discover, together … what we must do to use [our] power to create the humanity, the dignity, and the joyfulness of each one of us." (Illich 1969, 15) I began to understand that this delight, dignity, and joy comes with peoples' movements, from abandoning the drudgery of modern serfdom dominated by mechanical clocks, and from recovering something of our ancestors' non-hasty daily lives. I was moved by Illich's hopefulness: exercising autonomy, we could break ourselves free from our driven lives as "needy humans" -- *Homo misérables*. We had the capacities and the imagination to begin cultivating the arts of living with *eutrapelia* (for Greeks the graceful, gentle, beautiful dance of being alive) for all – and not just for the elites.

Next, I entered the story-weaving, mythmaking, poetic world of Illich in the last chapter of *Deschooling Society*: the "Rebirth of Epimethean [Wo]Man." I had read it many times before while teaching *Deschooling* – with the foolish purpose of discrediting Illich. No surprise, therefore, that I entirely missed the central point of this last chapter. Why did Illich end his book juxtaposing the renowned Greek hero, Prometheus, next to

his brother Epimetheus – who remains completely unknown amongst moderns?

My ancestral memories started resurfacing. Mythmaking and storyweaving are integral to my birth – auspiciously in the birthplace of the world's two most famous epics: the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The wombs of our mothers and grandmothers nourished us from the moment of conception with *mythopoesis* … songs and stories of divinity incarnated; of the good life lived and suffering endured era after era, cyclically returning us to our beginnings; re-member-ing us with all the elders who had come and gone before us.

Educated "certainties" constructed concrete highways offering speedy departures from the "backward" mythmaking worlds of my mother and grandmothers. Once Illich turned my heart towards "escaping education," I found myself reading and, repeatedly re-reading the myth of two brothers: Prometheus and Epimetheus. Vaguely, I recalled some fictional references only to the first brother. Illich's re-telling the myth of Prometheus points unerringly towards the hubris and futility of modern technological planning. I began to see with Illich how education can leave us chained and confined to a manmade industrial world, designed for self-destruction. The "price of progress" we continue paying is nothing short of the complete "death of nature"—what is referred to today as "climate collapse."

While steadily warning us against hopeless, "apocalyptic randiness," Illich guides us towards the hindsight and hopefulness of Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, who marries the Greek Earth Goddess, Pandora: worshipped on the slope of Mount Parnassus, the "center and navel" of the Earth. Misogynist Greeks had little use for Gaia or Pandora. It is Pandora who opens her amphora, allowing all human ills to escape while keeping secure the virtue of hope for human flourishing. Illich offers ancient myths – Greek and other – to comprehend our modern tragedy of self-destruction through desecrating Mother Earth. Illich's storyweaving found me remembering how the ancient Hindu Epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* – also warned us about our human ignorance leading us towards the precipice of self-annihilation. No longer could my educated mind dismiss my ancestors' epics as

irrelevant stories to be discarded for the rigors of modern science and philosophy.

Learning to learn with Illich, I began my adventures into the depths of ancient Hindu wisdom. With him, I was learning to distinguish between the hubris of planning and the humility of hoping. Planning ties us down to *chronos*, the ticking modern clock; hoping offers the freedom of *kairos* – the timelessness of this propitious moment of eternity. Yet as an ambitious modern woman, I remained trapped by my expectations and fantasies of a planned future. Along with so many educated masses, I was sacrificing living with vitality and joy in the present moment for…what? When, in the presence of Illich, my Promethean fantasies came face-to-face with our self-destructive era, his invitation to become an Epimethean woman undid me.

How do we cultivate the virtue of hope in our hard times? For Illich, this remains the pressing contemporary question, central to all his philosophical investigations. His answer smashes many modern illusions:

> To hell with the future … It's a man-eating idol. Institutions have a future … but people have no future. People have only hope. … no sane person can project the future of the economic utopia of endless growth in which we live as anything but catastrophe, sooner or later, … the future as an idol devours the only moment in which heaven can happen upon us: the present. Expectation tries to compel tomorrow; hope enlarges the present and makes a future, north of the future. (Illich in Cayley 2005, XIX)

These words take on a special significance, especially today: as COVID-19 reduces our engineered plans into ghosts. Illich's hopeful call to enlarge the present surfaced for me as I isolated myself in a "safe zone" within a COVID-19-stricken California. Illich resonated in my being, reminding me to transform each present moment of living into one of learning, sharing, and caring.

Hope and Hospitality: Stepping Over Illich's Threshold

Reticently at first, I began accepting invitations from friends who prepared simple dinners every week in Illich's home; offering the hospitality of local wines and seasonal CSA (community-shared agriculture) harvests cooked and served around a makeshift, surprisingly expandable dining table. The frugality practiced in Illich's hearth …. with aromas of freshly kneaded breads, baking pasta, simmering sauce and warm cinnamon cider … laundry drying outside on the clothesline … complemented conversations that brought me down-to-earth; even as the fiery, bracing philosophical reflections sent my literary imagination soaring.

Crossing the roads separating the university campus from the oasis of Illich's home, my senses came alive with the hospitality at the heart of Illich's ideals: the virtues of friendship. Here began my complete healing from the dis-ease of being "underdeveloped." Instead of the tedium of professional meetings, I savored the moments, silently witnessing the leisurely playfulness of ideas taking flight over the course of long evenings – in slow time. Instead of the familiar rush to run home, I enjoyed lingering with kindred spirits sharing "*conspiratio*" into the long night. Each highly anticipated fall evening en-fleshed for me his ideals of *schole* and *eutrapelia*: the arts of leisurely, graceful and beautiful learning/ dancing / delighting.

After years of resisting learning anything from Master Illich, I became more and more open to being surprised, delighted, and all too often completely confused by his bracing, always adventurous, unfamiliar historical and intercultural pathways. Such confusions were an essential aspect of groping together in the uncharted intellectual adventures of his shared explorations – going beyond all "certainties" defining modernity. Slowly, I started losing familiar schooled anxieties about not being "caught up" with others in Illich's circle where we unceremoniously sat or lay down on the encircling cushions. Why had it taken me so long to realize that Illich had never called for the closure of schools, universities or hospitals in his misunderstood bestsellers: *Deschooling Society* and *Medical Nemesis*? I began living such questions – without impatiently waiting for quick answers. In the interim, between academic semesters,

guided by others within the Illich circle, while travelling throughout India, I began to "look and see" anew … to see the "un" and "undereducated", the "illiterates" and "unschooled" living and learning at the grassroots, as anything but "disposables," or as "needy men and women," needing the mandated curriculum that would invariably label them as "dregs", "wastes" and "dropouts".

Now, it became natural to respond to his call for action: to recover the "common sense" of commoners and "common-ing." I began imagining the end of Truman's era of Development: its engineered scarcities -- of teachers or the genius of learners; of healing freed from high-tech hospitalizations. I began joining Illich's conspirators in hoping for worlds freed from state-mandated, credentialed education; with endless opportunities opening up for learning and teaching freed from the compulsory confinements of classrooms. I came to appreciate the sense and sensibility of extending the separation of Church and State; to boldly include the separation of State and School – weaning us from fundamentalisms that went beyond imposing "right" religions to requiring pedigreed credentials for living fulfilling, creative, fruitful, rich and sane lives. Such insights moved me to embark on journeys home to my ancestors – rich in practical skills and wisdom; unburdened by the tomes that I had memorized and mastered for a well-credentialed and feverishly updated Curriculum Vitae.

Among the countless blessings of savoring pasta in Illich's home on Friday nights was witnessing the birth of *The Development Dictionary*. (Sachs 1992) Scholars from different cultures and lands (jocularly called Illich's Flying Circus) came to share Illich's passion for *interculturality*: desecrated by the oil slick of Development. Twenty toxic words (including "Education", "Planning", "Population", "Poverty", "State", "Environment", "Equality", "Science", "Development" and others) were thoroughly exposed for the ways in which they poisoned our hearts and minds—divorcing us from our soil cultures; while incarcerating peoples world-wide; pushed, as I had been, into waging Development wars on themselves and others.

Moved by Illich, I surprised myself – learning from one of his heroes – St. Schindler: saving "his" Jews while fraternizing with the Nazis.

Failing in all my attempts to leave the academy in order to re-root myself in soil cultures, I could not, however, continue teaching the "stuff" of my award-winning doctoral dissertation; nor subscribe to the Bell and other curves that made it "notable" within the academy. Instead, I fully embraced the many challenges of creating new conditions for honoring the unique genius of all learners – in all their singularity and particularity; even when, and *especially* when they had already fully bought into self-deprecating categorizations of themselves as ONLY "Bs", "Cs", "Ds", "failures" and "dropouts."

This came with a heavy price I was forced to pay within the academy. With predictable regularity, I received "collegial" taunts for "lacking standards," "lowering the objective bar for "As." Even as a Full Professor of Education, I was publicly shamed for my incapacity to teach professional philosophy of education – as taught at Stanford and the other Ivy Leagues. I was condemned for giving centrality to nourishing slow food and soil in my curricula and pedagogy; composting shit and other "waste"; preventing climate collapse by promoting ecological literacy rather than only the modern Rs.

Rank and tenure did not protect me from professionalized abuse. Nor did such rebukes stop me from opening up windows to other landscapes of learning. In all my courses, I began exploring why "underdeveloped / developed," "illiterate," "primitive," "uncivilized," "illegal" were words as toxic as the vast family of terms related to the "N" word. I began including stories from what I was learning at the "grassroots"; including co-creating communities where building our dwellings with adobe was as central as banning flush toilets: re-sacralizing soil and water through dry latrines.

Step by step, I began finding ways to learn from my ancestors while living in the belly of the Development beast. I began confessing to my own complicity in working for a system that produced more "dropouts" globally than it did successes. Furthermore, I began accurately naming these "successes" – which included me—for their role in promoting unsustainable life styles. We would need six planets to fulfill the illusion of equality which allowed the "other" seven billion to "enjoy" our

privileges. Such "enjoyment," I could not hide from myself or others, was severely short-lived; abjectly suicidal.

Soil Cultures: Remembering, Recovering, Regenerating Peace

More than a century ago, Gandhi's prescience predicted that if an independent India adopted the "civilization" of her colonizers, she would destroy the earth with the speed of locusts. On more than one occasion, Illich confessed that his own vast corpus of published and unpublished works remained a mere footnote to Gandhi's 90 volumes on the practices of *Shanti* (peace) won through *Ahimsa* (non-violence). Illich's passion for "techno-fasting," for example, had been articulated a century before by Gandhi. Both remained equally unimpressed by the modern feats of "machine" driven moderns.

Educated to be as ignorant about Gandhi (India's *Bapu* / father), as I was about all the soil-cultures he celebrated, Illich aroused my curiosity; starting my Gandhian *Ahimsa* pilgrimage—once again while crossing over the threshold of his home in Central Pennsylvania. Guided by Illich, I began with Gandhi's tiny, pamphlet *Hind Swaraj*, (Gandhi 1938) written by hand in 1908 on board the ship taking him back to South Africa from London; only two years into the birth of the *Ahimsa* movement that had already won him global recognition. Unqualifiedly, it called for peacefully liberating ourselves from the servitude of being Britain's "jewel in the crown"; de-colonizing our hearts and minds. Illich's 1980 short essay, "The De-linking of Peace and Development" (Illich 1992, 15-26) offered a perfect companion for my inspired foray into "peace studies." Such juxtapositions with Illich's social thought moved me towards the first of many small steps into Gandhi's 90 volumes – which require several dedicated life times of *studium*.

On December 1, 1980, Illich's opening address at the Asian Peace Research gathering in Yokohama, Japan, began with a confession of ignorance: regarding the multiple meanings of the word "peace" in different languages and cultures (for example, *shanti* in Hindi, or *shalom* in Hebrew). Illich's confessions of his ignorance about the multitude of ways for speaking about or enacting "peace" over centuries shed light on the fact of my own ignorance about the Indian ideals of *shanti* and

ahimsa. He clarified for me how Truman's post-war declaration for global development, announced on the day he took office on January 20, 1949, marked the launch of a new era for systematically warring against the peace of soil cultures, Illich urges: "[L]imits to economic development, originating at the grassroots, are the principal condition for people to recover their peace." (Illich 1992, 16)

The environmental and ecological alarms Illich sounded half a century ago, I now hear being echoed globally as horrors bombard the daily lives of billions; as temperatures soar and fires consume rain forests; as climate collapses with carbon, pulled out of soil cultures; as COVID-19 disproportionately kills the most thirsty, hungry, homeless and poverty stricken; as fear and despair spread the rot of their contagion. Repeatedly reminding me of the moral imperative to recover the virtue of hope, Illich heals another affliction being globalized: "apocalyptic randiness." (Illich in Cayley 1992, 146) In lieu of the hysterical "arousals" attending "the end of the world is here" pronouncements, Illich's hope is cultivated through quiet acts committed to the healing friendships born of moral action: "Carry a candle in the dark, *be* a candle in the dark, know that you're a flame in the dark." (Illich in Cayley 1992, 147)

On December 6, 1990, Illich and friends began circulating another pamphlet for remembering, recovering, and regenerating soil cultures: "Hebenshausen: Declaration on Soil." (Illich et al unpublished) Pithy and to the point, in less than two pages it flew me home; crossing oceans, mountains and continents; while teaching me how to become rooted, flowing water in Central Pennsylvania. My awakened imagination, stretching through time and space, brought me to where my ancestors had stood tall for centuries; with their feet firmly planted in their cultures – replacing rigidity with resilience; their lives shaped invariably by the virtues of soil. In a few short paragraphs, this pamphlet completely undid four decades of the indoctrination I suffered since birth. Finally, I was freed to fall in love again with what I had forsaken as a little girl: the soil cultures of my Punjabi ancestors. It awoke childhood memories of profound pleasures eating vegetables freshly harvested from fields; slowly stirred atop handmade, earthen *chullahs* (stoves); flavored by freshly churned butter from buffalos milked a few hours ago by the hands of our extended family members.

Only in hindsight do I realize that at the very moment of my first encounter with Illich in 1981, the soil of the Punjab was already being poisoned and lost by the violence of the scientifically engineered Green Revolution; seducing Punjabi farming communities with all the false promises of Development. Once renowned for the abundance created by their soils and waters, today Punjabi farmers top the charts of worldwide suicide statistics: the inevitable effects of agribusiness takeovers of peoples' places, palates, and intestines.

> This violence can be undone, Illich's hopefulness reminds and reassures. It *must* be undone. Illich leads the way for me and other "conspirators." It is, he says, [our] duty to speak about soil. For Plato, Aristotle and Galen it could be taken for granted; not so today. Soil on which culture can grow and corn be cultivated is lost from view when it is defined as a complex subsystem, scarce, resource, problem or "farm" – as agricultural science tends to do... As philosophers, we offer resistance to those ecological experts who preach respect for science, but foster neglect for historical tradition, local flair and the earthy virtue, self-limitation. Therefore, we issue a call for a philosophy of soil: a clear, disciplined analysis of that experience and memory of soil without which neither virtue nor some new kind of subsistence can be. (Illich et al unpublished, 2)

Illich's call carried me to another vast treasure-trove of writings on the destruction of soil cultures: the essays, poems, plays and fiction of his friend, Wendell Berry. Their answers bring me "down to earth," literally and metaphorically. I restate them here in the simplest terms: to nurture and be nurtured by two types of soil: physical and cultural. Both are inextricably interconnected. Physical soil is sacred in the cultures of Punjabi and all other soil cultures. Agri(soil)culture, displaced by Agri(soil)business, destroys family farm communities globally, including that of my ancestors. Illich and Berry guide my understanding of two types of deserts (physical and social) that follow the displacement of soil cultures by agri-businesses.

Oral stories of place shared intergenerationally are central to cultivating roots that keep both cultural and physical soils where they belong. In the company of Illich, joined by many of his kindred spirits – including Gandhi and Berry, I began living my way into the question: What are people for? Daily, all three nudge me towards my ancestral wisdom about the daily rituals of slowing down; essential for making soil – physical and cultural. Among my favorite stories of hope for COVID "lockdowns" include the regeneration of Victory Gardens, with young people discovering from their elders' cultural practices centered around slow food.

Who is Ivan Illich?

Who is Ivan Illich? This question nags me more persistently than it did when I began this essay. It is all too clear that I offer the very roughest of sketches; inadequate for revealing the genius and bracing intellect of a "larger than life" public intellectual; whose vastness of vision, exuberance of spirit, and passionate cultivation of friendships challenged and stretched my imagination more than any other teacher. Travelling with Illich sporadically for a few, brief, interrupted weeks and months over the course of two, too-short decades, I have found myself arriving where I came from 69 years ago; and, knowing it for the first time.

In these final "snapshots" … brief as fading photos, I seek to offer glimpses; expressing gratitude not only to Illich but to the large legacy of those who, like David Cayley among other "conspirators," have dedicated decades of their lives to honoring the life and work of the "most radical thinker of the 20th century" … also known as one of the most significant "witnesses" of his time. My wild hope is that in these celebrations of Illich, some readers will savor flavors that will lead them directly to the source: the original books and essays for which Illich was both admired and reviled; in equal measure, inspired by some, while still remaining completely misunderstood by many others. (Sacasas nd)[2]

[2] L. M. Sacasas's *The Convivial Society* podcast and newsletter provide a fine introduction to Illich and his legacy: https://theconvivialsociety.substack.com/.

Often asked to be a guide into Ivan Illich's literary worlds, my experience compels me to start at the very beginning … with one of his earliest essays while he was still a Monsignor of the Catholic Church. Written and orally delivered to secular or religious proselytizers visiting Mexico in 1968, Illich's essay "To Hell with Good Intentions," (Illich in Kendall 1990, 314-320) boldly proffers the gift of the Illichian Zen Slap. The brevity and simplicity of his 1968 wake-up call offers invaluable insights into the vast corpus of his writings. Here, he warns "do-gooders" not to impose their so-called "developed standard of living and educating" upon "underdeveloped / illiterate / developing" diverse cultures – flattening them into the monoculture of modernity.

Further steps toward Illichian insight can be taken through the annotated bibliography crafted by his good friends, Lee Hoinacki and Carl Mitchum, in their 2002 edited book: *The Challenges of Ivan Illich*. For those concerned about the desecration of soil and sacred water (as I am, given the reverence for rivers and other waters in the Hindu-Sikh cosmovision), I urge exploring another often-misunderstood masterpiece by Illich: *H20 and the Waters of Forgetfulness*. (Illich 1985) Now that climate collapse is no longer a well-kept secret, it helps me guide people towards deeply appreciating traditional cultures' reverence for soil, water, and all the gifts of Mother Earth.

Given the vast range of his literary explorations in social thought, it is important for me to remember that there are as many Illiches as there are pupillas with whom he shared "the gaze": in and through which, seeing our reflections, we come to know and be known. I pause before the first among the multitude of Illiches I have chosen to give most importance to in these pages: the one who guided me home to my Sikh and Hindu ancestors. Master Illich opened wide my heart and mind into recognizing the wealth of their soil cultures; their ways of living, learning and dying: no longer dismissible as "underdeveloped."

Illich was a rare 20th century intellectual who cultivated deep friendships with his literary/ intellectual ancestors; travelling as far back as the 12th Century to celebrate his love for and friendship with Hugh of St. Victor; studying the latter's *Didascalicon* with rare dedication. As evidenced in Illich's book, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, (Illich 1993) the list of his ancient

and contemporary teachers is a long one – celebrating as he does his life of a robust, contagious "*polyphiliac*."

With Jacques Maritain, Illich discovers the modern sin of "planning." With Jacque Ellul, he studies the prison of the industrial technological system. With Lewis Mumford, Leopold Kohr, and others, he delves deep into the proportionality and scale appropriate for humans' five senses – growing out of them the sixth one: common sense. Once again, Hugh of St. Victor guides Illich to clarify:

> "Science BY the people" is the flowering of common sense. In contrast, "Science FOR the people" … simply R and D … is usually conducted by large institutions –governments, industry, universities, clinics, the military, foundations … It is usually a highly prestigious activity … expensive and tax-exempt. [It has] no bearing on the immediate everyday activities of him who does it. R and D can be carried out on neutron bombs, muscular dystrophy, solar cells or fish ponds – (supposedly) always for the service for the people. (Illich 1981, 513)

In celebration of "Science BY the people" of soil cultures, Illich found it critical to point out the industrial chasm separating it from R and D, or "Science FOR the people" – imposed upon common women and men, like the Green Revolution or Agribusiness.

The second Illich who comes to me is the one I have focused least upon in my *studium* with him: the striking towering man with the distinctive tumor on his cheek: as large as a softball; lumpy and grotesque in its protrusions; completely layered over on top with additional smaller lumps; all of which, over decades invaded his skull; insidiously spreading its tentacles into his jaws, ears and teeth; too-often destroying his sense of balance and equilibrium; while regularly negating his capacities for concentration or restful sleep. No longer could he simply walk, talk or teach without that vast tumor arousing horror and fear in strangers. Some crossed over to the other side of the street when they witnessed the protrusion from afar – as if running away from a monster.

Others demanded a change of seating in planes when placed next to him. Illich often shared such stories with the same lightness and humor with which he spoke of his other distinctive facial feature: his Jewish nose marked him out; forcing his escape from his ancestral home in what became Hitler's Vienna. Still a terrified teenager, fully responsible for the safety of his widowed Jewish mother and younger twin brothers, he fled with them to Florence, Italy. Ivan mastered the arts of embracing these life gifts. With serious humor, he celebrated that nose which rendered him a refugee in Nazi times, honoring it in the same spirit as he did his highly cultivated sense of smell – not just to savor delicious cuisines; but, equally, to smell situations … relationships … and, most significantly, the friendships and kindred spirits with which he defined his being.

The inescapable, excruciating pain of that tumor took him deep and far in cultivating the "arts of suffering": that pain often publicly forcing him into a fetal position before he could relax himself into straightening his body—once a small dose of opium subsided some of the anguish.

Why, I wondered along with others, did he not have the best medical experts remove it, while sedating his pain "away" with morphine? Why did he choose to live with it; and die with it only a few minutes before a scheduled public address in Bremen on December 2, 2002? *Medical Nemesis* – one of his instant best sellers in 1976 – offers critical clues for answering such questions. Decades after its publication, life sent him his "new cross"; leading him to thoroughly research his painful predicament: revealing all the threats posed by state-of-the-art surgeries, opioids and other advanced medical interventions posed to his vibrant vitality and creativity. Deliberately, carefully, he chose the path of learning to live a rich, remarkably creative life, while embracing his pain and suffering.[3] In lieu of the "nemesis" and counterproductivity of medical expertise, he befriended his pain, his personal "cross." He cultivated the virtues necessary for doing so with courage, grace and equanimity – as part of practicing the arts of suffering and dying;

[3] Illich opted for small opium dosages over morphine and other opiods. For the former rendered his pain bearable; taking off its excruciating edge; while allowing him the alertness, lucidity and awakenness he sought--to be fully present both to his work and friends.

essential for living the good life. "Yes, we suffer pain, we become ill, we die. But we also hope, laugh, celebrate; we know the joy of caring for one another; often we are healed and we recover by many means. We do not have to pursue the flattening-out of human experience. I invite all to shift their gaze, their thoughts, from worrying about health care to cultivating the art of living. And, today with equal importance, the art of suffering, the art of dying." (Mitcham, 2003)

In hindsight, I realize I missed invaluable opportunities to learn from him how sickness and pain, if borne with grace and equanimity, become our teachers, returning us to our bodies. Only recently, I learned from a friend suffering COVID-19, that Gandhi almost died from the Spanish flu of 1918-20. It took him years to regain his strength. When he did, he confessed that his illness had been his spiritual teacher: taking him much further along on the path of peace through *ahimsa*. Perhaps it is bold of me to conjecture that Illich, too, went much further along his journey of cultivating the virtues of friendship – given the growing interdependence that came out of his immense pain; as public as was the vastness of his facial tumor.

His pain is an even more significant teacher for me today. Suffering from a mysterious chronic, often unbearable pain for much of 2020, I yearn to gaze into the *pupilla* of the Master; learning to learn from him how he gracefully bore his "cross" for more than two decades; while remaining unmatchably creative; celebrating his awareness of suffering as much as the joys of friendship. He fully lived his hospitality offered to strangers and friends crossing over his threshold, without allowing his agonies to become a narcissistic barrier to the fullest flowering of friendship.

The third Illich continues compelling me to practice the virtues of friendship. Once Illich announced that he finally knew who he was by seeing himself in the eyes of his friends, "from your eyes, I find myself." (Illich and Mitcham 1998, 59) Illich departs from the virtue of *philia* in Plato's Republic. … where it springs from the politics of the democratic *polis*, appropriate in scale, while scarred by misogyny and slavery. Reflecting on the scale of our nation states, Illich recognized that that Greek ideal of friendship was no longer a possibility:

> Today, I do not believe that friendship can flower out of political life. I believe that if something like a political life is to remain for us in this world of technology, then it begins with friendship. Therefore, my task is to cultivate disciplined, self-denying, careful, tasteful friendships. Mutual friendships always – I and you and, I hope, a third person – out of which perhaps community can grow. Because perhaps here we can find what the good is. (Illich and Mitcham, 1998, 60)

Illich devoted himself to performing that task: cultivating tasteful friendships--always political--yet entirely detached from what we usually call politics today in the age of show. He reminded his friends, as he did himself, about what could be grown for the common good out of the soil in which these friendships were rooted. Such friendships are cultivated, I learned, through the leisurely hospitality I savored, crossing over Illich's threshold. It offered me what my colleagues could not. Illich created the conditions for friendship to flourish:

> I remain certain that the quest for truth cannot thrive outside the nourishment of mutual trust flowering into a commitment to friendship. Therefore, I have tried to identify the climate that fosters and the "conditioned" air that hinders the growth of friendship. … Only the gratuitous commitment of friends can enable me to practice the asceticism required for modern near paradoxes, such as renouncing systems analysis while typing on my Toshiba. (Illich in Hoinacki and Mitcham 2002, 235)

Following Illich's gaze, I have also come to discover myself in the pupilla of my friends. As his gaze carries me home to my Punjabi ancestors, I see the vastness of the web of relationships in which I am a knot, among the wondrous rendering of knots I celebrate today in the mythologies of divine Indra's Net.

Regenerating Soil Cultures with Ancestors

> We revere and adore the true teacher who sees us whole, our faults dissolved.
>
> *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (in Kaur, 2020, 323)

This was to be a journey of ancestral re-member-ing – honoring my literal and literary ancestors as "a labor of love." Sadly, that was *not* how writing this essay unfolded for me. Why? In addition to the intense and inexplicable pain that overcame me during my anxiety-filled, COVID-19 evacuation from India, I found myself "stuck." I was unable to find words for sharing how Illich turned my life around as a woman of color; wading her way through all the violent competitiveness of the academy; suffered both by students and professors. Why was it so hard to birth the love letter to Illich I had intended? Why was it as daunting as birthing my son Krishna "naturally" -- instead of the C-Section I had started to "scream" for in the hospital – only to be gently silenced by my patient, nurturing doula?

Once again, answers arrived in surprising ways. One of the conspirators of this book, Estrus Tucker, shared the timeliness of "revolutionary love" celebrated in *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Radical Love* by Valarie Kaur – a Sikh American (Kaur 2020). Her call to revolutionary love in December 2016 at the AME church in Washington DC, invited by Reverend William Barber, reflected on the hellish pain of birthing a new nation following the terrifying election victory of Trump. Her words went viral; with more than four million people across the earth singing hallelujah to her talk, which began with words from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Within minutes, recognizing a kindred Sikhni, I downloaded her audio-book. Over the next month, I listened to her recitations repeatedly; and, for the first time in my 69 years on earth, comprehended the Song of Hope my mother had recited decades before and after my conception. That song speaks to me of the hope Illich guided us to cultivate – in the 1960s; and, even more so today in 2020; trapped as we find ourselves today in the suffering of COVID-19, climate collapse and the race riots provoked by the most divisive and dangerous President. Kaur's "revolutionary love" speaks to me of Illich's "radical love" exemplified by the good Samaritan: the Palestinian who picks up and tends to the

discarded, "dissed" Jew in the ditch; revolting against all the established walls separating "foes" from "family"; de-humanized "illegals" from "legal" citizens.

Journeying home to my soil culture ancestors today, I hear Valerie Kaur's voice joining my mother, grandmother, and great-great-great grandmothers: reciting our centuries-old Song of Hope. Singing this song today in Central Pennsylvania, Illich's presence is as palpable for me as that of my mother Rajinder Dandona, her mother Shakuntala Devi, her grandmother Biji, and all of my ancestors. I invite you to join me in rejoicing with our sacred Song of Hope; hoping for the healing of Creation: which remains, despite the continuing hate, violence and wanton desecration, nothing short of wondrous:

Wondrous is sound, wondrous is ancient wisdom
Wondrous are the creatures, wonderous are their varieties
Wondrous are the forms, wondrous are the colors
Wondrous are the beings who wander around unclothed
Wondrous is the wind, wondrous is the water
Wondrous is the fire, which works wonders
Wondrous is the earth, wondrous the sources of creation
Wondrous are the tastes we seek and seize
Wondrous is union, wondrous is separation
Wondrous is hunger, wondrous is satisfaction
Wondrous is divine praise, wondrous is divine adoration
Wondrous is the wilderness, wondrous is the right path
Wondrous is closeness, wondrous is distance
Wondrous to face the divine, ever-present now
Beholding these wonders, I am wonderstruck
…. [T]hose who understand this are blessed.

Guru Granth Sahib (in Kaur 2020, 320-321)

References

Cayley, D. (1992). Ivan Illich in Conversation. Toronto, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Inc.

Gandhi, M. K. (1938). Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule. Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Trust.

Hoinacki, L. and Mitchum, (ed.) , (2002) The Challenges of Ivan Illich— A Collective Reflection. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Kaur, V. (2020) See no Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love. New York: One World.

Illich, I. (1970, 1971) Deschooling Society. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Illich, I. (1976) Medical Nemesis. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Illich, I. L (1981). "Hugh of St. Victor or Science by People", Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society, Vol. I.

Illich, I. (1982). Gender. New York, NY: Random House.

Illich, I. (1985) H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books.

Illich, I. (1986-87. In Cayley, D (2005).The Rivers North of the Future – T he Testament of Ivan Illich as told to David Cayley. Toronto, Canada: Anansi.

Illich, I. (1990) "To Hell with Good Intentions." In Kendall, J. et. al., Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service Vol I. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 314-320.

Illich, I. (1992) In the Mirror of the Past – Lectures and Essays 1978-1990. London: Marion Boyars.

Illich, I. (1993). In the Vineyard of the Text – A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Illich, I. et al, nd. Hebenshausen: Declaration on Soil. (Unpublished)

Illich, I. et al, (1997). Disabling Professions. London: Marion Boyars.

Illich, I. and Mitcham, C (1998) "The Politics of Friendship." In Jerry Brown, Dialogues. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books.

Mitcham, C. et al., (2003) "Remembering Ivan Illich." Whole Earth, Spring.
https://illichlinks.wordpress.com/2013/02/10/remebering_ivan_illich/

Reggio, G. (1992) Koyaanisquatsi: Life Out of Balance. MGM Home Entertainment.

Prak M. S. and Esteva G. (1997) Escaping Education. New York: Peter Lang.

Sacasas, L. M. The Convivial Society [podcast] https://theconvivialsociety.substack.com/.
Sachs, W. ed. (1992) The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power London: Zed Books.

Learning to Learn with Ivan Illich: Regenerating Soil Cultures

Madhu Suri Prakash

Abstract In looking back over her immensely fruitful life and her many influences, Madhu Suri Prakash thoughtfully ponders her Punjabi ancestry and the disabling impacts of colonization, including the colonial legacy of the English education system in India and its creation of colonized minds. She tells her education story from her work as a critical pedagogue, through the transformation she experienced given her long association with Ivan Illich enabling her to escape the disabling of conventional education and professionalism, toward her work regenerating soil cultures, including coming full circle to honour her mother and grandmothers as well as the humble and storied culture of her youth.

Keywords soil cultures, regenerative culture, Ivan Illich, ancestral belonging, global development, development disease, liberation pedagogy, education in India, critical pedagogy, disabling professions, commoning, hope and hospitality

---

Apprendre à apprendre avec Ivan Illich :Régénérer les cultures du sol

Madhu Suri Prakash

Résumé En revisitant sa vie immensément riche et les nombreuses influences qui l'ont façonnée, Madhu Suri Prakash réfléchit à son héritage pendjabi et aux impacts dévastateurs de la colonisation, notamment l'héritage colonial du système éducatif anglais en Inde et sa contribution à la formation d'esprits colonisés. Elle retrace son parcours éducatif, depuis son travail en tant que pédagogue critique jusqu'à son

engagement dans la régénération des cultures du sol, en passant par la transformation profonde qu'elle a vécue grâce à sa longue association avec Ivan Illich. Cette relation lui a permis de s'affranchir des effets invalidants de l'éducation conventionnelle et du professionnalisme, pour finalement revenir à ses racines et rendre hommage à sa mère, à ses grands-mères et à la culture humble et riche en récits de son enfance.

Mots clés cultures du sol, culture régénérative, Ivan Illich, appartenance ancestrale, développement mondial, pathologie du développement, pédagogie de la libération, éducation en Inde, pédagogie critique, professions invalidantes, mutualisation, espoir et hospitalité

Aprender a aprender con Ivan Illich:Regenerar las culturas del suelo

Madhu Suri Prakash

Resumen Al reflexionar sobre su vida profundamente fructífera y las numerosas influencias que la marcaron, Madhu Suri Prakash analiza su ascendencia punjabi y los efectos debilitantes de la colonización, incluido el legado colonial del sistema educativo inglés en la India y su contribución a la formación de mentes colonizadas. Relata su historia educativa, desde su labor como pedagoga crítica, pasando por la transformación que vivió gracias a su prolongada relación con Ivan Illich, que le permitió liberarse de las limitaciones de la educación convencional y el profesionalismo, hasta su trabajo en la regeneración de las culturas del suelo. Este recorrido culmina en un reconocimiento a su madre, sus abuelas y la cultura humilde y cargada de historia de su juventud.

Palabras clave culturas del suelo, cultura regenerativa, Ivan Illich, pertenencia ancestral, desarrollo global, patología del desarrollo, pedagogía de la liberación, educación en la India, pedagogía crítica, profesiones limitantes, comunitarismo, esperanza y hospitalidad

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 209-234
Convergence/ia/e 2024

Longing to Belong: Reconnecting to my Cree ancestors (*âniskôtapânak)* and our Ancestral Homeland in Lesser Slave Lake, Canada

Jeannette Sinclair
Independent Researcher

Introduction

I am a North American Indigenous woman with ancestral roots in the Lesser Slave Lake area of northern Alberta, Canada. I use the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal interchangeably in referring to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people in Canada. My people, *nehiyawak, (*Cree people), from Treaty 8 territory are referred to as *sakâw* (Northern/Bush/Woodland) Cree which is the ancestral language of the Indigenous people in the area. My parents, born and raised in the Lesser Slave Lake area, were Cree speakers. However, English, the language of the dominant culture was used at home with their six children. There were seven in our mom's family and eleven in our dad's family.

Our ancestors lived off the land in that area for five or more generations from the early to mid-1800s. First Nations, Metis and non-Indigenous people inhabit small communities mainly on the southern, western and eastern shores of the lake. Traditionally, knowledge of Indigenous presence was transmitted through the oral histories of Indigenous people, but this was profoundly disrupted by colonization. Local history books, penned mostly by settlers, do include Indigenous families in the area; however, the focus is largely on the settlers and their contributions to the communities.

Permanent historical structures did not exist for Indigenous people who primarily lived off the land within relationships of reciprocity, caring for

the land and the land, in turn, providing for the people. Knowledge of burial sites was traditionally carried in oral history, but this has been lost. Archival records for some of my ancestors refer to burial sites but, in some cases, these are no longer visible, or their locations are unknown, unlike historical burial sites for settlers with visible permanent markers in local cemeteries. Further, some ancestral burial sites are now enclosed within designated parkland around the lake, again invisible to the public eye. Without extensive oral history, physical burial sites, or many archival records, understanding our ancestral history is challenging. This marginalization of our people and our history motivates me to strive for the recognition and acknowledgement of our people. In seeking to reclaim our oral histories and our stories on the land, we can create another level of understanding of experiences in the local area and deepen community knowledge.

This article primarily draws on my qualitative doctoral research (Sinclair 2013) and is driven by my view that as we deepen the understanding of our own histories, Indigenous knowledge, and Indigenous ways of knowing and being, it serves to strengthen our identities, individually and collectively, including familial and ancestral kinship ties. Our Elders instill in us the importance of knowing our history, knowing our language and culture, knowing our relatives; in other words, knowing who we are (Sinclair 2013). The Elders are our teachers in many ways. The late Metis scholar Elder Joseph Couture (2000) describes Elders as "the oral historians, guardians of the Secrets, as interpreters of the Life of the People, as unusual teachers and way-showers to the People" (32).

Yet, how do Indigenous people in Canada learn about our own histories when the pedagogical foundations of our oral traditions have been so profoundly disrupted, damaged or destroyed by deliberate colonial strategies that have resulted in a variety of challenges, barriers, and losses? Knowledge transmission does not happen organically when intergenerational language barriers exist. Traditional knowledge transmission in many of our families and communities has been seriously damaged and, in some cases, broken by the legacy of colonization and the subjugation of our knowledge and our people in Canada. Whether it was deliberate or inadvertent that our local histories

were marginally evident, the result is the same; our ancestors' stories become invisible over time in the landscape of Canada's past.

To address this dilemma, archival and genealogical data was collected for the study which was supplemented with narratives of Indigenous voices from my community. The purpose was to bring the ancestors out of the shadows and create a bridge of reconnection with the 're-searcher' and the 're-searched'. This work addresses the legacy of pain that Indigenous people carry because of colonization and oppression, and the marginalization, and silencing of our people. Further, it speaks to the need for validation and mobilization of Indigenous knowledge systems to support the efforts to make visible hidden yet essential Indigenous vitality. Throughout, the research was grounded in ceremony to honour our ancestors and our traditional ways, as well as to guide the work in a good way.

Context: Multiple Indigenous Identities

In many Indigenous communities, including my own family, there is a mix of Indigenous identities. Metis scholar, Joyce Green (2022) discusses this mix of identities: "The colonial and racialized history of Canada has led to many Aboriginal identities, and thus, of histories and communities. Not all of us fit a formula, and not many of us fit only one formula" (169). In my immediate family prior to 1985, we were considered Metis, although in earlier years the Cree term *âpihtâw'kosisân* and "Halfbreed" were also used. In 1990, our family acquired First Nation status, because of the 1985 Amendment to the Indian Act commonly known as "Bill C-31". It allowed the reinstatement of Indian women who had previously "lost" their Indian status through marriage to a "white' man or "non-Indian" man, as was the case with my maternal Cree grandmother. She lost her status when she married a white man from the United States. Ironically, when Indian men married white or non-Indian women, those women and their descendants automatically became status Indians. In 1987, our mother was the first in our family to acquire Indian status along with her siblings based on the genealogical research conducted by my eldest brother, Gordon to support her application. He continued with archival research of our paternal lineage

and then applied for status for our father, my siblings and I, and our children. In 1990, this resulted in our family acquiring "Indian" status.

Although the 1985 Amendment to the Indian Act was meant to eliminate sex-based discrimination, it created other forms of discrimination such as giving First Nations the authority to determine their own band membership codes. They determined who could regain band membership, who could live on reserve, and who could receive other provisions such as the benefits granted to non-member spouses and children of on-reserve band members. Prior to that amendment, Indian status and band membership were not separated.

Even though our family obtained First Nation status in 1990, we were excluded from 'band' membership in our home territory. Without band membership, families like ours became disconnected from their original Indigenous communities. Prior to obtaining First Nations status in 1990, our political representation was structured through local, provincial and national Metis organizations in Canada. Without band membership, it gives us even less political influence than before we gained 'Indian' status. The result is that we do not have a collective land base where our First Nation identities can be strengthened, and where our Indigenous language and culture are supported. The Assembly of First Nations is a strong collective political voice for over 600 First Nations bands in Canada represented by their chiefs. Yet, without connection and membership in a First Nation's band, without land, and without chief and council leadership, we lack strong political representation which is an act of disempowerment and contributes to a lack of agency for our families and communities.

Although the 1985 Indian Act amendment was implemented to rectify gender and racial discrimination, the late Harold Cardinal (1999), Cree leader, lawyer, as well as Indigenous rights activist, asserted it "has created its own host of new identities, and with them new problems" (xiii). Cardinal asserted this new class of Indians "who meet the legal requirements to be recognized as 'status Indians' but do not meet the requirements to be legally considered members of an existing band or reserve" has ultimately resulted in "a legal hocus pocus in which recovering 'status' has little or no meaning" (xiii). Our family, not unlike

many Indigenous families in Canada live in that disempowering 'in between' space that can have negative and even detrimental effects on our collective identity, on our connection to ancestral land, culture and community, on our social and political infrastructures, and on our sense of belonging.

A few short years after receiving Indian status in 1990, various family members including myself were served official notice from the Registrar of what was then the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs that our status would be revoked. The arbitrary nature of assigning identity in northern Alberta stems from 1899 when Indigenous people of the area could choose to accept Metis scrip in the form of land (240 acres) or money (240 dollars), or alternatively, they could take Treaty and be defined as Indian under the Indian Act. The Registrar stated that because the parents of our father's maternal grandmother took scrip, we were considered ineligible for Indian status. It did not matter that our great grandmother had died in 1898 before the signing of Treaty 8 and the allocation of "Halfbreed" scrip in 1899. Even though various ancestors from our maternal and paternal lineage were band members from Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 areas in Sawridge, Driftpile, Swan River, Sucker Cree, Michel bands and others, it resulted in many of our nuclear and extended family members having their First Nation status revoked. The challenge that our family faced in trying to retain our Indian status was like being caught in what Cardinal (1991) called 'legal limbo' (xiii).

For almost a decade, our family fought to prove our collective rights to be "Indian" since the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985. Two of our brothers and our dad had their status revoked, while the rest of our family's status remained intact. After years of archival research, expending personal resources on legal expertise, and eventually receiving legal services from a national Indigenous organization, our legal battle was lost. Sadly, a few years later our dad lost his battle with cancer, passing away at the age of 79 without any status. Over twenty years later, my brothers were able to regain their First Nation status following a subsequent amendment to the Indian Act. What we have learned from this experience is that the Indian registration process is deeply flawed - we share the same parents, grandparents and ancestral lineage but only certain family members were able to retain their First Nation status. It raises questions about the

deep injustices of state-imposed identities which, in turn, have substantive potential for family conflicts and community divisions.

My family is not unlike many Indigenous families in Canada who experienced the impact of confusing and immoral national policies. No matter which decisions our ancestors chose in signing treaty or accepting scrip, the government's colonial strategy was the extinguishment of Aboriginal entitlement to land and in many cases, the erasure of identity. Speaking from an international Indigenous perspective, Maori scholar and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts that differential subjugation practices within a specific Indigenous context can demonstrate the unevenness of imperialism, within a single Indigenous society. She addresses the colonizers' self-serving interests of state-controlled identities, impacting Indigenous peoples' efforts of recovery:

> legislated identities which regulated who was an Indian and who was not, who was a *metis*, who had lost all status as an indigenous person, who had the correct fraction of blood quantum, who lived in the regulated spaces of reserves and communities, were all worked out arbitrarily (but systematically), to serve the interests of the colonizing society. The specificities of imperialism help to explain the different ways in which indigenous peoples have struggled to recover histories, lands, languages and basic human dignity. (22)

Metis scholar Heather Devine (2004) indicates that in the Treaty 8 region, 1,195 money scrips of $240 were distributed and forty-eight 240-acre land scrips were issued (195). She asserts that making the land scrip transferable allowed scrip speculators who followed the 1899 Half-Breed Commission to persuade and buy the land at a fraction of its value, leaving most of the Metis in northern Alberta to subsist as squatters (195). Devine goes on to say that the Crown land on which the Northern Metis relied for their livelihood to hunt, fish, and gather was "about to be opened up for homesteading after the federal government transferred responsibility for the management of natural resources to provincial governments in 1930" (195). Some of our ancestors were on First Nation Band lists while others, even within the same family, took Metis land scrip which ended up back in the hands of the Crown. Retired lawyer

and author of Metis descent, Jean Teillet (2019) states that the "Métis scrip process was a rotten deal. And everybody knew it" (381).

Our family's story (Sinclair 2013) and others yet to be told, would not be considered unique among Indigenous families across Canada. Thousands of families and communities have experienced disconnection from their traditional lands, languages, histories, and traditional cultures through the imposition of colonial policies. Many of our people, perhaps more among the Metis and non-status populations, "will have experienced state-imposed labels/identities which impact the sociocultural, political, and in many cases, economic aspects of their lives (8). Devine (2004) indicates that ethnic labels arbitrarily assigned by outsiders can be quite different from personal and family understandings of identity as she discovered in her comprehensive family history research (xviii). As stated in my research (Sinclair 2013), labels that are assigned to us by outsiders, "can change with the swipe of a bureaucrat's pen" (88).

Cree writer, lawyer and poet, Michelle Good (2023) describes what she refers to as the "colonial toolkit" used to activate the goals of colonialism to "remove us from our lands, disempower us in decisions about our land and resources, dismantle our highly effective social institutions, and dismember our families and communities" (3-4). She goes on to say that we need to embrace history as it truly unfolded in the way Indigenous people experienced it and further reminds us that "history is also contemporary" (4-5). In my research, I consider that re-searching our hiStories/re-claiming and re-searching our stories is a way of "giving voice to the land and to our relatives who have gone before us". Moreover, it resists the "primacy of the historical discourse of the dominant culture" (Sinclair 2013, 98). Good (2023) also noted that Canada is primarily Crown land where the government claims the land as their own and which is held by the federal and provincial governments. "Less than 11 per cent of Canada's land is in private hands; 41 per cent is federal Crown land and 48 per cent is provincial Crown land" (204).

Research Intentions: Identity, Land, Belonging

There is a complexity of internal and external factors which contribute to an individual or collective sense of identity. Although the focus of my research was not exclusively on Indigenous identity, it formed an integral aspect of the study. As described by Metis scholar Weber-Pillwax (2003), "identity formation is [also] connected with and affected by such additional environmental elements as physical geography including land, knowledge and education systems, economic and governing systems, languages, values and spirituality" (18-19). She also addresses the impact on legislative identity on our people which extends beyond theories on paper: "the effects of this 'outside naming' has been and continues to be a destructive element in the development of Indigenous peoples and their communities in general, and to the normal processes of individual identity formation in particular (58-59). In my experience, the challenges of ascribed identity on our family are unnecessary barriers and hurdles that we face in addition to the legacy of the subjugation and colonization of our people.

I believe we need to be cognizant that government-imposed identity can serve to divide us in ways that are long lasting and destructive to our individual and collective wellbeing as Indigenous people. Families such as ours experiencing different entitlements associated with the respective labels assigned by the state are in a precarious situation with the potential to create resentments and divisions among family members. Inconsistent state-imposed identities could pit us against one another if we are not applying a critical lens to the consequences of externally applied labels that privilege or limit the rights of individual family or community members over others. Anishinaabe writer of mixed ancestry, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (1993) says that we will not reach consensus on the question of politically imposed identities. Instead, we must assert our own definitions of who we are and reject colonizers' systems of imposing definitions which would:

> reduce us to nothingness with misrepresentative, overly-broad or trivializing labels of identification. … By freeing ourselves of the constricting bounds of stereotypes and imposed labels of identity, we empower ourselves and our

> communities and break free of the yoke of colonial power that has not only controlled what we do and where we live but who we are. (24)

Colonizing governments can attack our languages and reduce our cultures through their restrictive policies, but no one can take away our inherent blood connections. Further, we as Indigenous peoples are becomingly increasingly educated and able to do our own research which can reconnect us to our own knowledges, our ancestral land, our own histories, and our own ways of being. Smith (2005) says that research was used as an oppressive tool, like schooling, but it is "gradually coming to be seen as a potential means to reclaim languages, histories, and knowledge to find solutions to the negative impacts of colonialism and to give voice to an alternative way of knowing and being" (91). Through this research, I am working to reconnect and strengthen our own individual and collective identity through knowing our histories, who our ancestors are, where they lived, and honouring our own ways of knowing.

Indigenous Research Framework: Honouring Our Own Ways of Knowing

To explore the complexity of multiple identities and reconnect with land and ancestry, I engaged the principles of Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM) as identified by Cree Metis scholar and Professor Emeritus, Cora Weber-Pillwax (1999, 31-32) who is also from northern Alberta. This study drew on multiple IRM principles, including that it must serve the community, it must follow Traditional protocols, and it should privilege "lived Indigenous experience" as the foundation of Indigenous research (Sinclair 2013, 8).

Through prayer and ceremony on the land, which follows traditional practices and protocol, I began my search to make visible the history of my ancestors and their stories. Throughout the research process, I drew on our own ways of knowing, in addition to ceremony, by smudging my research and writing space and providing food offerings for my ancestors as I worked. I engaged with my research as a sacred ceremony. As Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) maintains, research is ceremony,

and we need to begin our work in the right way. It seemed even more imperative to engage with the research as a sacred process, out of respect for our ancestors and their lived experiences.

The challenge to find a methodology that fit the study was like trying to force a square peg into a round hole. I used my family history as the foundation of my research, as a "case study". This included an autoethnography of ancestral lived Indigenous experience as a northern Alberta Cree family. Social scientist Robert Yin (2009) discusses that case study is used in many situations "to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" and further, is used as a common research method in "psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, social work, business, education, nursing and community planning" (4). Yin asserts that the case study method "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (4). I acknowledge that the dynamic nature of my research may not fully fit within qualitative case study research parameters, however, I suggest that the stories and ancestral history of my immediate family could be considered a microcosm of other Indigenous families in Canada. Our family story, including my own perspective, stood as a 'voice from the inside', providing an Indigenous perspective which largely was absent in the literature; although today, is becoming increasingly evident.

I also gathered archival data including archival documents from colonial institutions, including land searches to identify reserve land, scrip land, and burial sites, supplemented by qualitative interviews of family members and knowledge holders from the community of Lesser Slave Lake. This included several audio recordings of my late father given the breadth of his experience as an Indigenous leader at a community, provincial and national level. The interviews addressed other real-life events of our family and others from the Lesser Slave Lake area. I maintained reflexive research journey notes throughout the process. Documenting knowledge of our familial roots served as the foundation for a deepened awareness of our Indigenous ancestry; one that permits our family's current generations and subsequent generations to reconnect to our ancestors and to their ancestral land at some level. It

also sought to create another, deeper, level of understanding of community knowledge.

In terms of writing, I was inspired by the work of Cree/Saulteaux scholar, Margaret Kovach (2009), who described her writing style as first-person narrative woven with expository writing and analysis as a research story: "It is situated in a time, place, and context. … Although the narrative style is present, the writing often shape-shifts to other forms. Like sweetgrass, it has three braids, comprising three writing styles: expository, analytical, and narrative" (21).

Similar to Kovach, I use first person voice to incorporate narrative which also has the additional benefit of "keeping me grounded" (Sinclair 2013, 21). Using first person narrative in this study reveals my own subjectivity, while drawing on the stories of others, mostly family members, some of whom are no longer with us. My intention was to present the research with honesty, integrity, and accuracy as best as I could, being respectful of individual and collective voices, while meeting the academic requirements of the research (9-10).

Autoethnography: The First Steps, Finding My Voice, Finding my History

Among Indigenous cultures where oral transmission is the norm, with the passing of Elders, grandparents and parents, the oral history goes with them. This work was an attempt to capture some of those stories, some previously recorded and some from my own lived experience, as well as the collective memory of others in the family and community. In my family, Cree language fluency in my generation no longer seems within reach especially since the passing of our parents. Thus, it has been imperative to document our stories, our ancestral land and bloodline connections, weaving together the fragments of ancestral lived experience as a bridge for our descendants to know themselves and have a strong sense of identity and hopefully belonging. This autoethnographic journey (Sinclair 2013) was to find voice, my own and those of my ancestors who are no longer visible, so together we emerge from the shadows into the light. It is like "re-Cree-ating" our past (29).

I realized on this research journey, that my own lived experience was vital, beginning with my home birth which left an imprint on me that I have carried all my life. It was my eldest sister Linda who encouraged me to include the story of my home birth in my research. She remembers it though she was only 3 ½ years old at the time. I use it here to provide context about the issue of invisibility as I see it.

> I was born in the mid-1950s in a small two room house in northern Alberta with no indoor plumbing or telephone. There was no hospital or doctor in the town. The nurse who provided medical services for the community wasn't available the night I was born so Dad rushed to find the midwife who had delivered many babies over the years, mostly of my parents' generation. In my family, I was the only one of my siblings born at home even though our parents' generation and those before were delivered by midwives. My home birth may have set the tone for my life path as there were no medical records for my delivery, no birth weight, no height, no time of delivery. Invisible.
>
> The feeling of being left out, of not being important enough to write about, of being invisible was reinforced in school, right at the outset from first grade. We never saw ourselves in school textbooks. There was no written history about our people, it was like we did not matter. We weren't important enough in Slave Lake for the townspeople to keep accurate records, even of the burial sites and cemeteries where our ancestors lie. All of this sets the tone of this "re-search" for the restoration of evidence and the stories of our people, my ancestors in the Slave Lake area, seeking to be visible, no longer invisible.
>
> I often introduce myself as a landless, bandless, mixed-blood northern Cree—with Indian status. I am grateful for having Indian status since 1990 which provided some much-needed support for my university education. I am deeply grateful for my eldest brother's genealogy research identifying our ancestors. Yet for me it raised other questions about identity and belonging. What does it mean to be a Treaty Indian from the Treaty 8 territory? Where is our land? Which is our band? Where is our community? Who are our leaders, our chief, our councillors? Where do I exercise my political right to vote at the local level? Who represents our views at the national level? Why does it feel

like we have become even more invisible in the 'great Canadian landscape' than we already were? I feel as an Indigenous person in Canada, in our own homeland, that we don't matter. It's like being cast aside. Invisible.

Not having land is about others not recognizing the land base where your ancestors traditionally lived off the land, where they worked, where they fished, hunted and trapped, where they had their children and raised their families, their homeland. It's about not having communal land for your family—for your parents, your brothers and sisters, their children, their children's children and those not yet born. It's about feeling disconnected from our community which should be rooted in the history of our ancestors. Invisible.

There are essentially no historical traces of where our ancestors lived. No inheritances of family homes on cement foundations, no precious jewellery, no coveted objects of value passed on to subsequent generations like many non-Indigenous families. We heard stories and memories shared in Cree by our parents and grandparents' generations in in our home but did not understand them. With the loss of our ancestral language, the oral traditions seem to fade away like the ancestors of our past. Invisible.

What is worse, being invisible or being silenced? Either one is damaging and disempowering to our people, to our psyches, to our spirits. What is even more damaging is being silenced and invisible. (24-29)

Perhaps invisibility was the seed that was planted in my adult search for official records, as physical evidence to validate our history. After the passing of my parents, I wondered if their generation did not have issues with the lack of access to official documents because it was a common occurrence for them, or because of their reliance on the tradition of oral transmission of our stories. Our parents, grandparents and great grandparents had the ancestral language and the stories of our people. I had neither the records, the stories, nor the language.

I was schooled in mainstream Canadian culture that privileges written records over oral knowledge. Luckily, I was able to I draw on previously recorded interviews of my parents and others of their generation that I recorded during my undergraduate years and for my master's research. Our paternal grandparents, our *kohkom* and *moshom,* who we spent the most time with as we were growing up did not speak English or have any formal education. Born in the late 1880s and early 1900s, they were educated in the Cree way of life. Our maternal Cree grandmother passed away when our mom was a child, so we never had the opportunity to meet her. For me, the longing to see a photograph of her never leaves me. I treasure our grandparents' stories captured in our collective memory and the recordings of our parents sharing their stories from my previous research.

Metis scholar, Bonita Lawrence (2011) says that telling our histories for Indigenous peoples, "involves recovering our own stories of the past and asserting the epistemological foundations that inform our stories of the past. It also involves documenting processes of colonization from the perspectives of those who experienced it" (69-70). I concur with the late Choctaw and Ukrainian scholar, Carolyn Kenny's (2012) assertion about the use of narrative as a theme in Indigenous scholarship: "Stories are bridges that connect our histories, our legends, our senses, our practices, our values and, in essence, our sustainability as people" (7). It was reassuring to me those Indigenous scholars and others reinforced for me the significance of stories to inform our past and to document our own realities.

It also resonated with me that we use story as a means of colonial resistance—in a sense taking back our own power, our agency, using our own voices. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses 'researching back', 'writing back', or 'talking back' in post/anti-colonial literature which has involved "a 'knowingness of the colonizer' and a recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination" (7). Metis scholar, Emma LaRocque (2010) discusses the use of voice as 'resistance scholarship' and states: "The important thing is that we all have the right to speak, the right to be represented fairly, and the right to express ourselves true to our lives, experiences, and research" (32).

Indigenous people consider telling our stories to be imperative, as "integral to our identity, to our culture, to our survival" (Sinclair, 99).

Reweaving Land and Language Reconnection

There are many complex factors that affect personal and collective identity, especially land and language. The land facet of the research is currently ongoing, and language is minimally addressed in this article. What is central to this study has been the healing aspect of land reconnection and the reclamation of our family history and Indigenous ways of knowing. Identifying burial sites, locating habitation sites, and collecting local stories may have positive effects that ripple out beyond the scope of our family by bringing to visibility our ancestral presence on the land. Time will tell. Chickasaw Elder and scholar, Eber Hampton (1995) says that the "identity of Indian people is that which links our history and our future to this day, now" (22).

For me, the deep connection between identity and place lies in the reconnection with our own histories, including the land where our ancestors' bones are buried—in our case, the Lesser Slave Lake area. The fact that some of our ancestors were not buried in the town cemetery with their names etched in granite headstones does not mean that they have no history there. The history of a people does not get eliminated because there are no remaining visible landmarks, including historical buildings, gravesites, or ceremonial sites. Our people had a connection to the land based on reciprocity—respecting the land and the water so that it could sustain the people and the natural environment of plants, trees, animals, fish, all wildlife. Our dad remembered his grandmother, saying, "if you look after the land, it will look after you". This Indigenous perspective on land translates into leaving gentle, or no, footprints on the land.

The path that I follow is not a visible path but an inherent calling to connect with our ancestors and their land and our language, while to a lesser extent drawing on the culture that is embedded in the language. Kovach discusses the connection of place and identity and the connection through the generations:

> Place gives us identity. … Place links present with past and our personal self with kinship groups. What we know flows through us from the 'echo of generations,' and our knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our experience with our places. This is why name-place stories matter: they are repositories of science, they tell of relationships, they reveal history, and they hold our identity. (61)

In a conversation between guest editors of an educational research journal (Shultz, Kelly, and Weber-Pillwax, 2009), Weber-Pillwax describes the deep connection between place and identity, drawing on her Cree language to discuss the practice of our people burying umbilical cords after childbirth:

> I am reminded of a Cree word, *nitisiy,* meaning my navel. When I say *nitisiyihkason*, I am saying "my name is …" so the connection between my name (or what I call myself) and my navel is clear. …The umbilical cord is buried in that place where you are supposed to be and where you belong. Place, then, is a part of who you are, a part of your identity. (338-339)

The ancestral practice of burying umbilical cords in our home territory was not a continued practice by my parents but may have been practiced by other Indigenous people in the area. Whether or not my umbilical cord was intentionally buried in the Lesser Slave Lake area, I believe that it is in the land since I was born at home. The likeliness of this reality may explain the deep calling I have for reconnecting with ancestral land and our ancestral stories and sharing them so that their presence on our homeland is known and valued.

Reweaving Ancestral Reconnection using Indigenous Ways of Knowing

I was in search of guidance to find out how we strengthen our identity as Indigenous people in Canada in light of the colonial disconnections and barriers resulting from the allocation of scrip and the signing of Treaty 8 in Alberta over 125 years ago. There was not an obvious path

that I could see. I drew on our own Indigenous ways of knowing in my research journey. Kenny (2012) discusses how the ancestors guide us with a reverence for what they have left behind: "They communicate with us through dreams, through the teachings that have come down through the generations, through spirit" (3). Throughout the research for my study (2013), I was asking myself how we make the reconnection to our histories and to our ancestors.

We carry the history—as some claim—in 'blood memory'. Weber-Pillwax (2009) discusses the theory of blood memory among a people: "The theory is if you have the blood of Cree ancestors, you have the Cree memories connected to those ancestors. But it's really your choice as to whether you use that or let it go" (339). I choose to honour that connection or what may be viewed more appropriately as re-connection. In an article on honoring spiritual knowledge, Cree Elder/scholar Stan Wilson (1995) discussed the late Miniconjou Sioux traditional knowledge holder/scholar, Elder Lionel Kinunwa's wisdom about cellular memory:

> Our ancestral memories are in your blood, they're in your muscles, they're in your bones, they're in your hair, and those memories are there. …That is why when we hear the drum, our spirit is moved. This is because the vibrations of the drum stir old memories—our ancestral memories. These memories come out of our molecular structure of our being. This is also why when you hear someone speaking your own language, your molecular structure picks up those vibrations, because each language has its own peculiar patterns, and you feel good that somebody is speaking your language (65).

My reconnection process was strengthened through learning from traditional knowledge holders, ceremony, and dreams. I was inspired by Indigenous research mentors and the work of other Indigenous scholars, especially those who would be considered trailblazers among Indigenous scholars. Indigenous education scholar and Professor Emeritus, Jo-Ann Archibald (2008), and others, assert that dreams can be "a source of Indigenous knowledge and that they can provide guidance for Indigenous research methodology" (3). It was late in my research

journey that I decided to include one of my bear dreams in my work (Sinclair 2013), as it had a significant impact on me:

The bear was massive with a thick collar around its neck chained next to a house in the bush that was not like any of the Native people's old log houses in that area. But intuitively, I sensed that the land was nearby where kohkom and moshom lived. I came upon the bear and was startled by it. It was terrifying because of its size and further, it was agitated. I did not know what to do. Then my eldest brother appeared and came over to me and told me that I had to feed it. It was like he was given the responsibility to feed it, but he was passing it on to me. He had to go somewhere else. He handed me a huge pail of raw fish. I did not object although I was afraid. One by one, I pulled out a fish and threw it to the bear until the pail was empty. I was relieved that it calmed it. My fear subsided. But I was puzzled that whoever lived in that house would be so cruel as to chain an animal that should have been allowed to be free in the wild. (130)

I cannot remember exactly when it was that I realized that I was going to have to be more diligent in feeding our relative, the bear, but that dream has stayed with me. Bear dreams and dreams of a spiritual nature seemed to become more frequent after I began participating in ceremonies in the early 1990s. My first bear dream was when I was approximately four years old. It was terrifying, like most of them since then. In that initial dream, I was the one who was tied up. I was tied up in a chair on a covered bridge with a rope around my arms and legs. I could not escape, but the bear did not harm me. In other dreams, I was being chased or was surrounded by them, bears of all colours and sizes. After I started to provide food offerings on the land for my ancestors whenever I had the opportunity, my bear dreams subsided. I felt that it was our ancestors coming to me in my dreams as a reminder to feed them.

In 2005, I attended a ceremony in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to find out about our clan from a traditional Elder who had the gift of knowing Indigenous people's clans. Following protocol, I approached him near the end of the ceremony as instructed. He informed me in Cree, that our clan is *maskwa* (sounds like muskwa) which is Bear Clan. It was an affirmation of what my late sister Lorraine who was a cultural teacher, told me about our family belonging to the bear clan prior to her

passing in 2005. The ceremony was something that I needed to experience first-hand.

Over the years I have come to know that other family members also have bear dreams, which is not surprising to me. As I reengaged with my research after a decade had passed, the bear dreams came back. I am being reminded to provide ceremonial food offerings on the land and to acknowledge and show gratitude and respect for them in my prayers. I consider *maskwa* to be my relatives and spiritual helpers.

Finding Your Own Belonging

For this research I explore some of the interrelated factors that affect our identities and sense of belonging as exemplified in the lived experiences of our family, including our ancestors and their stories. It was timely that I came upon a Cree word, *miskâsowin* "that means going to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging" (Kovach 2009, 49) as I was working on the analysis and conclusion of my study. I could relate to Kovach's assertion that from a *nehiyaw* (Cree) epistemology, "attention to inner knowing is not optional" and that "seeking out Elders, attending to holistic epistemologies, and participating in cultural catalyst activities (dream, ceremony, prayer) are all means for accessing inward knowledge" from a Cree perspective (49-50). Her words reflected my own understanding that teachings come different places and that we need to be open to those teachings and allow ourselves time to integrate them to be of use to the community and that research is a personal process that requires inner and outer work (50). All of this resonated with me on my research journey that has spanned many years beyond.

In sum, my stories, and the stories of my family, revealed themselves through dreams, ceremonies, personal reflections and shared family stories. Going through this research process I felt deep sadness and grief for what our ancestors had to endure. The colonization of our peoples was unfair, unjust treatment of our people at the hands of the colonizers. It was especially painful for me as I learned more about various family members, mostly our grandmothers, and the incredible sacrifices they made for their families and the hardships they endured for their families' survival. Although such stories are not included in this article, I will keep

working towards correcting the injustices our ancestors faced, in whatever way that I can.

I continue to research ancestral birth places and burial sites, some of which are unmarked gravesites, including crown land, parkland and other spaces yet to be revealed. For me, this is a journey of reconnection to our ancestors, to our ancestral lands, and to their stories. It is like a reweaving or braiding of ancestral stories, land reconnection, and strengthened identity. A braid of sweetgrass is much stronger than individual sweetgrass strands on their own. We can proactively reconstruct our own identities and historical relationships to land through our research by honouring Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous pedagogies, and by not giving up, *ahkameyimoh* (try harder).

Belonging is reconnecting with *âniskôtapânak* (my ancestors) and our ancestral homeland. This research is not just about the academic journey—it's about my life's work. It has also been an ongoing journey of decolonization that requires me to find courage to keep going, so that we can move forward as proud and connected peoples with a deepened sense of belonging here on our homeland. My belief is that my sense of belonging, our family's collective sense of belonging, and the belonging of the young people in our communities will be strengthened as we continue to move in the direction of reconnecting with our ancestors, their stories, our ancestral homeland, and our ancestral language.

I wrote a poem for our people, and for myself, that serves to guide me on this journey. It began when I was with our precious late mother who was in her mid-nineties at the time and was reliant on our family for her care. It was at a time when the shocking news of the discovery of 215 children buried in unmarked graves on Indian Residential School grounds in Kamloops, was revealed. I needed a place to express my anger and overwhelming pain that I was feeling after hearing the tragic news, knowing that it was the tip of the colonial iceberg that represents the rampant oppression and genocide of our people. I quietly wrote as time allowed. Over time, the poem morphed into a song that I share here. It serves to remind me of the work I am committed to undertake and that it is through the restoration and revitalization of our voices, through our research work, that our ancestors' voices can be heard. Our stories

matter; our ancestors matter; our healing matters. As Indigenous people in our homeland, we matter.

We Will Rise *waniska* *(arise, wake up and rise)*
© Jeannette Sinclair Jan 1, 2022

We will rise like the phoenix, from the ashes of pain, make
time for the elders' teachings, once again
We'll hear the stories of our people silenced far too long, our
families are healing, our nations will be strong

We will rise, *waniska, waniska*, we will rise, we will rise,
***waniska, waniska*, we will rise**

We'll grieve for the babies, who died without a name, be the
voice of our people, subjected to shame
We'll listen to our *kohkoms,* speaking from the heart, united
we will stand, together, not apart

We will rise, *waniska, waniska*, we will rise, we will rise,
***waniska, waniska*, we will rise**

We'll respect all our women, and the wounded overlooked,
our stories we will write, we'll publish our own books
We'll pick up the pen, mightier than the sword, guided by
truth, will be our reward

We will rise, *waniska, waniska*, we will rise, we will rise,
***waniska, waniska*, we will rise**

We'll honour the departed, gravesites unmarked, reclaim
stolen land, rename provincial parks
We'll not retreat nor forsake, future generations, a better life
we'll make, for all tribal nations

We will rise, *waniska, waniska*, we will rise, we will rise,
***waniska, waniska*, we will rise**

Acknowledgements

This project is supported by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Edmonton Arts Council, the Edmonton Heritage Council and the City of Edmonton.

References

Akiwenzie-Damm, K. (1993). Says who: Colonialism, identity and defining Indigenous literature. In J. Armstrong, ed. *Looking at the words of our people: First Nations analysis of literature*, 9-26. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books.

Archibald, J.(2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body and spirit.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Cardinal, H. (1999). *Unjust society.* Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre. (Original work published 1969).

Couture, J. E. (2000). The role of Native Elders: Emergent issues. In D. Long & O. P. Dickason, eds. *Visions of the heart: Canadian Aboriginal issues*, 31-48. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Canada.

Devine, H. (2004). *The people who own themselves: Aboriginal ethnogenesis in a Canadian family, 1660 – 1900*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.

Good, M. (2023). *Truth telling: Seven conversations about Indigenous life in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers.

Green, J. (2011). Don't tell us who we are not: Reflections on Métis identity. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, *1*(2), 166-170. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/aps/article/view/11687

Hampton, E. (1995). Towards a redefinition of Indian Education. In *First nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* edited by Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, 5-46. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press

LaRocque, E. (2010). *When the other is me: Native resistance discourse 1850 – 1990*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

Lawrence, B. (2011). Rewriting histories of the land: Colonization and Indigenous resistance in Eastern Canada. In *Racism, colonialism, and Indigeneity in Canada edited by* Martin Cannon & Lina Sunseri, 68-80. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Shultz, L, Kelly, J, & Weber-Pillwax, C. (2009). The location of knowledge: A conversation with the editors on knowledge, experience and place. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research,* 55(3): 335-350.

Sinclair, J. (1999). *In the Footprints of Our Ancestors: Exploring the reconnection to my Cree ancestors (aniskotapanak) and ancestral land in the Lesser Slave Lake area.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* London: Zed Books.

Smith, L. T. (2005). On tricky ground: Researching the Native in the age of uncertainty. In *Handbook of qualitative research edited by* Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln, 85-107. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Teillet, J. (2019). *The North-west is Our Mother: the Story of Louis Reil's People, the Métis Nation*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Publishers.

Weber-Pillwax, C. (1999). Indigenous research methodology: Exploratory discussion of an elusive subject. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(1): 31-45.

Weber-Pillwax, C. (2003). *Identity formation and consciousness with reference to northern Alberta Cree and Metis Indigenous peoples.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Weber-Pillwax, C. (2021). It's in the blood: Theory and praxis of lifelong Indigenous education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 40 (4): 395-414. doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2021.1966528

Wilson, S (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.

Wilson, S. (1995). Honoring spiritual knowledge. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21 (Supplement), 61-69.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Longing to Belong: Reconnecting to my Cree ancestors (*âniskôtapânak)* and our Ancestral Homeland in Lesser Slave Lake, Canada

Jeanette Sinclair

Abstract This research study explored the lived experience and oral stories of Indigenous people, specifically First Nations and Metis from the Lesser Slave Lake area in Canada, whose presence has been marginalized both in historical literature and on the land. The intention was to reclaim and validate our Indigenous history and complex descendant identities, strengthening our sense of belonging. This article specifically elaborates on the relationships that connect Indigenous Cree identity to a sense of belonging, while addressing the legacy of political identities imposed by government which continues to impact Indigenous people in Canada. This work engaged an Indigenous Research Framework and used mixed methods, including archival research and Indigenous autoethnography which utilized knowledge of the researcher's family as foundational to a 'case' study, weaving together narrative, expository and analytical writing. Ancestral reconnections including ancestral stories, relationships with the land, with language, and with Indigenous ways of knowing are all essential to belonging. Exploring ancestry in these multiple ways can edify Indigenous communities by contextualizing the lived experiences of Indigenous ancestors for contemporary times and positively impact existing and future generations.

Keywords ancestral land, Traditional knowledge, *nehiyawak*/Cree people, Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous identity, Indigenous culture, Indigenous voice, Indigenous invisibility, Indigenous poetry, Indigenous autoethnography

---

Anhelo de pertenencia. Reconectando con mis ancestros cree (ânisk ôtapânak) y nuestra tierra ancestral en el Lago Menor de los Esclavos, Canadá

Jeanette Sinclair

Resumen Este estudio investigó la experiencia vivida y los relatos orales de los pueblos indígenas, específicamente de las Primeras Naciones y los Métis de la región del Lago Menor de los Esclavos en Canadá, cuya presencia ha sido marginada tanto en la literatura histórica como en el territorio. El objetivo era reivindicar y validar nuestra historia indígena y nuestras complejas identidades como descendientes, fortaleciendo nuestro sentido de pertenencia. Este artículo examina en detalle las relaciones que conectan la identidad indígena cree con el sentido de

pertenencia, al mismo tiempo que aborda el legado de las identidades políticas impuestas por el gobierno, que continúan afectando a los pueblos indígenas de Canadá. Este trabajo utilizó un marco de investigación indígena y métodos mixtos, incluyendo la investigación archivística y la autoetnografía indígena, utilizando el conocimiento familiar de la investigadora como base para un estudio de «caso», entrelazando escritura narrativa, expositiva y analítica. Las reconexiones ancestrales, como los relatos ancestrales, las relaciones con la tierra, la lengua y las formas indígenas de conocimiento, son esenciales para la pertenencia. Explorar la ancestralidad de estas múltiples maneras puede fortalecer a las comunidades indígenas al contextualizar las experiencias vividas de los antepasados indígenas en la época contemporánea y tener un impacto positivo en las generaciones presentes y futuras.

Palabras clave tierra ancestral, conocimiento tradicional, pueblo nehiyawak/cree, formas indígenas de conocimiento, identidad indígena, cultura indígena, voz indígena, invisibilidad indígena, poesía indígena, autoetnografía indígena.

La nostalgie de l'appartenance :Se reconnecter à mes ancêtres cris (âniskôtapânak) et à notre terre ancestrale du Petit lac des Esclaves, Canada

Jeanette Sinclair

Résumé Cette étude explore l'expérience vécue et les récits oraux des peuples autochtones, en particulier des Premières Nations et des Métis de la région du Petit lac des Esclaves, au Canada, dont la présence a été marginalisée tant dans la littérature historique que sur la terre. L'objectif est de revendiquer et de valider notre histoire autochtone ainsi que les identités complexes de nos descendants, renforçant ainsi notre sentiment d'appartenance. Cet article met en lumière les relations qui lient l'identité crie à un sentiment d'appartenance, tout en abordant l'héritage des identités politiques imposées par le gouvernement, qui continue d'affecter les peuples autochtones du Canada. Ce travail s'appuie sur un cadre de recherche autochtone et utilise des méthodes mixtes, incluant la recherche archivistique et l'autoethnographie autochtone, qui s'appuie sur les connaissances familiales de la chercheuse comme base d'une étude de « cas », mêlant écriture narrative, expositive et analytique. Les reconnexions ancestrales, notamment les récits ancestraux, les relations

avec la terre, la langue et les modes de connaissance autochtones, sont essentielles à l'appartenance. L'exploration de l'ascendance sous ces multiples aspects peut renforcer les communautés autochtones en contextualisant les expériences vécues des ancêtres autochtones dans le présent et avoir un impact positif sur les générations actuelles et futures.

Mots clés terre ancestrale, savoirs traditionnels, peuple nehiyawak/cri, modes de connaissance autochtones, identité autochtone, culture autochtone, voix autochtone, invisibilité autochtone, poésie autochtone, autoethnographie autochtone.

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 235-261
Convergence/ia/e 2024

A Savage Silent Calling for the Right to Be: Life as an Indigenous Woman – Sakawikaskeyihtamowin

Cora Weber-Pillwax
University of Alberta

Introduction

I begin by talking about words, the pieces of dynamic cognitive immateriality that gives rise to human speech and writing. Words inevitably find meaning and human expression through dialogue, narrative, imagination, and communion. They arise through a person's being and knowing, and are given shape and direction through feeling and sensing within the constant cognitive forward propulsion of living cultures and relationships.

Words then require consciousness. Although consciousness is not discussed explicitly in this work, it is understood as a People's internal cognitive, spiritual, and experiential mapping of their place on earth. Indigenous consciousness begins with the land from which life springs and is sustained. In putting my thinking and words forward, I ask to be heard as an Indigenous woman rooted within the land of Turtle Island as North America because my words have sprung from this land, carried on the breath of my ancestors.

I share thoughts and experiences which are grounded and interpreted from a consciousness formed in relationship with the lands, waters, and other living beings in the boreal forests of northern Alberta. Discourse is guided by experiences and enveloping thoughts related to the ways that my ancestral language and culture, comprising the expression of my life as an Indigenous woman, has evolved with strength in the face of constant purposeful repression and opposition from colonial forces.

The topics I will speak about include the ways we understand, and the ways we support, particular activations of archetypes in relation to cultural and racially-defined contexts and relationships; the targeted killing or destruction of Indigenous women as a thinly-veiled settler-supported colonial act that has continued since 'first contact'. While this work does not speak directly to the teaching and significance of personal reference points within Indigenous reality, these points are embedded in all narratives and commentary; conclusions and syntheses will assist in readers' parallel processing of the content as one whole, to be observed from different and distinct reference points that will disclose different information and give rise to new knowledge. Indigenous calling out to be heard is in response to effective silencing; the intention is that others will hear and sense our presence. As an old Indigenous mother, in this work, I urge educators and other readers to constantly look forward, always acknowledging themselves as the careful bearers of the past.

Pehta way pitahkosowak A Howling in the Wilderness: The Power of the Word

To experience the "power" of a word, an individual is encompassed and moved beyond the limitations of the concrete or denotative aspects of a "word". As symbols, words hold the capacity and primary function of pointing, directing, or signifying. However, to experience the power of words, individuals participate in the vital transformation processes that move words beyond symbols and into significantly-contexted meanings. These contexted meanings hold the "power" of words that have moved beyond symbols, and express that power of words through meaning within languages, knowledge paradigms, and forms of consciousness. When we as participants of discourse - speakers and hearers - are not immersed in a shared language or knowledge paradigm, the power of words within the discourse is lost to us. The power still is, but without the shared condition of discourse, the potential value, meaning, and purpose of such power is non-existent for us.

Although the indivisible connection between language and thinking is readily accepted, disparate cultural and linguistic groups and peoples around the globe are turning increasingly towards their own knowledge

systems for deeper understanding about cognition and cognitive development, language and language learning, and the related impacts of these on the physical and mental wellbeing of their peoples. This movement of people towards their own knowledge systems for understanding the deep roots of historical and contemporary issues is one that has traditionally and historically been supported by Indigenous peoples. In consideration of this, I am acutely aware that, in many Canadian institutions, organizations, and social environments, Indigenous people are actively present participants interacting in processes of formal engagement with policy development, administration, and planning in education, health, and other social and professional services. Going further along this thread, I know from direct experience that support for relying upon ancient Indigenous knowledge systems as an effective approach for dealing with contemporary issues in Indigenous communities is rarely, if ever, apparent from a perspective of? Indigenous peoples as distinct political and social collectives, e.g. First Nations self-governments. Connected to northern Alberta Cree and Metis people, one reason for this? that I have understood, is linked to the strong respect that continues to be upheld in conducting actions known to be significantly impactful on the people as a whole; this respect is for the concept of Indigenous identity as being both individual and collective. The reality and accuracy of this statement has not yet moved the people to dislodge or transform the heavily imposed forms and networks that comprise the colonial architecture of Indigenous self-government and administration.

The challenges of a major transformation such as I have described anticipates decades of concentrated attention on internal efforts to empower the people-as-collective through intentional dialogue and discussion, that is power-ful communication through words of shared meaning. Relying upon, or referencing and interpreting the ancestral language of the people aligns with and strengthens individual understanding of contemporary topics, deepening experiences and quickening the mind's capacity to remember and re-integrate meanings from the past into the events and situations of today. I have utilized these strategies in graduate teaching courses related to Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous languages. Supporting students to learn or remember and practice words of their ancestral Indigenous languages

helps them to ease away from their personal apprehensions of shame and inadequacy because they don't understand or speak 'their language'. This is speaking to only one tiny aspect of one major Indigenous issue that lies hidden and waiting for our children, youth, and adult learners within Canadian education institutions.

Most First Nations and Indigenous peoples[4] have not yet formalized the utterances and processes that will ensure the pursuance of their own objectives. Mission and vision statements, as well as written policies of principles and objectives are words, but these words are without power. Transformation within a people occurs at a deep and lasting level; addressing the issues of Indigenous peoples and communities effectively without shared meaning in the use of words amongst the membership of a people is not possible. Empowering words of all speakers and establishing ways for them to re-connect with each other through words and concepts of shared meanings is the first step to empowering words for transformation. The connection of words that spring from their ancestral language is significant to Indigenous peoples exactly for the power that becomes available to them through its usage.

The significance of the word in Canada's relations with Indigenous peoples is the bedrock upon which Canada stands and from which it shapes the bases and justifications for all actions taken in relation to anything Indigenous. Significant words present themselves in the form of Treaties signed between the (British) Crown as Canada and 364 First Nations[5] representing over 60,0000 First Nation members in Canada. The Numbered Treaties (1871-1921) are the treaties that impact Western Canada and the lands in Alberta on which Northern Cree and Metis people have lived for hundreds of years. As a Metis person, I am not a

[4] In Canada at the present time, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada oversees Indigenous-government relations, including self-government. Through federal Land Claim settlement agreements, several First Nations have been formed in northern Alberta, including the Peerless Trout Lake First Nation, formed in May 2010. The people at Peerless Lake and Trout Lake are northern Cree of the boreal forest or Woods Cree. They maintain close social and kinship connections with Bigstone Cree Nation (of which most were members at one time) and the Little Red River Cree Nation. The knowledge system is bush/Woods Cree and the community sites have existed since the trading post era in 1870s and early 1900s.

[5] See https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231 for a description.

First Nation member but the words, the language, the social context, the historical reality and aftermath are continuously present and the power of the words used and written in Treaty 8 are continuously active in the beings and lives of members of my family.

I have shared these thoughts not to give preeminence to language and words in the fulfillment of human capacity, but to suggest and acknowledge that many of the limitations we ascribe to ourselves as human beings are defined by the theories (or paradigms) that we accept or use to explain our ways of being and knowing. In this brief commentary, I have referred to the Treaties as one of the limiting paradigms created by the power of words. The same Treaty 8 in 1899 that impacts the lives of my family and relatives today, even though I am not a member of a particular First Nation, was the cornerstone for the creation of the Peerless Trout Lake First Nation through agreement. It was also the same means that permitted the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to 'settle' Indigenous Treaty rights and claims with Indigenous people without ensuring that Indigenous people, being signatories, understood all the words and concepts of the agreement. In other words, it was expected that the intent, purpose, meaning, and power of the words that were being used were understood by both sides of the agreement. I was not there but the written history is available to demonstrate how unlikely it is that the agreement evolved out of shared meanings, a sense of communion in communication, where for the Cree signatories their understanding of themselves as being both individual and collective in signing that agreement was in fact acknowledged, and embedded into the meaning of the words of the agreement.

The significant point that is consistently ignored - or denied - by Canadian settler society and its government is that the words being used in dialogue or discussion are not being used in a practice of shared meaning. The context for a meeting within shared meaning has not been created or prepared, and no party is accepting responsibility and accountability for the skewed outcomes of the meeting event: an outcome of benefit for one party and an outcome of destruction for the other.

An Indigenous paradigm ascribes power to many symbols, words being one type. Traditional protocols around Indigenous social and personal integrity include solemn consideration of such power, and individuals live with the knowledge and effects of such power every day of their lives. Although many of the Old Ways that expressly acknowledge the power of the word are now changed, recognition of such power remains. In the more isolated northern Cree communities, Trout Lake for example, many persons will not name themselves in introductions in any context. They consider such an expectation to be very rude. As it is commonly known that Canadian settler society adheres to this expectation and practice for most group meetings, most Indigenous people have accepted the need to introduce themselves as a matter of respect for the process.

Conversely, I have observed that people from the Northern Alberta communities that were once referred to as the "Isolated Communities", including my community, are divided on how to think about and how to respond to such changes in social protocols. Those who grew up and are rooted in the Traditional ways of living and expressing relationships will avoid the naming of self in a variety of ways, e.g. by not being present at the start of the meeting. Or, if they do name themselves, they do so purposefully, as a matter of strength, aiming directly towards the meeting context. The self-naming then becomes a political act, and is not conducted as an action of introduction of self. This is a process that get repeated in many acts of social interaction protocols where Indigenous people are expected to use words in specific ways that accommodate Canadian settler society but, in fact, undermine Indigenous rules of respect in social interactions.

Dynamics such as the naming of persons indicate an Indigenous tradition of attending to the power of words as evidenced amongst the northern Cree and Metis. I have to remind myself that this knowledge is likely much more widely known at this time in our history than is being practiced. However, I also know that it is not being practiced partly because we as the old generation - the capans-greatgrandmothers, and the kokoms-grandmothers - have not been able to keep up with uncovering the buried trails used by our ancestors and removing the rubble that is continuously being poured on them through the colonial

agenda to keep them hidden. This knowledge, as with most of our ancient knowledge, has not been handed down to our upcoming generations in ways, means, and contexts that they can understand and put to immediate use. I am writing as one way to reach those who are searching. I know that everyone ends up searching for something to ground themselves, and this need will spring from deep within themselves in unpredictable ways and at unanticipated times. But they will hear it and recognize it for what it is – their own being crying out for its own knowing.

To continue, according to the Old Ways of respect, the names of those who have passed on to the other side are not spoken. In fact, connected to that protocol, and as well to other occasions, identifying relationships are used instead of speaking names. Persons can more appropriately be addressed directly or indirectly in terms of the speaker's relationship with them. The kinship structure amongst the Cree and their Metis relatives[6] can be depicted by an extensive and very comprehensive mapping of linked identifiers. Every person in large extended families is likely to have a variety of personal connections that can be identified as effectively, and more appropriately through one of many terms of kinship; this practice carries more respect and contributes to the duration of the people. For example, a son or a daughter would address an older brother and older male parallel cousin (son of his father's brother or mother's sister) as *nistes,* and an older sister and older female parallel cousin (daughter of mother's sister or father's brother) as *nimis*. Words used to describe or ascribe relationships at the same time that they name persons are good examples of the power of words. They create and strengthen a relationship, giving it more life, at the same time as they name the person. In many ways, the decisions regarding usage of kinship terms in addressing another person is left to the speaker, and as such, decisions regarding the use of relationship terms instead of names are not disrespected or questioned, even if the term is not accurate in its designation.

[6] The Metis are linked with a language referred to as Michif. Amongst the Metis people, most who know an Indigenous language will refer to that language as Cree. In fact, the word Michif originally referred to the person, the Michif or Metis person, and did not refer to the naming of a language. Michif was the language spoken by communities of Metis people, particularly in northwestern Canada (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) and was a combination of Cree and French.

The power of words to create experience is also evident in words used in ceremonies. Songs that belonged to persons who have long ago passed on are still being sung today. The words of the songs came from experiences and the power of the words continued to evolve with new experiences. Today the vitality of the words provides the means to other new experiences. The power of the word in the mystical sense, where the word itself seems to create experience or being, is evident mostly in ceremonies and individual spiritual practices. Articulation of an Indigenous paradigm regarding the power of "word" is certainly based on a principle that is beyond the limitations of thinking and language, and comes imbued with the energy of creative powers beyond those controlled by human intellect and human being. A more detailed discussion of ceremony or ceremonies will not necessarily provide more clarity or understanding of this seemingly esoteric notion of the "power of the word". However, if we each take a moment to recollect an event of our own participation in a ceremony, we will undoubtedly also recall that the power of the word was a present and crucially operative element of the experience, whatever the source of the word. Ceremonies involve our spiritual beings in very particular ways, and this, along with the fact that the words within ceremonies usually do more than act as signifiers should in no way detract us from including these elements into this discussion.

I wish to elaborate on the name of this section, *Pehta way pitahkosowak,* in order to integrate several threads of meaning. This title carries several implied, enjoined and/or embedded points. Firstly, *pehta* / enjoins some other/others to listen, and secondly, implies in segments of the remaining words how the syllables fit together, that there are sounds belonging to some beings, that these beings are being heard, and that these beings are coming closer. There is nothing to indicate what sort of beings these are - they can be spirit beings or physical beings. The important part of the word in this case is that which indicates the movement of sound, the coming closer. What is it that is coming closer? We say through the language, "Indigenous voices", but we have not limited these voices to those persons who are or who can be physically present here today; neither are those voices limited to those present in this space at this particular time. Those voices can belong to those who have gone before us, to our grandfathers and grandmothers, to our spirit

guides. The one who hears the voices is the one who says *Pehta way pitahkosowak*, and is also the one who recognizes who it is that approaches. Within Indigenous reality, who is approaching determines how one listens and how one prepares to hear. It also determines how one acts. When every word of a language is similarly laden with meaning and direction for thought and being, it is not difficult to imagine and to understand the difficulties inherent in the notion of developing a shared meaning context for two conversants, or a shared paradigm between different worlds.

I have spoken briefly to several aspects of significant challenges involved in the development of shared paradigms across which different and distinct peoples must navigate in order to understand the power of (their) words in one language. In this case, the language may be shared through interpretations, but the full meanings cannot be shared, primarily because presence is crucial to any development of shared meaning.

Based on over half a century of lived experience as an Indigenous educator, and having served my own people and Canadian society as a certified public school educator and school systems administrator, and then as researcher and professor in a higher education institution, it became clear to me some time ago that it is we, Indigenous people, who must solve Indigenous issues. More importantly, it is we who must bring to the fore of our lives the knowledge systems that we were given by our grandparents and our peoples for the generations that we have been here on our own lands. The knowledge that we need so deeply is not to be found outside of our own ways. We have much knowledge from many other sources, other peoples included, but the integrating core must be within our own sense of knowing, lest we find ourselves trying to come back after genocide. By definition and from ancient knowledge, we understand there is no return from genocide of any sort. We can only become anew, and for me there is no noun to follow that.

What I have experienced and observed is that most people of Canadian settler society have limited or no knowledge or interest in any form or aspect of Indigenous reality. The pain of that realization, which I reached as a beginning teacher, was lessened significantly over the years by the

many students whom I loved and walked with, and who loved and walked with me. Within the sustaining strength of the earth and our ancestors who have not left us, I know that to consider seriously the articulation of an Indigenous paradigm of knowledge, language, and word that describes or explains the order of the world is an absolutely necessary task for Indigenous peoples. I also know that the articulation of such a paradigm will evolve as a part of our natural movement towards personal and individual fulfillment of human potential. Within that movement, we will want to talk to each other and to share our thoughts, to participate and experience ourselves consciously as members of the whole, the sacred collective, the antithesis of genocide. We will want to know, to experience, to remember and recognize concretely the beings from our past who have shaped us and who are with us as we shape our own world. These actions and events are the elements of an Indigenous paradigm that is already and that will continue to be. The ways that we choose, or discover, to give expression to this paradigm today are far-reaching and overarching, enveloping the collective as being immersed simultaneously in past, present, and future.

There is a fairly extensive body of literature that addresses directly the concrete structures of many Indigenous societies, and as well discusses the many and varied forms of oppression and injustice that seem often perceived to be a "standard" part of Indigenous life internationally. In education for Indigenous peoples, for example, relevant areas of study have included work by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational researchers in Indigenous languages, curriculum and program development, teacher training, student attrition and retention, student achievement, as well as family and community health and well-being. My point here is that there is already available enough of a resource base of knowledge to speak clearly to the issues of Indigenous students' failures to adapt successfully to mainstream schooling, and to speak clearly to the issues of Indigenous persons' failures to be acceptable or law-abiding members of Canadian settler society. There are enough resources already to speak clearly to the issues of Indigenous persons' failures to be rehabilitated successfully after their incarcerations and to speak clearly to the issues of poverty and to speak clearly to the issues of violence, both self- and other-inflicted. There is enough information available and readily accessible to know today that all such

knowledge is not sufficient by itself to bring about transformations in the reality that gives birth to these issues of Indigenous constant and continuous experience. If information was enough, then I think the concrete effects of such transformations would be visible and obvious to everyone of us as observers.

Further, this information will not bring about the will, the intent, and the hope that is required for the transformation of inhuman conditions of being - 'inhuman' in that they do not support the ongoing process of being/becoming human. Such conditions or structures of reality do not support the development of "the reflection and action which truly transform reality" and are "the source of knowledge and creation" (Freire 1983, p. 91). Yet Indigenous reality as it is being experienced daily is exactly this. This is neither to deny the small numbers of individuals who "make it" through the systems, nor is it to deny that transformation is continual and ongoing in Indigenous communities: the proof being our continued presence as Indigenous people.

In all this however, we live knowing that we are a part of a whole that operates outside the limits of time and space. This is the point of distinction between the Indigenous paradigm and the Freirean paradigm. Indigenous peoples are oppressed and we can use Freire's wonderful and eloquent lessons and indeed the same language for analysis and action, but we stand in a different spot when we reflect and we may even shift into a different state of being in order to prepare ourselves to reflect. Our actions, we know, will extend across time and space and therefore must be considered and intentional. We know too that our words are actions in the sense that they can precipitate change and transformation merely by the simultaneous actions of being spoken and being heard.

Freire helps to show us how words are used to take power from people. People whose words or language have been stolen are helpless and imprisoned within circumstances and situations they cannot affect or transform, no matter how negative or destructive these may be. The violence that is associated with ripping out a person's tongue cannot be more abhorrent and diabolical than stealing a person's words, very slowly, over generations of psychological tyranny maintained by

keeping people in states of dispossession, displacement, dependence and isolation.

How does a child begin to learn words that have become something repugnant? How does a child learn a language that comes clothed in anger, harshness and cruelty?

I remember this teacher. She was cruel and judgmental. She ridiculed my brother because he told her about a pie that our mother had made. He said it was an orange pie because he didn't know the word "lemon". She punished him and called him "stupid", but he was a child who hadn't seen too many lemons. How was he to know that she would hate him for that? He went to the Aberhart Tuberculosis Sanitorium about a year later and I believe strongly that there was a distinct relationship between her abusive treatment of him and his illness. I keep his story close to my heart because he is my brother still, and I remember his words and his life.

One more story about the power of words. I was told this story by a good friend. She visited an old couple who asked her for help. They had had a son when they were young. While the young mother was still in the hospital, she had a visit from the nurse who informed her that her healthy daughter who had been born a few hours earlier had died. The young couple mourned and left for home without ever seeing the baby or the body. After a while, they had another child, a son. This child was a healthy and happy three-year-old when a priest came to visit. He informed the parents that they could not take their son with them as they had planned on their seasonal move to a winter camp. The priest took the boy from them and they left. When they returned, the child was gone. They could get no information from the priest. Years passed and one day a car drove up to the house and a boy was let out into the yard. When the couple went out to see who it was, they saw their own son, now six years old. When they tried to talk to the boy, he was mute. He couldn't talk at all nor has he talked to this day. He is now a man in his thirties and still doesn't speak. The mother asked for help to try to find out what happened to her son that he can no longer speak. The couple do not have a command of the English language, and through or because of this, they were robbed of the most precious gift of creation: their own

child. Is that not a fairly high price to pay for the absence of words or personal power?

Archetypes against Indigenous Woman

In the same way that Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970) and I could enter into dialogue through a shared paradigm of knowledge on education, I discovered through advanced studies that I could understand and dialogue with the works of Carl Jung relating to archetypes, dreams, and consciousness. As a young Indigenous woman struggling to understand a different way of being in the world while, at the same time, having to work and live in that world, I found that Jung's work opened deep conceptual doors to Euro-Western knowledge and provided me with opportunities for understanding the ways and people within Canadian settler society. More importantly for this writing, I started to understand and articulate in words the bases of many of my experiences as an Indigenous woman interacting with persons and systems of this society of which I was not a part. The most important part of the whole of this learning experience was that I also started to realize, identify, and understand the ways that members and systems of Canadian settler society perceived Indigenous people, including me, and how their understanding of Indigenous people was flawed exactly because it was based upon their own knowledge system which could not interpret or construct accurate cognitive meaning from an Indigenous knowledge paradigm.

What had been theoretical knowledge for me up to that point suddenly became real, on the ground, lived experience. I had known that words and actions had the power to hurt, cripple, maim but I had never used words to hurt and I had never acknowledged the persons who had tried to hurt using their words. I had simply ignored and left those persons in their own world and paradigm of knowledge, as I had been taught.

Jung's work using archetypes to explain and understand human personalities, behaviours and experiences was an example of Euro-Western thought in dialogue with Indigenous thought in the areas of epistemologies and ontologies. Even without a dialogical positioning,

Jung's concept of archetypes has served to guide analyses of some of my own experiences.

One very significant reality for Canadian Indigenous women, and likely other Indigenous women, has been, and remains, the tensions associated with Indigenous woman and settler man interactions and relations. Several archetypes come into focus in the analyses of such interactions and relationships; the following narrativization of personal experiences and analyses of Indigenous women's experiences will demonstrate this.

For meaningful context, I came for teacher education from a small remote bush community in northern Alberta (present population of 370) to a major urban city in Alberta (present population of 1.6 million) in the late 1960s. Over the next decade, as an Indigenous woman, I encountered behaviours and attitudes from settler men that I had never anticipated and had to learn to interpret. For most of those years, I had no response to these behaviours and attitudes. In looking back 10 years later, from a position of professional experience and intense periods of critical community activism, I realized that "no response" was probably my protection, and that the strength of my Indigenous preparation for this journey was reflected in that response.

One set of those interactions with white settler men aligns strictly with the experiences and descriptions of Indigenous women in the Written Submission by the *Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women* (IAAW, 2018) to The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG 2017). The submission begins with a sentence that addresses what I think speaks to one of the strongest points of denial and simultaneously one of the deepest and broadest, most applicable arguments in support of a strong global and national movement to tear off that scarlet target on the chest of every Indigenous woman and stop the violence in constant propulsion towards every mother's heart. Let me describe my experience first.

During my first year on the university campus, the daily walks from my rented space were interrupted at least once, twice or three times a week, with propositions from white men in vehicles. These propositions were usually innuendo, almost always sexual and often derogatory. Usually

if the first approach and comments received no response, the second would be negative, and occasionally threatening. I was not afraid and I made no response, not looking or speaking, or pausing in any way. My reflections on the events were brief.

Although I thought this was normal behaviour for young white men towards young women, I also had been taught by my sister and her friends that young white men would not necessarily have good intentions if they were approaching Indigenous women. Other than that advice, I had no experience or knowledge to advise on an appropriate response in those situations.

Years later, after the Inquiry of MMIWG came to media attention, I understood one day that I could so easily have been one of those statistics of missing and murdered Indigenous women. By then, I had also remembered the days when I was a child of about 10 years, overhearing my parents talking about how the oil industry had now become a part of Alberta's move towards resource extraction around our isolated communities. The oil rig workers were picking up young women from the community and keeping them hostage in their isolated bush camps for days, before dropping them back off again in the community. As girls, my sister and I were warned about the men and potential threats to our safety. However, I had not associated the violence and sexuality of that time period over a decade previous, with the present concern around relationships and interactions of Indigenous woman and white man.

More recently, along with many other women, I have begun to realize the immensity of the violent crimes that are being perpetrated against Indigenous women by the colonizing forces that have shaped and/or impacted settler society, men, and Indigenous women. These forces and different relationships within which many, if not most, Indigenous women must engage daily usually carry a potential for tremendous negative energy. The sources of negativity that tear or shred interactions or relationships between Indigenous women and settler society, including settler women and settler men, are dispersed and can be difficult to unveil. However, having lived with them every day of my life - as Indigenous woman and the man in uniform, Indigenous woman and

lover, Indigenous woman and the man on the street, Indigenous woman and the supervisor, Indigenous woman and the teacher, Indigenous woman with settler woman, I know that unveiling negativity in interactions and relationships may not be worth the effort required. The Institute for Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) submission quotes the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in its first sentence: "The most significant new theme we identified in this process was the impact of racism." (p.2).

In my opening narrative, I refer to Jung to interpret the events as the unfolding of the Seductress/Siren archetype. "She" would be motivating the settler men's behaviour, and therefore the men could conceivably be simply victims of her power. I would extend this position to say that Canadian settler women would also likely be interpreting the effects of the Indigenous woman in relation to the White man as Seductress/Temptress, and would respond with resentment towards the Seductress' effect on settler men. I am not imagining this interpretation; I have observed that response and have been implicated more than once. In fact, it is a fairly common occurrence for Indigenous women to find themselves unwittingly accused being a Seductress, though usually not in those words.

A related situation with the Indigenous woman is being perceived as the Seductress when her husband or intimate partner, Indigenous or White, condemns the actions, appearance, and/or words of the Indigenous woman, perceiving these to be seductive to other men. Although this can and does happen with all women, the fact remains that Indigenous woman have to deal with the Seductress depiction and its effects in disproportionately higher rates than Canadian settler women. I see the violence against Indigenous women as arising exactly from the ready labelling of Indigenous women as Seductress, an action which simply exacerbates their targeting by drawing attention.

There are a myriad of questions and factors to consider in addressing the labelling and targeting of Indigenous women, but most of them have little or nothing to do with the Indigenous woman. Being naturally beautiful and seductive is usually considered a gift and a good thing;

these qualities do not usually get a woman killed or hurt. Yet it seems this does not to apply to an Indigenous woman.

I have seen that other factors support the assigning of the Seductress archetype. In particular, it is used for defense and concealment of racially motivated violence. It springs from the inherited attitudes of colonialists that Indigenous women are objects to be used in any way a settler colonial chooses. Indigenous people are perceived to be one of the natural species of the forest, and women in that definition are simply natural, useful, and alive to meet the needs of the hunter.

Historical accounts of Canada have been written from many perspectives. One historical position addresses the marriages between European men and Indigenous women and focuses on the transformation of Canadian settler society from one that encouraged and socially acknowledged the marriages of Indigenous women and European men to one that purposefully restructured the lines of moral and social acceptance, excluding the marriages of Indigenous women and European men from acceptability. This transformation began after the arrival of the Christian churches and European wives into the colony of Canada in the late 19th century (Van Kirk, 1983).

As an Indigenous woman with a professional educator background, I can share endless narratives, elaborated with details on how the archetypes are revealed within the actions of formal representatives of settler society systems who are, most often, White settler men. However, with strong movement in institutions towards equity in general, it is Canadian White settler women who have gained ground, in attaining senior-level administrative and supervisory positions within settler systems. Decision-making power remains primarily then in the hands of Canadian settler men and women at the interface of Indigenous women and settler society.

The archetypes that come to mind in relation to my professional and academic work and community activism are as a revolutionary, warrior, and visionary. These are the descriptor words that have been thrown at me in a derogatory way by settler men administrators who felt challenged by my presence, my thinking, my work. Of note to me is that,

in these situations, once the supervisor has decided that I am against him, he also sees that as me challenging the system he represents, and if I persist, he starts to see me as challenging his society, and eventually his own personal existence.

In that process of his changing perceptions, the image he has of me goes from warrior, to revolutionary, then to messianic visionary. Being a Metis woman, it was very common in my work situation as a senior-level educational administrator to be accused of trying to live out a Messiah vision of myself. This judgement would be presented along with an oblique reference to Louis Riel at times. Once a Euro-Western archetype surfaced in an interaction with a supervisor, I understood how I was perceived as an Indigenous woman. The Witch, Teacher, Healer archetypes have carried both positive and negative energy in my life as an Indigenous woman.

The stories wherein a woman is accused or 'talked about' as being a Witch usually arise in response to any form of activism carrying potentially significant but undesirable outcomes for persons in positions of political and social power. If I as the worker with influence in the community cannot be unseated from my "power", removed from my position, or otherwise have my influence neutralized, then I must be a Witch.

In Alberta, and likely across Canada, in Indigenous communities, a human being is a spirit first, and the life of the spirit is expressed through the body, hence the sacredness in which a body is held. Knowing that this is a principle of how most Indigenous people consider a person, officials at every level of government have the opportunity to use this knowledge to serve their own ends in contexts related to Indigenous peoples and communities. In relation to this, the concept of self-government for Indigenous communities is not usually understood by the majority of the people who are being represented. This creates an easy opportunity for unethical conduct by any one of the multiple forms and levels of settler government committees who are responsible for serving, advising, and supporting the various divisions of service within the self-government body established to serve an Indigenous community. This type of administrative support is to be provided in

ways that directly benefit the community. Often, however, the community is unable to access necessary information and, without information and understanding of how to interpret that information, community members must rely wholly on what they hear and are told by their own self-government body and the overseeing settler government committees.

This is a typical situation where the Indigenous woman who is a community worker with a community-driven objective can be referred to as a "Witch". In an Indigenous context, references to someone being a "Witch" will be communicated in ways that align with shared meaning contexts within the community. This will ensure correct interpretations within a particular Indigenous context. For example, "Witch", an English language and Western settler culture term, can signify "witchcraft", also an English language term, but one which will be readily interpreted or understood within a Cree Metis community as "Indian medicine". That term is commonly understood by Metis Cree people, often leading people to experience apprehension, discomfort, and even fear because of historical and early family responses to church-related teachings, residential schooling, and the criminalization of ancient forms of spirituality and healing practices. The connotations can be very negative and most people will avoid using the term, except in very particular circumstances.

None of these actions will be understood by the settler society, but that is not even an objective because, from their position, the only significant consideration to hold to is the outcome: nullifying the influence of the identified Witch by the labelling and ensuing fear amongst the people. The outcome is predictable, in consideration of all impinging factors; the vulnerable mis- or uninformed majority of community people will fall back to the self-government body and the settler government/committee with oversight responsibility. They will move away from challenging either system and avoiding any form of questioning or information-seeking. This is an example of how Euro-Western frames of knowledge and interpretation undermine and support the ongoing stranglehold on Indigenous communities as a collective.

In summary of this discussion on how archetypal frames of analysis can be used in attempts to create dialogues within shared meaning, I want to say that archetypal valuations of Indigenous women are not likely to avoid racist, gendered, and debilitating descriptions and interpretations of Indigenous women's activities, morality, or characters simply because a general colonial resentment amongst settler society for the embedded sense of collective Mother as represented or inherent in Indigenous women will continue well into the future. Indigenous women have always, and into today, suffered lives of collateral damage under the centuries-long system of European colonialism; in the face of the strength of this Mother icon, this resentment is empty and leads to emptiness.

Indigenous people have always respected and upheld ancient teachings of power and the supernatural in relation to human lives; many people have never moved away from these ways and continue to uphold that position. The heavy-handed fracturing of intergenerational knowledge transmission has cost the easy access that Indigenous people once had to understand and to practice and to use that knowledge to the benefit of Indigenous people as individuals and collective.

Especially at this time of massive uncertainty around the globe, we remember that we have been given, and we can recollect, those ways we need for renewing the trust in our Mother and the grandfathers and grandmothers of the Great Mystery. That an Indigenous woman would be subjected to the Witch designation within an Indigenous community would only demonstrate how far we have moved away or been taken away from the strength, depth, and power of our own knowledge systems. However, based on my experience and observations, we have gathered a huge number of Western settler strategies that we can use to benefit ourselves as individuals, all the while asserting that we are a collective. In the midst of poverty and massive social needs and issues, the rewards for setting aside the collective whole of one are ever-present. The purpose of the Western settler society is to ensure that we do not forget the existence of the rewards that they offer. Our purpose is to support each other so that we remember that, indeed, we are both individual and collective.

In summary, this written expression of my personal thoughts and life experiences is grounded and interpreted from a consciousness formed in relationship with the land, encompassing trees, waters, plants, and all other living beings within the boreal forests or 'bush country' of northern Alberta. I will conclude now with a synthesis, perhaps a rephrasing, of the meanings I wanted to convey through the words and thoughts I have shared.

Without visible and obvious motions of harm towards us as Indigenous people and peoples, Canadian settler society and its members have maintained a constant assaulting barrage of policies, practices, and other attempts to change or transform us as Indigenous people. Through these forms of "encouragement", we are expected to accept and assist the settler state in a restructuring process toward the re-creation of ourselves. Wherever and whenever we do not accept, settler state intensifies the pressure and devises more subtle forms of impositions and strategies to turn us into settlers on the lands of our birth, the lands that have given us life, the lands that are shaped by the blood and bones of our ancestors. Indigenous women have always been given a special consideration in colonial planning and long-term objectives for turning Indigenous people into settlers.

We know that without the land, we as Indigenous people will cease to exist as Indigenous people. The most recent colonial strategy is to talk very loudly about inclusion, equity, diversity, and promising forces of new forms of human communication, communion, and shared knowledge and technologies. From direct experience, I have already seen and experienced the impacts of this strategy within institutions of higher education where the weakening and dissolution of Indigenous programs, policy directions, research, and pedagogies have been strategically planned, with processes of implementation ongoing.

The development, interpretation, and implementation of broadly accepted and unquestioned contemporary theories and policies of equity, diversity, and inclusivity is another powerful, convincing, and effective silencing strategy of Indigenous voices, at least in Canada. While equity and inclusion would likely never be set aside by any Indigenous peoples as a human value for human interactions and

behaviours, I have observed that one impact of these policies is the subtle removal and redirection of Indigenous people's positioning, locations, and forms of contributions within significantly impactful institutions and organizations. In important ways, the interpretations of these policies has resulted in the reduction of consideration, inclusion, and specifically Indigenous benefits to meet the needs and rights of Indigenous people as the original peoples of Canada.

Ignoring Indigenous presence, including on and from Indigenous lands, is an excellent strategy for a settler society; aside from silencing Indigenous voices, it assuages any settler self-doubts and moral questioning about their history in the dying of people and natural environments for other beings, on these lands that they have come to live on and call their home.

Speaking as the Crone

I want to end this 'speaking' as the Crone. During my years of professional practice in Indigenous education as an Indigenous woman, I found strength in experiencing myself as a spiritual being, as somebody connected to probably thousands of years of power and knowledge. And I called on that. I had dreams and visions that carried me through immense and lengthy struggles. I lived out visions and I have one yet unfinished. This perhaps sounds strange, but it is not; I am, after all, still here, and I am not sure I have understood that vision yet. I am waiting.

For closure, I want to share with you a personal experience as I sat outside the doorway of the room where my mother was breathing her last, with my youngest sister beside her. Our mother never had one day of schooling in her life; she knew and taught us how to protect ourselves so that we would never be lost from our own way of being or lost into the Western settler systems. We learned from her life how to keep our spirit connection to the reference point that had been established with our birth. In simple, powerful living, she who made life possible for all of us, passed from this side of the veil to the other.

The following words I offer as a description of a last event of her special teaching; it was created through her living, and brought forward in time and space to be given to us at her leaving:

There is no greater rift to live through than that between a mother and a child who cannot share a language. Like the woman lying on her bed, waiting, moving slowly into the consciousness held within the language she heard at her mother's breast, facing death and completing her life's journey with Cree words and Cree visions. Like the daughter, sitting quietly beside her mother, waiting, unshed tears burning through a mind screaming in English words while the Cree words of her mother softly break the silence, consuming their final hours. What greater presence of language and Indigenous consciousness than this to the woman who sits alone, unable to accompany her beloved parent returning to the world of their people of long ago. At this final moment of death, this moment of merging with the ancestors and the sacred power of the Great Mystery, with God, Jesus, Mary, a husband and a son. Grandfathers. Grandmothers.

A Savage Silent Calling for the Right to Be

I want to express my gratitude for this opportunity to speak and to be heard through this means. Indirectly, I have shared some tortured and some wonderful aspects of my life through the narratives, and I have been prompted to remember many more. The silent calling is always savage; it is the cutting, torn heart that refuses to die, the need to live just to insist with silent screams of beseechment to beloved children that "If you don't hear me, then you will die". The Mother in Indigenous women and in Mother Earth is there for all of us, and so the calling, the sounding, "Pitahkosowak" is the hope of Mother coming so that we can know that we are of her.

Indigenous women are the sinew that holds the people together in strength, to support the independent survival of the people. They know within themselves the spirit of the collective, and as the mothers of all, face deep challenges to their own wellness and survival as Indigenous women. Without them, the people as collective stumble, faltering when they need to stand and walk. Weakening the women weakens the

collective and weakens the land. The land itself needs the women and Indigenous life through the seasons reveals that clearly. Traditional Indigenous knowledge systems contain the teachings for our own understanding, and our own ways of acting in supporting the strength of our collective mothers, Indigenous women and the Earth.

In remembering and honouring our mothers, we become and are the bearers of the past; we are the links and if we refuse, walk away, or simply do not accept to carry the past of being within our presence today, then that past that is our own being today, simply falls away, and we no longer are.

References

Freire, P (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* New York: Seabury Press.

Institute for the Advancement of Indigenous Women (2018) *Written Submission to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, December 14. Edmonton, Alberta. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ni-mmiwg-interim-report-en.pdf

National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2017) *Interim Report Our Women and Girls are Sacred*. Ottawa: Privy Council Office. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/IAAW-Final-Written-Submission.pdf

Van Kirk, S (1983) *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870*. Reprint. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

A Savage Silent Calling for the Right to Be: Life as an Indigenous Woman – Sakawikaskeyihtamowin

Cora Weber-Pillwax

Abstract I begin by talking about words, the pieces of dynamic cognitive immateriality that gives rise to human speech and writing. Words inevitably find meaning and human expression through dialogue,

narrative, imagination, and communion. Words arise through a person's being and knowing; they are shaped and given direction through feeling and sensing within the constant cognitive forward propulsion of 'living'. Words then require consciousness. In this paper, consciousness is acknowledged as a people's internal cognitive, spiritual, and experiential mapping of their home-place on earth. Consciousness begins with the land from which life springs and is sustained; it assures the attunement of human life with earth in every aspect of being. In considering my words as an Indigenous woman rooted within the land of Turtle Island as North America, I ask to be heard as one whose words have sprung from these lands - alive, vibrant, dynamic, continuous - words flung into the winds and carried on the breath of my ancestors, birthed and gifted life in this place, whose bodies returned to the earth, leaving their words for those to come. Herein, I share thoughts and experiences as an Indigenous Metis Cree woman of the boreal forests, addressing my discourse to three areas of impact in my life: significant Euro-Western archetypes in relation to the lives of Indigenous women; Indigenous women as human collateral damage in North American society and culture; and hidden reference points to strengthen Indigenous Metis women in North America. The three areas of focus are introduced and their content discussed using a multi-threaded presentation of contextual information, narrative empiricism, and embedded detail analyses. Conclusions offer syntheses derived from parallel processing of the whole content, and urge educators and other readers to constantly look forward, always acknowledging themselves as the careful bearers of the past.

Keywords Indigenous, consciousness, land, Indigenous women, Indigenous being, Indigenous lifelong education

---

Un appel silencieux et sauvage pour le droit d'être: La vie d'une femme autochtone – Sakawikaskeyihtamowin

Cora Weber-Pillwax

Résumé Je commence par parler des mots, ces éléments d'immatérialité cognitive dynamique qui donnent naissance à la parole et à l'écriture humaines. Les mots trouvent inévitablement leur sens et leur expression humaine à travers le dialogue, la narration, l'imagination et la communion. Les mots naissent de l'être et du savoir d'une personne ; ils

sont façonnés et orientés par les sentiments et les sensations dans le cadre de la propulsion cognitive constante de la « vie ». Les mots nécessitent donc une conscience. Dans ce document, la conscience est reconnue comme la cartographie cognitive, spirituelle et expérientielle interne d'un peuple par rapport à son lieu de vie sur Terre. La conscience commence avec la terre d'où jaillit et se maintient la vie ; elle garantit l'harmonisation de la vie humaine avec la Terre dans tous les aspects de l'existence. En considérant mes paroles en tant que femme autochtone enracinée dans la terre de l'Île de la Tortue, en Amérique du Nord, je demande à être entendue comme quelqu'un dont les paroles émergent de ces terres – vivantes, vibrantes, dynamiques, continues – des paroles lancées dans les vents et portées par le souffle de mes ancêtres, nées et nourries par la vie en ce lieu, dont les corps sont retournés à la terre, laissant leurs paroles pour les générations futures. Je partage ici mes réflexions et mes expériences en tant que femme métisse crie des forêts boréales, en abordant trois domaines ayant marqué ma vie : les archétypes euro-occidentaux significatifs en lien avec la vie des femmes autochtones ; les femmes autochtones en tant que dommages collatéraux humains dans la société et la culture nord-américaines ; et les points de repère cachés pour renforcer les femmes métisses autochtones en Amérique du Nord. Ces trois domaines sont présentés et examinés à travers une approche multiforme comprenant des informations contextuelles, un empirisme narratif et des analyses détaillées intégrées. Les conclusions offrent des synthèses issues du traitement parallèle de l'ensemble du contenu et exhortent les éducateurs et autres lecteurs à constamment se tourner vers l'avenir, tout en se reconnaissant comme les porteurs attentifs du passé.

Mots-clés autochthone, conscience, terre, femmes autochtones, être autochtone, éducation permanente autochtone

---

Un salvaje silencioso que reclama el derecho a ser: vida como mujer indígena – Sakawikaskeyihtamowin

Cora Weber-Pillwax

Resumen Comienzo hablando de las palabras, esos elementos de inmaterialidad cognitiva dinámica que dan lugar al habla y a la escritura humanas. Las palabras encuentran inevitablemente su significado y expresión humana a través del diálogo, la narrativa, la imaginación y la

comunión. Surgen del ser y el saber de una persona; se moldean y adquieren dirección a través del sentir y el percibir, dentro de la constante propulsión cognitiva hacia adelante del «vivir». Las palabras, por lo tanto, requieren conciencia. En este documento, se reconoce la conciencia como la cartografía cognitiva, espiritual y experiencial interna de un pueblo respecto a su lugar de origen en la tierra. La conciencia comienza con la tierra de la que brota y se sustenta la vida; asegura la armonización de la vida humana con la tierra en todos los aspectos del ser. Al considerar mis palabras como mujer indígena enraizada en la tierra de la Isla de la Tortuga, en América del Norte, pido que se me escuche como alguien cuyas palabras han surgido de estas tierras: vivas, vibrantes, dinámicas, continuas; palabras lanzadas al viento y llevadas en el aliento de mis antepasados, nacidas y dotadas de vida en este lugar, cuyos cuerpos regresaron a la tierra, dejando sus palabras para las generaciones futuras. Comparto aquí reflexiones y experiencias como mujer indígena Métis Cree de los bosques boreales, abordando tres áreas que han impactado mi vida: arquetipos eurooccidentales significativos en relación con las vidas de las mujeres indígenas; las mujeres indígenas como daños colaterales humanos en la sociedad y la cultura norteamericanas; y puntos de referencia ocultos para fortalecer a las mujeres indígenas Métis en Norteamérica. Estas tres áreas de interés se presentan y analizan mediante una combinación de información contextual, empirismo narrativo y análisis detallados integrados. Las conclusiones ofrecen síntesis derivadas del procesamiento paralelo de todo el contenido e instan a los educadores y otros lectores a mirar constantemente hacia adelante, reconociéndose siempre como portadores atentos del pasado.

Palabras clave Indígena, conciencia, tierra, mujeres indígenas, ser indígena, educación permanente indígena

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 262-266
Convergence/ia/e 2024

REFLECTION

We Were Not the First on This Road: Reflections on My Past and Their Future in Indigenous Education

Jane Martin
(Former) Assistant Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Education
Alberta Education, Canada

Taking Up Community Responsibility as An Education Leader

I am pleased to be invited to share my reflections on where we have come on the road of Aboriginal Education in Canada, and I stand honoured to be included among so many Indigenous women scholars, colleagues, and mentors. I recall with fondness the 15 years I spent studying and working at the University of Alberta, one of the largest institutions in the country at the time. It was during those years that I found my voice and grew my confidence to see myself as a woman of integrity, both in my personal life as well as in an academic environment. It was those years spent in the campus community where I gained a strong sense of responsibility not only to my immediate family, but also to my place and identity in relation to my ancestors and the generations that came before me. I offer this reflection on the challenges in my walk as an Indigenous woman and education leader, for those to come.

Much has changed in the 20+ years since completing my Ph.D. in 2001. In re-reading my dissertation "Voices from the Heart of the Circle," something I had not done since I put my pen down and started the next leg of my journey, I know it was part of the foundation that guided me throughout the remainder of my career in postsecondary institutions and the Department of Education. In essence, my dissertation constituted a promise and a commitment to take up the responsibility to continue the work of those who came before us, as well as lay stones on a path for those who come after us.

My Walk through Higher Education

Clearly, universities have made some strides/advancements in program development, supports, and spaces for Indigenous students. When I first set foot on campus, there was only one Indigenous faculty member and very few Indigenous students. Today there are numerous Indigenous faculty and students on campuses across the country as well as many emerging Indigenous scholars in all fields with wide academic knowledge and resources to draw from. We now have among us many authors of fiction, non-fiction, and scholarly research, in fact too many to even know. This makes me relieved, happy, and proud.

My dissertation gathered the stories of Indigenous women's experience in university and the interrelationship with identity development. My hope was that my findings would contribute to planning and advancements in the knowledge, resources, and supports available to assist Indigenous students as they arrive on campus and struggle to find a place to belong and the resources they need to be successful. I also wanted to add to the body of methodology available within the academy—methods that fit better within our own Indigenous context and culture. For instance, talking circles used as a methodology for speaking, listening and sharing are widely used today, but they remain a sacred ceremony to be respected and honoured, which should not be forgotten.

Our travels have brought us to this point, with many opportunities available for Indigenous students now. It is my hope that we/they do not lose track of those who came before, those who laid the path for others to follow. I worry we may lose our way without that generational connection. I wonder if the experience is personal to them anymore, in seeing themselves as walking a path laid by others as well as assisting those to follow them.

Losing Track of Generational Connectedness

Are Indigenous students today looking back and making connections to their past, to their parents, community, and ancestors? While I am very proud of all my young relatives' accomplishments, I do wonder if they are aware of or think about how their work sits within the bigger picture, the road that was laid out before them. Or, like many modern people, do they think they represent a new beginning totally separate from those who came before? I am not sure, but it worries me if they do not understand their generational connectedness.

I have always seen my own journey in relation to my mother's journey and my grandfather's journey. It sounds shallow now, but my mother who was born in the 1930s used to talk about how the goal for her and her First Nation sisters was to marry a white man and all would be well. Education was neither something to aspire to, nor was work, independence, or career. My mom did manage to marry a white man, doing the best she could at raising eight children born in ten years (no twins either). Sadly, though not surprisingly, she had a nervous breakdown after child number seven, ending in the hospital for several months. At this time she was 26 years old, lost after the passing of her dear father and only remaining parent. Though tragic, this experience turned positive when she was told by her attending psychiatrist that perhaps she could find her way back to wellness by connecting with her People.

Honouring Those Who Walked Before Me

Despite the lack of any meaningful hands-on support from my father who never understood why she could not find her wellbeing inside the home, my mother summoned all the courage she could to navigate public transit to inner city Toronto with half a dozen kids in tow. There she was able to find many others like her, mostly poor, mostly lost, all of them looking for each other and their people. Together they sought to get stronger so they could understand their sadness, their past, and make a better life for themselves, their children, and for "Indian people" in the city. My mother was a part of the early Friendship Centre Movement that changed her life, our family life, and the lives of many, many others across the country.

I witnessed that small group of people, mostly women, dedicate their time, energy, money, and lives to improving life in the city for Indigenous people. They fought hard to lay those stones and build the path that helped so many others to survive and eventually thrive. As an adolescent, I was forced to tag along so I could help to look after my younger siblings. At first, I was resentful; but now I see that time differently. Those years shaped me, and I am forever grateful to my mother's generation for their commitment, courage, wisdom and tenacity.

While I have chosen to live and work alongside my Indigenous relatives across the country, I never stopped seeing my own journey as part of my mother's journey, my grandfather's journey, all part of a continuum of those who came before me.

Following In Their Footsteps

My parents, grandparents, and ancestors' journeys, including the scholars who came before us, struggled through a different time when the path was not so easy, when the old ways of life were interrupted and replaced by the settler ways. I cannot help but see their experiences as being so much more difficult than the experiences of our generations and subsequent generations. I grew up hearing the story of my grandfather, Chief Jack Jones, who was part of the generation who fought to get the vote for Indigenous people in Canada in the 1960s, when no Indigenous political organizations existed to represent and support our Indigenous nations. I cannot forget the image of him sneaking off the reserve, out of sight of the Indian Agent, to hitchhike hundreds of miles to Ottawa to request even demand an audience with the Prime Minister. I am told he had no money in his pocket and so he slept on the side of the road when he could not walk any further. It would have taken days to arrive at his destination, although it is an eight-hour car drive. On my own journey, whenever I feel tired, frustrated, afraid or alone, I think about my mother, my grandfather, and my ancestors. Then I know I can, and will, carry on despite the difficulty of the day or of my walk. It is their hard work and the stones that they laid on the path which deserves credit for my direction and accomplishments.

In this same way, I am grateful for and aware that today's Indigenous students on campus are trodding their path given the hard-fought strides and well laid paths of leaders like Dr. Carl Urion who was the only Indigenous scholar at the U of A well into the 1980s. Imagine how hard it must have been for him to find his way and lay those stones for the rest of us. We owe him. We honour him.

Do Indigenous students today see themselves as part of a continuum, a community, a nation? Do they know what our ancestors witnessed, what hardships they had to endure, and what contributions they made? Do they have that sense of responsibility to add to the story, our history, our Peoples? I hope so, although I fear otherwise. I have heard about more than one Indigenous professor whispering to another that if they must read one more "grandmother story" they'll be damned. My thinking is that if I read Indigenous writings or hear Indigenous stories that do not include their grandparent's story, I'll be damned!

To those younger relatives who are on their journey today: "*Please explore your past with pride and humility so you can know and see how you not only lead, you follow. Don't lose sight of this.*"

I suppose one could look at it another way. Perhaps younger generations do not agree that it is important to understand how they fit within their family history and our collective history as a People. Perhaps this omission is the natural outcome of all the hard work of previous generations. Perhaps it is a sign we have come far enough on the continuum that we do not need to acknowledge or honour the path laid by our predecessors. In drawing from my Indigenous mind, I do not agree.

To my own grandchildren, I say, you come from a long line of Indigenous leaders. Please take the time to know from whom and from where you came. Your relatives and ancestors worked hard, they struggled, they fought, they conquered the challenges before them, to get us here. They did it for you.

CONVERGENCIA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 267-283
Convergence/ia/e 2024

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLE

Positive Shifts in Adult Education: The Role of Student Mentoring in a Vocational College in Malta

Jessica Borg and Katya De Giovanni
University of Malta

Introduction

The study analyses the newly introduced role of student mentors in the career advisory service at MCAST, the main vocational education and training institution in Malta. In view of the high rate of early leavers from education and training (ELET), the student mentor's role was implemented with the aim of improving student retention rates as well as to enrich their learning journey. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the new student mentoring programme is working from the perspective of management and professionals. Multiple perceptions about this programme were investigated by nine stakeholders through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with the student mentors, career advisors, counsellors and their respective directors. Data were analysed through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three main themes were generated reflecting the impact of student mentors at MCAST and the dynamics between professionals, as follows: Reinstated Multidisciplinary Team Meetings, Increase in Referrals and Better Student Relationships. Findings indicate that the mentoring programme was positively accepted by the participants for the various benefits it brought to the overall service delivery.

Rationale

A number of students are always at risk of falling through the cracks of the Maltese Educational System as students fail to pass their examinations and/or stop attending school altogether, and normally decide to seek employment rather than completing compulsory or postsecondary education and training. In 2019, Malta, with 16.7%, had the second-highest rate of Early Leavers from Education and Training (ELET) within the European Union (Eurostat, 2021). According to the Maltese definition, ELET refers to "persons between 18 and 24 years of age who do not have at least the equivalent of Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) passes (grades 1 to 7) in five different subjects and who are not in education or training." (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p.7). This is further compounded by the fact that compulsory education in Malta stops at age 16 and therefore for the purposes of this article, individuals become adults at the age of 16 and follow foundation courses at the MCAST having failed to attain any SEC passes. A wide variety of factors contribute to this high percentage as well as dropouts ranging from compulsory education, post-secondary and tertiary education affect the above cited percentage. The Maltese education system has been putting a lot of resources in place to combat ELET and to meet the European Commission's (EC) 2030 target of no more than 9% of the population falling into the ELET bracket (Eurostat, 2023).

Research on ELET has mainly focused on dissecting and understanding the problem (Haug & Plant, 2015; Cedefop, 2016); on how it impacts society and the economy (Flisi et al., 2015); on establishing tools and policies that cater for ELET (NCFHE, 2014; Haug & Plant, 2015, Cedefop, 2016); on patterns and reasons why students dropout and the contributing factors (Bugeja & Cauchi, 2012; Spiteri, 2012; Camilleri, 2016). Yet, in the local context, little or no research has been carried out to analyse initiatives or programmes that seek to combat ELET within post-secondary institutions. Consequently, this study attempted to address this gap in research, as this qualitative study analysed the newly introduced at-risk mentoring programme at a post-secondary vocational college in Malta called the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). Therefore the focus will be specifically on ELVET students, i.e. potential at-risk leavers from vocational education and training.

The main goals of the mentoring program at MCAST are to improve students' retention rates and to enrich students' educational experience. In fact, one of

the reasons the mentoring programme was set-up was to address the seemingly high dropout rates at MCAST (Farrugia, 2019). During MCAST academic year 2018/19 (first year of mentors when this study was being conducted), between the months of November and April, 16% of the total 1,973 foundation level population dropped out (Meeting with MCAST Registrar, 19th August 2019). Therefore, twenty-three student mentors were assigned with foundation level students and were distributed amongst each institute within the vocational college with the aim of supporting students in furthering their studies. Furthermore, student mentors were appointed to act as an intermediary role that filters and refers students to both career advisors and therapists, as well as other departments at MCAST which were not included in the purpose of this study.

Review:

Haug and Plant (2015) refer to ELET as a 'wicked problem' (Rittel & Webber, 1973 in Haug & Plant, 2015) because of the many issues it provokes and the awareness that no solution can ever eradicate this problem completely. The ramifications of this 'wicked problem' ranges from negatively impacting the economy, society, the individual's quality of life, and one's well-being (MEDE 2014; NCHFE 2014; Haug & Plant, 2015; The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 2015). The crux of the issue is that ELET do not have the basic skills required to enter the labour market at entry point (Villalba, 2014). This puts ELET in a position where it is difficult to find employment, and if they are employed it would be a series of patchy work which most of the times yields a low salary (Haug & Plant, 2014; European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014, p. 3). Subsequently, such working status might lead to a higher risk in engaging in delinquency, setting unsustainable long-term goals, less control over one's life and time, less resources to participate in social life and to provide to a potential family one would want to create (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014, p. 3; The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 2015). All the issues mentioned have a great impact on one's life and self-worth, it can also lead to isolation and social exclusion (The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, 2015).

The 2011 European Commission recommends the member states to strategically plan policies to reduce ELET that target the root causes of ELET

within all of the education sector, in ways that are sustainable. Furthermore, it is pivotal that comprehensive policies are adopted as part of a three-fold strategy including prevention, intervention and compensation (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice & Cedefop, 2014; Oomen & Plant, 2014, Cedefop, V.II, 2016). The main participants of this study, i.e. the career advisors, therapists (represented by a counsellor), and student mentors form part of an intervention measure to combat ELVET (EC, 2013, p. 5).

At the intervention stage, it is crucial that professionals identify signs and issues which students demonstrate, for instance, higher rates of absenteeism. The idea is that the intervention takes place as early as possible in order to identify the problem, to rope in all stakeholders involved and to support the students from disengaging through student-centric measures (Oomen & Plant, 2014; Cedefop, V.II, 2016). Through the addition of student mentors, MCAST has set up an early warning system in order to preempt and cater for potential ELVET. Student mentors then refer to the other professionals as needed. All the practitioners' roles are intertwined in a way that each profession's work complements the other so that all together they cover the different aspects of at-risk students' needs.

It is critical for adult learners to have a protective and caring adult that is consistently present in their lives (Masten & Reed, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2002; Hurd et al., 2010). Such adults who lack constant figures in their lives, could benefit from other appropriate role models and healthier relationships outside the home, such as the support provided via mentoring programmes (DuBois & Neville, 1997; DuBois et al., 2002; Keating, Tomishima, Foster & Alessandri, 2002; Rhodes & DuBois 2006; Satchwell, 2006; Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller & Rhodes, 2009). Research indicates that generally vulnerable or at-risk adults are the ones who seem to benefit the most from mentoring programs as it helps them to become agentic and self-motivated about their future aspirations (Kashani, Reid & Rosenberg, 1989; Raposa et al., 2019; Jekielek et al., 2002). In this study mentoring is referring to a "one-to-one relationship between a [student of adult age] and [another] caring adult who assists the [student] in meeting academic, social, career, or personal goals" (Nettles, 1991, p. 139, in DuBois & Neville, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

This research adopted two main frameworks that serve as its theoretical backbone. Patton and McMahon's (2014) Systems Theory Framework (STF) is used to examine how the mentoring program is perceived by the mentors themselves as well as the other teams within the student support services that are involved in this study; and to gain insight into the internal dynamics between professionals and their respective directors. STF represents a dynamic and complex system of the interaction between the individual, his/her societal systems, and the environmental-societal system within a fluid timeframe (Patton & McMahon, 2014; McMahon & Patton, 2018). Therefore STF looks at the inseparable connection within and between parts of the whole (including content and process as an integrated unit) by means of a recursive dynamic, changes over time and chance.

Ryan and Deci's (2017) Self-determination theory (SDT) is adopted to explore how the mentors' relationship helps students develop their inner resources from the mentors' perspective. Self-determination refers to the individual's ability to have control over one's life choices. SDT suggests that people are motivated to grow and shift to become self-determined when the following three basic and universal needs, which is when competence, connection and autonomy, are satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, SDT is an organismic theory of personality and human behaviour development in terms of evolved inner resources and self-regulation. This theory explores the biological, social and cultural factors that could either facilitate or hinder the human's capability to grow, commit and to take care of one's own mental health (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Methodology

This study is concerned with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach because it reflects human experience and the interpretation of such moments in an individual's life. An interpretivist approach was adopted for this research because the aim was to gain insight related to internal dynamics between professionals who help students within the MCAST system. In fact, an interpretative approach is best suited to explore hidden agendas and complex multifaceted social dynamics.

The main focus of the study is that of eliciting how the mentoring programme was perceived by the mentors, the other professionals, and the management of the college who were directors of the mentors and of the respective professionals working closely with the mentors. Multiple perceptions about the at-risk mentoring program were investigated via interviews with nine stakeholders including 3 student mentors (SMA, SMB, and SMC), 2 career advisors (CAA and CAB), 1 counsellor (C), and their respective directors (DP and DOE). Data source triangulation was used to substantiate evidence and shed light on the phenomenon under inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Rogers, 2012). The recruitment ratio of the participants was influenced by the fact that there are only two career advisors within the vocational college, so the student mentors had to be chosen relatively in proportion. Thus, three student mentors were randomly chosen from a pool of twenty three mentors. Conversely, since career guidance is the main discipline around which this study is centred, only one counsellor was chosen as a means to have the insight of the full complement of professionals at MCAST.

The research was carried out between 2019 and 2020 when the mentoring program had already been running for a whole academic year within the vocational institution. The interviews were audio-recorded, in-depth, individual, and semi-structured. Data was transcribed and analysed through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were elicited and then carefully examined to generate a thematic map in order to organise and navigate the data. Moreover, the authors made sure that the emergent themes were discussed and grounded within the literature review, the epistemological lens and the theories employed.

Findings: Creating a Positive Shift in Service through Mentoring

This article focuses on the perceived 'Positive Shift in Service'. The participants concurred that the student mentors benefitted the student services provision as they helped to reinstate multidisciplinary team meetings, increased the number of referrals, and promoted better student relationships.

The participants perceived the new role of student mentors as an added value to the holistic provision of student support services. MCAST has established a tier of frontliners with the mentors, with the aim to prevent or to retain potential at-risk students as early as possible, as they focus on getting to know

all the students individually, to filter, and refer them to the professionals as needed. Therefore, student mentors are filling the gaps by providing continuation, stability and bringing the students closer to the student support services:

Student mentors are contributing immensely. The change has been sudden and positive. […] when the mentors came in, they brought familiarity, they brought a sense of certitude of service. So, you will always be followed. People never feel alone. (CAB)

A number of students have said, "thank God for the mentor. If the mentor were not there I probably would have stopped". To me even if a handful of students were saved, it's worth it and it's not just a handful. The student mentors have managed to make the student feel more valued, more esteemed, more empowered, and more in control. That to me has worked wonders, because a student has left here now, not only with a qualification but with a stronger character. (DP)

A mentor who cares, protects and proves to be a steady presence is key to building a meaningful connection wherein the mentee feels seen, supported and secure to resort to his/her mentor (Hurd et al., 2010; Masten & Reed, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2002). Therefore, this role seems to have brought a positive impact not only to the respective directors and professionals themselves, but also to the students who in their opinion needed a sense of security.

Reinstated Multidisciplinary Team Meetings

Although the career advisors, student mentors and the counsellor all work under the student support services directorate, they also report to different departments and directors. With the addition of the role of student mentors, a common platform was needed in order for practitioners to discuss complex at-risk students' that needed different interventions from multiple practitioners. Therefore, the directors felt the need to establish monthly multi-disciplinary team meetings. In this way, students are seen holistically, interventions are timed in a continuum, and practitioners can avoid duplication of work. Unfortunately, as the DOE elucidates below, before the multidisciplinary meetings were established, students were slipping away from MCAST's support system as teams were previously working in silos:

[...] we recently started to have these meetings with student mentors, student support service coordinators, LSU Lecturers, student liaison officers and career advisors to discuss cases. Because what was happening before is students used to say yes, I am going to counselling and then the other services would say there is nothing they can do, he is being followed by the counsellors. And in reality, it could have been he went once for counselling and he didn't continue with the counselling sessions and students were slipping out of the services that we offered due to fragmentation of services. (DOE)

Mentoring refers to, "an alliance that creates a space for dialogue, that results in reflection, action and learning" (Rolfe, 2006). This alliance that fosters growth and collaboration has not only been true for the mentor-mentee relationship, since the mentors' role has also constructively strengthened the team of practitioners by injecting the student service delivery with new energy of positive practices and support to students:

In each institute, we meet once a month, for a 2-hour meeting. We see how we can work together, we discuss our issues regarding difficult cases, so this is where interventions are sort of developed. [...] For example, we are currently discussing between us to write what we call a 'unified report' where we say in these cases, we have done so. And this becomes a handbook for our mentors and everybody around. Thus, we are adopting a proactive approach, instead of being reactive to our client group. We also get speakers who come to speak to us. So, it's a training area too. (CAB)

The reinstatement of multidisciplinary team meetings provided a space for the whole team to discuss cases together as a means to better monitor students and to make them feel supported. Moreover, these practices have instilled a sense of shared responsibility between practitioners when planning interventions. As a result, the team is empowered to foster a coherent shared system on how to deal with future cases, as well as to align their service delivery as a unified organisational structure.

Increase in Referrals

Unlike student mentors, the other professionals do not seek students, it is the student who seeks their therapeutic or career guidance service. The professionals as well as their respective directors, concur that thanks to the student mentors they are all receiving more referrals and are therefore reaching more students:

Yes, they are definitely contributing, especially when it comes to referrals because sometimes when you have a class of students, it's easy for the quiet ones to get missed. I think that the mentors are working in that sense that they have the time to follow these students. As we wouldn't know that student 'A' needs career guidance hadn't it been for the mentor. Because student 'A' might be shy to seek us or might not admit that they need career guidance out of pride or out of disinterest. (CAA)

The student mentors' feedback suggests that the reason why referrals increased is that there were barriers that needed to be facilitated in order for the students to make use of the other student support services available at MCAST, as follows:

One of the counsellors told me that through us they manage to have more referrals. They are reaching more students. Why? They are located in a separate building and some of the students do not know about the role of the counsellors. Despite the induction meetings held by the student support services, wherein the counsellors and the career guidance come to speak to the students, most of the students [...] do not pay attention to the meeting. (SMA)

Student mentors are creating awareness of the services as they speak to students about them during group sessions. They also provide the human contact that physically introduces the mentee to the services, as they accompany their mentees to their initial sessions with the therapists or the career advisors**.** Thus, it becomes very clear that these students need both familiarity and safety as well as to be followed closely in order to open up. Furthermore, the student mentors are building the mentees' self-determination by empowering them to become more autonomous and by enabling them to use their inner resources to seek the services and the help they require (Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2017).

Better Student Relationships

At the core of the mentor-mentee relationship there are two important elements. The student mentor's guardianship and determination to help the mentee, and the profound trust that the mentee has in the mentor who helps him/her to move forward. Connection is at the heart of SDT, which is an essential element as to why student mentors are achieving better student relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000). CAB's and C's observations confirm that the outcome of this mentoring relationship is reaping the benefits and achieving its aim towards the collective service delivery:

At first the student didn't want to be nice to her mentor. But then when the student was upset, she wanted only the mentor. So, the mentor went to meet with her, and she opened up about her difficulties. Then the mentor told her listen these are difficulties that therapy might help you with. They were more of a psychological nature. And the mentor accompanied her here and this student is in therapy now. But she is still being seen by the mentor for the more practical matters. (C)

At the end of the mentor's intervention she referred them to me. She told me, "There is a problem with this particular student. He came to speak to you in July but since then he has changed his opinion. Would you like to have a session with him?" That student would have probably never come back to me [...]. So, the mentor provides a flatbed for things to happen. She even finds out about the parents. For example, we have what I call helicopter parents, who always want to know what's happening with their kid, and the mentor is the first buffer. She will actually tell the parents, "let's have CAB handle it, you don't have to attend." So, she provides students a sort of crusader for their own thoughts. (CAB)

Student mentors are re-building mentees' trust towards caring adults and the services offered at MCAST. Mentors are providing their mentees with incessant support by listening to and advocating for them, by establishing structure, by challenging their inconsistencies and by reinforcing their strengths in the face of adversity or in the case of low self esteem (Satchwell, 2006). As a result, this provides a better footing for the other professionals to start their career guidance or counselling work with students. This means that students are more motivated and open to receive the help they require and to

address their issues. This is how prevention and intervention measures are working at a systemic level at MCAST.

Conclusion

The findings of this study seem to indicate that mentors are an invaluable resource as perceived by practitioners and management in order for them to reach out to students and avail themselves of the services on offer in a profitable manner. However, a further study that includes the students' perceptions of mentoring is required in order to compare these with the practitioners' views. Students would have helped the researchers understand which are the predominant areas they feel mostly supported by these professionals. Unfortunately, for the purpose of this study, it was not possible to gain access to students within the mentoring programme as they were also being involved with an internal study conducted by MCAST. This study proposed with students could be performed longitudinally with the aim to trace the degree of contact hours required between the mentors and mentees in order to observe and achieve long-term benefits out of mentoring relationships (DuBois et al., 2002; Satchwell, 2006; Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller & Rhodes, 2009). A mixed methods approach could be powerful in such an extensive research area so that generalisations could be made about this service as a means to inform MCAST management and policy making.

Overall, this study indicates and advocates that mentoring could be considered a feasible subsidiary resource supporting career guidance practitioners and counsellors within post-secondary institutions, as it helps them to adequately cater for full-time students' needs. Moreover, the support provided needs to empower students to have personal agency. In 2023, MCAST put this finding into practice as it has now employed student mentors on indefinite contracts and extended the service to all levels (MQF 1-6) at MCAST (Meeting with Career Advisor CAA on Monday 2nd October 2023). It would be ideal to replicate such a study given this new scenario. As Rolfe (2007) said metaphorically about lifelong career development skills and the empowering relationship between the mentor and mentee, "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day; teach a person how to fish and they can feed themselves for a lifetime".

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Bugeja, S. & Cauchi V. (2012). *"No More Education Please"*. A Review of Students' Decision to Discontinue Learning Beyond Compulsory Schooling. Unpublished dissertation. University of Malta.

Camilleri, M. (2016). *The Experiences behind Early School Leaving*. Unpublished dissertation. University of Malta.

Cavell, T.A., DuBois, D.L., Karcher, M.J., Keller, T.E., & Rhodes, J.E. (2009). Policy Brief: *Strengthening mentoring opportunities for at-risk youth*. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Centre. Retrieved from https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/mentoring-policy-brief.pdf

CEDEFOP. (2016*) Leaving education early. Vocational education and training centr*CEDEFOP.57(1) Vol. 1 Investigating causes and extent. Luxembourg: Publications Office,

CEDEFOP. (2016 V. II). *Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage*. 57(2) Evaluating policy impact. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

DuBois D.L. & Neville, H.A. (1997). Youth mentoring: investigation of relationship characteristics and perceived benefits. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 25(3): 227-234.

DuBois, D.L., Parra, G.R., Neville, H.A., Pugh-Lilly, A.O., & Povinelli, N. (2002). Mentoring relationships for youth: Investigation of a process-oriented model. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(4):367-388.

European Commission. (2013). *Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf

European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice & Cedefop. (2014). *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*. Eurydice & Cedefop Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from http://eslplus.eu/documents/Tackling%20Early%20Leaving%20from%20Edu

cation%20and%20Training%20in%20Europe%20Strategies%20Policies%20 and%20Measures.pdfEurostat. (2021, 24 June).

Eurostat (2023). *Continued decline in early school leavers in the EU [Data Set edat_lfse_14]*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-202106242#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20Member%20States%20that,%25)%20and%20Bulgaria%20(12.8%25).(2023, 8 August).

Early leavers from education and training (2022) *[Data Set]*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/1150.pdf

Farrugia, C. (2019). A Study of the Factors that Lead to Student Drop-Out: The VET Context. *MCAST Journal of Applied Research & Practice*, 3(1): 113-130.

Flisi, S., Goglio, V., Meroni, E.C., & Vera-Toscano, E. (2015). School-to-work transition of young individuals: what can the ELET and NEET indicators tell us? *JRC Technical Report. Luxembourg*: Publications Office of the European Union.

Haug, E. H. & Plant, P. (2015). The potential role of career guidance and career education in combating early school leaving. In *Education Sciences*, 3(1): 5- 15.

Hurd, M. N., Zimmerman A. M., & Xue, Y., (2010). Negative adult influences and the protective effects of role models: A study with urban adolescents. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 38(6): 777-789.

Jekielek, S., Moore, K., Hair, E.C., & Scarupa, H. (2002). *Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development*. Washington D.C.: Child Trends.

Kashani, J.H., Reid, J.C., & Rosenberg. T.K. (1989). Levels of hopelessness in children and adolescents: A developmental perspective. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,* 57: 496-499.

Keating, L.M., Tomishima, M.A., Foster, S., & Alessandri, M. (2002). The effects of a mentoring program on at-risk youth. *Adolescence*, 37(148): 717-734.

Masten, A. S., & Reed, M. J. (2002). Resilience in development. In C. Snyder & S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 74–88). New York, US: Oxford University Press.

McMahon, M., & Patton, W. (2018). Systemic thinking in career development theory: contributions of the Systems Theory

Framework. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 46 (2): 229-240.

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). (2014). *A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta*. Malta: Salesian Press.

National Commission for Further and Higher Education, (NCFHE). (2014). *Early leaving from vocational education and training in Malta*. Cedefop's ReferNet. Retrieved from https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/2014_CR_MT.pdf

Oomen, A,. & Plant, P. (2014). *Early School Leaving and Lifelong Guidance*. ELGPN (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network) Note No. 6. Jyväskylä: ELGPN. Retrieved from http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no1-resource-kit

Patton, W., McMahon, M. (2014). *Career Development and Systems Theory: Connecting Theory and Practice* (3rd Edition). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Raposa, E.B., Rhodes, J., Stams, G.J.J.M., Card, N., Burton, S., Schwartz, S., Yoviene Sykes, L.A., Kanchewa, S., Kupesmidt, J., & Hussain, S. (2019). The Effects of Youth Mentoring Programs: A Meta-analysis of Outcome Studies. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48: 423–443.

Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2006). Understanding and facilitating the youth mentoring movement. *Social Policy Report*, 20(3): 1-20.

Rhodes, J. E., Bogat, G. A., Roffman, J., Edelman, P., & Galasso, L. (2002). Youth mentoring in perspective: Introduction to the special issue. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30: 149–155

Rittel, H.J. & Webber, M.M. (1973). Dilemmas in the general theory of planning. *Policy Science*, 4: 155–169.

Rolfe, A. (2006) *How to Design and Run Your Own Mentoring Program*. Mentoring Works. Terrigal, Australia: Synergistic Management Pty Ltd.

Rolfe, A. (2006). *The Mentoring Conversation*. Mentoring Works. Australia: Synergistic Management Pty Ltd.

Rolfe, A. (2007). *Mentoring guide*. Kincumber South, Australia: Mentoring Works.

Rogers, M. (2012). Contextualising Theories and Practices of Bricolage Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(48): 1-17

Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness*. New York, USA: The Guilford Press

Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychological Association*, 55 (1): 68-78.

Satchwell, K. (2006). *Mentoring literature review*. Alberta Child Services Report. Retrieved from http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/mentoringliterature-review.pdf

Spiteri, M. (2012). *Exploring stakeholders' perceptions of students' disengagement with schooling by Form IV secondary and the prospects for their further education*. Unpublished dissertation. University of Malta.

The President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society. (2015). *Early School Leaving and Wellbeing in Malta and Beyond: A Statistical Analysis*. Attard, Malta: San Anton Palace.

Villalba, C.M.H. (2014). Early school leaving. In A.C. Michalos, (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of quality of life and well-being research* (pp. 1744-1748). Dordrecht: Springer.

Positive Shifts in Adult Education: The Role of Student Mentoring in a Vocational College in Malta

Jessica Borg and Katya De Giovanni

Abstract The study analyses the newly introduced role of student mentors in the career advisory service at MCAST, the main vocational education and training institution in Malta. In view of the high rate of early leavers from education and training (ELET), the student mentor's role was implemented with the aim of improving student retention rates as well as to enrich their learning journey. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the new student mentoring programme is working from the perspective of management and professionals. Multiple perceptions about this programme were investigated by nine stakeholders through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with the student mentors, career advisors, counsellors and their respective

directors. Data were analysed through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three main themes were generated reflecting the impact of student mentors at MCAST and the dynamics between professionals, as follows: Reinstated Multidisciplinary Team Meetings, Increase in Referrals and Better Student Relationships. Findings indicate that the mentoring programme was positively accepted by the participants for the various benefits it brought to the overall service delivery.

Keywords Post-Secondary Education; MCAST; ELVET; At-Risk Students Mentoring; Career Guidance

---

Changements positifs dans l'éducation des adultes: Le rôle du mentorat des étudiants dans un collège professionnel à Malte

Jessica Borg and Katya De Giovanni

Résumé Cette étude analyse le rôle récemment introduit des mentors étudiants dans le service d'orientation professionnelle du MCAST, le principal établissement d'enseignement et de formation professionnels à Malte. Face au taux élevé d'abandon précoce de l'enseignement et de la formation (ELET), le rôle de mentor étudiant a été instauré dans le but d'améliorer les taux de rétention des étudiants et d'enrichir leur parcours d'apprentissage. Par conséquent, cette étude cherche à examiner le fonctionnement du nouveau programme de mentorat étudiant du point de vue de la direction et des professionnels. Les perceptions multiples de ce programme ont été explorées à travers des entretiens semi-structurés enregistrés avec neuf parties prenantes, notamment les mentors étudiants, les conseillers en orientation professionnelle, les conseillers et leurs directeurs respectifs. Les données ont été analysées à l'aide de l'analyse thématique (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Trois thèmes principaux ont émergé, reflétant l'impact des mentors étudiants au MCAST et la dynamique entre les professionnels : réintégration des réunions de l'équipe pluridisciplinaire, augmentation des références et amélioration des relations avec les étudiants. Les résultats indiquent que le programme de mentorat a été positivement perçu par les participants en raison des divers avantages qu'il a apportés à l'ensemble des services offerts.

Mots-clés éducation postsecondaire ; MCAST ; ELVET ; mentorat pour étudiants à risque ; orientation professionnelle

Cambios positivos en la educación de adultos: El papel de la tutoría de estudiantes en un centro de formación profesional de Malta

Jessica Borg and Katya De Giovanni

Resumen Este estudio analiza el papel recientemente introducido de los estudiantes mentores en el servicio de orientación profesional de MCAST, la principal institución de educación y formación profesional en Malta. Ante la alta tasa de abandono temprano de la educación y la formación (ELET), se implementó el rol de mentor estudiantil con el objetivo de mejorar las tasas de retención de estudiantes y enriquecer su experiencia de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, este estudio busca examinar cómo está funcionando el nuevo programa de tutoría de estudiantes desde la perspectiva de la dirección y de los profesionales. Las percepciones sobre este programa fueron investigadas a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas grabadas en audio realizadas a nueve partes interesadas, incluyendo mentores estudiantiles, orientadores profesionales, consejeros y sus respectivos directores. Los datos fueron analizados mediante análisis temático (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Se identificaron tres temas principales que reflejan el impacto de los mentores estudiantiles en MCAST y la dinámica entre los profesionales: restablecimiento de las reuniones del equipo multidisciplinario, aumento de las derivaciones y mejora de las relaciones con los estudiantes. Los resultados indican que el programa de mentoría fue positivamente aceptado por los participantes debido a los diversos beneficios que aportó a la prestación general de servicios.

Palabras clave educación postsecundaria; MCAST; ELVET; tutoría de estudiantes en riesgo; orientación profesional

CONVERGENCE IA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 284-290
Convergence/ia/e 2024

IN MEMORIAM
Joachim H. Knoll (1933 - 2024)

A Tribute to an adult education stalwart with a selection of his publications

Heribert Hinzen

Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h. c. Joachim H. Knoll died in Hamburg on 22 March 2024 at the age of 91.

In 1964, Joachim H. Knoll was appointed to the Chair of Adult Education and Non-formal Youth Education at the Ruhr University in Bochum, which he held until his emeritus status in 1998. During those more than three decades, he transformed the professorship into an outstanding voice for both international and comparative adult education. He served as Dean of the Faculty of his Ruhr University in Bochum twice.

The older generation in our field of adult learning and education (ALE) will have crossed the way of Professor Knoll in one way or the other. Those who were lucky will have worked with him on any of his vast interests; others will at least have met him on travel or in international conferences, most will have come across his numerous writings which go far back to a time when the printed book or journal was the order of the day.

He was a close friend and colleague of other outstanding champions of his time, like Professors Lalage Bown, Alex Charters and Paul Belanger – all authors of CONVERGENCE in the 1970s (Hinzen 2022). They were among those who gathered and exchanged informally on the occasion of CONFINTEA V, enjoying a splendid view from the roof top of the place where Knoll lived overseeing the Hamburg harbor. Knoll knew

also and worked with the other giants in ALE who have died recently like Chris Duke, John Field, Dénes Koltai or Horst Siebert.

UNESCO and CONFINTEA

His closest relationship to any international organisation was UNESCO. He was an in-person member of the German National Commission and he participated actively in UNESCO events. He missed CONFINTEA III in Tokyo although he met and worked with important personalities of the time like Prof. Roby Kidd, Helmuth Dolff or Paul Bertelson. But he enjoyed reporting about his experiences during CONFINTEA IV in Paris which came up with the lasting declaration on *The Right to Learn* (UNESCO 1985), established in the midst of the high-time of the cold war. Knoll joined the editorial team for a special issue of CONVERGENCE (Agostino et al. 2007) which was published advancing CONFINTEA VI, with contributors from many regions around the globe like Carolyn Medel-Anounevo, János Tóth, Alan Tuckett, Cecilia Soriano, Babacar Diop Buuba and Malini Ghose. He himself contributed a highly cited and re-published article on "The History of the UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education – From Helsingör (1949) to Hamburg (1997): International education policy through people and programmes" (Knoll 2014). As CONFINTEA VI was in Belém, Timothy Ireland ensured that a Portuguese version of this CONVERGENCE VI Special Edition was produced and shared widely.

DVV International

The relationship of Prof. Knoll with DVV International was of mutual benefit, and started in the early phase of his university work which was close to the founding years of the Institute in 1969. He often invited to contribute to his *International Yearbook of Adult Education*, and contributions included an overview on the journal *Adult Education and Development* (Hinzen et al. 1982).
Prof. Knoll enriched the Board of Trustees of DVV International for over two decades, subsequently also the Advisory Board for Continuing Education of the German Adult Education Association. During this time, he wrote a position paper "Bedeutungsverlust von Bildung in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit" (The Loss of Importance of Education in

Development Cooperation), which was designed to support far-reaching lobbying and acquisition activities. Consultancy assignments took him to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Hungary and Vietnam – always with a focus on politics and legislation relating to adult education. He collaborated on the study by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) on *Adult Education: Trends and Issues in Europe* (EAEA 2006) which later became of key relevance for the EU *Action plan on adult learning - It is always a good time to learn* (EU 2008).

In the German adult education landscape, the Volkshochschulen (adult education centres) were of great importance to him. He contributed to the anniversary volume *100 Jahre Volkshochschulen. Geschichten ihres Alltags (100 Years of Adult Education Centres. Stories of their daily life)* (Schrader, Rossmann 2019) and was invited to the celebratory event in the St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt.

Publications

His published works were extensive and spanned the period from the 1960s to the end of his life. This encompassed the founding of the *Internationale Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung / International Yearbook of Adult Education* which he started as editor in 1972, and continued for more than three decades. As an example, volume 10 in 1982 covered a wide range of themes, including universities and academic continuing education, older adults in US colleges, professionalization in non-formal education, the potentials of ALE in reducing inequalities and poverty as well as country reports on Tanzania (Hinzen 1982), France, Ghana, India and Tanzania (Knoll 1982). The *International Yearbook* is now edited by Michael Schemmann (2023).

Also, for more than three decades he enjoyed being a co-publisher of the journal *Bildung und Erziehung / Formation and Education,* and under his co-editorship with Hinzen special issues on *Academic Study and Professional Training. New BA/MA Courses and Qualifications in Adult Education* (2005), *Migration and Integration as a Topic of Adult and Continuing Education* (2007), Adult *Education and Continuing Education Policy: Science in between Society and Politics* (2009), and *Lifelong Learning and Governance* (2014) were published. In addition, he used the journal

also for his contributions when discussing the international perspectives in German adult education (Knoll 1976).

Throughout his lifetime he continued with his international and comparative perspectives on ALE through articles and books when presenting concepts, institutions and methods (Knoll 1996), writing on the "Development and Fundamental Principles of International and Comparative Adult Education Research" (Knoll 2000) or "Diversity by Design. Evolution, Trends and Problems of International Comparative Adult Education" (Knoll 2009).
In his later life he edited collected volumes titled *Erwachsenenbildung – Quo vadis? / Adult Education – Quo Vadis?* (Knoll 2002) and *Erwachsenenbildung – still confused but on a higher level / Adult Education – still confused but on a higher level* (Knoll 2005), where he reflected on the various fields of activity to which he had contributed his knowledge and experience, especially through contributions like "Adult Education and Legislation. Laws Relating to Adult Education and Paid Educational Leave in the Provinces (Länder) of the Federal Republic of Germany". He even constructed a "Draft Adult Education Act" (Knoll 2000) which he discussed with partners during his consultancy work.

Recognitions

Prof. Knoll has been honored in numerous ways: He received an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Berlin, was awarded the Order of Merit 1. Class of the Federal Republic of Germany and was an honorary member of the German UNESCO Commission. In 2006, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

Some personal remarks

My first contact with Professor Knoll hails back into the late 1970s after I had joined DVV International. I enjoyed working with him on numerous occasions. He was certainly more of a mentor in the early years, close to other colleagues in DVV International like Jakob Horn or later Hanno Schindele.

Prof. Knoll was an admirer of the late Prof. Lalage Bown whom I met first in Freetown while I taught at the University of Sierra Leone and she served as our external examiner (Slowey et al. 2023). I recall a telephone conversation with Knoll shortly after the untimely death of Bown where he mentioned that he had been sending a *Dresden Stollen* at Christmas to her over the last decades.

Each time I came to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, like for meetings of the Editorial Board of the *International Review of Education,* we made sure to meet over lunch for some nice fish food to exchange on most recent professional and personal developments.

In Memoriam – thank you

Both the German and international adult education world can thank him greatly. We acknowledge his achievements in life with appreciation and respect and will remember him with gratitude as a colleague, mentor and friend.

References

Agostino, A., Hinzen, H., Knoll, J. H. (eds.) (2007). CONFINTEA VI Special Edition. *CONVERGENCE*, Vol. XL, 3-4.

EAEA (2006). *Adult Education in Europe*: *Trends and Issues*. Brussels: EAEA. http://www.ginconet.eu/sites/default/files/library/AE_trends_issues_Europe.pd

EU (2008). *Action Plan on Adult Learning – It is always a good time to learn*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008AR0003

Hinzen, H. (1982). Erwachsenenbildung in Tanzania seit der Unabhängigkeit (1961-1981). In: *Internationales Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung / International Yearbook of Adult Education*, 10, 79-94.

Hinzen, H. (2022). CONVERGENCE and ICAE in the context of CONFINTEA and UNESCO – memories, reflections and perspectives. In: *CONVERGENCE. An International Adult*

Education Journal , Vol 43, No 1, 17–30. https://www.convergencejournal.org/vol-43-no-1-2.pdf

Hinzen, H., Knoll, J.H. (Eds.) (2009). Adult Education and Continuing Education Policy: Science in between Society and Politics. *IPE 64*. Bonn: DVV International.

Hinzen, H., Knoll, J.H. (Eds.) (2014). *Lifelong Learning and Governance*. *From programming to action – selected experiences from* Asia *and Europe*. Vientiane: DVV International.

Hinzen, H., Horn, J., Kowalski, M., Leumer, W. (1982). Dialogue and Information Exchange: Functions of „Adult Education and Development". In: *Internationales Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung / International Yearbook of Adult Education*, 10, 134-141.

Ireland, T., & Spezia, C. H. (2014). *Adult Education in Retrospective 60 years of CONFINTEA*. Brasilia: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227635/PDF/227635eng.pdf.multi

Knoll, J.H. (1976). Internationale Perspektive in der deutschen Erwachsenenbildung. Organisatorische Kontakte und erwachsenenpädagogische Auslandskunde. In: *Bildung und Erziehung*, Heft 1, 22-45.

Knoll, J.H. (Ed.) (1982). *Internationales Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung / International Yearbook of Adult Education*. Köln: Böhlau.

Knoll. J.H. (1996). *Internationale Erwachsenenbildung und Weiterbildung*. *Konzepte*, *Institutionen*, Methoden. Darmstadt.

Knoll, J.H. (2000). Development and Fundamental Principles of International and Comparative Adult Education Research. In: Reischmann, J. (Ed.). (2021). *Essential Readings in International and Comparative Adult Education*, 84-90. Ziel Verlag, Augsburg. https://ziel-verlag.de/produkt/essential-readings/

Knoll, J.H. (Ed.) (2002). *Erwachsenenbildung - quo vadis*? *Einheit und Vielfalt der Erwachsenenbildung*, *zwischen Harmonisierung und Subsidiarität*; *Beiträge zur internationalen Diskussion*. Krakow: Impuls. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000200016

Knoll, J.H. (2005). *Erwachsenenbildung - "still confused, but on a higher level": Exposés über Recht, Profession und Jugendschutz; Beiträge zur internationalen Diskussion.* Krakow: Impuls. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000201560

Knoll, J.H. (2009). Diversity by Design. Evolution, Trends and Problems of International Comparative Adult Education. In: *AED 72*, 153-162. Bonn: DVV International.

Knoll, J. H. (2014). The History of the UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education – From Helsingör (1949) to Hamburg (1997): International education policy through people and programmes. In: Ireland, T., Spezia, H. (Eds.) *Adult Education in Retrospective. 60 Years of CONFINTEA*. Brasilia, S. 11-28.

Knoll, J.H. (2015). Horizontal and vertical derestriction of adult education – the historical example and the contemporary view of education policy. In: Gartenschlaeger, U., Hirsch., E. (eds.). *Adult Education in an interconnected world. Cooperation in lifelong learning for sustainable development. IPE 71*, 77-86 https://www.dvv-international.de/fileadmin/files/Inhalte_Bilder_und_Dokumente/Materialien/IPE/IPE_71_web.pdf

Knoll, J.H. (2004). Training of Adult Educators within German Universities. Reflections on the History and Present Situation, and some Visions on Professionalization. In: Hinzen, H. Przybylska, E. (Eds.). *Training of Adult Educators in Institutions of Higher Education. A Focus on Central, Eastern and South Western Europe. IPE 44.* Bonn, Warsaw, 147-155.

Knoll, J.H., Hinzen, H. (Eds.) (2005). *Academic Study and Professional Training. New BA/MA Courses and Qualifications in Adult Education. IPE 50*. Bonn: DVV International.

Knoll, J.H., Hinzen, H. (Eds.) (2007). *Migration and Integration as* a *Topic of Adult and Continuing Education. IPE 57.* Bonn: DVV International.

Schemmann, M. (Ed.). (2023). Researching participation in adult education. *International Yearbook of Adult Education*, vol. 46. Bielefeld: wbv.

Slowey, M., Hinzen, H., Omolewa, M., & Osborne, M. (Eds) (2023). *Adult education and social justice: International perspectives. Studies on Adult Learning and Education*, vol. 17. Florence: Firenze University Press. https:// doi. org/ 10. 36253/ 979- 12- 215- 0253-4

UNESCO (1985). *The Right to Learn*. In: *Report on the Fourth International Conference on Adult Education*, 66-68 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000066114

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 291-294
Convergence/ia/e 2024

CONFERENCE REPORT

UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education
Conference Proceedings, Webfests and Seminars

Autumn / Fall 2024

Ever since its inception in September 2021, the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education has been actively engaged in promoting Adult Education globally, in keeping with its remit. It revived *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal,* following its lengthy hiatus, for which the University department housing this Chair is mainly and financially responsible, with support (translation of *Convergence* article abstracts into French and Spanish) from the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). In addition, it has been organising numerous other activities.

This Autumn/Fall saw the publication, in paperback, of the book of papers from the May 2023 International Conference on Critical Education in general (ICCE XV) which included International Critical Adult Education and Learning. The conference was organised and hosted by the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education and the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education with funds and organisational efforts shared by these two entities within the University of Malta's Faculty of Education. These two entities were also responsible for editing and producing the book that emerged from the conference, *Stretching Boundaries of Critical Education. Past, Present and Future Possibilities* (Faculty of Education, University of Malta). It contains articles from and about Africa (Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Education for Self-Reliance and *Ubuntu),* Asia (Lebanon and the Arab World through the Arab House for Adult Education and Development-AHAED), the Caribbean (Popular Education during the Grenada

Revolution), Asia (Older Adults in South Korea), Latin America Nicaragua, Brazil) and Europe (Resistance education in Greece, Popular anti-Neoliberal education in Turkiye, Revolutionary STEM in the Soviet Union, Philosophical insights from Foucault etc). A copy of the book at a snip can be purchased from the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida 2080, Malta.

The two book editors and main conference convenors were Carmel Borg from this university's Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education and Peter Mayo, UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, the Chair housed within the same department. The book was officially launched at the University of Malta's Valletta Campus on Thursday 12th December 2024.

The outgoing year also saw the launching, under the aegis of the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, of the international online MA degree in Adult Education. The participants have thus far completed their two foundational courses, one in the Theoretical Foundations of Adult Education and the other in Research Methods in Adult Education. This Autumn/ Fall, they worked on their dissertation proposal. There are ten participants in this cohort, from Malta, Australia and the UK.

Ever since its inception, the UNESCO Chair has been responsible for holding annual webfests celebrating momentous events in Adult Education. In 2021, there were webfests celebrating the Birth Centenaries of Paulo Freire (three days) and Raymond Williams. 2022 saw the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Julius K. Nyerere while similar birth centenary webfests were held in 2023 for Don Lorenzo Milani and in 2024 for Alberto Manzi. The Manzi event was held on Tuesday 10th December, 2024. On Tuesday 17th December of the same year, a similar web event was held to commemorate the third anniversary of the passing away of bell hooks while, on Thursday 19th December, 2024, the 50th Anniversary of the 150 hours Italian experiment in Working Class and Women's Adult education was also marked by a webfest in Italian and English. The different webfests involved Zoom connections with different corners of the earth; some of the most prominent global scholars on the topic participated. The Freire event

involved interventions from such established scholars as Ira Shor, Carlos Alberto Torres, Margaret Ledwith, Donaldo Macedo, Tal Dor, Alessio Surian, Didacus Jules, Walter Kohan and Anne Hickling Hudson. The Raymond Williams event attracted inputs from Ian Menter, Sharon Clancy, Linden West, Eugenio Enrique Cortés Ramírez and Handel Kashope Wright. The Nyerere session featured interventions from Njoki Wane, Budd L. Hall, Marjorie Mbilinyi, Heribert Hinzen, Annagrace Rwehumbiza, Mewmezi Rwiza and Ahmadi Kipacha. The Lorenzo Milani session featured Domenico Simeone, Federico Batini and Evelina Scaglia among many others. Alberto Manzi's event saw the participation of Roberto Farne', Lisa Stillo, Elena Zizioli, Giulia Franchi, Sandro Caruana and Tania Convertini. The memorial for bell hooks involved interventions from Tal Dor, Edith Gnanadass, Shermaine Barrett and Gisella Vismara. The 150 hours session featured Francesco Pongiluppi, Giulia Pizzolato, Anna Maria Piussi and Fiorenzo Parziale. The sessions spread across continents and time zones. All recordings of the different webfests are available on the UNESCO Chair UM website.

In 2023, a UNESCO Chair Global Adult Education two-day Seminar started being organised around November. The 2023 seminar invitees discussed challenges and trends in adult education. The participants were Marcella Milana from Verona, Italy, Agnes Andollo from Nairobi, Kenya, Rose Kando from Bethlehem-Palestine (online intervention because of travel restriction in the wake of the Israeli-imposed embargo post October 7, 2023), David Abril and Angel Marzo from Spain, specifically Mallorca and Barcelona respectively, and Elisabeth Lange from BC, Canada. November 2024 saw the organisation of the second seminar, the theme being the International Council for Adult Education on its half century of existence. The seminar involved the following participants: Katarina Popovic (Serbia and ICAE General Secretary), Alan Tuckett (UK), Timothy Ireland (Brazil), Elsy Wakil (Lebanon and AHAED) and Heribert Hinzen (former DVV Director, Germany), with online interventions from Budd L. Hall (former ICAE General Secretary) and Darlene Clover, both from Victoria, BC, Canada.

Both seminars were held in the Boardroom of the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. Papers from the 2023 seminar appeared in previous issues of *Convergence. An International Adult Education Journal.*

2025 marks the end of the Chair's first four-year cycle. An International Adult Education Conference, a follow up to the 2023 one, is being planned for the latter part of 2025. Next November's webfest is being planned to mark the 80th year since Chilean educator, education policy maker and poet, Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 295-298
Convergence/ia/e 2024

BOOK REVIEW
Shannon Leddy and Lorrie Miller *Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies* University of Toronto Press, 2024, 152 pages (paperback) ISBN: 978-1-4875-5401-9 (pbk)

Elizabeth A Lange
Institute of Sustainable Futures,
University of Technology Sydney and,
Athabasca University

This beautiful book, *Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies* (2024) by Canadian professors Shannon Leddy and Lorrie Miller, conveys Indigenous ways of thinking and an Indigenous approach to education, especially transformative teaching and learning. For them, "the concept of lifelong learning is embedded in Indigenous thought" (p. xviii), which deeply challenges conventional conceptualizations of our field.

After centuries of attempted genocide and the global silencing of Indigenous thinking and ways of being, this book stands as an example of the revitalization of Indigenous onto-epistemologies. In so doing, the authors confront taken-for-granted aspects of schooling, higher, and adult education that remain in the industrial era, including prepackaged and universalized curriculum, education for economic production, individual achievement, fast and efficient pedagogies, siloed specializations, clock time, amoral and ahistorical approaches, and pressure cooker educational institutions. Their turn to Traditional wisdom, Traditional knowledge holders and Indigenous philosophies explains how dominant approaches in education move against natural ways of learning and much older ways of teaching.

Using the principles of slow learning and the Medicine Wheel symbolic system as complementary approaches, they illustrate a gentle approach

to "decolonizing curriculum and indigenizing pedagogy" (p. xxi). In seeking to "serve others, to be of some use" (p. xxii) this approach can address our existential crises of a climate crisis, global pandemic, democratic decline, and racial conflict. They do this by encouraging a spiritual and cultural transformation using processes of relationality, reciprocity, slowness, creativity, noninterference, timelessness, process, and collectivity, explored throughout.

This book is comprised of eight chapters, with the first three chapters laying out the key principles. The first chapter is a making of space, an open invitation that welcomes all. In moving beyond the tyranny of the clock back toward natural rhythms of seasonal and cyclical time and in seamlessly integrating what have been distinct subjects, they illustrate how education can be knit back into a "comprehensive view of life" (p. 8). They use the Lil'wat Principles of Learning, particularly that of "leaning into our discomfort" (p. 6), including the dissonance and uncertainty when considering a new way of approaching education. Unlearning the old ways of education *is* the work of decolonization.

Slow ways that rely on storytelling, mapmaking, poetry, visual art and traditional craft—especially weaving which they use as their dominant craft and metaphor—help "embody different notions of time" (p. 8) and a way of being that loosens frenetic-ness and time famine. They advocate following the felt energy in an educational encounter, especially group attunement, emergence of mutual assistance, and common group purpose (p. 9). Another key principle, which informs their title of "teaching where you are," is connecting to the local place you live. Consciousness to, and knowledge about, one's lived place is vital for our human future. These are examples highlighting that it is primarily about the *process* of how learning is engaged. Relations and listening are key…in the relationship with the student, among students, to process, and to content (p. 51). Unhurried time to dive deep into inquiry leads to much richer learning. Always, they say, "less is more" (p. 61).

Decolonizing learning is also about probing a nation's dominant historical narratives, including the absence of Indigenous voices in their own land, the origins of and causes for becoming settler-people, down to the daily microaggressions, racisms, and misinformation that continually shape relations. They offer powerful themes and processes to aid educators in this decolonial literacy. As weavers, they illustrate how handwork can aid this deep learning.

In Chapters 4 to 7, they use the Medicine Wheel to explicate learning in relation to human development. The East, as a place of beginnings, is the place of spiritual learning, in other words the spirit in all things including individual purpose, as the origins of respect.

The South is the place of emotional and relevant learning, including all the important dispositions of our highest selves—generosity, wisdom, humility, courage, trust, love, and respect. They illustrate a circle pedagogy or healing circle that can address trauma, as part of a process pedagogy. Understanding the typical emotional responses to decolonizing learning is explained, part of early growth and learning discernment.

The West, as the place of maturation, is the place of physical learning and reciprocity. Learning about the relation between the unseen and the physical, manifested world through processes such as meditation, is discussed. Relationality is examined in more depth including our relations in a consumer society, our relation to the Land as the body that sustains us, and our ways of being a social collectivity, including the importance of giving back or reciprocity.

The North is about intellectual learning and responsibility where balance in all things is found, part of the wisdom of the elders. Teaching in a *good way* is about helping each person find their special gift and unique contribution to the community. When you have completed this movement around the wheel, you will have created a warm and tightly woven blanket of meaning from different frames of reference, although the movement is continual.

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, is entitled *Pimoteh* or Walking, indicating that it takes time, effort, mistake-making, courage and persistence, to walk this decolonizing path. Despite the challenges, it is key to our human future.

In sum, this gentle and generous book provides educators, located in diverse locations and places, guidance for exploring long-silenced Indigenous philosophies. They have woven these together with principles for slow teaching and learning, as part of facing fully the colonial history that has distorted so many of our relationships with each other and the Earth.

They assert, "we are *all* colonized peoples" (p. 7). Thus, this book is useful and applicable to all teacher educators working in settler and

settler-origin societies as part of their decolonization journey. It is also useful with preservice and inservice educators searching for alternative ways in which to regard education and our role as educators. As public education systems become stretched and even frayed with ever-increasing diversity and demands, this book offers some important alternatives that can lead to more human, transformative, and respectful engagements of lifelong learning. It returns us to some ancient wisdom about the purpose of the life journey and processes for transforming our societies toward healthy, wise, and regenerative futures.

CONVERGENCIA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 299-304
Convergence/ia/e 2024

BOOK REVIEW
Walter Lepore, Budd *L.* Hall and Rajesh Tandon *Bridging Knowledge Cultures. Rebalancing Power in the Co-Construction of Knowledge*, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2024, 313 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-68774 (pbk)

Krista Bonello
University of Malta

The book is structured across five framing chapters (three introductory, two concluding) and ten case study chapters. The volume adds to the body of knowledge(s) through the documentation of efforts in bridging knowledge cultures, insights into diverse cultures. It also provides a framework for understanding community-academic engagement, examples of best practice and challenges, applicable methodologies, and valuable critical pedagogical insights. It brings together findings from the work of the Bridging Knowledge Cultures (BKC) project (2020 – 2022), "an international partnered training and research initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education", working on UN Sustainable Development Goals through training hubs located around the world, and under the auspices of the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium (Lepore et al, p. 6).[9]

The volume's aim is to diversify sources of knowledge, towards achieving knowledge democracy that counters "the near monopoly of Eurocentric knowledge systems or the exclusion of experiential or Indigenous knowledges" (Lepore et al, p. 9). It aligns with other efforts to decolonise knowledge production (Smith, 1999; Akena, 2012), and

[9] All undated references are to chapters in the book under review.

moreover contributes additional insights through focused and detailed community case studies, where practice informs analysis. Alongside case studies, the book also provides a robust theoretical framework, which is flexible enough to accommodate heterogeneity.

Participatory research is persuasively identified as the best route towards bridging knowledge cultures, "as it places collective knowledge at the heart of processes of social transformation and social justice" (Lepore et al, p. 10), engaging with timely concerns. It further develops the continuing long-term project undertaken by the editors (see e.g. Hall & Tandon, 2017; Munck et al, 2014) towards knowledge decolonisation, and exploring and upholding the potential of participatory community-based research. The research was in many cases student-centred, with students being the primary intended beneficiaries (Wood et al, pp. 187, 196; Flores et al, p. 240; Suriani Dzulkifli et al, p. 276; Yadav et al, p. 127). We also gain helpful insights into course design (Suriani Dzulkifli et al, p. 264). Chapters 14 and 15 offer constructive recommendations, e.g., structurally provided/supported administrative "spaces for shared leadership" (Tandon et al, p. 297; Hall, p. 307).

The volume is a welcome arrival, and seems particularly targeted at educators, social sciences researchers (both within and outside academia), activists, and policy makers; the issues raised are however of wider interest, not least to the communities themselves. The authorship of the book reflects this range, with authors hailing both from within and outside academia, for example members of NGOs involved with Indigenous communities. The book stands as a testament to the importance of recognising that knowledge is "created everywhere" (Lepore et al., p. 3). This is also important because Indigenous knowledges have been threatened with erasure and poorly documented, under colonising and Westernising influences (see e.g. Rwiza et al; Suriani Dzulkifli et al; Lepore and Jenny).

Methodologies were qualitative and practice-based, ranging from focus groups and interviews, to arts-based and participatory sessions, aptly reflecting different types of knowledge transmission (storytelling, creativity, etc). Use and application of knowledge in the communities studied in the volume are closely linked to "everyday life challenges and

expressed as a part of their worldviews", with "community knowledge production and sharing [being] functional and need-based" (Hall, p. 303) – as demonstrated, for example, in the chapter on the Kenjeran fishing community (Naily et al).

Universities and communities operate from different "underlying worldviews" (Hall, p. 304) and knowledge bases. The tendency identified is for training to be more theoretical at universities and more practical in the community (Lepore et al, p. 10; Lortan and Maistry, p. 219; Lepore and Kaul, p. 55). Understanding differences is rightly underlined as crucial (Lepore and Jenni, p. 37; Naily et al, 83; Venugopal et al, p. 109); accompanied by respect for what "cannot be easily understood through a Western lens" (Lepore and Kaul, p. 51). I would have liked to see more reflection on encountering areas of conflicting values, since such reflections may yield practical recommendations on how to navigate these – as one such example of good practice, one chapter offers possible strategies to encourage more gender inclusivity in the Nyerere Hub through further conversations with the Maasai communities, traditionally led by male elders (Rwiza et al, p. 172).

More could have been said in the introductory, framing chapters about what the editors understand by academic culture and values, with reference to ideological underpinnings, to avoid the impression of its being a default benchmark. Some chapters do make reference to investigation of "academic modes of knowledge generation" (Naily et al, p. 68), although this is sometimes equated with a 'scientific' dominant framework, which excludes or neglects other sources of knowledge (e.g. Naily et al, p. 76). Scientific values are however not the only set of values academic institutions espouse; as acknowledged by a number of authors in the volume (e.g. Monk et al; Wood et al; Suriani Dzulkifli et al), they are accompanied by a Westernising and colonial set of values; the global neoliberal and neo-colonial academic marketplace is also a driver of how 'worth' is established. The point is made that the term 'knowledge culture' has been associated with business and organisation practices (Wood et al, p. 185; Lepore and Jenni, p. 21); the neoliberal implications of this could have been more deeply critically interrogated. The desired consequences for academia (other than publications and teaching) could be more effectively explored and explained. As it stands, the benefits

reaped by the universities are often clearer than those gained by the communities (while the community's gains sometimes entrench them in recipient position rather than as actively creative); and Naily et al rightly observe that "further improvements are needed" to work towards "mutual benefit" (p. 82).

The move to decolonise knowledges has had to contend with "the trends of internationalisation and commercialisation" in education and research (Flores et al, p. 233) and the risks of appropriation (Lortan & Maistry, p. 222). Tandon et al set out the issue in the clearest terms, from the viewpoint of Indigenous communities: "Much of academic research has been used to extract information from communities for analysis and publications" (p. 289). Given the hubs' admirable aim to correct this, it would be interesting to read some more reflective commentary on the risks of commodifying such Indigenous knowledges as a research resource, to be repackaged as academic output, and on the steps taken to avoid or mitigate these risks. One way suggested in the volume is to affirm community ownership, such as Naily et al's opting for the term "community-validated" as opposed to the term "scientifically proven" (p. 79). Reconceiving value requires consideration of alternative ways to gauge impact of research by appreciating the process itself, other than publications and impact factor metrics (Suriani Dzulkifli et al, 267-268; Flores et al, 248). This is a vital point highlighted by several entries in the volume.

There is some variation in the relationships covered across Hubs, with varying degrees of participation by the partners. The dominance of the university remains clear across several chapters. Authentic and effective partnership requires equality (Lepore et al, 4; Monk et al, 141), towards being co-researchers (Mutalib et al, p. 96; Monk et al, p. 143). However, as several authors note, there is considerable evidence of persisting inequalities. For example, as many of the authors recognise, it is difficult to move away from the framing of such efforts as 'academic outreach', originating within the academic institutions (e.g. Tandon et al, p. 299: "While outreach is encouraged, 'inreach' is ignored"). The editors and authors are right to highlight this power imbalance as a barrier.

Ultimately, the book emphasises the importance of sustainability, and is about laying the foundations for this. The common good, which motivates a sense of community (Lepore & Kaul, p. 50), is shown to be in the interest of all partners (e.g. finding sustainable solutions to social and environmental issues, such as waste disposal and water management, to give examples from two case studies). The volume takes important steps towards recognising that community knowledge can have a transformative effect on universities and institutions (e.g. Rwiza et al, 159). The conclusion that successful community-university research collaborations work "despite – and not because of – existing policies" (Hall, p. 308) is a sobering one, and compellingly calls for greater efforts from policy-makers. This volume certainly delivers plenty of key insights to encourage and guide other such initiatives, offering us examples of best practice while alerting us to challenges to look out for, and suggesting ways forward.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Maria Brown for her carefully thorough editing work.

References

Akena, F. A. (2012). Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization. *Journal of Black Studies*, *43*(6), 599-619. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934712440448

Hall, B.L., & Tandon, R. (2017). Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education. *Research for All*, *1*(1), 6–19. DOI 10.18546/RFA.01.1.02.

Munck, R., Lorraine McIlrath, L., Hall, B., & Rajesh Tandon, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Higher Education and Community-Based Research Creating a Global Vision*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books.

CONVERGENCIA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 304-308
Convergence/ia/e 2024

BOOK REVIEW

Andreas Frejes and Erik Nylander (Eds.) *Mapping out the Research Field of Adult Education and Learning* Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland, 2019, 242 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-109455 (hbk)

Jenson Elsworth
University of Malta

In the book *Mapping out the research field of adult education and learning*, Andreas Fejes and Erik Nylander (2019) offer a comprehensive overview of the research landscape, research methodologies and emerging trends within adult education (AE) and learning. They adeptly contextualize adult education within broader societal, economic, and political contexts, shedding light on the diverse factors influencing adult learning practices. Apart from this, the book helps to uncover the networks and communities of researchers, often referred to as "invisible colleges" (p. 4), who are actively engaged in adult education. The book is also significant because Fejes and Nylander critically analyse current research trends and identify areas for future exploration and inquiry. Their insights into emerging topics such as lifelong learning, digital literacy, and the impact of neoliberal policies on adult education offer valuable guidance for researchers seeking to contribute meaningfully to the field.The volume also speaks about '*Bildung*', which encompasses a personal growth journey that intertwines education, nurturing, knowledge, culture and personal responsibilities towards humanity and the world. This concept encourages lifelong learning by promoting critical thinking, self-reflection, and the continuous quest for personal growth (Laros et al., 2017). The authors' reference to such a concept is laudable for providing an enriching basis for AE.

Several key findings were identified by the authors. Firstly, some characterise adult education as a "weak field" (Fejes & Nylander, 2019, p. 16) due to its fragmented nature and lack of coherence. Another significant finding is the concept of "invisible colleges" (p. 75), referring to researchers who know each other and their work, which serve as a framework influencing the boundaries of discussion within the field. Additionally, the historical evolution of AE research mirrors the history of AE in practice, changing "from social movements and AE movements in the early years through university departments in the period of institutionalisation to international bodies in the present" (p. 199). This shows how the relationship between the theory and practice in AE is an issue.

Whilst, the book discusses several theories, other AE relevant theoretical perspectives could have been explored, such as postmodernism, critical theory, and ecological perspectives. While the book discusses critical pedagogy, postmodernism, and critical theory offer alternative perspectives on adult education that emphasize deconstruction of power structures, cultural narratives, and knowledge production. These theories question dominant ideologies and challenge traditional notions of education and learning (Hamilton, 1997), which could have been explored deeper in the book. Additionally, with growing concerns about sustainability and environmental challenges, theories related to environmental education, and ecological literacy, adult learning contexts are increasingly relevant. These perspectives explore the interconnectedness between human societies, the environment, and lifelong learning for sustainable development (Clover et al., 2013).

The volume serves as a guide for scholars, educators, and policymakers seeking to understand the key themes, theories, methodologies, and trends shaping the field. It is a good introduction to the topic in hand; yet does not delve into enough day-to-day practices within adult education. Having said that, the scholarly thought and research discussed still expose the reader to theories and perceptions to adult education.

While the book does not delve into asset-based community development (ABCD), there are potential connections that can intersect. ABCD is a strengths-based approach that emphasizes identifying and leveraging the existing assets, and resources within communities to promote

positive change and sustainable development, focusing on local assets instead of solely addressing needs (Russell, 2022). Similarly, the book discusses co-creation of knowledge, community empowerment, community-based learning and experiential learning, which parallel the community-centred approaches advocated in ABCD theoretical foundations.

The editors and contributors conducted a bibliometric analysis that specifically examined three crucial elements that shape the connection among scholars in the field of adult education: indexation, publication, and citation. The imagery of 'mapping' allows us to conceptualize the interconnections among 'items on the map', akin to how this book navigates the landscape of adult education research and theories. However, this approach also presents certain limitations. Their selection of journals was restrictive as they opted for data exclusively from "Scopus and Web of Science" (Fejes & Nylander, 2019, p. 55), inadvertently excluding potentially valuable studies from other sources that might have warranted further research. It is conceivable that a list of the AE articles published in journals like the *International Journal of Educational Development*, or the *Cambridge Journal of Education* would perhaps better reflect the status of AE research than the specialist journals. Although, qualitative research entails the personal experiences and depth analysis, the researchers' choice for mostly qualitative journals shows their specific interests in the journals used, specifically in Chapters 7 and 8.

To add to this, as their concentration was on English-language journals, they overlooked developments in regions where research may not have been published in English. The editors were aware of this as can be seen in (Fejes and Nylander, 2019):

what would our results be if we drew on data from other geographical sites and included altogether different language regimes? Would the image of the field perhaps look entirely different if we included other sources of data in our analysis, such as books and book chapters or conference proceedings? (p. 135).

Additionally, the absence of primary research may lack the richness of insights gathered from stakeholders, community leaders, or policymakers that work within AE. Despite the limited research, the

reliable sources organised patterns and relationships among AE theories and research through conceptual mapping, guiding the reader to understand the field's overarching structure. Finally, their data set comprises of over 150,000 citation links among over 33,000 distinct authors from five prominent AE journals between 2006 to 2014, providing a telescopic view derived from the cumulative impact of citations.

In sum, the book's strengths lie in its exploration of various theoretical perspectives, including critical pedagogy, experiential learning, andragogy, transformative learning, and sociocultural approaches. This theoretical grounding enriches readers' understanding of adult education research and practice. Moreover, Chapter 10, focusing on historical aspects, was fulfilling, though it would have been more beneficial earlier in the book. Chapter 7's discussion on reflexivity was noteworthy but lacked depth, which may discourage readers. I agree that the editors encourage introspection on the AE research field and learning. As an aspiring adult educator and current community development worker, this broadened my understanding with fresh perspectives.

While the book offers insightful resources, this book speaks about the field, rather than discussing from within the field. I advocate for *praxis*, which is the integration of theory and practice in a dynamic, dialectical and transformative process (Ritchie, 2023), which the book does not cover. As the title suggests, the book primarily focuses on mapping out the research field of adult education, providing a solid theoretical foundation and highlighting research methodologies. However, practitioners seeking practical guidance on implementing strategies or addressing real-world challenges in AE may need to supplement this book with additional resources. More practical examples of how these concepts apply in real settings could enhance the book's usefulness for individuals seeking actionable practices. Moreover, some sections are dense, particularly for newcomers to the field of adult education.

Despite these limitations, *Mapping out the research field of adult education and learning* (2019) remains a valuable resource for scholars, researchers, and practitioners seeking a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundations and research landscape within adult education. Yet,

supplementing the book with additional readings and practical examples can enhance its applicability to diverse educational contexts.

References

Clover, D. E., Jayme, B. d. O and Follen, S. (2013). *The Nature of Transformation: Environmental Adult Education* (1st ed.) Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Hamilton, T. (1997). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education - A Post-Modern Critique*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Laros, A., Fuhr, T., & Taylor, E. W. (2017). *Transformative Learning Meets Bildung* (1st ed.) Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Ritchie, L. (2023). Practice of Praxis. *Journal of Adult Learning, Knowledge, and Innovation,* 6 (1), 14-22.

Russell, C. (2022). *Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)* (1st ed.). London: eBook Partnership.

CONVERGENCIA E
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 309-312
Convergence/ia/e 2024

BOOK REVIEW
Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan, Helen Bound and Rebekah Lim Wei Ying (Eds.) *Pedagogies for future-oriented adult learners: Flipping the Lens from teaching to learning* Springer Nature, Charn, Switzerland, 2022, 174 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-92869-8 (pbk)

Charlene Xerri
University of Malta

In view of the growing demand for a change in adult education at community, vocational and higher education level, and the need to put learners and learning at the centre of our pedagogical practices, away from the traditional transmission and acquisition approaches (Sfard, 1998), the book, Pedagogies for Future-Oriented Adult Learners, is truly a valuable contribution in the field of adult education. The editors of the book, Helen Bound, Jennifer Pei-Ling Tan and Rebekah Lim Wei Ying, all having a vast experience in Adult Education, argue for a re-orientation in the pedagogy of adult education to emphasize aspirations, circumstances, and needs of twenty-first century learners. This book, which is the 27th volume of the Lifelong Learning Book Series, is groundbreaking in the way it connects the already much debated theories of learning to the "realities of everyday messiness of working, living and learning". (p. 5). It challenges the traditional pedagogies of learning and teaching and advocates for innovative practices such as blended learning and incorporating learners' prior experiences to nurture future-oriented learners.

The book consists of three structured main parts, with a total of ten chapters, empirical and conceptual in their nature, written by different authors. The fundamental ideas which are presented in the first part progress to practical applications throughout the book. Part one entitled,

"Introducing the Focus on Learners", through the first two chapters, outlines the central ideas in this book. Helen Bound who is also one of the editors, introduces the main idea of the book, that is putting the learners and the learning at the centre, as the subtitle of the book suggests, Flipping the lens from teaching to learning. She presents the readers with several metaphors to provide insights into what is involved in theoretically flipping the lens, to enable the educators and others connected with learning, to move beyond the traditional grand theories of learning-behaviourism, cognition, and constructivism. Her first chapter serves as a preamble to the rest of the book.

The three editors co-author the second chapter of the book that describes very clearly the three major constructs that are pivotal to all the following chapters. The key constructs: future orientation, identity, and contexts and practices, are brought to life through stories taken from different real-life contexts, in view of the theoretical metaphors used in the previous chapter. Through a dialogical inquiry approach, which is comprehensively discussed by Helen Bound and Seng Chee Tan in the next part of the book, "David" a human resource manager reading for a part-time Masters degree, was "able to develop new epistemic practices shifting from human capital formulations to a holistic value of people in their contexts and valuing their biographies and life experiences" (Bound et al, 2022, p. 22).

The second part of the book, "Framing the Issues" provides various frameworks for rethinking learning. The authors present new conceptualisations of learning, to change learning for acquisition to emancipatory learning. It is interesting how Anne Edwards in Chapter 3 defines the social situation of learning using the Vygotskian cultural-historical approach to learning, which she deems as a future-oriented approach to meet the demands of the present workplaces. She asserts that flipping the lens to focus on the learner "requires careful analysis of the practices in which they might learn; how they respond to the demands in practices and how the learners might be helped with interpretations and responses" (p. 38), while seeing that the learner's agency is exercised alongside this process. In Chapter 4 Roger Säljö repositions learning, not as behaviour and cognition taking place in individual minds, but as emergent through activity in collaboration with

'symbolic technologies'. The story presented in the introductory part explains very well how the maths curricular experience of Alice, together with the technological expertise of Cassie, changed the initial rote learning experience into a much more significant one through symbolic technologies.

The current policy and educational institutions focusing mainly on employability tend to limit the working people's participation and democratic struggle over processes of learning. In view of this, in Chapter 5 Henning Salling Olesen proposes "an idea of competence building which is based on life experience" (p. 80) as an alternative to create a lifelong learning approach which is not just limited to employability and competitiveness but extends beyond. In the last chapter of the second part "Future of Work, Transitions and Future-Oriented Learning" Arthur Chia, inspired by Zygmunt Bauman, proposes future-oriented learning as a means to enhance workers ownership and control of their work, labour, and skills. He refers to the six principles of learning design (Bound & Chia, 2019) to highlight the role of the teacher as shifting between the expert and source of knowledge to a facilitator or critical questioner according to the needs of the learner, that is, flipping the lens from teaching to learning.

"Flipping the Lens in Practice", the last part of the book, shares specific approaches for enabling flipping the lens to bring focus in different contexts to learners and learning. In Chapter 7 Christine Owen uses her experience with the High-3 workplace culture structures together with a framework model of learning based on Kolb's experiential learning theory, to facilitate learning in the workplace, foreseeing that "the future organisations that are the most productive will be those who understand the value of learning from events that happen in the workplace" (p. 117). In Chapter 8 Rebekah Lim Wei Ying, the third editor of this book, through her considerations for the Singapore Work-Study Programme, presents: the learner's view; how the learner is being influenced by the social others in the process of being and becoming; and the learner's reflection of their own development, as the three main perspectives in the trajectory of the learner from "novice to expert" (p. 126).

The authors of this book tend to draw examples and case studies from research, at times their own research, while presenting and discussing their arguments, aiming to extract valuable insights. In the last chapter, Bi Xiaofang talks about how students experience different sense making features in two different blended learning courses and how this affects them; "learners tend to experience seamless sense-making when they are offered more opportunities to share ideas, gain different perspectives from others and are exposed to different authentic workplace settings" (p. 170). Through the excerpts retrieved from the case studies of the stories in this chapter and in the previous ones, the readers are provided with illustrations that vividly depict the ideas discussed by the authors in the book. Most of the times, these are embedded within the Singaporean context. Perhaps examples from studies from other countries could have provided a broader global perspective. Also, in view of the artificial intelligence era which we are currently going through, I feel that there could have been more examples on how new technologies can enhance future oriented learning.

Pedagogies for future-oriented learners discusses learning in an innovative way. It should provide a true inspiration for scholars, researchers, learners, and educators who believe in the necessity for a change in the pedagogies for a more future-oriented Adult Education. It is an Adult Education that will also "allude to the importance of society addressing issues of inclusiveness and equity, and for enabling individual's ability to thrive in uncertain and changing circumstances" (Bound, 2022, p.

References

Bound, H., & Chia, A. (2019). *The six principles of learning design: Designing learning for performance.* Singapore: Institute for Adult Learning.

Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4-13.

CONVERGENCE
An International Adult Education Journal

Volume 45, No. 2, pp. 313-316
Convergence/ia/e 2024

BOOK REVIEW
Steve Smith and Gianfranco Conti, *The Language Teacher Toolkit*, Second Edition Independently published, 2023, 570 pp. ASIN B0C8GDFXJ7 (Kindle edition)

Angele Ann Andrews
University of Malta

As the title 'The Language Teacher Toolkit' suggests, Gianfranco Conti and Steve Smith promise to equip educators with devices to help learners absorb languages "through exposure and communication" (p. 13). 'Extensive Processing Instruction (EPI)' (p. 353) has become a buzz word in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) departments. What is 'Contification' and how does this philosophy fit into the context of second language acquisition?

I approach this review with the agenda of investigating how much it benefits language programs within Adult Education. My review is informed by 43 years of language teaching, including Outstanding schools in the United Kingdom (UK). Within the last one, I witnessed the Conti method used successfully across school subjects, even within staff assemblies where the onus was on interaction. The authors' expertise is never brought into question. Whilst Conti's teaching experiences in the UK and Southeast Asia has inspired this methodology, Smith is a former Postgraduate Certificate in Education Lead subject Tutor and 'professional development provider'. Thus, the ultimate adult educator! Notable chapters range from 'Meeting the needs of all students' and Teaching Advanced Level Students, through to 'Subject Knowledge', 'Lesson planning for communication' as well as 'Planning a communicative curriculum'. Aptly, this second edition goes beyond how to simply deliver lessons to awareness about social aspects, like

'intercultural relations' on a physical level or through online channels. Students learn through individual, peer to peer, group as well as teacher-led engagements. Such vital integration is also expounded by adult education authors like Nemtchinova's (2023) and Johnson (2015).

'The Language Teacher Toolkit' is as philosophical as it is didactic: it allows for reflection. Whilst academics are treated to a sound critique of teaching theories, the practical educator will be thrilled by its diverse array of activities: engaging, pleasurable, and ludic. Smith and Conti analyse strengths and pitfalls of methodologies in order to validate their preferred 'lexicogrammatical' approach. Here, "multi-word chunks" (p. 340) help sensory immersion. Now Andragogy largely, but not exclusively, draws upon the curriculum for those attending evening classes, particularly for anyone wishing to add a General Certificate in Secondary Education or Advanced Level Certificate to their CV. Whilst tenses and grammar remain unchanged, educators may wish to adapt specialized vocabulary, e.g., Business French, to fit into patterns defined by Smith and Conti. Crucially, one notes, at the heart of their ideology, a paradigm shift from a 'generativist' reliance on "dictionary and rules" (with vocabulary embedded into a grammatical structure) to a "chunk and chain process" (p. 341). Antiquated Whitmarsh style grammar books are safely relegated to the cellar. In recent textbooks, communication has become the primary focus, with role plays and dialogues based on current events; yet Smith and Conti wish to delve deeper for learners to own a second language. Perhaps the driving force behind this effective bid is that they "recognised that language acquisition happens subconsciously or implicitly, just as when a child picks up their first language(s)" (p. 13).

Like its inherent techniques, this guide has a problem-solving approach. Whilst challenges to learning, such as "cognitive over-load" (p. 358) are indicated, the authors propose clearly presented attention-gripping lexical games which aid retention through 'sentence building'. Ironically, or perhaps purposefully, the latter, a highlight in its practicality, is not introduced until the reader has been embedded in cognitive insights. One then discovers how language fluency can be obtained via techniques specified as "modelling", "awareness-raising", "receptive-processing", "structured production", "expansion",

"autonomy", "routinisation", and "spontaneity", i.e., the "MARS/EARS pedagogical cycle" (pp. 355-357). Non-linguists can be assured that syntactical processes e.g., 'parsing', will be explained.

Whilst educators might be lured by intriguing nomenclature such as: 'The rock-Climbing Game', so might young adults enrolled in community courses like English as a Second Language. Pertinently, behaviour management has been left out of this second edition once games are designed to enthral the learner. However, retention is always welcome, as typically those attending classes for their own survival, e.g., for community integration purposes, have their own baggage; and might benefit from distraction; cohesion inherent in 'Whodunnit' types of activity might be beneficial. Exercises like 'Run to the board' (p. 153) could be avoided in classes where seniors, pregnant women or disabled are concerned; but otherwise, tasks seem adaptable. Given that other tasks seem designed for a snappy pace: 'Sentence-stealers' and 'Oral Ping-Pong', energy may be required on the leader's part, so sedentary lecturers might stick to more familiar tasks, albeit with a twist: 'narrow reading' and 'narrow translation'(p. 340).

In my opinion, this method may require practice to be delivered effectively but is worth the effort. Adult educators may find it time-consuming to adapt power-points in the prescribed fashion but once created, time and resources may be saved in the long run. In a migrant centre, for example, one visualizes a setting in which a functioning whiteboard together with mini whiteboards find themselves populating the classroom, but this works to the educator's advantage as the goal is on 'zero-preparation' (p. 10); minimal marking. Hopefully, directors of adult education programs dreaming of budgeting output can benefit from the educator's freed time to the learner's advantage.
Furthermore, such centres might benefit from bonus links to the authors' websites promoted on page 4. As Andragogy and Heutagogy often go hand in hand, computer literate learners might be likely to explore impressive-sounding Conti's language-gym.com and Smith's extensive frenchteacher.net. These digital aids might serve autodidactic learners too. However, some resources require paid subscriptions; so, there are limitations to this valuable extension. In any case, there's a wealth of

inspiring materials in this very readable compendium fashioned with tables and figures including 'Boxes of Tricks' (p. 205).

A third Edition might do well to provide contacts or in-depth funding tips as to how adult education programs could incorporate scholarships. Spending time in the target country (p. 55) would prove to be the ideal trick! When it comes to Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, Smith and Conti seem to have faith that adults have an advantage and "some learners - typically adult learners with good analytical skills… (would)… proceduralise declarative knowledge of language over time" (p. 350). Transformation can ensue.

Whilst not professing that this book has an advantage over others in particular (p. 12), Smith and Conti manage to hook in new teachers whilst levelling with seasoned practitioners. I feel that this handbook deserves a place in every MFL department, to be consulted, followed or simply used as a 'toolkit' to inspire more than good practice; to form responsible adults in the throes of forming others.

References

Johnson, S.M. (2015). *Adult Learning in the Language Classroom*. Bristol: Channel View Publications Ltd.

Nemtchinova, E. (2023). *Enhancing beginner-level foreign language education for adult learners: Language instruction, intercultural competence, technology, and assess*ment (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

CONVERGENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles are accepted in English, French and Spanish.

General Directions

CONVERGENCE. AN INTERNATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION JOURNAL is a biannual journal published in open access by the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, Faculty of Education, in collaboration with the International Council for Adult Education, aimed at an international readership.

Because of our international distribution, we attempt to select articles of interest to a broad audience of practitioners, field-workers, planners, trainers, teachers, researchers and administrators.

In addressing issues, practices and developments in adult education, CONVERGENCE provides a forum for a discussion and exchange of experiences and ideas. Articles are accepted in English, French and Spanish.

Points to Remember

- We prefer to receive a letter of enquiry describing the content of the proposed article, its treatment and why you believe it is suitable for CONVERGENCE. Our experience has been that those who read the journal regularly are more likely to have a good sense of an appropriate article. The enquiry letter also helps us to judge if a similar subject or the same region has appeared in a recent issue—we attempt to maintain a balance among subject matter and regions of the world.
- An article may be about a particular country, programme or activity, but the interpretation, description and analysis should be of interest and generally applicable to the work of colleagues in other countries. Papers written for another purpose (e.g., a local audience, a course of study, part of a thesis) are usually unsuitable.
- Put yourself in the position of a colleague in another part of the world and ask: Does this article include what I would wish to know about another country or programme? Is the context clear? Have unfamiliar abbreviations, references or concepts been used?
- Heavily statistical research reports are not accepted. Interpret data, results and conclusions in terms of practical application and lessons learned.
- Since CONVERGENCE is open access, no payment is made to authors of articles or book reviews. Reviewers may keep the book that they review.

Style and Presentation

CONVERGENCE follows The Chicago Manual of Style (latest editions) for formatting references and notes; consult the most recent issue if you do not have access to this manual.

Writing should be informal, without jargon or convoluted sentences.

Keep footnotes and references to a minimum. Tables and graphs are considered only when they depict essential information that cannot be described adequately in the text. US and UK spelling accepted for texts in English. Numbers ten and under are spelt out; 11 and over use numerals.

Review Process and Response from the Editor: Articles are sent out to international reviewers; please expect a delay of three to six months for a response.

Requirements Submission: Authors are asked to transmit their articles in ASCII format via e-mail attachment. Length: Feature articles should be no longer than 5000 words; information reports up to 800 words; book reviews, 600–1000 words. Abstract: Upon acceptance, an abstract of 150–200 words is requested for translation into other languages. It should summarise clearly the points of the article. Book reviews, conference reports, other reviews and obituaries do not require an abstract. Author's information: Include the title, position, place of work and a background explaining your affiliation with the subject or country you are writing about. Include your address, telephone number and e-mail address. For more information, contact: CONVERGENCE Editor, Professor Peter Mayo, Professor, UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida MSD2080, Malta. Tel. (prefix 356) 99845476, email: peter.mayo@um.edu.mt.

CONVERGENCE BOOK REVIEW GUIDELINES

General Directions

Book reviews are an important source of information for adult educators in that they provide a valuable synopsis and summary of important recent texts in the field. Book reviews must provide a concise summary of the contents of the book and must address whether or not the book is a valuable contribution to the field. As such, reviews should evaluate the usefulness of the book and mention who would find the book useful.

We strongly recommend the review is introduced by a brief introduction to the text, with reference to its stated objectives, layout and chapter structure, etc. It is also recommended that reviews discuss the extent to which the text:

a) Is comparable (or not) to other works in the genre, with examples of where this is particularly evident;

b) Testifies to efforts that positively exploit and disseminate the state-of-art; primary / secondary research findings etc.; give voice / opportunity to 'silenced' / 'marginalised' authors, etc.

c) Resonates with the work programme / agenda of our journal *Convergence: An International Journal of Adult Education*. More info on this is available in the editorial of the first issue of the relaunched version of the journal, also summarised below:

"articles... should help lift spirits in a disturbing time. Readers need little reminding that we face multipolar imperialisms bringing us potentially close to a Third World War. We are still reeling from a global pandemic and witnessing wider environmental degradation. Climate change is wreaking and will continue to wreak havoc especially in the Geographical Global South leading to constant mass migration flows. It is against this ominous global scenario that this journal is being resuscitated. The call for socially engaged adult educators strikes me as being ever so urgent" (Mayo, 2022, p. 3);

and

d) What would be the specific research interests of readers / adult education specialists / practitioners that the text can support? (e.g., 3-4 examples of specific research interests and/or specific nomenclatures / levels of scholars / specialists / practitioners that the text can support).

The timeline for completion of a review will be negotiated between the book review editor and the reviewer. While most book reviews are solicited by the editor, *CONVERGENCE* does accept unsolicited book reviews. The editor reserves the right to reject reviews.

Style

Reviews should be written in a manner that is accessible to a general readership rather than to an academic audience. Footnotes and references must be kept to a minimum. For writing in English, *CONVERGENCE* accepts UK and US spellings. Numbers ten and under are spelt out; 11 and overuse numerals. Include the title, author, place of publication, publisher and number of pages with your review.

Requirements

Length: Reviews should not be longer than 600–1000 words (about two to four pages).

Submission: Emailed submission is preferred (maria.brown@um.edu.mt), however, one copy may be mailed if email is not possible. The review should be typed doublespaced. MS Word format is preferred.

Author's Information: Include your institutional affiliation and its national location with the review. Also include your address, telephone number, and your email address.

For more information, contact: CONVERGENCE Book Reviews Editor, Dr. Maria Brown, Department of Arts, Open Communities & Adult Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida MSD2080, Malta, email: maria.brown@um.edu.mt