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(Pollan 2006, 99-100) - when you want to reference specific pages in the text

(Pollan 2006, 99-100; Weinstein 2009) - when a second text is being referenced and you don't want to reference specific pages within the second text.

### *Listing in End-of-Article Reference List:*

*Book:* Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

*Article:* Weinstein, Joshua I. 2009. "The Market in Plato's *Republic*." *Classical Philology* 104:439–58.

More information on Chicago Manual of Style can be found at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) We prefer author-date citations (the second tab on this page) to notes and bibliography.

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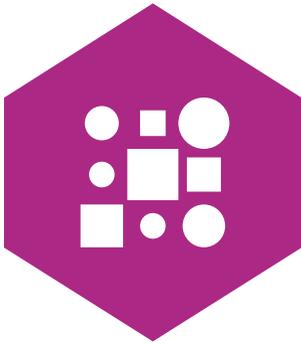
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## A Metaphorical Canoe Trip to Decolonization Dance Your Dance on the Journey to Place

LESLEY DAWN SCHATZ MICIAK

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# A Metaphorical Canoe Trip to Decolonization: Dance Your Dance on the Journey to Place

Lesley Dawn Schatz Miciak, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

*Abstract: This paper attempts to show by quotations, paraphrasing, paintings, poetry, and examples that positive change is coming. By re-educating our education systems, educators, and communities, we will renew Place in the world. On this journey we pack our canoes well, starting with these three bundles: knowledge of Place (relearning Aboriginal Language and Culture), knowledge of Space (Ethical Space where we engage and respect one another's knowledge and life force), and knowledge of Time (we don't have much time left to initiate the space in the ethical engagement).*

*Keywords: Ethical Space, Engagement, Time, Space between the Events of Ethical Space, Dreaming, Realization of Place, Voice, Metaphorical Canoe Trip, Colonization, Decolonization, Aboriginal Language and Culture, Land-based Learning*



## Introduction

**L**earning journeys are both “inward and expansive” (Ermine, 2010). This learning journey is also describing learning and knowledge in a circular motion on a metaphorical river that flows both ways. This journey explores the inward and expansive; the circular receipt of knowledge and the parallel but opposite gift of knowledge through the arts. The inwardness reflects our personal experiences in the waters of life (metaphorical river of knowledge) and the application of the knowledge is embedded in the canoe and its travellers. Together the inward and the outward embark on the circular journey of knowledge gained and given through the river

of knowledge that flows both ways taking us through a “shift in consciousness” in and out of the colonist world to a visionary world with a sense of hope for all who journey here. This narrative also takes the reader on the journey to decolonization through the land based learning methodologies while paddling in their metaphorical canoe. This journey enables a consciousness shift through the creative arts to a new world of vision possibilities.

## **Dance Your Dance**

*The Journey to Place: Through the Knowledge of Time and Space*



I illuminate my words with candle light in the darkness. One room cabin near Grey Owl's haunt.  
I find my voice in the night of Owl calls. Fish rise, leaves shake, the deer graze outside my door.

YOU WILL FIND YOUR VOICE

YOU HAVE FOUND YOUR VOICE

YOU ARE YOUR VOICE

Stiff paper bark, thank you Mother Birch for your body provides our words. People, Real People, The People, all had literacy long before contact. All entities had voice. Contact began the long dark struggle back to voice through nameless darkness, through gruesome torments and tortuous existence caught in the in-betweens of Life, Death, and Other. Other turned into dreaming and the realization of Place and the discovery of Space and through Time, you have found your Voice.

First the Loon told you, then the wind, then the Geese in Niska Pisim, then Kakakiw, told us all. The wind blew life into your lungs and sang a song from your throat and you sang your song with your voice.



It was your song. It was always sung, and just is.

*“Traveler, there are no roads. The road is created as we walk it [together]” (Macedo, as quoted in Battiste, xii, 2009)*

To travel from colonization to decolonization on the river of New/Old Thoughts, we must first load the canoes. Our canoes must go far and carry quite a load which we will actually use up while we travel. The loads will be absorbed by our minds and leave us again in the form of knowledge. This river will flow both ways and we will pass canoes coming and going. Eventually we will all meet.

This paper pertains to the journey that begins with the ethnocentric statement by Seventeenth century political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, describing Aboriginal Peoples’ lives as “Nasty, short, and brutish.” (Hobbes)

“Modern European political thought has its roots in the “state of Nature” theory propounded by ...Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes’ vision of the state of nature remains the prime assumption of modernity, a cognitive vantage point from which European colonists can carry out experiments in cognitive modeling and engineering that inform and justify modern Eurocentric scholarship and systematic colonization” (Henderson, p.11, 2009).

I will attempt to show by quotations, paraphrasing and by examples that positive change is coming. By re-educating our education systems, educators and communities, we will renew *Place* in the world. This will be no small task! On this journey I propose that if we pack our canoes well we will succeed. Let’s start with these three bundles, knowledge of Place (relearning Aboriginal Language and Culture), knowledge of Space (*Ethical Space* where we engage and

respect one another's knowledge and life force) and knowledge of Time (we don't have much time left to initiate the space in the ethical engagement). I see that we already have Hobbes' "*State of Nature* "theory packed.

Oh, thanks Sa'kéj for that one!" Let's check out the rest of the load and get started, I'm ready to go!

## Packing our Canoes

To continue on with our metaphorical journey we must find out how to balance our weight. So, in order to do that, I had to find out what everyone wanted to put in their packs. Any community going out on the land needs to first balance their canoes. Let's see what the people want to pack:

Louise is taking this poem:

Leaf Life Laughter Sun

Miymiykwesiysak astam

Loving laughing one!

Helen wants to take *love and forgiveness*. David is taking *his dog and an orange tree*. Shannon from the North is taking *mittens, a hat and tobacco*. Her sister is taking *skills and spirits*. As we load each pack, which oddly enough already had some suspicious looking items inside, we have to remember *Balance!* These are canoes and they can tip! So if we put something in the pack, we have to take something out.

I have chosen art books for my pack, some other books of skills, a drawing set, paints and paper. The art books are varied, each very inspirational. I feel like each of the artists is in canoe. I have a conversation with one of them as we paddle along. Right now, there's only the two of us, the canoe and the water.

We are very creative at the House of Invention. Artists go there by themselves or stumble across it, voluntarily go, or go and they don't remember when they wake up. As well, writers go there and musicians of all kinds go there and pick up their sheet music, which they play when they are awake. Gauguin was an artist. Somerset Maugham was a writer and Hemingway was a writer. Michelangelo and da Vinci. None of these people relied on any particular person to inspire them or to give credit to any particular person alive to say, well, this is what I've learned from this person. What they did was go directly to the House of invention themselves. They were able to use whatever they were able to pick up for the benefit of themselves and for those who view their new works, such as sculpture, or listen to their music, or look at their art. (Morrisseau,p.18, 2005)

I listen, who am I to talk when the great Norval Morrisseau speaks ? I think instead and the long pause between his words and what I will say feels right. I am respectful, thoughtful and internalizing his words. I want to be an artist. I want to feel good about myself. I want to inspire others to feel good about themselves. Maybe that's the Artist's and Musician's job. Where can I find this House of Invention ?

I believe that when I sleep, I get out of my body and I roam all the universe. I go to the inner places. I go to the source. I even dare to say I go to the source where all the inventors of mankind go...to the house of Invention(Morrisseau, p.94, 2005).

## MICIAK: METAPHORICAL CANOE TRIP TO DECOLONIZATION

I paddle thoughtfully and quietly, I think of Willie Ermine and *The Ethical Space of Engagement*. (Ermine, 2007) Is this space I'm creating with my silence Ethical enough? It feels right. Norval and I are both out of our systems, out of our artificialities, in my metaphorical canoe, going down the New/Old river to relieve our colonialist burdens. Already my pack feels lighter, even though I'm filling it with this great Ojibwa Artist's teaching.. I am entering Norval's Knowledge space and I am learning.

These paintings only remind you that you're an Indian. Inside somewhere, we're all Indians. So now when I befriend you, I'm trying to get the best Indian, Bring out that Indianness in you to make you think that everything is sacred (Morrisseau, p.66, 2005).

Wow! I like that one. This discussion in my mind with my new friend from my book (Morrisseau, 2005) makes me feel so much better about colonialist baggage. Let's throw that overboard, and that, and that. There....hope I didn't pollute! Oh darn! That colonialist baggage is really nasty! I'm glad that I didn't have to carry that around any longer! The water is stinking!

What I teach the people is that attitude and attention will determine the whole course of our lives. Get rid of fear and that is all you ever have to get rid of. Fear of anything at all. There is nothing to fear but fear itself (Morrisseau, p.60, 2005).

Oh no! I just dumped all that old Colonialist baggage into the water! Are you saying that I shouldn't fear the fact that I am colonized or are you saying that even without decolonizing that I can carry on as long as I am Brave? I do feel lighter....

New music is very healing for healing things for people. So we allow ourselves to become instruments or channels for the Inner Master or spirit, so that we may inspire others (Morrisseau, p.14, 2005).

I agree! Sometimes the best teaching is done from example. You are a shaman. You are a painter. You have inspired many younger artists to, *I'm trying to get the best Indian, Bring out that Indianness in you to make you think that everything is sacred* (p. 66). *Ehe!Yes, that's what you have inspired them to do!*

A lot of people tell me that I must be the happiest person there is. I believe that. That's how I managed to live all this life (Morrisseau, p.126, 2005).

My pack is almost empty and yet its refilling at the same rate. It must be all this wisdom from the words and inspirational paintings. The waters are widening as the river reaches a great plain. I'll have to unload some more of my old colonist baggage, although its hard to tell what's what as its all getting mixed with my new knowledge. Maybe I could take out the real stinkers and leave the stuff that's not too tainted and see if it sweetens up when I listen to this last incredible insight from Norval before he rests for a while and another paddler takes over.

The reason we exist is to love (Morrisseau, p.20, 2005).

### ***Saskatchewan***

Mamaskats! Tabwe! We've reached Saskatchewan. That's why the river widened out. We're in Treaty Six Country!

Let's see if someone from my *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* will come out and paddle...

The Elders emphasize the sacredness of the Earth, and in particular the sacredness of the Peoples' Island- North America- that was given to their peoples to live on. The Elders say

that the Creator gave the first Nations Peoples the lands in North America. The Elders maintain that the land belongs to their peoples as their peoples belong to the land. (Cardinal, 2008)

What's this? I see two tipis and it looks like a camp right on the river! Let's stop for a bite to eat and ponder that last statement by Cardinal and Hildebrandt. Then we'll make the miles, because I now have all the *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan* and the Authors in my little canoe... Hey move over! What was it you said about *Ethical Space! Tatawaw, Tawaw*. There's room.

We carefully steer our heavily loaded canoes towards the shore. We are greeted by the community of *Sturgeon Lake First Nation* who are having a wonderful meal of ribs, berries and bannock at their annual summer youth camp. What an inspiration for us all as we join them for this meal. We're careful not to unload any of our baggage in this sacred place as the words spoken in the canoe come back to us, *that the land belongs to their peoples as their peoples belong to the land.* (Cardinal, 2008) The families are all participating in this day camp filled with Elders, Children, and Parents. A lot of knowledge is being shared and lessons learned out on the *Land*, every day. We then get invited to their *Cultural Centre* which they tell us that was built with their own money, not Government funding, through fund raising activities. Again, we learn so much, but dare not unload anything from our packs in this inspired PLACE.

### ***Knowledge of Place is Where You Can Go Yielding Up Your Secrets.***

We are shown the Medicine Room, where the Healing Secrets are. Feeling honored and incredibly enlightened, our loads feel lighter as well. Finally its time to leave. We all say kinanastomiten and head off on our journey. When we reach the canoes, we find the packs are empty of a lot of that suspicious stuff that was on the bottom when we first started our trip. Where did it go?...funny how that happens...you just kind've lose stuff along the way, especially when you refill your mind with wonderfully inspiring new thoughts! This new load from Sturgeon Lake is light, airy, and enLIGHTening.

We journey on after settling back in to our canoes on our Journey to decolonization, on the New/old River of *Knowledge*. We rest a moment at a still part and my paddle lays across the canoe walls. The silence is powerful when I notice a new sentient being helping out with the trip. Cheryl Swidrovich has found her *Voice*:

The phonetic syllabic characters were first introduced to the Cree at Norway House by Methodist minister Reverend James Evans. Apparently the invention was quickly carried to distant camps and created a considerable sense of excitement among the Indians to whom it was introduced...The fascination with syllabics appears to have had particular relevance to the spiritual customs and beliefs of the Northern Cree. (Swidrovich, 2001)

Now that is interesting! Can Cheryl be saying that there are some good things in my pack from Colonialist times? Were syllabics instrumental in collaborative communication between Aboriginal nations over long distances and times? Wow who'd of thought! I'd better be careful and only throw out what I can't use. I was feeling heavy *Colonialist Guilt* for all my *Colonialist* ways but, Hey! Isn't guilt a Colonialist thing brought in by the Christians? I'm learning a lot on this trip! If I could just get this word out of my head...its like a song that you don't know the lyrics to that keeps going round and round...*Transsystemic, Transsystemic Transsystemic...*

Hey, Marie! Weliegsitpu'g! Good to see you...well, hear you! What's that you're saying?

By harmonizing Indigenous Knowledge with Eurocentric Knowledge, they are attempting to heal their people, restore their inherent dignity, and apply fundamental

human rights to their communities. They are ready to imagine and unfold post colonial orders and societies...Together we sought to find ways of healing and rebuilding our nations, peoples, communities, and selves by restoring Indigenous ecologies, consciousnesses, and languages and by creating bridges between Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge. We discovered that we could not be the cure if we were the disease. (Battiste, p.xvi, 2009)

Hei! Hei! Tabew! That's why we are all on this journey. Right on Marie! Boy, that *Sturgeon Lake First Nations* really hit the nail on the head with all the things they are doing to syncretize their *Traditional* ways and *Knowledge* with the new ways that they decided not to throw out. Decisions are hard to make, especially for an entire *Community, Nation, or People*. Marie Battiste makes many good points in her statement and she's a pretty good paddler, look how far we've come since she joined up! I think I'm going to pull out some more of her wisdom ...

The sharing of these common ideals creates a collective cognitive for tribal societies that is understood as tribal epistemology (Battiste, p.199, 2009)

Okay, if we carry that idea further , that means that we all share *Epistemic Duty* towards humanity and life. Right?

However, in this chapter I have argued that most of the evil produced by humans is not the result of malicious intentions, but the unwillingness to do one's moral and epistemic duties. (Rowlands, 2008)

We can't be the cure if we are the disease! (Battiste, p. xviii, 2009).

I'm just going to put you back in my pack Mark, I like your book, *The Philosopher and the Wolf* but since reading Hobbes, I'm afraid I'm a little down on Philosophy! What! I should learn to take the good from all the knowledge I find in my pack? How do I tell if it's good? There's so much Nasty News on the Radios and Televisions, so many people rushing around on the highways hollering and fighting with their car horns and rude gestures. So many of our children despondent and spiralling down the trail of violence, greed, artificial reality in their video worlds... how do we know what's good? How do we find our wholeness?

Wholeness is like a flower with four petals. When it opens, one discovers strength, sharing, honesty and kindness. Together these four petals create balance, honesty and beauty. Wholeness works in the same interconnected way. The value strength speaks to the idea of sustaining balance. (Little Bear, p.79, 2009)

**Balance!** That's the key! I'll just check on my pack and see what else is in there....

Look Out! We're tipping! SPLASH!

Oh no, Sorry Leroy, I've gotten you all wet, even my typewriter is acting funny...there , that's better. Are we all okay? Sometimes these rough waters can actually be a good thing! ...builds up our **Resilience**. Did we lose anything? Let's hope so.

Land-Based Learning can help all the petals unfold in a whole and epistemic way by helping us remain grounded with the Land teaching us constant little lessons while we learn our Educational Curriculum written for and by Aboriginals and their Allies.

Mothers from every culture sing to their infants and have done so throughout time as far as we know. Singing can soothe and comfort infants in ways that other actions cannot, and this is in part because of how different auditory stimulation is from other senses. Sound can be transmitted in the dark, even when the babies' eyes are closed. Auditory signals feel as though they come from inside our heads, unlike visual signals, which

appear to be 'out there' in the world. Before the infant's visual apparatus is fully formed-before it can make out the difference between its mother and other adults-the auditory system is capable of recognizing the consistent timbre of its mother's voice. Why is it that mothers instinctively sing rather than speak?...music not speech activates areas of the human brain that are very ancient, structures we have in common with all mammals... (Levitin, 2008)

That is so soothing to know! I'm so wet and cold though from that last dip in the New/old River of Knowledge that I could really use a warm up by a fire, and a good night's rest! Let's pull up over there by that sand bar, Delvin, did you bring your drum? I could use a good song to balance me out! I'll light the fire....darn, my matches are wet!

So we leave our travellers to have a good night's rest and find out what kind of sleep they've had when we join them again in the morning. Delvin has already taught every one hoop dancing and that sure warmed them up! The fire was a little hard to light with the wet matches but someone had an old fashioned colonialist lighter so they started a syncretic flame and that's when the drumming and singing really got going. The entire area joined in the celebrations of "We Made It This Far"! and afterwards every one slept like logs!

"It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story..." (Berry, 1997)

Dream time. Such a conduit to the 'other', to the spiritual planes, to the House of Invention. Where is our world going when most of the population has no time to dream?

It is true that Descartes bashing is quite fashionable these days. He is blamed for just about all the modern ills. In his defence, we need to see that, although undoubtedly a genius, he, too, was a symptom of his time. The idea of the clockwork Mechanical Universe was not his invention alone: It was part of the mechanical worldview then newly rising in 17<sup>th</sup>- century Europe. Descartes' decisive contribution, however, was his working out an ontology, and an epistemology to accompany it, that gave a philosophical justification for this world view. (Mckenzie, 2009)

Wow! How to denigrate all the sentient entities other than the Human Mind! This leads to Animals having no soul, matter only taking up space and having no value....where is the sacredness of it all? Where's the Balance? What cafe in France did he *minekwe* too much *pikotaywapoy*? Where is the balance?

### ***Dream time, Stories, and Messy Packs:***

When we dream, we base our dreams on our epistemology. When we tell our stories we develop tales relating to our epistemic duty, moral implications that help us understand our boundaries and imaginings as a culture. Our language allows us to further our dream experience and deepen our meanings in our stories. We are no longer a flat plane, but an entity, a whole, a sentient commodity capable of limiting our excesses and broadening our horizons. On this canoe trip we've developed really messy packs! With any journey, one quickly grabs what one needs and throws back the unwanted or unneeded item in a hasty, sometimes careless manner. The arrangement becomes entangled, messy and inefficient. We eventually get so that we can't find what we need when we need it, and when we do, it's usually so damaged or wrinkled that we can't use it! The pack actually begins to smell and that's when we finally get the message and decide to do something about it.

### *The Story of the “Land-based learning product”*

Land-Based Education is actually a product that I found at a little store in Saskatchewan. I threw it in my pack and waited. After a few days the product was internalized and everything in my pack started to smell sweet and organized. I'd heard of this product before, years ago, as I had borrowed some and used it on my own pack and my children's packs when we were on a home school journey. It has amazing power to synergize the old with the new, the soiled with the fresh, the good with the bad. The really yucky stuff, it seems, just dissolves and then it's gone. This process actually creates more energy for the product to do a really exceptional job on whatever is left. I mean, there's problems with every product and sometimes what comes out isn't quite what you'd expect, but the product's main premises are Love, Balance, Consequence, Respect, Epistemic Duty, Play, and watching out for Elitism. You just can't beat that! I'd gladly become a distributor if any are needed.

### *Love, Balance, Consequence, Respect, Epistemic Duty, Play: Land-Based Wisdoms*

The land teaches all of these Wisdoms without a classroom through the journeys the student finds themselves in when they engage with learning directly. This is my prime area of interest and implementation. Can the Land-Based Learning Philosophy employ these Wisdoms through a distance learning platform? Each Aboriginal community could initiate their own Land-Based Learning situation based on successful models that are currently working. The Ethnosphere of Land-Based Learning though an ancient idea is a new reality. Even if the models you choose to investigate are seasonal camps - such as *Sturgeon Lake First Nations*, or *Immersion Programs operating within the boundaries of school curriculum such as the one at Onion Lake First Nations Cree Immersion Program* - imagine your dream through and with theirs and develop your own to suit Your Land, Your Language, Your Needs, Your Dream. As my Dad always said, “Even the little prairie chickens dance!” Dance your dance in your own way, but Dance!

Having designed a language learning tool in Power Point form was a proud moment in my life as I am not computer literate. Once I completed it, I realized what a unique addition to a Land-Based Educational Experience it would be. It can be used as a template or model in which your community could program your own vocabulary and Language sound clips. Combine this technology with a solar panel and you have once silenced voices harmonizing with computer technology! A perfect fit for a rainy day out on the land tent activity. (As long as your battery is charged!)

The voices of these victims of the Empire, once predominantly silenced in the social sciences, have not only been resisting colonialization in thought and actions but also attempting to restore Indigenous knowledge and heritage. By harmonizing Indigenous knowledge with Eurocentric knowledge, they are attempting to heal their people, restore their inherent dignity, and apply fundamental human rights to their communities. (Battiste, p.xvi, 2009)

Wade Davis, in his book, *The Way Finders*, coins a term to describe the oneness or whole of the Language, Cultural and Spiritual diversity on our Earth. He calls this social web “the Ethnosphere” and believes that it is humanity's greatest legacy (Davis, p.2, 2009). I feel that we, as Educators, can use that tidbit of incredible insight to spur on the work that needs to be done to save endangered *Languages, Cultures and Teachings* before they are extinct. The “Ethnosphere” (Davis) of Education coupled with the development of syncretic teaching techniques could become the classroom of tomorrow if we dream the way today. Systemic cultural interface could be the bridge to the future of education based on the land and the ethical, ecological secrets of her teachings. This social web is also called the epistemology. When I first heard the word, I associated it with the Cree ability to build on a verb-based foundation by adding prefixes,

suffixes and infixes. We have epistemic, systemic, transsystemic, and epistemology. When I was looking up the word epistemology [*to understand, know*] in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, I accidentally landed on page 385, 6<sup>th</sup> word, 2<sup>nd</sup> column. The word I found is closely related and reads as this: epi-zo-ot-i-ol-ogy : the *sum of the factors controlling the occurrence of* a disease or pathogen of animals. Highlighting a portion of this definition of the word-relative of Epistemology SHOULD bring a recurring theme to our attention: *The sum of all the factors controlling the occurrence of a disease is important. ( I realize that this word also contains zoo /animal: I am honoured to consider myself included in the animal race of sentient beings)* The community must become whole before the Land-Based Education idea can work. We can't become the cure if we are the disease. Land-Based Learning can facilitate a healthy Community by implementing the wisdoms aforementioned in a style of education where everyone is needed to contribute to the success of the whole. As Leroy Little Bear points out in his flower quote from *Jagged World Colliding*. (Little Bear, 2009). I also point out the term *Elitism* to bring attention to the common by-product of success.

In applying the term *Consequence* to education, the best teacher of this term is *Life*. For example, if you don't get in the wood and it rains, you will not only have a difficult time lighting your fire, you will most likely be cold, wet and hungry. The if/then scenario can be enlightening and easier than a command technique. Another example of consequence in a land-based education situation is inappropriate action at an inappropriate time. For example, if you have a ceremony in which the Elders are praying or some other similar traditional protocol situation involving sincerity and truth, loud outbursts or physical antics to entertain one's friends, won't be appreciated. There will be consequences. Teachers of Land-Based education also have to deal with *Consequence*, As Mary Twelve Ponies states in her quintessential book of the same name, "*There are no Problem Horses, only Problem Riders*" (Twelveponies, p.79, 1982). As educators we sometimes ride into the fray on our high horses, only to get bucked off in unfamiliar territory, unprepared with our lack of tools for the situation we find ourselves in. If you prepare ahead for land-based education with not only 'book-Learned' knowledge, but the incorporation of community in the form of parent, elders, and volunteers, the consequential situation you create for yourself will be positive. You will no longer be the problem rider!

Therefore the term consequence is magnified and changed when placed adjacent to different consequential potentials. Each situation we find ourselves in has potential for consequence. By ignoring acts, either positive or negative we nonentify the actor. Land-based learning is one of the best teachers of consequential actions by dealing with each situation immediately and personally. *No wood, No fire.*

## Respect

Never make a grab for a horse when you get up to him. When you get up to his shoulder, quietly start scratching him on his shoulder and work up to his withers. If he is the kind that will step away when you make this kind of move, slip your left hand across his breast and up his neck on the off side. The secret of holding a horse this way is to offer brief resistance each time he goes against your arm. If you try to hold him with a steady force he will want to break loose and probably will. (Twelveponies, p. 179, 1982)

Connect this quote to nine months of the year, twelve years of school situation in your mind. How many students feel trapped, locked into something they'd rather not participate in? Many students do feel caged and this inturn causes anxieties and torments that those of you who didn't feel trapped won't understand. We do not all think and feel the same. Temple Grandin uses her autistic condition applied to animal behavior to add fresh reflective observations to the fact that we all have different learning experiances in the following statement:

To sum up: fixed action patterns are built in, brain based behaviors that are always the same in every individual in a species. Emotions are built in, brain based motivators that

vary in intensity and probably in frequency of expression from individual to individual....More than one different circuit in the brain is always involved. That gets us to what is not biologically fixed in the brain. Emotions are built into the brain, but everything....[done] to act on ...emotions, except for the fixed action pattern is learned. (Grandin, p.137, 2005)

## **Elitism**

We have all been impacted differently in our lives. As Willie Ermine taught us in our Ethical Space Lecture, and I paraphrase from my notes;

Ethics is about our notions of good, virtue, obligation, right and duty. It is about our heart and humanity....we can't talk to a construct: an imagined system that others have built. When we talk about Ethics, we must talk Human to Human. We have to come out of our systems. Conceptuality takes effect when you encounter yourself precisely. Then clarity with the Language and the Land exists. Ethical space allows us to understand our identities and engage with others to create and identify values and morals, cultural imperatives, and collective knowledge. (Ermine, 2010; from my lecture notes, author)

The classroom setting, daily routine, sets the stage for artificial elitism because it is a construct based on someone else's imagination, as Willie Ermine points out in the preceding paragraph. The routine, depending on each individual, could either be positive or negative but importantly, its the easiest way to monitor success. In order to curriculate the system efficiently, lessons need to be planned for the greater good, the 'norm', students who routinely fit more or less into the construct of imposed imagination. Some educators are gifted at turning this construct into a memorable educational experience, involving even the most marginalized and disenfranchised. Both my Mother and my eldest Sister are two fine examples of educators who have engaged Ethical Space to become the imaginative teachers they were in their careers. The joy of learning and teaching within the school system was evident. Both routinely taught in schools with nonelitist student populations; students bombarded culturally and physically by their environments.

Margaret Kovach has an exceptionally enlightening book for educators and students alike. This quote from Indigenous Methodologies pertaining to Aboriginal approach to research and education is dead on:

While Indigenous methodology provokes substantive political and ideological shifts within Western research contexts, I believe that an antidote for a certain level of inertia can be found in knowledge translation. Without exposure to Indigenous inquiry, nonIndigenous academics may not know how to recognize an Indigenous methodological approach that flows from tribal epistemologies. (Kovach, 2009)

Colonist traditions imbedded in scholastic attitudes will *also* have to use the syncretic approach by translating Aboriginal Knowledge and Educational Methodologies to further understanding and wholeness in the systems currently operating in our communities, countries and ultimately, the world.

Wahkohtowin, wicihitowin, witaskewin, witanihitowin, yospatisiwin. (Cardinal, 2008)

These powerful words evoke gentle response. Current Educators need to internalize these terms. Current students need to internalize these terms. (Translations; *good relationship of the First Nations with each other and the creator: The act of helping one another, here it refers to*

*the mutual assistance and respect between land and people: living harmoniously and peacefully with one another: familial relationships, gentleness.* (Cardinal, 2008)

Land-based learning has a built in respect code closely linked with consequential value that our current systems can't emulate unless they are Land-Based. When you're in a canoe, a certain amount of respect for your craft is important or you will tip. When you are lighting a fire, you need to respect the type of wood, the placement of your fire and even the type of rocks you put around your fire or you or others will get hurt. Consequence goes hand in hand with respect but also the usually auspicious word, *Elitism* rears it's omnipotent head. Once we get beyond the point of confidence in our routines and skills most of us tend to develop an elitist frame of mind. This frame of mind actually gets in the way of learning. Land-Based learning can help to dislodge elitism, by bringing into play a level playing field of cooperative importance: *the group, the community, the whole*. Individually you may feel strong, but when you load a voyageur canoe and set out for a month with a group of individually strong people you become greater than one, stronger than one, you become the Whole.

Routine classroom settings can actually encourage a form of *elitism* that can be detrimental to students spirit. By allowing artificial hierarchies and alliances, we can render a learning situation-involving common efforts and goals-ineffectual. Once again the canoe becomes my example. If you want to cross the lake you must all paddle the same direction. Some will have to paddle *lighter*, some will have to pull *harder* to maintain course but all are involved, no matter what their strengths are, in the same goal. In saying that, we bring the word *respect* into play. If the rear steering paddler is not able to steer, the other paddlers will have to compensate by doing their best to keep on track because it's too late to change positions in the canoe without endangering the crew. Of course, the group itself might feel elitist to other groups as Doris Lessing states in her *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*:

There is no group or party setting itself up against this state of affairs that does not see itself as an elite, whether it be dictator...or the political parties of the democracies, which by definition know what's best for everyone else...There is a certain social process that is known and very visible but perhaps not acknowledged as much as it should be. It is that one where a new idea (or perhaps an old one in a new form) is accepted by a minority, while the majority are shouting Treason, rubbish, Kook, communist, capitalist, or whatever is the valued term of abuse in that society. The minority develop this idea, at first probably in secrecy, or semi-secrecy, and then more and more visibly, with more and more support until...guess what? This seditious, impossible, wrong-headed idea becomes what is known as "received opinion" and is loved and valued by the majority. Meanwhile a new idea, still seditious etc. and so forth has been born somewhere else and is being cultivated and worked out by a minority. Suppose we redefine the word elite, for our general purpose to mean any group of people who are in the possession of ideas that put them ahead of the majority. (Lessing, p.67, 1991)

## **The Road to the Cure: Knowledge**

Knowledge is immunisation. If we strengthen ourselves with knowledge we become immune to disease. Our pens and words will inspire, instruct, and instigate a change in our Educators, Halls of Education and students, resulting in a better world not only for Aboriginal people but the entire world. Colonization is a disease that we may never eradicate but we can try! I think that together we can find a cure. "Even the little Prairie Chickens Dance."

*Let's get back in the canoes!*

We leave our travellers on the New/Old River of Knowledge. They are travelling from colonization to decolonization with loaded canoes. The journey is very difficult, filled with rocky rapids, shallows that can tear the bottom out of your canoe, snags submerged after floods and difficulties too numerous to mention. Their canoes must go far and their loads will actually evolve during the journey. Some of the load will be absorbed by their minds and leave again in the form of knowledge to unite with the Tribal Epistemology.

This sacred river flows both ways and canoes pass each other coming and going. Eventually we all will meet.



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**Lesley Dawn Schatz Miciak:** I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from ACAD. In 2010, I applied for and was accepted into the Thesis Route Integrated Master's of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I am a watercolour painter, a graphite artist, and have been a singer/songwriter travelling the world for most of my adult life. I have taken my children to Europe twice on musical tours, represented Alberta musically in Beijing and represented an Alberta Charity for the delivery of Hospital supplies to Children of the Chernobyl disaster who suffered from Leukemia in Russia (three times) as well as produced a musical video, "Take a stand for the Children." One of my other songs is on a United Nations project for Children. The song is called Mother Love. Discovering diversity is an incredible learning experience that can't be duplicated.

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