

Stan Wilson  
Barbara Schellhammer

# INDIGEGOGY

An Invitation to Learning  
in a Relational Way



Stan Wilson, Barbara Schellhammer

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## About the Painting “Asini Shaman” (Rock Shaman)

This piece depicts the Rock Shaman surrounded by the universe. The stars, fire and rocks are elements of creation. The stars make up our creation story and represent spirits who have chosen to come to Mother Earth. The fire is a reflection of the rock shaman, this was not intentional but was revealed upon completion of the piece. Mother Earth rests on the back of the turtle. The Shaman is made of grand father rocks and sits in the universe praying, protecting, and ensuring that life will continue, keeping (Ininev) spirituality strong.

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# Indigegogy

An Invitation to Learning in a Relational Way

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## Setting the Stage – für deutsche Leser\*innen und darüber hinaus

Wir erleben momentan eine Zeit massiver Umwälzungen und disruptiver Entwicklungen, die vieles, was wir für sicher und selbstverständlich hielten, in Frage stellen. Traditionelle Ordnungen in Politik, Wirtschaft und Recht geraten ins Wanken und gewohnte Mechanismen der Normalisierung, die der Bewältigung und Beruhigung dienen, stoßen an ihre Grenzen. Dabei lassen sich gegenläufige Tendenzen beobachten, die sich wie viele Phänomene in der Corona-Krise auf eine besonders zugespitzte Weise zeigen: Nationalistische Egoismen stehen der Notwendigkeit einer gemeinsamen Bekämpfung globaler Herausforderungen gegenüber. Auch die Philosophie scheint sich trotz der wichtigen Pionierleistung von Ram Adhar Mall, Franz Martin Wimmer, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt und anderen Gründern der interkulturellen Philosophie mit einem offenen, „globalen Denken“ schwer zu tun – zumal die interkulturelle Philosophie die Mainstream-Philosophie häufig nur als exotische Randbemerkung garniert, was in besonderer Weise für indigenes Denken gilt. Prozesse der Selbstvergewisserung und identitätspolitische Forderungen sind einerseits enorm wichtig, andererseits stehen sie in der Gefahr, einem „Narzissmus der kleinen Differenzen“ (Jullien 2019, 71) zu fröhnen, sich exklusivistisch einzukapseln und gegen andere in Stellung zu bringen.

Wir möchten mit unserem Buch ein anderes Zeichen setzen. Eingeladen dazu hat der bekannte Cree-Wissenschaftler Stan Wilson in einer Zeit, in der Kanada mit den Funden sterblicher Überreste von indigenen Kindern an ehemaligen Umerziehungsschulen noch einmal eingeholt wird von seiner kolonialen Vergangenheit, der sogenannten „Residential School Legacy“. Dabei zeigt sich mit erschütternder Deutlichkeit, was Paulo Freire (2007) einst als „Pädagogik der Unterdrückten“ bezeichnete. Sie diente als Hauptwerkzeug des kulturellen Genozids an den Ureinwohnern Kanadas. Das Besondere am wichtigen Zeichen von Stan ist, dass er nicht steckenbleibt in Anschuldigungen und – durchaus verständlichen – reaktiven Aggressionen, sondern mit mir, einer weißen deutschen Frau, gemeinsam einen gangbaren Weg in die Zukunft suchen möchte.



Stan war Professor und Mitbegründer der *First Nations Graduate Education* an der Universität Alberta. In den letzten Jahren hat er damit begonnen, seine Erfahrungen und Gedanken über eine kultursensible Pädagogik aufzuschreiben, die es insbesondere indigenen Studierenden möglich macht, als Pädagog\*innen und Wissenschaftler\*innen Fuß zu fassen und darüber hinaus Multiplikator\*innen zu werden, die indigenen Kindern eine Basis bieten, selbstbewusst am Geflecht ihres kulturellen Gewebes mitzuflechten, um so proaktiv und zukunftsorientiert die Risse und Löcher des kolonialistischen Traumas zu bearbeiten. Ich erlebte es als ein großes Geschenk, getragen von unfassbarem Vertrauen, dass Stan seinen Text mit mir teilte und mich einlud, ihn zu kommentieren. Das ist das Zeichen, das ich meine und auf das es uns ankommt: den Mut aufzubringen, einen gemeinsamen Zwischenraum zu betreten, um in aller Verletzlichkeit in einen „echten Dialog“ (Buber 1969, 19) einzutreten, der kritisch an den Grundfesten der eigenen Identität rüttelt, aufschreckt, verändert, vielleicht aber auch heilt.

Diese tiefe relationale Bezogenheit – nicht nur mit den Menschen, sondern mit der gesamten Mitwelt, mit Pflanzen, Tieren und sogar Steinen oder Gletschern (Cruikshank 2005) – ist eines der für mich wertvollsten Grundprinzipien, die ich aus der Philosophie indigener Menschen lernen durfte. Dabei verhält es sich jedoch wie mit allen Prinzipien normativen Charakters: Es ist *eine* Sache, sie theoretisch zu formulieren oder gar moralisch vor sich herzutragen, und eine andere, sie zu leben. Stan lebt mit seiner Einladung das, was er schreibt – eine Einladung, die nicht nur mir galt, sondern Ihnen allen gilt, die dieses Buch lesen. Indigene Wissenschaftler\*innen haben für diesen relationalen Zugang zu Wissenschaft und Forschung unterschiedliche Begriffe oder Metaphern gefunden, wie zum Beispiel das „Zusammenflechten“ unterschiedlicher Traditionen (Kimmerer 2013), das „two-eyed seeing“ (Martin 2012) oder die offene Begegnung in einem „ethical space of engagement“ (Ermine 2007). Dabei zeigt sich, dass sich die Zugangsart von der Sachfrage nicht trennen lässt und wie wichtig die Methode sowohl für erkenntnistheoretische als auch forschungsethische Fragen ist. Und doch haben es insbesondere indigene Forschungsmethoden nach wie vor schwer in der von westlichen Paradigmen geprägten Wissenschaft. Das beginnt bei der Anerkennung von wissenschaftlichen Herangehensweisen und Erkenntnissen bzw. deren Darstellung und endet bei der Forschungsförderung, womit sich die Katze in den Schwanz beißt.

Wir sind glücklich und dankbar, auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen Förderungen erhalten zu haben, denn wir sind überzeugt von dem, was wir mit unserem Buch zeigen wollen: Dass wir nämlich den eingangs geschilderten Herausforderungen nur im Modus eines „two-eyed seeing“ begegnen können, mit dem Wagnis eines dialogischen Zwischens, den Erkundigungen einer „Grenzlandschaft, die zugleich verbindet und trennt“, die „weder auf Eigenes zurückgeführt noch in ein Ganzes integriert, noch universalen Gesetzen unterworfen werden kann“ (Waldenfels 2016, 110). Ein paar Beispiele für die Bedeutung dieses Zugangs:

Zwei der großen Themen, die derzeit wissenschaftlich den Ton angeben, sind die Herausforderungen durch den Klimawandel sowie die rasanten Entwicklungen im Bereich der Künstlichen Intelligenz (KI). Die bekannte Inuit-Aktivistin Sheila Watt-Cloutier hat recht, wenn sie betont: „Wenn wir weiter zulassen, dass die Arktis schmilzt, verliert die Menschheit mehr als ihre Lebensgrundlage. Sie verliert die Weisheit, die nötig wäre, um sie zu erhalten.“ (Right Livelihood 2015) Mit dem Verlust des indigenen Wissens um das nachhaltige Leben mit der Natur potenziert sich die Dynamik des Klimawandels. Ganz ähnlich sieht das Papst Franziskus (2015, 74), der in seiner Umweltenzyklika *Laudato si* schreibt, es sei unabdingbar, auf die verschiedenen kulturellen Reichtümer der Völker, auf Kunst und Poesie, auf das innerliche Leben und die Spiritualität zurückzugreifen: „Wenn wir wirklich eine Ökologie aufbauen wollen, die uns gestattet, all das zu sanieren, was wir zerstört haben, dann darf kein Wissenschaftszweig und keine Form der Weisheit beiseitegelassen werden.“ Ganz ähnlich steht es mit der Entwicklung der KI. Damit diese wirklich allen Menschen gleichermaßen zugutekommt und nicht bestehende Ungleichheiten, Vorurteile und Machtstrukturen perpetuiert, ist es von äußerster Wichtigkeit, kulturdivers und multisprachlich vorzugehen, was momentan leider nur selten der Fall ist. So stellte neulich die UNESCO (2021) fest, „diversity is seriously, seriously lacking in the world of AI“. Eine Forschungsgruppe um Jason Lewis, Professor an der *Concordia University* in Montréal, hat dementsprechend das richtungsweisende Positionspapier *Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence* (2020) entwickelt. Viele der Prinzipien, die Stan in seinen Ausführungen erläutert, unterstreichen, ergänzen und liefern weitere, wichtige Hinweise für die Entwicklung einer kultursensiblen KI.

Auch in der Pädagogik ist – das hat sich nicht nur in Kanada gezeigt, sondern auch angesichts gescheiterter Integrationsbemühungen in Deutschland – das „two-eyed seeing“ eminent wichtig. In einer globalisierten Welt, die zunehmend

internetbasierte Lehr-Lern-Plattformen einsetzt, wird es immer fragwürdiger, nur ein monokulturell verankertes Bildungsverständnis zugrunde zu legen. Kulturell unterschiedliche Bildungsphilosophien – ich denke hier z. B. an naturverbundene Konzepte indigener Traditionen oder an das deutsche Bildungsverständnis, das den ganzen Menschen in seinem je eigenen Bildungsvollzug in den Blick nimmt – können zudem wichtiges Korrektiv sein für eine vornehmlich an ökonomischen Maßstäben, an „Employability“, internationalem Wettbewerb oder „Human Capital“, ausgerichtete Bildungsstrategie. Die pädagogische Verantwortung ist angesichts erwähnter disruptiver Entwicklungen wie der Digitalisierung, massiver Umweltveränderungen und auch wachsender Migrationsbewegungen nicht leichter geworden. Auch hier können wir Wichtiges vom relationalen Bildungsverständnis indigener Traditionen lernen. Pädagogische Verantwortung heißt hier tatsächlich, sich in der „response-ability“ Fremdem gegenüber zu üben, was neueste technologische Entwicklungen ebenso umfasst wie interkulturelle Begegnungen oder befremdliche Naturerfahrungen (auch in uns selbst).

Fremde Ansprüche treffen zunehmend auch die Philosophie (Schellhammer 2021a). Dabei scheint die Angst häufig noch groß zu sein, den objektiven Stand des Zuschauers zu verlieren, wenn wir als Philosoph\*innen die Schiffbrüche der Welt beobachten, denn leicht könnten uns die Wogen hineinziehen in das unheimliche Geschehen, würden wir uns aus der sicheren Distanz wagen. Vielleicht ist deshalb die Skepsis gerade indigenen Philosophietraditionen gegenüber so groß, denn sie erscheinen als zu „subjektiv“, zu „zirkulär“ und widersetzen sich mit ihrem Zugang über das Geschichtenerzählen einem abgeschlossenen Systemdenken, das Sicherheit vermittelt. Und dennoch zeigt sich gerade in Bereichen der Naturphilosophie, der Leibphilosophie, der Anthropologie oder der Ethik, wie wichtig es ist, sich von fremden Ansprüchen auch philosophisch treffen und betreffen zu lassen. Dazu gehört auch das Bewusstsein für eine Wirklichkeit hinter der Wirklichkeit, für eine Spiritualität in der Natur und in zwischenmenschlichen Begegnungen, die Demut, Respekt oder Achtsamkeit hervorrufen. Es macht einen großen Unterschied, ob ich von der Natur als „Schöpfung“ spreche oder sie als ein Gegenüber betrachte, welches ich naturwissenschaftlich zerlegen und analysieren kann – beides ist wichtig, allerdings scheinen wir Ersteres verloren zu haben, denn die aktuelle Klimakrise zeigt: Alles Wissen reicht nicht aus, wenn wir die verzweifelten Schreie unserer natürlichen Mitwelt nicht vernehmen, die Ehrfurcht vor ihr verloren haben (Schellhammer 2021b).

Stan hat sein Buch als Einladung formuliert, um gemeinsam miteinander und voneinander zu lernen. Das Buch präsentiert keine fertigen Erkenntnisse oder Definitionen, sondern öffnet, es eröffnet einen Raum, um so nicht nur etwas über „Indigegogy“ zu erfahren, sondern in diese transformative Erfahrung selbst mit eingefasst zu werden.

Berwang und The Pas, August 2021



## *English Translation: Setting the Stage – for German Readers and Beyond*

Presently we are experiencing a time of tremendous turmoil and unsettling developments that are questioning much of what we thought was safe and self-evident. Traditional orders in politics, economics, sciences and law are disrupted, and familiar mechanisms of normalization that serve to cope and comfort are reaching their limits. In this process, opposing tendencies can be observed, which, like many phenomena in the current pandemic crisis, are becoming particularly acute: nationalistic egoisms stand in sharp contrast with the need for a joint effort to deal with massive global challenges. Despite the important pioneering work of the intercultural philosophers Ram A. Mall, Franz Wimmer, or Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, mainstream philosophy, too, seems to struggle with open, “global thinking”. Intercultural philosophy often only garnishes Western philosophy merely as an exotic side-note, which is especially true for Indigenous thought. Processes of self-assurance and claims of identity politics are enormously important on the one hand, but on the other hand they are in danger of indulging in a “narcissism of small differences” (Jullien 2019, 71) encapsulating themselves in an exclusivist manner and thus positioning themselves against others.

With our book we would like to take a different approach, sending out a different message. This invitation to take a different stance initially goes back to the Cree scholar Stan Wilson – during a time in which Canada has been caught up once again in its colonial past after having discovered the remains of many Indigenous children at former residential schools. This reveals with staggering clarity what Paulo Freire (2007) once called the “pedagogy of the oppressed”. Education served as the main tool for the cultural genocide of Native people in Canada. What I find so very remarkable about Stan’s message is that he chose and was able to move beyond rightly filed complaints and understandable reactive anger, offering me, a white, German woman, coming from the Western world, to enter into a dialogue with him. He once wrote to me: “It is like two eagles. A European one caught in a wild wind ending up in North America and joining an American one in soaring

and circling together over the storied landscape looking for a safe place to land.” We are now able to share with you what we ourselves didn’t know beforehand when we started our journey.

Stan was a professor and the co-founder of the *First Nations Graduate Education* at the University of Alberta. In recent years, he has begun to write about his experiences and thoughts about a culturally sensitive pedagogy that enables especially Indigenous students to gain a foothold as educators and scholars and, beyond that, to become multipliers who provide Indigenous children with a basis to self-confidently weave the web of their cultural fabric proactively repairing the cracks and holes of their colonial trauma. It came as a most precious great gift for me, coming from a place of incredible trust, that Stan shared his text with me and invited me to comment on it. This is the message I meant above that matters so much to us: Finding the courage to enter a space “in-between”, to step, in all vulnerability, into a “genuine dialogue” (Buber 1969, 19) that critically shakes up the foundations of one’s own inner self, startles, changes, and perhaps also heals us letting this dialogue take place.

This deep notion of relationality – not only among people, but also with the whole natural environment around us, with plants, animals and even stones or glaciers (Cruikshank 2005) – is one of the most valuable principles I have just started to learn from Indigenous philosophies. However, it is like it is with all principles of normative character: it is one thing to know about them theoretically and another to actually live them. Stan lives his invitation – an invitation offered not only to me, but to all of you reading this book. Indigenous scholars have found different terms or metaphors for this relational approach to science and research, such as “braiding” different traditions (Kimmerer 2013), “two-eyed seeing” (Martin 2012), or the “ethical space of engagement” (Ermine 2007). Here it becomes utterly clear that the way to access a research question cannot be separated from the subject matter and vice versa. It also shows how important method is for both epistemological and ethical issues in research. And yet, particularly Indigenous research methods have still a difficult time in the academe, which is dominated by Western assumptions – this begins with the recognition of scientific paradigms, includes the presentation of research findings and ends with funding, which is where the cat bites its tail.

We are fortunate having received support at various levels to publish our book – and we are very grateful, because we want to pass on what we found so very

important, namely that we can only meet the global challenges we are facing currently by practicing “two-eyed seeing”, by exploring the “borderland between us that simultaneously connects and separates us”, which “can neither be traced back to one of us nor integrated into a common whole, nor subjected to universal laws” (Waldenfels 2016, 110). I would like to give you a few examples of the importance of this relational approach:

Two of the big issues currently setting the tone in academia are the challenges posed by climate change and the rapid developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). The renowned Inuit activist Sheila Watt-Clautier rightly points out, “[i]t is not only the melting ice which is being threatened by the climate change, but also the wisdom of the Inuit culture.” (Right Livelihood 2015) The effects of climate change potentiate as Indigenous knowledge of how to live sustainably is lost. Pope Francis (2015, 74) similarly states in his encyclical *Laudato si* that it is essential to draw from the various cultural riches of peoples, on art and poetry, on inner life and spirituality: “If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out.” It is much the same with the development of AI. To ensure that it benefits everyone equally and does not perpetuate existing inequalities, prejudices and power structures, it is of utmost importance to foster an AI development that considers different cultures and languages. Yet, as the UNESCO (2021) round table on Ethics of AI recently pointed out, “diversity is seriously, seriously lacking in the world of AI”. A research group led by Jason Lewis, professor at *Concordia University* in Montréal, developed the landmark position paper *Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence* (2020) starting to fill this gap. Many of the principles Stan outlines in in this book stress, complement, and provide further guidance for the development of a culturally sensitive AI.

“Two-eyed seeing” is also eminently important in pedagogy. This became obvious not only in Canada, but also in failed efforts to integrate refugees and migrants in Germany. In a globalizing world which increasingly utilizes web-based-learning platforms, it becomes extremely questionable to solely rely on a monocultural understanding of education. Rather, the opposite should be the case: culturally different philosophies of education, e.g., Indigenous concepts of nature-based pedagogy or the German understanding of “Bildung” that aims at the whole person in his or her own educational process, can be an important corrective for dominant educational strategies that are primarily oriented toward economic revenue,



international competition and the exploitation of “human capital”. In times of disruptive experiences such as digitalization, life-threatening ecocide and mass migration, educational responsibility has not become easier. Here, too, we can learn from the relational approach of education in Indigenous traditions where “responsibility” truly means to practice “response-ability”, to feel that we are accountable for what we do or don’t do.

Intercultural demands increasingly affect philosophy as well (Schellhammer 2021a). Often, there seems to be a great fear of losing the objective status of the spectator when we as philosophers observe the world being shipwrecked, because the waves could easily pull us into the uncanny events if we dared to leave our safe distance. Perhaps this is why the skepticism towards Indigenous philosophical traditions is still prevalent, because they appear too “subjective”, too “circular”, and with their oral tradition of storytelling they resist a thinking of grant all encompassing systems that convey a comforting sense of security. And yet, especially in natural philosophy, anthropology, or ethics, it becomes apparent how important it is to allow oneself to be philosophically struck and affected by the unknown other. This also includes a deep cognizance of a reality behind reality, of a spirituality in nature and in interpersonal encounters that evoke humility, respect, and mindfulness. It makes a big difference whether I speak of nature as “creation” or consider it as a something that I can take apart and analyze scientifically. Both perspectives are important, but we seem to have lost the former, we are just looking through one eye – with rather negative effects, as the current climate crisis shows: all the scientific knowledge we have is not enough if we are not able to hear the desperate cries of our relatives, of bees, trees or even rocks (Schellhammer 2021b).

Stan has formulated his book as an invitation to learning from and with each other. The book does not present ready-made findings, rather, it opens a space to not only learn about “Indigegogy”, but to be involved in this transformative experience itself. The text not just talks about relationality, it evolved out of a living relationship. We invite you to join us in our “soaring and circling together” sharing stories, reflecting on theories, ideas, and thoughts developing new ones out of this co-creative space “in-between”.

Berwang and The Pas, August 2021

## Foreword “A doorway to the book” by Alice Keewatin

When I thought of writing a few words for the opening of this book<sup>1</sup>, they weren't coming. So, I waited for a doorway. When I read your email, Stan, about the name “Indigegogy”, I got a message for you. I'm pretty sure Lionel (the late Elder Lionel Kinunnwa, a Lakota Sioux from Oglala) is helping with this. Remember when he said, “we are not obligated to listen to the dead words of living people, but we would be wise to listen to the living words of those who passed on.”

As scholars, it is our obligation to make sure that the written word is living. When knowledge was passed on through the oral tradition, all of the protocols and safeguards were set in place to make sure that the knowledge was received in a living way. The written word brings a challenge when it comes to bringing the spirit of the knowledge to the page.

Traditionally, knowledge was requested through protocol. The protocol insured that any knowledge passed on would be living. This exchange of knowledge only occurred within the language. As you know, the language holds the history, the traditions, and all the knowledge known and unknown to that point. Through the use of protocol, knowledge that was unknown to humans on the earth could be accessed. People weren't required to memorize or rely on each other for knowledge. Through ceremony the knowledge was available for anyone who asked in a proper way through protocol. Protocol holds the integrity of the knowledge and makes sure it is delivered with a good heart and a good mind. Protocol activates the language and all of the living systems within it. The vibration of the language speaks to the cellular memory and DNA of those who hear it. That is how words become living. The words are not exclusionary, the spirit within them speaks to everyone no matter their culture or traditions. This explains how people come to

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<sup>1</sup> Stan had invited a number of people to write about their thoughts on “Indigegogy” or their experiences with it. Besides Alice Keewatin, Lindsey Koepke and his son James Wilson responded – that is why their texts became part of this book.

know things and understand a new worldview or paradigm even when they have not grown up within the culture or language.

Like oral traditions, the same protocols must be followed to activate the words before they are written. The protocols open a sacred space, and with a good heart and good mind, those who write the words can convey them in such a way that they retain their spirit. Although it would be ideal to have the words written in the language of those who accessed the knowledge, when they were presented with protocols, the same spirit can be conveyed in any language. Lionel spoke of a meta-language that would serve this purpose across all cultures. But spirit is not bound by language or culture, it travels through pure hearts.

When people read living words that have been placed on the page through protocols their cellular knowledge and human DNA is activated. This is how all humans raise the consciousness of humanity over time. This consciousness ebbs and flows over the history of humanity and although it seems like the world is in turmoil at the moment, it is actually a birth of a higher consciousness. This higher consciousness is the sacred space that is allowing more non-Indigenous people to hear, resonate with, and understand a new paradigm.

In terms of a name for your proposed book “Indigegogy”, protocols need to be followed to ensure that the words are living. The name of the book is a doorway. If you choose the name that reflects a non-Indigenous paradigm without protocols, then all of those who read the book and walk through that doorway will resonate with the same non-Indigenous vibration no matter how the content is written. Even though every language has the ability to convey living words, when humans are asked to cross paradigms the strongest doorway is created in the language of the protocols that asked for the knowledge.

Each person who reads the title and passes through the vibration of the word will have their cellular knowledge and DNA activated and will then have the ability to absorb and comprehend the living words. Protocol can also be followed to invite the other authors so that their words will be part of the same spirit.

In order to establish a paradigm shifting doorway, offer protocol to those who know, along with an explanation of the intent of the knowledge and the grandmothers and grandfathers will select a doorway that can allow all to access the knowledge. When you are in the doorway, you will feel it in your body you will have a mini-satori moment.

# Introduction

*Taansii n'tootemaak, kih-watchyeh-mittin-awaw.*

Greetings to one and all genders.

I greet you the reader with an open hand, symbolic of an open heart and mind. This is the way the Cree greeted the first Europeans to venture into our territories. It is the old way of greeting each other every day. Even if we had met the previous day, we still do the ritual as a cultural ceremony every time we meet. It is also a way to express the appreciation that we both are still alive. All of that lies in that one word and action of *watchyeh*. My hope is that you, too, will greet me that way as you read these words.

I am physically from Opaskwayak that is along the Saskatchewan River where the Carrot and Opasquia rivers join the river system and its delta. It is the central part of our traditional territory. I grew up as a child in that community known as Opaskwayak Cree Nation.<sup>2</sup> Seeking an education, I went to the Indian residential school in Prince Albert Saskatchewan. After many returns to educational institutions, I eventually graduated with a Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. As a result, I got to know the hidden purpose of the American and Canadian educational systems.

What you are about to read are my experiences and thoughts that are related mostly to teaching and learning. You also find stories I have listened to or read of other peoples' experiences and thoughts which have had a profound effect on me and shaped my own thinking and experiences.

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<sup>2</sup> Since the *Constitution Act* (1982), Indigenous peoples (lat.: *indigena*, meaning “sprung from the land”) in Canada comprise *First Nations*, *Inuit* and *Métis*. The term “Aboriginal peoples” is also often used. However, some people don't like that term, e.g. Lynda Gray (Tsimshian Nation) explains that many words in English that start with “ab” mean “not” as in “abnormal”. (Monchalin 2016, 2) “Native American” refers to all Indigenous people in Northern America, including Indigenous groups living in the United States.

I'm not expecting you to change your thinking of who you are while reading or even after you read this. What I do expect however, is that you will listen and hear the message, because that's what reading is all about. Just as in my elementary school years when I first learned to read English and speak broken English I began to think about what the writer of a history book I was reading was actually doing. I only spoke Cree until then. My first "aha" moment came while I was reading a book supposedly about Canadian history. It boldly stated that Christopher Columbus discovered America. I wondered about it often and began thinking, if my ancestors were already here, how could he be the one considered to have discovered this land? I wasn't able to articulate it at the time, but my awareness and critical question of who's truth was being told in stories, shaped the way I would forever read, and listen.

It has taken me a lifetime to see what is not obvious even when it is plain sight. In the following, I'm presenting what is now my view from within my own cultural box. Perhaps from inside your own, we can learn about each other's views without trying to colonize each other. Willie Ermine (2007) calls this an "ethical space of engagement".

In the process of writing, I shared my manuscript with Barbara Schellhammer, a German philosopher. She had read a short piece that I had written in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* and had previously emailed me to get a better idea of the concept "Self-as-relationship" (Wilson 2001). She had planned on travelling across Canada east-to west with her mate and took the advantage of visiting me while on that tour in spite of a long detour to my home. Some time passed and I needed someone to review what I wrote to see if my writing was cogent. I remembered her interest in Indigenous philosophy. I asked her to read the manuscript which she did thoroughly. Reading her comments, I thought that it might be a good idea for her to write with me, weaving our two worldviews and experiences together. This is what we set out to do in this book. You will find Barbara's words intertwined with mine in italics.

*I had the honour to read Stan's manuscript and share my thoughts with him – reading his words felt like engaging in a dialogue with him. After I had sent him my comments, he invited me to a relational journey of exchanging thoughts on "Indigegogy" and thus to practice what Willie Ermine meant with his "ethical space of engagement". In his email he wrote: "I am thinking that we could model*

*how the two worldviews could be blended, zippered, or how the two streams of thought can flow into confluence, how to be relational even in texts if you were to be co-author by adding your voice to it.” Considering history and feeling its burden as a white woman coming from a privileged place weighing heavily on my inner self, this came as a precious gift of trust. I lived in Canada for a number of years, worked with juvenile sex offenders in Regina, conducted research on the human necessity of culture in the Northwest Territories (see Schellhammer 2015; 2019; 2020) and taught at the Royal Roads University in Victoria, B.C. I now work at the Munich School of Philosophy in Germany and seek to find ways to include Indigenous knowledge in the still very Eurocentric discipline of philosophy. Here, too, Stan’s offer came at the right time and it was more than I had hoped for. It is not enough to just talk about Indigenous knowledge, it is about time that we engage in an open dialogue, which questions us and transforms how we think and see the world, that changes who we are.*

*I had met Willie Ermine in 2000 when I organized a youth exchange program and brought German kids over to Canada to travel together with First Nations kids from Downtown Regina through Northern Saskatchewan learning with and from each other. Willie invited us to spend some time at the Sturgeon Lake First Nation. I will never forget how we were all sitting on the back of his truck – in awe and deeply moved feeling a herd of bison stamping on the ground. In 1969 about 50 bison were brought back to the region, their population grew steadily.*

*Back then I hadn’t read Willie’s article about the “ethical space” yet – but somehow, I could sense that his invitation to us was more than just inviting us to his physical place on the reserve. It was his way of opening that space he was genuinely living. My initiative to organize the youth exchange with an Indigenous friend of mine, a project we called “Chimatawa – Building Bridges”, came from a very similar place, but I wasn’t able to articulate it at that time.*

Who is meeting when “cultures” meet? We recently received a Christmas gift. It is a puzzle in the form of a wooden sphere with different pieces that are shaped to fit tightly to each other to form a ball. When I was contemplating a good metaphor to use in explaining the notion of culture, it occurred to me that the carefully crafted puzzle is a great one to use. Each individual piece is shaped in such a way that it fits snugly into the other pieces to form the ball. If one piece is removed, the ball falls apart. Each piece therefore critically depends on the other pieces for it to remain

a complete solid ball. The pieces of the puzzle are like the societal institutions that fit into each other and are essential in supporting each other to remain as a whole entire culture. Each societal institution depends critically on the other institutions for it to remain intact.

Human cultures are like different kinds of wooden puzzles. Each culture is different and each of the societal pieces that form the whole is different from those of other cultures. Yet they all have similar institutions. Because we are all human beings and have the same needs, each culture has developed over time in its own way of structuring itself. The one institution, *education*, existing in all cultures, is what this story is about.

I want to also introduce the more important “invisible me” to you so that you may understand why I’m writing this. According to our Cree origin story, we are descendants of *Kaahkanatissik achak*, the “Great Spirit”. Our language, as in all other languages, is structured to reflect who we are physically as well as spiritually. *Kii-t-achak* means “your soul/spirit”. *Achak(osak)* is also the same as the word for “star(s)”. I knew these as separate words from each other before I heard the origin story. That story finally connected the three together. As you might already know, single words by themselves can be understood, but they have no power. It is when they are connected as an entire network like an invisible web, that they give power. Thus, it is this strong invisible network of concepts in the languages that form the structures that maintains each cultural worldview. It is what binds the culture together.

I was lucky enough to meet Allen Keeper of the Tataskweyak Cree Nation, whose story of our Cree ancestors’ origins, which he enjoys telling, connected the words into a chain that clearly and explicitly explains our Cree worldview. It doesn’t work, though, until we replace the Gaelic word *Cree*, meaning “stream” or “creek”, with the word we use to identify who we are in our own language. That word is *Anis-inniwak* (I have inserted a hyphen to indicate the word is made up of two concepts). Many speakers of that language only use the second part, because they, too, may have not yet heard the origin story due to colonization. The word *inni-wak* is used for “people”, any people, much like the notion of human beings. The first part though is essential in knowing who we are as *anisininniwak*, because it is the piece that defines the “descending” or “coming down” and explains whose descendants we are. The story is that our ancestors came from the North Star, *Kaahkanatissit Achak*, the “Sacred Spirit”, also known as the “Great Spirit” moving

from one star to the next down the handle of the “big dipper” constellation. When the handle of the cup was at the closest to the earth they descended to earth via a braid landing “up north”. A question that some people might consider a bit “too much out of this world” is, if this happened intentionally and by design or through some other natural or metaphysical interstellar phenomenon by some other intelligent life. Either way, that is why the direction north is *keewehtinook*, which literally means “homeland”. Now, when most people hear the story, they seem to automatically assume it was human beings that came down. How else would it make sense? But the idea that we human beings are made up of cells as organisms, as Western science claims, opens the possibility that our ancestors who came from the North Star arrived on earth as some forms of organic cells that later became human beings. That idea is not much different from the Western scientific story of origin with its “big bang theory” and how evolution happened.

A word that explains this, is *wahkohtowin*. Loosely translated, it means “relationships”. It includes kinfolk of course. But the other word associated with the concept is *kahkinaw ni-wahkohmakanak*, which means “all my relations” that is often heard in English. My spiritual family includes all other forms of life: grasses, trees, animals, birds, fish, and even insects. And if they are family, I am obligated to acknowledge and honor them as such. This concept then is the possible explanation of who our ancient ancestors were when they arrived here on earth long ago. It could have been any one of those relatives. If I do not acknowledge and respect them and even love them enough to take care for them, *pastahowin* (stepping over the line) or *otchinawin* (karma if you like) will occur. These two words represent how I am held accountable for my words and actions to them and that I have responsibility to do so. If I have not been ethically/morally accountable and instead mistreated my relatives in any way, I will have crossed the sacred line and natural law will provide justice. Because all my other relations have spirit, too, they are also considered as our soul/spirit mates. *Nehinoway anisinniwak* (Crees) are only one form of life considered to be as sacred as our ancient ancestor the Great Spirit star.

That leads me now to tell you of another way we identify ourselves: Our language is *nehi-nowaywin*, which means “speaking in fours”. The first person I ever heard discuss the meaning of that word was the late Don Settee from the Pimicikamak (Cross Lake) Cree Nation. He was considered an Elder, because he was always trying to understand why our traditions were practiced the way they are. He stopped



in for a visit one day back in the late 60's as he usually did whenever he passed through Opaskwayak. He started the conversation wondering what the word *nehi-noway* meant. His analysis suggested that the word *neho*, “four”, is an important part of the word. He spent a great deal of time explaining the idea that I'm summarizing here. The Cree worldview consists of many ways to think of the world as being made up of fours. There are four cardinal directions, four seasons, four aspects of human life; heart, mind, body, soul, four stages of life; birth, adolescence, adulthood, old age etc. etc. Therefore, the number four must be a significant and sacred part of our worldview. These basic Cree concepts express who I am and how I'm expected to live. All human cultures provide a prescription of how to live ethically and Cree is no exception.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

*This reminds me of a poem that a friend of mine introduced a number of years ago for a program he developed for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF). It is called “Thoughts of the Old One” (The Four Dancers 1989):*

*The four dancers  
are joined together  
united  
in one voice  
and one dance,  
slowly awakening  
the sleeping Old One  
with circle of song  
round and round  
building a heavy bond  
with each other.  
Awakened  
the Old One smiled  
and spoke  
to those gathered,  
“There is still time,  
We have the time.”  
Moving in harmony*

*with the drum,  
his words then created  
melody,  
harmony  
is the path  
that brings  
four directions,  
four dancers  
to dance and sing,  
to hold the bond  
four dancers  
join as one.*

With this brief introduction, you begin to know who I am. However, I don't know who you are and how your language represents your worldview. I will assume though that you, too, are seeking to be a good human being and trying to make the world a better place, desiring justice and peace and living that way. If you are, good, we are heading in the same direction, perhaps on the same path without one hogging it or it might even be a different, but parallel trail. What matters is that we are heading in the same direction. Who knows, maybe we will meet each other sometime in the future! I am looking forward to that so that I might hear your story. For now, here is mine – and I invite you to join us in weaving our thoughts and experiences together.



# 1. “Killing the Indian in the Child” – Pedagogy as an Invisible Systemic Assault

*Every child in Germany wants to play “Indians”. I grew up with a very romantic and positive image of Indigenous cultures. Like my fellow playmates, we dressed like what we thought would be traditionally “Indian”. We wanted to be like “Indians”, we loved their wisdom, their hunting abilities, their close relationship with nature – and the freedom we sensed in a lifestyle that is deeply connected with the land.*

*When I first came to Canada, I realized that most of the teenagers I worked with as a social worker were Indigenous – although only about 5 percent of the population are First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Soon I stumbled over what Lisa Monchalin (2016) called “The Colonial Problem” – and the treacherous role of education in it ...*

Most Indigenous children who have been raised in their traditional cultural heritage with its own worldview who are forced into attending residential school that operates from the Eurocentric base, meet for the first time their cultural protagonist: the teacher. Where the two paradigms meet head on initially, is in the classroom. The teacher representing the Euro-Canadian culture, supported by the whole educational system, and the Indigenous children who are not aware of what is really happening, except that they are expected to learn whatever the teacher says. The students are a captive audience and cannot escape the required legal participation. They must accept what the teacher represents. They are at a great disadvantage as far as being able to keep their cultural selves intact under the great cultural genocide they are experiencing. Some of those students, who may feel ill at ease in this encounter, have no way of expressing themselves other than to drop out or to develop behavior problems and be pushed out. Viewed in this light, behavior problems are a symptom of the cultural crisis the students are experiencing.

*What you are saying here, Stan, speaks to a grave and consequential error – not only teachers, but also social workers, police officers and the general public tend to confuse “problems” with “symptoms” – they consider aggressive behaviour, alcoholism, suicidal tendencies or sexual assault as “the problem” and the person showing it, as a person “having” (or even worse: “being”) a problem. However, these behaviours or dispositions are “just” symptoms (meaning “a sign of”) of very complex and multifaceted problems that can reach back to generations ago. It gets even worse when symptoms turn into fictions, that claim to be facts. An example of this I found in Richard Thatcher’s (2004) “Fighting Firewater Fictions”. He sets out to deconstruct a false, yet very persistent assumption about the behavioural dynamics of drinking in First Nation communities.*

*Clearly, it is not enough to treat the symptom without seeing the underlying problem, which is – and this is important – of systemic and inter-relational nature. Thus, treating the actual problem, would also entail “treating” the sick reality of a structural, oppressive pedagogy (Paulo Freire) and to “unsettle the settler within” (Paulette Regan). An author whom I find particularly helpful here, is Ronald Laing. In his “The Politics of Experience” he writes: “We can see other people’s behaviour, but not their experience.” (Laing 1990, 15) This leads people to wanting to fix other people’s behaviour ignoring their actual experience, because: “The other person’s behaviour is an experience of mine” (ibid.) and since my experience is closer to me and it seems to be irritated by the other person’s behaviour, they must be fixed.*

*A relational, ethical space opens the door for what Laing calls an “inter-experience”: “to relate my experience of the other’s behaviour to the other’s experience of my behaviour” (ibid.). This means to become sensitive and courageous enough to listen and feel through even disturbing behaviour into the wounded and hurtful experience of the other instead of judging him or her for his or her behaviour.*

Teachers, usually not aware of the cultural conflict they are inadvertently creating just by their presence, are not equipped to mitigate. It is just as Barbara states in her reflection: If there are problems in our relationship, it is “*they* who must be fixed”.

It is as if the teacher was on one end of a teeter-totter with the children on the other end. The teachers’ weight is augmented by the whole educational system and keeps the end she or he is sitting on down. Meanwhile the children remain up

in the air at the other end and will slowly one-by-one slide down to the teacher’s side. Some may slide down kicking and screaming and even a few may hang on to the end of the board then drop down to the ground rather than slide down to the teacher’s end.

However, that metaphor may be too simplistic and too stark and it may require one that is more at a social and cultural level. The process may be subtler, but still very invasive, like what Vincente Rafael (2005), calls “Contracting Colonialism” (as in catching a virus). He describes how translating the Christian bible into an Indigenous language corrupts the Indigenous language and thought by using the English language structure and therefore twists and bends the Indigenous identity. Now that the bible is in the Indigenous language, it seduces the converts into the colonizers’ worldview even though that worldview sets up a hierarchy that places the Indigenous peoples at the bottom. This metaphor catches what has happened to Indigenous peoples.

*The anthropologist Clifford Geertz introduces an understanding of culture that helped me a great deal to understand what happened in the past and why a lot of Indigenous people still suffer. Moreover, it explains why the term “cultural genocide” is more than accurate and justified. Geertz (1973, 5) describes culture as a fragile and yet essential “web of meaning”. People living at a certain place and at a certain time spin and shape this web through their interactive behaviour. This behaviour comes in symbolic forms. Symbols capture historically transmitted patterns of meaning. Thus, symbols are something like the connecting nodes of the web. Some of them are so very important that the whole web collapses if they are taken away.*

*For Geertz symbols have always two sides that influence and strengthen each other: Symbols serve as models “of” reality and models “for” reality (Geertz 1973, 93), they represent a “worldview” (how the world is) and an “ethos” (how the world should be). If you look for example at the Christian symbol of the cross: It is a model of reality as it stands for a particular worldview, e.g. that there is a God who created the earth, plants, animals and human beings and that there is life after death. The cross also serves as a model for reality (ethos), because it asks of the believers to adhere to the ten commandments, to follow the “golden rule” and to “love your neighbour as yourself”. I had to think of this earlier, reading about “nehi-nowaywin” (speaking in fours). The number “four” is also a symbol:*

*it gives you an idea of who you are in this world (worldview) and at the same time gives you a (or four) direction(s) of how to behave, or, how Stan is writing below: it is “setting a prescription for how to be a good human being” (ethos).*

*The most important symbol holding the web together is our language. Therefore, it is most “effective” to destroy a culture by taking away the language, which means ripping a huge hole into the web of significance. People living in it, fall through these holes. They lose their orientation and experience helplessness and anxiety. This is particularly severe for cultures who rest on an oral tradition, because everything will be gone and the intergenerational link destroyed. An Inuvialuit friend of mine once told me: “When an elder dies in our culture, it is like a library burning for you.”*

As much as there is a feeling on the part of some folks that the residential schools were a positive thing for Indigenous people, because many did get a good education, the darker side left a much more negative effect. The goal of the Canadian government was obvious: to get rid of the “Indian problem”. Since it is a lot harder to assimilate adults, the main target group became children. In 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, a severe assimilationist and civil servant in the Department of Indian Affairs, made sure that all native children under 15 years of age attended residential school. He explained: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. [...] Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department.” (in: Monchalin 2016, 131)

To this day many of those who went to those schools are left still seeking a solid Indigenous identity based on traditional views because the development of their Indigenous selves was disrupted and an attempt made to replace their identities with those of the settlers. By attempting to erase Indigenous peoples and their cultures and languages, the Canadian government almost completely destroyed the Indigenous psycho-spiritual element while at the same time trying to replace it with a Euro-Canadian one. The churches were all too willing to assist in this evil venture “to kill the Indian in the child” (Churchill 2004), because the government paid them to be their agents in accomplishing it under the guise of “saving souls”. As a result, many First Nations peoples have been converted to the Christian religion and rely on it for a spiritual relationship and are unwittingly accomplishing their own cultural suicide.

*Without culture, we are lost, because we cannot rely on our instincts for organizing our lives like animals. There is no "culture-less" human being. Besides, it is not possible to simply exchange one culture with another, because every human being has also something like an "inner culture", an intrapersonal "web of meaning" (what is usually referred to as "self" or "identity") – both are deeply entwined.*

What you say reminds me of George and Louise Spindler's notion of the "enduring self, the situated self and the endangered self" (Spindler/Spindler 1994, 13). Each person in a culture experiences these in their own way and manages to arrange them into their inner being. The "enduring self" represents a self that is deeply rooted their heritage culture including important rituals, language and practices. The "situated self" develops during adjustment processes to a new environment while their enduring self stays intact. If, however, the person is constantly threatened by unfamiliar demands for a longer period of time, the situated self loses its stable ground, it has a hard time coping. Therefore, their enduring self is severely threatened turning into an "endangered self" which may resort to resistance, hostility, or simply shuts itself down and gives up.

*The "endangered self" reflects what I was trying to see above: The living threads of our inner web (our self) are deeply interwoven with the cultural web we grew up in. To cut them, means to cut the lifeline of our existence. People get severely injured if you do that – what we experience today in a lot of Indigenous communities (not just in Canada), sadly attests to that. Geertz (1973, 46) explains: "Undirected by culture patterns – organized systems of significant symbols [e.g. language, ceremonies] – man's behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless." Cultural genocide is in fact genocide: it kills the humanness in humans.*

*Very fitting to the image of culture as a "web of meaning" is what Viktor Frankl (1975, 167) describes as "existential vacuum". He considers "man's search for meaning" as a driving force in every person's life (ibid., 154). This meaning ought to be found within, it has a very strong spiritual component and it is unique. It can never be given from the outside or somehow artificially produced – this would merely result in "non-sense" (Frankl 2005, 15). Many of the government's*



interventions reflect some of this “non-sense” – I am sure Stan has many examples of that, particularly when it comes to “pedagogy”.

People falling through the holes of their cultural web (which is the essential keeper of their meaning), experience this “existential vacuum” Frankl talks about. They experience a great deal of nothingness, meaninglessness and boredom – thus, the Indigenous protest movement’s name and slogan “Idle no more” is very well chosen! Without the ability to rest on traditional roots, Frankl (1975, 168) writes, man (as mankind) doesn’t know what to do, “sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism)”. People easily fall prey to strong leaders, not even recognizing that they lose themselves in the process – maybe we can see some of that in James’ story below.

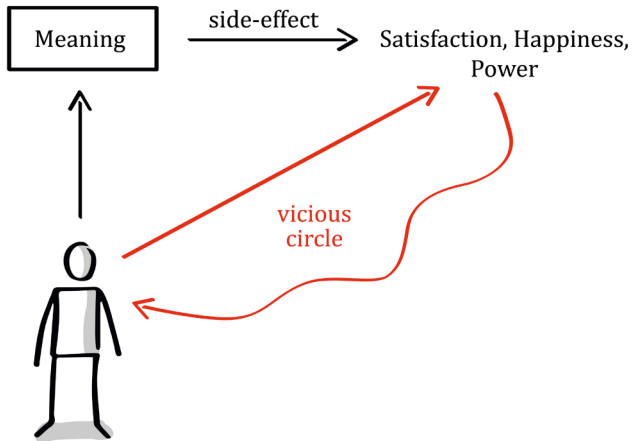


Figure 1: The dynamics of Man’s Search for Meaning (Frankl)

With the graph above, I would like to add one more observation with regards to the devastating destruction of the “Indigenous psycho-spiritual element”. Frankl (2005, 10) explains that the feelings of life-satisfaction and power are just “side-effects” of a life resting on meaning. For him, “meaning” entails body, mind, emotions, and spirit in a healthy balance. People losing their cultural hold, reach directly to everything that seems to satisfy their desire for happiness and power – often a sign for a deep feeling of powerlessness. The more people reach directly for

*happiness and power, the more desperate they get. Without having a solid stand in their cultural identity, it feels like a bottomless pit: All they get is an instant feeling of joy that quickly evaporates and makes the yearning even stronger. This is, of course, the perfect breeding-ground for all kinds of addictions. Frankl (ibid.) calls this forced desire for more "hyper-intention". The longer it takes to break this vicious circle, the more it takes hold of somebody. It evolves to some form of substitutional web that takes hold of the fidgeting person like a fly in a sticky spider's web. This dynamic doesn't only affect individuals, it also absorbs whole communities. Maybe one could say that a healthy and balanced "cycle of meaning" including body, mind, emotions and spirit, is able to break the vicious circle. For that it is essential to work on a healthy "web of meaning" on a community level combining the inter-personal (inward) with the intra-personal (outward).*

I was wondering what the graph Barbara introduced above would look like from an Indigenous perspective – it would have to be in a circle, instead of a triangle, maybe like the two circles below. The first one reflects the balance a person experiences who is grounded in his or her culture in a meaningful way. The second picture shows a broken circle resulting from a disrupted cultural web with the experience of lacking meaning. A vicious replacement-circle takes hold, which results in a fatal loss of balance:

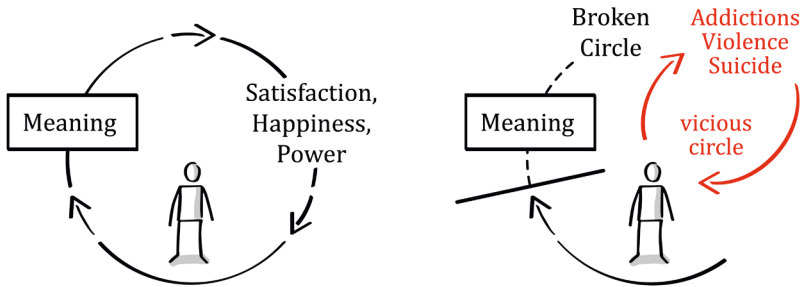


Figure 2: *The balanced Circle of Meaning turning into an unbalanced Vicious Circle*

William Denevan (1992) suggests that the Native population of the Americas was approximately 112 million when the first Europeans arrived in 1492. However, these numbers are also contested as others estimate the population to have been as low as eight million. In any case, the native population declined to less than six million by 1650 due to new diseases that Indigenous people weren't immune to. Denevan states that the discovery of America led most likely to the greatest demographic disaster in the history of the world. Those who survived, became afflicted with the new disease "Colonization" that continues to wreak havoc on all of us Indigenous folks.

If you're an Indigenous person and your first language is English (or any other European language), you have been unwittingly committing cultural suicide. If you want to stop doing that, you need to take a U-turn or come to a complete stop. Put everything in reverse, so that you can get back to your own culture and the roots of your language. You might need to get drastic and do the opposite of what the colonizers intended to when they tried to "save" the Indians from themselves by providing a European education that would kill the "Indianness" in the child. To achieve the inverse, Indigenous peoples need to kill the "European intruder" in themselves. If this is not done, how else can we as Indigenous peoples stop our youth from sacrificing their lives by actually committing suicide? They are the ones who have raised our critical consciousness that something terrible has happened to our people. Their extreme distress blinded them, so that they could not see any other way out. We have to find *our own way out* from this cultural and language mess. We have been shooting ourselves in the foot and now have great difficulty walking the red road. What needs to be done?

The first step is to actually realize that we have been committing cultural suicide. We have to become aware of the fact that we have been complicit in our own cultural and language demise so that we can shed forever the hari-kari pattern into which we have been seduced. We have to understand the ambivalent role of education in this. The betrayal of our languages has been happening for generations now; it has grown into an intergenerational pattern and affects our cultural web of meaning. Disrupting the dysfunctional cycle is a huge and formidable task – I hope it is not too late.

Building on this awareness, we can then begin a renovation and renewal of the Indigenous culture using what is left of our languages. We shouldn't use English, because it carries its own ideology and philosophy hidden in the

language itself; that base is invisible; it is difficult to detect. If we must use English, we need to decipher and expose the hidden concepts and ideas that helped to eliminate our culture, while embracing those that are complementary to the Indigenous views. Rejecting the corrupting features of the foreign language requires diligence and critical thought as they already become part of who we are today.

I appreciate that I learned to read and write English from attending school right from the first grade all the way to graduate with a Ph.D. I guess one could say that it was successful, what the first Indian day schools and the Indian residential schools sought to do, teaching us all to read and to write. That goal in itself can be viewed as an achievement to a desire on the part of the Christian churches that took on the role of providing education for "the Indians". But wait, what was there to read? The Christian Bible was first. Everything available in print was written by Europeans; all only from the European perspective. Children take for granted that what is written, must be true and often continue believing that into their adult lives.

Thus, the Canadian Government's policy to assimilate "Indians" was almost achieved – until those who survived the residential school system learned to read in a critical way and began to see the impact of the hidden messages which the printed material carried. Now as people are awakening to this system of cultural and language genocide, they are looking for ways to reverse the impact it has had on them, they are seeking a new direction. Like I said above, it seems to me that what is needed, is "killing the invasive white man in themselves". However, using that brutal metaphor goes against the basic premise of the Indigenous peoples' worldview.

*Yes, you are right – I was stumbling over these words, because they didn't fit with what I have come to know about Indigenous people – and I am afraid that "killing the European intruder" could be one of the reasons for the high suicide rate among Indigenous people. What was so very impressive when I met and experienced you, was that you were so clear in your analysis and so sharp in your words, but without the vengeance or hatred that one might expect from the stories you told us of blank racism that you had experienced and still experience. I sensed that you are very aware of the fact, that this longing for revenge would in the end eat yourself...*

Yes, this could indeed be the reason also for other immediate issues faced by Indigenous youth – they feel triggered to hate or to even kill the “inner intruder”. We need to find a word that is inclusive, yet has boundaries that are set in determining where the line is between the continuation of colonization and respecting the Indigenous language, cultural, and spiritual sovereignty. We need to use a double-edged knife of learning to read while separating what is harmful to all human beings like preparing a feast of muskrat. We use the knife to prepare the meat but cut out the contents that contain the bile that would make us all sick were we to eat it.

Like many other grandparents, I now realize how I deprived my children and grandchildren from the world of Indigenous thought by not using my heritage language in our home, all because English was convenient. I can see now that it has been expediency that brought us to our desperate state. However, as late as it is, it is not too late for recovery and there is hope. There’s a cure: Our languages are our medicines that will help us heal and to recover from the mess we are in. The languages guide us on how to teach in the Indigenous ways.

*Your book is so very important, Stan, because it addresses the colonizer’s most perfidious weapons: education and the destruction of language – and it works towards bringing both back to where they belong: to the hearts, hands and minds of Indigenous peoples themselves. In her article “The Destruction of Identity: Cultural Genocide and Indigenous People”, Lindsay Kingston states that “appropriate indigenous education is necessary to battle the long-term effects of colonization” (Kingston 2015, 78).*

I think that is why years ago, my wife Peggy and I started our journey to finding out, what “appropriate Indigenous education” could look like ...

## 2. The Formative Years – “Indigegogy” as an Answer

Those daily and cyclical activities that people are involved in are usually not analyzed. They are lived as part of the culture and are not viewed as part of the bigger picture. They are lived “in the moment”, but are inside and surrounded by their worldview. The events are experienced and become part of living a pattern. It is kind of like trying to see outside the box while you are in the box. It is hard to do because the only reference you have is what is inside the box.

*Clifford Geertz once told me, just before I started my first field trip to the Arctic in 2006, that I have to write down a lot of my experiences during the first little while in the unfamiliar environment, because I would be quickly drawn into the cultural web of those living there. I would become part of a living pattern and not be able to see its peculiarity anymore ...*

I am to a certain limited extent able to see beyond the cultural box as I reflect on my life experiences. Reading these reflections may provoke some similar memories or insights for you. If that happens, I hope you will be able to apply them to your own life in a positive way.

I remember now as a young boy growing up in Opaskwayak, Manitoba, I had chores to do for the family as did other young folks for their families. During the fall after school started and the winter had set in, I would set out some snares for the rabbits along a trail through the bush several kilometers behind our house. I would check the snares before school and if I had caught a rabbit or two, I would bring them home and either my mother or father would prepare them for a meal later that day. After school I would bring in enough wood for the wood box in the house to keep the fire going in the kitchen stove all night. If my father or older brothers had not cut the wood or chopped it into small pieces to fit into the stove, I would have to do that, too. After supper, I would join the other boys down on the newly formed ice on the frozen river with the ice frozen just enough to support

our weights. There we would fish for maria (a kind of a fresh-water codfish). If we caught any, we would drag them home on the snow where our parents would take the liver out from the fish and hang it on a string over the stove to dry out. The liver is what would be on the breakfast table the next morning. The rest of the fish would be given to the team of sleigh dogs that my father used to check out his trap line 30 or so kilometers down the river. Even though we had had fish liver for breakfast, the teacher in the one-room-school would give each of us a spoonful of cod-liver oil as a morning ritual much to our displeasure. I'm not sure what getting a double dose of fish liver oil did for our health, but we got it during the winter months.

The summers brought different activities that were part of the cyclical pattern. My family, as other families, would be at a summer camp. Early summer would be a time when mud-hen eggs were part of the diet. A canoe was used out on the marshes going from one floating nest to the next taking some eggs. No one took all the eggs from one nest. There was always one or two left for the hens to either lay more or hatch the ones left. During melting season in late July when the drakes lose their wing feathers and grow new ones, was another opportunity for harvesting fowl. Just because the drakes couldn't fly didn't mean they were easy prey. They can swim fast under water using their webbed feet and their featherless wings. When they get played out, they can stay submerged holding onto weeds with just a bit of their beaks sticking out for breathing. Amongst the weeds growing out of the water they were hard to spot.

We might also luck out and get invited to tag along on a moose or deer hunting trip. All the hunting was done from a canoe back then. There were a few families that had small outboard motors to push their canoes along. The rest had to do it the old-fashioned way and paddle. If a moose or deer was harvested, it would be butchered at the kill site, then brought home and shared with those who were along on the hunt. Some of the meat would be kept for family use while those parts considered delicacies, like the moose nose, kidneys, heart, or liver, given to elders.

It was one of those summer days that one of my late uncles invited me to go hunting with him. I was basically his assistant to paddle the canoe from the stern while he was at the front looking for sign of game. As we paddled down one of the many channels and streams in the Saskatchewan River Delta west of Opaskwayak he slowly dropped his paddle silently into the water – I knew he saw something and would want me to keep the canoe straight and not let it drift sideways. He quietly and smoothly stood up simultaneously picking up his rifle unlocking the

safety and fired into the tall grass. I picked up his paddle and pointed the canoe to the shore. He stepped out and pulled the canoe up onto the shore. There lay the dead deer. He told me to skin the deer while he made a fire for tea and lunch. I had seen a friend skin a young moose before and that’s how I began. He stopped me. I thought he was busy getting the fire ready but apparently had kept an eye on me. He said something to me that became a standard that I have kept ever since. You are taking shortcuts and doing this *mamasees* he said. *Mamasees* is the Cree word for doing something “just good enough”. It implies that there is something more important that needs attention. In this case though it was more important to pay attention to skinning the deer so that all the meat and skin would be useable.

During the summer months it would also be a time for berry picking. Each family had their favourite berry picking spots and everyone else knew and respected their territory. It was also a time to go into the muskeg and hang out the fresh moss on dry branches. When dry, it would be used as diapers for the infants who would most likely be in moss baby bags or *teakinagan*, a cradle board with a cloth or hide bag attached to the board. This board was easy to carry with the baby in it. I understand now that *sphagnum moss* has antiseptic properties. That’s probably why there was very little, if any, diaper rash back then as I’ve heard elders talk about old times. I have also learned since then from other Cree communities that the moss was used for keeping fish from spoiling quickly during the summer months. A quantity of fresh moss was taken along to wipe the fish and then place it in a bed of moss. This was done while out in the summer camps, where there was no ice, and kept in an underground space to keep the fish fresh as it would have been done in the main home camp.

In all these activities, harvesting medicines, berries, mud-hen eggs, moose, deer, and fish, the importance of not taking everything, was the way of life. This custom was important to always leave some for the future generations to use – whether it was hunting or berry picking or collecting plants used for medicines. When out duck hunting for example, the hunters would not necessarily shoot the first flock of ducks. They would say something like: “We’ll let those ones go by so that our grandchildren will have some too. The ones we leave alone, will perpetuate their own kind.” This is the kind of traditional practice that needs to be retained and perpetuated today – not just for Indigenous peoples.

As I think of it now, there was always lots of food to eat harvested from the bounties of nature. It seemed that everyone knew how to do that. I suppose if they



didn't, they would not have been able to survive. Nature was like what a supermarket is today. All that was required was motivation and the knowledge with the skill that was passed from one generation to the next. And if some folks weren't physically able, the community found ways to help those in need. There was always a sense that you had to share your good fortunes with others. I only wish that all young people would learn this way of thinking.

But the influence from the rest of the world has brought about many negative changes that seem to overwhelm the positive ones in the Indigenous communities. However, there are still elders who are trying to maintain and perpetuate the positive aspects of Indigenous cultures and are having some success at it. Language and culture revitalization seems to be taking a hold. Indigenous languages developed over thousands of years, contain knowledge gathered from observing nature and living within nature and can still be useful for all people to help mitigate climate change while enhancing the quality of life. The Indigenous paradigm can be one of the guides to future work that must become a priority in these critical times.

*You mentioned this already in the introduction, Stan – this is how we first got to know each other. Reading your son's (Shawn Wilson) book "Research is Ceremony", I came across an article, you had written and I asked you to send it to me. The article talked about "Self-as-Relationship" (Wilson 2001) and the fact that our life is always one in dependencies. We are all interrelated with each other and with our natural environment. Therefore, we are responsible, we are born to respond – and we can never escape this responsibility. Here, I really enjoy our intercultural exchange and what we find in it weaving our thoughts together. Your text adds so much value to what Bernhard Waldenfels (2012) calls "responsive ethics" – particularly when it comes to environmental ethics (Schellhammer 2021b).*

*A Ph.D. student of mine is trying to find arguments to incorporate the protection of the human-nature-relationship into the German constitution. Her aim is to leverage the chances to sue all forms of "ecocide" that also impact humans (including future generations). She argues that human dignity doesn't come with the superiority of mankind over nature (thus, the "protection of the environment" in the constitution is not enough, because this places humans above nature). Rather, we depend on nature and to protect nature, means to protect human dignity. In order to find supporting arguments, she works herself through*

*the history of European philosophy. And yet, it seems so obvious for me: She would find so much in Indigenous philosophies ...*

I attended the dayschool on our reserve along with the other children I grew up with. My cousins were the ones I depended on to tell me what was required of us as students, especially when it came down to writing in English. I spent the time out of class in the Cree community doing the chores that were assigned to me helping the older men and women. I learned how they saw and experienced the world around them which I shall keep returning to. An example of this is a memory I have of one of my uncles, who had a team of horses. Horses were used in the summer months to put up hay for winter-feed. During the winter they would be used to haul wood from the forest in sleighs built for that purpose. My uncle would ask me to go along with him on weekends to get the firewood. The way this was done was to only take the dead trees, mostly spruce, but also jack pine and tamarack, and leave the live ones. This pattern cleared the forest of the deadfall, leaving room for new growth. I didn't realize at the time this was the same pattern of not taking everything from one place, like they do now for clear-cutting an entire area. I later understood that my uncle had a special connection to horses. He was a bit handicapped as he had had tuberculosis and had one lung removed. When he was working with the horses, he hardly moved his hands to get them to move into positions he wanted. He had a remarkable sense with those horses. I later learned about horse language and he apparently intuitively knew about it and used it while working with them.

School filled the rest of my days and weeks. When I completed the requirements for passing fourth grade the teacher, Sam Waller, told me there was no more he could offer me because there was only room for a certain number of students and he had to give priority to the younger ones. With our community being on the north side of the Saskatchewan River and the town of The Pas situated on the south side, I could see that the town also had schools. I convinced my mother that I wanted to continue to go to school. This was because I found learning new things exciting, mostly from reading. I guess I had a vivid imagination and could understand what was in those books. I wasn't able to express that, but my enthusiasm must have convinced my mother, because we went to see the principal of the town school during the early summer of 1950 about me attending their school. The principal indicated that she would need to get permission from the school board

about our request and that she would let us know their decision before the fall term began. Not hearing from her as the summer passed, I assumed that everything was in order. I went and enrolled in the appropriate grade. I actually attended the town school for several days before the classroom teacher asked me to stay after school. I kind of knew what that was about, and I reluctantly went along as the teacher and I went to the principal's office. There she informed us that there was no tuition agreement in place between the Band (called at the time) and the school board for me to attend their school. The school could only serve the town residents.

After such disappointment, I moped around at home for several days. My mother not knowing what else to do with me suggested that I go back to Sam Waller and explain to him what had happened at the meeting with the town school principal to see if he could do something about me continuing my attendance at his school. I did. He said: "Well, there is one desk you can use as not everyone who is eligible has registered". Perhaps the family had moved away, and I had a chance to continue attending school. He got the books for me, but I would have to do this on my own, because he needed to give his attention to the younger ones, he explained. So it was and I spent the rest of that school year in the corner of the room reading and writing in the workbooks that Sam gave me.

Sometime during the winter months while the federal government medical doctor, Dr. Yule, made his visit to check up on our health, I could tell he and Sam were discussing something about me. Toward spring, Sam gave me some formal looking documents to take home for my parents to sign. My mother looked them over and told me what they were. They were release forms that were to go back to the Indian Affairs office. They were giving their permission for me to attend residential school at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. I learned later that during that time the rationale given for sending children to residential schools was that the children were orphans or children from broken homes. There must have been many broken homes from our reserve that the good doctor's prescriptions remedied because there were many other children from families there when we left in late August of 1951 on the train that carried us to Prince Albert.

The experience at the residential school introduced us children to other First Nations children and young people, some of whom became our role models. The friendships made there became lifelong ones. The first year went by without any trauma, except that I began to notice that what I, we, were used to in the way of doing things back home seemed to be at odds with the way things were done there.

By the time I spent the first year at residential school, a new four-room dayschool on the reserve had been completed. I spent the next two years at home attending what was grade seven and eight. We had great teachers. Three of them were bishop’s messengers (women) from England. Being back at home again, I continued to learn more about what my uncles’ lives entailed by observing how they were in their daily and seasonal rituals and activities. It was these patterns that I recalled later that allowed me to make some sense of the uneasy relationship they (and I) had with the white neighbours on the other side of the river. While they seemed to get along with the settlers, they appeared to be a bit uneasy when they were around them. This was completely opposite when they were in the natural world where they seemed completely at ease in their surroundings.

The highest grade, the new dayschool offered was grade eight, once again I was on the prongs of a two-horned dilemma. My father wanted me to become his partner on his trap line and to enlighten me on the basics of being a Cree trapper. In late March we were out spring trapping muskrats (it must have been the school’s spring break with an extra week thrown in) at a camp in the Saskatchewan River delta east of Opaskwayak, along with three other trappers each in their own tents. I recall one beautiful sunny day while I was making my rounds on my line of muskrat houses, I stopped to linger for a while sitting on one of the lodges that the sun had warmed up. All around me I could see the endless spring snow shimmering in the sun. I tried to see the horizon, but the snow seemed to meet the sky with no discernable line between the two. The feeling I had was one of wholeness with what was before me. I remember sitting and enjoying the heat from the spring sun and wondering what was beyond the horizon and the horizon beyond that. I was probably experiencing a “mini-satori” as some writers or psychologists have labelled similar experiences.

Then I started thinking about my father’s offer. I believe it was there that I decided to go as far I could in school and also to find out what was really out there beyond what could be seen. On our muskrat catching rounds, we went one way in the morning, and skinned our catches at the end of the route where we met, and ate our lunches. The afternoon was spent retracing our morning route, checking our traps or setting new ones, and finally arriving back at the camp. We skinned our catches and attached them to stretchers to dry them. It was at this time my father asked, what I had thought of his offer. I told him hesitantly what I wanted to do instead. I thought that I could always return later to be his partner. I was assuming

it was an open offer. I believe he was greatly disappointed with my response, because we exchanged few words during the next few months. I don't really know to this day if he ever changed his opinion because it seemed at the time that he did it as his duty as a father more as an obligation about teaching me the Cree ways of hunting and gathering. However, later when I would return in the summers from residential school, we would go out on hunting trips along with an uncle or two. Each time there were moments that taught me much about how one fits into nature (and not the other way around as I would learn later).

My desire to know everything about the entire educational system kept me going back for more education so that I could totally understand the whole system, the bigger picture. Over a number of years, I gradually and eventually ended up with no more steps to go for more information. I had reached the end of being a student when I completed the requirements of a Ph.D. The last requirement was to demonstrate that I could conduct research that is considered scientific. It was a way of reflecting on the whole educational experience by conducting research on parts of the educational system. All doctoral students in education are required to do this. In a way, it is doing an evaluation of the educational system. There is a structured way that is to be followed if it is to be scientific. After I completed my dissertation, I realized that the whole educational system in the US and Canada is set up to retain, maintain, and perpetuate the English (or French) language and culture. In Central and South America, it is the Spanish and Portuguese languages and cultures. That is the whole purpose of an educational system: to perpetuate its own culture and language. Anything not aligned with that intention, is deemed to be not useful, because it undermines the intent of the system and is either ignored or at the most can be considered as an addendum only.

*This is not only the case for the US and Canada. For many years now there has been a heated debate about the German/European education system – particularly after we adopted the economically driven US concept in our Universities (“Bologna Reform”). In schools, children are rated according to measurable, quantitative criteria across Europe according to the “PISA-test” (Programme for International Student Assessment) which had been introduced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This creates big problems for children who don't fit into this rating-scheme (solely testing mathematics, science, and reading), who don't excel in courses that are deemed valu-*

*able for a modern and progressive society (I was one of them and still often doubt if I am “good” enough for what I do). The main focus and aim of this kind of education is adaptation and alignment serving the gross national product. After I had written this, Stan brought my attention to a paper in which a Blackfoot Elder, Narcisse Blood, is quoted and compares the dire US education system with Henry Ford’s production line (Adams et al. 2015, 50) – and this is indeed a good, yet also very sad example for what has been happening around the world for a number of years now with capitalism dictating our future.*

I finally understood what was beyond the horizon of the educational system. The invisible unstated underlying purpose and intent structured into a system to perpetuate itself by subtly indoctrinating its future generations. What was ahead, was the challenge of how we as First Nations peoples could perpetuate our own language and culture while being covered in a sea of whiteness like the shimmering snowbank that covered the muskrat house I was sitting on earlier in my youth. Everything about the existing educational system was white with a barely visible brown spot of muskrat house being exposed by the hot spring sun. I understood what Indigenous peoples needed if they were to survive the silent cultural war against us.

*I can see, Stan, how this awareness is such an important step towards Indigeogy. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2007) coined the term “conscientização” (Portuguese), which describes a process of becoming aware of one’s oppression. This critical consciousness also includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one’s life. Which means to work against unequal social relations which created a “culture of silence” also within the oppressed as a negative and passive self-image. Once drawn into this huge shimmering snowbank, it can be very hard to see the tiny brown spot (particularly when you sit on it). Also, it takes a lot of courage to act upon it. For that it seems crucial to realize that you still have this little island and from there you can take a stance and critically assess the surrounding. For Freire, too, it was clear, that language plays a crucial role here as “each individual wins back the right to say his or her own word, to name the world” (Freire 2007, 33).*

*In her book “Red Pedagogy”, Sandy Grande (2004), a Quechua woman, refers to the concept of Critical pedagogy as a philosophy of education and social move-*

*ment. Through a critical analysis of liberal and democratic structures in society as well as education and referring to her own Indigenous philosophy, she seeks to encourage people to transform their life-worlds through social critique and political action in order to self-actualize and strengthen their sovereignty.*

Yes, I fully agree, awareness is not enough. Action is required to identify the cultural aggression in order to upset the oppression causing the suffering and damage. First Nations adopting the Euro-Canadian school system without understanding, leads them to aiding the process of perpetuating the Eurocentric system that is fundamentally set to ignore them. They become a mere footnote in the mainstream history. If First Nations desire to retain, maintain, and perpetuate their languages and cultures, they need to set up their own system and not copy the mainstream. Establishing and setting a design based on Indigenous languages and cultures is a task that requires escaping the present system. That can only happen by using the Indigenous language as a guide. Language carries the essential concepts and worldview of each Indigenous culture. That is the reason why Indigenous languages need to be the base on which an Indigenous educational system is established. Using English or other European languages as the base, is essentially flawed right from the start, because English corrupts any Indigenous language.

This is no easy task when many present First Nations people were either torn away from their cultural roots by the Indian residential schools or were scooped away by the Canadian child welfare agencies (Monchalin 2016, 168). This is exacerbated by many First Nations people ending up incarcerated and spending many years away from their heritage culture and language (ibid., 143). Each Indigenous language (like all languages) contains the entire structure that provides a framework for its own worldview. Cree for example explains everything in its own words. Everything is accounted for from the very distant past to yesterday, today, tomorrow and into the distant future while setting a prescription for how to be a good human being, as an esteemed Elder used to say.

What is missing in many First Nations schools is the entire Indigenous worldview. Because much of it is philosophically very different from the Eurocentric worldview, such an initiative is still in the budding stage.

I kept on my research agenda to find out the nature of the cultural conflict between the mainstream school systems and the North American Indigenous students that I had identified in my study. I was not as much interested in publishing

my dissertation as I was in finding the elements that created the negative experiences of First Nations. While teaching at universities in the United States as well as in Canada, it became obvious that “Indians” were on the losing side of the conflict in those venues. It seemed that the American (the United States) and Canadian desire to eradicate the Indians from their lives was becoming a reality. With a preliminary analysis, it seemed that in order for “Indians” to make some headway, the nature of the relationship needed to change. Interventions were needed.

The universities that looked promising to my wife Peggy and I attracted us because we got the impression that the faculty members saw the potential we could contribute. Moreover, they particularly focussed on Indigenous issues. We spent some time in each: The University of Alaska, Fairbanks, where Ray Barnhart and Oscar Kawagley were faculty members, and the California State University in Sacramento. Both had programs that focused on cross-cultural or multi-cultural education. Our experience in those programs enabled us to gain the knowledge of how universities work. With that knowledge we decided to return to Canada to see what we could do to set about finding a way to enlarging the brown spot of the muskrat house in the whiteness of university and educational systems. We did a brief stint at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina and were planning to move back to Sacramento when we were invited to visit the faculty of education at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. This initiative was due to Carl Urion who had been there for some time and invited us to do presentations of our work to the faculty of education. We found we were of the same mind. Our university teaching lives changed forever.

We were both hired there. There was an explicit expectation from the faculty of education administration that we were to develop an *Aboriginal Teacher Education Program*. Other faculties of education in most universities in Canada already had them and were graduating Aboriginal people from those programs, yet, the University of Alberta hadn’t started one. The first one we were involved in was at Brandon University in the late 70’s (called *Indian-Metis Project for Careers through Teacher Education*, IMPACTE). Many in the faculty realized that the First Nations educational needs were a low priority at the university and saw the need to serve that population. We were to initiate the process of setting up such a program specifically to enhance the university’s slogan of “embracing diversity”.

After we got settled into teaching our assigned courses offered by the faculty, we called our first meeting to begin the development of an Aboriginal based



Bachelor of Education that was attended by a dozen faculty members. We presented our ideas from experiences we had at Brandon University as instructors in the Aboriginal focussed teacher training projects. We called for a follow-up weeks later anticipating that those faculty members who were at the first meeting could form a core to begin developing the program. To our surprise a completely new group turned up. From that we assumed there was indeed support within the faculty membership. But we had to start over again. We had our third meeting and to our surprise again a different group showed up for the meeting. No one in the faculty seemed prepared to be involved in developing such a program. Those who attended the meeting didn't offer any suggestions. They may have just merely wanted to hear what we were proposing or to find out who we were but showed no more interest than that. Perhaps it was the lack of our organizational skills or they may have been thinking the existing Bachelor of Education was adequate and that Aboriginal people should fit themselves into it and there was no need to produce a new program specifically for them. Such a notion was never mentioned. We didn't want to keep repeating the same talk, so we held that idea in abeyance.

We began to seek out other Aboriginal faculty and students. We found three others in other faculties across the campus. We already knew there were less than one-half dozen Aboriginal students amongst the other 600 or so students in the teacher preparation program. We then sought out Aboriginal graduate students. We found three in a university of 35,000 students. It was clear that we were in a university that wasn't first choice for Aboriginal people.

After considering the results of our inquiry, we concluded that perhaps what was needed was a teacher preparation with an Aboriginal-focused graduate degree program. Having an Aboriginal graduate degree would result in graduates from such a program teaching in the undergraduate degree program. The situation at the time would not get the results that were sought; to graduate numbers of Aboriginal students from the Bachelor of Education program who could then be ready to teach in the Aboriginal communities or teach anywhere else in the country. We already knew there was a shortage of qualified teachers in the First Nations communities and very few Aboriginal ones.

We then began the process of writing a proposal for our department to consider adopting the development of a program based on Indigenous knowledge. The existing programs were all from the Western paradigm. It was taken for granted

that it was the only legitimate base for offering teacher preparation programs and that First Nations and Aboriginal people needed to fit into that paradigm. In other words, complete assimilation of the Indigenous population was the intention of the existing programs.

The first draft was sent around to the department members for comments and feedback. We received encouraging suggestions and a snide remark or two about “Indians”. Our rationale for the need for such an initiative was since the university claimed to promote diversity then it also needed to honor epistemological diversity as well. Not just skin color. Aboriginal thought and knowledge had its own epistemology and the proposal sought to have that as its foundation. Our department voted overwhelmingly in favor of the initiative. When the chair of our department introduced the motion at the education faculty council for its members to adopt the proposal, there was wholehearted support – except for three members who claimed that such a program would “water down” the quality of the graduate programs. When the vote was taken, only these three members voted against it. We felt relieved and encouraged that almost all of the 150 full time tenured professors supported the idea.

The proposal then had to be presented to the general faculty council of the university. They asked, if we were proposing an entirely new program or a specialization within an existing one. We were informed that the proposal would be easily accepted if it were a specialization. If it were an entirely new university program, the whole general faculty council would need to be convinced and it only met twice a year. We wanted to get going so we decided that it would be a specialization in a department within the faculty of education. So it began.

Our first step in developing the specialization was to determine what courses would make up the specialization. Our planning committee set up an autochthonous scholar’s conference and invited four well-known elders from the four directions as well as local ones. They, along with the invited scholars, presented their views on what issues were most prominent that needed to be addressed. From that conference, the four courses that were recognized as a specialization in the department and formed the core were: language revitalization, from oral tradition to written text, Indigenous research methods, and First Nations issues in education.

A steering committee consisting of the two of us, a few department members, and a well-known Dakota academic, Bea Medicine, as our elder advisor, was then set up. She was prominent in the selection process of our first four students who

needed to be from the Indigenous community and were viewed as being well entrenched in their own First Nations worldview.

We needed to convince the department that the success of the program depended on who taught the courses. Because there were no current faculty who could offer the four specialized courses, it was necessary to hire adjunct faculty who were well known as academic leaders in those areas. The ones invited to teach those core courses were all excited to be part of the development. It was a possibility that was profoundly setting the stage for more to come!

Threading through these courses were analyses I made of what constitutes a legitimate Indigenous way of delivering the core content. Based in Indigeneity, they could not be delivered using the existing teaching model. They needed to reflect an Indigenous way of being, of doing, and of living. I wanted to make it clear that this specialization was based on an Indigenous paradigm different from the Western one. I felt an identifier was needed, so I coined the word *Indigegogy*.

The word is a placeholder while each Indigenous group finds a word from their own language that embraces the whole teaching, learning, and living concept. The Cree word would probably be *kiskinohamatowin* which means “teaching and learning from each other”. It is implied in that concept that not “the teacher” is the center dishing out knowledge. The concept is interactive, each participant is able to share knowledge and initiate discussion rather than only the teacher having and disseminating knowledge.

*This, too, reminds me of Paulo Freire’s (2007, 71) work as he distinguishes between a “banking concept of education” (which is repressive and one-sided) and a “problem-posing concept of education” (which is empowering, coming from the students themselves inducing a teacher-student-dialogue on eye-level). Here, I like the metaphor of “turning the funnel upside down” (zur Lippe 2014, 235). Not the teacher is dumping knowledge into the heads of his or her students, rather they are setting the tone, their curiosity is at the center.*

*I very much like how you talk about the term “Indigegogy” being a placeholder. It reflects this notion of turning the funnel upside down or maybe even using it as an ear trumpet. Instead of dictating a new concept that ought to be applied across board, it opens the space for different Indigenous cultures to explore their own unique ways of teaching and learning. The ear trumpet stands for cultural*

*sensitivity, for stepping back and listening, and for an “ethics of attunement” (Lipari 2014).*

Many people, including colleagues and family members, objected to me creating a name for the process, I believe they weren’t sure that it would be accepted in academe. That is until Malcolm Saulis at *Wilfrid Laurier University* (WLU) thought it was exactly what their school of social work there needed (see WLU: *Center for Indigegogy*, or just search for “Indigegogy” in the internet!). An instructive description of the application of Indigegogy in the study of social work you find in Gus Hill’s and Alicia Wilkinson’s (2014) *Indigegogy. A Transformative Indigenous Educational Process*.

*Yes, you mentioned that some people didn’t like the term “Indigegogy”. I wondered about that and thought it may also be the case that they didn’t like the fact that the composition of “Indigenous” and “Pedagogy” still rests on the English language. I also sensed some of that in Alice’s Foreword to this book. However, words are not just words. They are what you make of them. They are living entities. And yet they can become powerful and create a life of their own ...*

You are right, that is another reason why people criticize the term. Alice even said that I am actually making a clear case in this book why a word like “Indigegogy” shouldn’t be used. She argues that concepts must be expressed in the language they come from because words hold meaning and spirit, they function as doorways to ideas. And yet, I would like to hold onto the term – even it is controversial. I didn’t just use the English language, rather I twisted it creating something new showing that we cannot simply accept people imposing their language on us, but we can use it on our terms. I’ve been wracking my brain in trying to express in a title what it is that we have been doing and the desire for others to follow in keeping with Alice’s comments. It centers on the word “Indigegogy” that is a made-up word in English because Indigenous languages are so diverse. Yet there is a common thread among their languages that is expressed in relationality; a way of being, a worldview. It is also there in other languages, but is not the central “binding” or glue in their worldviews. Perhaps it is the process expressed in the word “Indigegogy” that seeks a made-up “doorway” because of a desire to not “colonize” but to work together, to seek spiritual balance between differing paradigms.

We drifted away a bit – I now continue with my “formative years”: Not only would Indigenous knowledge now be a part of Indigenous students’ studies, it could be delivered in a way, Indigenous students were familiar with and different from the current approaches that were in use. They would no longer feel alienated from how the courses were delivered as many Indigenous students told us they did, but would feel secure and at ease in their course of studies. But wait, such a suggestion to name a process of teaching and learning different from pedagogy and andragogy as a way to teach has not been so easily accepted.

*That doesn’t come as a surprise. Thomas Kuhn’s “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions” comes to mind. I don’t know if it is a coincidence, or if you thought of it when you used the term “paradigm”. Scientific paradigms are deeply rooted in a particular culture (people embedded in it, are not even aware of them). Anything that is different or strange, is considered to be less valuable, “not normal” or not according to certain standards. New paradigms endanger the equilibrium or order of what Kuhn calls “normal science” (Kuhn 1972, 23). That is why they have a hard time to take a hold. They need a “critical mass” of supporting faculty or champions in academia and beyond (this becomes very obvious reading your story). And even then, it takes a lot of endurance to establish a new paradigm as it challenges the old one, which often results in a crisis (ibid., 66).*

Now there was a recognized specialization in First Nations education that was not only based on First Nations epistemology, but it included ways of teaching and learning that came from that epistemology. However, there were no discussions in the literature on the topic. The discussions focused on the teachings of oral tradition and the concepts taught in the course specialization. Alice Keewatin, who wrote the foreword to this book, was one of the doctoral students in the department who studied all of the courses in her specialization. She wrote her dissertation on the difference between the Western and Indigenous paradigms (Keewatin 2002).

The next development happened when there was a momentary stall in the number of Indigenous students applying into the specialization. We went to find out from the certified and qualified Indigenous teachers who had graduated and been teaching successfully in many venues. We asked them how the university could help them in their professional development. Most of those we talked to weren’t

willing to give up their salaries to return to do graduate studies because they would also have to pay for tuition and living expenses while they were upgrading their credentials. It was too costly they said. Then we asked, “what if the courses were offered through summer sessions?” Some said they might consider such an option for professional development. We then tried to find out, what would attract them into such a program. Without exception they said they would be eager to apply to a graduate level program if it were offered from within an Indigenous paradigm.

With that information we returned to the department that housed what had now become the *Indigenous Peoples Education Specialization*. After much discussion, it was decided that a proposal for a new master’s program which would be offered through summer sessions was needed. The courses in that degree program would be offered as a land-based master’s degree that is described later. It was easily accepted and adopted by the department. What was not explicitly articulated, was the academic paradigm from which the courses were to be delivered. The rationale this time was that most university courses and programs are offered from within the Western paradigm and it was taken for granted that a Western university would offer its program from within that framework. Using the same rationale, it would stand to reason that a program and course work on *Indigenous Peoples Education*, would be from within an Indigenist paradigm – a program validated by Indigenous learners as representing their worldview from within which it should be delivered. A land-based Master of Education degree became the option because most Indigenous peoples we had spent time with shared the similar cultural value of maintaining a special relationship with land and water.



### 3. Language grounded in Experience as a Key to Restore Balance

Indigenous languages are the base on which Indigegogy is expressed into praxis. The actions reflect the philosophies contained in the Indigenous worldview. The same way that “pedagogy” and “andragogy” are words from a Eurocentric language that carry the worldview that finds expression in the way teachers trained in that paradigm teach their students. The teachers are part of a socio-cultural system based on hierarchy and patriarchy. That worldview fully embraces what is believed to be a God-given right to “rule dominion over nature” and thus have the spiritual and moral right to colonize. The teacher in the classroom is the representative of that Eurocentric system. All learners are expected to respect and accept fully the academic authority of the instructor. Learners, coming from cultures and languages that are not in sync with that worldview, are expected to conform to it.

There have recently been initiatives that attempt to provide bridges for learners from different cultures and languages to adapt to other systems. Still, many students feel that they are not completely fulfilled. They may have graduated with the proper credentials, but their heritage language and culture needs are unmet. It may be the case that their specific needs do not allow for the expression of the adopted paradigm. They may feel that they have had a one-sided experience. So, when teachers and educators use the term “pedagogy” they are reinforcing the retention, maintenance, and perpetuation of the status quo of the Eurocentric culture that was expressly designed to kill the Indian in the child. If teachers and educators who are working to educate First Nations children do not want to continue the killing of Native American languages and thought, they need to alter their mindset and start anew in how they view the approach they take in teaching Native American children. Shedding the prescribed approach promoted in most teacher preparation programs, requires teachers and educators to begin by deconstructing what they carry in their thinking about how to teach.

Now we need to begin articulating what is an approach that is Native American student-friendly; to suggest what it is, how it is to be done, and what its ideological



and conceptual foundation is based on. How can Indigenous students have a complete and fulfilling experience in education? Perhaps by organizing the learning experience based on the Indigenous worldview that we have called *Indigeogy*. Establishing it as a base for education will provide a necessary foundation for all activity and learning to be conducted as the overarching *modus operandi*.

Yet, referring to “Indigenous pedagogy” is like putting wings on a locomotive that will enable the train to fly or like talking about a Muslim Pope. That is pure fantasy. The word “pedagogy” is culturally loaded, because it carries all the values and assumptions regarding how European cultures relate to their children. “Pedagogy” is an English word and it carries with it that worldview. The power of language becomes a trap for Indigenous educators. They fall into the Eurocentric way of teaching and learning that the English language carries. In other words, they become the replacement recruits for retaining, maintaining, and perpetuating the Eurocentric worldview.

*We, too, have a different word in German for what is usually translated with “education” – the word “Bildung”. What it actually means, can only be understood, if you know more about the historical and cultural context of the word – and that is very rich and multifaceted. Just translating it, is not enough, because you lose the “thicker” understanding of it. “Education” comes from the Latin word “educatio” (Noun) or “educare” (Verb), which means “to bring out”, “to bring up” or to “lead forth”. This is a rather one-sided process and would be better translated with the German term “Erziehung”, which literally means to “draw something out”. Bildung is much more happening from within, it means something like growing. It can be an effect of or a response to “Erziehung” (education). It involves the whole person, with body, mind, and spirit. It is a process of forming the essence of a person.*

*Also, I can support your argument that “the power of language becomes a trap” with one of the most prominent “Bildungs”-philosophers in Germany: Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835). Besides his great influence on the philosophy and politics of education, he is well-known for his instructive approach in language-philosophy. One of his key insights was that language is the “formative organ of thought” (Elberfeld 2014, 49). He claims that we think with our language – hence, our language influences what we think and how we see the world. Just recently, I read an interview with the Iraqi writer Abbas Khider who fled from a*

*terrible war in his country and now lives in Germany. One sentence stood out for me, he said: "One doesn't live in a country, one lives in a language." (SZ 2020, 20)*

*For Humboldt, the differences between languages were not those of "sounds and signs", but of "differences of representing the world". In short: "Man lives primarily with objects [...] as language presents them to him." (Humboldt 1999, 60) Very fitting to the metaphor of culture as a "web of meaning", Humboldt (ibid.) writes: "By the same act whereby [man] spins language out of himself, he spins himself into it." This can truly become a trap, if we are not aware of this process and just perpetuate a worldview with the language we use ...*

You are right, that is exactly the reason why Indigenous educators need to start from scratch to use their own traditional ways of educating children and to be able to describe the process in their own heritage language. That is why naming a process based on Indigeneity (including *Nehiyowayinissecihkawin*) can surmount the overarching existence of contemporary Eurocentrism that prevails in too many First Nations schools even when teaching the Cree language. The following discussion will explore how this is a trap and how to avoid it.

It has taken me a lifetime to figure out what is happening to the Cree language I grew up with and the current trend to "Indigenize" including the movement to assert *Nehinaw Annisinneemowin* as the language of instruction in many Cree First Nation schools.

The first thing I realized was that it was the Scottish fur traders who named us "Cree". They worked for the *Hudson's Bay Company* and were the first Europeans who came into our territories. The company itself assumed by its charter granted by Great Britain that ownership of the lands was theirs, because of the exclusive trading rights contained in the document. Therefore, they began to name Indigenous peoples and places on their maps and reports sent to the company headquarters in England. Those they traded with inferred a relationship in which they were the trading partners with the company fur traders. In a sense then, those Indigenous peoples were *their* trading partners. Naming something is a way for establishing ownership, or at least, that the name used establishes the mindset that the object named, is from the language used and therefore must belong to its users. For instance, naming *Turtle Island* as America sets the tone that it was "discovered" by the users of the language who named it and therefore it belonged to them. Some say that "Cris" is a French word (coming from the term

*Cristinaux*) – but why are we not “Cris” then? It apparently was a French Jesuit who, on a map made by the French, named much of the Cree territory. Naming something indicated that the name showed who was the owner. Of course, it is well known that the English and French fought over land and its resources and continued their wars over here. They wanted to dominate North America to have control over the resources much needed in Europe. So, I came to the realization that if we use the word “Cree” (or even “Cris”) to identify ourselves as Indigenous people, we are falling into the mindset of and from the English (or French) worldview and not from our own Indigenous worldview. We have allowed the use of the word “Cree” to identify who we are from the English point of view. Some of us even speak fluently in our heritage language but too few identify ourselves as *Nehinohwe Anisininnew*.

We have allowed ourselves to be seduced into using a foreign language, because it was more convenient to use and have inadvertently become trapped in the mindset contained in the language of use. Convenience is what is killing our language and people. It started to happen as the first Europeans arrived with their metal objects. Metal pots became more convenient to use than claw ones as were the rifles with bullets, canvas for tent coverings, synthetic fiber for clothes, then the canoes, and other items that were available at the trading posts. Even food became more convenient to buy. Then the English (or French) language became more convenient, trading for the handy articles the traders had. It also became easier to talk to other tribes who also had learned the foreign language, whereas before they all spoke different Indigenous languages.

The essence of *Nehinohwe* concepts and ideas, the basis of *Nehinaw Anisininnew* traditional view, is missing when English becomes the first language of use. The beauty and the ancient history in the words, ideas, concepts and stories, the cosmology, the psychology in the heritage language is missing. How the metaphors are constructed and unfolded in the language are not understood when English is used to translate the stories, because the “spirit” that is in *Nehinowawin* isn’t in the English language. The spirit in the word is what gives it life – just as the spirit in a person gives life to the body. English (also French and Spanish) has completely corrupted the Indigenous worldview, erasing any trace of Indigenous concepts, ideas and replacing it with its own spirit expressed in its worldview. How to extract ourselves from the European mind-set and to return to *Nehinohwe Anisininnew pehkiskwewin* is the challenge we face. That is also the challenge faced by many

other Indigenous peoples. Let me provide a couple of examples to illustrate this from *Nehinhowaywin*.

Some Cree speakers talk about their spirit or soul as *achak*. They can also refer to a star as *achakos* and they know star-blankets as *acak akoop*. There is all too often no understanding of the connection between those words. To many, *Nehinhowak kahkanahtissit achak* refers to the “Holy Ghost” from the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity. The meaning of *Kahkanasitachak* in *Nehinhowaywin* is the “Great Sacred Spirit”. The English language used by the Christians has co-opted a *Nehinhoway* word and concept, appropriated the word and has made it its own. The English worldview has also established itself in the example of using words like *iskweo*. It has turned the word into “squaw” with its own twisted and gross meaning.

We therefore must turn ourselves around and discontinue using someone else’s diminished view of us and about the rest of the natural world that has been named in English. We need to start using our own word for declaring and understanding ourselves. Some Indigenous peoples like the Dakotas, Dine, Inuit, Seneca, Mapuche, Maori, and Sami have kept their own word for identifying themselves. However, I imagine they, too, may have the same challenge in attempting to revitalize their heritage language. The back-to-original language movement has an overwhelming task of shedding the overlay of the Eurocentric worldview already entrenched in many Indigenous languages. To survive and to retain its own worldview, each Indigenous language must go through this transformation.

*I realized how real and existential it becomes (to actually survive!), what you are saying during my time in the Arctic, learning about Inuit place names. There is incredibly much in them! They are multidimensional as they are loaded with several layers of meaning coming from many experiences and stories of the past. Béatrice Collignon (2006, 202) talks about a “geosophy” that goes beyond a practical and efficient geographical knowledge. I very much like the term. “It encompasses feelings, dreams, hopes, values, and beliefs.” (ibid.) I was completely amazed to see how naturally elders were able to travel on the land that looked just snowy and white for me – all the same – and how safe we were with them finding our way back. All their wisdom lies in the names they found for their environment. Yet, there was no “possession” involved in the naming, rather, a closeness and intimacy with the land that was ever changing, dynamic and relational.*

Yes, an evolving respectful and honourable relationship with the land; not to dominate it – all that is expressed through language. Indigenous knowledge may be understood when translated into spoken or written English, French or Spanish, but the source of that knowledge can best be understood only from the Indigenous language itself.

*This is also reflected in what is called “hermeneutics”, the theory and methodology of interpretation. Here, it is obvious, if you want to decipher the meaning of a word, you have to go back to the original language, to the “Urtext” – nothing else is what the practice of exegeses is all about (Danner 2021).*

*Moreover, the source of the knowledge an “exegete” is after, is not just in the “Urtext”. If you want to get really close, you have to find the language’s “seat in life” (German: Sitz im Leben). You have to expose yourself to where the language came from. When we do that, it sometimes happens that we even understand something on a level beyond language. I think this happens through grace, you cannot make it. It comes out of a relational moment where spiritual worlds meet or bodies communicate – but for that we have to open up, let go and expose our vulnerability.*

*On a very cold winter day, I went out on the land with elders and youth for a fishing-trip. We sat in the sled for many hours and I started losing parts of my body to the cold. Late in the afternoon, we arrived at the camp and I realized that one of my toes was frozen – I stayed for the night, but had to get back to the village the next day (it turned black). After another long, cold day on the back of a skidoo of a hunter who was on his way home, I arrived. The woman I was working with was waiting for me. She didn’t say much, took my boot off, opened her parka and hold my bare foot on her belly. I felt ashamed and tried to resist, but then let go – and understood so much.*

In order for us to understand how the replacement from one language to another seemed to happen so easily, I needed to turn to the history of the relationship between Canada and First Nations and the role of the Christian churches in how that happened.

The undeclared war on Indians started with the first Prime Minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald (1815–1891), who used his own English language as one of the strategies in implementing his desire to eradicate “the Indians”

forever with the support of the Canadian legislators. Here, Cindy Blackstock's (2020) remarks on the "Colonial Rule of Law" as a "Rule of Injustice" are very instructive and accurate, particularly to analyse current forms of long ingrained and perpetuated injustices towards Indigenous people in Canada. For instance, in 2018, the rule of law allowed Canada's youth jails to be filled with nearly 50 percent Indigenous children, despite Indigenous children only being eight percent of the population. The law is never neutral – particularly when it affects Indigenous peoples that Canadian and British law have spent centuries oppressing.

An 1884 amendment to the *Indian Act* (1876) mandated education for Indian children, to bring them to read and write English. It led to the creation of the Indian residential school system (see 1.). The desired effect was, I believe, based on the assumption that Canada would no longer eventually have to comply with the 1763 *Royal Proclamation* (that asserted the English people in the new colonies had to make legal deals with the Indians regarding land title), if there were no more Indians. The Canadian government quickly enticed the churches to do the actual work – and they couldn't resist the prime opportunity to do their Christianizing. Thus, they jumped at the chance to run the residential schools, subsidized by the federal government. The balance between the churches' mission and providing a healthy development of its students was definitely in favor of the mission and this has been well documented (see RCAP Final Report 1996, and TRC Final Report, 2015). It was the beginning of systemic cultural genocide (TRC 2015, 1) that used the language of instruction as the primary weapon. The languages used to educate and maintain order and control in the institutions, maintained and preserved the Eurocentric worldview. And this is still the case in most First Nations and other Indigenous peoples' schools.

Young children were held as hostages away from their parents and disconnected from their homelands. Because most of the schools were far away from their home communities, the children didn't get to continue to learn their heritage languages completely. Their Indigenous cultural socialization was also thwarted and they could not develop a full understanding of Indigenous knowledge.

Meanwhile in the children's home communities, the churches were at work using the same process. The missionaries were learning the Indigenous languages and using it to convert the Indigenous peoples away from their ancestral belief system.

*Being able to understand and speak a language means to have power (that is why we feel helpless arriving in a country where we don't understand what people are saying). In German, the term "Sprachbeherrschung" somewhat reflects that – it means to "master" or "control" a language. A lot of missionaries knew that. They quickly tried to learn Indigenous languages – and as you mentioned above – translated the bible to have the means to infiltrate their beliefs. In his article "Sprachbeherrschung und Weltherrschaft" (English "language mastering and world domination"), Wolfgang Reinhard writes that Europeans were able to dominate Indigenous peoples by leaning their languages, colonizing their grammar and penetrating into their spiritual world for their own means. Their control over Indigenous languages helped them to manipulate. Hence, language turned into a devious instrument of rule and power (Reinhard 1987, 27).*

Exactly, that is the very reason why I don't like to use the linguistic approach to teaching Cree. It uses Standard Roman Orthography (SRO) invented by linguists who are "standardizing" the Indigenous languages using microns and telling us how to write our language. That is why I write Nehinowaywin phonetically.

Churches were also behind the movement of making it illegal for Indigenous people to practice their ceremonies. If there were any ceremonies conducted, they had to be done undercover or people would have ended up in jail. Even to this day, there are many people who practice their traditional ceremonies in secret.

*An Inuk I worked with in Inuvik once told me that he still trembles and ducks when he uses Inuktitut instead of English, because he expects to be smacked on the head ...*

... this could be the reason why so many Indigenous people defer to non-Indigenous people in intercultural situations.

Forbidding the children to speak in their heritage languages and forcing them to speak English or French became standard practice. Because the heritage language forms the base of identity and relationships contained in the worldview, this was how cultural genocide was to be completed. However, no one from the First Nations was the wiser, because it was, after all, very convenient to use English. Those who resisted, were too few. The rest were too busy trying to survive in the harshest conditions, including other cultural weapons used against them.

Language has power; power to change a life, change a culture, sustain a culture, power to destroy, power to create (trip to the moon), power to annihilate (weapons of mass destruction), power to enhance the quality of life, to enable love, or peace. It has the power to tell us who we are, who we think we are, who we are not. It has the power to create monsters, to create kings, and rulers. It also has the power to control. One language can be used to dominate others. It can also be used to provide a way to freedom. It can be used to praise, and it can be used to shame. It can be used to unite all people and it can be used to divide people. It can be used to bring harmony amongst people, and it can be used to get people to war against each other.

How we use language is up to each of us to decide how we will dedicate ourselves to using this powerful force. Decide wisely. It can be used to provide truth, and it can also be used to deceive (“fake news”). Choose wisely. It can be used to transfer knowledge and wisdom and it can be used to promote twisted knowledge and ignorance. It can be used to transfer intergenerational knowledge to revitalize, retain, and maintain itself as a language and culture. As we have pointed out, it can be used as a weapon to eradicate other languages and cultures.

So, now at this time, the attempts to revitalize the Indigenous languages are more often than not mere translations from English, French or Spanish to Indigenous languages. We have inadvertently taken over John A. Macdonald’s mission ourselves. When Indigenous communities are in the process of recapturing their heritage languages, great care must be taken to not fall into the trap. Because it is convenient to use English, it appears to be the easiest way to teach Indigenous languages, especially so when the children’s first language is English. This scenario merely increases the difficulty when using second-language teaching methods. Those methods originate in the European worldview. Using them may simply be falling deeper into the Eurocentric trap.

*The Inuk Tanya Tagaq (2019, 50) remembers that she felt deficient in her Inuinaktun class. She writes that she hated it. “My mother never speaks to me in Inuktitut anymore. Residential schools have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of progress, in the name of decency. Everyone wanted to move forward. Move forward with God, with money, with white skin and without the shaman’s way. It made me wonder what I was not being taught. It made me wonder why the teachings I was receiving felt like sandpaper against my skin. It*



*made me sad to have Inuktitut slip away. [...] So much has slipped away these days. [...] We cut and paste words from our ancestry onto our paper-doll versions of ourselves and everyone feels a little bit empty.”*

I believe we need to stop the Indigenous language revitalization offering Indigenous immersion programs that are inadvertently teaching Indigenous languages from that Eurocentric view. To do so will kill the Indian worldview that is inherent and basic in the survival of heritage Indigenous languages. If we are to successfully launch Indigenous heritage languages revitalization, it must be offered from the Indigenous worldview. Each Indigenous language contains that worldview and must be honored and held to be sacred. That way, each child will know who they are, who their ancestors were, and will learn their ancient ancestral knowledge and traditions. From my own experience, the best place to re-learn my heritage language is out on the land. After all, that's where it was developed many centuries ago. Teaching, learning, and living within the Indigenous paradigm using ancient heritage cultural patterns as a base is what I have called *Indigegogy*. In the end, culture is a prescription for living. It should be possible to do.

*Here, too, I am eager to weave in supportive thoughts coming from the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Two main ideas I find most important for what you say: Firstly, Wittgenstein states: “And to imagine a language, means to imagine a form of life.” (Wittgenstein 2003, PI 19) For me this entails exactly what you say: You can't learn a language without living it. Indigenous languages revitalization programs starting from English are weird and twisted from the very beginning. To give an example: How can you re-learn the many words for snow in Inuktitut, if you have just one word to start from (“snow”)? In order to “re-vitalize” them, you will have to go out there on the ice and snow and experience the difference! Moreover, Humboldt already warned us that we usually start to learn a new language from the grammatical framework we are familiar with. We always start with a structure we know and try to somehow fit the new language into it. In order to avoid this trap, robbing the uniqueness of the language we want to learn, so he suggests, we have to learn a new language in its own right. (Elberfeld 2014, 59)*

*The second idea coming from Wittgenstein talks about “language games”. By that he wants “to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is*

*part of an activity” (Wittgenstein 2003, PI 23). If you want to learn a language, it won’t be enough to memorize vocabularies and to study grammar structures. You have to “practice” a language and experience it embedded in the lifestyle where it came from. Otherwise, you learn dead words and lifeless technical sentences without understanding their real or deeper meaning, because “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein 2003, PI 43). To me, this is a very relational and circular approach to keeping languages alive. It calls for an experiential way of learning, e.g. on the land doing things together and learning in traditional way.*

Thank you for this – yes, that is why land-based education is so important! Youth are on the land where the language emerged and was developed. It must not be in a foreign language. It must be in the Indigenous language, otherwise the relationship with the land will evolve from the foreign language with its own language design. The English version will automatically be to “rule dominion over land and nature”, rather than from the Indigenous language that is based on relating to the land as part of the self. The word “land” in the Indigenous languages I’m aware of has a totally different meaning than the English term. *Askii* in *nehinowaywin* entails the total earth ecosystem, everything is interdependent with everything else.

It strikes me as supreme irony that I am writing this in English. However Indigenous language survival has to start where we are at the moment. Every tool available is essential. My hope is that my grandchildren will carry on the quest to preserve, maintain, and perpetuate *Nehinaw Annisnew* knowledge and worldview, because it contains the heart and spirit I see needed to restore the balance with the natural world that the Eurocentric view has completely upset and continues to make waste of.

*Mh, “supreme irony” – yes, we somehow meet on this strange middle-ground “English”, which is not my mother tongue either. It is my hope that exchanging thoughts and experiences using English as a vehicle opens a room between us for an awareness on a deeper level.*

Perhaps that is also why we have to invent new words like “Indigegogy” to express this new grounding...?

*Philosophically and practically, we cannot afford to lose the Nehinaw Annisnew knowledge and worldview. Even Pope Francis sees that in his encyclical “Laudato si” when he writes: “Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out.” (Pope Francis 2015, 74) Although this sounds great, the question still remains, what does this actually look like in practice? What does “showing respect” look like concretely? There is still a lot of “talking about” going on and not so much “talking with”, including the honest acknowledgement that one might lack the knowledge and skills, others have. We need the knowledge and wisdom that is captured in several Indigenous languages around the world to understand how much we depend on a relational and cyclical worldview to restore the balance in our lives.*

Absolutely! In order for us to set things right, we need to understand our original connection to the cosmos and know what *Nehinowain* means. The late Don Settee of Pimicikamak was the first person I heard talking about the meaning of the word. This was way back in the sixties. According to him, the word *neho* is in it. It is the word for “four”: There are four dialects, four cardinal directions (or four winds), four stages of human development, four seasons, four dimensions of a human being (body, mind, heart, and spirit), four parts of a day (dawn, noon, sunset, and night time), and the other four directions, inward, outward, up, and down. According to this idea, the number “four” is a sacred symbol and that is the reason, why we call ourselves *Nehinohwawininniwak* (people who speak in the four sacred ways) or what we refer to as the “celestial circle” or “circle of life”. This concept is often misrepresented as *The Medicine Wheel*. According to the late Philip Deer, a Muskogee, this is a mixed metaphor. If it is to represent an Indigenous worldview, it must be inaccurate, because the wheel arrived with the first settlers. Thus, Indigenous peoples need to understand their own creation story as told in their own language and find the words that describe who they are.

*A former (German) professor of the First Nation University who is married to a Mushkegowuk Inninew woman once gave me the well-known little book*

called “The Sacred Tree”. I am very glad to learn from you now, that there are many sides to the story of the “Medicine Wheel”, because I trusted what is said in the book: “This is an ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America.” (Lane et al. 1985, 9) Although it states that there can be many different ways that this basic concept is expressed, nobody seems to question the term “wheel” – here again it shows how important it is to become aware of what language does and how much it is grounded in experience.

I also find it problematic to use symbols that mix several, sometimes even very distinctive traditions, trying to find the lowest common denominator or creating a mishmash that takes away the uniqueness of a culture and pigeonholes or even lies – a famous example of this is Karl May’s “Winnetou”. Also, this comes close to what Chimamanda Adichie (2009) calls “The Danger of a Single Story”. “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

What we are doing is not a single story then. Instead, our story has multiple lines like a braid that makes it stronger or shows how multiple colours like the pride flag can represent a positive perspective! I’m not at all promoting that we shouldn’t learn other languages, rather the opposite. The more languages a person speaks, the better he or she understands about other peoples’ views of the world from their unique perspectives. It is also true that there are many similarities of how languages are constructed. It helps to know of the common threads that promote healthy, equalitarian, liberating, and non-harmful relationships.

What we need to avoid are dangerous ideas and concepts that originate in languages, which dominate and establish powerful empires that invade and seek to displace other languages in subtle ways, resulting in damaging relationships. This is also reflected in the ways we deal with our natural environment. Our planet is precious, and we must retain its natural form as much as possible and not allow artificial interventions to take over – the way we speak and what language we use, makes a difference. I already mentioned that the construction of *Nehinowaywin* reveals a cosmic relationship. When people think of ancestors coming from a star (in our case the North Star), they seem to automatically think that we are talking about human beings. However, the concept *kaakinow niiwaakoomakanak* means,

that *all* living beings are considered relatives. Therefore, any of our ancestors could have arrived from the star in any other life-form.

I was assisting my daughter Alex offering an “Aboriginal Awareness” training session for the employees of a mining company just north of our home First Nation. We explained that we consider rocks as our grandfathers (and softer rocks as our grandmothers) and that we treat them just like family members, with care. Right away a geologist exclaimed how silly that is, because a rock is a rock. I replied that because he was a man of science, he must believe in the atomic theory, which claims that all matter is made of molecules. Each molecule is made up of atoms. Each atom has a nucleus of a positive proton(s) with electrons whirling around it. The density of the matter depends on the number of protons and electrons. Nothing is completely solid. With all that energy, it surely must be considered “alive”.

By the way, here we find also some sort of “scientific proof” of the concept of relationality. It is the “relationship” between the proton(s) and the electrons that keep the world together. From the micro-level of atoms to the macro-level of the solar system and beyond to the galaxies, their dancing around each other keeps the universe together. Without these “family” systems in tight relationships and the motion or life between them, things may just fall apart. According to the Big Crunch theory, the whole universe will implode on itself several billions of years from now. There is an equivalent story told by the Abenaki that ends with “at the end of creation the hunters will catch the bear” (referring to the star constellations). I believe that Einstein also understood the power of relationships. His language was mathematics. He also warned us not to use the theory to manipulate its elements and to exploit nature to man’s selfish use.

*I just read Tanya Tagaq’s “Split Tooth”. Tanya is a well-known Inuk throat singer who grew up in Iqaluktuuttiaq (Cambridge Bay, Nunavut). I couldn’t read her book all at once, because the bodily, emotional and spiritual sensations it contains and provokes are overpowering. What I find so interesting from a language-perspective is that although Tanya writes in English, she is able to convey her culture and the brokenness of it in such a shocking clarity that people coming from different cultural contexts have a hard time with her stories. Even one of the leading German newspapers, the “Süddeutsche Zeitung”, reflected on that. The reviewer Lea Schneider (2020, 11) writes that Tagaq resists any (Western) main-*

*stream genre including a linear storyline, a clear distinction between individual and group and between human beings, the spirit world and the natural environment. The fact that a lot of critics seem to be irritated by her courageously open “mythobiography”, mixing poems, teenage journal entries including horrific descriptions of abusive and violent behaviour, corporeal and sexual sensations and an intimate connection with the land, only shows how successful she is, bridging the multiple worlds she grew up in by using the language of the colonizer and yet breaking out of it in a way that reflects her unfaltering and undefeatable identity. Although the book came out in German this year, it was impossible for the translator to communicate the depth of her narration in yet another language.*

What a great example! Yes, it is so very hard to translate relational languages without losing too much of its multifaceted context and thus its actual meaning. Relational thinking is in the language. It is only natural that speakers/writers who use their heritage language think and communicate within that way of thinking. Using a foreign language designed to communicate in a non-relational way creates a problem for them as they attempt to express themselves in a low context/high content fashion. Western society and thus languages place the individual in the context, in relational societies the context contains the individual. He or she finds him- or herself within the universe. *As such, no one ‘owns’ the universe. No one ‘owns’ any land. Human beings are merely in relationship to the land and the universe.* Individualism requires the person to construct the context, relationality requires the context to situate the person.



## 4. The Birch Bark Canoe and the Great Ship *American Hegemony*

As an Indigenous American learning to use the tools of Western science, I feel much like I am in a birch bark canoe on the open ocean at night trying my best to keep from being swamped and then dragged along in the monstrous wake of the passing great ship *American Hegemony*. While I am busy steadying my canoe, I am also trying to send a message to those at the controls of the great ship. I know that smoke signals won't work, especially in a canoe made of birch bark. So, I turn to my laptop computer with its waning battery power to send messages to those on-board *American Hegemony* who may be surfing the net. One of the messages I send is actually one that my deceased father had given me when I was quite a bit younger. We were out on the trap-line at that time and I think he may have picked up from my body language that I was impatient to get back home to my buddies on the reserve. The bush was his home and he was relaxed while he was out there. So, I suppose sensing my anxiety to get things finished quickly, he put his hand on my shoulder, looked me in the eye, not a common practice among Crees, and said something like the following: "It doesn't really matter at all that much, if you go with haste and great speed or if you go calmly and slowly, because you will arrive at eternity at exactly the same time." Since looking someone in the eye was not part of the cultural pattern, you knew when it happened, what was going to be said was very significant.

I've remembered that quite often when I became aware of my impatience to get things done. Those folks on board the great ship would do well to keep that in mind as well. They don't need to keep the power on its maximum threshold of performance continuously. Doing that puts undue stress and strain on the infrastructure of the great ship and unnecessary prolonged stress has a way of revealing any weakness in the structure. But it seems that the folks on board are preoccupied with the wonders of the discoveries of the voyage to take any notice of messages coming from outside their contained environment. The great ship *American Hegemony* proceeds on its way scooping up whatever natural resources it needs for its progress, processes them for its own uses, and dumps the waste behind



it. So, there's all this garbage left in its wake. If the leftovers were harmless and biodegradable, it wouldn't be such a big problem. However, an accumulation of toxic waste could reach a critical mass at which point disastrous long-range consequences could be triggered.

Meanwhile, back on board the great ship, those who are concerned with the security of the vessel have been developing ways to protect themselves from unseen future threats to their way of life, even to the extent of developing deadly pathogens to be used against an imagined future enemy, just in case. If the ship ever sinks like the *Titanic*, one can only try to imagine the catastrophe that will ensue. But there is no concern, the captain tells us, because they have everything under control. After all, they have the most modern of high-tech systems monitoring and continuously assessing their progress. But my observation from my flimsy canoe is that those systems of analysis they employ are not unlike mirrors they have stuck onto the side of the ship, like rear-view mirrors on an automobile, and reflect mostly their own image of the ship that is greatly admired by everyone on board. They even turn the mirrors outward, but they cannot see anything in their reflection and their instruments and thus believe that it is nothing to worry about, lulling them into a false sense of security.

Another message I want to send to those on board is that we need other ways than using only mirrors for analyzing and assessing our human conditions. One of these ways is to look to our Indigenous American ancestors who were able to develop ways of thinking about their place in the environment which respected all forms of life while creating systems which took care of many people. Having access to those ways of viewing and analyzing our world may provide people engaged in science yet one more framework that may prove useful in some contexts. Indigenous American researchers need time and resources to spend on finding and articulating those methodologies that developed the birch bark canoe and kayak, and agricultural practices that now feed so much of the world population. When these researchers are ready, they too will share these methodologies with those aboard *American Hegemony* just as their ancestors welcomed those who appeared on their shores aboard the *Mayflower*. Who is to say that what they discover may prove useful in setting a course for *American Hegemony* that avoids future drastic consequences for all life on earth?

To state it another way, our desire as Indigenous Americans to conduct research in our communities was dampened somewhat by the perspectives on

knowledge developed from Western science. Although social scientists have been struggling with the ingrained biased Western science cultural paradigm for some time now, the shifts in the research paradigms have not been enough, from my point of view, for them to escape their cultural boundedness. Since a greater part of my identity and social affiliation is Indigenous, I feel compelled to do something about it.

The question we are considering in this book is, whether or not there are structures in Indigenous American thinking and logic that guide the process of inquiry in that tradition and that now could prove useful in enhancing the quality of life for all life. If we are to find and use those concepts and ideas from the Indigenous traditions, we need to explore the Indigenous languages. Too many Indigenous languages are lost forever. We will never find out what gems of old concepts they contained that could have been used to enhance our current quality of life. Let us not squander the opportunity to do that now with the existing ones.

*Your story of the birch bark canoe and the great ship hit home for me (I like the expression of “hitting home”, it doesn’t exist in German but says so much). I wasn’t very good in school, I guess I didn’t quite fit to what the German school system considered valuable – at least not when it comes to performances that show in grades. Some teachers said that I am too much of a “dreamer”. It was a troublesome experience for me to be on that big iron ship without the ability to escape its logic. I felt small and of minor value.*

*Western philosophy is still very powerful with its striving for objective rationalism and academic perfection. However, I also sense the shifts and openings for other ways of knowing, allowing for a more holistic and intercultural approach. The German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1996) uses a similar metaphor to yours talking about “Shipwreck with Spectator”. It is a daunting task for many academics to leave their “safe haven” and to jump in the open sea – however, we can only learn to swim, if we are willing to become wet. Maybe you can teach me to paddle with you in your canoe?*

I think, though, that before you jump ship on the open ocean from Hegemony, you have to make sure to see an Indigenous craft available for the rescue! Yes, most people feel safer in their own language and worldview. Few are willing to take a

risk. I'm glad I went along with Western education because I learned a lot about the system and how it affected me and other Indigenous peoples. In hindsight I always felt I had a way out and that I could intuitively separate Western knowledge from Western culture.

## 5. Indigenous Spirituality, Relational Self and the Academe

Several years ago, when my wife Peggy and I went to a conference in Georgia, we left the conference venue and went for a walk on that beautiful campus during the lunch break. The weather was fine with most of the trees still having leaves on while many of them had gone into winter mode with hardly any leaves. The grass was still plush and green. It was a beautiful January day and we were enjoying the warm weather; so different from the wind and cold that we had left behind in Regina. We headed toward a ravine and walked along a steep bank that dropped down to a creek that was winding along its course toward its final destination, the Atlantic Ocean.

As we walked, I suddenly had an overwhelming feeling of being welcomed in a powerful way, yet with a sense of sadness; a melancholy feeling. That feeling is hard to describe. It was as if I suddenly entered a slow-motion time zone where all my senses were simultaneously stimulated. Even though it probably lasted only less than a second on the clock, it felt like a whole new world had opened up for me and I was a time-traveller. The message emanating from that spot of earth felt like it was telling me something. Not in a human language, but it was nevertheless communication. It was a wistful feeling and yet, I knew that I was being welcomed. I was momentarily suspended in time and spell bound, kind of like a magnet had a hold of me. As I was telling Peggy about the feeling, we were both left in awe of our surroundings, wanting to remain there to fully appreciate the rapture of the experience. So, we lingered a while longer before we headed back to the conference.

Later that night an image came to me. I don't know if it was a dream I was experiencing while I was asleep or if it was a vision that came to me just at the moment I was waking up. Whatever it may have been, it woke me up with a start. The image was very clear and remains clear to this day. It was of a person who was very emaciated, I guess what you would say just "skin and bones" and his nondescript clothing was tattered and weather-beaten, worn and just barely covering what was left of him. This person was walking along in a very desolate area where there wasn't

anything growing. But he had been clever enough to not eat up all the provisions that he was carrying with him in a little bag tied loosely around his waist. Nor had he drunk all the water that he had brought with him in some sort of bag. He knew he had to ration his supplies. As he was trudging along, he kept peering out into the horizon, looking for the far edge of this desolation. He had barely enough energy to walk. He kept up his momentum by slightly leaning his body forward so that the weight of his body would keep him going and just barely moving his feet. He was desperate and needed to keep going. He was exhausted.

All of a sudden, he could see in the distance something that renewed his energy. He saw very lush vegetation. He opened his eyes wider and quickened his pace. He leaned forward a little bit more so he could hurry. As he got closer, he could see the beauty and the bounty of this place. He could see all the lush vegetation, the fruit, and lot of natural foods to eat. He used up his remaining energy and rushed into this place and began grabbing for this and that. He was vigorously filling his prolonged hunger, because he had been keeping himself just above starvation for such a long time. As he was doing this, he didn't pay any attention to the people that were there, he was leaning over them, and pushing them off balance. They didn't fall over though, but they were off balance, and he too was off balance as he was extending his reach to gather as much as he could. This was the clear image I saw and related to Peggy at three in the morning. She told me to go back to sleep.

We finished the conference and caught the plane back to Regina. While we were on the plane, I napped as I usually do while I am on a plane and when I awoke, we were somewhere between Minneapolis and Regina. We had caught a connecting flight in Minneapolis. I was looking down at the prairie from 30,000 feet and was imagining what it would have been like, if I could have seen from up there what it would have been like 200, 300, or 500 years ago. I could see moving carpets of buffalo. I could see camps of our ancestors here and there. And as I was thinking about these images, I remembered an experience that I had several years before.

It was in late summer or early fall, somewhere in the southern wheat fields of Saskatchewan. The crops had been harvested leaving the stubble. It was a beautiful sunny day. I began to wonder what it would have been like on that particular spot 300 years before. I was imagining that there would be many buffalo on the plains and in those clumps of willows or in the bush in the gulley there would be some deer. There would also be prairie chickens all over the place, and the sky would be full of geese and other fowl on their annual fall migration south. Perhaps in the

bluff by the creek over there would be a camp. My ancestors might have camped there.

I went down into that bush and was walking around looking and imagining all these things. In mid-step it occurred to me suddenly that if my ancestors, if our ancestors, had been living here for thousands of years some of them might have even died right here, right on this spot that I was going to place my next footstep. I stopped and was thinking if that were the case, I'm walking on sacred ground. If my ancestors had died here, their remains would still be here. Their decomposed remains would have become part of the soil. That would mean the grass that's growing here would be getting its nourishment from the soil. My ancestors' genes are in the grass. They are likewise in the tree and in the worm that lives on the leaf of the tree and in the bird that eats the worm, in the elk and buffalo that eat the shrubs. When I eat the deer meat, I too am getting nourishment from my ancient ancestors. That is the great circle or cycle of life. Somehow the two experiences, although years apart, had common grounding that I will return to later.

When you go by yourself into the woods, you are not alone. You are there with the birds. You are there with the trees. You are there with the grass. You are there with your ancestors. That is how I felt when I was growing up on the trapline. Even when I was by myself, I never felt alone. I finally understood how we are all related.

When we got back to Regina, I was anxious to tell my story to someone who would listen. I have some good friends there who would take the time to listen to whatever manner of things I have to tell. I was very eager to tell of my experience to my friends, and I think the first one I found was Eber Hampton. I told him that I needed to tell him something, something exciting that had happened to me, but I didn't know what to do with it. We went for coffee and I told him the story about the experience that I had in Georgia. He kept looking at me in a funny way as I was talking, and I couldn't figure out why he was looking at me like that. After I finished my story he said, "I understand, I had a similar experience." He told me that when he was at Harvard University, he had to go out every once in a while to get away from the university and away from the city. He found a little valley in New England, where he used to go. He felt at home there and would go there to pray. He said the first time he found this place, he felt at home and he felt like the ancient ones were there. He felt the old people were there, as if his ancestors were there. This is why he used to pray and burn sweet grass and smudge in that little valley. He noticed a construction site starting up in the same valley.

A couple of months had passed since the last time he was there when there was a knock on the door at his office at the university. He invited the person to enter. Here was an older Asian man with some long paper rolled up under his arm. This old man explained that he was with a group of people who wanted to build a meditation center. Then they realized that they were getting ahead of themselves. The old man said they forgot to get permission from Native Americans first, because being foreigners and immigrants they needed to get permission to go ahead and build their meditation center. They needed permission from the original inhabitants of the area, because they came from other lands. Eber asked him where the place was. The old man unrolled a map and showed him the location. It happened to be in that same valley, Eber had been going to. He told the old man, “I’ve already done that. I’ve already prayed there.” So, they prayed together and the old man left satisfied.

I was happy that I found someone who understood my Georgia experience. By Eber sharing his experience, I began to realize that it is not an extraordinary experience, it’s an ordinary experience. I started to feel good about it and I wanted to share it with others. I next found and spoke to Lionel Kinunwa, a Minnicunjo from South Dakota, who was in Regina at that time. I told him about my sad, yet welcomed feelings, and about the vision in Georgia. As I spoke, he kept nodding his head. When I finished, he looked at me and said: “You’ve had a 10,000-year-old experience.” I thought, “I’m only 50 years old, how can I have a 10,000-year-old experience?” And so, our conversation continued:

Lionel: “Think. What was here 10,000 years ago at this place where we’re sitting now?”

Me: “Well, they tell us there was a big sheet of ice here a mile high.”

Lionel: “Yes, and where do you think your ancestors were?”

Me: “I guess, they would have left when they saw the advancing sheet of ice, right?”

Lionel: “And where would they have gone?”

Me: “They would have looked for a good place to be. I don’t think they would go to the desert, because they wouldn’t be used to living in a desert.”

Lionel: “Well, where would they be?”

Me: “They’d probably go where there was lots of good stuff to eat and where they would be able to live easily.”

Lionel: “Yeah, and that’s where they would have been, in the southeast part of the continent, somewhere around Georgia. They moved down there, remained

there during the ice age. They were born there, and they died there, for thousands of years. Your ancestors were happy to see you, and that's why you had that feeling. They were glad to see one of their own kind, because they don't see Indian people there very often as Georgia is now populated by white people, right?"

As he was saying all of these things, I remember from my psychology classes at the university reading a story about a particular researcher who tried the following experiment. He made a little wooden box, filled it with sand after he had strung a number of fine wires through it and put some worms and food in the box. He then connected a bright light over the box and whenever he turned the bright light on, it also turned on a small electrical current in the wires. When the light was turned on an electric current also went through the wires that shocked the worms touching the thin wire. He did this only very briefly and watched to see what the worms would do. He noticed that every time he turned the light on, the worms flinched from the shock. After a few more shocks, he disconnected the battery to the fine wires. When he would turn the light on, the worms would still flinch anticipating that they were going to get a shock. He tried this a few more times and the worms kept doing the same thing. Then he took these worms out and put a new batch of worms into the box. He ground up the old worms for food for the new batch. When he anticipated that the new worms had sufficient time to have ingested the old worms, he flipped on the light. The new worms flinched. How did they know? How did they know they would get a shock? He reasoned that by eating the previous worms, the new worms had absorbed the information that was imbedded in the genes of the old worms they had ingested (see *Neo-Lamarckism*). To be honest, I doubt that this is scientifically sound, because worms would completely digest the DNA-material which doesn't hold that kind of information anyway. However, animals (and humans) unconsciously scent the smell of dead conspecifics and thus observe their environment with great attention. They get easily scared for example when exposed to bright light. Still, the worm-story holds great metaphorical value with regards to what Lionel was telling me.

He said: "We have memories, 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. Many of us do not pay attention to these memories, because we are too busy paying attention to what's going on in the modern world. We don't pay attention to our historic memory. But when somebody starts to play the drum, our spirit is moved. This is because the vibrations of the drum are stirring up these



old memories, our ancestral memories. These memories come out from the 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. We human beings, we two-legged beings, we think we are all-powerful, but we have limits to what we can do, we have limits to what we can see. We can't see everything, and some animals see things that we can't see."

I guess what he was telling me is that our vision is limited on the light spectrum. There are light frequencies that we are not able to perceive, that other beings can perceive. At the high and low end of the spectrum, there are some things that we can't see, but they are there, only not visible to us. We cannot see microwaves. We cannot see radio waves. If we were able to see everything, we wouldn't be able to pay attention to anything specific, to focus on only one thing at a time. The same applies to our hearing. We cannot hear everything. We can't hear the radio waves going through the air. We cannot hear the animals talking to each other. We can hear some of them, but there are some we can't hear, because our hearing is limited to a small spectrum of sound. Lionel also said that our bodies are the same, our core body temperature stays within a narrow range. Sometimes when our core body temperature goes above that range, or below that range, our bodies release certain chemicals and we experience a non-ordinary event. It's a natural experience, it's not supernatural, but we are not used to it. For instance, when a person is freezing to death and his core body temperature falls below the normal range, chemicals are released in the body and the person starts to feel at peace. The person, feeling peaceful, falls asleep before freezing to death. On the other hand, if your core body temperature goes above the normal range the opposite thing happens. Our bodies release certain chemicals that alter our consciousness. That is what happens when you go into a sweat lodge and your core body temperature goes above the normal range. We may have these non-ordinary experiences.

Lionel explained: "In Lakota, we have a word which describes the experience that you had: *Wampli-ee-wan-yankapee*. In our language that means, people have reached the stage of seeing or watching like eagles." According to Lionel, we can all have these experiences. However, it is mostly older people that have them and this is why they call it reaching the "age of walking with the eagles". You know when an eagle comes down on the ground, he has a hard time walking, because of his long talons and so he has to walk with a definite swagger. That is why old people

walk that way. They have reached the age of walking with the eagles. “Young people don’t ordinarily have those experiences, because they are interested in other things”, Lionel added. “It is as if you were sitting in a parking lot at a football game, where there are thousands of cars. You are sitting in the middle in your car trying to see past all the other cars. Because of the way they are parked, you aren’t able to see past more than one or two of them, by looking through the windows. If, however, all these cars were lined up precisely, you could look through all the windows and see past the parking lot. Sometimes we have those experiences where we can see things that we don’t normally see, because things are lined up in a certain way. That is the kind of experience that you had. You don’t have to go on a vision quest to receive these experiences. Some people are helped in having these experiences by going through a ceremony or a ritual.”

I had to think about all of this for a long time. As I found more people to tell my story to, I got more ideas about it. All this time, this vision, these images that I had, wouldn’t go away. They wouldn’t leave me alone. I could understand how it was that I got the feeling of being welcomed when it happened. I can understand that feeling now, but I couldn’t understand it then. I couldn’t understand what the tinge of melancholy or sadness was about. I couldn’t understand the sadness until I suddenly started to remember my history classes in university. When I was thinking about my ancestors living in Georgia at a time when the Europeans started to come in large numbers, President Andrew Jackson (regency 1829–1837 had trouble deciding what to do, because some of the early Americans were telling him that they had to be careful. These early Americans said they had to respect the Indian people that were there. However, there was another group of Americans who said that they were strong enough to take the land for themselves, away from the Indians and that they would move the Indians, giving them another piece of land in exchange. Jackson listened to this latter group and he ordered the U.S. army to forcefully remove as many or most of the Indian people who were living in that area and bring them somewhere else (see *Indian Removal Act* from 1830). We’ve all heard of the “Long March” or the “Trail of Tears”. In 1838 our ancestors were forcefully removed from Georgia (about 60,000 people in total from Southeastern United States) and brought to what they called the “Indian Territories” in Oklahoma. A few escaped, and their ancestors are apparently still living in the swamps of Florida. We also know that the U.S. Army was ordered to clear the area of the “Indians” and in so doing killed many of them. The soil

contains the remains of my ancestors. It then transmits the story to the plants that grow there. The plants I stepped on relayed that sad story to me. I was in a receptive mode at this moment and, like catching an infection, became a host. This forceful removal of my ancestors was what the sadness was all about.

When Alice Keewatin read these lines, she shared yet another valuable analysis of what happened. She explained that what I experienced could have been the vibration and frequency of the plant (and the environment) which matched and harmonized with my receptive open frequency. The plant's (and the environment's) information including its generational information, resonates at a certain frequency. When I came in contact with it, I entered an open and relaxed state of gratitude. My unique combination of ancestral DNA and openness, was very close to the environment's frequency, so I harmonized with it and was able to pick up the frequency of the environment. She also mentioned that Lionel also explained that there are "pockets of energy" (certain frequencies or realms that exist from the past – like a sacred place where others have died or where events have taken place – and when we walk into them, we resonate with them and are able to experience different realms or times).

*Reading your lines brings back memories of a conversation I had a few years ago with the psychologist Mark Freeman where he shared a similar experience with me. As a person with Jewish background, he attended a conference in Berlin and also all of a sudden had an extremely intense experience of great sadness. In an article where he describes what happened, he talks about his theory of the "narrative unconscious". It brings back memories which are alive, although we have not experienced them ourselves. He writes, "I couldn't help but wonder whether it was possible for the events of the past – terrible ones, in particular – to somehow leave traces, in the form of disturbed energy fields or some such thing. I wondered whether the past could somehow become inscribed in the present, whether it remained alive and operative. Would someone who stumbled upon a piece of land where a concentration camp once stood, without knowing where he or she was, feel anything different? Would there be traces or echoes, even ghosts of a sort? It's possible." (Freeman 2016, 514)*

*Referring again to the metaphor of culture as a web of meaning, we may say that the strings of history are attached to the web of our being today. Or, to use yet another image, we are born into the flow of history, we cannot escape it and*

*we carry it with us without being aware of it. When we come upon experiences that surface parts of this history and bring it into view, it can be quite startling and revelatory. However, we are not just passive receivers, we are also actively creating history. While we become part of this stream, we leave traces in it that impacts future generations.*

Next, I started to wonder, how does the vision of the emaciated person walking through the desert fit into all of this? At first, I thought, that withered person is me. I'm deprived spiritually and I'm looking to meet that need. I thought about this and while that is true on a personal level, there was something more than a personal message in the dream. I was able to relate the vision to the European migration to America. The vision presented an understanding of why the newcomers acted the way they did. I am not sure how helpful this understanding will be in trying to recover our collective imbalance. Perhaps it is in knowing what it is that is keeping us off balance, that will help us to do something about it. I recalled reading about European history in my high school and university classes and how the European nations were fighting amongst themselves for centuries. Every country in Europe has been involved in reshaping its political boundaries many times over. Because of increasing city populations and a dwindling agricultural base, production could not keep up with the exploding populations. The ruling classes only worsened the problem by skimming the cream of the crop for their own uses. The average person during this time was indeed in a deprived condition as the power structures made certain that there was always just barely enough food to keep the masses of people working or fighting against other nations. So, the wars were about resources. Access to these resources meant that the national states could feed their own people. The overpopulation drove adventurers to the so-called New World in search of new resources, returning with stories of bountiful riches for their taking. This is how the outward migration of people from Europe to the rest of the world began.

According to this interpretation, because the Europeans had experienced deprivation for generations, they could not control their over-reaction when they arrived in the "new" worlds. They were attempting to fill a centuries- old void in themselves. Their collective histories drove them to secure for their respective homelands as much of the new lands and resources as they could muster for their fellow citizens at home so they would never again experience deprivation. In their eagerness to claim everything for their own, they caught Indigenous peoples off

guard, pushing them off balance. For instance, the Europeans grabbed our Indian libraries according to some Elders. The information that our ancient ancestors had, was inscribed on gold plates and other artifacts in Central America. When the Spaniards came along, they didn't see the information on the gold plates, they just saw what to them was precious metal. The Spaniards demanded the Indians bring all the gold to them. The Indians were all suffering from the new diseases and experiencing devastation, they could not do much to resist. They melted and took our libraries to Spain and they used the gold to either pay for more armies or buy more goods to sustain their own people. And that is still happening. The Spaniards are in conflict with Canada for wanting to take the last fish from the ocean. They don't care if they take all the fish. They want to look after their people, and they don't realize how short-sighted that is.

Indigenous people all over the world are experiencing similar circumstances. We Indigenous people are off balance and we need to regain our balance. However, it doesn't matter if we regain our balance; as long as others are off balance, it's not going to work. We have to figure out how we are going to help the colonizers to stand on their own two feet. A lot of people find it strange that I say this, because they say the "Indian" has to learn to stand on his own two feet. It is not only the "Indian", though. Yes, we have to learn to stand on our own two feet, too, but it is more important for the bigger person (particularly by number), the white man, to learn to stand on his own two feet. We are smaller, so we have to convince white people that they are colonizing cultural bullies.

I have no suggestions about how we can do these things. That is why we gather once in a while to talk to each other and try to figure out ways in which we can regain our balance. We can't do it by ourselves, because we are interdependent, we live in relationships. We have to figure out how to say firmly, but with a good heart to the white man, "You're leaning on me too much."

*While we are writing this, we experience the pandemic crisis of Covid-19. This to me is a stark sign of how much we are "off balance". Although the virus doesn't make a difference between people, the difference of its impact is huge. It amplifies the great inequality we created. People living on the streets cannot stay home, because they don't have a home. Refugees on the Greek islands or people living in a Kenyan slum cannot keep a safe distance, because there is no room. There is not even clean water to wash their hands. It is still mostly the task of women to work*

*as care givers – at home and in hospitals or nursing homes, thus they do most of the work; yet, they still don't earn as much as men. Children in poor families are exposed to violence, because they cannot escape their small and overcrowded apartments. Indigenous peoples are among "high risk groups" because of their already fragile health conditions.*

*System-theory and cybernetics confirm your analysis: If the most powerful parts stick with their agenda, the hegemonial system is not changing. A few years ago, I spent some time in Kenya and Togo. Here, I learned about the concept of "transformative masculinity". It evolved out of the need to fight gender-based violence and it echoes with what you say: We are all interdependent and the burden to change cannot always lie on the shoulders of the weakest – in the African case, on women.*

*Indeed, your statement "that you have to figure out how you are going to help the colonizers to stand on their own two feet" can be rather startling at first. I think "standing on my own two feet" could be understood quite literally. If we are not able to fill the void in us, we are in danger of falling over, because we are just "one-legged". People often compensate their longing with something they find outside – they "lean" on others. However, finding balance has something to do with an inner healing journey. It primarily means to embrace the oppressed parts of myself, the "shadow" I feel ashamed of, which I would rather exclude or ignore. Thus, even in myself the hegemonial structure has to change to some form of "democratic self". I have to accept and learn to respect, maybe even love the parts of me that I dislike. Similar to your startling statement about helping the colonizers to stand on their own feet, I still try to wrap my head around Nora Samaran's (2019) assertion that "violence is nurturance turned backward" – somehow, I sense that she means something similar...*

I refer to the 'Nishga and other First Nations land claims that took many court cases to get resolved. It is ironic that it is First Nations who need to make a land claim in the courts to assert their territorial jurisdiction. The white man still isn't listening. He still wants all that land to himself. He hasn't got the good heart yet to say: "We will in turn share this land with the people who were here before, just as our ancestors who signed the treaty intended." The newcomers were welcomed because our ancestors had a different view of their relationship with the land. It could not be "owned" by anyone. Land didn't belong to anyone. People belonged

on the land and its resources were to be shared. But what happens now is that “Indians” belong on “their land”, the reservations, and the newcomers “own” all the rest of the land and its resources. The treaties state that “Indians” could still live their life-style on what was now the reservations as well as what is deemed to be now “Crown land”. During and immediately after the treaties there were few Europeans and if the population remained that way there would not have been the problems created by the large influx of newcomers. Because the new Canadian government now “owned” the land mentioned in the treaties, they could proceed to do with it what they wanted since they considered it to be their land. The white-man problem was created when millions of Europeans immigrated to Canada answering the call from the new super colony of Canada to come and settle here. (The Canadian Confederation was created by four British colonies of Upper and Lower Canada along with Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, joining to form the super colony of Canada.) Once on the land, the newcomers were given free land and the Crown land slowly became private land. The dwindling “Crown land” meant that “Indians” could no longer pursue their life-style of hunting, fishing, and using the natural resources that were now private land.

You see Indian people are sharing people. Not far from Edmonton there is a town called Wetaskiwin. In the Cree language, the name means something like, “Let’s live on this land together in a harmonious way.” Let’s share this land together, or something close to that meaning. My understanding from listening to stories told by Crees who know their history is that the Crees and the Blackfoot used to fight over that territory, because it was kind of like the border between them. They used to have battles between themselves until they made a treaty. That is why they called that place, *wee-taskay-win*. The name represents the concept of living together on this land in harmony with each other. Wetaskiwin does not mean we own this land, it means you too can come in and live here in peace. We share this land together. We Indigenous peoples have been too preoccupied for too long now with what has been keeping us off balance. We need to shift our attention to what it was that kept our ancestors in harmony with their environment. We need to regain that perspective and make ourselves adjust to the regained perspective.

I do realize that the dream or vision has other meanings. I’ve considered several of them and though they seem to provide some insight into my own personal psychological state and condition, I am convinced that the greater message is the interpretation I have presented. The profound insight from those two experiences

happening at about the same time and place has a message. The land can talk to a person who is aware of their surroundings; not in words, but in subtle vibrations as Lionel called them. We just need to take the time and make a space for it to happen. We can learn from the land, if we are open to it.

Another thought seems to be important here – it refers to the idea of the “relational self”. I came across this idea in the literature after I wrote about the concept (see Wilson 2001). I was fascinated by the idea, because it seemed to describe something that I was familiar with and I was wondering how I could present it. Pedersen’s (2000) discussion of the idea is based on his experiences with Asian peoples whom he claims live by the concept of a “relational self”. Western ideas on the other hand have made a sharp boundary between self and non-self. This Western construction is assumed to be universal. The relationship between individuals is viewed to be one of interdependence between individuals. Asian cultures apparently have different notions of self. For example, Confucianism suggests that there is a small self and a bigger self that is devoid of individuality. Apparently in Taoism, self is part of nature and they combine it in a harmonious relationship. Ho (1991), as cited in Pederson (2000, 50), states that there is a “methodological relationalism” that implies reciprocity, interdependence, and interrelatedness between individuals. Thus, Pederson reminds us that our relational responsibilities require that we incorporate them into our research methodologies. Other Asian perspectives view the self as interpersonal and inter-subjective reflecting the notion of the relational self. Indigenous Americans seem to include both the Taoist and other Asian philosophies.

*What you are saying here, shows why I find it so important to philosophize inter-culturally – we learn so much, also about ourselves, when we converse with other thought traditions. I, too, came across this notion of a “relational self” and was fascinated by it, searching for more. Here again, we are weaving a very similar pattern. I would like to bring in two more threads to strengthen our common fabric:*

*The first one also comes from East Asian philosophy. Knowing that these philosophies are very complex and diverse, I would like to highlight just two aspects: (1) self as “non-self” and (2) self as being “in between”. (1) describes the conviction that there is no permanent, underlying substance in humans. Rather, we come into being and develop ourselves through living in dependencies. In the*



*Buddhist tradition, the main reason for our suffering is that we believe in an encapsulated core self, which we have to protect, feed, satisfy, etc. (your vision of the emaciated person comes to mind). We strive for autonomy, while we ignore the basic fact of our relationality (see Elberfeld, 2017a, 298). (2) Being “in between” means that our being is utterly relational. It is born out of a dynamic and ever changing “in-betweenness”. Thus, Rolf Elberfeld (2010) states “self is not a thing, but a place”. It is a vibrant place, full of life.*

*The second thread I would like to weave into our joint fabric, argues in a similar direction. It goes back to Kenneth Gergen’s (2009) book “Relational Being” which placed the Western tradition of the independent self under critical scrutiny. Notably, he also linked his notion to a spiritual realm also referring to the Buddhist “inter-being” (ibid., 385). When I shared a brief summary of his book with you in one of our email-exchanges, you pointed out that you were impressed by his seeking for a common ground of various spiritual traditions that would recognize a sacred dimension in generative relationship. His idea of a transitive relational being reminded you of the Cree words wahohtowin (relations in action), sakihiwawin (love in action), pakosiwawin (hate in action), mentioning that all of them reflect a process. You wrote: “They are not static, not nouns as such, but are in the process of ‘being’ with the added notion of pastahowin and otchinawin as a possible outcome. Pastahowin is crossing the sacred line that has negative consequences. Otchinawin is similar to the idea of karma. This is also sometimes referred to as natural law.” In a very similar vein, Mark Freeman, whom I mentioned before, wrote a thought-provoking book called “The Priority of the Other: Thinking and Living Beyond the Self” (Freeman 2013). He, too, wants to move away from an ego-centric perspective of human beings to a more “ex-centric” perspective that affirms the importance of otherness in shaping our experiences. In speaking of “the other” he doesn’t only refer to people, but also to “non-human” others, like nature, the spiritual world, or art that take us beyond our ego.*

Nice, that you’ve picked that up – yes, what Gergen is saying resonates with me. I have heard North American Indigenous people refer to themselves as a squirrel, hawk, bear, or thunder-being. They weren’t just using those labels as a name they used to identify their individual characteristics or personalities. Rather, they identified themselves at different times as those beings. Colin Scott (1996, 81) suggests

that “the premise of a communicative, reciproactive network [...] unifies the holistic world. This premise is metaphysically prior to the more particular differentiation of persons in the world”.

The question that comes up here is: How will an Indigenous researcher with such a self-concept conduct their self in pursuing a research agenda? As each Indigenous researcher recounts their own stories of how they have negotiated their way through the research process, they will have provided a launching pad, or a window of opportunity, for other Aboriginal researchers engaged in similar dilemmas. That is not to say that it is the expectation that all Indigenous researchers follow this trend. It is at least one more option among the existing paradigms that is available. Indigenous researchers have a choice from among the existing strategies that can be pursued.

It seems obvious, though, that our self-concept and how we see our relationship with the world, impacts the way we conduct research. It is in this vein that Scott (ibid., 85) writes: “The conventional social context of Western Science tends to hierarchy and centralized control [...], and this is the morality that is metaphorically projected onto our relations with ‘nature’. For this very reason, the historical disqualification and subjugation of Indigenous knowledge is intimately linked to Western culture’s [belief in their, S. W.] domination of nature”. An Indigenous research framework may help us and other researchers who endeavor to develop a more balanced approach to formal inquiry.

*This is so much in need! I totally understood what you say here when I read your text “Relational Accountability to All Our Relations”. Here you say that “[i]n addition to being related in a kinship manner to all living organisms, there is the added dimension of respect for and taking care of ‘all our relations’. [...] Each individual is therefore responsible for his or her own actions, but not in isolation. Individual responsibility for actions must be in relation to all living organism. It is this web of relationships with each individual in the center that stretches out in all directions.” (Wilson; Wilson 1998, 157) I love the fact, that you, too, talked about a “web of relationships” that we ought to honour and respect when doing research. It is this vibrant place in between that draws us into our inquiries and changes us.*

*It is frustrating sometimes that most of our Western research paradigms are so narrow and yet so dominant. When I applied for my research license in the*

*Northwest Territories (NWT), I didn't prepare a questionnaire, because I wanted to resist a linear process of data collection based on singular one-on-one encounters. For me this simply doesn't reflect the "in-betweenness" of the "web of relationships". Moreover, I considered it as ethically problematic and anything else but culturally sensitive. The result was that I didn't get the license! I tried to explain my approach, but it didn't help – I had to come up with such a list of questions that I would supposedly ask people. Well, I gave them what they wanted, but never used it. The whole situation was additionally twisted, because the licensing procedure had initially been introduced to protect Indigenous communities in the NWT not to be "researched to death" (Goodman et al. 2018). It asked for an ethical framework to conduct research. This of course is absolutely necessary, however, during the process I wondered, if the development of that framework has ever been discussed with the people it addressed. Even I knew that Inuit consider asking questions as something that is intrusive and rude (I would feel the same). That is also why the saying that I grew up with in Germany, "there are no dumb questions" and the premise to always ask, if you want to know something, isn't a general rule with universal reach – and yet, people seem to think that and just apply it everywhere.*

I am interested in the processes involved in gaining insights coming from Indigenous ways of inquiry as well as in their acknowledgement and acceptance as being as valid and credible research. I believe other Indigenous researchers are also turning to such issues. An example is Pam Colorado (1988) who discusses a bridging between a Native and Western science by employing participatory research methods. Debbie Martin (2012) talks about "two-eyed seeing" as a framework for understanding Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches and to apply them in synergetic ways. A nice example for its application is "*Two-Eyed Seeing*": *An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management* (Reid et al. 2020). Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall explains: "To see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together." (Peltier 2018, 2) Suzy Basile et al. (2018) write about their experience of "co-constructing" data collection tools with Atikamekw Women (e.g. a consent form that addresses Indigenous concerns about trust, transparency, and community involvement). Another example is Robin Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*

where she tries to “braid” her book on the “awakening of ecological consciousness” from three strands: Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge, and the Anishinabekwe stories. “It is an intertwining of science, spirit, and story.” (Kimmerer 2013, x)

Robert Warrior (1995, 123) calls for the Indigenous peoples’ exercise of “intellectual sovereignty” as a way of life: “That way of life is not a matter of defining a political ideology or having a detached discussion about the unifying structures and essences of American Indian traditions. It is a decision – a decision we make in our own minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies – to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process.” The forms of inquiry coming out of this “exercise” or “way of life” will necessarily be quite different from the present paradigms, but that doesn’t mean that they do not have their own logic. Shawn Wilson (2008) showed that this logic could take on the form of a ceremony: Indigenous researchers develop and live relationships with their ideas through “research ceremonies”. For Barbara Christian, literature could build a bridge. In her critique of the Western scientific paradigm, she writes, that literature has the ability “of rendering the world as large and as complicated as I experienced it, as sensual as I knew it was. In literature I sensed the possibility of the integration of feeling/knowledge, rather than the split between the abstract and the emotional in which Western philosophy inevitably indulged.” (Christian 1995, 459) That research holds transformative power shows the book *Research & Reconciliation. Unsettling Ways of Knowing through Indigenous Relationships* that set out to seek for research projects that advance processes of reconciliation being aware of the fact that “reconciliation” means many different things to people (Wilson et al. 2019).

In their *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Denzin et al. (2008) suggest, that ethnic research perspectives offer important insights into our understanding of the world as these perspectives become applied across the traditional research disciplines much like grounded theory, critical theory, and the feminist perspective have done. These Indigenist perspectives provide researchers with creative and insightful paradigms. The authors particularly seek to foster “a productive dialogue between indigenous and critical scholars” and call this “merger [...] critical indigenous pedagogy” (ibid., 2). They aim at utilizing Indigenous knowledge as a resource to bring about social change while criticizing and demystifying “the ways in which Western science and the modern academy have been part of

the colonial apparatus” (ibid.). However, as often, I miss any discussion about challenging issues associated with such developments.

One of these issues that I see immediately is, whether or not Indigenist approaches to research can be used by any researcher. Are these methodologies available only to those already entrenched in the specific Indigenist perspective? If they are available to all, can the perspective be learned as quickly as the traditional research paradigms or does it require prolonged lived experience within that perspective? If it is possible that the perspective can be learned in sufficient depth to satisfy the most sceptic within the Indigenous community, will the research community appropriate that perspective and, having done so, once again leave out the Indigenous peoples? Ethical and moral reasons, in my opinion, dictate researchers from outside the Indigenous community to leave the development of such research methodologies to those from within. It would be difficult to engage in the development of new research paradigms by someone not from that paradigm. A parallel example is that it is not at all appropriate for males, even if they understand the feminist perspective, to engage in the discourse of developing that paradigm. There is even debate amongst women themselves as to which of them is able to speak with authority about their issues.

*Erica-Irene Daes (2000) raises another point that has to do with the historical traces of oppression, past injuries and traumas that are still very much alive. Having this in mind, it seems obvious to ask, if decolonizing research requires to exclude non-Indigenous researchers. Daes (ibid., 4) refers to the saying that, “you cannot be the doctor if you are the disease”. She then argues that Europeans “have had the disease of oppressed consciousness for centuries, and, as a result they have grown so used to this experience that they do not always appreciate the fact that they are ill”. This very much reminds me of your vision with the skinny person.*

Another concern that comes up in discussions regarding Indigenous approaches is whether the four domains of personality (mind, body, heart, soul) can be used in the research process. Indigenous peoples place an importance in the balanced way of perceiving the world. The prevailing research paradigms are mostly based on only one way of perceiving. As Carlos Cordero’s keynote address has pointed out during the *Autochthonous Scholars Conference* a number of years ago, Western

science views the gaining of knowledge as the most legitimate knowledge acquired from intellectual processes. Other ways of obtaining knowledge are seen as outside the realm of science. Intuitive ways are viewed as belonging to the realm of religion and using senses are mostly viewed as being art (Cordero 1995). Even though Thomas Kuhn (1962) has established that not all advances in the scientific endeavor are due purely to the use of the scientific method, some major shifts in the paradigm involved either accidents or use of intuition. I believe that cognitive processes are still taken for granted in that regard.

If researchers like Howard Gardner (1993) or Daniel Goleman (1996) are accurate in their assessment, other intelligences ought to be recognized as legitimate ways of gaining knowledge. From another perspective, at least in qualitative methodologies, the affective variables that a researcher's biases do have bearing on the nature of the inquiry are beginning to be acknowledged (see Peshkin 1985; 1988). Psycho-motive responses have been the subject of much research, but I don't know of any approaches to research that use them as a research strategy. The most suspect of the domains is the conative, spiritual, or metaphysical. Is an integrated approach (of the four domains) to inquiry possible? Any formulation of an Indigenous American research paradigm would necessarily need to address such a fundamental question. Here, also the role of metaphors would have to be looked at. Relational languages like Cree are highly contextual and less "wordy" (see Hall 1989). That is why we often use metaphors to convey meaning (see Couture 2013). Details are kept minimal to not get distracted, what is told in a story hints at an expanded content like nesting dolls. An example of the use of metaphor are the stories of *Weesahkehchak*, a mythical spirit being that can change its physical form. It can appear in the form of a tree, a bear, or a human being. This illustrates that trees and animals have a spirit just like humans. I'm using "it" to refer to *Weesahkehchak*, because spirit is non-gendered. One example is the story of how the rabbit got its white coat in the winter. This is how it goes: One year, people were suffering from a very long winter with only a few animals left to hunt. *Weesahkehchak* promised to help and ventured out to find the animals. They tell him that the people have forgotten their manners and haven't kept the tradition of giving thanks for their contributions of providing food to them. *Weesahkehchak* tells them about the hardship and the suffering of the people if they kept away. The animals started feeling for them and met to talk about it; finally, they decided that they will return to the humans if the promised to practice their tradition again of

showing gratitude. *Weesahkehchak* is happy and sets out to return to the people. However, it gets lost along the way much like a human can sometimes get lost due to overconfidence. A rabbit comes upon it and asks what *Weesahkehchak* is doing stuck in the deep snow. The rabbit says it can show *Weesahkehchak* the way back to the river where it came from. As a reward *Weesahkehchak* uses its special powers to confer on the rabbit a condition that it will now forever change the color of its coat from brown to white in winter so that the animals that prey on rabbits will no longer find it so easy. *Weesahkehchak* finally returns to the people's camp telling them what the animals ask of them. The humans agree to revive their tradition and the animals return. Unpacking this story reveals the use metaphor as a way to explain natural processes without stating it explicitly. The prolonged winter suggests that the vicissitudes of weather can change animal behavior much like climate change, the ice age, and evolution. The rabbit can travel on deep snow because of its large snowshoe like feet. It also teaches the virtue of appreciating what nature provides for human survival.

*What I find so very intriguing in our exchange is that we seem to come up with thoughts and experiences that resonate between us and between our cultures. What you just shared about the importance of metaphor in your culture, reminds me of the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996). He developed what is called 'metaphorology' which examines the function, structure and meaning of metaphor for thought, cognition and action in systematic and historical terms. Metaphorology looks at metaphors which humans create about their "Dasein" (existence) and their world. It focuses on the philosophical-hermeneutic, linguistic-semiotic and historical-etymological analysis of metaphorical processes and structures. In doing so, it looks at and distinguishes between cognitive, emotive, creative, communicative, aesthetic and mythical functions and performances of metaphor. This attests to the importance of metaphors also in my cultural context as they serve as existential "Daseins"-metaphors with respect to normative-practical implications: metaphors give us an idea of how we should act without prescribing a clear-cut manual, e.g. respect the animals by thanking them that they give our lives for us.*

*Metaphors reflect the fuzziness of our experiences. Whereas for example Descartes' program is "high content" and "fully algebraic, proceeding by strict rules to fill every gap, one by one, until the system is complete" (Westra 2010, 129),*

*metaphorology seeks to give orientation in a complex and dynamic world that can never be solely managed or captured by formulas or recipes. If we were to live in a cartesian world, there wouldn't be much need of orientation at all, "since the system generates itself mechanically; the end is already programmed into the beginning, as it were. But history does not run along iron rails; the human beings caught up in its contingent and violent upheavals try at every turn to get a sense of the whole, projecting metaphors into the unknown and the unconceptualized in order to guide their thoughts, attitudes and actions because the answer is not given in advance" (ibid.). What I take away from this: Our thought traditions are not monolithic, if we become aware of the plurality in our own philosophical traditions and how some of our thoughts are intertwined already, we may be able to find similarities that would make it easier to access different ways to do research.*

This also shows in the stories our elders tell – this is another point I would like to make. What I see more and more emerging is that some of the concepts Native elders use in their teachings appear to be used elsewhere, not completely in the same form, but recognizable nonetheless. For example, Lionel talked of what he had learned from his elders regarding how messages are stored in the living cells of our bodies (see above) as do Petersen and Rutherford (1995) who develop an argument of how the personal psyche has available a fossilized identity: “Every living being is also a fossil. Within it, all the way down to the microscopic structure of its proteins, it bears the traces if not the stigmata of its ancestry.” (ibid., 185) What does all of this really mean?

In order for understanding to happen between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, the instrument for coding the messages to pass between the two must be set up so that both ends use the same configuration to avoid misunderstanding. To put it another way, if a bridge is to be built between the two knowledge systems, each side has to begin laying the groundwork to establish the foundations for the supports of the bridge. A bridge between the two cannot be constructed from only one side, because the foundations for the supporting structures would need to be established and set at both ends by each on their own side. Otherwise it would not be firm enough to support the bridge, let alone any traffic on it. This is because the support viewed only from one side might not understand the different ground on the other side and therefore make the foundation for the supports weak. I'm optimistic that the current trend of Indigenous scholars



articulating an Indigenist research paradigm is doing just that – they are laying the groundwork for constructing the supports for building a bridge between Western and Indigenous knowledges. There are practical examples of what I mean. Take the case of Ben Muneta (2001), a Navajo pharmacist. He describes a traditional healing ceremony that has been passed down for generations to cure the hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. “[It] entails the use of several herbal medicines that have known inotropic properties in very high dosages. The herbal medicines are titrated in response to the patient’s respiratory status for up to four days with the goal of delivering the maximum amount of medicines without achieving drug toxicity until the patient recovers. This mirrors the function of a modern intensive care unit in that respect. The Navajo however, use this curing ceremony to integrate their holistic view of uniting the patient with the universe in achieving this cure.” This is an excellent example of how the two knowledges can work together to make a better world for human beings. Another one that comes to mind is Jon Turk’s (2009) *The Raven’s Gift: A Scientist, a Shaman, and their remarkable journey through the Siberian Wilderness*.

Then perhaps our various cultural groups can meet each other and generate a balanced dialogue where we look to the future, building the kind of society we want our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to live. Perhaps one day we will work to make what I think of as “cultural fusion”, an idea borrowed from the hard sciences. New alloys are made from several different metals to create yet stronger ones that previously didn’t exist, but are several times the strength of the separate metals they are made from. And even a small fraction from one of them added to the other greatly increases the strength of the metal. Perhaps one day that is the kind of global village we human beings will create; here each nation and culture are valued for the strength they will add to the new society.

*Reading your lines, I feel strongly supported on my quest to raise a critical awareness for Indigenous philosophy as “Philosophy” that we should seriously engage with. The questions you pose go way beyond methodological questions or the search for appropriate research tools. They are of philosophical nature as they ask for the epistemological, ethical and ontological foundation from which we start building the bridge. I found what I want to say in Shawn’s plea “to move beyond an ‘Indigenous perspective in research’ to ‘researching from an Indigenous paradigm’” (Wilson 2001, 175). It is not enough to just “thinly” employ*

*Indigenous research methods or to follow “how-to-recipes”, if we don’t delve into the “thick” philosophy they rest on. Based on what we said above with regards to language, one would additionally have to say, that in order to “learn” a new paradigm, one would have to learn the structure of the language in which it is embedded in and out of which it emerged.*

*I think we have to go a lot deeper, we have to ask “foundational” and existential questions – not only about the “Other”, but mostly about ourselves. We have to understand the ground from which we begin and the assumptions and “truths” we tend to build on – including all the layers that are deep down and that we may not even be aware of. That means that we have to allow ourselves to be questioned and that we need to seek ways to look at our foundations from the other side.*

*Willie Ermine’s (2007) “ethical space of engagement” shows how the bridge coming from two different ends merges at the middle and how strong it can be that it is now supporting our “weaving” (and I am sure others too). The other side of the bridge, he found in a philosophical concept that stems from Roger Poole’s (1972) “Towards Deep Subjectivity”. Poole (1939–2003) was an English literary theorist – coming from quite a different world than Ermine. I can see that Willie Ermine found Roger Poole’s book intriguing. In an obituary after his sudden death, Fred Inglis (2003) writes, “[his book] remains one of the boldest and least refutable of the assaults upon the impossible idea of scientific objectivity as the guiding light of human inquiry”. Indeed, Poole (1972, 78) was refreshingly clear and straightforward in his “subjective objections to ‘objectivity’”. Very fittingly to the metaphor of the bridge, he writes: “A fault has occurred in our reason. One half of our modern rationality has dropped sheerly away, leaving the cliff face of scientific and political objectivity towering uselessly over the void.” (ibid., 12) With the missing half, he aims at our subjectivity as a holistic expression of our being in the world. If we ignore subjective factors in our analysis, “objective’s considerations are less than objective and its conclusions no conclusions at all” (ibid., 43).*

*With “subjectivity” Poole doesn’t only suggest an individual stance, he aims at a relational experience: “Subjectivity itself thus turns out to be, not only an intentionality, a meaning-conferring ability, but a relationship.” (ibid., 95) Research means to enter relationships, to be or to become in relationships – also with my ideas, questions and answers. Shawn writes: “It is not the realities in and of themselves that are important, it is the relationship that I share with re-*

ality. *It is not necessarily an object that is important, it is my relationship with that object that becomes important.*” (Wilson 2001, 177) This is close to what Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) meant with his “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy: to study the subject and how it perceives and understand its world, instead of researching the object. However, Kant utterly believed in the autonomy of the subject and ignored or underestimated the dynamic relationship between subject and object.

A more suitable philosophy with regards to building the bridge comes from the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965). For him we never exist in isolation, but only “in the completeness of the relation” (Buber 1998, 74). In his seminal work “I and Thou”, it becomes clear that this entails the “inter-human realm”, the natural environment and the spiritual world (Buber 1937, 6). Buber distinguishes between (1) a “technical dialogue”, which results out of the need for objective knowledge and instrumentalizing it, (2) a “monologue disguised as dialogue”, what we find a lot in so called “participatory approaches” that are still driven by dominant research paradigms and (3) a “genuine dialogue”. The latter can take place spoken or silent. It involves our hearts, minds, bodies and souls – thus it may come close to what you mean above with “balanced dialogue”. It happens in a place „where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between [her- or] himself and them” (Buber 1969, 19). “In genuine dialogue”, Buber (1998, 75) writes, “the turning to the partner takes place in all truth, that is, a turning of the being”. This could give us an idea of how we ought to build our bridge. However to “turn my being” in that way, can be a daunting and dizzy experience as I have to reach out for you, leaving the stable ground of my knowledge system. And yet: “All real living is meeting” (Buber 1937, 11). Through our meeting we create reality – a reality that does neither belong to me, nor to you, because it happens between us. Buber says it happens “through grace” (*ibid.*), it is almost a spiritual experience that cannot be made, yet we have to be open for it.

As we see from your comments, it is clear that we cannot possibly know everything about a topic. We each know bits and pieces and other peoples’ knowledges can make a more holistic picture.

## 6. Indigegogy: The Indigenist Paradigm of Education by Lindsey Koepke

Note: This is a slightly revised version of an article that appeared in the magazine *Aboriginal Boreal Conservation Leadership* (2010) and is used with permission.

Recognizing the need for the participation of more Aboriginal people in post-graduate education, Drs. Stan and Peggy Wilson sought to introduce a Graduate Program in First Nations Education at the University of Alberta. Ten Aboriginal PhD students and 22 Aboriginal Masters students graduated in the ten years the Wilsons taught the program, all of their work stemming from an Indigenist Paradigm. Despite mandatory retirement, the two continued to work to deliver a unique Land-Based Education program which would offer Aboriginal educators the chance to acquire a master's degree without giving up their teaching positions. The program effectively seeks to teach an alternate way of learning, one that places a high value on Indigenous knowledge. Not only is its relevancy as an educational tool highlighted, but also its ability to create exciting exploratory opportunities using a fresh, in-depth and accessible system of support and sharing, drawing in part from the strength of our natural areas, namely, the boreal forest.

This program, having sprung from the perceived need for Aboriginal students to receive a more "relevant form of education," encourages teachers to get out of the classroom and use the land and resources around them. Of greatest importance is to educate using an Indigenist Paradigm. Inherent to this is the understanding that we are all teachers and all students. "Teaching, questioning, answering ... everyone is on the same level rather than on a hierarchy. It's about interaction," Stan explains. The connection between people is one that ties us to each other and to nature. It is reflected in the way we act and interact with it, "... going about gently and thus knowing you belong in nature, you are a part of it (all of creation) ... we are an integral part of the environment, and must maintain a harmonious relationship with the land around us."

Part of understanding the paradigm is coming to read the land around us so that we can fully understand what our responsibilities are. An Indigenist Paradigm recognizes that we are all related: people, plants, animals, fish, rocks, the air we breathe, the constellations we see, the water that sustains our life, and the soil on which we tread. If we misstep or otherwise disrespect any one of these components, it follows that natural justice will be carried out. The Cree word that encompasses this concept is *pastahowun*. The Land-Based Education initiative emphasizes this as relational accountability, explains Peggy.

Stan adds there is no standard definition of the term, as one would find in a dictionary “yet”. Rather, Indigenist Paradigm is a perspective that is derived from an Indigenist world view and in our case, from the Cree words *pastahowin* and *otcinawin*. These concepts convey that we are accountable for our actions to all our relations (all living things/beings). Being accountable means there are consequences for the way we live our lives. These notions provide the framework for a way of living that includes teaching and learning. To be a good human being, contributing to the betterment of life, one must consider the impact of one’s actions. If we live a destructive and dysfunctional life, then natural justice will surely be served. If we are compassionate to all our relations, then there is balance in these relationships. So, an Indigenist Paradigm is a way of building relationships that are harmonious and reciprocal and encompasses all living things.

To live in alignment with it means one does not deliberately destroy the environment for the sake of progress or profit, but rather lives in harmony with it. One also acknowledges and celebrates the “gifts” that nature and the “great mystery” provides. Stan explains: “Because the sacred is in all creation, one can also acknowledge and honour those relationships. There are numerous ways that can happen. All this is ancient Indigenous Peoples knowledge learned from living and observing the ways of nature over many centuries. Central to this is the land (Mother Earth as some folks call it). It is thus like a textbook in that once one learns to read, the knowledge is there. This way of teaching and learning I have called ‘Indigegogy.’”

This circle of learning is perpetuated on many planes within the lives of the Wilsons themselves – through their children who all hold graduate degrees, through the family of Aboriginal scholars that is rapidly developing, and in the soon to be established (at the University of Saskatchewan) International Indigenous Doctoral Program that they have developed along with a working group of International

Scholars. These varying levels of discussion enrich the circle of knowledge that exists within the Indigenist Paradigm and leads to a diversification of interpretation and understanding.

Land-Based Education does not simply mean taking university level courses off campus, but rather, embodies a much fuller concept. Students are provided with experiences and their subsequent interpretations are their own, not dictated to them or inferred from assigned text. Stan points out that though it is difficult for professors and students alike to make the shift away from learning through book text (all of the Wilsons' past Masters and PhD students hold undergraduate degrees from the Western Paradigm's education tradition), "learning from the land is just as credible as learning from books." Students must be able to analyze their experience from the Indigenist perspective (for some, a life-changing experience), develop a theory, and discuss their experience in writing in order to be able to articulate it. It teaches students to "*learn how to learn from the land.*" This results in a rich combination of experience, interpretation, and balance between different forms of discourse, traditional and otherwise. "There has to be a moving back and forth between oral tradition and written text", Peggy explains.

A holistic lifestyle approach is taken in the Land-Based Education Program; all four quadrants (physical, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional) are drawn from in order to acquire knowledge. By addressing a variety of needs from these realms, students are engaged at a deeper level of participation in which they live fully and consciously. From paddling, running, and the gathering of medicinal herbs, to meal preparation, students are given the experiences needed in order to fuel their ensuing thesis pursuits. However, as Peggy clarifies, it is not just having the experience, but being able to understand and analyze it, which separates this program from western methods of education. It uses the 'land as text' as a means to develop experiential education, as opposed to a regurgitation of taught knowledge. For example, how do trees, like other living forms, live in families (deciduous trees are usually to be found close together so that they too will be able to regenerate their species). Likewise, for evergreens, the different families live close together. Even rocks are in families, sand is usually found gathered together, so is gravel, boulders, sedimentary rock, granite, etc. Water of course finds its way to gather in pools, lakes, and eventually the ocean.

Students develop a direct relationship with the boreal forest through this program. This is done in many ways, including harvesting traditional medicines in

order to learn about their uses from local knowledge holders who understand and can explain why certain medicines are found in specific areas. Intellectual property rights are important and are observed here. “Students come to respect these rights, taking responsibility for carrying knowledge that can be shared only with those who respect and observe required protocols”, Stan explains.

The Indigenist Paradigm takes root in ancient Indigenous knowledge, and from it, stems a need to engage students in cooperative learning, something this form of education, at all levels, seeks to utilize. The program takes a positive approach to study, as will the International Program. Though it will include a sharing of knowledge between different people who hold recent histories of oppression, the focus of the program is on ancient histories as seen through an Indigenist perspective. “We want to situate ourselves to come from a positive, proactive state,” Stan asserts.

A new platform for accessing Indigenous knowledge will come with the International PhD Program, that is set to commence in 2012. Its proposal, which will be made available through the University of Saskatchewan, presents yet another avenue of discussion – that which has already been, and will continue to be, occurring between its diverse team members. This group includes scholars from Australia, New Zealand, Alaska, Hawaii, and Canada, who set its focus and direction. The Wilsons expect that the University of Saskatchewan will see more Aboriginal students graduate from this program than have ever graduated from that university before. Awareness is spreading quickly. What university educators such as the Wilsons would like to see happen now is an increase in funding so that scholarships can be provided for students.

## 7. Indigegogy Applied

With the following I provide four examples of how I used what I believe to be the process of *Indigegogy*. It reflects a world view that is inclusive in that it is as if all other living beings are family members and are part of the family activities. Being a family means being accountable for words and actions to the family members. When a teacher is using an inclusive approach to their teaching, their students necessarily become engaged as part of the family and are treated as such. Healthy families make decisions together where wanting to achieve something they can all agree on is needed. Indigegogy is merely teaching, learning, and living a cultural prescription that comes from a world view that is situated firmly within words like “our,” “ours,” “us,” “we,” “sharing,” and “inclusivity,” instead of “I,” “mine,” “yours,” “me,” “you,” and “exclusivity.”

The first example is how I began my new job as Director of Education at a First Nation. Administrators can also use an approach to their work that employs an Indigenous way of doing work as a collective, rather from a position of authority. People in assigned leadership roles can be part of a team, instead of staying aloof and giving out “orders.” The second example is how I usually started courses I taught at the University of Alberta. The third example comes from teaching a Cree language course required for a Cree language instructor’s certificate. The fourth is how I have conducted a talking circle (see also Wilson/Wilson 2000).

### *(1) New Job as Director of Education*

I was hired as the Director of Education at a First Nation. The position entailed providing directions given by the School Board to the staff. At the first day in office, I made sure to invite the heads of the departments for a meeting several days later. This gave me time to look over the previous board minutes and get the direction of the job descriptions of each of the department heads; the principals, guidance department, health services, transportation services, finance, librarian, and office staff.

The first item on our agenda of the staff meeting was introductions as would be normal procedure. I asked the members of the staff to introduce themselves to me and to each other but with something they thought the other members didn’t know about them already, because they lived in the same community, but it was



large enough that knowing everyone there was impossible. It turned out that some of them hadn't known what others were contributing to the community in ways that were not obvious.

Next, I requested them to write down how I could help them do the best job they could possibly imagine. This gesture was so moving to one of them that he began to cry. We all sat still until he regained his composure. He then said something like, "this is the first time that I have a boss who wants to know how he can help me do my job. Other bosses I've had always came in with a list they had made out of what he or she wanted from me." We had a break for them to write out what support they needed the most from the Director of Education. When we were back together, I gathered up their papers and told them I would read them and figure out how I could respond to their needs.

Ensuing, I asked them to take some time to figure out how they could support each other in fulfilling their roles they were hired to do. I told them that we are going to be a team and they needed to figure out how best to support each other as team members. We made up a list of how they could do that.

I ended the meeting with thanking them for their cooperation. One of them said, "Wait, we are not finished! There is one more thing we need to do. You have not asked us how we can support you in your job to enable you to do your best." At that moment I became a marshmallow. I was able then to ask them to work together as a team to get their required reports in on time, to support each other, and so on. We worked very well as a team until my term was up and I left to attend graduate school.

## *(2) Teaching at the University*

I usually began my courses with introductions followed by handing out the course description only and the class meeting dates and times. There was no outline of the course material, no reading list, no due dates of assignments, no assignments to be completed, no rubric for gaining credits. There were no other handouts, just the course description. I asked my class to read the course description and to make a list of what they saw in the description and what they would like to see if they were going to spend the rest of the allotted time learning. Several times I was confronted with the charge that I was neglecting my duty as a teacher by not providing all the rest of the usual expectations for completing the course. In my mind, the students were preparing themselves to be teachers because, after all, we

were in the Faculty of Education. They should have a chance to experience and put into praxis what the course required them to learn—and since the University’s slogan was “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity,” they had to practice what it means to be inclusive teachers (diversity aimed at the individual as well as the cultural level). I then asked them to form small groups to discuss their lists. The process of sharing their group’s lists provided topics they were most interested in. This informed what was to be studied in the course. Interestingly enough, all the courses over time were quite similar after we got the outlines completed.

As a next step, I asked my students to discuss again in small groups how they were prepared to earn credits for the course and the number of credits that each topic was worth. Usually, they chose which topic they would do as a class presentation on their own or as a small group (the presentations required them to tackle a current issue backing their arguments up by at least three citations from relevant literature; the chosen texts became part of the course reading list). This was great for teacher preparation. Students also suggested reflective journals on class discussions and topics. Writing a term paper critically analyzing current teaching and learning theories and/or methods and citing several sources to back up their analysis was also one of the common choices. An annotated bibliography of current books and articles was sometimes suggested. Writing a report and an analysis of an interview with a teacher or administrator on current issues facing teachers or administrators was also a popular project. There was always a suggestion that a credit for attendance and participation be part of the assessment. Sometimes they also offered to do interviews with parents on their views of education and schooling. We usually settled on them choosing five of the assignments they wanted with each one worth 20 percent of the final mark. They were asked to hand in to me which five they had chosen for themselves, and I kept a record of their individual choices. I recall one class where several students got together to direct a play that raised educational issues. Everyone was assigned a role that had been outlined. Once the stage was set, the scene described, and the opening lines given, the rest of the play was spontaneous. It was hilarious as it gave permission for the actors to be creative in their roles.

A couple of times several students stormed out saying the class was not a university class, because I had not set out my expectations as was the way I was paid to do. They would say something like I was asking the students to do my work. They were obviously operating from a hierarchical perspective and expected to be told what to do and were not wanting to try something culturally different.

Let me give you an example for that cultural clash that actually turned out to be a great leaning experience. Only one class had several people who wanted a regular final exam. As the course progressed with only several sessions left, those students insisted to know what questions would be on the final exam. I asked them to form two groups. The task was for each group to come up with ten possible questions based on the course topics and the reading material that they each as a group would ask the other group to answer. Each group then presented their questions. We as a class chose five questions that we agreed on to be good final examination questions. I then told the students that they would have a choice to do a written or an oral exam. The written exam would be at a designated time and would require them to answer two out of the five questions. I set up a schedule with 20 minutes time slots to sign up if they chose to do an oral exam. I figured that to answer two out of five questions in writing, an hour and a half would be adequate time and that it would take about 20 minutes to reply to the questions orally. Some of the student comments at the end of the courses indicated that they experienced something like a culture shock because most of their student years they had spent in predictable mainstream patterns of teaching. When they ventured through my courses, they found it confusing at first but settled into seeing that there were other ways to teach and learn – and that was another great learning they took away from it!

This way of conducting a class or course requires a rubric that captures the relational approach and needs to be fully explored, explained, and articulated so that it becomes another legitimate approach to assessment. What is important is that assessment is based on what is valued. That is what is evaluated. In short, what is valued is tested and what you test you value. For First Nations and Indigenous Peoples the analytical form of assessment takes too much precedence over other forms. Someone out there may already be engaged in such a project. If so, I encourage them to continue, so that others may feel confident in using this way of teaching and learning.

### *(3) A Cree Language Class*

Because teachers can't anticipate the student's past experiences and knowledge they bring with them into a class, course educators need to be alert to that fact and be prepared to alter their course plan to accommodate themselves to this.

I once observed a student who was in a teacher education program demonstrate this very well. She was doing her practicum in a school that had an "English only"

policy where there were obviously many students who were from differing cultural backgrounds. When it was time for her to do a lesson, she asked me, her university supervisor, what I thought of her doing her lesson using the home languages of her grade two students in this school. She would definitely be breaking the “English only” policy. I told her, I would support whatever she wanted to do, because she was in a Multicultural Teacher Education program. I made sure, I was there when she did her lesson. The day before her class she asked her students to get their parents to write how they said the words or numbers one to ten (1–10) in their home language.

When I arrived early for the day, I noticed that these children were all dressed up and were waiting by their classroom door up to one half hour before school started. She had prepared a chart on the chalkboard with lines across and columns down the lines. She asked who wanted to be first and 20 hands shot up. She picked one and asked him or her to teach the rest of the class how to count in their home language, which they did with great enthusiasm.

The class ended with 17 different ways to count from one to 20. The co-operating teacher was so impressed with the students’ eagerness to take part in a lesson where their language, hence their culture, was legitimized. She appealed to school administration to drop the “English only” policy for their school, a change I observed and welcomed. That student taught me a great lesson!

I was assigned to teach one of the courses in the *Cree Language Certificate Program* that was a specialization in a Bachelor of Education degree from the *University College of the North* (UCN). UCN’s main campuses are in Thompson and The Pas. There are also a number of centres in several larger communities scattered across northern Manitoba like the one at Norway House. The course syllabus that was offered there was based on rules and structures in grammar of the Cree language.

The first thing I did after I introduced myself was to ask the students to introduce themselves as well using only Cree, because I had heard that this group were all fluent Cree speakers. No one spoke English while introducing themselves! After that, I gave out the course description that was written in English. The task was to translate it into Cree and then to write it out using phonetics and not Standard Roman Orthography (SRO) that was used in that specialization. They worked in small groups to do this and when each group was finished, we put together a composite course description. There were many words in the course description that

would not have a Cree equivalent, and because Cree is a descriptive language, they had to be inventive in translating some of the words like “colonization.”

One of the options I suggested was that they could call “time out” using a hand gesture if they were stuck and had to revert back to English for them to find a similar word that would better fit to be translatable. There were only few time-outs requested.

After we completed the course description, we set out the rest of the schedule of what we wanted to get from our time together. The students wanted to find out more about Cree legends told in the heritage language from the Elders in the community. In addition, they sought to get more into depth regarding their traditional cultural heritage and how language carries those traditions. The course was not about just learning words and grammar; it was part of how the relational worldview is expressed in language. The community’s history was also on the agenda and there was interest in how it had been impacted by colonization.

When one of the students came back to report on her field trip to an Elder to learn legends, she had the rest of us in stitches as she used body language while telling us one of the old stories she heard about otters. A classroom can be a happy place!

#### *(4) Talking Circles*

A great way to get everyone’s input in discussing a sensitive issue is to use a talking circle (see Wilson/Wilson 2000). A circle represents the Indigenist view of relationality because everything is connected, returns back to the origin point from anywhere in the circle. Every point in the circle is equal to other parts of it, because there is no hierarchy. Any point is a start and an end. Depending on where one is situated in the circle, one can only see from that one point. Gaining perspectives from other points in the circle, without moving – which means to listen to others in the circle, can provide the whole picture on any given issue. Thus, it is essential to listen to all. This exercise requires patience for participants, because no one is allowed to cut in to assert their own opinion.

Whenever I needed to get everyone’s opinion on an emerging topic or an issue that affected everyone, I set up the class as a talking circle. The protocols for conducting and participating in a talking circle are: Whoever has the floor must not be interrupted and must be allowed to complete what they want to say before they

relinquish their time, each person in turn will have the opportunity to speak, and the circle is complete once all have spoken.

There are objects that are used like a small stone, a stick, or a feather that are held and passed along to signify the speaker. The significance of using objects that represent the rock, tree, or bird Nations can be explained by the word *Ooneekanoostaamaakehwin*. It means “leadership in action”. It literally means “walking ahead at the behest or request of those following”. The followers trust that they will be led to where they want to be. It is leadership like a trailblazer who has either been appointed or elected to lead the way because of his or her knowledge of the area and how to get to a specific place, not just blazing a trail for the sake of marking a way. The speaker, by holding the object, is declaring that the rock, tree, or feather Nations are witnesses to the words spoken as truth known by the speaker. It is an expression and an act of accepting accountability. This is usually stated as “speaking from the heart.”

I have used a four-round system where the first round lets each person make a statement. During the second round, each person can reply to a statement they heard someone make in the first round. During the third round a person can reply to what someone else had said regarding their initial statement. In the fourth round, each person has an opportunity to make a summative statement on what sense they have made from all the statements. This way of structuring talk and turn taking is helpful at times. It sets a clear, relational way of interaction amongst and between people when a tight social order is required.



## 8. “Ceremonies are not the Sentence” by James Wilson

I am a pipe carrier and traditional Native. I have fasted, sun danced and pierced in ceremonies across Canada and the northern U.S., alongside some of the bravest, most unselfish people I have ever met. I no longer actively walk this path; however, I would still consider myself a traditionalist, but my unquestionable obedience to a traditionalist dogma has long disappeared.

As a young child my brother, sister and I were exposed to many traditional ceremonies. The smell of sweetgrass was not foreign to us. We had no name for it, it was something that happened in our home occasionally and we would be there. I remember gatherings where people would share their stories from fasting. One in particular stands out in my memory. A man, who for some reason I think was a member of the *American Indian Movement* (AIM) was telling us about his fast in a house. He was there alone and after going for days without food or water, praying constantly and offering his suffering so that his prayers could be answered, an eagle came to see him. A six-foot eagle. The story resonated in us kids as we questioned its validity. I think I told one of my friends about it and he said it was impossible. He was a Christian. I then told my father and I remember him saying, “well, if people believe Jesus walked on water then there’s nothing wrong with believing in that 6-foot eagle”. I must have been six or seven at that time.

I was baptized as an Anglican, but I have never called myself a Christian. My parents witnessed firsthand the many horrible things that Christian churches did to Native people in Canada and I was constantly reminded of this growing up. Around the time I turned 18, I attended my first sweat lodge ceremony with an Elder from Alberta who had been brought to our reserve to run ceremonies. After going to school in Winnipeg, taking Anthropology courses of all things, I realized that Native people in Canada have a unique religious system that was still practiced today. I had to go away to suddenly become interested in our traditional ways. Suddenly there was a name to what went on in my younger days.



I was told by a traditional person that the first thing I should do was to get a traditional name – which is how I ended up at the sweat. I learned all of the proper protocols, the importance of the offerings, the importance of the gift you give to the Elder, etc. When I immersed from that first sweat, I felt as if I had been reborn. I felt pure. I felt that my life had meaning and that everything I did would be to help others. When I think back to those first few ceremonies that I went to, I also had a nagging quiet voice in the back of my head telling me something was not right. I ignored it. Anything that I saw that I would have previously disagreed with, I accepted as I believed in cultural relevance. If it was traditional, it was right. If the Elder said this is the way things are, then this is the way things are. I was told time and time again that Elders are the carriers of knowledge in our communities and they are to be supremely respected at all times. I was told that to question an Elder is to question “the Grandfathers”, spirits or angels ... sacrilege.

I became a born again Indian. Like so many converts to new ideologies and religions, I went into it head over heels. I did everything I could to be as “traditional” as I could. I fasted, two, three, four times a year for periods of up to four days. No food or water for four days (you lose about 20 pounds in 4 days if you do not eat or drink anything). I became a “Oskapey’ous” or helper in the ceremonies; basically, an apprentice under the Elder who at that time I held in high esteem. I got rocks, prepared the sweat, built sweats, etc. I began to move my way up in the hierarchy of traditionalism.

I remember one day even telling my father: “Dad, you need to get a traditional name!” His reply was swift and caught me off guard. I would not know its significance until years later. He said: “If you have been walking on a path your whole life that you know is the right path to go where you want to go, why would you leave it?” I tried to convert everyone I knew to the path of traditionalism.

In some traditional groups you have to “earn” everything that the Grandfathers give you. At first by helping out you may earn a feather, then maybe a name, then a personal pipe, then a men’s pipe, then a people’s pipe, then a personal sweat lodge, etc. It is up to your Elder to facilitate handing these things over to you when you are ready. During those days I saw a lot of amazing things. I witnessed some ceremonies and events that I thought could not possibly be hallucinations or trickery. Again, if any doubt crept into my subconscious, I pushed it away into a locked closet.

After a time, I learned a tremendous amount about myself, about my body, and what it was capable of, and what religion was capable of inspiring men and women to accomplish. I saw the self-sacrifice of fathers and mothers fasting and sun-dancing for days in the hot sun for their children or for their sick and dying parent or relative. I learned that the spiritual fulfillment that comes with sacrificing yourself for others is very intoxicating. When you dance or fast or sweat it is never about yourself, it is about others, helping others. The last time I pierced, at a *Mandan Okepa* ceremony (it has become a modern phenomenon to cut short the four days and count one day as two, or allow a small amount of food and water, the Mandans danced for four *full* days with zero food or water), it was for my daughter. She still carries the blood-stained dowel and the cordage in her personal bundle. In those days, I felt spiritually enlightened – but there was still something in the back of my mind that I pushed away.

Then my spiritual world came crashing down. The Elder that I had been apprenticing under, the Elder that I had studied with and listened to for hours upon hours and had learned so much, was charged with sexual assault. At first, I refused to believe what I was told about him. He was accused of sexually assaulting his step-daughters over a period of ten years. I wanted so much at the time to believe him, take his side of the story, because if I believed his step-daughters, it meant that everything he had told me, everything that I had learned in the ceremonies and on my quest to “enlightenment” had been false. Deep down however, the closet I had been hiding my intuition in burst open. With the assistance of a good friend who was of tremendous help to the victims of his crimes, I supported the girls. I went to the trial in support of them, *not* the Elder. They have become heroes to me, for facing up to a person that others worshipped, for telling the truth when others were calling them liars and trying to shame them.

After all of this happened, I put all of my pipes away. I put away my sweetgrass, my sage, tobacco, and cedar and stopped going to any ceremonies. If the intent of religion and ceremonies is to help people be better people, then shouldn't I just try to be a good person? If the dogma of traditional ways helped cover up the submission of women than was it worth following at all? I had so many unanswered questions and I knew that I had to turn my back on the sweat.

The Elder that I worked with was sentenced to two years in prison and to this day denies any wrongdoing. He refused treatment in jail and even left jail with a new batch of followers, many of whom themselves were convicted sex offenders.

I began hearing other stories about Elders that had abused or assaulted others. Elders that used the premise of a ceremony to grope young girls, elders that in the cover of darkness in a sweat had sexually assaulted women in need of medical attention under the guise of some special “ceremonial penetration practice” that they were not to tell anyone about. The power that Native people were giving to Elders was harming our children and our women. What kind of a religion turns a blind eye to abuse of children and women?

I have slowly returned to practicing traditional ways on my own terms. I am now devoutly against anyone telling me what I can or cannot do in my ceremonial life. In my view it is 100 % fine to have women on their menstrual cycle participate in ceremonies. It is not okay to force women into submissive roles in the name of tradition. It is okay to “break the rules” that the fanatical converts preach and demand. Wearing pants to a ceremony doesn’t make a woman evil, nor does sitting a certain way, or not walking behind a husband. These traditions are about power and the abuse of power.

If anyone wants to accuse me of doing something wrong in a ceremony or of allowing a practice that is against the teachings, they can go right ahead. I do not care. I will do my best to live a good life. To walk on a path that helps others. I will teach my children about respect, responsibility, and freedom. Most importantly to stand up for what they believe in and trust their instincts.

I have also learned that the sacrifice of committing yourself to others is a good thing. I suppose that anything taken to a fanatical level can be harmful. I am beginning to realize now that the words of my father are wiser than ever. “Ceremonies are the punctuation at the end of a sentence. They are not the sentence.” Only because of this am I starting to slowly appreciate them again. My path away from the sweat lodge may lead me back to it, on my terms.

*James’ story is so very valuable as it teaches us so much. Ever since I read it, it stayed with me. Out of the many teachings it holds for me, one kept coming up, realizing that it is a story of balance – balance within oneself and with the outside world. Everything in its extreme, even if it is “good” (e.g. a positive trait or virtue), is harmful and damaging if it doesn’t have a positive counterpart that keeps it in balance. Above I talked about the “existential vacuum” and the emptiness and despair people feel without a firm hold in their culture. People who experienced a state of powerlessness in their childhood, tend to overcompensate*

that by longing for power over others. In his book *"The Betrayal of the Self"*, the psychologist Arno Gruen (1988) gives several examples of infants who lose their true self and embark on a search for power with which they manipulate the world around them – a quest that will henceforth rule their lives. I can only imagine that something similar happened in the Elder's life.

I guess we have to find our own words, our own "sentences" in a balanced way, instead of worshipping the "punctuation" that others dictate. In Greek antiquity, Socrates and others spoke of the practice of "self-care", which by no means aimed at an egocentric attitude. Rather, it was of relational nature from the outset as Socrates challenged people to critically engage with themselves through several exercises in order to find inner balance (some of these exercises were similar to the vision quest). This ability to live some form of "inner democracy", is the prerequisite to deal with the outside world in a balanced way. Practices of self-care entail listening to all the inner voices that make us whole, even the ones we dislike and we may even feel ashamed of. "There is no light without shadow", C. G. Jung once wrote (Jacobi 1983, 119). As a very committed social worker, I had to learn (and I am still learning now as a university teacher) that sacrificing myself without that inner balance, is, in the end, not for others, but to satisfy my longing for recognition. That holds me hostage in a negative form of co-dependency, needing others to give me what I am lacking within myself.

In the history of Western philosophy, we have lost a lot of this "inward journey to knowledge" (Keewatin 2002, 86), because we didn't trust our senses, the wisdom of our body and our spiritual intuition anymore. That created a deep disconnect and a grave imbalance. We repressed everything that was not "rational" enough and fought it in ourselves and in cultures we considered "primitive". In a way we started "leaning" on what we lost – maybe leaning on you, Stan, just as you said. Unconsciously, we sought to regain balance in that fight sacrificing parts of ourselves and others. Although I know that it can also be dangerous to just follow one's natural instincts and bodily desires, because they tend to be selfish and brutal, I feel deep sadness in me becoming aware of this disconnection and constant struggle.

I think Alice Keewatin (*ibid.*, 87) is right: In many Western traditions, we tend to look from the inside out, whereas Indigenous traditions look from the outside in. Maybe we need both directions to find what Keewatin calls "the still place within ourselves and the place of greater knowing". She then quotes Willie Er-

*mine (1995, 107): “Only by understanding the physical world can we understand the intricacies of the inner space. Conversely, it is only through journeys into the metaphysical that we can fully understand the natural world.” Healing goes in both directions. It aims at a rather paradoxical balance between autonomy and dependency. We need a firm stand in ourselves to live healthy relationships and we need a deep and wholistic sense of interdependencies to become who we are. One without the other results in extremes that bring about a lot of pain and suffering.*

*This may also be reflected in an email-exchange Stan and I had about the “Maslow hierarchy of needs” – we both thought that it should actually be upside down. Stan wrote that the self cannot be seen as an independent self. I came to a similar understanding a few years ago reading Viktor Frankl’s book about his horrific experiences in a concentration camp. He was able to survive a situation where he was lacking his basic physiological needs (food, clothing, shelter, safety ...), because he was believing in something greater than him. Cindy Blackstock, member of the Gitksan First Nation, argues that the “hierarchy” actually represents a tipi that holds self-actualization, community-actualization and cultural perpetuity in one place while reaching up to the skies (Michel 2014). Apparently, Maslow spent some time at the Blackfoot nation in the 1930s which informed his thinking, however, he twisted the insights he had gotten into his own concepts.*

## 9. Conclusion

The educational experience for Indigenous peoples has been a disaster resulting in cultural genocide. Because the current educational system is set up to retain, maintain, and perpetuate the English language and the “mainstream North American” culture, Indigenous peoples who have not and do not assimilate into it are most certainly at odds with it. This is a major problem because a crisis is on the horizon due to the Indigenous population rebounding and many are demanding that they, too, want to perpetuate their culture.

The educational system is only one part of the English culture. Other systems like justice, military, economy, religion, arts, government, etc. all form an interconnected network that support each other to ensure the perpetuation of the English-speaking culture. This makes breaking the colonization process very difficult due to its increasing presence that hardens the established patterns. Once those affected by it, have accepted and adopted the condition and some ossification has set in, it is extremely difficult to break free from it.

Take for example my name. According to several Elders whom I asked many years ago about the names that are prevalent in our community, I found out that many of them sounded very English or Scottish: McGillvary, Ross, Constant, or Lathlin. The Elders told me that when the treaties were first signed, the name Constant was already in the community, because a fur trader from Montreal with an Indigenous wife had settled there before the treaty signing. When the treaty commissioner needed to make a registry of who belonged and was a member of the community, the first-year registrar made it a point to note the Cree names. So, names like Ettawikapow, Nasicapow, Wastessikoot, Shingoose, Wessinahs were recorded. However, there was also a trend for the registrars to ask what the names meant in English. Thus, Sakwesiw became Mink, Wapistan became Martin, Shingoose became Ermine, etc. Some names were hard for the registrars to hear the pronunciation correctly or, in not trying to understand, they suggested that they adopt English names, because there were already many who had relatives who were intermarried with the Scottish and English fur traders. There is a good mixture now of both the traditional names and adopted surnames. In the past, each

person had an individual name that was part of an extended family system. Some family groups were organized according to animals, weather, plants, due to following the notion of *wahkotowin* (relationality). Lately, many people have adopted their ancestors' names. In our Wilson family one of our sons has taken the name of one of our ancestors named in the treaty as Wessinahs but spelled as Wassenas. The name Wessinahs is not intelligible, so it may have been what the registrar heard and wrote it that way. The thought is that Wassenas probably means "reflecting light". While many follow and respect the decisions made by their forefathers to adopt Scottish and English names, a few have made the decision to recover their Indigenous ancestors' names as family names. This is only one example of how colonization has affected the thinking and customs among Indigenous peoples.

This seems like an impossible situation to resolve. However, Indigenous peoples have learned over thousands of years how to survive despite all the hazards of the vicissitudes of climate and dangerous animals. Now they (we) need to figure out how to relate with the most dangerous animal of all: the two-legged ones that want to see our Indigenous ways disappear forever. How do First Nations perpetuate their cultures without physical and violent confrontations between themselves and the mainstream systems that do not easily accept change? The will of the people will be tested in the future if First Nations and Indigenous peoples are to achieve their aspirations of maintaining their cultures in the contemporary world.

Teachers can be shields against the damaging aspects of Western ideology from Indigenous traditions as a base on which Indigenous knowledge and processes form the foundation of Indigenous educational systems while incorporating Western science into their curricula. Most Indigenous peoples all over the world have had similar experiences to the ones described and a number of Indigenous scholars have met several times over the years to discuss the formation of an *International Indigenous Graduate and Research Institute*. Such an institute would offer Indigenous educators a way to take time out to learn and conduct research that is based on Indigenous worldviews.

An Indigenist approach to education departs from the Western way with its philosophical base famously represented by the notion of individuality expressed by Descartes' "I think, therefore I am". This spirit of individualism is still the social foundation of Western society. Social sciences used in education have kept this philosophy alive and postmodernists have successfully established that an individual's perspective is an acceptable starting ground for methodology (McHale 2015).

Adding to this, many Western institutions have acquiesced to the incorporation of an Indigenous perspective (not a paradigm) into their programming. Research methodologies that are accepted by them also use individual perspectives, all grounded in Western philosophy and based on the premise that the English (read European) language and culture is to be retained, maintained, and perpetuated. Even though other worldviews are acknowledged, they are an addendum and not considered to be part of the mainline philosophical base.

*They are acknowledged as something “exotic” or “interesting”, something that can be studied from the outside, without entering a dialogue that would severely question a life-world that is superior. Or with a sincere interest aiming at learning something new. Not too long ago I met a colleague who introduced himself as an expert in “African philosophy” – later I found out that he has never been to any African country. Even the famous German philosopher Jürgen Habermas asked if China and Japan are “actually as complex as Europe” (Elberfeld 2017b, 7). Many Western philosophers are still more or less convinced, that solely European philosophy is original and complex enough to be studied at a university level. Jay Garfield and Bryan Von Norden write in a fiercely debated article in the New York Times: “The vast majority of philosophy departments in the United States offer courses only on philosophy derived from Europe and the English-speaking world. For example, of the 118 doctoral programs in philosophy in the United States and Canada, only 10 percent have a specialist in Chinese philosophy as part of their regular faculty. Most philosophy departments also offer no courses on African, Indian, Islamic, Jewish, Latin American, Native American or other non-European traditions. Indeed, of the top 50 philosophy doctoral programs in the English-speaking world, only 15 percent have any regular faculty members who teach any non-Western philosophy. Given the importance of non-European traditions in both the history of world philosophy and in the contemporary world, and given the increasing numbers of students in our colleges and universities from non-European backgrounds, this is astonishing. No other humanities discipline demonstrates this systematic neglect of most of the civilizations in its domain. The present situation is hard to justify morally, politically, epistemically or as good educational and research training practice.” Viola Cordova was one of the first Indigenous women who earned a PhD in Philosophy. „I study white people“, she once wrote (Hogan in:*



*Cordova 2007, vii). The same is true for African universities who mainly teach European philosophy.*

Of course, Indigenous academics can also use these same methodologies and are accepted as part of the academy. Yet, they remain as individuals and their views are their own personal perspective (even as a group). In that context they are caught in an assimilation model. This baseline of assimilation drove the Indian residential school movement, the Sixties Scoop, and the placement in “special education” classes, among many other initiatives that have been devastating for Indigenous people.

What is missing is an Indigenous philosophical paradigm on which the whole system of knowledge and methodology is based. It is a discipline in its own right and it is guaranteed in the *Canadian Constitution* as an inherent right. For the academe to accept and adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), Indigenist graduate and research programs would have to base their philosophical foundation and modus operandi on and in that paradigm as a right “to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning” (ibid., 13). An Indigenist paradigm is philosophically based on the idea of relationality as expressed in the notion of *wahkotowin*, meaning that “we are all related” (Kovach 2015, 54; Wilson 2008, 80). Within *wahkotowin*, teaching, learning, and researching are based on the effects of relationships in their context. As a field or domain within the education system, it is not only good for Indigenous peoples to gain an Indigenist education, it is also good for non-Indigenous peoples. When viewed as a legitimate one, it surely must also be beneficial for non-Indigenous peoples.

*I am grateful to see that things are moving. Take for example books like “Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom. First Nation Know-How for Global Flourishing” (Narvaez et al. 2019) or “Protest as Pedagogy. Teaching, Learning, and Indigenous Environmental Movements” (Lowan-Trudeau 2019) – they reflect the energy and a worldwide movement of a new generation who fights for a common cause: their thriving on a planet that desperately needs a relational understanding. For my own discipline, books like “American Indian Thought” (Waters 2004) are extremely relevant to have something at hand that I can introduce in my philosophy classes.*

*On a meta-perspective, I find Miranda Fricker's (2007) book on "Epistemic Injustice" extremely helpful. Here, it becomes clear, that it is not only a huge loss, if we don't consider other ways of knowing, rather it is downright unjust and thus an ethical problem. Fricker explains how we typically and fraudulently disdain knowledge claims from people unlike ourselves. We simply doubt their capacity as a knower. The Latin phrase "scientia est potentia" (knowledge is power) reveals the motive behind this dismissal – it is about power and especially about being in power. Fricker (2007, 2) talks about the "politics of epistemic practice" and that "social disadvantage can produce unjust epistemic disadvantage".*

This reminds me of Rebecca Sockbeson's (2017) work on "epistemicide" – the intention to even eradicate the Indigenous peoples' way of knowing and being.

What is required now at the global level is to establish an endowment fund to enable *Indigegogy* as an educational domain and institution to become a reality. We need allies who understand the dire circumstances Indigenous people are in and who are willing and able to assist. They in turn need to recruit other allies who have the capacity to engage many people to provide the necessary support level of funding to establish and maintain such initiatives. Indigenous peoples themselves do not at present have the financial capital to sustain such a project. Indigenous peoples however do have the cultural and language capital to engage in the emerging global society retaining the ethical and moral foundation needed at this time of global crisis – a crises that is mostly brought on by the tenets of the individualistic psyche embedded in the Western paradigm.

*Yes, the individualistic psyche disconnects – not just with everything else around it, but also with itself. At the end of this book, I would like to go back to its beginning. Throughout the process of writing, Alice's words stayed with me and I thought about them. How can I "make sure that the written word is living"? And what can I do that what you read and take out of it, is what I actually want to say? It is so difficult, because I need words to convey meaning and the different experiences we had in our lives makes you unpack my words based on your experience. It is not in my hand what you take out of them. Sometimes I wonder what I am allowed to say and what not, sometimes I even want to stop writing. Somebody mentioned that we should be careful that my weaving into Stan's text doesn't come across as white validation for Indigenous voice. His comment is*

*still weighing heavily on me. I am afraid that he may be right and people could think that way – although, I am the one who learns and who still cannot fathom the great gift I received having been invited into this ongoing conversation with Stan. Being able to talk with him about all this, to share what drives me and also my concerns and doubts, was and is so very important. Yet, I feel the burden of the past. The historical strings of violent and hurtful relationships are attached to my inner self. I feel helpless as I would like to be understood – not with what I say, but with what I mean. I don't want to harm and yet, it may happen. Often, I feel that words are too narrow for me to fit into them, what I want to say and sometimes meaning evolves in the process of writing, I am not able to hold it in my hands. If you could see me, listen to my voice, hear my stuttering and experience me trying to find the right words, it may be easier – I guess that is what Alice means by "receiving knowledge in a living way".*

*I wondered about the "protocol" that would open a sacred space. Reading about it created a deep wish to be able to follow protocol to address Stan and everybody else who reads this book in a way that is respectful and honouring their being. Like Alice, Margaret Kovach (2009, 7) talks about the importance of a "good heart" and a "good mind" from which writers are able to convey a positive spirit in their words. Similar to Margaret, I can say that my writing comes from the heart or from a mind that seeks to be heart-centered – and from some place that I don't even know where it is. I think it comes from moments I shared with my Indigenous friends sensing their sadness and fine spirit at the same time. It gives me a lot of hope that Alice writes, "spirit is not bound by language or culture, it travels through pure hearts". Understanding doesn't only happen with our mind, it happens with our heart – and it takes place between us.*

*What Stan and I tried to do in our process of weaving a pattern between our worldviews, is indeed to open the "doorway" Alice talks about. The original web of meaning of many Indigenous peoples is severely damaged. But cultures aren't made out of concrete or cement, they result out of spinning delicate threads between people. They can heal. Maybe we can continue our weaving, inviting you to join us. The Inuvialuit Elder Victor Allen once said: "There is no going back, only fast forward." (Allen 2005) The question is: Who do we want to become going forward and what are we bringing into our weaving, e.g. what are we willing to give and what language are we using? The web becomes more beautiful and also a lot stronger with many different threads in it. I am grateful for Stan's*

*threads that became part of my web and I am looking forward to inviting my students into it – here, the end becomes a starting point, because what I learned will impact others, maybe also the way they understand and practice philosophy. I am utterly convinced that also from a philosophical point of view, we cannot afford to assimilate, we need the richness of languages, traditions and cultures, we need to expose ourselves to what is alien cultivating our response-ability.*

*I guess a huge portion of trust is needed for this process of weaving – trust that holds us accountable, because we have to respond to the infinite face of the other. For the Jewish Philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas (1985), it is clear that we can never escape this responsibility. Every human encounter (and also philosophy) essentially is a relation that comes with an ethical demand. It must be so very difficult for Indigenous people to trust Europeans, too many promises have been broken. Trust seems to be a very dangerous thing, because you open your heart and more than that, also your spiritual being. Trust exposes you, it makes you vulnerable. It is an act of courage and a great gift. I always wondered how it happens, that people trust each other. I feel honoured that Stan dared to trust me and that he would allow me to weave my reflections into his thoughts. I very much hope that this is just the beginning ...*



## The Last Word

Thank you for having taken the time to read this story. Maybe someday I will have the opportunity to hear or read yours. In the meantime, let us all pull in the same direction to move all of humanity to live as good human beings in peace and harmony with all our relations so that they, too, will not be troubled by happenings that cause distress, pollution and waste.

I have presented the root of negative experiences for many Indigenous peoples and also the resiliency needed for sustained self-determination. It is clear that while I benefitted from getting a Western education, as has my family, I can also see that others who chose not to get a formal education retained a valuable personal investment in their traditional cultural identity. This was because their personal development as Indigenous peoples was not interrupted by formal foreign cultural invasion. They were able to resist colonization while maintaining and continuing to live their ancestral heritage culture. They have become the holders of Indigenous knowledge, customs and traditional practices. Some have also been able to find a way to do both without diminishing one or the other. I have been able to do that, but not without a critical analysis of both and that has taken me a lifetime to sort out.

Thousands of children who were essentially abducted by the federal government and sent to the Indian residential schools or scooped out of their original families at an early age, may have gotten a formal education, but at the expense of them missing the essential elements of their heritage culture. There was an attempt to erase their Indigenous identities so as to silence their ancestor's knowledge and their spiritual connection to their homeland. It is terrible that a government would deliberately set out to destroy a child's identity and force a foreign one upon them: all for the sake of disposing them of their homelands. It was identity fraud!

In my opinion, that experience left a psycho-social hole in those children as well as a huge hole in their cultural web. They later sought to discover their inheritance. This is why I'm writing this, because so many of us were affected by those legislated policies. The systemic attack or cultural genocide has left an inter-generational negative impact that many are trying to overcome. That's one reason why

Powwows and Idle-No-More movements are so popular. An interrupted and dislocated cultural identity is not easily rescued and restored though. This is because colonization has continued unabated, setting the ideas, concepts and worldview in the language of the colonizer.

Even when attempts are made to offer Indigenous language immersion programs, few Indigenous teachers are able to overcome the tendency of translating English into the Indigenous language. The mindset of teaching that way has gone wrong right from the start. English carries its own worldview; thus, the teaching comes from that paradigm. It corrupts the Indigenous worldview. Doing the reverse is difficult, because it has become too convenient to use English in everyday talk. If the teaching is done from an Indigenous base, it has to be maintained without referring back to English to explain a concept. Many parents want their children to learn English, because they see their children's future success hinges on it. In those cases, Indigenous languages become secondary. Colonization continues, unless the teachers have sufficient training in maneuvering and navigating through the colonizing mess and are able to help their students to avoid cultural chaos.

I have regrets and even remorse at times that the cultural chasm is still there and may even be widening. We see daily in the news the number of racially based divisiveness that perpetuates hate. The number of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls continues to escalate almost daily. My hope is that there are enough good human beings out there in the world who are working to create a world where every child will be culturally secure and have an opportunity to develop and be free to be who they are.

After all, First Nations have already given enough. In spite of negative experiences at the hands of the government and the society at large, many volunteered to fight in the European wars, and to honor the treaties made with the British Crown. To defend a treaty ally was considered a sacred obligation. Many did not return and lie buried in some marked and some unmarked graves in Europe. Their spirits demand a reciprocal commitment. In effect, they were double crossed and betrayed by the British Crown because Canada was, and still is, a member of the British Commonwealth. Wouldn't you think that the current members of the royal family should step up and defend the honor of the Crown by defending those First Nations who gave so much? Even at this late date this would be more than appropriate!

My wife Peggy used to weave. Back in the 1970s she learned it from an aged woman who told her that Navajo weavers always left a thread which lead away from the rest of the pattern out to the edge so that the spirits would have an “escape route” should they need one in case they became feeling too bounded. I hope that your reading will have caused even a short pause in thinking about your own worldview and how you want to be in its continuation, maybe following this spiritual thread. The pattern of our weaving is not perfect for sure and there will be holes in it that can be picked up by discerning readers. This appeal is your invitation to join our collective voices in unison or for ours to connect with yours in developing a global interconnected web that will provide a base of freedom for children of all nations to enable them to grow to their full capacity as human beings; free from cultural ideologies, philosophies, and customs that do the opposite.

I believe something good will happen. *Ahow, astumiik, peetikwehk, kiitahwech-itowak*. This roughly translates as: “So shall it be, welcome, come in and join us in this effort!”

Ekosi piitaamaa, watcheye.





## Glossary of Cree Words and Expressions

Cree is a *relational* language. Edward T. Hall (1989, 105 ff.) called it a high context/low content language. English is a high content/low context language. Differences in communication styles are the leading edge of intercultural contact that often result in misunderstandings. Single words in Cree by themselves are just that, words that require an understanding of the cultural context. Words need the context to make sense, their relationship to other words gives them meaning. The low content/high context base uses metaphor (Couture 2013) to provide ways that explain a concept rather than using more words. This shows for example in the Cree protocol that upon meeting new people you provide a brief family history so that listener(s) can understand the context or relationship. Because of the idea that we are all related which includes all other life-forms, a person introducing themselves is situating his or her amongst all those other life-forms. Relationality makes their words accountable because all relations are listening. In English though the speaker/writer is required to build the context into the words used and appears to relational speakers as “talking too much” while high content speakers appear to relational speakers as “low verbal”, reserved, quiet, and may seem uncommunicative. Teachers, counselors, child-care workers take heed!

Writing this, I realized why Barbara and I work together so well in writing. English is a high content/low context language while Cree is high context/low content. Barbara’s part provides more of the content to what I have written, often in stories.

Finally, it is important for me to mention that I don’t own these Cree concepts I express in English. No one owns them, they belong to all. They can be and will be used freely by anyone who knows them. A language learned doesn’t belong to anyone, it reflects a shared learned relationship – a relationship between people and their language. It belongs to all. A person can belong to a language that constitutes the basis of their identity much like the notion that land doesn’t belong to individual people, rather people belong on the land.

<b>Achak</b>	spirit or soul
<b>Achakos</b>	star; Plural: <b>Achakosak</b>
<b>Annisinniniwak</b>	refers to Cree People. The word itself is made up of <i>nassii</i> that means to descend and <i>inininwak</i> that together means “people whose ancient ancestors came down from the North Star”.
<b>Awa/Omma</b>	animate, inanimate – We are all part of the sacred circle of life.
<b>Indigegogy</b>	made-up word from the first part of <i>Indigenous</i> or <i>Indigenist</i> and the last part of the word <i>pedagogy</i> . Such words are called “portmanteau”.
<b>Ininew</b>	person, any person, e.g. <i>maskiki ininew</i> is a medical doctor or medicine person
<b>Ininiwak</b>	people, for example <i>akamaskii ininiiwak</i> people from overseas
<b>Kahkannassitachak</b>	Great Spirit, Sacred Spirit, with the North Star as it’s symbol. It’s considered sacred, because all the stars do a “round dance” around it in the night sky.
<b>Keewatinook</b>	North (the direction). The first part of the word, <i>keeway</i> literally means “go home” and the rest of the word is the direction, hence the notion that the north is “homeland”.
<b>Kihtacak</b>	metaphysical spirit or soul
<b>Nehnowaymowin</b>	speaking the Cree language
<b>Nehnowaywin</b>	Cree language (origin of the name, the story of four, cardinal directions, stages of human life, dialects)
<b>Pastahowin</b>	crossing the sacred line with its residual negative consequences when the overarching rule of ethical human conduct has been breached
<b>Oochinehwin</b>	result of negative consequences for unethical behavior

<b>Kisteneetowin</b>	virtue of showing respect
<b>Tipahtenimowin</b>	virtue of showing humility/dignity
	Note on the preceding two virtues: Writers from non- <i>Anisininnew</i> perspectives may not fully understanding the depth of influence of <i>pastahowin</i> , when they suggest that there is an “ethic of non-interference”, e.g. Clare Brant (1990), Rupert Ross (2006, 13ff.).
<b>Tanteh oochiiian?</b>	Where are you from?
<b>Ootissi</b>	umbilical cord, belly button
<b>Issineekahsowin</b>	belonging name
<b>Itoochikehwinna</b>	traditions
<b>Wahkotowin</b>	refers to all my relationships. It affirms my existence within the whole web of life. It implies maintaining a positive and reciprocal ethical connection. It also means accepting my place in the natural order and pulse of the entire universe without trying to be a “master over it”.
<b>Waskannisiimowin</b>	<i>waskan</i> means around, <i>issimowin</i> means dancing. It is also known as <i>maskisimmowin</i> , dancing like a person with an injured foot.
<b>Weesahkehcak</b>	is a mythical spirit being that can change its physical forms.



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## About the Authors

Stan Wilson, B.A., Ph.D.

Stan is a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation where he spent his early years. He has experience teaching at all levels of education including primary, elementary and high school both in the public system and at the First Nations' level. He earned his B.A. at the *University of Saskatchewan* and his Ph.D. at the *University of California* (Santa Barbara). As a university professor Stan conducted research and taught at *Brandon University*, the *University of Alaska* in Fairbanks, *California State University* in Sacramento, the *Saskatchewan Indian Federated College* and at the *University of Alberta*. Stan works from within an Indigenous paradigm using what he refers to as "Indigegogy", promoting and encouraging Aboriginal people, including students, to honour and utilize their own unique knowledge base. He was co-founder of the First Nations Graduate Education Program at the *University of Alberta* as well as the Master of Education degree in Land Based Education there and is now working with a team of International Indigenous scholars to develop an international doctoral program. Stan is bilingual in Cree and English. He is currently an Adjunct Faculty member at the *University of Alberta* and the *University of Saskatchewan*. Stan is an active member of the Council of Elders for Opaskwayak Cree Nation.

Prof. Dr. Barbara Schellhammer, MSW

Barbara started out in Social Work (specializing in systemic family therapy). Ensuing she studied Philosophy. She earned a Ph.D. (Philosophy) and finished her Habilitation (post-doc) in Cultural Philosophy. She worked as professor at the *International YMCA University of Applied Sciences* in Kassel, Germany, and now holds the chair for *Intercultural Social Transformation* at the *Munich School of Philosophy*, where she also heads the *Center for Social and Development Studies*. For about 15 years she lived in Canada where she worked as associate faculty at the *Royal Roads University* in Victoria, B.C. and conducted research in several

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Alice Keewatin, Ph.D.

Alice is a Ph.D. graduate in International/Intercultural Education from the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. Her thesis, *Balanced Research: Understanding an Indigenous Paradigm*, highlighted the process of conducting research within an Indigenous worldview. Alice is grateful for having been a part of the team that established the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at the University of Alberta.

James Brook Wilson

James Wilson has a very full and varied background of education and a wealth of experiences in this field. He earned a B.A. from the University of Winnipeg, a Multicultural Teaching Certification, and a Masters degree in Educational Administration. He is a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. As a young man, he completed his sun dance training, is a pipe carrier and still leads many traditional Indigenous ceremonies. At one time he was a member of the Special Forces in the US army, a teacher and guidance counselor and the Treaty Commissioner for Manitoba. He is now vice-president of Arctic Gateway. He is a father of three and grandfather of four children. He and his wife Kristin spend their summers at their cabin on Clearwater Lake, their winters at their home in Winnipeg.

Lindsey Koepke, B. Env. D., B.A.

Lindsey works as a designer in Winnipeg, Manitoba. With degrees in International Relations and Environmental Design, her interests lie in interdisciplinary, cultural work, alternative building methods, and collaborating with others to create sensitive, responsive spaces and projects. Lindsey contributed the original 2010 piece on

land-based education from interview when working as Outreach Coordinator for the Manitoba Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society [CPAWS].

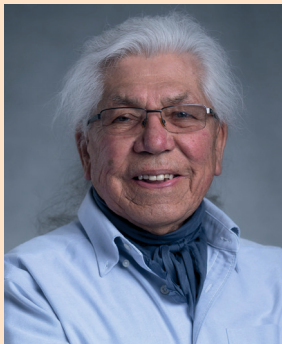
Darin Keewatin, M.A., Artist (picture on cover called “Rock Shaman”)

Darin is Cree from Okanese First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada. He has a Master Degree in Social Work from the University of Manitoba and is currently the Executive Director of the Asikiw Mostos O’pikinawasiwin Society, caring for the children, youth, and families of the Louis Bull Tribe. Darin found freedom through creative expression as a child. His love and dedication to children and their healing path was enhanced when he became a graduate of Expressive Arts from the Prairie Institute of Expressive Arts Therapy (PIEAT) in Calgary. Darin has dedicated his life to advancing the inherent right of Nations to govern the care of their own children. One of his passions is conveying spirit through art. The “Rock Shaman” tends to the home fire within each Nation, speaking through ceremony to strengthen the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual bond of families to care for one another through natural law.





Indigegogy stands for „Indigenous Pedagogy“. Yet it is a placeholder signifying the importance of culturally sensitive concepts of teaching and learning. The term is coined by the Opaskwayak Cree Elder Stan Wilson. Having gone through a pedagogical system that strategically set out to kill the “Indian in the child”, he invited not only his co-author Barbara Schellhammer, but everybody who reads this book into a journey of relational learning.



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