



## **Placing Knowledge as Resurgence**

***Damien Lee***

*University of Manitoba (Department of Native Studies)*

### **Abstract**

This article discusses Anishinabek (Ojibwa) knowledge as a manifestation of human connection and re-connection to place. Colonialism in Canada is predicated on taking land from Indigenous peoples, or taking Indigenous peoples away from their land; such removals have had a negative impact on some Indigenous knowledges. However, rather than accepting that such knowledge is gone forever when individual people are silenced, this article posits that Anishinabek knowledge is still in the land, and that it can resurge through our relationship with place. The article centres on a narrative about reconnecting with knowledge told by my grandmother, Geraldine MacLaurin-ba, and goes on to (re)envision how such knowledge constitutes a resurgence of Anishinabek self-determination.

For many Indigenous peoples, a radical relationality with place generates the knowledge needed for resurgence vis-a-vis continued Canadian colonialism.<sup>i</sup> Whereas Canada sought/seeks to separate Indigenous individuals from who they are as Indigenous peoples, the ultimate source of knowledge - land and our relationships to it - has not disappeared.<sup>ii</sup> Many Indigenous individuals, especially women,<sup>iii</sup> have been separated physically from place, home and family.<sup>iv</sup> Further, some places have been disfigured as

a result of colonial enterprise such as mining, deforestation, oil and gas development, or, as is the case of my community, the dumping of industrial and toxic wastes; many communities face an overlapping of such factors.<sup>v</sup> Separation from place impacts Indigenous peoples' relationships with Creation in favour of maintaining colonialism in Canada. How can we transcend such separation as an act of decolonization?

[2] While different genders experience colonial separation from place in unique ways, Indigenous women have been particularly targeted in Canada's colonialism project. Mary Ellen Turpel writes, "[i]t is women who give birth both in the physical and in the spiritual sense to the social, political, and cultural life of the community. It is upon women that the focus of the community has historically been placed and it was, not surprisingly, against women that a history of legislative discrimination was directed by the Canadian State."<sup>vi</sup> To emphasize this history is not to reduce women to merely people who give birth, but this does demonstrate in part why colonizers have attacked women so directly. This discrimination was intent on separating women from their families, communities and lands as a means to disappear Indigenous nations to exploit Indigenous lands.<sup>vii</sup>

[3] Despite Indigenous women being a specific target for separation within Canadian colonialism logics, they are also at the centre of anti-colonial

resistance as well as reclaiming self-determination, sovereignty and relationships to land. The responsibilities Indigenous women have in reclaiming the self-determination of our nations cannot be emphasized enough for, as Andrea Smith writes, the gendered politics of colonialism have meant that when women are colonized, our lands are colonized.<sup>viii</sup> It is not enough for our communities to engage in decolonization without also ridding sexism, patriarchy, homophobia and other colonial social pathologies from their decolonizing actions; no matter how resurgent or anti-colonial our communities might become, so long as decolonizing movements mirror the heteronormative, gendered power dynamics endemic to Eurocentrism, they risk turning on our own people the very oppressive logics we seek to eradicate. All Indigenous peoples have rights and responsibilities to their territories that must be restored as core to the process of decolonization.

[4] Relationship to territory is key to Indigenous peoples' resurgences and decolonization. This relationship is the source of Indigenous knowledges, identities, languages, nationalisms, songs and laws.<sup>ix</sup> As Oscar Kistabish said in his own language, "[t]erritory is a very important thing, it is the foundation of everything. ... I am territory."<sup>x</sup> Resurgence is the process that moves us towards the goal of decolonization, as it is a process of picking up Indigenous knowledges to carry ourselves and our responsibilities to/within Creation. As Smith notes, Indigenous peoples' "radical relationality to land"

allows them to engage in reciprocal relationships with Creation.<sup>xi</sup> This relationality is important to resurgence, as renewing relationships with place is one way that Indigenous peoples renew their knowledges of who they are in the face of ongoing colonialism in Canada.<sup>xii</sup> Renewing this knowledge through reconnecting with place enables Indigenous peoples to challenge the Canadian state on the grounds of having a unique relationship with the territory that gives them their unique political identities.<sup>xiii</sup> Place is what maintains, for example, Anishinabek, Nêhiyawak, Mushkegowuk, and Kanienkehaka knowledges and identities, the essence of our power vis-a-vis Canadian colonialism. In other words, unique relationships with place informs resurgences *as Indigenous peoples* beyond the homogenizing Indian or Aboriginal identities regulated by the state for its own purposes.<sup>xiv</sup>

[5] In order to emphasize the importance that relationality to place has in Indigenous peoples' decolonization, this paper discusses how knowledge is an expression of that relationship. Colonialism attempts/attempted to separate Indigenous peoples from knowledge about themselves in a process of cultural assimilation; as I discuss below, this separation can be seen in separating people from their territories in one way or another. Indigenous women have experienced this separation as a matter of statute and patriarchy, as well as physically, socially and politically. I show that knowledge can be reclaimed through relationality with place, drawing on a

dibaaJimowin<sup>xv</sup> my grandmother shared with me and re-interpreting its meaning into my own life.

### **Introducing Grams**

I refer to my grandmother, Grams, throughout this paper. Grams shared dibaaJimowinan<sup>xvi</sup> and experiences with me throughout my life and, in particular, when she taught me how to make makazinan.<sup>xvii</sup> Born on November 6, 1933, Geraldine MacLaurin-ba lived her entire life in our reserve - Fort William First Nation - at the north western shore of Lake Superior. My Grams dedicated every phase of her life to her family, community and Indigenous women. She passed away in the summer of 2011, nearly exactly one year after sharing with me her story about learning how to make makazinan and the challenges she faced in doing so.

[7] Once, as she was talking about her childhood in the 1930s and 1940s, I asked Grams what she had wanted to do when she grew up. She said she wanted to write children's stories, using her experiences and the dibaaJimowinan and aadizookaanan<sup>xviii</sup> she heard while growing up in our community. However, writing stories never became a reality for her, as most of her time was spent raising eight children, working a variety of jobs, and, later, supporting nieces, nephews and grandchildren through our own life issues. She also took care of the land, trail-blazed the establishment of

piped water into many houses in my community, and supported Indigenous women's self-governance organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario for years.<sup>xix</sup>

[8] It is impossible for me to not speak on behalf of another person's experience, as their experience is, at least on some level, always only theirs alone. As a young Anishinabek man adopted into my family as a toddler,<sup>xx</sup> I do not experience colonialism as an Indigenous woman. Yet, I can share some parts of the dibaajimowinan Grams told me. Through her relationships with place she transcended some of the effects colonialism imposed on her and our community. I share some of what she told me not because I want to claim her experiences as my own, but rather because I want the resurgences found in some of her dibaajimowinan to be heard by others engaging in decolonization. When I refer to Grams's dibaajimowinan, it is important to note that these are her dibaajimowinan as I understand them. Any mistakes in their retelling here are mine alone.

### **Radical Relationality with Place**

"Place" is an appropriate term for discussing the relationships Indigenous peoples have with their territories. As Vine Deloria Jr. considers it, place is the "relationship of things to each other."<sup>xxi</sup> Place includes the unseen beings that have their own life forces; it connotes a universe that is alive, with the concomitant "suggestion that the universe is personal and,

therefore must be approached in a personal manner."<sup>xxii</sup> Others such as Sakej Youngblood Henderson have also written about Indigenous conceptualizations of place, noting that both animate and inanimate "embodied spirits" form the implicate order of relationships of which humans are a small part.<sup>xxiii</sup> As understood here, place is the reciprocal relationships we find ourselves in with our territories and all the beings within them.

[10] When I heard Andrea Smith speak at a conference in California in early 2010,<sup>xxiv</sup> I was reminded about how Indigenous peoples' reciprocal relationships to land can be a source of knowledge for decolonizing our minds. Discussing in part Vine Deloria Jr.'s *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, Smith argued that Indigenous peoples have a "radical relationality to land," where their connections to place is based on inclusivity, responsibility and acceptance.<sup>xxv</sup> By contrast, noted Smith, Christianity and imperialism engage with place through a temporal relationality that prizes domination and subjugation of land. She spoke about Indigenous peoples' conceptualizations of place as a spatial relationality, where the fundamental ways of living are predicated on seeking balance and harmony within relationships of things to each other. Dominating the land is not part of respecting place.

[11] Anishinabek aadizookaanan and dibaajimowinan unfold reciprocal relationships with place. Anishinabek ancestors knew that colonialism and attempted genocide were coming, so they prepared for long term survival by putting knowledges back into Creation so that later generations of Anishinabek could pick it up again when it would be safe enough to do so.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Edward Benton-Benai writes that

[Visionaries and leaders] gathered all the Wee'gwas scrolls that recorded the ceremonies. All these things were placed in a hollowed-out log from Ma-none' (the ironwood tree). [Wo/Men] were lowered over a cliff and buried the log where no one could find it. Thus the teachings of the elders were hidden out of sight but not out of memory. It was said that when the time came that [Anishinabek] could practice their religion without fear that a little boy [or girl] would dream where the ironwood log full of sacred bundles and scrolls was buried. [S/He] would lead [her/his] people to the place.<sup>xxvii</sup>

I understand this preservation of knowledge on both metaphorical and literal terms. Knowledge was placed into the land - whether as scrolls in the sides of cliffs as Benton-Benai describes above, as writing on the land itself,<sup>xxviii</sup> or in other ways. I also believe knowledge was put back into Creation through ceremony, with ceremonies acting to hold knowledge in much the same way as scrolls or pictographs. Gaps in knowledge are not permanent losses of knowledge as much as they are symptoms of the colonial project in Canada.



Such “gaps” might be understood instead as silent resistances, temporary mutings of knowledges that await being (re)found by someone in a dream. Through reconnecting with place, Indigenous peoples are able to reclaim their ways of being and their knowledges.

[12] Indeed, humans are not separate from the place they come from, but are an expression of that place. Rupert Ross, a non-Indigenous lawyer, notes that the focus of Indigenous knowledge is understanding how energy or spirit within place operates.<sup>xxix</sup> Each expression of energy, whether human, animal, rock, language, knowledge, etc., is likened to a unique wave within an ocean of energy. Humans are simply another form of embodied spirit, which, like everything else, relates to this energy and to its multiple expressions in innumerable and complex ways. This understanding is expressed at all levels of Indigenous society, from the community, to artists and scholars, to international relations between Indigenous nations and the Canadian state. Indigenous peoples understand their languages, their knowledges and their spiritualities as expressions of the land in physical, audible, epistemic, and spiritual forms;<sup>xxx</sup> all are expressions of the ecology of Creation.

[13] Indigenous knowledges are one way that this relationship with place manifests. Knowledge arises in the act or work of maintaining balance in an

ecology that exists as constant flux.<sup>xxxix</sup> As Sakej Youngblood Henderson notes, "The aim is to be with the flux, to experience its changing form, to develop a relationship with the forces, thus creating harmony."<sup>xxxix</sup> Knowing how to maintain balance within constant flux generates Indigenous knowledges. These relationships generate meaning that humans (and other beings) interpret into knowledges, expressed in vibrant ways: "Since the ultimate source of knowledge is the changing ecosystem itself, the art and science of a specific people manifest these relationships and can be considered as manifestations of the people's knowledge as a whole."<sup>xxxix</sup> Yet, colonialism has been intent on separating Indigenous peoples from such knowledges about themselves. Whether through relocation or expropriating land for capitalist developments, or in dividing communities along gender lines, colonialism has been intent on undermining Indigenous peoples' relationships to their knowledges as a means for assimilation. Separating Indigenous peoples occurs both as taking people away from their place, and as taking land away from people.

## **Separation**

Given the seamless relationships between ecology and humans, when separation occurs it is traumatizing for both place and people. It is a disruption of the harmony a people and place developed together over generations. Being separated from one's territory causes Indigenous peoples

to experience loss much like that of when a parent, spouse or child dies, this is lived as a weakening of individual and collective senses of self.<sup>xxxiv</sup> As Taiaiake Alfred notes, “[d]isconnection from the spiritual, cultural and physical heritage of our indigenous homelands is the real reason for the cultural and physical disempowerment of First Nations as collectivities and individuals” today.<sup>xxxv</sup> Separation is multifaceted and multi-layered, resulting in a complexity of separations at various levels in Indigenous peoples’ relationships with their territories.

[15] Sometimes place is taken from Indigenous peoples. Some have spoken about the colonizing effects of environmental pollution.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Polluting Indigenous lands and waters facilitates separation because the peoples’ ability to fulfill their responsibilities to the land can be severely impeded. This is not to say that Indigenous peoples “give up” on lands that are polluted, but rather that the risk to human health can be extreme enough to force people to stay away from polluted sites, for indeterminate periods of time, until it is safe enough to return. The link between pollution and colonialism is clearly understood by Anishinabek Elders and knowledge holders, for example, as environmental pollution is one result of the relationship between Anishinabek and Canada being contaminated by settler activities.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Environmental pollution can cause generations of people to

mourn the loss of their relationships to land and for land to mourn the loss of its people.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

[16] My community experiences separation from place as a result of industrial pollution. For years I challenged environmental colonialism affecting my home, criticizing local pulp and paper industry, as well as other industries for using my community as their dumping grounds. My Grams did the same thing in the 1980s. Fort William First Nation is literally surrounded by contamination, whether point-sources such as industrial facilities (e.g. pulp and paper, manufacturing facilities, a coal-fired power plant, and more) or industrial waste sites situated both “officially” and “unofficially” in my community.<sup>xxxix</sup> Some studies were done on these industrial waste sites in the 1980s as a result of my Grams’s advocacy work, and we were eventually told that there was nothing to worry about through government and industry reports.<sup>xl</sup> While many of us do not trust these reports, it is clear that the experience of being used as a dumping grounds for industry has impacted our relationship with place. For example, in the centre of my community lies a bark-waste dump 150,000 square meters in size, and several stories tall.<sup>xli</sup> It was placed there over decades after a local pulp and paper mill, going through a succession of ownerships, acquired that piece of land from settlers who colluded with an Indian Agent in the early 1900s to take it from my community.<sup>xlii</sup> This waste dump sits at the base of Anemki Wadjiw - a

mountain that is sacred not only to the people of my community, but to many Anishinabek. The presence of the bark-waste dump in my community has led some to a sense of frustration, helplessness and mourning a loss of connection to place.<sup>xliii</sup> This puts individuals in my community at risk of the “profound sense of alienation” that Taiaiake Alfred writes of, which can manifest in “serious substance abuse problems, suicide and interpersonal violence.”<sup>xliv</sup>

[17] While land is being taken from Indigenous communities, some Indigenous individuals are being taken away from their lands. All Indigenous individuals face colonialism in their own way, but Indigenous women’s connection to place is being attacked in particularly pronounced ways. Canada’s *Indian Act*, a piece of legislation embodying racist, colonizing and sexist logics, serves as a tool for the state to separate Indigenous peoples from their territories.<sup>xlv</sup> It determines who is entitled to “Indian status,” the federal government’s imagined designation for determining who has access to treaty and aboriginal rights. Indigenous women face particular discrimination under the *Indian Act*. Indian status, and entitlement to it, favours the male line in determining who the Government of Canada will recognize as an Indian.<sup>xlvi</sup> The *Act* separates Indigenous women from their territories by relying on a fundamental belief that gender determines what a person is capable of doing in society.<sup>xlvii</sup> For decades the *Indian Act* explicitly made it

so Indigenous women who married non-Indians lost their Indian status. In many cases, when Indigenous women lost their status they were removed from First Nations lands and communities.<sup>xlviii</sup> While these mechanisms were ostensibly removed from the *Act* in 1985, women continue to experience discrimination in terms of who the *Act* will recognize as being entitled to Indian status.<sup>xlix</sup>

[18] Indigenous women still experience colonialism as (at least) a double oppression. Sexualized and homophobic oppression of Indigenous peoples is woven into the very fabric of settler mindsets in North America because, as Ann Stoler notes, settler society requires a biologized internal enemy against which it must constantly protect itself in order to “[ensure] the growth of the national body.”<sup>i</sup> Racism perpetuates the making of this “enemy” by labeling Indigenous peoples as inherently “dirty” - a “pollution of which the colonial body must constantly purify itself.”<sup>ii</sup> Colonizers viewed the bodies of Indigenous women in particular as inherently “dirty” because “Native women are bearers of a counter-imperial order and pose a supreme threat to the dominant [colonialist] culture.”<sup>iii</sup> Indeed, Indigenous women were/are seen as the source of generations of Indigenous peoples who will (and do) understand their relationships to their lands as relationships of unassailable sovereignty.<sup>liii</sup> Because the settler mindset imagines Indigenous women as

both “dirty” and “enemy,” they could be violated and attacked without impunity according to colonizers.<sup>liv</sup>

[19] Some have argued that the subjugation of Indigenous women and the subjugation of Indigenous territories are inseparable elements of colonialism in North America. Through their need to subjugate Indigenous lands, settlers in Canada colonize(d) Indigenous women’s bodies through sexual violence.<sup>lv</sup> The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* notes that “the Jesuits, steeped in a culture of patriarchy, complained about the lack of male control over Aboriginal women and set out to change that relationship” very early in settler-Indigenous relations.<sup>lvi</sup> Likewise, colonizers described Indigenous lands as in need of subjugation to be made productive, and set out to do just that.<sup>lvii</sup> To separate Indigenous peoples from their territories, colonizers attempt(ed) to destroy Indigenous societies by attacking Indigenous women and their lands.

[20] Like so many Anishinabek who lived throughout the 1900s, many in my Grams’s generation experienced a colonial subjugation in the form of residential schools as a means to sever Indigenous peoples from their knowledges and relationships with place. The Canadian state was blatantly attempting to commit physical, political and cultural genocide against Indigenous nations, disrupting their relationships to their places and their

knowledge systems. My Grams was a direct target in Canada's heyday of legislated kidnapping of Indigenous children in the name of "civilizing" Indigenous peoples in residential schools. Though she did not go to Indian residential school or Indian day school, and though she lived her entire life on our reserve, my Grams still grew up without becoming fluent in Anishinabemowin or being given all the anishinabe-gikendaasowin<sup>lviii</sup> regarding how to use plant medicines that my family had been known for.<sup>lix</sup> While some anishinabe-gikendaasowin was indeed passed on, my Grams grew up in a time where living an Anishinabe way of life was a risk to a child's safety and connection to family and place.

[21] That said, many Anishinabek parents resisted the violence perpetuated against them by the state and settler society. My Grams told me that she remembered her childhood with the utmost fondness. This needs to be acknowledged as a major achievement on behalf of my great grandparents: they protected my Grams's soft spirit in the face of genocide legislated by the Canadian state. This is more than just the celebration of parents protecting their child from harm, as they were also protecting Anishinabek parenting traditions. Leanne Simpson notes that Anishinabek family traditions function to create incredibly safe spaces for children to find and fulfill their gifts.<sup>lx</sup> I must honour my great grandparents' resistance and for



protecting my Grams so she could share her knowledge and gentleness with me, my cousins, her own children and the rest of Fort William First Nation.

[22] Taken together, the multifarious ways used to separate Indigenous peoples from their knowledges, places and communities facilitates a complex colonial domination that I cannot fully explain within the scope of this paper. However, though separation has occurred, our relationality with place, and therefore our knowledge, is flexible. There is decolonizing power in our relationships with place. Renewing those relationships provides one way to engage in resurgence.

### **Nokomis o'dibaajimowid<sup>lxi</sup>**

Despite not going to a residential school or an Indian day school - a feat in and of itself considering there was a residential school only a few kilometers from my Grams's house<sup>lxii</sup> - my Grams still experienced a widening gap between her and Anishinabek knowledge. Her father taught her some Anishinabemowin and some of the medicinal plant knowledge he knew, though there were gaps in the knowledge she was given that would have not existed if her grandmother had been alive.<sup>lxiii</sup> Though Anishinabek knowledge was present in my Grams's life, what was shared and how much was being shared was shifting.<sup>lxiv</sup> Some knowledge was not passed on to her, perhaps to protect her from being taken away to residential school.

[24] When my Grams was a young mother in the 1950s, she began seeking a specific type of knowledge for which our family had been recognized in previous generations. She sought the knowledge needed to make makazinan. She knew that her grandmother was well-known for the makazinan she made. Despite not being able to learn directly from her, my Grams attempted to make makazinan on her own. She had a dream<sup>lxv</sup> in the 1950s through which that makazinan knowledge came to her. Before this dream her makazinan would always turn out, in her words, "ugly." Her dream connected her with the knowledge she was seeking and made her makazinan "perfect."

[25] This was retold in the following conversation I had with my Grams as we were making makazinan together at her house in 2010:

Damien: How did you learn how to make moccasins?

Grams: I dreamed it. I dreamed it. What I do there, what I do with my slippers now, came from a dream.

My dad used to say his mother made moccasins, and sold them.

Downtown, to people in Westfort, and areas. People always came

to her for mitts and moccasins and mukluks. But then my grandmother died when I was little, so I didn't have nobody.

I didn't see [my grandmother's makazinan], but my dad told me. They used to describe to me how. But, I still couldn't. I kept trying to make them, and they just weren't right. They were *ugly*. Until I had my dream.

That slipper was there, in my dream. Slippers. A pair of slippers. And, when I went to make them, I used my size. I put my foot on the paper, and drew it out, cut it out, and made a pattern. And it just, I don't know, I guess it was supposed to be that way because when I made a pair, that's the way it was, just exactly like my dream.<sup>lxvi</sup>

Dreaming, a way to renew one's relationship to Creation,<sup>lxvii</sup> allowed my Grams to darn the gap between the knowledge she had and the knowledge she needed. It was a spiritual connection that manifested anishinabegikendaasowin and supported the resurgence of anishinabe-inaadiziwin<sup>lxviii</sup> within my family.

[26] Embodying that knowledge in action, my grams made makazinan; embodying that relationship to Creation, my grams expressed her unique way of being Anishinabekwe.<sup>lxi</sup> This brought her joy and pride:

Damien: How did [being able to make makazinan] make you feel?

Grams: Oh, I was, when I made that, when I dreamed that and made them, I was really, I just, I was happy! *Oh'ly man*. That was really something; to make something from a dream when you want it so bad, to know how to make it! You see, my grandmother – my native grandmother – was dead. So I couldn't learn from her. And my mother was English, so I didn't have anybody to show me.<sup>lxx</sup>

However, the meanings within this knowledge do not stop there. They echo through the generations of people as part of their function to support our survival.<sup>lxxi</sup> My Grams's knowledge echoes through me; I manifest resurgence by applying the knowledge shared with me to the contemporary context and in my own life.<sup>lxxii</sup>

### **Interpreting my Grams's Knowledge: Proactive Self-Determination**

Within the teachings of my Grams's dibaajimowinan is the importance of maintaining good relationships proactively. My Grams told me that when

makazinan are made as gifts for people, they need to be “perfect.”<sup>lxxiii</sup> When I asked her what “perfect” meant, she said that her makazinan must look exactly like the ones she saw in her dream in the 1950s.<sup>lxxiv</sup> In other words, harmony can be achieved by embodying what Creation is telling us. Ensuring makazinan are perfect for others is something that happens in the making process, i.e. *before* they are given to a person. That person is kept in mind when the makazinan are being made for them specifically. Each stitch is done with care; each stitch is proactively taking care of the relationship.

[28] I extend this teaching to self-determination. Self-determination is not a goal, but a process - we are self-determining as Anishinabek when we live in a way that embodies our responsibilities to our territories, people and other beings.<sup>lxxv</sup> Maintaining balance, or keeping things “perfect” (i.e. harmonious) requires taking on mutual responsibility in our relationships. Maintaining balance is easier to do in a proactive sense rather than fixing problems after they occur: while we have ways to re-establish balance after problems occur, taking care to not upset balance is an easier way to survive. This requires that we embody in our actions awareness about other people/beings; it requires that we observe what others like as well as what they do not like, what might disturb them in any way or promote a positive relationship. It means maintaining relationships proactively before they become unbalanced. This is the spirit of “self-determination” in a

responsibilities-based logic. In this way, self-determination can be seen as the thread that stitches relationships together, where one is constantly seeking the best way to fulfill one's responsibilities to other beings in a humble way that promotes balance.

[29] In a context where Canada continues to deny and undermine Anishinabek self-determination territorially and politically, we subvert such attempts by taking care of our relationships and responsibilities to our territories (including to Creation beyond the reserve boundary), colonial occupation notwithstanding. A self-determining person knows how to maintain their responsibilities to another being, *and acts on those responsibilities without being constantly asked to do so* (such as doing proper stitching on a makazin, and re-doing stitching when its not "perfect"). Having to be chased to take care of our relationships creates unnecessary stress on the person doing the chasing. Taking this to our relationships within Creation, we are self-determining when we renew our relationships to, and knowledge of/from the land.

[30] At the centre of this resurgence of Anishinabek knowledge stands my Grams's relationship with place. What she received was more than just knowledge about how to sew, though this is a valuable skill in and of itself and should not be discounted in any way. For, as Leanne Simpson writes,

process, or how we do things, is just as important as content, or the product of our efforts, within Indigenous ways of being and knowing.<sup>lxxvi</sup> The process of making makazinan unfolds teachings about how to create balance and build community. My Grams engaged in taking care of our place in many of its manifestations, including the people, the land and knowledge. Through this relationship, knowledge came to her in a dream that continues to radiate. And while my Grams's dibaajimowin might not reconnect every Indigenous person to what was taken from them, it is one more piece of knowledge that has been picked up in a broader resurgence of Anishinabek ways of being. That knowledge is a transcendence of colonial attacks on place, and it radiates through my community in the form of discussions, sharing of the story and its knowledge, and by encouraging others to reconnect with our territory in similar way.

---

<sup>i</sup> Glen Coulthard. "Place Against Empire: Understanding Indigenous Anti-Colonialism." *Affinities* 4 (2010), accessed March 10, 2012, <http://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/place-against-empire>.

<sup>ii</sup> Dumont qtd. in Winona LaDuke. "White Earth: A Lifeway in the Forest." *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge: South End Press, 1999:132; Vine Deloria Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion, 30th Anniversary Edition*. Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003: 278-81.

<sup>iii</sup> Many Indigenous intellectual traditions recognize a multiplicity of genders and gender responsibilities. See Kiera Ladner. "Women and Blackfoot Nationalism." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35 no. 2 (2000): 45, 53; Leanne Simpson. *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing 2011: 60.

<sup>iv</sup> Bonita Lawrence. "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview." *Hypatia* 18 (2003): 7-8.

<sup>v</sup> For example, in my community - Fort William First Nation, along the northwestern shore of Lake Superior - we recorded over 250 dumpsites on our reserve and a bark waste dump over of 150,000 square meters in size, placed there from local pulp and paper mills over decades. See Anishinabek of the Gichigami. *Fort William Dumpsites and Adjacent Industry*, accessed January 23, 2012, <http://www.archive.org/details/FortWilliamFirstNationDumpsitesAdjacentIndustry>.

- <sup>vi</sup> Mary Ellen Turpel. "Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Legacy of the Canadian State for First Nations Women." *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law* 6 (1993): 181.
- <sup>vii</sup> Taiaiake Alfred. "Colonialism and State Dependency." *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 5 (2009): 53, accessed January 21, 2012, [http://www.naho.ca/jah/english/jah05\\_02/V5\\_I2\\_Colonialism\\_02.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/jah/english/jah05_02/V5_I2_Colonialism_02.pdf), 43-4.
- <sup>viii</sup> Andrea Smith argues convincingly that patriarchy, homophobia and sexism are vital to colonialism and genocide in North America. See Andrea Smith. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Boston: South End Press, 2005: 7-33. Also see Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*. 60.
- <sup>ix</sup> See Kiera Ladner. "Women and Blackfoot Nationalism." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35, no.2 (2000): 54; James Sakej Youngblood Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining the Just Society*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 2006: 116-77.
- <sup>x</sup> Kistabish qtd. in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). "Relocations of Aboriginal Communities." *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 11.4.1), accessed January 24, 2012, [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055149/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg41\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055149/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg41_e.html)
- <sup>xi</sup> Andrea Smith. "Untitled Plenary Presentation." *Critical Ethnic Studies and the Future of Genocide* (online video presentation), accessed January 23, 2012, [http://mainstream.ucr.edu/CESA\\_2011\\_Fri\\_AM.mov](http://mainstream.ucr.edu/CESA_2011_Fri_AM.mov).
- <sup>xii</sup> Alfred. "Colonialism and State Dependency." 44.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Kiera Ladner, "Aysaka'paykinit: Contesting the Rope Around the Nations' Neck," in *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, ed. Miriam Smith (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008), 228.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Pamela Palmater. *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2011: 47.
- <sup>xv</sup> Dibaajimowin has been translated to English as "teaching, ordinary story, personal story, history story." This is the singular form of this term. See Anishinabe Word List qtd. Wendy Geniusz. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Anishinaabe Botanical Knowledge*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009: 192.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Dibaajimowinan is the plural form of dibaajimowin.
- <sup>xvii</sup> The word makazinan has been translated to English as "moccasins." Makazin is the singular form. In May and June 2010 I worked with grams to complete my Honours Bachelor Thesis while finishing my Bachelor's degree in Indigenous Studies at Trent University. See Damien Lee. *Embodying Anishinabe-Inaadiziwin: Coming Home* (Unpublished Honours Bachelor Thesis). Peterborough: Trent University, Department of Indigenous Studies, 2010.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Aadizookaan has been translated as "a traditional legend; all of one's relations' ceremonies" and "the spirit of or character in a traditional or sacred story or a legend." Aadizookaan is the plural form. See Anishinabe Word List and Johnston qtd. in Geniusz. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive*. 11, 190.
- <sup>xix</sup> For example, grams worked for years at an urban Indigenous women's shelter in Thunder Bay, called Beendigen. See Nancy Janovicek. "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self-Governance, and Native Women's Self-Governance in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989." *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities*. Eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009: 56-75.
- <sup>xx</sup> I discuss my adoption in more detail in a forthcoming article; see: Damien Lee. "In the Shoes of the Other: Reclaiming Indigenous Authenticity from Colonial Logics of Difference." *Canadian Critical Studies*. Eds. Lynn Caldwell, Carriane Leung and Darryl Leroux. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, in -press.



- xxi Vine Deloria Jr. "Power and Place Equals Personality," *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Golden: Fulcrum Resources, 2001: 22-3.
- xxii Deloria. "Power and Place Equal Personality." 23.
- xxiii Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining the Just Society*. 135-53.
- xxiv See Smith. "Untitled Plenary Presentation."
- xxv See Smith. "Untitled Plenary Presentation."
- xxvi These peoples are known as the Osh-ki-bi-ma-id-zeeg, or New People. See Edward Benton-Benai. *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*. Hayward: Indian Country Communications, 1988: 93, 111.
- xxvii Benton-Benai. *The Mishomis Book*. 91.
- xxviii Louise Erdrich. *Books and Islands in Ojibway Country*. Washington: National Geographic 2003: 5.
- xxix Rupert Ross. *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1995: 115.
- xxx Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence*. 135-53. Also see Neal McLeod. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2007: 19.
- xxxi Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence*. 155.
- xxxii Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence*. 151
- xxxiii Marie Battiste and James Sakej Youngblood Henderson. *Protecting Indigenous Knowledges: A Global Challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd., 2000: 41-2.
- xxxiv RCAP. "Relocations of Aboriginal Communities." *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Volume, 1, Part 2, Chapter 11.2.1), accessed January 24, 2012, [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055119/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg34\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211055119/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg34_e.html)
- xxxv Alfred. "Colonialism and State Dependency." 53.
- xxxvi See Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment. "Superfund Clean-up at Akwesasne: A Case Study in Environmental Injustice." *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 34, no. 2 (1997); Leanne Simpson, Judy DaSilva, Betty Riffel and Patricia Sellers. "The Responsibilities of Women: Confronting Environmental Contamination in the Traditional Territories of Asubpeechoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows) and Wabauskang First Nation." *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 4 (2009): 12.
- xxxvii Simpson, DaSilva, Riffel and Sellers. "The Responsibilities of Women: Confronting Environmental Contamination in the Traditional Territories of Asubpeechoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows) and Wabauskang First Nation." 12.
- xxxviii Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment. "Superfund Clean-up at Akwesasne: A Case Study in Environmental Injustice." 283.
- xxxix Anishinabek of the Gichigami. *Fort William Dumpsites and Adjacent Industry*.
- xl For example, see Environment Canada. *Status Report: Great Lakes Forest Products Ltd. Barkwaste Dump - Thunder Bay Survey 1986*. Environment Canada, Environmental Protection, Conservation & Protection, Ontario Region, August 2, 1988.
- xli See Anishinabek of the Gichigami, *Fort William Dumpsites and Adjacent Industry*.
- xlii Ian J. Bannon. *Specific Land Claims Update: Boundary Settlement Implementation, GTP and Needing* [PowerPoint Presentation]. March 9, 2012, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/82441862/GTP-update-january30-2012>.
- xliii Arthur MacLaurin. "Fort William Writer Bothered by Paper Mill Waste." *Wawatay News*. April 20, 1995, 5.
- xliv Alfred. "Colonialism and State Dependency." 49.
- xlv "The *Indian Act* and its previous incarnations have resulted in many groups and individuals being excluded from legal recognition as Indians or band members on grounds of

gender, marital status, family status, race, age, and blood quantum or descent." See Palmater. *Beyond Blood*. 28.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Palmater. *Beyond Blood*. 102-11.

<sup>xlvii</sup> See Turpel. *Patriarchy and Paternalism*. 181.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Lawrence. "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview." 6-9.

<sup>xlix</sup> Palmater. *Beyond Blood*. 101-42.

<sup>l</sup> Stoler qtd. in Smith. *Conquest*. 9.

<sup>li</sup> Smith. *Conquest*. 9.

<sup>lii</sup> Smith. *Conquest*. 15. Also see Turpel. *Patriarchy and Paternalism*. 181.

<sup>liii</sup> Patricia Monture-Angus. *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations Independence*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1999: 36.

<sup>liv</sup> Smith. *Conquest*. 10.

<sup>lv</sup> Notes Smith, "The colonial/patriarchal mind ... seeks to control the sexuality of women and [I]ndigenous peoples ... to control nature." Smith. *Conquest*. 55.

<sup>lvi</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (RCAP). "Women's Perspectives." *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Volume 4, Part 2, Chapter 2.1.). January 21, 2012

[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211052616/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj2\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211052616/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sj2_e.html).

<sup>lvii</sup> Smith. *Conquest*. 56.

<sup>lviii</sup> Anishinabe-gikendaasowin has been translated as "anishinaabe knowledge: not just information but also the synthesis of our personal teachings." See Anishinabe Word List qtd. in Geniusz. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive*. 191.

<sup>lix</sup> Geraldine MacLaurin-ba. Interview. May 31, 2010. Fort William First Nation.

<sup>lx</sup> Simpson. *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*. 122-31.

<sup>lxi</sup> "Grandmother, tell me a story."

<sup>lxii</sup> The Fort William / St. Joseph Residential School operated from 1936 to 1964 in what is now the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Assembly of First Nations. "Fort William." *Assembly of First Nations IRS - Indian Residential Schools Community Site*, accessed January 24, 2012, <http://www.afn-irs.ca/content/fort-william>.

<sup>lxiii</sup> My grandmother's grandmother died when my grandmother was young.

<sup>lxiv</sup> This was explained to me through a dibaajimowin my grams shared with me about receiving medicinal plant knowledge from her father. My great grandfather shared certain knowledge with her, but my grams received less plant knowledge than her father, and less than her grandmother.

<sup>lxv</sup> Anishinabe Elder and language keeper Basil Johnston describes three types of visions that contribute to Anishinabe knowledge systems. See Basil Johnston. *Ojibway Heritage*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2007: 126-27.

<sup>lxvi</sup> This conversation took place on May 30, 2010 at my grams's house in Fort William First Nation.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Geniusz. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive*. 68-9

<sup>lxviii</sup> Anishinabe-inaadiziwin has been translated as "anishinaabe way of being, behaviour, psychology." Anishinaabe Wordlist qtd. in Geniusz. *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive*. 191.

<sup>lxix</sup> Anishinabekwe means Anishinabe woman.

<sup>lxx</sup> This conversation took place on May 30, 2010 at my grams's house in Fort William First Nation.

<sup>lxxi</sup> McLeod. *Cree Narrative Memory*. 11-8.

<sup>lxxii</sup> "As life circumstances have shifted over time, the challenge for each First Nation generation has been to interpret the laws to enable their continuing survival, not just physically but as spiritually strong people." See Henderson. *First Nations Jurisprudence*. 131.

*InTensions Journal*

Copyright ©2012 by York University (Toronto, Canada)

Issue 6 (Fall/Winter 2012) ISSN# 1913-5874

<sup>lxxiii</sup> This conversation took place on June 4, 2010 at my grams's house in Fort William First Nation.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> This conversation took place on June 4, 2010 at my grams's house in Fort William First Nation.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Writing from a Kanienkehaka perspective, Monture-Angus writes that self-determination is about carrying responsibilities for ourselves and to the land in a good way. See Monture-Angus. *Journeying Forward*. 36.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Leanne Simpson. "Our Elder Brothers: The Lifeblood of Resurgence." *Lighting the Eighth Fire* Ed. Leanne Simpson. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008: 74.