

Learning from the land: Indigenous land based pedagogy and decolonization

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Abstract

This paper introduces the special issue of *Decolonization* on land-based education. We begin with the premise that, if colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land. An important aspect of each article is then highlighted, as we explore the complexities and nuances of Indigenous land-based education in different contexts, places and methods. We close with some reflections on issues that we believe deserve further attention and research in regards to land-based education, including gender, spirituality, intersectional decolonization approaches, and sources of funding for land-based education initiatives.

Keywords: *land based education; Indigenous Knowledge; Indigenous Resurgence; decolonization*

Introduction

What does it mean to think of land as a source of knowledge and understanding? How do our relationships with land inform and order the way humans conduct relationships with each other and other-than-human beings? How do we offer education to people on the land in ways that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge? What does it mean to understand “land” – as a system of reciprocal social relations and ethical practices – as a framework for decolonial critique? These are a few of the central questions that have been answered by contributors to this special edition on land-based education, in *Decolonization: Education, Indigeneity and Society*.

Settler-colonialism has functioned, in part, by deploying institutions of western education to undermine Indigenous intellectual development through cultural assimilation and the violent separation of Indigenous peoples from our sources of knowledge and strength – the land. If settler colonialism is fundamentally premised on dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their land, one, if not the primary, impact on Indigenous education has been to impede the transmission of knowledge about the forms of governance, ethics and philosophies that arise from relationships on the land. As Leanne Simpson argues in the feature article of this issue, if we are serious about decolonizing education and educating people within frameworks of Indigenous intelligence, we must find ways of reinserting people into relationships with and on the land as a mode of education.

Key to the set of inquiries contained in this special issue is moving from *talk* about the land within conventional classroom settings, to studying instances where we *engage* in conversations with the land and on the land in a physical, social and spiritual sense. In addition to the comprehensive theoretical engagement with land based practices, the ten articles in this issue provide us with a specific examples of how land based activities are occurring on and with the land. What is gained from moving the classroom to the land? As Leanne Simpson, in a recent interview conducted by Eric Ritskes with her and Glen Coulthard, summarizes, land-based education sustains and grows Indigenous governance, ethics and philosophy – and life:

We’re practicing conflict management, agency and transparency and the things that Indigenous political cultures value. We’re asking students to engage in a fairly rigorous process from a Dene perspective, in an intellectual, emotional and a spiritual and a physical way... we have to remember the ways that we replicated our nations through education and what were those critical components that produced people who could embody our political cultures and survive in our lands and think within Nishinaabeg or Dene thought and live a life where they were promoting more life in the coming generations. (Simpson & Coulthard, 2014)

In that same interview, Glen Coulthard also reflects on how land based education has been fundamental to his own understanding of Dene knowledge:

I had learned as much as I could in the archive, talking to people, and reading about that history, but it was only when I started to commit myself to re-learning those practices and re-embedding myself in those social relationships with place, that I understood in a more concrete and embodied way, what was wrong with the forms of economic development that have come to be dominant in the North and elsewhere. (Simpson & Coulthard, 2014)

Land-based education, in resurging and sustaining Indigenous life and knowledge, acts in direct contestation to settler colonialism and its drive to eliminate Indigenous life and Indigenous claims to land.

In their own unique ways, each contribution to this volume aims to sever the historical and contemporary relationship between education and the reproduction of settler-colonial power and associated forms of knowledge. On the one hand, the pairing of colonial domination with western education has had a devastating effect on Indigenous students, contributing to a contemporary educational deficit that expresses itself in lower academic success rates and experiences of racism and alienation in the classroom. On the other, institutions of mainstream education have fostered high levels of ignorance regarding Indigenous issues within the non-Native student and educator community. In different ways, each paper in this collection takes stock of what settler colonialism makes lost, damaged, and destroyed, as well as what is being and can be changed, gained and restored through various forms of land-based resurgence. In doing so, the examples of Indigenous land-based pedagogy discussed in this volume all offer a way of fostering individual and collective empowerment for students by re-embedding them in the land-connected social relationships that settler-colonialism, through education and otherwise, sought to destroy. The initiatives discussed in this issue, each focused on resurging Indigenous knowledges, leaves us with room for optimism despite the stranglehold that colonial education currently has in Canada and other settler nations. But, contrary to mainstream discourse, ours is not an optimism grounded in the ideal or hope of reconciliation through inclusion. Our optimism is grounded in a call for Indigenous resurgence and settler reckoning.

This issue highlights the diversity of land-based education and is a major contribution to the *Indigenous Resurgence* paradigm of intellectual thought. For scholars working on Indigenous political issues within Canadian universities and elsewhere, Indigenous resurgence has become one of the most robust scholarly paradigms to study Indigenous politics from. The term owes its intellectual origin to Taiaiake Alfred's (2009) work in *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* and is now widely used by many scholars in the field including many of the editors and contributors to this journal issue. For Alfred, the resurgence paradigm was a way of theorizing how a shift in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples, away from reconciliation and towards decolonization, would provide the foundation of an Indigenous social movement capable of transforming Canadian society.

To create this social movement, what was needed was initially a *regeneration* of Indigenous cultural, spiritual and political practices. This revitalization would provide the

personal and collective strength necessary for a confrontation with Canadian society. Having undergone cultural regeneration, an Indigenous resurgence would engage in an outward, disciplined confrontation with settler society. Due to the protracted struggle and engagement with this Indigenous movement, settler society would be forced into reckoning with its colonial past and present and undertake in its own decolonizing journey.

This issue can then be read as a useful contribution to the resurgence paradigm in its emphasis on both the importance of cultural regeneration, as well as outward resurgence and contestation with settler colonial incursions and violence in the realms of education, and more broadly against Indigenous peoples, knowledges, languages, and the relationships with the land that sustain these. This issue is a reminder that Alfred's original formulation equally emphasized regeneration of Indigenous knowledges and ways of being in the world, as well as their necessary contestation with settler colonial power.

The issue begins with a feature article by Leanne Simpson and then traverses ten articles, two creative writing pieces, a video and a poem. We encounter Mohawk lives disrupted by industrial pollution and Métis landscapes transformed through the rise of industrial capitalism; Tlingit and Mono places whose names, stories and ecological realities have been overwritten by colonial relations; contributions from three Anishnaabe authors who discuss land as both culturally grounding and contested; the social relations of Chisasibi Cree; stories from the land provided by a Swampy Cree author and a Tłı̨chǫ author; and we see the perspective of a Maori knowledge keeper in film. Many of these contributions include collaborations between settler scholars working in the academy and Indigenous community members, and we also have two great contributions from settler scholars working in collaboration with Indigenous peoples of Denedeh/NWT. Including the cover from a Coast Salish artist and the work of Plains Cree and Yellowknives Dene editors, we have here an edition with contributions from Indigenous people from 12 different nations.

Taken together, we believe the issue offers a nuanced and diverse appreciation for the significance of land based pedagogy and practices as a catalyst for regenerating Indigenous social, spiritual and physical land-connection. In lieu of descriptions of each piece, our introduction will highlight important insights provided by the ten articles and two creative writing pieces. These insights provide only a small sample of the theoretical complexity and empirical richness developed by the authors. We conclude by examining areas for further exploration and inquiry in land-based education.

Issue overview

Leading off the issue, Leanne Simpson's article prompts deeper thinking about ways in which mainstream education is at odds with resurgent life ways. Simpson provides a compelling argument for the necessity of raising Indigenous youth who are strongly connected to the land and the Indigenous cultures and languages that the land sustains. Employing the story of Kwezens, she anchors her argument within a Nishnaabeg intellectual framework. Using this

frame provides a “critical intervention into current thinking around Indigenous education, because Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes” (p. 9). For people working in Indigenous education at any level or locale, this article represents one of the most definitive statements on the importance of land-based education for Indigenous cultures and the resurgence of them.

As Simpson states in her opening footnote, her paper was generated “inside a community of intellectuals, artists, Elders and cultural producers to whom I am both influenced by and accountable to” (p. 1). While her article did not go through a standard academic peer review process, it is important to note that drafts were peer-reviewed by four prominent Nishnaabeg thinkers. Given that the majority of our articles in this issue were written or co-written by Indigenous scholars, and written in conversation and collaboration with Indigenous communities and educational projects, Simpson’s approach is a powerful challenge to how peer review is conducted in the context of land-based education and Indigenous resurgence. Namely, we should not assume that ‘peers’ in these circumstances are university professors, nor demand that the review process require submitting papers for anonymous feedback. It is a challenge to think about how we create review processes that involve people from the communities that support and foster these land-based initiatives. As Coulthard points out about his role as an academic in collaboration with community, “we’re not renegades that are dropped into territories and determine what the most radical and transformative educational experiences *we* think would be relevant for *them*; it’s done in a spirit of reciprocity, with community engagement and input” (Simpson and Coulthard, 2014). This requires academics to think further about how we can practice and foster reciprocity with communities in order to create land-based sites of education.

Aldern and Goode, in part, focus on how Indigenous intellectual thought can be mobilized in land management decision-making. Their article provides an account of ways that land-based methods influence ecological policy in the traditional territory of the North Fork Mono peoples, in what is today known as the Sierra National Forest area in central California. They expertly outline a method that combines traditional Mono narratives with site visits that happen with the leadership and presence of Mono elders and other knowledge holders. They discuss how this method is applied to government policy decisions with respect to the endangered Pacific Fisher (weasel). Critically, Aldern and Goode demonstrate that including Mono knowledge within ecological decision-making is not done solely for the sake of fulfilling requirements of consultation. Rather, Mono knowledge arises from deeply rooted land relationships that can improve ecological outcomes, while at the same time transforming settler-privilege, which is further discussed by Irlbacher-Fox in her contribution. After a site visit to the forest with author Ron Goode, a federal biologist “remarked that he saw the forest in a new way ...something that was not easy to imagine without getting out onto the land” (p. 43). Being present on the land provides powerful ways of seeing one’s relationships to the land and other-than-humans, as well as new ways in contesting settler colonialism and its sense making mechanisms.

While Goode and Aldern's article offers an example of ways to challenge settler colonialism's formula of Indigenous dispossession, Jennifer Adese provides a careful account of ways in which industrial modes of production structure Métis relations to land. Adese relies on Métis Elders' life stories to illustrate changing relationships with land. She shows that industrial life ways have fundamentally and negatively impacted Métis relations with land. Importantly, this argument avoids any reliance on tropes that believe contact with modernity renders Indigenous peoples 'inauthentic' (see Raibmon, 2005) by bringing forward descriptions from Métis autobiographies about their changing relationship with land and the various ways in which Métis peoples navigate these changes. Quoting from the biography of Elmer Ghostkeeper, Adese describes the transition as moving from "living with the land to living off the land," requiring Ghostkeeper to deny and suppress "his inclination to understand the world around him through the prism of relatedness, leading to his detachment from the land" (p. 62). Building on the work of Chris Andersen and Adam Gaudry, this contribution is also a counter to Métis histories authored by non-Indigenous writers that essentialize the Métis and their histories through racialized understandings of 'mixedness', without reference to how Métis actually understood their own lifeways through relationship to place and land.

Erin Freeland Ballantyne, in her article, positions Dechinta Bush University as a site of decolonizing praxis in her analysis of settler colonial capital and the history of the public education system in Denendeh. Arguing that Indigenous-led land-based education has the potential to undermine petroculturalism in the north, she draws from Dechinta's five years of land-based programming to demonstrate that land-based learning supports individuals and communities ability to live and envision life outside of the enclosures of capital. While self-identifying as a settler and calling for settler people to take responsibility for settler colonialism, the site of decolonizing praxis she describes is inclusive of people and families who are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. She articulates a site of multi-cultural decolonizing praxis where all students learn from the land in a shared space in which Indigenous epistemologies are central. She writes, "Building strong relationships of reciprocity with the land results in the crumbling of settler capitalism because it fundamentally shifts the relationships people experience and what they believe about who they are, how they are in relation to and with land, and what they believe to be true" (pp. 76-77).

Equally intriguing, Ballantyne argues that settler capital can and should be realigned and reconfigured to serve the resurgent goals of Indigenous communities. This is an important and probably contentious point in the world of anti-colonial activism, as many organizers and activists are vocally apprehensive about 'buying into' what's termed the non-profit industrial complex or funding mentality. This article addresses this question in an important way by grounding this dilemma within a space of learning that is reliant on funding from social innovation funders, but that has also consistently received evaluations from students who speak of Dechinta as providing a transformative experience.

One of the most comprehensive overviews of land-based programming is provided by Radu, House, and Pashagumskum. The three-year old "Chisasibi land-based healing program"

provides a space for those seeking to overcome addictions and mental health issues. Participants learn from two elders who combine counselling methods with “teaching Indoh-hoh¹ (Cree bush skills) and values embedded in the Cree language” (p. 88). This article shows how combining land-based activities can work in conjunction with other institutional requirements. The authors make two valuable theoretical contributions. First is an exploration of how ecological connectedness promotes good health. For Eddie Pash, one’s connection to nature encourages reflection upon what healthy relationships look like. He states: “All through these traditional ways of living we respect nature. If you respect nature, you have to respect each other too, and you have to respect yourself... Respect is a gift in our traditions, because it is the way to be happy” (p. 94). Second, the article positions healing as a central component of decolonization. For the authors, healing is a “relational process that fosters spaces in which social and familial bonds are strengthened and make possible community conversations about what is needed to mend local relationships that is in line with Indigenous life-worlds” (p. 97). While this is important for the decolonizing journey of the community, it also creates a situation where: “healing fosters decolonization by empowering individuals and communities to engage in transforming the Indigenous-State relationship” (p. 97).

The article by Schreyer, Corbett, Gordon and Larson describes the development of a place names website using participatory mapping and crowd sourcing techniques. The website was created through a collaboration between the Taku River Tlingit and a team from University of British Columbia – Okanagan. The authors provide a description of their website, where users can manually upload place names onto the traditional territory of the Taku River Tlingit. This approach is guided by a commitment to stewardship as a guiding principle of decision making and promoting an appreciation of the close connection between the Tlingit language and the landscape. The authors describe the application of these values as being able to “talk to the land.” The website has only recently been completed and the authors also provide a useful discussion of the potential pitfalls in such a project, such as the possible decontextualization of Indigenous knowledge from place. In response, they also point out how the website can be used in conjunction with people engaging in land based activities. In doing so, their honest and reflexive description of their project animates the kinds of difficulties encountered in the course of land-based initiatives which is instructive for others considering similar approaches to foster language learning and land-based connections.

Taiiaike Alfred details a cultural apprenticeship program in the Mohawk community of Akwesasne. For those familiar with the work of Alfred, this piece provides an important corrective to those who claim Alfred’s theorizing is impractical in the face of societal and institutional constraints. Alfred details his work as principle consultant for the Mohawks of Akwesasne as they moved through the Natural Resources Damages Assessment process, remediation projects that are more commonly known as “Superfund” sites. While the Mohawks of Akwesasne clearly face legal and legislative barriers in undertaking the process, they were also able to “put forward and defend their understanding of cultural loss within the context of

¹ See the glossary at the end of their article for a detailed definition of the term.

their nationhood” (p. 135). The “superfund” process asks groups to negotiate settlements that remediate the natural environment and establishes a monetary settlement to compensate for lost economic opportunities. The Mohawks of Akwesasne were able to alter the terms of compensation to focus on how ‘cultural injury’ caused by pollution would be addressed by instituting measures and mechanisms aimed at restoring “relationships that are crucial to the expression of Mohawk identity” (p. 139). Alfred summarizes how the restoration plan for the Mohawks of Akwesasne created a land-based cultural apprenticeship program targeting youth, instead of the typical approach that asks groups to simply negotiate a monetary figure that will compensate for past harm.

Irlbacher-Fox focuses on what decolonization requires in settler colonial contexts. Drawing on a combination of personal experience and scholarly thought, Irlbacher-Fox traces the role settler privilege plays in blocking the establishment of structures that enable Indigenous peoples from having effective political power and control. Here we see how self-reckoning with settler privilege is fundamental to creating spaces of respect, in order to work towards creating a context of co-existence in which Indigenous knowledge and practice can safely circulate. Many of the contributions in this special issue describe Indigenous-funded or controlled and/or Indigenous generated initiatives; here, Irlbacher-Fox provides an important addition by focusing on a conceptual framework for how settler people can work towards enacting decolonization. For Irlbacher-Fox, in order to achieve respectful co-existence in the future, settlers must engage in forms of co-resistance that challenge settler privilege in the present. Irlbacher-Fox provides us with an important conceptual framework for settlers attempting to tear down institutional barriers, such as those described by Leanne Simpson’s observations on mainstream education or Goode and Aldern’s on curriculum and policy development.

The final two articles deal with sites of Anishnaabe resurgence. Unlike the other land-based programs described in the edition, both of these sites do not receive funding or material support from government, non-profit or corporate sources. Yerxa provides us with an examination of a recent resurgence project she is involved in. For the past two years, Anishnaabe from multiple communities have come together to Gii-kaapizigemin (we roast) manoomin (wild rice) neyaashing (at The Point). In this article, Yerxa characterizes this collective organizing as a ‘Manoomin Movement’ and, building on the work of Avery Kinew, Yerxa outlines how “making manoomin is a ceremonial act, as much as it is a practical act, as much as it is a political act” (p. 108). Roasting manoomin at the point is a political act because it foregrounds a history of dispossessing Anishnaabe jurisdiction in the area. In 2009, a ninety-nine year lease expired on The Point and Anishnaabe moved to reassert ownership and control. Four Anishnaabe Nations are pursuing the matter through the specific land claims process to regain control of The Point, an approach Yerxa problematizes. She states: “Through this process we automatically negate what we are trying to assert - Anishinaabeg nationhood - because we grant authority to the Canadian state to decide matters over our lives and our lands” (p. 109). As an alternative, people from four communities have come together to roast wild rice and ‘re-presence’ themselves on their traditional territory. Yerxa calls for a ‘Manoomin movement’, where roasting wild rice at

The Point every fall provides the basis of a resurgence that has the ability to overwrite the land with Anishnaabeg law.

Continuing the themes explored by Yerxa, Gardner and Giibwanisi discuss the creation and maintenance of the Oshkimaadziig Unity Camp. The authors describe the camp as a land reclamation conducted in the same spirit as other camps such as Grassy Narrows, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, or Elsipogtog. One notable difference is that this camp arose in response to the settlement of a Specific Land Claim by four surrounding First Nations, instead of in response to incursions by resource extraction projects, and the authors contextualize the camp within Canada's attempt to retroactively legitimize its claimed sovereignty through the specific land claims process. Although the Oshkimaadziig Unity Camp is meant to challenge the legitimacy of Canadian law over the claim area, an action that aligns with Audra Simpson's (2014) theorizing on 'refusal', the camp is equally focused on internal acts of regenerating Anishnaabe connections to land. From this standpoint, the authors concisely discuss four modes of internally directed regeneration. First, establishing connection with land as a necessary aspect of Anishnaabe ceremony and governance. Second, the camp as a method of passing on teachings to the next generation. Third, the camp as a method of establishing just relations between Indigenous and settler peoples. And, finally, the camp as a source of alternative social relations and practices that model a more just world.

To conclude, the special issue takes a more creative turn. Tł̓ch̓q writer and storyteller Richard Van Camp and our editor, Maskikow graduate student and Dechinta Program Manager Mande McDonald, provide us with two pieces of creative writing, fiction and non-fiction respectively. Van Camp's story introduces us to two young cousins, recent high school graduates facing the next stage of life. We follow the young men on a hunting trip with their Father/Uncle. Van Camp's piece is an important illustration of how spending time on the land allows generations to connect and form bonds, but it also depicts the land as a source of joy and happiness for the characters. This same theme illuminates the creative non-fiction piece written by Mande McDonald. Her story telling approach is enlivened by the emotions of her experiences on the land, which in turn determines the flow of her narrative: Moose Hides, Bears, Fish, and Hunting. McDonald's account of her experiences on the land brings some of the broad theoretical insights from the issue into focus as they circulate in her lived experience. Her story situates the land as an animating force of teaching and learning. McDonald also reminds us that to build self-determining futures, Indigenous peoples must find ways to practice governance that centres love for the land and each other as the basis of the courage necessary to see it through.

Future directions

Although the contributions made in this issue are substantial and important, many readers will no doubt have questions or concerns about the lack of discussion on some issues. We would like to reflect on three issues that deserve further attention in future research on land-based education. These are gender, spiritual values, and intersectional approaches to settler colonialism.

Gender is touched upon by a number of the authors, but it is not the primary focus of any author. Discussing the story of Kwezens, a young girl discovering maple syrup, Simpson points out how the discovery could only be made in a context where observation and creativity are fostered in young children, and trust is reciprocated between the young girl, her family and other community members. In this story, trusting the teaching of the young girl is central to Nishnaabeg intelligence. Many other contributions bring forward and value the voices of women, and those wanting to think about those issues will find important contributions to think about, especially in the contributions of Adese, McDonald and Irlbacher-Fox. Yet, as a whole, the issue reveals rather than addresses the need for more thoughtful consideration towards gender. These considerations include focusing on gender relations in contemporary land-based contexts, how we might queer land-based pedagogy, and discussing the role gender plays in understanding the land as a source of knowledge.

Such analyses might illustrate how the internalization of colonial patriarchy and heteropatriarchy in Indigenous communities informs contemporary gender relations, values and roles when it comes to land-based practices - specifically regarding ceremony and harvesting protocols. The prevalence of violence against women in land-based contexts is also an unfortunate reality requiring critical attention, support and awareness, as land-based educational settings are often remote and novice learners or practitioners can be in vulnerable positions of dependence and isolation.

Spirituality or spiritual beliefs are clearly infused throughout the issue, or at least seem to inform many of these articles. In particular, Radu, House and Pashagumskum speak to the spiritual healing that occurs at Chisasibi's land-based healing program, stating that "the reciprocal and dialogic relationship with nature provides not only the material needs but also the ethic, moral and spiritual underpinnings of living a good life" (p. 93). Spiritual healing and grounding is an important benefit that comes with cultivating a strong relationship to land. This is more than a fortunate by-product of engaging in land-based practices. Teachings and practices based in spiritual values are critical components of learning and teaching on the land. Protocols that demonstrate respect and reciprocity, such as putting down tobacco, making offerings, ceremonies, or particular ways of harvesting or treating unused animal parts, are a part of Indigenous land-based education. The question that arises from this discussion is, how does the internalization and adoption of Euro-western religious values impact our abilities to pass on traditional land-based knowledge that is rooted in Indigenous spiritual values, and how are the knowledge and practices themselves potentially altered?

Many of the articles in this issue deal with settler-Indigenous relations, and the impact of settler colonialism in our contemporary context. The discussions of settler colonialism within the issue implicitly revolve around white settler – Indigenous relations. We do not have contributions that broach the much discussed topic of how non-Indigenous people of colour do or do not fit into the concept of settler and how this impacts discussions of land-based education and solidarity against colonialism. Nor does the issue deal with how Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism intersect with other anti-colonial critiques and radical traditions connected to

place. Various other intersections with other axes of oppression could be pointed out here, such as racism, heteronormativity, ableism or ageism and the list could go on. It might be easy to write these concerns off as beyond the scope of discussing Indigenous land-based pedagogy but recent scholarship on settler colonialism and within critical Indigenous studies has continued to make it clear that we must bring intersectional and nuanced approaches to the fore of our analysis.

Land-based education and funding

Finally, we cannot ignore the issue of funding and institutional capacity for land-based initiatives. One of the reasons we believe Leanne Simpson's article is a vital read for people working in Indigenous education is because she calls on us to increase the energy we devote to fostering sites of land-based education. Yerxa and Gardner & Giibwanisi show us how it is possible for people to undertake these activities without funding from mainstream institutions. These and other grassroots initiatives provide us with an important baseline for those who may argue that we lack the funds to undertake land-based practices.

Yet, simply saying funding is not an issue ignores how economic disparities within Indigenous communities gives those with resources greater access to the land. This is a tension brought to light by Eden Robinson (2008), "For instance, you have to be fairly well-off to eat traditional Haisla cuisine. Sure, the fish and game are free, but after factoring in fuel, time, equipment, and maintenance of various vehicles, it's cheaper to buy frozen fish from the grocery store than it is to physically go out and get it" (pp. 214-215). Freeland also discusses this phenomenon, in her discussion of students who have grown up in northern communities, where histories of dispossession have hindered young people from acquiring bush skills and denied them access to the land.

This brings us to the dilemma outlined by Coulthard (2013) in regards to land-based practices:

Although all of these place-based practices are crucial to our well-being and offer profound insights into life-ways that provide frameworks for thinking about alternatives to an economy predicated on the perpetual exploitation of the human and non-human world, [these practices require participation in capitalist economies] in order to generate the cash required to spend this regenerative time on the land.

A similar problem informs self-determination efforts that seek to ameliorate our poverty and economic dependency through resource revenue sharing, more comprehensive impact benefit agreements, and affirmative action employment strategies negotiated through the state and with industries tearing-up Indigenous territories. [Although these resources could be spent on cultural revitalization, they are] entirely at odds with the deep reciprocity that forms the cultural core of many Indigenous peoples' relationships with land.

Freeland-Ballentyne makes a valuable first foray into addressing this dilemma but more work needs to be done to explore the forms of education that are capable of fostering Coulthard's call for the creation of "Indigenous political economic alternatives." At the very least, this will mean creating forms of education that allow us to teach people within Indigenous philosophies and pedagogies, that in turn will guide how we select economic activities to engage in, how we organize work and labour within our economic activities, and how we distribute the products and resources generated through our economic activities.

To create these sites of education we must also think about how we can push forward institutional capacity. Although Indigenous peoples as a whole remain in an impoverished condition and resources are scarce, furthering land-based education is a necessary undertaking. Increasing capacity to offer land-based education is going to require a discussion of how various First Nation governments and organizations might cooperate with each other in order to foster these sites of learning. This is going to require moving beyond a practice where individual First Nations governments undertake programs and services in isolation from each other, as well as in isolation from other parts of the Indigenous political landscape such as urban communities, and Métis and non-status people. As Giibwanisi states in regard to the Oshkimaadziig Unity camp, "We want to be a connector between the city and the land. The broader work of being a connector is bringing together community-building strategies in urban areas and community building work at Oshkimaadziig. Settler colonialism, here and now, affects and implicates us all" (p. 173).

Of course, this does not mean centralizing or standardizing the delivery of land-based education. While we will learn from each other, the delivery of land-based education must always be rooted in place and the histories of Indigenous peoples from those places. Rather, the call to consider how we foster cooperation in service of furthering land-based education is a call to consider how we practice forms of governance between communities. While grassroots initiatives will always remain important within land-based learning, the institutional funding that Indigenous peoples do have control of must also contribute to land based initiatives. Typically, Band Councils in Canada have political authority over a membership and territory (both reserve and traditional) that is held in exclusion to other Band Councils and other aspects of the Indigenous political landscape. If we maintain these rigid boundaries, First Nations governments will not only limit their ability to support land-based education, but we will hinder traditional forms of governance that fostered connections between communities. As James Anaya (2004) argues: "Any conception of self-determination that does not take into account the multiple patterns of human association and interdependency is at best incomplete and more likely distorted" (p. 103). In short, we need to find ways for multiple communities to weave their authority together in service of fostering sites of land-based education.

Conclusion

Although we feel this issue is a valuable and important contribution to the literature on land-based education, it only represents a beginning. Rather than filling a gap in the literature on Indigenous land-based education – a gap far too large for any one volume to fill – we hope this issue provides a platform for further study. The research of the editors, as well as the editorial process of this issue, has made it clear that further studies and publications focusing on land-based education are required. Longitudinal evaluations of existing land-based healing and education programs that indicate the impacts these experiences have on participants would be incredibly useful research. Such findings would prove useful for organizations in their efforts to secure funding for programs already known and understood to be vitally important. While a diverse range of land-based initiatives is contained in this special issue, this edition only represents a small sample of efforts that we are aware of. This means there is a great need to continue and further the conversation moving into the future.

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