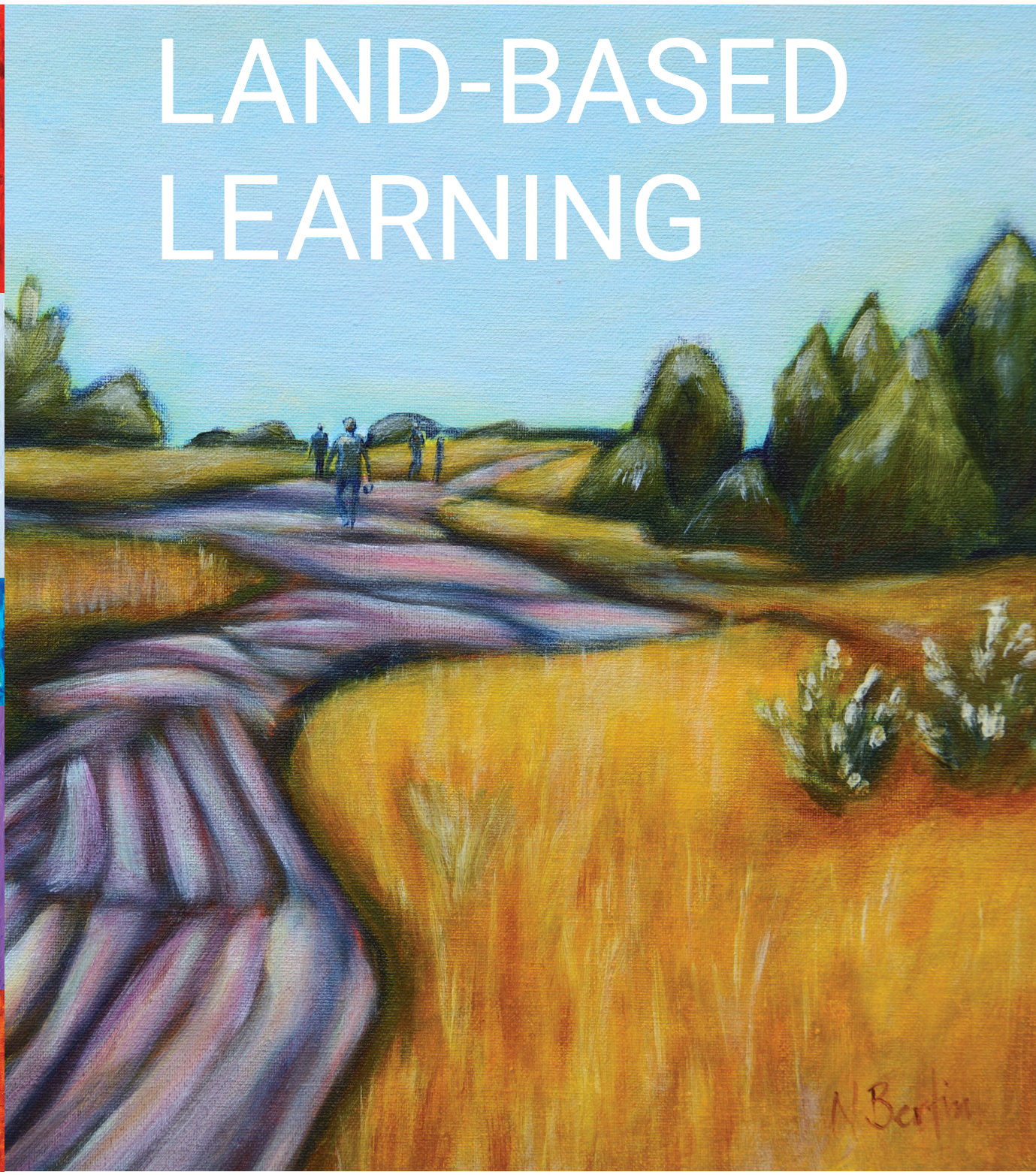
INDIGENOUS

LAND-BASED LEARNING



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ETFO Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario acknowledges that we are gathered today on the customary and traditional lands of the Indigenous Peoples of this territory.

ETFO and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

It is integral for educators to move forward into reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. In 2015, ETFO endorsed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action. It is our hope to educate and inform ETFO members on the diversity of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the complex historical and current relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To support ETFO members in integrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) perspectives, worldviews and content into their learning and instructional practices, ETFO works with ETFO members, allies and Indigenous Peoples and/or organizations to develop authentic and relevant resources and professional learning opportunities. The writers and/or advisors may have included the name(s) of someone who is no longer here and it is with the utmost respect that they are being acknowledged.

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Note: The word "land" has been capitalized in some statements to honour the Indigenous worldviews shared in the interviews, quotes and additional resources provided within. The Land is seen and described as an animate in these contexts. This resource is embedded with hyperlinks and provides a brief introduction for educators to consider when learning about Indigenous Peoples' worldviews. Be sure to check out other Indigenous education resources at etfofnmi.ca.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

PREAMBLE

"Our connections to the land also provide us with a sense of belonging."

Facing History and Ourselves, 2020.

The Indigenous land-based learning: A learning perspective resource was developed to demonstrate the journey of four ETFO writers whose perspectives of Indigenous land-based learning grew through a process of self-reflection, an interview with an Indigenous advisor (knowledge holder) and exploration and summary of relevant resources and tips for educators.

There are variations of what land-based learning means, but the one common element is the Land and the connectivity each has with the Land. Each human has learned from many teachers in their lifetime. Note that teachers in this sense does not necessarily mean a certified educator, a teacher could be a family or community member, or something they learn from, including the natural environment. How we learn is not an isolated experience. We learn about ourselves through our interaction with others and everything in the world. There are many different ways that we have been taught; ways of seeing, ways of knowing, ways of connecting and the ways of learning. Our perspectives on certain things may also change due to our interaction with new information or experiences.

In many Indigenous practices, when someone is introducing themselves to others, they often begin by speaking in their native language, followed by their traditional or English name. In many cases, people will identify with the Indigenous place, community or group they come from. This connection to identity and place is included in the introduction of the writers and the Indigenous advisors that shared their knowledge, perspectives and journey.

The Indigenous advisors discussed what land-based learning meant to them; each sharing a personal experience that was specifically related to their cultural identity and their relationship to the Land. To capture the learning journey, each ETFO writer was invited to record and define what Indigenous land-based learning meant to them at that moment in time. The writers developed interview questions and were paired with an Indigenous advisor from a different cultural background from theirs. The conversations provided a fruitful learning experience; expanding the perspectives of each writer.

Finally, the writers explored relevant resources and included tips for self-learning practices that educators can use when embarking on a learning journey that includes connecting to the Land. It is with hope that ETFO members will take a reflective approach in their learning journey and renew their relationship with the Land and Indigenous Peoples.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Nathalie Bertin is a multi-disciplinary artist from Toronto, Ontario, Canada with documented roots in Michilimackinac & Nipissing. She is of Métis, French, Anishinaabe and Omàmiwininiwak ancestry.

To express that the Land is my greatest teacher, my design for the cover of this resource includes a hunter, a forager and a gardener. The artwork I chose for the cover is that of my family walking on the path toward our favourite blueberry patches. The painting's title is "What Are We Going to Do with All the Blueberries?" This painting is symbolic of the time that we spend learning about, and from the Land, while acknowledging what the Land has to offer and ensuring that we give back to nature by taking care of it. It gives me hope for abundance, while being grateful for the work we will have to do to ensure that these sacred medicines are not wasted.

While reading the interviews, I recognized the similarities on perspectives of land education and the importance it has on our human existence. The smaller inset images are derived from these commentaries to reflect the content shared.

The Blueberry
Symbolizes the food and medicines that plants provide if we know how to find them.

The Oak
Speaks to symbiotic relationships between living beings when we are able to see how connected all of life is.

The Fish
Represents the underworld and hunting, seeing the unseen, and intuition.

The Animal Tracks
Tell us about the other beings that we share the Land with if we look for them.

The Corn
Symbolizes how we can work with the land as long as we understand how to give back to the Land so that we can keep working with it.

INTRODUCTION

"Two-Eyed Seeing is the gift of multiple perspectives treasured by many Aboriginal Peoples and explains that it refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledge and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all."

(Bartlett 2006, 2011, 2012; Bartlett et al. 2012; Hatcher et al. 2009; Iwama et al. 2009; Hatcher and Bartlett 2010; Marshall et al. 2010; IISH website).

Ways of Seeing

My dad was Mohawk and my mom was a mix of English, Irish, French, and Scottish descent. During the summer break, we would travel from British Columbia to Ontario to visit both sides of my family, and we would attend a Scottish Days celebration, and then go to a powwow. For me growing up, we weren't any different from Canadians, except for when my dad would teach us how to do something and he would jokingly say, "...it's an old Indian trick!" We would always laugh.

Today, I live my life in both of my mixed cultural identities. How I see and understand the world can be different from my non-Indigenous fellow humans. As an Indigenous person, I know that I belong to the Land on Turtle Island. In my tradition as an Indigenous woman, I am also responsible for taking care of the waters. I have a deep respect for the natural environment and all living things on it. I believe that everything has a spirit, including the clouds.

I had many teachers throughout my life who taught me about our collective history, and who I am as an Indigenous person. I learned from academia, cultural ceremonies, community gatherings, the arts, personal experiences and through my language - Kanyen'keha:ka (Mohawk). I also learned many things from being around other Indigenous Peoples. My Indigenous friends from the West Coast of British Columbia were an influence in my learning. They adopted me into their families and shared traditional knowledge and spiritual practices with me. I learned by doing, by witnessing, by listening to stories from my Indigenous family, friends and colleagues and by paying attention to messages in my dreams.

"Walking in Two Worlds," like "two-eyed seeing," is challenging. Often the western worldview clashes with Indigenous worldviews and then I have to find a way to reconcile these within myself. And sometimes I can't. In all my walking, I prefer to wear my own moccasins.

Sheila L. Maracle

Ways of Knowing

The worldviews that humans have about the Land and the natural environment vary depending on cultural identity and practices, and through personal connection to the Land. A shared worldview by many Indigenous Peoples is that we are only borrowing the Land from future generations, and that there is a responsibility to be stewards of the Land, to respect, and protect it. The Land provides everything we need as humans to survive. To live in balance with the natural environment, humans must be responsible with the natural resources that the Land provides. The Land is an integral part of Indigenous identity, spirituality, culture and way of life.

Indigenous land-based learning recognizes that there is a connection and a relationship with the Land around us. In *Bridging Cultures, Indigenous and Scientific Ways of Knowing Nature*, Aikenhead and Michell say that knowledge originated from observations, interactions and experiences of living with the Land. They explain that by observing the behaviour and actions of animals over time, the observer would understand nature. Examples of this are knowledge of plant remedies for ailments or how to locate animals for hunting (p.80). Looking to the Land as our first teacher can help us understand the world and our roles and responsibilities to all living things.

Elders and Knowledge Keepers have always shared these ways of knowing, seeing and doing through storytelling, songs and ceremonies and, through the native language. This knowledge has helped Indigenous Peoples live, survive and heal since time immemorial. These stories and teachings originate from observing and experiencing the world around us; from the changing seasons, to the thirteen moon cycles, the water cycles, and the migration of animals. By observing the animals that live around us, they teach us how to live and survive on the Land. Indigenous ways of knowing vary by geographic region, or community to community, and illustrate the diversity of Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing across Turtle Island. Although traditional values and systems of belief differ among First Nations, Inuit and Métis, there are many commonalities, including respecting and caring for all living things, valuing traditional knowledge and ensuring that the Land is respected.

Healing from the impacts of colonization through a land-based learning approach provides First Nations, Inuit and Métis the opportunity for the revitalization of culture, language, and ceremonies. Indigenous Peoples are sharing their Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) with non-Indigenous Peoples. Together we can build an understanding of how to live a good life, in balance and harmony with all living things. First Nations, Inuit and Métis life-long learning models provide Indigenous perspectives on learning and measuring success. These frameworks visually display life-long learning and community well-being for each group, and show how the land is at the centre of each learning model.

Aikenhead, G. Michell, H. (2011). *Bridging Cultures, Indigenous and Scientific Ways of Knowing Nature*. Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada Inc.

Ways of Connecting

Family and connectedness are central to Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island. In her novel *Half-Breed* (1974), Maria Campbell talks about the importance of family in her Métis community as those with whom you share everything, and highlights how people can gather strength from connecting through shared experiences. MacDougall (2017) writes and teaches about *wahkootowin*, a Cree word meaning "all of my relations." *Wahkootowin* includes everything that we come into contact with and has a strong emphasis on extended and chosen family (MacDougall, 2017). These are just two examples of many that exist in Indigenous Nations, that illustrate the fundamental concept of connecting to relations that extend beyond human family.

How we relate to those around us applies to the winged-ones, the four-legged, the water, soil, rocks, the Land, plants and medicine. Our reliance on the natural environment includes food, shelter, water and clean air. When you have a relationship with the Land, you are grateful to it and also understand that you have a responsibility to care for and protect it. Understanding this connection is key to understanding the way in which Indigenous Peoples learn. It is the difference between looking at the Land as a resource, as opposed to a relation.

For many Indigenous Peoples, the ties and practices on the Land were interrupted by colonization, residential schools, Indian day schools, the foster care system, dog slaughtering in the North, tuberculosis boats, legislation and racism that forbid many land-based cultural practices. Healing is a journey and for many Indigenous Peoples, it includes returning to the Land or reconnecting to the ways of life and connection to all our relations.

It's important for Indigenous students (and all students) to connect to the Land. This connection allows Indigenous students and their worldview to make sense in our modern school systems, and demonstrates a respect to Indigenous Peoples' worldviews and knowledge. Land-based learning would benefit any student and would provide opportunity for them to build a stronger connection to the Land and develop a sense of stewardship and responsibility to all of our relations.

Campbell, M. (1974). *Halfbreed*. Vancouver, BC: McClelland and Stewart.

Macdougall, B. (2017) *Land, Family and Identity: Contextualizing Metis health and well-being*. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

Ways of Learning

In order to learn from the Land, one needs to take a step outdoors. Put away the books and feel the warmth of the sun. Learn to pick edible berries, notice the buds on fruit trees, or tracks in the mud. Being on the Land is necessary to deeply engage with Indigenous land-based ways of learning (Simpson, L. and Goulthard, G.,2014).

In education, there is a difference between place-based learning and Indigenous land-based learning, even though these terms are used interchangeably. Place-based education does not acknowledge Indigenous history, cultural knowledge or that all places were once, and continue to be, Indigenous lands (Calderon, 2014). Indigenous land-based learning integrates ways of knowing, learning and being, while honouring the spiritual, ancestral and physical aspects of land (Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013). With this in mind, teaching students in the outdoors is only one aspect; in order to understand Indigenous land-based education, the integrated relationships and diverse ways of learning that Indigenous Peoples have with the Land must be at the centre.

Sharing stories is a common way of sharing scientific and cultural knowledge among Indigenous communities. Listening to stories through podcasts produced by Indigenous Peoples blends contemporary and traditional ways of learning. Indigenous land-based knowledge is also shared through ceremonies. This is in part to honour relationships with other species, seasonal cycles and one's own personal journey (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Ceremony or spiritual practices on the Land are reciprocal, in that natural elements are recognized as equal importance as human species. Learning on the Land includes expressing one's gratitude for a lesson that is learned from the Land. For example, tobacco is a traditional medicine in many First Nations and Métis communities. Offering tobacco to an Indigenous knowledge holder, or placing tobacco on the Earth when harvesting plants, or the killed hunt of an animal is a way to show appreciation.

Reaching out and connecting with local Indigenous Peoples and communities can assist educators with ensuring Indigenous ways of learning are brought into the classroom environment and curriculum. Many local school boards have an Indigenous Education department or lead person to support educators by providing professional learning opportunities and information on how to connect with local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The Indigenous education leads can also assist educators with cultural protocols that are region specific and are respectful. It's important to contact the education departments within your board as a first step. Provincial organizations such as the Métis Nation of Ontario, Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, or Tungasuvvingat Inuit provide resources to educators. You can also read ETFO's FNMI curriculum resources found on the etfofnmi.ca webpage to deepen your understanding of Indigenous Peoples and our collective history.

No matter our age, we are all learners and we all learn in different ways. The history of colonization forced many Indigenous Peoples to give up their way of life and their relationship with the Land. There are many Indigenous Peoples who have already connected or are reconnecting with their traditional ways of life and worldviews. Learning about the history of this country and learning from Indigenous Peoples is a good approach of reconciliation.

Calderon, D. (2014). Speaking back to manifest destinies: A land education-based approach to critical curriculum inquiry. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 24-36.

Simpson, L. and Goulthard, G. (2014). Simpson and Glen Coulthard on Dechinta Bush University, *Indigenous land-based education and embodied resurgence* (Eric Ritskes) [Audio].

Styres, S., Haig-Brown, C., & Blimkie, M. (2013). Towards a Pedagogy of Land: The Urban Context. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(2).

Wall Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.

A JOURNEY OF INDIGENOUS LAND-BASED LEARNING

Overview

There are many different ways to learn. Our perspectives are shaped through various interactions that we have with others and the world around us, including how and where we learn. We also have different relationships with the Land, including our knowledge of it. The approach taken in this resource is to capture the learning of the writer and to gain a new perspective on Indigenous land-based learning from four Indigenous knowledge holders. Land-based learning is not just an Indigenous practice or concept.

Our hope is that the process taken here will inspire you, as educators, to learn more about, and from Indigenous Peoples in your region through community connections, getting out on the Land in your home or school community and being reflective in your learning.

This resource captured the learning journey of each ETFO writer through the following:

Personal Introduction

To demonstrate a common introduction practice that is done by many Indigenous Peoples when meeting and working with new people, the four ETFO writers were asked to introduce themselves and share information on who they are, where their ancestral roots come from, and to share their perspectives of the Land and what land-based learning means to them.

Interview Summary

There is great diversity among the First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Each group comes with unique languages and dialects, customs and practices, stories, ceremonies and knowledge that is specific to the Land and land-based learning. The four advisors graciously shared their knowledge of the Land with the writers through one-on-one interviews. To ensure the authenticity of the information shared, the writer summarized the interview and the advisor reviewed for accuracy.

Resource Sharing

To support the writer in their learning journey and their knowledge of Indigenous land-based learning that is specific to their culture, the advisors provided a list of recommended resources for educators. The writers selected two resources from this list to highlight and summarize. The writers also included additional resources in the Learning Tools section of this resource.

Learning Reflection

To wrap up the learning journey, each writer concluded by sharing their perspectives on what they learned, and what their knowledge of Indigenous land-based learning now means to them. The learning journey continues…

Personal Introduction by Ali Dusome

I am Métis from Penetanguishene, previously from Bootagani Minis (Drummond Island), and have French, English and Irish descent. I live and teach in the Ottawa Valley on the unceded territory of the Algonquin People. I hold an elected position on the Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council, where we work on increasing the voice of youth in decision-making and bringing young people together for learning, sharing and cultural activities.

Throughout my life, the Land has defined who I am as a person. I am Indigenous to this land, and I am from ancestors who travelled great distances by water and land to make a life for our family. My family and I return home to Penetanguishene frequently to spend time with our relations. As a child, I spent a lot of time with my aunties, uncles and cousins on the land and water. We always have big family gatherings (usually upwards of 50 people) that include harvesting foods and cooking in the outdoors. These gatherings included corn roasts, fish-frys, boating and making maple syrup.

In my life, I have had several knowledge holders who taught me valuable information about plants and their importance. When I was taught how to bead, it expanded my knowledge and understanding about plant life while deepening my connection to my plant relatives. I learned to examine how plants grew, including the shapes that they took, and the way that the Métis and other Indigenous Peoples have been capturing flowers in their art. Another teaching I received about plants was their medicinal uses, including how to make salve and heal insect bites. I learned that poison ivy is a plant that protects other more delicate plants. All of these lessons strengthened my relationship with these relations.

As a Grade 1 teacher, land-based learning is the way to help my students deepen their connection to the natural world. We spend a lot of time discussing where we are and how we connect to it, and going into the yard or nearby forest to meet the plants and animals that share our space. We are learning how to grow our own food, and how to clean and cook it, and about the relationship that we are in with our animate and inanimate relatives around us. Land-based learning is sharing a piece of myself with my inner-city students. It is the learning that takes place through a lens of understanding who you are in relation to where you are, how you got there, and how interconnected you are to all of nature and to the place and community where you live. For me, all learning is land-based, because without it, who am I?

Interview with Kowesa Etitiq (Inuit)

Kowesa Etitiq is the Vice-President of Sunburst Consulting.

What does land-based learning mean to you?

Land-based learning is the passing on of knowledge from family, Elders and knowledge keepers. It means living in harmony with the environment, respecting animals, and taking only what you need. Land-based learning is the way that knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next. It is not a formal way of learning. It's done by watching and through experience, like trying something new and learning from your mistakes. In land-based learning, mistakes are viewed as lessons.

What is your relationship with the Land?

The Land provides everything. The Land is life. For the Inuit, respect for the Land is a matter of survival. Understanding the weather and the Land is a matter of life and death. This isn't to say that Inuit are taught fear of the Land but are taught respect for the Land. The Land is where everything comes from including food, clothes and tools. Land-based learning is the strength and ingenuity of Inuit people. They know how to survive on very little and in a very extreme climate. The Inuit have a deep respect and relationship with the Land. There is no hierarchy; you can either live in harmony with the Land or die.

Is there a specific experience that you would like to share that focuses on a connection to the Land that you have made on your journey?

The seal hunt teaches many different skills. The Inuit must learn meteorology to predict safe weather to hunt. They must learn to pack and plan so that they have everything that they need to be successful and safe. Inuit make their own hunting tools, such as harpoons and kakivaks (fish spears), which cannot be purchased from a store. Ice conditions vary, and can be dangerous; a good hunter needs to learn about the conditions of the ice to stay safe. When a seal is caught, a hunter will melt snow or ice in their mouth and spit it into the seals to ensure that the seal has water for their journey to the spirit world. A hunter must also have the knowledge of how to cut up the seal, who to give specific parts of the seal to, and how to prepare the skin for stretching and drying. Each of these steps requires a lot of knowledge, and these are only some of the skills involved in a seal hunt.

What suggestions do you have for educators in teaching students about the importance of land?

Educators can bring in people who understand the Land, and allow them to support them and teach their students. It is important that educators understand that they do not know everything. It is also important for educators to understand that most Inuit do not consider themselves experts, as it is not the Inuit way. It is important to remember that Inuit teaching

styles are different from the western ways of learning. So, it's important that educators remember to check their biases, and also believe Inuit people when they share their knowledge, experiences and stories.

If educators are unable to access the outdoors, there are a lot of ways to access land-based learning in the classroom. Activities such as tool making, stretching and tanning skins, and drum making are a few examples. For their own personal learning, educators can go on Medicine Walks or attend a culture camp to build connections with other learners and people in the community.

Resource Sharing

1 Tagalik, S. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Supporting Wellness in Inuit Communities in Nunavut* (2009).

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is an article written by Shirley Tagalik. She explains that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is an Inuit knowledge system based on Inuit worldviews (Tagalik, 2009). The article uses the framework of four laws for living a good life: working for the good of all, respecting all living things, living with harmony and balance, and planning and preparing for the future (Tagalik, 2009). It also explains six guiding principles as set out by Elders, which could be used to develop classroom activities.

This resource will support educators to learn about the Inuit and their way of life. The author explains the Inuit way of life, and how the Land is central to health, wellness, prosperity and education, while including challenges faced by Inuit in the present day, and barriers that may be faced when trying to live a good life. As educators, we can integrate the guiding principles in our classrooms through a number of ways, including considering how to implement decision by consensus into our classroom community, and weaving the concept of environmental stewardship into lessons and referring to it when engaging in land-based learning. The six guiding principles and laws have been adopted by the Government of Nunavut and by educators to teach about the Land in a way that honours the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

2 Twitter The importance of caribou. The Beaver, 1942.

The image (found in the link) depicts a caribou and the many ways in which Inuit use the parts of a caribou. This image is powerful because it provides insight into the way of the Inuit worldview. In the image, there are clues about how resourceful Inuit are (using all the parts of an animal), and the respect that is shown towards an animal that has been hunted. There are also images of tools, and items from clothing to instruments, to tents and lashings, illustrating that all things in the North at one point came from the Land. This resource could be used to explain respect, food security, not wasting, innovations and the importance of knowing the Land.

Students could look at the image and discuss all of the different ways in which a caribou can be used. Students could then create a similar drawing of another animal or plant that is consumed for food, brainstorm and write down all of the different ways in which parts of that plant or animal are used or could be used. This exercise could tie into environmental stewardship and allow students to understand the ways in which we waste, and can in turn, reduce waste by using more from the animals and plants that we rely on for food. It is worth noting that the article in which this image comes from was written in 1942 by a settler for the Hudson's Bay Company. Although it contains a lot of good information about the ways in which Inuit use a caribou, it is important to understand that the terminology used does not respect the words that Inuit use to describe themselves.

Learning Reflection

During this project, I had the opportunity to learn a lot from Kowesa and about his perspective on land-based learning. It was amazing to hear the similarities and differences between our experiences as Indigenous People. We both have a very deep connection to the Land. We understand that land and water are life. Both our families and communities shared lessons with us on how to live a good life, how to use our surroundings to survive, how we are related to the world around us, and how to honour and respect our relations.

Since my interview with Kowesa, I've been spending a lot of time thinking of the survival aspect that he spoke to me about. He talked about how in the North, land-based learning was a matter of life or death. The cold is not forgiving, and the Inuit have to be able to stay warm and hunt in a dangerous climate. If you get lost hunting, you will die. If you go through the ice, you will die. If you don't get enough food, you will die. Of course, the Inuit, like all people on Turtle Island, have been deeply impacted by both technology and colonization. Snowmobiles, cars, communication technology and imported food are now available in the North, which have impacted the way the Inuit hunt, communicate and travel.

Colonization has disrupted the transfer of knowledge among all Indigenous Peoples. In the North, the climate remains dangerous, and land-based learning remains essential for daily survival. Originally, land-based learning was a key to survival for my people as well, but over the years, we pass on knowledge in my community for the survival of a people and a culture. The Inuit also pass on knowledge for this reason, but in the North, Mother Nature acts as one of the first teachers for many.

Personal Introduction by Sheila Maracle

She:kon! Sheila Maracle yonkyats. Tyendinaga tahnon Six Nations nitewake:non. Kanyen'kehá:ka niwakonhwentsio:ten. A'no:wara niwaki'taro:ten. My name is Sheila Maracle and I am from Tyendinaga and Six Nations territories. I am from the Kanyen'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation. I am Turtle Clan. I am a Wife, a Mother, a Teacher, a Language Learner and a Singer. I love to laugh. I am on a journey right now to share my understanding of land-based learning.

To me, land-based learning is about discovering, developing and understanding what it is to have a relationship with the Land that I am on. This also includes understanding and acknowledging the water, the air, the plants and the animals. Everything is interconnected. Everything is alive. My West Coast sister told me that each tree has its own song, but in order to know a tree's song, she said you have to offer it Sacred Tobacco every morning at dawn for a year without missing a day. Then at the end of that year, the tree will decide if it wants to share its song with you.

As a child, my family always drove up to Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory to visit my late uncle. I was not aware of a land connection at that time, but I was happy to know that this is where my dad came from. Years ago, my partner and I and our daughter travelled from Vancouver to visit family in Ontario. We drove to Tyendinaga to visit my relatives and as soon as I saw the sign, "Welcome to Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory," I had a huge wave of warmth, happiness and a sense of belonging. It washed over me and took my breath away! I felt I was home. It was an instant and deep spiritual connection to this area, this land, this place of my ancestors and my history. I cried happy tears.

I taught for almost two decades in Vancouver's inner-city schools. One spring day while on the school grounds, I paused at the young sapling tree in the yard. A tiny bird was singing at the top of the tree. I began mimicking its call and the bird flew down a few branches toward me. I kept mimicking and a few more tiny birds came, and so did a few Kindergarten students who were curious. As I continued, the tiny birds came so close to me that I could have touched them, and the kids were as spellbound as I was. Now, I listen for this bird every spring, and when I hear its call I say, "Ah, my bird!"

Land-based learning for me means being outside and learning about the natural world around me. Indigenous land-based learning is about going a little deeper to know about traditional and cultural teachings of a specific area.

Interview Summary with Deb St. Amant (Anishinaabe)

Deb St. Amant is a retired ETFO member who is now the Elder in Residence at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

What does land-based learning mean to you?

Land-based learning means always being ready to go outside. We need to be dressed for the weather everyday so we can go outside and enjoy the outdoors in comfort, no matter if it is windy or raining, etc. It's good medicine just being out on the Land.

According to Anishinaabe teachings, we humans were here last. All of Creation was here before humans, so we need to be thankful to all of Creation including the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, those that creep, swim and fly, right down to the bugs and the standing ones (trees and plants).

All of Creation has gifts to share with humans. For example, the birch tree has so many uses for the Anishinaabe, so we give thanks to the birch tree. We acknowledge Creation's diversity of gifts that help us in so many different ways each day. Also giving thanks for the water in all its many forms. The lakes, oceans, rivers, rain, snow, what have you, are all precious and needed by all living things to survive.

What is your relationship with the Land?

I am the Land, and the Land is me! Mother Earth is our Mother so we take care and look after our Mother just as she looks after us by providing everything we need to be alive. I wear a long skirt to honour Mother Earth. The fringes on the edge of my long skirt brush her as I walk gently upon her.

I try to respect her. It bothers me deeply and I cry when I drive to work and see the limestone that has been blasted, and I see the water trickling down from the blasted area. It looks to me like the Land is crying. It wasn't meant to be blown apart. To me that is disrespectful. We are not taking care of this limestone. It is hurting.

I put down my sacred tobacco morning and night. The Water Walker taught me that copper is a natural purifier, which is why we use copper cups and buckets in our water ceremonies. I keep a copper cup of water by my bed at night and in the morning to drink three-quarters of it and give the rest back to nature. I also plant foods and medicines. I find it very grounding to have my garden and get my hands right in the earth. Water is part of the earth and I like to go out on the water in my kayak. I enjoy the gift of water. I look at all the plant life at the water's edge, the fish swimming, and any animal that is at the water's edge. Land-based teaching isn't just about the Land, it's about the whole environment.

How has the Land defined who you are?

I have lived many places during my life and so I try to make the most of the Land wherever I may be. When I lived in Australia, I loved going to the botanical gardens. I enjoyed the lemon trees and orange trees that grew in my backyard. Neighbours had mango trees, avocados and bananas. There was always so much growing and it made me very happy. Even when I lived in an apartment, I had a garden on my balcony. I have always fed birds, squirrels and other animals that come into my yard. I am not one to sit and just watch television. I am always out on the Land, playing in nature.

Is there a specific experience that you would like to share that focuses on a connection to the Land that you have made on your journey?

There is one experience that I share with my students. Every year there were a pair of Killdeer birds that would make their nest and lay their eggs at the foot of the hill in our school yard. I would take my students for a walk and show them the birds. I'd ask the students to guess which one was the male. I would tell them that it was the one that would try to lead us away from the female and the egg by pretending it was hurt with a broken wing. We would watch what would happen, and sure enough the kids would get so excited to walk around and see this male Killdeer flop around with his pretend broken wing. Then as the years went on, these students would come visit me and ask to see if the Killdeer had made their nest again that year. These students would always remember this experience fondly.

On a nature walk with 26 students and three adults, we walked softly on Mother Earth. We made sign language to say things like "stop, look over here". As we moved through the forest, everyone would be sure not to make any noises. We were able to see a deer, a rabbit, squirrels and chickadees and three snakes.

What suggestions do you have for educators in teaching students about the importance of land?

For any lesson that you do, you could ask yourself, "what part of this lesson could be done outside?" It's very important to teach students to reduce, reuse and recycle. This is part of looking after the Land.

Only take what you need. If you are out berry picking, corn picking, or apple picking, pick from every other plant; don't ever pick a plant clean. We must also leave some for the animals and insects. This is acting in reciprocity. Our word "miigwech" is used for thank you but it really means "I give back to you." This represents our reciprocal relationship, and our agreement with all of Creation. Before picking or taking anything, we always give thanks with tobacco by placing on the ground, by a tree, or in the water.

An attitude of kindness must be taught. If there is a spider in the classroom, we teach that it can be captured and put outside. We don't need to kill it. Same with bees or wasps, we can show them mercy and kindness and put them outside so they can live.

Outdoor spaces need to be created so all staff can utilize outdoor teachings practices. Encourage students to touch the plants or dirt that the teacher is talking about. Students and educators can learn the medicines that are growing in the school yard. Students can learn the calls of the birds that are local. Studying the trees on the school yard is another idea; touch the bark, what shape and shade of green are the leaves, and what smell the tree gives off.

Teachers can bring the outdoors inside. Some suggestions are having class pets, an ant farm, watching a caterpillar morph into a butterfly, or growing small plants indoors so kids can watch them up close. Have kids care for something because some kids never get to care for anything.

Teachers can show their own personal relationship to the Land through their language and actions. Teachers can talk about their own outdoor experiences to model the way they use their senses to enjoy the outdoors.

Resource Sharing

1 Styres, Sandra D. (2017). Iethi'nihstenha Ohwentsia'kekha: Space, Place, and Land. In *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education* (pp.45-55). Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

This resource introduces concepts of land as space, place, time, relationship, identity and stories. Western ideologies written about the same topic of land tend to separate these concepts, whereas Indigenous worldviews view these concepts as inextricably interwoven and interconnected. For example, the Western worldview believed "North America and its host people did not exist until they were discovered by European explorers and colonists – they had also proclaimed it "tabula rasa" – empty space, a blank slate – unstoried and theirs for the taking," (p.46). Whereas Styres states, "Iethi'nihstenha Ohwentsia'kekha embodies principles, philosophies, and ontologies that transcend the material construct of place. With this understanding in mind, Land is spiritual, emotional, and relational; Land is experiential; Land is conscious – Land is a fundamental living being," (p.47). Many Indigenous cultures view the Land as their mother and "the land comes first, before all else," (p.48). The author brings the reader to a much deeper understanding of land as Mother, as cultural deity from which we Indigenous Peoples remember who we are, past and present, understanding our "interrelationship between place [land] and Indigenous identity (Archibald, 2008, p.74)," (Styres, 2017, p.50). Land is so much more than a place in time to Indigenous Peoples, it is a sacred relationship that transcends linear time and space and defines our identity in connection to the Land.

2 Styres, S. D. (2017). Self-in-Relationship. In *Pathways for Remembering and Recognizing Indigenous Thought in Education* (pp.56-61). Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press.

There are many Indigenous Peoples that believe that the earth is our mother. Styres explains that Indigenous relationship with Mother Earth is one of action, and not just philosophies and knowledge passed down from generation to generation. We have a reciprocal relationship with the Land and we have responsibilities to maintain this relationship with the Land. Ancestral knowledge and ceremonies are connected to the Land, languages, cultural identities and the spirit of everything on the earth. Another important concept Styres talks about is the Seven Generational Thinking that, "we are a part of everything that is beneath us, above us, and around us. Our past is our present, our present is our future, and our future is seven generations past and present," (p.60). We are expected to consider the effects that our decision-making will have on the seven generations. The consumerist, capitalist Western way of life does not align with this respectful relationship action. If everyone acted globally, we would not be worried at all about climate change or clean water shortages. We need to practise, "Land is our primary relationship – it is first, before all else" (p.61).

Learning Reflection

After interviewing Deb and reading several resources, I've come to understand that land-based learning can be as simple as growing a bean plant in a cup in your classroom, or thinking about land as a spirit, and the importance of stories. No matter one's personal beliefs, when we teach our students about Indigenous perspectives, we teach them that everything should be respected and the natural environment needs to be taken care of.

Through this project, I was able to see that I have many relationships with the natural environment even inside my house; from the plants that I take care of, the pets I care for, practicing recycling and composting, and using water sparingly and efficiently. Outside of my house I take care of the backyard by keeping it clean and talking to the bushes and trees because I believe that these living things can hear me. I would like to learn more about the types of trees and the wildlife that are in my neighbourhood. I will also start a garden in my yard and make an effort to acknowledge the water I drink by singing a traditional water song.

In the Haudenosaunee culture, we are to practise gratitude and show thanks for all that we have, and to take care of our Mother Earth. In my instructional practice, I want to teach my students about walking softly upon Mother Earth. I will find ways to bring the outdoors into my classroom and teach about the corn husks. I will take my students outside to learn about the plants and medicines that naturally grow in our community. I will continue to learn and grow in knowledge, and share it.

Nya:wen, Yethi'nistenha Ohwen:tsya. Thank you, Our Mother Earth.

Personal Introduction by Kareena Butler

Kwey! Aanii! Hello I am Kareena Butler. I am Anishinaabe Algonquin from Mattawa, Ontario. While growing up, I was negatively impacted by colonial stereotypical views of First Nations people. This experience resulted in hiding my Indigenous identity and hindered my interest to learning more about my culture, language and traditional ways. For many years, it was easier to tell others that I had Italian ancestry. In doing so, I thought I could protect myself from stereotypical jokes and negative comments. Being proud of my ancestry was not easy, I had not found my voice yet.

Raised in a small community nestled between the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers, I learned the importance of water, and the importance of showing gratitude for the gifts that nature provides us. At a young age, I was taught that we are connected to every living thing and that all life matters. Everything from the spiders on the grass, to the birds in the trees, or the rocks along the river, and the flowers in the ditch; all of these things are alive and have a spirit that should be respected.

I feel most alive when hiking and snowshoeing in forest trails or even sitting by a tree in the city. Being outdoors and connecting with the Land is good medicine for me. It is a place where I can reflect, heal and feel nurtured. In the stillness of being in nature, I know I am not alone. Spending time in nature, I have learned to appreciate all the gifts from nature, Mother Earth, and to observe our interconnectedness with the swimmers, the flyers, the crawlers and the four-legged beings.

At this point in my life, I am focusing on healing, finding my voice and working with the Indigenous community to learn about traditional ways, language and culture. As an educator on the Indigenous Education Team with my school board, I have the opportunity to listen and build trusting relationships with Indigenous co-workers, community partners, teachers, students and parents.

Land-based learning is more than just bringing students into the outdoors; it is an opportunity to learn about where they live and delve deeper in understanding the importance of the Land. By working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, educators can learn about Indigenous knowledge, stories and worldviews. This is in hopes that we can all be more responsible to in taking care of the Land. Being in nature can benefit many urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and educators.

Interview with Dave Sowden (Mohawk)

Dave Sowden is a Mohawk elementary educator at the Oliver M. Smith Kawenní:io School in Six Nations.

What does land-based learning mean to you?

Land-based learning means learning a skill set, where physical activity is involved, and making connections to traditional ways, language and knowledge. Learning about harvesting corn allows us to understand where this skill set evolved from, how it's done and why it is done in a certain way. We can learn traditional ways as well as modernized skills.

Land-based learning allows for an understanding of Indigenous perspectives. For example, a Haudenosaunee belief is that corn has a spirit much like a human and the way you treat the corn will determine the corn crops for the following year. Land-based learning provides hands-on experiences that demonstrate how we are supposed to use everything that is left over and to use only what is necessary to sustain for future generations. Learning skills such as harvesting corn, using corn in soups or for making flour are lifelong skills. This type of learning creates connections between the community and the school and involves ceremonies, sharing stories and giving thanks.

What is your relationship with the Land?

The Land has given me everything I need to survive. I enjoy all four seasons and the gifts each season brings. As a hunter of wild turkey and deer on this local territory, I am grateful for the animal's sacrifice and I always share the meat from the animal.

The Land gives me the opportunity to connect with my children. I share the skill of tree tapping with them and teach them how to make maple syrup. The sap is medicine and it is important to care for the trees for future generations. Growing up I remember my uncle was an herbal, plant medicine man. I can still recall the smell in his workshop. If I knew then what I know now, I would have placed learning from him higher on my priority list. Haudenosaunee code of conduct consists of such values as using kind words, being compassionate and being respectful. I strive to incorporate as many of these as possible into my daily life.

By living this way, it strengthens my relationships with others and with the Land. I'm always humbled by the power that the Land and water possess. Despite advances in technology the Land itself, the Land still provides us with everything we need to survive here on this Earth.

Is there a specific experience that you would like to share that focuses on a connection to the Land that you have made on your journey?

At school, students and educators are learning the importance of corn, where it comes from, how to harvest corn and the different uses. They are not only engaged in learning practical skills they are learning their traditional ways, learning language and listening to stories.

Before a recent white corn picking trip, I was introduced to a video called, *White Corn - Our Sustenance*. This video has so much information. It describes the process of white corn picking by the Haudenosaunee people. It also explains how we are to treat the picked corn and why we treat it that way.

Although times have evolved, we are to remember the lessons from earlier times and to practise them because the presence of the corn is a privilege, and that it can be taken from us at any moment. The video allows for group discussion and helps develop an understanding of the importance of corn before going to experience picking white corn in the field.

What suggestions do you have for educators in teaching students about the importance of land?

When participating in land-based learning it is important to have an open mind. Your way may not always be the right way; and be aware of your worldview.

Many First Nations, Inuit and Métis have a vast knowledge of the gifts that the Land and water provide. Make space for Indigenous knowledge keepers, Elders, and community partners in your schools. Value stories and the importance of oral tradition, many of the "whys" are taught to us through stories. Give yourself time to reflect and make your own meaning from the stories Elders and knowledge keepers share with you. Remain open to other perspectives and worldviews, we exist together (e.g., Two Row Wampum and Dish With One Spoon).

We learn from failure and should not be discouraged by failure. Incorporate more physical skill and activities into your program. Start small and provide real-life experiences that will build confidence. Skills and outcomes should have attainable goals to start and build from there to improve confidence. Acknowledge the territory where you live, work and play, by showing respect to the Land. Indigenous Peoples understand that the Land helps us thrive and that we are all equals, not above each other or the Land. It is our responsibility to leave it better than we found it for future generations.

Resource Sharing

1 *Our Sustenance (2020)*

Our Sustenance is an organization local to Six Nations of the Grand River. It supports the community with knowledge in gardening, food preservation, and agricultural knowledge in general. In addition to the service to their community, *Our Sustenance* has been a local resource for Educators in the area sharing their experience and knowledge with respect to growing, preparation and food preservation. Food is medicine. The community members of *Our Sustenance* also share their expertise in self-care through the traditional uses of certain foods. The videos included in this resource talk about the traditional knowledge related to the calendar of ceremonies tied to certain foods, how they are grown, harvested and prepared, including maple sap, varieties of corn and the hunt. The speakers included in these videos are local knowledge guardians/keepers respected throughout the territory.

2 *Deyohahá:ge: The Indigenous Knowledge Centre* (2019)

The Indigenous Knowledge Centre housed inside Six Nations Polytechnic at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory is a vast catalogue of resources, both online and in-person.

"Deyohahá:ge (Two Roads): is dedicated to bringing together two streams of consciousness – the ancestral Indigenous knowledge with the best of modern academic knowledge – in order to advance the overall well-being of all peoples. The two main goals to accomplish this vision are:

- Preservation and nurturing of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom.
- Nurturing and fostering community-based research that incorporates Indigenous knowledge in all fields."

Knowledge Guardians/Keepers work to share their knowledge in the community and throughout connections to bridge the gap between colonial education and traditional. Seminars are shared by the respected knowledge keepers with respect to the origins of some foods based on the creation stories, traditional ways of caring for the land, food security, and the sharing of traditional foods. These videos will support the building of capacity or setting the foundation for education workers looking to connect with community members to engage in land-based learning.

Learning Reflection

This learning process has given me the time to reflect on my personal understanding of land-based learning. I have come to discover that it is more than simply bringing your students outside or taking them on a field trip to the forest. It means committing to learning about the Land as well as learning from the Land. This also includes being taught a skill to responsibly harvest, gather and/or care for the Land. It creates an ideal setting for building partnerships and collaborating with community partners, Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This way we make space to understand Indigenous worldviews, traditional ways of knowing and the importance of respect and gratitude.

Before this, I thought living in an urban setting might be a limitation for educators who wanted to engage in land-based learning. I thought this because not every school has access to nearby green spaces or the ability to go on field trips. I now realize land- based learning is not only about going into the forest, that you can easily bring nature into the classroom. Start local and explore the natural environment around you, like the schoolyard, the park and other spaces in your community. Ask yourself, what native plants, trees, funghi, birds and other wildlife do I share this territory with? When we learn about the Land outside, we begin to understand how we are all connected and have roles and responsibilities for survival.

I feel the urgency to learn not only the names but also the traditional uses for the plants and trees that grow on this unceded Algonquin territory. I plan on attending culture nights on a more regular basis and continuing to build relationships with Indigenous community partners to learn traditional uses for plants as food, for ceremonies and even healing. This also includes the animals that share this territory and the importance of water. By becoming a learner alongside the students in my classroom, I will model the importance of lifelong learning, stewardship and commitment to respecting the Land for future generations.

After several discussions with Dave and reviewing his recommended resources on land-based learning with a Haudenosaunee perspective, it reinforced the importance of learning about diverse traditional ways, culture and language. Understanding the reciprocal relationship our ancestors had with the Land, can guide our ways of living and taking care of the Land. Learning about corn explained the Haudenosaunee perspective that everything has a spirit and that our words and actions matter. Harvesting corn, strawberry picking, collecting sap from maple trees, planting a garden are all skills that can be taught through a land-based learning approach. These lifelong skills not only give back to the community but also teach us how to sustain life.

Land-based learning allows us to understand our role and relationship with the Land, how to care for it, respect it and give back to it. The Land gives us everything we need to survive.

Personal Introduction by Emily Chan

My name is Emily Chan. I'm Chinese Canadian, born in the Year of the Tiger in Tkaronto/ Toronto. My parents came from Hong Kong in the 1960s. They taught me to have deep respect for Elders, learn by doing, and connect meaningfully with people across differences. I was raised as a community activist and learned to be useful from as young as I could lick a stamp.

Whenever they could, my parents brought our family and friends out to forests and lakes to push us outside of our comfort zone as city people. They taught me that experiences were more important than material things so we learned to ski, went for hikes in the woods, watched the sunsets, and used an outhouse. The seeds of curiosity and wonder about the natural world were also planted at home, where we grew Chinese vegetables for nutritional herbal soups and learned to garden with my Poh Poh (grandma) and aunties. Every harvest taught me about being grateful for satisfying hard work.

My upbringing centres my understanding about Indigenous land-based learning: the Land is our teacher; knowledge is passed through stories that span all of time; we have a responsibility to care for the Land and to take only what we need, use it well and be thankful; and, that deep learning happens experientially.

With students, I start with being outdoors in the schoolyard as a first step. I tap maple trees, find plantain leaves and spread milkweed seeds. I share teachings about the interconnected qualities of plants, animals, rocks and water that I've learned from Saugeen First Nation Elder Duke Redbird and Cree/Dene artist Veronica Johnny.

When students learn by doing, whether planting seedlings or raking leaves for a compost pile, I see eyes light up with hearts racing. What we feel from head to toe is the energy created with land-based learning; and when we feel alive we can better understand that the Land is living and to walk gently.

Interview with Scott Carpenter (Métis)

Scott Carpenter is a Manager of Education, Way of Life and Special Projects, Métis Nation of Ontario.

What does land-based learning mean to you?

Everything I learned about the Land and the water, I learned from my family, my parents, grandparents, uncles, aunties and cousins. That was our way. We weren't well-off, so we learned to add to our pantry through harvesting and preserving foods like our ancestors did. That was our way of life. Throughout my life, the Land was important to me. When I was young, I would hunt and harvest with my parents. The connection I have to the Land is hard to put into words. I learned to harvest and hunt safely, not in a classroom, but on the Land with my family. Sometimes they taught me outright ("don't do that") and other times I would have to learn by experiment. They weren't hovering over me all the time and would let me test things out and learn by doing. My parents let us children learn on our own but they always had one eye on us.

There are some things you only need to do once to learn. When you walk along the side of creek, and you don't look where you're walking and you step into a mud bog, you only need to do that once. Sometimes you learn from doing and sometimes you're told very clearly what to do. For example, firearms are very dangerous, and I was taught that you never fire the gun in the bush unless you know where everyone is in your hunting party. Being on the Land meant we learned how to do things safely. My grandparents and my dad were always on the Land. We came from people who knew weather patterns and never relied on the news for weather forecast. My parents had a very good understanding on how to read the Land and the waters and these teachings were passed on to me and my siblings.

At the beginning of learning about Indigenous land-based knowledge, I think that it's very important that educators understand that there are three unique Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Métis and Inuit. We need to understand that each of the Indigenous Peoples may perceive the Land differently. Any program in school about Indigenous land-based learning must recognize this. I've learned over time how to understand who the Métis are through my own journey of applying for Métis citizenship over 20 years ago with the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). The concept of land-based learning is at the centre of programming for the MNO youth cultural camps and it is how many Métis people learn. We share our life experiences to teach Métis youth about the seasonal rounds and harvesting. The cultural knowledge that I developed over the years includes learning about the Métis relationship to the Land.

There is a huge misunderstanding about who the Métis are. For example, the dictionary definition of Métis is "mixed blood" and this is inadequate. There is so much more to being Métis than that. The Métis had self-governance and were historically important to confederation. To obtain Métis rights, the community needs to meet the Powley Test that

was developed in the 1990s. This ten-point test can help determine whether one is a rights-bearing Métis community (the Van der Peet Test looked at whether an Indigenous group was here prior to contact and since Métis peoples were the result of contact, they would never meet that test). In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada made a decision that confirmed Métis have harvesting rights.

First Nations people were here before the Métis people. You can't take the fur trade out of the Métis or the Métis out of the fur trade. People need to understand who the Métis are to effectively work with the Métis. We're not just like any other First Nation. Our governance system is different, and we have different policies, funding mechanisms, worldviews, and pedagogies. The Métis evolved into having their own language, culture and ways of life separate and different from First Nations and Europeans. Sometimes, there are paralleled aspects of First Nations and European ways, but it was complex and unique. That being said the Métis have changed over time, just like Canadian society has.

The MNO runs culture camps, based on seasonal rounds, for students in grades 10-12 from all across Ontario. I helped to develop the program and included knowledge that I learned about harvesting and other skills I learned from my family. I learned these things from being on the Land and not in a classroom. The stories that youth share at the culture camps carry a common theme: that what they learn in school they don't necessarily retain, but the things they learn with their hands will be remembered for a long time.

What is your relationship with the Land?

Where I'm most at home is in the bush and on the water. I feel relaxed and in the right place. Being on the Land restores Métis peoples' relationship to land and our identity. The Métis connection to land is fractured due to colonization, and so getting back to the Land like that of our ancestors is restorative. My grandfather didn't have a full-time job; he lived off the Land to ensure that there was food on the table, because you couldn't get everything you needed from the store.

I grew up in the Midland/Penetanguishene area and I got my hunting license when I was in high school. I remember I couldn't wait until I could get my hunting license. I hunted with my dad and uncles. Hunting is my passion and when it was fall time, I would even go hunting by myself as soon as I got off the school bus and would stay out until dark. While attending university in Thunder Bay, I didn't have the opportunity to harvest but during the summer when I'd get home, I would go fishing. I would go fishing for hours. I would fish a little, eat lunch, fish some more, have a nap. Being on the water brought balance into my life.

Is there a specific experience that you would like to share that focuses on a connection to the Land that you have made on your journey?

I have three children's stories in various stages of development about my own upbringing on the Land and how I was introduced to certain aspects of harvesting. These stories were also about family values, knowing the seasons, the importance of respect to the Land, and

knowing how much to harvest. By My Toe is about how my dad used to show my siblings and I where the morels were. It's about seeing the world around us, the signs of what's in the bush that tell you that the morels are out, how to recognize seasonal landmarks in order to know where the morels were, and to appreciate the Land and all that it has to offer. When we'd go morel picking, he'd say "by my toe" so we'd know there'd be a morel there. These outings weren't just about picking morels. He taught us about insects and birds. It was about sharing time with family and I learned from the stories told during those trips. My dad would ask, "Where should we go this time?" or "Remember the time when...?" as a way to teach us about harvesting. This story is really about how being on the Land is about being with family. Not to mention the one-of-a-kind taste that morels have.

My Life as a Hound Dog is another story. Even though we didn't have a pet dog, I'd go into the bush to chase out the rabbits, partridges and ducks. I loved hunting with my dad and he'd always send me into the bush where I could scare the game so he could shoot it. Before I got my hunting license, I would go hunting with my dad. I used to get so excited the night before we'd go hunting. If I didn't wake up in time to go, I'd be disappointed. It was something I did with my dad that was kind of like a rite of passage. I just wanted to be out there watching my dad and learning from him. My dad would tell me stories the entire time, like how they used to set rabbit snares. I learned that the first snowfall was when the coats of the snowshoe rabbits would change from brown to white and if the snow melted, you'd be able to spot them much easier. Hunting was a passion and even as a young boy, I was always practising my aim with my BB gun, and then my pellet guns, to help prepare me for when I could go hunting.

The third book is called Fishing for the Old Lady. When we'd go fishing, we'd bring my grandma fish that we caught. This honoured the relationships we had in the family and my grandmother's love for fish. Fishing was the main way that my grandfather fed his family. He used to set fishing nets and before he passed away, he made sure his sons had nets so they would be able to provide for their families. Fishing was a way of survival for my grandfather and my family. Fish played a very important part in my dad's family's upbringing and survival. Watching the weather patterns, knowing when it was safe to be on the lake, when fish would bite or not, where to net our own minnows, and smelts in the spring. Fish was a food source for us; we had them all year-round. When my grandfather was younger, he would go to Lake Simcoe to fish in winter to catch enough fish to have food for several weeks. Fishing is really important to my family's culture and my family's way of life and it has been important to the Métis way of life in the south as there are, and have been, fewer large game animals to harvest and feed families.

All of these experiences are what we try to bring to the youth who attend MNO's culture camps. It's what I and many other Métis have been doing our entire lives. Each program is based on being on the Land. Youth that we bring to culture camp experience things differently than they ever would in a classroom. The kids talk about the camps being a second family. Harvesting might be the activity, but so much more takes place because it's an all-encompassing experience. It's who we are. The kids say they can be who they are without being judged or bullied. That's really important to Indigenous land-based learning.

What suggestions do you have for educators in teaching students about the importance of land?

You can't truly experience the outdoors without being in the outdoors. It's like describing what pie tastes like without tasting it. There's a difference between teaching students indoors and outdoors. It changes how students take to it. My advice is to practice land-based activities by being outside on the Land. When a child learns to cut down a tree, the smell of cedar or pine is part of that experience including the sound the tree makes before it falls. Describing a campfire is different than experiencing it from the sounds, the smells, and how it feels cannot be fully described, it needs to be experienced.

I'm not sure if I want to compel someone to learn about Indigenous land-based learning. People have to have an interest to be on the Land, and to learn about Indigenous Peoples and their ways. They would also need to think about the biases they are bringing. I would challenge educators to understand myths about Indigenous Peoples. What do you think about Métis people? What's your understanding of rights-bearing Métis people? We don't want people to feel unsafe in our youth camps. In the same way, we don't force people to do something they don't want, but we do encourage them to try things that are new or outside their comfort zone. Everyone needs to take their time to be comfortable.

In order for educators to understand Indigenous perspectives, I would suggest that they meet with Indigenous communities and participate in different community events. For example, attend a Métis Assembly, or go on a medicine walk with an Elder. You must include Indigenous Peoples when learning about Indigenous land-based learning, and educators should partner with different Indigenous communities. Understand that First Nations do things differently than the Métis and Inuit. I caution against cultural appropriation. When including Métis knowledge holders, it's also important for them to partner with educators who can provide funding (for example, an honorarium).

Get out on the Land with knowledge holders. The interpretation and questions should be answered by the Métis knowledge holder leading the activity. Ask the Métis knowledge holder if it's appropriate to share what you learned and always to credit the knowledge holder whom you learned from. It's important for educators to be open minded and to continue learning. For example, smudging is done differently by different people. There isn't a right or wrong way in how things are done, as this knowledge or practice would have been handed down. As Cherie Dimaline says, the stories shared are repeated until someone is given the responsibility to pass on the stories. Métis knowledge cannot be gained in a piecemeal way or replicated in the classroom, get out onto the Land.

Resource Sharing

1 Dimaline, Cherie (2019, December 17). Keynote Address at the Métis Nation of Ontario Fall Cultural Gathering.

"It's the way that we were raised; the way we hunt, the way we fish, the way we celebrate, the way we mourn; it's in the way that we dream. Everything about the way that I hold story; everything about the way that I live, is, as a Métis person." Dimaline emphatically states that the Land and culture are intertwined through stories passed on from her Mere (mother) and aunties. These stories are instructive: as maps about her family or community's history; and, as teachings with a moral or lesson. Dimaline also describes what is unique about Métis communities in terms of relationship to the Land. In her research, she found a common theme across Indigenous communities in Canada: "The Land is who we are. The Land is what makes us community." She emphasizes the importance of authenticity in stories as a way to sustain connections to land for future generations. Her speech is a riveting call to action for educators to understand that Indigenous land-based learning is fundamentally important to our responsibility to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights to culture, identity and the Land.

I'm moved as a parent and educator to ensure that I avoid cultural appropriation when sharing opportunities for Indigenous land-based learning, by working in partnership with Indigenous educators and knowledge holders; and, to recognize that land is vital within the diversity of stories and ways of life among First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

2 Hivernant: A Métis Winter Camp Experience (2018, April 19).

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) leads seasonal camps for Métis youth across the province to learn experientially on the Land. The video highlights one of the many MNO camps that show Métis youth to walk on ice, fish, hunt and harvest wild game in Michif (Métis language). The youth in the film also learn specific skills such as how to cook fish in different ways, including how to handle hot oil or make a basket with twigs to hold a fillet), as well as how to sew mittens and use hot coal to make a wooden spoon.

A closing activity includes presenting a Métis sash to the youth to symbolize one's journey in learning about Métis culture and identity. The MNO's culture camp is a community building initiative that helps connect Métis youth with other youth, Métis knowledge holders, and to learn about the Land and ancestral ways.

This is a useful resource for educators to understand how an organization that is actively teaching and advocating for the unique ways of life among Métis communities in Ontario. This culture camp initiative demonstrates that one cannot learn about the Land without being on the Land. For Indigenous land-based practices, we must take further steps to ensure that the teachers are Indigenous knowledge holders.

Learning Reflection

Through my conversations with Scott Carpenter, I learned of the tireless work by generations of the Métis Nations demanding sovereignty that inherently connects them to the Land. Colonization fractured many Métis peoples' relationships to the Land and restoring this connection exemplifies the resilience of Métis ancestral knowledge. I learned that honouring Métis land-based knowledge is a necessary political act for reconciliation for all people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Two things that have stayed with me from the interview with Scott are that you can't do Indigenous land-based learning on your own; and that you need to have deep passion and commitment about being outdoors to understand the importance of the Land. In my role right now, I will continue to connect with my school board's Indigenous Education department and ask for land-based learning opportunities from a diverse group of Indigenous perspectives (Métis, Inuit, First Nations). Scott reminds me to do this work responsibly as a non-Indigenous educator. In his words, "all it takes is to ask to find out what can be taught" from Indigenous knowledge holders about whether teachings can be shared and how.

Scott also inspires me to collaborate with non-Indigenous colleagues and integrate my education practice across classrooms and subjects. I need to continue working with colleagues to learn and co-teach together, as well as to plan within an integrated, inquiry-based framework rather than teach subjects separately.

I am motivated to plant seeds of curiosity with my students, even though I am unable to be outdoors or on the Land. As an urban educator, I always begin with what is relevant in the everyday lives of my students, such as the shade from trees in the schoolyard or a debate about the origins of the maple syrup production. I tap sugar maple trees at school, collect sap, measure the volume of sap or syrup, discuss the history of technology and share the Anishinaabe stories about the origin of maple sap. I can learn and teach, as David Suzuki says about his understanding of the Haida worldview, that "we are connected through air, water, and soil" with a cross-curricular approach.

If being on the Land restores Indigenous relationships to culture, identity and the Land itself, then non-Indigenous people (like myself) must follow Indigenous leadership with respect to land-based learning as allies, stewards and citizens of the Earth. This needs to be done with an understanding that First Nations, Métis and Inuit have unique perspectives and pedagogies. I've learned that we need to fall in love with the Land and share that passion by connecting with Indigenous educators and non-Indigenous colleagues. I will walk the talk with students, whether on the Land or in schools, to take steps forward to care for the Land and embrace Indigenous land-based learning.

Suzuki, David. 2007. The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature. Vancouver: Greystone Books, pp. 192.

CONCLUSION

Land-based learning is remembering that we have a relationship with everything around us. This learning happens everywhere: in urban and rural settings, including inside of our classrooms. Getting to know plants and animals in your schoolyard, growing a plant in your classroom or learning about food that grows in your community, are great ways to get started.

Land-based learning is a journey with nature; we build on our existing knowledge and our connection to Mother Earth by forming partnerships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community colleagues and agencies. We especially seek out these partnerships when seeking cultural and spiritual knowledge however, as this learning should come from Indigenous communities.

Each of us are somewhere along a continuum of discovery in our learning, so keeping a growth mindset is key. Whether we are seeking answers when we have questions or modeling that we are life-long learners alongside our students, as long as we are acknowledging the gifts of the Land and taking caring of the Land, we are doing land-based learning.

To conclude this resource, a list of online resources has been provided on the following pages for educator and student learning. Check them out. Be curious. Have fun.

TOOLS FOR SELF-LEARNING

Connect

Connect with your school board's Indigenous Education department. Some school boards have Indigenous land-based studies that you may participate in with your class.

Call a local First Nations Band Office or Inuit or Métis organization to speak to their Indigenous Education officer and enquire about education or cultural programs or speakers.

Call an Indigenous Friendship Centre, local college or university that has an Indigenous education office as they may have access to community members, Elders or Knowledge Keepers that can visit your class/school.

Share your learning and interest with colleagues as a way to collaboratively build knowledge and be inspired.

Experience

Participate in a local hike or Indigenous land-based learning activity or event that is open to all; invite a knowledge keeper (check your school board protocols) to lead the hike!

Start a compost in the schoolyard - rake leaves, use the compost to nurture the plants in the school garden or school plants.

Visit a local park that may have developed Indigenous land-based curriculum with local community organizations and Indigenous knowledge holders.

Listen

Listen to Indigenous-produced podcasts, stories from the Land and those that feature storytelling.

Read

Subscribe to an Indigenous Education newsletter.

Listen and Learn.

Promising Practices in Indigenous Education Website (PPW)

Medicines to Help Us by Christi Belcourt describes Cree, Métis and Anishinaabe teachings for diverse Indigenous plants.

Invite Indigenous children's book authors to do a reading.

Braiding Sweetgrass.

Bridging Cultures Indigenous and Scientific Ways of Knowing Nature.

Peruse the Indspire site for excellent resources, teacher/mentor opportunities, Indspire Awards recipients (truly inspiring).

Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac.

Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children, by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac.

Keepers of Life: Discovering Plants through Native American Stories and Earth Activities for Children by Joseph Bruchac.

FourDirectionsTeachings.com Indigenous knowledge and perspectives: Five First Nations across Canada.

Muskrat Magazine: an online Indigenous magazine that honours the connection between humans and Indigenous ecological knowledge by exhibiting original works and critical commentary.

Google famous FNMI people, or by Nation, example, famous Mohawks.

Check out ETFO's 21 Inspirational First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women poster.

Google famous FNMI athletes, FNMI Olympians.

Watch

Take part in Webinars such as the Kikinoo'amaadiwin Webinar Series.

Watch news and programs on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) or APTN Lumi (Indigenous-focused TV shows, documentaries, kids show).

Partner

Develop partnerships with Indigenous educators and community partners.

Join a union committee that promotes Indigenous learning in some way (i.e., Status of Women, Social Justice, etc.).

Connect with outdoor education centres within your school board and ask for Indigenous land-based learning opportunities with students.

Nurture co-learning partnerships with colleagues, in your school or with your board, to encourage and inspire your education practice.

Expand your Toolbox

Visit the Métis Nation of Ontario website for an Education Kit, which includes teacher's guides for Traditional Métis Knowledge Teachings and flashcards of significant items in Métis culture.

Study arts by First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists.

Explore different sports - Lacrosse, pin and ring games.

Use EagleCrest early reader books that feature Indigenous children on the Land, at school, in urban settings and on reserve. Available at Good Minds.

Check out the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Integrate

Offer experiential activities that engage the senses (e.g., what does cedar smell like? How does wind affect how one smells? What animal tracks do you see in the sandbox?).

Teach with the seasons (e.g., measure the diameter of maple trees in schoolyard, if appropriate in maturity, collect supplies from hardware store to tap trees when daytime and nighttime temperatures are adequate).

Investigate lunar cycles (e.g. names of the moons are linked to animals and vegetation in the areas).

Learn and Share

Learn the plants and animals in your area with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous community groups.

Find a resource or field guide that describes how Indigenous communities have used plants for medicine, food or cultural purposes.

Go Outdoors! Have students discuss what they can see, hear, feel, or smell in your school yard.

Have students locate (not remove) specific items (like a treasure hunt).

Find ways to use nature to have your math lesson (counting branches on a tree or clouds in the sky).

Observe which birds or animals you hear or see. Note the time of day or season and how many you observe.

Start seeds in your classroom in January and plant them in the ground in June, either at school, local gardens or students' homes, so students can watch the plants over the summer.

Walk around the neighbourhood to show students different types of trees and plants or talk about different parts of the landscape. Explore!

Make a map with students of the plants, trees, shrubs in your playground.

Add students' personal stories or qualities about various plants. (i.e., "This cedar is a good hiding spot when I play Hide and Go Seek").

Add observations about where animals perch or travel in the schoolyard.

Connect with stories and picture books by Indigenous authors that convey teachings about Land, culture, ancestry such as Shi-shi Etko, A Day with Yayah and Marrow Thieves.

Bring the outdoors into your classroom!

Soundtracks and images of forests and rivers, animal calls, live webcams of various animal habitats from a local conservation authority provide opportunities for students to identify animals or inspire curiosity for the outdoors.

Investigate ceremonial calendars from different Nations.

Express Humility

Include activities to show appreciation when learning from the Land.

Say a word of thanks. Students can share individually or as a group.

Initiate a quiet moment of gratitude.

Write thank you notes to the Land, the water, people who teach you things about your culture and/or nature.

With collective activities such as maple tree tapping, students may all place a hand on the tree to express connection to the Land.

RELATED ETFO RESOURCES

Be sure to check out three ETFO resources related to this topic at etfofnmi.ca.

1 Cultural Appreciation vs. Appropriation Resource

In 2019, ETFO developed a resource that examines cultural appropriation versus appreciation.This resource includes information that encourages educators to self-reflect and respectful approaches to demonstrate appreciation of Indigenous stories, cultures and arts.

2 Starting From the Heart: Going Beyond the Land Acknowledgement

This document was developed to provide educators with information, ideas and resources that support the reconciliation journey specifically in the area of land acknowledgements. The resource will invite you to acknowledge your own values, your relationship with family, the community and the Land. It will also explore our collective responsibility to protect the natural environment.

3 Introduction to Treaties: Compilation of Resources

This resource was developed to introduce ETFO members about the nation-to-nation relationship and agreements that were made between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples. The information within this document will provide educators with a starting point to acquire knowledge about treaties and land acknowledgements.

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