

KIPIMOOJIKWIN: ARTICULATING ANISHINAABE PEDAGOGY THROUGH
ANISHINAABEMOWIN (OJIBWE LANGUAGE) REVITALIZATION

by

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Abstract

In Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language), *Kipimoojikewin* refers to our inheritance, or the things we carry with us. While Anishinaabemowin, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) pedagogy and research practices are all part of our inheritance, so too is a legacy of colonial violence and historic trauma. This paper details one journey towards the language; the struggle through a colonial terrain rife with institutional and cognitive barriers, the journey to return to Anishinaabe ways of knowing, to articulating Anishinaabe pedagogy in a contemporary urban context and the work done to fulfill the vision of the Elders. There are no “best practices” only stories that exemplify an Anishinaabe axiological framework so that the causes and effects can be better understood, taken up and improved upon. Aapajitoon kema wanitoon.

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Waaciye, Ode'amik nintishinikaas, amik nitootem Kaministiquia nitoonji. Nikii kihkinohamaakoomin e minopimaatisiwihikoyaakin Anishinaabemowinan. Nikii kihkinohamawikoo kete kihkinoohamaatwinaan ohsha taa kii pikiiwecikaatekin tahshine. Amihimaa e onci kihkentamaan "kitipentamowinaan ekwa kaye kipimoocikewinaan kaa Anishinaabewiyak ji kanohkeyak aanti e onciyak ekwa miina ji aapacitooyak kikihkinoohamaatowinaan tahso kiishik". Miihtahsh ihi e wiiji tashikemitiyaak ji aapajitooyak nintanishinaabewi kihkinohamaakewinaan; nintanishinaabewi pimaatisiwinaan; nintahtisooakaaninaan. Ekwa miina tahshine ji tahshimikooyek ekwa miina tahshine ji maamitonenimikooyek, Shoomisinaanak.

Ninanaakomaak Nookomisinaanak, Shoomisinaaak, Kaa Tipenjikech, kaa kikinohamawishiyek, miikwech. Ninanaakomaa Kichi ayahaak kaa kii niiganiwaach. Ninanaakomaa Dr. Keren Rice, kaa kii wiijishiyaan, that you have guided and supported me through my development miikwech. Ninanaakomaa Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, that you have believed in and supported me, miikwech Ninanaakomaak ninikiihikok, Aiden, Alex, Elijah, Manee, Betsy, kaa kikinohamawishiyek, miikwech.

Ninanaakomaag (*dedications*)

To those who remember where they come from, to those who are lighting the Seventh Fire.

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Nitaapiskose niwiikwaasapakoon', Foreword

I was told once about this man who, 30 years ago, had found out that the museum kept a box full of old Mitewin bundles. The museum people brought that man over there to ask him if he would be willing to open those bundles and explain the meaning of the items inside. The man, he was certainly curious to know what was in there, but he went away before making a decision. When he came back a few weeks later, he said to them, "I'll open those bundles up for you, but only if you are willing to take responsibility for what's inside". The curator and the others present at that time were shocked at this request, but in the end they said no, they could not take that responsibility. And so, that man, he left without opening those Mitewin bundles. When he went back 15 years later, he asked the new museum people about that box. They told him that they had never seen a box like that.

Today I have my own bundle; and unlike those men at the museum, I am willing to take responsibility for this gift because I know that if I don't, it too might disappear. What I keep in my bundle has been gathered through an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) process of inquiry. Each item represents a complex web of teachings, histories and ceremonies. The most important thing that I carry in my bundle is my language. Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) is a gift, a medicine, a sacred responsibility, an inheritance handed down from generation to generation. There have been terrible losses when the generations of the past were forcibly kept from passing on this inheritance. But it makes my responsibility no less. If I don't open up this bundle and use my language, then I will have failed in upholding my responsibilities as Anishinaabe.

Mii ohmaa nikii ishi wiintamaakonaan ahawe kihci ayaa, peshikwaa ihi
Anishinaapemowin kiiyaapic ohoma ayaamakan. Mii tahsh kiinawint etako; kiwanishinimin,
kakina kiwanishinimin ahpii kaa wanitooyaak kita Anishinaapemonaan. Anishinaapewi
ishicikewinan ekwa miina Anishinaape weshkac ishi pimaatisiwinan, kiiyaapic ohomaa
ayaamakanoon. Kiishpin tepwe kwayak pimootooyek, kika kii mikaanaawaapan kakina kekon
kaa nanantakihkentamekopanen.

¹ Unraveling my birch bark

Introduction

Waaciye, Nikii kihkinohamaakoomin e minopimaatisiwihikoyaakin Anishinaabemowinan. Ekwa tahsh nikii kihkinohamaakoomin kete kihkinoohamaatwinaan ohsha taa kii pikiiwecikaatekin tahshine. Amihimaa e onci kihkentamaak kitipentamowinaan ekwa kaye kipimoocikewinaan Kaa Anishinaabewiyak ci kanohkeyak aanti e onciyak ekwa miina ci aapacitooyak kikihkinoohamaatowinaan tahso kiishik. Miihtahsh ihi e wiici tashikemitiyaak ci aapcitooyaak Nintanishinaabewi kihkinohamaakewinaan Nintanishinaabew pimaatisiwinaan Nintahtisoohkaaninaan Ekwa miina tahshine ci tahshimikooyek ekwa miina tahshine ci maamitonenimikooyek, Shoomisinaanak.

Four years ago, my intention was to focus my academic work on articulating Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) theory and pedagogy for addressing issues facing diasporic urban Aboriginal peoples as they engage in and redefine/reclaim education. At the same time, I was assisting an Elder who not only spoke our language and upheld our philosophical framework, but also had an incredible vision for how our language can be used in contemporary Anishinaabe communities. It became my job to do the research, grant writing and language work to fulfill his vision. What I learned soon after the process began was that his vision for the language and my academic inquiries into Anishinaabe pedagogy were very similar. Without the language I could not articulate Anishinaabe philosophical and pedagogical approaches. Without engagement with and in Anishinaabe communities, the theory is void of a depth of analysis that experiential practice provides. Thus, articulating Anishinaabe pedagogy for me began by first building a community of Anishinaabemowin learners and speakers--the very community that would inform my academic inquiries and enable me to fulfill my responsibilities to my community and Clan.

Anishinaabe pedagogical theory and practice occur everyday in Anishinaabek tashiikewinan across our territories, through ceremonies, video conferencing, e-learning

platforms, traditional story-telling, ceremonial gatherings, rites of passage, dreams, cell phones, songs, conferences, formal teaching environments, informal gatherings, in the home, and through Elder apprenticeships. It is a framework for teaching and learning that is “intact”, highly intelligent and has thousands of years of successful implementation. However, it is a practice that is not legitimized in current colonial institutional practices, or is in fact subsumed by colonial categories of “Indian teachings”--complete with beads and feathers, and a short list of nouns and everyday phrases. The question for me became how do I design an urban experiential learning environment that utilizes Anishinaabe pedagogies without being subsumed by institutional (colonial) agendas yet still uphold my responsibilities to my community and maintain legitimacy in the academy? Amihimaa wenci kaa ishi misawiyaaan.

Kipimoojikewinaanan translates to “what we carry”, referring to the choices we make as Anishinaabe for what we carry along with us in our life journey that we can then build upon and pass to future generations--our culture, our ancestral inheritance, our responsibilities to our community, our Clan, our place in relationship to Shoominsinaanank, Aatisokaanak ekwa kaye kaa Tipencikec. Certainly, “what we carry” could also include a legacy of colonization complete with built-in self-destructive mechanisms--isolationism, individualism, displacement, narcissistic self-gratification, and lateral violence. My re-search over the last four years has been an upstream paddle away from a pathogenic landscape of operational rationality (i.e. credentialized schooling) towards the source of Anishinaabe ishinaamowin (Anishinaabe worldview)--a journey that could only happen through learning the language and working to build community capacity in the language.

This paper details my journey towards implementing Anishinaabe pedagogy in a community-based learning environment. It includes chapters on the broader context of

endangerment and revitalization, cognitive barriers, and the articulation (and reclamation) of an Anishinaabe methodological framework.

Storytelling--real story telling, not “Indian myths” that have been watered down to fit on tourist information boards--is a ceremonial practice (Archibald, 2008). Both orality and aurality require a connection and awareness of self and creation beyond the physical boundaries of egocentric embodiment. I have to extend myself beyond my desires and insecurities, to “listen” for what I am supposed to say. This journey that I want to share with you has stories within stories, always starting and returning to the theoretical framework that they reflect.

Using my own language to describe this journey is also important. As Kenyan scholar Ngugi Wa Thiong’o explains, “to break with neocolonialism it is necessary to write in ones original language” (1986, p. 27). Or as Mi’kmaq educator Marie Battiste, explains, “the more an Indigenous person learns and tries to express Eurocentric ideas in his or her Indigenous language, the more that person realizes that Eurocentric languages constitute an imposed context that Indigenous peoples have neither authored nor experienced” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 81).

Further, I think it is important to note that the “research” itself is not the focal point of this paper, but rather the “doings.” We can spend our lives talking about our needs, interviewing others about the best ways to do things, gathering data, producing reports and going to meeting after meeting and never actually do anything. Instead, through the interviews and talking circles, ceremonies, and teachings, the Elders, the learners, the broader community, and the parents told me what needed to be done and I did it-- no hemming and hawing--I simply did what I was told to the best of my ability because that is my responsibility as Anishinaabe. I hope that my doings will be taken up and improved upon by my fellow community members, by the youth and by the learners who have given so much to the community through their commitment to the language.

While I believe that words on paper are meaningless unless they have a direct correlation to practice, I also think it is important to consider that my words on paper are fixed in place where the reality of my doings are constantly changing, adjusting to the everyday variables that come with traditional practices: responding to dreams, visions and the Elders' input, maneuvering around barriers, responding to the constant influx of new computer software, urban Nish youth culture, family crisis, institutional politics, funding deadlines, and seasonal ceremonies. What stays the same is Anishinaabe ishinaamowin (Anishinaabe worldview) as the framework for what I practice; much the same way my canoe is the frame that allows me to navigate constantly changing waters. The more I learn about my canoe, the better I understand what my boat and me can do. As Stl'atl'imx writer and educator Peter Cole (2002) journeys before me in his work "aboriginalizing methodology",

we learned to take a canoe from a cedar without felling it
 slate for tools profuse with islands
 not just a way of life but life itself
 hunting trails berry trails trading trails
 we assemble bit by bit the canoe giving thanks
 in that place euromethodology calls "conceptual space" t/here
 I speak with the assembled tree nations to a particular tree
 asking permission to use part of its clothing its body its spirit
 as a vehicle for my journey of words ideas intentions actions feeling
 as a companion
 paddle paddle paddle

Swoooooooooosshhh (p.459)

This paper will be a discussion on why and how I built my canoe, what the water was like as I traveled, whom I got my directions from and whom I stopped to visit along the way. By the time you read this, I will have come and gone and the waters will have changed.

Rationale: Amihimaa wenci kaa oshitooyaan niijiimaanim (Why I Built my Canoe)

Weshkac, wahsa kitchi-anishnaabekwe o-kii-kanawentaan kaa-ishi-gitchiinendaagwank. ihima, Anishinaabe ishikishiwewinan manitowikamik gakaabikaa tohkan. Mino-inaasinaaso weti Manito-niipi-ishikishiwewinikamik. Mino-miskwaawaa tohkan kaye zenibaawegin tohkan kaye aapamooyaanimaa tohkan. Weti, kakina kitchi-ishikiishwewinan misiwe pici-manito-kishkaayawaa. Mihtash kakina awiya kii-pishaawak ihima maamawapiwuk weti manito-niipi-ishikishwewikamik. O-kii-nanaantawentaawak manito-niipi-ishikiishwewinkamik. Ci-kakitowaac kaye ci-anisinaabe-bimaadiziwaac. Bezhikwaa, amanihsoohkaanak takoshiniwak. Waabshkiwenaakosiwak kaye kii- memecikaayaapantawuk weti manito-niipi-ishikiishwewikamik. Waabshkiwe Ihkito “ ohowe Nipii nihshiwanaatan” “ki-ka-maaciiwitoomin ekwa ki-kaminwaacihtoonmin”

Mihtahsh, iniweniwan Waabshkiwe o-saakicinishahwakwa Anishinaabewan. Mii tahsh koohkom kaye nishiwak otaawaashishan kii-apiwak ekwa kaaishi-oonci kaasoponihowaac. O-kiimooci- kanawentaawak manito-niipi-ishikiishwewikamik. Waabshkiwe kici-ohkonim kii-maacii-oshihcikewak. Mihtahsh, maaciipaankwahkamikaa manito-niipi-ishikiishwewikamik. Kooohkom okii-inaan otaawaashishaan “Kika-kiimooci-piishaamin ciimanink niipiikaank kaye kika-kocizhaapwitoon ihiwe manito-niipi-ishikiishwewikamik”.

Mihtahsh, pehkaac maamawi-maaciihkwashiwewak naawic ci-ishaawak ihimaa kaaishi-kiishkaayawaak. O-kii-waapantaawak nipihkaak ekwa nihshtawintaawuk minopimaatisiwin kaa-ocicaakopiisink. Koohkom ihkito ci-papaamaatakewaac Tahsh

aawaashishaan segisiwuk. O-kosihsan kii-piintoonepi ciimaanink ahsin tohkahn kaye wiikiiwehkwashiwepahtoo.

Otaanihsan kaa-ishi maatatemoc kaye kii- menisendam. Gawiin kaaishaahsiwak niipihkank. Koohkom o-kii- mate-waapantaan kihci- ohkonim. O-kii- kihcimikoshkatentam “awenenan kaa-wiicihikowank?” ihkito. Mii tahsh ihimaa Koohkom kaaishi- kihkentank ke-tootank. O-kii-poontaahkwehse kaye kii-nihsaapaawenaakosi.

Mii tahsh nishin otawaashishaan ihkitowak “koohkom, Aan enahkamikonk?”

Wahsa pici-kiishkaayaawaa paashkihwahikeniipi-naakosi koohkom piici-owiyaawink kaye kii-piici-mihkawinaakosi. “Aawaashishaak biindigewuk” koohkom ihkito.

“Niminaawepanihok! Piishaan niipihkaank ekaa ci-nipohsec ishikiishwewinan”.

Aawaashishaak tahsh sekisewuk kiyaapac. Gawiin wii-nihsaapaawenaakosisiiwak.

Mihtash, Koohkom nanaantawemikoyaank. Waawiye-tipiki-kiisihs tohkaan nanaatopicike nipi, Koohkom nanaatowemikoyaanh ci-pi-kiiweyak ishikishiwewinan.

Saakahikan ishanentan wiipac. Paankwahkamikaa wiipac ekwa Koohkom ta-wenipan.

Mihtahsh ihi ji-kanawenimakwaa kitchi-nihtaa-kakidoowininiwak Oshki-kakidoowininiwak ji minaadaniminakwaa kaye ci-miinakwaa anokaaziwinan. Kaye aasha ki-taa-poonipimaapootemin kaye ki-taa-maamitonentamin mashkawiziiwin imaa-ishikiishwewin².

Statistics may tell us that in the next 5 years Anishinaabemowin mother-tongue speakers will have dropped from the 30,000 recorded in 1996 to fewer than ten thousand (Norris, 2008). They may tell us that the vast majority of our speakers are over 65, that intergenerational transmission has dwindled to less than nothing or even that the trend of second language learners is increasing in number but not in proficiency (Norris & Jantzen, 2003). What they don't tell us

² This was a story that came to me at the beginning of my journey to work in and learn the language. For fluent speakers, this may seem full of poor grammar; for new learners of the language, here is an example of how much can be expressed after one year of intense study with a fluent Elder.

is that we are not in fact losing the language, as Anishinaabe Elder Giniwaanakwad, Joe Auginaush explains, “the language is losing us” (as cited in Trueur, 2001, p.157). This is a paradigm shift away from witnessing the death of our language,³ and towards, instead, a critical examination of our responsibility as Anishinaabe⁴. What has happened to us as Anishinaabe that we would be so complacent in our own destruction? If the statistics are true, we have less than ten years left to turn our boats around, return to our language, to gain proficiency directly from mother-tongue speakers who may have a greater depth of knowledge about the meanings and nuances of our language, rather than from other second language learners, books, recordings, and dictionaries that may not. Linguist Joshua Fishman (1991) describes the process of “reversing language shift”--that is, reversing the steadily widening gap between our people and our language--as the reversing of “the tenor, the focus, the qualitative emphasis of daily informal life--always the most difficult arenas in which to intervene” (p.8). He continues by saying that reversing language shift is incredibly difficult to plan or build programming around “not only because its would-be planners are frequently poor in resources and weak in numbers, but because

³ According to Krauss, if the current trend in language loss around the world continues, 90% of the world’s languages will be lost (as cited in Newman, 2003, p.4). In Canada, languages spoken by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are at the forefront of the trend towards language loss. A 1989 survey of 131 First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages indicated that 69% percent (119) were steadily declining to the point of critical endangerment. 19 of these declining languages had less than 10 fluent speakers remaining, while the rest had 50% or less of the adult population speaking with a smaller percentage of youth using the language; these numbers clearly indicate that in the majority of cases in Canada, First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages are not being transmitted intergenerationally (Canada Heritage, 2005, p. 35). While this survey was conducted in 1989, data gathered from Stats Canada in 2001 further supports these earlier claims by stating that despite the fact that Indigenous populations are increasing, the use of First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages in the home has dropped from 13% in 1996 to 8% in 2001 (Canada Heritage, 2005, p.36).

⁴ Numerous scholars have established that language directly impacts culture, demonstrating that when Indigenous language use declines, culture too is at risk. Marianne Mithun explains that “language represents the most creative, pervasive aspect of culture, the most intimate side of the mind” (1998, p.189) Language then serves a far greater purpose than mere communication, “...it is a social event whose goal is to establish and maintain the web of identities and relationships...” (Canadian Heritage, 2005, p.41). Thus, identity which includes cultural values, beliefs as well as a sense of belonging complete with networks of relationships and responsibilities, is embedded in language, making efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages an urgent and critical enterprise. Joshua Fishman emphasizes this fact by stating “the destruction of languages is an abstraction which is concretely mirrored in the concomitant destruction of intimacy, family, (and) community” (1991, p.4).

it is initially necessary for the weak in numbers and the poor in resources to tackle some of the most elusive behaviors and interactions of social and communal life” (p.8).

Historically, the steady decline in the standard of living for Indigenous peoples in Canada is rooted in contact with European colonial agendas and subsequent assimilationist policies (such as the *Gradual Civilization Act*, *Indian Enfranchisement Act* and *Indian Act*) implemented over the last 200 years (Miller, 1996). These policies systematically denied Indigenous peoples access to their languages and cultures while in the meantime, failed to provide adequate access to English language. Sto: lo Grandmother Lee Maracle describes this as being “crippled two-tongues”: the experience of being forcibly denied one’s language while not having the capacity to fully express oneself in the newly enforced language (personal communication, October, 2006). Moreover, trauma experienced from the often violent displacement of people from their land and family (relocation of people onto ‘reserves’, residential school, 60’s scoop, just to name a few) coupled with policies such as the 1880 revisions to the *Indian Act* that outlawed traditional healing practices and systematically discouraged the use of Indigenous languages, meant that whole populations of traumatized peoples were left without viable coping mechanisms and ways of healing. It is from this “culture void” that many psychological disparities such as suicide and feelings of hopelessness spread in the same way that diseases like smallpox spread from contact with Europeans centuries before. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Anishinaabe) and Magdalena Smolewski (2004) describe this pattern as “Historic Trauma Transmission” where, as long as the language with which to express oneself as well as the cultural tools for coping with trauma are denied, Indigenous people will continue to struggle with issues of health, education, healing and identity in Canada⁵. Revitalizing Indigenous languages

⁵ Prior to the articulation of *Historic Trauma Transmission*, a study from psychologists in B.C. detailed the prevalence of and direct control by Indigenous people over cultural components such as education, health, governance, land use and the presence of cultural facilities plays a significant role in reducing youth suicide rates

in this case becomes a necessary step towards healing--a process that has been recognized by National First Nations political bodies for over 20 years, “language is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values and fundamental notions of what is truth. Our Languages are the cornerstone of who we are as a People. Without our Languages our cultures cannot survive” (Assembly of First Nations, 1990).

Turning our boats around, navigating the colonial Terrain

The process of turning our boats around is a 360 degree, multi-dimensional reorientation (Dumont, as cited in Rheault, 1999, p.70). It is a reorientation that, on one level includes an understanding of our past, present and future. On another level it includes our relationships to self, family, community, clan, ancestors, those who govern us, and the larger society. It is a reorientation that also encompasses education, schooling, home-life, ceremony, and all the relationships needed to take up our Anishinaabe way of life in a contemporary context. Before we can reorient ourselves to Anishinaabe *ishitwaawin* (Anishinaabe culture), this process first requires a critical analysis of how dominating discourses have disrupted access to Anishinaabe-*ishinaamowin* (Anishinaabe worldview) on a cognitive level. *Ahpil Nanabooshoo opookookwenaan Shishibensan*, and *Shiikaawish*, are stories that uncover some of the cognitive traps that we have been caught in: hegemonic discursive domination, cognitive imperialism, and benign translatability. To understand these cognitive traps is to understand the colonial terrain and plot a more effective course towards our language. However, identifying and avoiding the snares, traps, lures, foot-holes, nets, and hooks is just the first part. Effectively planning a course towards language reclamation also

(Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C.E. 1998). This clearly demonstrates that for many Indigenous people, knowledge of one’s language as a means of establishing an identity rooted in cultural values, beliefs, and codes of conduct can provide the tools for overcoming a wide range of disparities.

includes ceremony, Elder apprenticeships, community involvement and gaining an in-depth understanding of Anishinaabe tepincikewin, aatisookewin, ekwa ishitwaawin. This kind of capacity building may not have language as its primary focus, but creates the foundation needed for using our language in everyday environments. The third part of this process is implementation: gathering the community together through concrete activities, sustainable relationships and social spaces where the language is used intergenerationally.

Chapter 1

Basangwaabishimon: The Shut-eye Dance and Hegemonic Education

Weshkaaj, Nanaboozhoo kaa pimiskadej. Osaam kinwesh kaawiin okii wiisinisiin. Okiiwaapaamaan shiishiipan, okii waawaatikohamawaan “boozhoo nishiimeyidog, ninka niimihiwe noonkom onaakoshing.” kita piishaanaawaa. Miish ihi okii niimihiwe Nanabooshoo. Miitahsh, Siishiipan okii mawadisikoon Nanabooshoo noonkom onaakoshig. “biindigen, biindigen” ihkito Nanaboozhoo. “kakina basangwaabig, kita basangwaapishimonaawaa” odinaan ahawe shiishiiban. Mekwaaj basangwaapishimoyek, kiishpin ekaa basabgwaabiyek, kika mamishkoshkiishigwen. Mekwaac niimiyek, Nanabooshoo okiibookogwenaan. Beshig onik odanokaason dewehigej, beshig onik odanokaazon nisaaj. Miish ahawe Shingibisan ogiimoosaabamikoon. Gii kichi naanoondagosi “koshkosik! koshkosik! kinisikonaan! kinisikonaan!”.

Miitahsh kaa kinipisaagijishimowaaj awiya kiyaapij kaa bimaadisiwaaj. Okii kajishkiwak. Nanabooshoo okiibasidiyeshkawaan Shingibisan. “kika mamiskoshkiishigwe” odinaan. Miitahsh wenji mamiskoshkiishigwej ahawe Zhingibiz.

There was a time, a long time ago, when Nanabush and all the other animals spoke freely to one another. Nanabush was always walking around looking for an easy meal. One time, Nanabush saw some ducks. He greeted them as his brothers and invited them to a dance that night. And so, the ducks went to the dance. Nanabush had prepared a beautiful dancing ground and invited them in. “Close your eyes, we are going to do the Shut-eye Dance” he said. “If you do not shut your eyes while I sing this song, your eyes will turn red”. And so, those ducks did shut their eyes and danced around.

Nanabush drummed with one arm as he sang. With his other arm he began to reach out and wring each duck's neck as they passed by. The sound of their wringing necks went along with the music, and so the ducks continued with their shut-eye dance. There was one duck however who secretly observed what was going on. Shingibiz was his name. When he saw what was happening, he called out to his fellow ducks, "My brothers, wake up. Nanabush is killing us!" The ducks that were still alive opened their eyes and quickly exited, escaping their confinement. Nanabush kicked Shingibiz in the rear and told him, "Now your eyes will turn red!" And that is why today Shingibiz has red eyes⁶.

Cognitive Barriers to Language Reclamation

I believe that as a society, we are continually lulled into dancing Bazangwaabishimon--the Shut-eye Dance. Eyes closed and passive, our heads are removed, our thinking capacity is stultified--or even devoured (assimilated into the body politic as to render it useless)--by the very colonial structures we believe we are resisting. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998), Indian colonial theorist Ania Loomba explains that hegemonic discursive domination as Gramsci, Althusser, Foucault and numerous other post-colonial theorists have articulated is not just a combined system of coercion and control but is also created through a consent-forming process (p.26-39). This consent-forming process includes out-right indoctrination through ideological formations that manipulate ideas, consciousness, desires, and orientations to authority, as well as "by playing upon the common sense of people" (Loomba, p.30). It is our very senses that have

⁶ Many teachers have told this story. It has been documented in a collection of Angeline William's work *The Dog's Children* and by Archie Mosay in a book of stories documented by Anton Treuer (2001, p.29-33). It was also told to me by Alex McKay in 2009 and Ernie Sandy in 2009. This is my version of the story. The original teaching is much longer and draws in other elements of Anishinaabe Kendaasowin. I have focused only on the first part here. My interpretations of the story come from things that the Elders have talked about in relation to this theme. However, I feel that it is important to note that each individual's truth is their own, and we will each learn something different from a teaching depending on where we are in our lives. Our task in learning, in my opinion, is to challenge each other's thinking (without imposing our own thoughts) so that we grow stronger in our understanding of the world and gain a deeper intellectual grounding in our teachings.

been manipulated, our “lived system of meanings and values” (Raymond Williams, as cited in Loomba, p. 110). In *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972), Herbert Marcuse explains this as an ideological system in which,

human sensibility is *blunted*: men perceive things only in the forms and functions in which they are given, made, used by the existing society; and they perceive only the possibilities of transformation as defined by, and confined to, the existing society. Thus, the existing society is *reproduced* not only in the mind, the consciousness of men, but *also in their senses* (p.71)

This is the Shut-eye Dance; our senses, our sensibilities are dulled; our speaking is harsh, direct and abrupt; our emotions are dampened and numbed. How can we return to our language through a lived Anishinaabe paradigm when we are trapped in “...an ideologically inflected linguistic field” that deadens our way of thinking (Loomba, p.39)? From this place, according to Loomba, every word spoken, every textual representation reflects and replicates dominant ideologies.

It seems a vicious cycle. We are trapped in a colonial framework, dancing to their tune and yet, the only processes and practices that are bureaucratically available to us, require the very steps to that Shut-eye Dance. The Elders for example, are often required to get university teaching degrees--where Zhaaganaash (non-aboriginal settler society) teaching methods are what “count” as certifiable--in order to make a living teaching the language. Government funds for language programs are often restricted to documentation, or replication of western teaching models rather than long-term programs for increasing community capacity and intergenerational economic viability in our languages⁷. Altogether this creates processes that relegate the instructional transmission of our languages to low-context, isolated social interactions, eroding

⁷ Anishinaabe economy, in my opinion, is not focused on the acquisition of material wealth. Nitashiikewinaan is where we are working about, in the culture transmission of knowledge, on the trap lines, in the apprenticeships for integral community responsibilities (both ancestral, and current) as well as in reclaiming and stabilizing a socioeconomic infrastructure for a better quality of life.

the use of our languages and furthering the assimilationist agenda. That is not to say that Zhaaganaash teaching methods, language classes and archival documentation are not important. But as the primary means of transmitting the language, they alone will not result in future generations of fluent mother tongue speakers. In fact, the reliance on Zhaaganaash practices for transmitting our language has, in the last 30 years proven quite the opposite (Littlebear, 1999). Indigenous language endangerment is increasing. The gap between mother tongue speakers and a younger generation of learners is widening. The generations that have learned Anishinaabemowin in schools are not proficient speakers. And worse, there are generations of youth who are now totally disillusioned about ever learning their language. They have given up. I ask myself now whether the colonial institutions that funded these language classes and linguistic documentation ever intended for us to become fluent speakers. Perhaps this is just another colonial assimilative practice: setting us up to believe that we lost our language despite the “valiant efforts” of the government to prevent this. Our language is our power; returning to our language is empowerment. Using our language in everyday environments is something that colonial institutions would not be able to control. And so, this shut-eye dance is used to lull us into complacency, dancing farther and farther away from our language.

In the interviews and talking circles I held before initiating the community-based programs, some of the Elders talked about feeling overwhelmed by the task of transmitting the language in a way that produced fluent speakers given the limited resources available to them and the institutional resistance to this. Many of the youth talked about feeling an enormous pressure from older generations to take on something that they had no viable means to acquire (becoming fluent in the language and skilled in the culture). The majority of the Anishinaabek second-language learners I spoke to expressed some degree of shame for not being able to speak the language and a certain degree of despair; to many it was a hopeless task relegated to wishful

thinking. But the despair identified by the Elders and the youth did not come from any lack of personal ability to teach or learn the language, but rather the means (or lack of them) to teach and learn the language. It was the institutional, structural, and economic barriers that made acquiring the language a seemingly impossible task--not a lack of willingness or ability; recent studies indicate that over 64% of Aboriginal people are saying that the continued transmission of First Nations languages is a priority (Statistics Canada, 2003)⁸. Lack of accessible means to acquire the language coupled with a ubiquitous assimilationist ideology may certainly be the greatest contributing cause of this separation from our language. Coming to an understanding of the colonial ideologies set to snare us, becomes of utmost importance if we are to move forward with the vision the Elders gifted us with.

Miitahsh kaa ciimaanikeyaan. Nizhazhiibitawikoo Shaaganoshiwak. tepwe nigizhizhawanokii ci ashowiziyaan tepwe nibimaaji 'idizo ci anokitawaakwaa niwicitashikemakanan. Amihimaa wenci nisitotaaman. Miitahsh wenji nisitotamaan Ashoowaapiwin.

And so, while Bazangwaabishimon--the Shut-eye Dance--has dulled our senses, there are those who have resisted. They are the ones with the capacity for critical thought, they are the Elders who still uphold their place in the spiritual/ancestral governance system, the people who maintain their relationship to place, and see the world through our language. They are the ones who will speak to me in the language and expect me to understand. They are the ones, like Zhingibiz, who were not afraid to keep their eyes open.

If we are to return to our language, we must first stop being lulled into the shut-eye dance and start listening to our red-eyed cousins, Zhingibizak. And more importantly, we must take what we are being taught and put it into practice everyday. Elders called on Aboriginal people to do the following:

- Do not forget our languages

⁸ Most currently available statistics on the topic.

- Speak and write our languages
- Teach and learn our languages
- Respect each other's dialects and do not ridicule how others speak
- Focus on young people
- Start in the home to strengthen the will of the people to bring back our languages
- Work together to build a foundation for our peoples
- Speak with a united voice

(Canadian Heritage, 2005 p.59)

To achieve this vision, institutional barriers must be recognized and overcome. Like Zhingibiz, the process of recognition and resistance requires us to dance with our eyes open. It is true that we still have to dance to their tune, but we can do it with awareness, with strategy and purpose. Amihima wenji kakwe ayaabojiiyaan. "Kaawin piiwitekaateken kitanishinaapemowin" ihkito kichi ayaa.

Chapter 2

Shiikawiihsh, told by Anishinaabe Elder Cecilia Sugarhead

Weshkac Anishinaapek e-taawaakopanen, peshik tahsh aha naape maacaakopan e-apinic otikweman. Mii tahsh aha ihkwe kii-ani-maaca ke-wiin e-anto-kawahinisec. Okii-maaciinaakopan tahsh oniicaanihsenhsan e-tahkopisinic tihkinaakanink. Mii tahsh e-kii patahkinaac shikop kaa ishi-patahkisoc e-wii kawahikec. Mekwaa tahsh ihimaa shiikawish kii-onci-kiimoosaapi. Okii-onci-kimooci-otaahpinaan awaashihshan kaa-tahkopisonic tihkinaakanik mekwaa tahsh kii-kawahinihsec aha ihkwe. Mekwaa tahsh kii-kihipcii okii onci-kihkentaan e-kii-panaapamaac oniicaanihsenhsan.

Mii tahsh iko shemaak kaa-ani-ishi-nanaantopahaac, e-kii-kihci-sekisic ahpan ekaa e-kii mihkawaac oniicaanihsenhsan. Mii tahsh kaa-ishi-kiiwec e-kii-kihci-maacentank. Okii-paahpiihaan onaapeman ci-pi-kiiwenic. Mii aashay naape kii-ppi-kiiwe e-kii waapamaac otihkweman e-kii-kihci-macentaminic. Mii tahsh kaa-inaac, “Wegonen wenci-macentaman?”

Mii tahsh ihkwe kaa-inaac onaapeman, “Mii ohsha ahpan e-kii-onci-wanihak kiniicaanihsensinaan mekwaac e-ontami-kawihinihseyaan weti noopimink.”

Mii shemaak naape kaa-ishi-kihci-nishkaatisic e-kii-saakicimishahwaac otihkweman. Shemaak ihkwe okii-kihkentaan ke-tootank. Mii himaa kii-ishi-nanaantopicike omatokaanaahkonk e-kii-aapacitooc kinoosheyaap k-onci-nanaatohkaanaac ini shiikawiihshan aanti kaa-ishaanikwen. Miitepwe kaa-ani-ishi-pihtaakimac e-kii-maacaac, piinihsh iko e-kii-pimi-ayaac.

Long ago where the People used to live, there must have been a man who was away while his wife stayed at home. That woman also left, to go and cut logs for firewood. She took along her baby, who was bundled up in a baby carrier. And so she stood him up against a tree that was standing there so she could gather logs for firewood. While she was doing that, there was a witch who was spying on her. The witch secretly took the baby that was bundled up in the baby-carrier while that woman was cutting logs for firewood. When the woman stopped working she realized that her little child was missing.

So then right away she started running around looking for him, and she was really afraid when she couldn't find her little baby. When she went home she felt very sad. She waited for her husband to come home. Then her husband came home and saw that his wife was very sad. So he said to her, "Why are you sad?"

This is what the woman told her husband, "Indeed I suddenly lost our little baby while I was busy cutting logs for firewood there in the forest."

And right away the man was so angry that he sent his wife away. The woman knew what to do right away. She went around seeking out and pulling things up near the lodge poles. She used her garter so she could track the witch and find out where she might have gone. Indeed she put on snowshoes and left, until she found where the witches' tracks were leading.

Okii-ani-atimaan tahsh e-kii-maamaaw-takohshinowaac. Ahpii kii-ani-oshi-kapehshiwaac, mii tahsh aha ahko awaashiihsh kii-wii-mawi. Shiikawiihsh tahsh aha okii-kakwe-noonihaan, aanci ko tahsh kii-kihci-mawi aha awaashihshenhs e-kii-macihpitank kaa-kii-ishi-noonihaakaniwic.

Mii tahsh aha mawaam omaamaamimaa okii-manipinaan oniicaanihsenhsan e-kii-noonihaac. Mii tepwe kaa-ishi-kiishikowenic. Piinihsh shiikawiihsh kii-macentam okii-mintitohaana e-kii-kihci-oshkiniikihaac. Mii tepwe kaa-ani-ishi-ompikic aha awaashihshenhs. Piinihsh kaye kii-ani-nihtaa-nanaatawencike.

Mii tahsh kaye peshikwaa e-kiiyotamwaa omaamaaman, e-wiintamawaac e-wii-antonanaatawencikec waahsa.

"Ehe," okii inaan okwisihsan, nawac iko ci-waahsawatinik ci-ishaac.

"Niin ohomaa, otaanaank ninka-onci-maaca," okii-inaan.

Mii tepwe wiipac kikishep e-kii-maacaac aha ihkwe naanaake okwisihsan kaa-ishkwaa-maacaanic. Ahpan kaa-inahkitenik omatokaan. Mii tahsh aha shiikawiihsh e-saakahank, mii kaa-

ihkitoc, “aan inap oho ekaa mahshi e-koskosc?” okii-inaan ini awaashihsh omaamaaman. Mihtikoni okii-paahpimwaatikwanihtoon matokaanini ci-koskosc e-inentank. Piinihsh iko okimiisitiyehikanahtik okii-ani-aapacihtoon. Piinihsh eni-waapatinik tawash peshikwaa kii inahkite.

She caught up to the witch and they arrived at the witch’s camp together. When they made camp, that baby started crying. That witch tried to nurse him, but that baby started crying because he didn’t like the taste of what he was being nursed with.

So then the real mother grabbed her little baby and she nursed him. It’s true that he did stop crying. The witch didn’t like what had happened and she made the baby grow up into a big youth. That little baby had indeed grown up.

And one time he went to visit his mother, he told her that he wanted to go hunting far away.

“Yes,” she told her son, he should go as far as he possibly could.

“As for me, I’ll be leaving here later on,” she told him.

And indeed that woman left early in the morning a while after her son had left. Her lodge was standing there deserted. Then that witch went outside and said, “ Why is it that she is not yet awake?” she said about the baby’s mother. She thought she would throw sticks at the lodge to wake her up. Until she started to throw the waste stick. She kept throwing sticks until dawn but the house was deserted just the same.

Mii tahsh aha naape kii-pi-onci-takoshin e-kii-pi-wiintamawaac siikawiihshan e-wii-naacininkwanihsoc, “Naawinaakwan,” okii-inaan. Mii kaa-ihkitoc shiikawiihsh, “ekwaa ta-ishaaniwan.”

Mii tepwe kaa-ani-maacaac aha shiikawiihsh, aha tahsh oshkiniiki okii-inaan shiikawiihshan, “Ani-papimahatoon kaa-kii-ishi-miihkanaahkeyaan.”

Mii tahsh tepwe kaa-tootank aha shiikawiihsh. Piinihsh iko kinowensh e-pimi-ayaac mii kaawin mahshi ci-otih tank. Ekwa iki oshkiniiki kaye omaamaaman kii-ishi-kiiwepanihowak wiipac, e-kii-oshiihtaawaac ci-maacaawaac ci-pwaa-pi-kiiwepanihonic shiikawiihshan. Mii tahsh ekaa e-kii-onci-kihipiiwaac e-kii-kakwe-takohshinowaac weti mayaam kaa ishi-taawaac. Ahpii e-pi-tepinaakwaninink otaawiniwaa, mii aasha shiikawiihsh pi-onci-tokohshin e-pi-antonehikec. Mayaam tahsh e-wii-pi-atimiwec ahpan ahki kii-pi-taashkihse, wii-pi-aashawikwaashkwani tahsh shiikawiihsh. Mii hsa ahpan kaa-ishi-panishikikec ahpan kaa-ishi-piintakoocink ihimaa anaamink ahkiihkaank.

Mii tepwe kii-ani-takohshinook kii-kiiwe awaashihshiiwise tahsh aha oshkiniiki.

Mii ohsha ho tipaatihsoohkaan ci-onci-kihkencikaatek ekaa ci-onci-nihshihke-nakanaakaniwic awaashihshenhs kaa-akaahshenshic.

Mii we.

So then that man arrived there to tell the witch that he wanted to cut up meat from the game that had been killed. “It’s far away,” he told her. And so the witch said, “Let’s go.”

And indeed when the witch started to leave the young man said to her, “You travel where I have made the trail.”

So for sure that’s what the witch did. Although she was traveling for a long time she hadn’t arrived at her destination yet. The young man and his mother hurried back home. They didn’t even stop until they arrived there at their real home. When they could see their home in the

distance, the witch was coming to attack them. Just when the witch was going to catch them the earth started to crack, and she wanted to jump across. That's when she jumped and she fell down into the earth.

When the young man and his mother arrived home he turned back into a child.

So this indeed is the legend, which is used to teach people that children should not be left alone when they are young.

That's all. (Cecilia Sugarhead, 1996, pp. 47-51)

Shiikawiihsh ekwa Aanakanootamaage Kiwaanimowin: The Witch and The Illusion of Benign Translatability

Our children have been poisoned. But unlike the mass product recalls, warning labels and health inspections of the western world, this poison runs unchecked, mainlined into Anishinaabe consciousness through our educational institutions. The source of this poison, named "cognitive imperialism" by Marie Battiste "has, in large part, destroyed or distorted Indigenous knowledge and heritage" (2000, p.86). This is the one who has us under constant observation, waiting to steal us from our tikinaakan. This is the one who can force feed us, raise us for other purposes, steal thoughts from our heads, words from our mouths, and lure us into drinking poison. This is the one that has stolen our children.

Battiste explains that "language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge...where Indigenous knowledge survives, it is transmitted through Aboriginal languages" (2002, p.17). She further explains that "[w]here Aboriginal languages, characters, and communities are respected, supported, and connected to elders and education, educational successes among Aboriginal students can be found" (2002, p.17).

Anishinaabemowin is our sustenance, the source of our good life. Shiikawiihsh tahsh aha okii-kakwe-noonihaan, aanci ko tahsh kii-kihci-mawi aha awaashihshenhs e-kii-macihpitank kaa-kii-ishi-noonihaakaniwic. Mekwaaj Omaamaamimaa kaa manipinaach awaashishan. Mii debwe gaa-ishi-giishikowenich.

Piinihsh shiikawiihsh kii-macentam okii-mintitohaana e-kii-kihci-oshkiniikihaac. Mii tepwe kaa-ani-ishi-ompikic aha awaashihshenhs. Piinihsh kaye kii-ani-nihtaa-nanaantawencike. While returning to our mother tongue may be the ultimate solution to overcoming cognitive imperialism, according to Battiste there is more to language-as-knowledge-transmission than simply learning to speak or read our language. That is, Aboriginal languages are not simply complements to western education, or a “a token integration of culture to bolster self-esteem” (2002, p.18). The child feeding from the witch’s breast knew that it was not the same as nursing from the original source.

Instead, Battiste argues that literacy itself must be redefined in a way that “affirms Aboriginal languages and consciousness as essential to Aboriginal learning and identity” (2002, p.18). Beyond literacy, her earlier work with Sa’ke’j Youngblood Henderson (Chickasaw) details the need for, a reclamation of Indigenous pedagogy and infrastructural support to incorporate our languages and worldviews into an enhanced educational system (2000, pp.92-96).

“Piinihsh shiikawiihsh kii macentam...” And so, that witch was so angry that she made the child grow into a youth.

But the power that cognitive imperialism has to influence our consciousness also plays out in the politics of Indigenous languages. Often, like the child in the story, information about our languages is manipulated, raised to serve other purposes or forced out of Indigenous ontological contexts to fit Eurocentric discourses. This, according to Battiste, is the *illusion of benign translatability*, where the dominant assumption is that Indigenous languages can be

explained using Zhaagaanash categories of translation (2000, p.79). By doing so, the *illusion of benign translatability* “maintains the legitimacy of Eurocentric worldviews and the illegitimacy of Indigenous worldviews” (p.80). It is through this assertion of translatability that many Indigenous people get trapped into believing in Eurocentric categories for their languages, thinking that English and noun-based grammars, lexicons and dictionaries are complementary to their language. Not only does this illusion conceal the inequalities between Indigenous languages and dominant worldviews, it is a “tool of assimilation and power” (p.81) controlling the way that our languages and worldviews are taught in institutional settings. Commenting on Orwellian “newspeak,” Australian feminist Dale Spender explains, “the group that has the power to ordain the structure of language, thought, and reality has the potential to create a world in which they are the central figures” (as cited in Battiste, 2000, p.81). Through cognitive imperialism, educational institutions have, in many ways, succeeded in separating our language from its ontological, philosophical and pedagogical context, creating generations of children who cannot speak their language despite years of language programming in the schools.

“Mayaam tahsh e-wii-pi-atimiwec ahpan ahki kii-pi-taashkihse, wii-pi-aashawikwaashkwani tahsh shiikawiihsh. Mii hsa ahpan kaa-ishi-panishikikec ahpan kaa-ishi-piintakoocink ihimaa anaamink ahkiihkaank. Just when the witch was going to catch them the earth started to crack, and she wanted to jump across. That’s when she jumped and she fell down into the earth.”

Despite centuries of domination, a great precipice has been maintained by our ceremonial peoples between Anishinaabe ishinaamowin (worldview) and western thought preserved and expressed through our language. As Battiste and Youngblood Henderson explain, anyone who attempts to translate Eurocentric ideas into his or her language will discover that “Eurocentric languages constitute an imposed context that Indigenous people have never authored or

authorized” (2000, p.81). Thus, it is only through our languages that a clear line between Anishinaabe ishinaamowin and Zhaagaanash thought has been upheld. This is not to say that both cannot be used, but rather that our worldview can exist beside Zhaagaanash worldview equally. Some of the original treaties between Aboriginal peoples and settler societies used the metaphor of two canoes traveling side by side (Bonapart, 2005).

Aawechiganan are those things that are set up before us. The things that we follow, that we recognize so that we can later use them. That is what I believe our traditional stories can be used for. There is a foreign body always persistently attempting to captivate our children. We should not leave our children alone to be raised by this foreign body; and if they already have been stolen, then it is time to travel back with them and together define what is our ontological terrain by intrinsic right as Anishinaabe. The mother knew that she had to live with the witch, as we have to live in this Zhaagaanash society, but that mother also knew she did not have to accept the situation. She could work for change. And eventually, together, after a long and hard journey, she returned home with her family.

I believe that through our language, stories and educational practices, we can reclaim this ontological terrain for our children. Indian control over Indian education can only become a reality when we can overcome the illusion of the benign translatability of our languages, practices and worldviews, or as Battiste and Youngblood Henderson explain, “through dismantling all aspects of cognitive imperialism from our schools and communities” (2000, p.92).

Chapter 3

Wenji Kakiitawentank Nanaboozhoo: Why Nanabush is so smart⁹

Weshkach, Nanapooshoo ishinikaasokopanen awiyaa. Okiiwaapamaan Anishinaapen e pinaakosij. So Anishinaabe goes up to Nanaboozhoo and says, “Kiwiikakwejimin pankii kekoon. Nanaboozhoo” kii ikito. Ahaaw Nanbush ikhito. “Wiinke, wiinke, wiinke, kikakiihtaawentaan Nanabush” otinaan. Aani kaa wenji kakihtaawentaman, kiin? “Nanabush, how did you get to be so smart?” otinaan. “Kwayak Kahkiihtaawentamonaaniwan ohoma, ikhito, oh yes, there are indeed a whole lot of smarts going on here” Nanabush ikito.

So Nanbush says, “Well see here, I eat these smart berries, kakiitaahwimiinan ikhito. And that’s how I get so smart!” “Maawac maamakac!” Anishinaabe ikhito, “you’ve gotta tell me where I can get some of those there smart berries-- Keniin niwii mijin kakiitaahwimiinan”. Mii tash ihi kii ishaawak noohpimink. And so they were walking through the bush and Nanabush points to a little trail over there and he says, “Ihimaa, mayaa ihimaa nintotinaan kahkiitawimiinan” and he points to the ground, “this very spot right here” he says, “go ahead, mii piko ki ishi shakamon peshik.”

So Anishinaabe runs over to the trail and scoops them up and pops them in his mouth.. “Yoohoo Waapoosomoowan oshawiin okoniwan..these aren’t smart berries, these are rabbit turds!” he says. And Nanbush says, “see... you’re getting smarter already!”

Articulating Anishinaabe Pedagogy

A teacher once asked me, Aanti e onji kikentaman? At first, I thought he was asking me how I know what I know--a hard enough question. But while listening to his stories, I realized that

⁹ Originally told by Anishinaabe Elder Gaa-waabadiganikaag, Joe Auginaush in Treuer, 2001. This is my own telling.

he wasn't interested in how I came to know what I know; he wanted to know what is the source from which I draw knowing from? Inside the university walls, mesmerized by the wonders of the book, living off smart berries, I started to look around.

Education in Zhaaganaash society is highly contentious terrain. Here is a beautiful landscape: informal learning networks flourish like spring-fed tributaries after the rain, rich soil for creating knowledge abounds, and formal institutions take root along tended gardens of opportunity where smartberries are there for the picking. But this pleasant landscape of knowing and learning could also be considered a spectacle of Zhaaganaash society's "real unreality" (Debord, 1995, p.13). Here, the essence of being--of real experiences, of interconnectiveness to land and other Beings--is subsumed by the state of having which then progresses to a state of appearing to have (Debord, p.16)¹⁰.

That landscape of Zhaaganash education is much like my home, Kamministiquia. Here, where my family lives, is a beautiful and powerful river, but it is one that is now controlled by a hydro dam. While it appears to be the "real" bush, there are few fish downriver of the dam and the Eagles who once lived there are gone. In times of heavy rain, the dam is released, flooding the community, contaminating the water, displacing the residents. In times of drought, the dam is closed up, killing the sweetgrass that grows along the banks. The Cedar trees are contaminated; we can no longer use the medicines. The hydro road gave loggers access to ancient and sacred places, where Mememgwesak still thrive--but not for long. The "realness" of my homeland is moderated by man-made processes.

Like the teachers in our schools, it isn't necessarily the people who operate the dam that are to blame; but the people, who run the people, who run the dam. And perhaps even they (like the deans and principals) are constrained by the agendas set forth by the man-made objects (global-

¹⁰ As my brother put it, it is not the learning process that is valued, not even the paper that says you have a degree, but the appearance of intellectual authority that your degree symbolizes (Ryan Besito, 2011).

corporate technologies) that now govern us. German radical sociologist Herbert Marcuse (1964) explains that “domination is transfigured into administration”, and the administrators are as much caught in the techno-structures as we are (p.33). This vicious cycle of domination-cum-administration is made bearable by the comforts and high standard of living it produces for the vast majority of people. In this way “under the conditions of a rising standard of living, nonconformity with the system itself appears to be socially useless” (p.2).

Almost everything that could be considered “education” is diverted into this system through formal institutions of schooling and training. Tributaries are stifled or redirected. Here, the sacred power that pushes humans to learn, to grow, and to nurture life is harnessed and diverted into the process of formal accreditation. Any other use seems a waste of energy: the highest paying jobs in Canada are sales managers, senior managers of goods production and utilities, financial managers, manufacturing managers and lawyers. The lowest paying jobs in Canada include farming, early childhood education and other human-service occupations like care-takers, drivers and carpenters (Statistics Canada, 2003). Mothers, children, Elders, and entire ecosystems where trees are not being cut, where the earth is not being mined, are economically worthless, useless and subsequently invisible (Waring, 1999).

In Zhaaganaash society, the passage through this dam--educational attainment via institutionalized schooling-- is the only path to living above the so-called “poverty line”, the only path to having some societal value. But it is also a terrain that has been colonized by a global-corporate socioeconomic system. New Zealand activist Marilyn Waring explains, “when you are seeking out the most vicious tools of colonization, those that can obliterate a culture and a nation, a tribe or a people’s value system, then rank the UNSNA among those tools” (1999, p.40)¹¹.

¹¹ The United Nations System of National Accounts. This economic techno-structure determines a country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product), Gross National Product and other economic machinations that in turn determine a

Knowledge production and distribution is controlled and contained (Wark, 2004). Downriver from the dam, green space for new ideas and informal learning is manufactured only where it does not interrupt the system. Upriver, our source of knowing is diverted, leaving us with turbid water and a parched landscape; knowledge miners come to Anishinaabe land and take what is useful for mass consumption.

I, like many Anishinaabek before me, bravely paddled my canoe through these rapids, towards the institutions of schooling. I rode straight in proud and strong. I was churned up in the turbines, slaughtered and spit out the other end. I nearly drowned; I nearly lost some important parts of myself; and I ate a whole lot of smart berries just to survive. Now, at the other end, I think about that old man who asked me *aanti e onji kikentaman* (what is the source from which I draw knowing from)? As broken and wounded as I feel from this journey, I can answer him now: *kaa onji bimaatisiwin*--from the source of all existence. And so, I'm picking up my battered canoe and trekking all the way back upriver. I'm going home. I'm going back to the source of my knowing.

This source of knowing is a lived connection that reflects the intricacies of one's spatial/temporal physical, mental, emotional and spiritual environment, *nikikencike eshiwepahk*, the inner workings of one's relations, *niwii kikenimaa eshiwepisod*, in order to take notice of those beings around you so that you may later use that knowledge to recognize them in other forms, *kihkinowaatenimaan*. Gregory Cajete, Tewa Pueblo educator calls this the "ecological person" who is a "bundle of sensitivities which are in the process of continuous refinement toward the enhancement and enlargement of life" (2000 p.63).

Anishinaabe teaching and learning practices can be thought of as the means to sustain this "enhancement and enlargement of life". Like Zhaaganaash education then, Anishinaabe

systems for learning, teaching and knowing are intertwined with socioeconomic stability and growth. However, Anishinaabe and Zhaaganaash socioeconomic practices differ greatly.

Rather than the acquisition of material wealth, Anishinaabe economics has as its foundation, the acquisition of the means to fulfill one's social responsibilities. For example, in Anishinaabemowin the word for one's possessions, *dibinawewisiwin*, shares its root with words like self-government (*debenimikosowin*), Aboriginal rights, freedom (*dibenimisowin*) and inheritance (*debentamowin*) to name a few. In this sense, Anishinaabe concepts of ownership have far more to do with who and what one is responsible for rather than the acquisition of material wealth. In fact, "freedom" is rooted in fulfilling one's responsibilities, rather than being free from restraints or restriction as is implied in English. As such, Anishinaabe economic systems are based on cooperative practices that focus on community, family and Clan. Anishinaabe socioeconomics also focuses on provisions for the survivability of a community (rather than an individual) in terms of food security, good quality of life and access to individual and community development resources (such as health, governance and education services).

Profitability is not measured in material gains, but rather in reciprocal relationships to land (balanced ecosystems) and community (holistic exchanges). The more one gives to the community, the more one gains in social (spiritual, mental, physical and emotional) wealth. The greater the gains in social wealth, the greater the capacity one gains to fulfill community responsibilities. Thus, Anishinaabe economies are built on a positive feedback loop, a reciprocal system reinforced through the myriad gift-giving trade protocols, lineage-based knowledge transfer practices, and interdependent land stewardship practices. The acquisition of skills, goods, and knowledge of one person, becomes the skills, goods and knowledge of the community.

In Anishinaabemowin, the word for community has a direct correlation to the work that one does within such a community framework. Nitashikewin (my community) translates to the work that one goes about doing—including hunting grounds, teaching societies, family, clan activities, workplace and school. The actual meaning of “community” then includes all of the socioeconomic responsibilities that one works towards fulfilling. In this way, economic, social and educational developments “are synonymous and thus must be dealt with as a total approach rather than in parts” (Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 1971 p.8)¹².

Aan kaa tootamowaac weshkaac: Anishinaabe-bimaatisiwin¹³

“Kete kichi-kinoohamaatwinaanah ohsha taakii pikiiwejikaatekin tashine¹⁴” (McKay Anishinaabe educator, 2008) does not mean that we should drop what we are doing to go back to our original communities and traditional lifestyles. Nor does it mean that we have to attempt an urbanized interpretation of a purist Indian education or set of practices that have been frozen in time—particularly if that education is constructed outside of a fully integrative community context. In fact, without an integrated sense of community, it becomes easy to be a “ceremonial teacher” (a sweat lodge conductor, a healer, an Elder etc.) while still abusing loved ones or abusing oneself outside of that role. What has happened in such cases is that an essentialized notion of identity (the “pure traditional Indian” as interpreted through varying degrees of colonial indoctrination) is enacted on a social terrain where fluctuating contradictory identities are acceptable, excusable and (in many institutional settings) enforced. While postmodernists might celebrate the end to notions of a fixed identity, we Anishinaabek are tearing ourselves apart.

¹² My initial thoughts on socioeconomic stability were first written as part of an evaluation framework for an Aboriginal youth leadership project at the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres 2011.

¹³ What they did a long time ago: Anishinaabe way of life.

¹⁴ Our old teachings should be with us always/ we should always return to our old teachings.

What then can be used to clearly set the parameters of Anishinaabe pedagogy? If the purpose of Anishinaabe pedagogy is to sustain and nourish the enhancement of life through a socioeconomic system based on reciprocity and inter-relationality, then a whole world of possibilities is open to us. We do not have to invent anything new. Nor do we have to water it down as mythologies, or dress it up with beads and feathers. Everything we need is there in our teachings, our stories and our language. The Elders have told us to take our teachings and use them; and our teachings start with inter-relationality.

Inter-relationality refers to the relationships between Beings in an “interrelated world of perpetual creative motion” (Cajete, 2000, p.184). Beings include the non-human world of trees, animals, minerals, stars, Ancestors, *kaa tepenjikech* (those that govern us) as well as our fellow humans. To know oneself in relation to the land, in relation to one’s ancestors, helpers, non-human Beings and community and to know what one’s responsibilities are in that respect, is integral to an Aboriginal sense of self/place.

Reciprocity is simply the ethics of relationality; it is the concept that informs accountability for one’s relationships. The trees continue to fulfill their responsibilities by inhaling and exhaling the world’s breath. The water continues to sustain life, the birds continue to carry the songs, and on and on throughout creation. The Haudenosaunee orators ensure all Beings are recognized for continuing to uphold their responsibilities in the Thanksgiving Address--the words before all other business is conducted. For Anishinaabe, strengthening reciprocal inter-relationality includes a complex system of gift giving, fulfilling visions, and Clan responsibilities. This form of exchange extends beyond humans to connect to all living beings that ever were and ever will be. Interconnectedness then is not (just) a new-age eco-warrior slogan, but a complex meta-ethics of relationality that accounts for one’s relationships to one

another, to our ancestors and future generations. Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) describes this experience of reciprocity as rooted in a sense of identity that is community-based rather than “ego”-based, “[a]s an aboriginal person I am constituted by my individual cells and by my ancestors and future generations who will originate in and have returned to the land” (Wilson, 2001).

It is no wonder then that the day-to-day practice of Anishinaabe pedagogy is often referred to as *Minopimaatisiwin*—the Good life. Yet, this sense of self is often difficult to reconcile when Anishinaabek learners and teachers are constantly constrained by a Western discursive field (and resulting institutional practices). To resolve this, it is not just our old teachings that should be brought back, but also our old ways of teaching and learning.

Anishinaabemowikanaak¹⁵

In a contemporary urban community setting, Anishinaabe pedagogy may appear in different ways with different emphasis. There is however a basic foundation for situating inter-relationality and reciprocity. This includes:

1. Fostering a sense of community amongst members
2. Working from and incorporating community-based cultural practices
3. Working from relational structures that are rooted in Anishinaabe sociopolitical structures (Clan systems, and extended family roles like that of Aunties, Grandmothers, Elders etc.)
4. Ensuring that community benefits match individual benefits
5. Allowing for role/knowledge transfer

¹⁵ Anishinaabe language/worldview framework as used by Alex McKay.

Without this foundation, Anishinaabe pedagogy runs the risk of being fragmented and disassociated from a community context. But at the same time, a basic framework may not be enough in a society where we have been deprived of our pedagogy for so long.

A more in-depth analysis of Anishinaabe pedagogy can be envisioned through what Anishinaabe scholar D'Arcy Rheault Ishpiming'Enzaabid (1999) calls the "Seven Directions of Kendaaswin", namely: Bzindamowin (learning from listening), Manidoo-waabiwin (seeing in a spirit way), Gnawaaminjigewin (to look, to see, to witness), Eshkakimikwe-Kendaaswin (land-based knowledge), Kiimiingona manda Kendaaswin (the Original Instructions given to the Anishinaabeg by Gzhe-mnidoo), Manidoo-minjimendamowin (spirit memory) and Anishinaabe-Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge). Rather than summarizing the work already articulated by D'arcy, the following is my attempt to build on his work through the teachings passed to me from Alex McKay, Sylvia Maracle, Doug Williams, Ma-nee Chacaby, Ed Pitawanakwat, Gordon Waindubence, Lee Maracle, Lillian McGregor, Rose Logan, and many other incredible teachers.

Bzindamowin (learning from listening)

The practice of Bizindamowin includes active oral/aural knowledge transmission through stories, teachings and legends while also rooting stories in self-reflective contexts. Our stories are the repositories of Anishinaabe philosophy, history, science, ceremony, and ultimately our worldview. They have been passed down for thousands of years in our language, through the practice of bzindamowin. Our stories are encoded with entire governance processes, laws and ethics. Orality in this sense is a highly sophisticated technology. This technology of orality includes both the tools (the story itself as represented in song or memory, the mnemonic devices, and the language used) and the knowledge of how to use the tools (understanding and applying the meanings, precision, and context of every story as well as fluency in the meanings and nuances of our language). Anishinaabe orality then is not simply a passive aural process where a

story is listened to, memorized and retold; it requires active engagement from both the listener and the teller. To be an active learner means that the listener must not only remember the content of the stories, but also understand the underlying teachings and how they fit into the context that the story is being told. In doing so, the learner takes responsibility for how the story will be told in the future. Considering that our stories are the storehouse for everything we know about ourselves, being responsible for our technologies of orality is a huge responsibility. An example of a formal testing practice for an apprentice oral historian would be to ask them to recall a story but not tell them which story it is they should recall. The learner then has to think about the context and social environment where the “test” is taking place, choose the story based on an understanding of the teacher’s intentions, and tell the story in a way that fits the context they are in. To do this, an in-depth knowledge of the stories and their contemporary application is necessary. The learner cannot just see the story as something fixed in “the past”; they have to be able to apply their understanding of the story to any given situation and recall the story with both precision (to know who the characters are, the plot, imagery, cadence, etc.) and sensitivity to the social context. This “testing” takes years, myriad social environments and hundreds of stories (nowadays both in English and Anishinaabemowin) to pass. Bzindamowin then is a high-context, active, conversive engagement between the stories, the learner, the teller, the environment, and the social context.

Kanawaaminjikewin (to look, to see, to witness)

In order to become a skilled knowledge carrier, Anishinaabe pedagogy must include the practice of transferring knowledge through interconnectivity. In Zhaaganaash practices, this is often called experiential or high-context learning. In Anishinaabe pedagogy, interconnectivity does not happen without kanawaaminjikewin. The concept of “witnessing” involves a life-long relationship to the knowledge, the community of knowledge carriers, and to incorporating it into

everyday practices. While high-context learning in Zhaaganaash society may mean teaching subjects that are relevant to an every-day situation, or immersing oneself in everyday situations that are relevant to one's learning--both necessary aspects of kanawaaminjikewin--the witnessing, and the relationships born of that witnessing are lifetime commitments in Anishinaabe pedagogy. In Anishinaabe practices, a witness is not someone who stands apart, impartially documenting events, but instead is one who fully partakes in every aspect of coming to know. A witness in Anishinaabe practice is one who, through immersion, retains and incorporates every teaching, every message passed to them through their teachers into their lives. Immersed in the practice of kanawaaminjikewin, the learner steadily gains sensitivity to his/her environment, community, ancestors, and teachers over a lifetime. Those who gain that sensitivity through kanawaaminjikewin become the Elders and leaders of our people. Why is this high level of sensitivity part of implementing what one witnesses? An ethical protocol in Anishinaabe practices is to refrain from imposing yourself (your ideas, ways, practices) on others unless you are in a position to do so (as an Elder, Ceremonial leaders or when tobacco is given to do so). In all other cases it takes a high level of sensitivity (and patience) to implement the teachings of your Elders without just waltzing into a room and demanding that things be done this way because the Elders told you so. The sensitivity developed through Kanawaaminjikewin also allows a learner to take notice of patterns, opportunities, context and timing. The witness/learner is an active "bundle of sensitivities" (Cajete, 2000) who prepares the learning environment much the same ways as the ceremonial helpers prepare the ceremony grounds.

Manitoo-waapiwin (seeing in a spirit way)

Cree Elder Louis Bird (2007) teaches that, "only in a dream, only in mental activity, could they acquire such spiritualism. It's not the material thing they were trying to acquire—it was spirit itself, it was a consciousness" (p.59). Thus, Manitoo-waapiwin is itself a

consciousness practice. Like any teacher, our dream teachers can only teach us if we are present and actively engaged--if we have prepared the learning environment. Manitoo-waapiwin also has a direct correlation to our process of gaining knowledge. Bird explains, “the first step in the procedure of acquiring knowledge was to find a dream, or to create a dream. This is how you find something that was supposed to be understood in life” (p.75). Outside of dreaming, Anishinaabe pedagogy makes space for dream knowledge by valuing, validating and incorporating Manitoo-waapiwin in knowledge transfer practices. Building relationships with our dream teachers can happen in the waking world if there is space made for it.

Anishinaabe-Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge)

Here are the beads and feathers: the dancing and singing and the traditional “crafts.” However, Anishinaabe-kendaaswin is not just taught so that we can have future powwow princesses. Teaching traditional knowledge means teaching the tangible skills one needs to survive in our community. The songs and dances are ceremonial in nature, communicating a whole range of ideas to and about creation. Our “crafts” are in fact necessary for day-to-day business: drums, pipes, fishing nets, baskets, etc. Traditional knowledge also includes Anishinaabe engineering technologies, chemistry and other sciences, ecological management technologies, agricultural skills and tools, medicinal practices, legal practices, governance, justice and ceremonial technologies. Teaching traditional knowledge in a limited and depthless way, like, for example teaching a child to sing an Anishinaabe song and thinking that it sufficiently meets the “traditional knowledge” standard, is akin to teaching a child how to sing the alphabet but never teaching them to read.

Manitoo-minjimentamowin (Spirit memory)

Spirit memory is often gained through ceremonial practices such as sweats, fasting, rites of passage, kosapijiken, sundance, and seasonal ceremonies. But it is not the conducting or

participating in the ceremony that provides access to spirit memory. It is instead, the relationship that one develops with Those Spirit Beings through genuine communication with them that makes their knowledge accessible. It is something that a person embodies and upholds through every moment of their lives--tahshine nimaamitonenimaak Shoomisinaanak. The ceremonies are just there to enhance and compliment our everyday relationship to spirit. To help us think of and communicate to those Spirit Beings in certain ways at certain times.

In terms of enhancing our connection with Spirit, the ceremonies are a science that has been refined for thousands of years. Practicing the ceremonies for the purposes they were meant for is a time-tested method for building relationships with those Spirit Beings and accessing that knowledge. I am not saying that ceremonies should be done exactly the way they have been done for thousands of years. A shower built next to a sweat lodge is a wonderful thing, foot-warmers at a winter sunrise ceremony are a blessing and my down-filled mattress in the fasting lodge is certainly appreciated. Instead, if we lose the intentions of the ceremony, if we just go through the motions, or worse, use the ceremonies for other kinds of gains, we are stepping farther away from the source of our knowing. I have seen many ceremonies where the people are just going through the motions or putting on a performance to stroke their egos. The ceremonies, conducted in an earnest and genuine manner are there to enhance the work we are already doing in our day-to-day lives. I have been taught that we are governed by certain Beings, who are in turn governed themselves. Those who govern us also are those who gift us, who help us become free and whole so that we can fulfill our responsibilities. A relationship to these Beings is developed over a long period of time, by overcoming many challenges and making many personal sacrifices. Dropping in on a ceremony now and then while not doing the day-to-day work, or conducting a ceremony without genuine intent isn't going to cut it.

Kiimiinkona manda Kendaasowin (the Original Instructions given by Gzhe-mnidoo)

The final component of Anishinaabe pedagogy is to teach and learn about our original instructions. As Haudenosaunee educator, leader, and Grandmother Sylvia Maracle explains, the first part of our original instructions was to be grateful (personal communications, January, 2011). For Anishinaabek, being grateful is not just a kind word of acknowledgment, it is demonstrated. Demonstrating gratitude in a reciprocal sense, means carrying out our responsibilities to our Clans, to our families, to our visions and the visions of our Elders. Demonstrating gratitude also includes engaging in the highly complex gift-giving protocols that maintain and uphold our relationships. Unlike Zhaaganaash society, gifts are often not physical objects, and responsibilities are not burdens or constraints. I have been taught that we enter this world with our name, our colors, our Clan, a song, and other sacred gifts. When we share those gifts with others, we are engaging in reciprocal demonstrations of gratitude. I have been taught that each Clan has their own set of responsibilities and that people who belong to a certain Clan will be born with abilities and gifts that would allow them to carry out those responsibilities. When we use our abilities to fulfill those sacred responsibilities, we are again engaging in a demonstration of gratitude. We are fulfilling our *raison d'être*.

In Anishinaabek society, the path to freedom and liberty, to carrying out what Gzhe-mnidoo instructed us to do, and to sustaining the socioeconomic infrastructure is through the continual fulfillment of one's responsibilities. It is no wonder then, that in addition to Clan, family, and Elder directives, there are also responsibilities to fulfill at each stage of life. Sylvia Maracle (Haudenosaunee) talks about these as "life-cycle responsibilities¹⁶" (Traditional Teaching Keene Ontario, January 19th, 2011). While this is a Mohawk teaching, it is an important and useful way of expressing the concept of traditional responsibilities shared by both

¹⁶ This Haudenosaunee teaching was first articulated by Sylvia Maracle during the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy development, Sept. 1979.

Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek peoples. As infants, our responsibility is to bring joy into the world, to teach people how to be happy. As toddlers, our responsibility is to teach others about safety. This is why our families put everything dangerous out of reach; toddlers teach us to be aware of the environment. As children, our responsibility is to truth; we constantly ask “why” and teach people to carefully consider what truth is. As youth we are responsible for disrupting the status quo, to challenging those truths. As young adults, we are responsible for doing the “work of the people” as helpers, apprentices, as young leaders. As adults we are responsible for parenting--for nurturing and providing. As grandparents we are responsible for teaching about life, and as Elders we are responsible for spiritual guidance. At every stage in our life, our community is there to support, nurture and guide us in fulfilling these responsibilities. When we are not able to fulfill the responsibilities at one stage, it disrupts the entire process. If an infant could not bring joy--if her parents and extended family were not able to learn from that baby and provide her with the things she needs to fulfill her responsibilities, it is likely s/he will not be able to teach them about safety or truth later on. If a person enters the youth stage not ever having a sense of safety or truth, then the disruption of the status quo can seem extreme, can be expressed through a total rejection of society--through suicide, joining gangs, escaping into substances and other disconnected activities¹⁷.

It is true that a youth who is engaged in these destructive behaviors is indeed disrupting the status quo. A grandparent who beats us is certainly teaching us about life. However, these activities are not seen as fulfilling responsibilities because they are not conducted in an ethically sound manner. Anishinaabeg have the Seven Teachings of Love, Respect, Humility, Truth, Courage, Honesty, and Wisdom as an ethical code of conduct. This code of conduct has many teachings and is an integral part of how we carry ourselves when fulfilling our original

¹⁷ See Brendtro, Brokenleg & Bockern (1990) *Reclaiming Youth At Risk*, for instructions on providing the support and nurturing that we need in order to fulfill our responsibilities.

instructions. However, this code of conduct was not gifted to us simply as a list of commandments to modify our behaviors. It in fact results from the foundation of Anishinaabe ethics: that “no harm is done to one another” (Mckay, personal communication, Toronto, April 2007).

Harm can be defined as an act or event that is contrary to the responsibilities that one has been given by Creator. For example, I have been taught that coming from Beaver Clan means that I am responsible for building community. How that occurs is an individual process, but to force upon me responsibilities where I am isolated from opportunities for community capacity building, or that do not allow me to incorporate community building is ethically harmful.

Likewise, “harm” can be defined by disrespecting/depriving a person of their familial roles and the life cycle responsibilities. It is ethically harmful to put a traditional Elder who carries the language, medicines, ecological knowledge and histories into an environment where s/he cannot transfer that knowledge. At the same time, it is harmful to put them in a situation where they are solely responsible for doing the “work of the people”: running a class, planning lessons, and teaching full time without an Elder’s helper to do the “work”. Rather than good or bad, right or wrong, Anishinaabe ethics is rooted in cause and effect. In our stories, Nanabush is never judged as right or wrong, good or bad. Instead, his deeds are analyzed for their potential causes and effects. In many of the stories, his actions alter the fabric of reality far into the future. An Anishinaabe ethical standard is one where no harm is caused, and “harm” is anything that disrupts or disrespects one’s roles and responsibilities.

Meanwhile back at the Dam

Colonization has inhibited us from fulfilling so many of our responsibilities by disrupting the life stages, disrupting our Clan practices and ceremonies, inhibiting the use and acquisition of the gifts we have been born with (including our language), cutting us off from the land, and

removing us from our families. It has also affected our ability to engage in reciprocal demonstrations of gratitude and carry out our responsibilities in ethically sound ways. Anishinaabe pedagogy does not need to be upheld just because it is our inherent right as Anishinaabeg, but because it is the only way we can access the source of our knowing and it is the only way who we are as a people will survive.

And so, I am looking up at this dam, where all legitimized knowledge is produced and disseminated. I am looking around on the other side, and I see my fellow Anishinaabe graduates emerge from those dam institutions. I see that they too were trying to make a better world for themselves and their communities by braving the turbulent passage. Like them, I saw my passage through that dam as necessary; in Shaaganash society the only way to have an economically stable life is to be filtered through these institutions of schooling. And so, I consider this a rite of passage, but without being fully equipped with the knowledge of our people, without our language, stories, and relationship with Spirit, it is a rite of passage that many of us are damaged by. In institutions of schooling where Zhaaganaash language, literature and literary form are used to determine whether you pass or fail, the passage through can quickly become “another kidnapping...the ensnarement of the intellect” (Itwaru & Ksonzek, 1994, p. 22). Once entrapped, we believe that the only way to validate our realities is through Zhaaganaash worldview, “...a thinking which looked towards England for meaning” (Itwaru & Ksonzek, p. 23).

Instead, when we are fully equipped with the knowledge of our people, we can resist the force of dominating discourse, we can actualize our pedagogy in everything we do, we can disrupt the flow of energy through that system and we can come out the other side stronger, with the necessary tools we need to survive and make positive societal changes. While it is only a revolutionary society that can change the institutions of schooling in a systematic way, we don't

have to wait for the revolution to implement those changes now (Freire, 1985, p.74). And so, if institutionalized schooling is a dam in this story, by my passage through I am indeed one of those dam Indians¹⁸--highly credentialized and accomplished by western standards. But like any rite of passage, it is a means to fulfill my responsibilities to my community. It is expected that I carry my culture with me, that I implement my teachings in everything I do, that I flush the poisons out of my spirit through fasting, sweats, and ceremonies, that I am vigilant in upholding my philosophical integrity no matter where I stand. If I am able to return to the source of my knowledge, to actualize Anishinaabe pedagogy in everything I do as a learner and a teacher, then I have no problem standing here in this Zhaaganaash landscape as a proud and strong Dam Indian.

¹⁸ A story about “The Dam Indians” was originally told by Anishinaabe Elder Naawi-giisiz, Jim Clark (in Truer, 2001 p. 61-65). The original story is also a story of colonial resistance, but rather than schooling, the story focuses on land and identity. While the stories are completely different, the idea of being a “Dam Indian” or a “Damn Indian” comes from him. In my teenage years, I remember him to have truly embodied “teaching by example”.

Chapter 4

Kaa-wiji tashikemitiyaank: Implementing Anishinaabe Pedagogy in Language

Revitalization

From 2006 to 2010, as requested by Elders during my initial research interviews I developed and implemented a series of projects and initiatives as part of my ongoing journey towards the language. While there were over 30 youth-led language projects implemented over the four years, the core projects included a youth-led learning program, free immersion language camps, a community digital archive, a community-based story telling project and a series of ceremonies to honor the language learners. What follows is a brief description of the projects initiated through an action-based, participatory process of researching and regaining my language.

Ciimaan (Chee-maun) Anishinaabemowin Learning initiative

Named by Anishinaabe educator Alex McKay, Ciimaan (chee-maun) in Anishinaabemowin means Canoe. The Ciimaan Anishinaabemowin Learning Initiative worked with urban Aboriginal youth to create opportunities for language proficiency through culturally based activities and community projects. The initiative was designed so that youth participants would steadily gain fluency in the language, contribute to the increased presence of language activities and materials in our urban Aboriginal communities while also developing transferable job skills. The youth produced creative works of artistic expression using Anishinaabemowin through theatre, storytelling, and visual/digital art, designed culturally-oriented, community projects that promoted Anishinaabemowin use in everyday environments and assisted in developing youth-led, Anishinaabe-centered methodologies for teaching and promoting the language. The project also created training and job opportunities for Aboriginal youth where Anishinaabemowin use and leadership building were integral components. The ultimate aim of

the initiative was to empower Anishinaabe youth to become leaders in our communities, resilient and committed speakers of their traditional languages, and to bring their voices and visions forward in the urban First Nations community in Toronto. The Ciimaan initiative, while originally part of my research, is still an operating initiative--albeit on a smaller scale. The youth in the project continue to play an active role in the transformation, healing, and regeneration of Anishinaabe cultures and traditions through language reclamation.

Anishinaabemowin Language camps

Opportunities for affordable and accessible language immersion environments was also recommended by Elders and community members in my initial research. Youth participating in the university language classes and the Ciimaan initiative designed and implemented the language camps. Leadership development and important transferable job skills like event planning, training manual creation, and group facilitation were fostered by creating an environment for the youth to take ownership of the project. In the first year, the one-week camp attracted 30 participants; that number doubled in the second year and was expanded to two weeks. In both camps, learners were able to attend structured interactive learning sessions while also visiting with several guest Elders. It was through the language camps that I was able to develop and “test” a culture-based model for teaching grammar which was later named the Kikinowaawiiyemon--or Language Circle teaching guide.

Tesopitaasowin

Another recommendation from community participants was for increased access to language material. To achieve this, I worked with youth to develop a community-owned and operated server for housing digitized language material for First Nations Community organizations across Toronto. In our old teachings, tesopitaasowin--or daasowin in the south--was the free-standing community storage platform used to house a community’s valuables. The

youth took this teaching and applied it to our contemporary urban environment by building a server and undertaking the long and slow process of digitizing community language materials that are now freely accessible resources.

Audio syllabics

Working with Native Earth Performing Arts, approximately 45 Aboriginal children, youth, and Anishinaabemowin students from the University of Toronto and York University took part in an interactive storytelling documentation project. The project, entitled Piitaapan: Coming of the Dawn aimed to foster greater pride in the language through the bilingual retelling of our traditional stories. Participants not only worked with Elders to write the stories in the language, but also created audio-video story telling pieces using artwork and contemporary contexts to bring the stories back into everyday community contexts.

Honoring ceremony

Also missing from urban Aboriginal language community capacity building was the space to formally recognize the hard work that the youth had taken responsibility for when they chose to learn the language. Anishinaabemowin learners were invited to an event held in their honor. In the first year over 120 learners--from children in the Aboriginal Headstart programs and Aboriginal daycares, students in secondary and postsecondary institutions, to seniors in the Friendship Centre community classes were formally recognized for their efforts to revitalize the language. Learners were given awards and gifts by community leaders such as Isidore Toulouse, Pat Ningewance, and Nokomis Rose Logan. Youth and children put on performances in the language and organized a feast in honor of the language. Again, it was important to build community capacity by creating a space for the youth to organize and take responsibility for the event. The honoring ceremony has now become an annual event in Toronto.

These projects grew in academic institutions and First Nations community organizations that were, in my opinion, without a basic pedagogical foundation for supporting inter-relationality and reciprocity. In other words, no substantial, culture-based, cohesive, long-term Anishinaabemowin revitalization efforts were being designed or implemented in these organizations. Nor were there infrastructural supports or trusting community relationships to do so. In fact, I entered into Anishinaabemowin revitalization in environments rife with apathy, fear, distrust and outright hostility¹⁹. In fact, as the work progressed and more community projects were developed, I found that the greatest barrier to achieving long-term success is lateral violence. More specifically, the malicious gossip, withholding of information, backstabbing, jealousy, and misuse of power that we do to one another as oppressed people as a result of internalized colonial power structures and subsequent violations.

I was certainly “weak in numbers and poor in resources” as Fishman describes (1991 p.8); finding ways to work beyond the hostility and fear and create tangible success indicators became critical if I ever wanted to build the infrastructural support needed for long-term, accessible language transmission. This may seem like a hopeless endeavor, but after four years of project implementation, over 1000 Anishinaabemowin learners took part in the activities and projects and a core group of seventeen Anishinaabemowin speakers of intermediate proficiency²⁰ were created. These learners gained proficiency in an urban environment while not having access to the language in their home or communities. To put this in perspective, prior to the project, only two learners were identified as reaching this level of proficiency in approximately twenty

¹⁹ This is understandable considering the 200 years of oppression and repression of our languages (but not excusable).

²⁰ Intermediate proficiency means that they were able to compose written stories, create complex (conjunct) phrases and questions using intransitive and transitive verbs, orally articulate thoughts, feelings and daily tasks in complete sentences. They also had a vocabulary that included a range of verbs, nouns and particles, and had a thorough enough understanding of Anishinaabemowin grammar that with continued exposure, increased vocabulary and practice, they could have progressed to advanced spoken and written proficiency in the language.

years of Anishinaabemowin courses offered at the university; and both of these learners were identified as having gained proficiency by spending considerable time with fluent speakers in remote First Nations communities. In terms of building an increase in language proficiency, an increased number of proficient speakers in a much shorter time, the projects developed far surpassed the previous teaching models.

As the learners in the projects and activities progressed and were better able to express their learning needs, as new community organizations became involved, and as more Elders contributed to the research, the projects were re-articulated, improved upon, expanded and contracted. While there was an ebb and flow to this kind of language capacity building, there was also a steady momentum being built by those of us who were returning to our language in that we had begun to author our own language development, rather than being objects of it. We were no longer being passively taught and we were no longer waiting for an outsider or an expert to fix us, study us or create a report about us. By doing so, the necessary tangible results were created by the community of learners prior to any substantial funding or institutional recognition. Additionally, the implementation of Anishinaabe pedagogy occurred first, before any basic foundation was created. That is to say, implementation of activities that fostered Bzindamowin (learning from listening), Manidoo-waabiwin (seeing in a spirit way), Gnawaaminjigewin (to look, to see, to witness), Eshkakimikwe-Kendaaswin (land-based knowledge), Kiimiingona manda Kendaaswin (the Original Instructions given to the Anishinaabeg by Gzhe-mnidoo), Manidoo-minjimendamowin (spirit memory) and Anishinaabe-Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge) occurred prior to the foundational development of inter-relationality and reciprocity.

For example, Anishinaabemowin learners (project participants, university students and community members) wrote, directed and presented theatrical reenactments of traditional stories,

which in turn fostered a sense of community amongst members and resulted in “tangible” outputs (the theatre presentation) for future fundraising efforts. Theater participants continued to use their character names with one another years after the projects had been completed. Mikisi, Nanabush and Kaajitoosk among many others, continue to be lovingly used nicknames amongst theatre participants. All of the participants who were interviewed identified the theatre projects as the highlight of their learning experience. One project participant, Simon Borer, explains, “The number one best experience for me in terms of really pushing me forward was the play.... it was so much fun doing that with everybody that we barely even noticed all the learning that was going on.” (2007) Developing Gnaawaaminjigewin or, an experiential learning environment, led to the growth of a community of language learners who could use the language with one another in an urban environment, outside of classrooms, in everyday interactions.

The implementation of Bzindamowin (learning from listening) resulted in another kind of reciprocal development. Learners were asked to think of stories that would be of benefit to the younger generations of Anishinaabemowin learners. Through the Audio Syllabics project, the digital retelling of these stories in the language not only assisted in their personal oral-aural development, but also provided an opportunity for the learners to contribute something substantial to the community, ensuring that individual benefits matched community benefits. Many of the at-risk youth involved in the project had never had prior opportunity to contribute positively to their community. More experienced learners were matched with new learners to translate and record the stories creating a multi-leveled learning experience. Freely accessible multi-media materials created by the learners for future learners were the tangible results, as was the growth of an intergenerational community of learners but the increased development of our oral-aural abilities in the language and through the worldview was the focus.

Once funding was secured, it wasn’t enough to simply hire fluent speakers and host events for the community. The focus at all times was ensuring that there were opportunities,

supports, incentives, role-models, Elders and material resources for the learners to take it up themselves. This is what community engagement is. The learners wanted an immersion camp, and so, with the infrastructural supports in place, the learners took responsibility for gaining land-based knowledge by creating the language materials and organizing their own language immersion camp, on the land, free of charge and open to all Anishinaabemowin learners. They got up at 5 am every day, cooked for the community, taught the classes (with the help of fluent speakers), hosted the activities and immersion sessions. Here, Eshkakimikwe-Kendaaswin (land-based knowledge) and Anishinaabe-Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge) was made freely available for the community of Anishinaabemowin learners by the learners. One of the participants stated, “Staying on the land, connecting to the earth, visiting with the elders and participants in ceremony all worked to encourage me as I strove to speak our language. Speaking Anishinaabemowin is priceless.”

In order to create the necessary resources and supports, an entirely new method for structuring the language needed to be envisioned. The dream I had to do this occurred soon after the first theatre project in 2007 and resulted in the initial development that year of what was later named the Kikinowaawiiyemon—Language Teaching Circle. With the help of several Elders, fluent speakers (particularly Alex McKay who named the grammar), learners, linguists, ceremonies and dreams, I was able to articulate Anishinaabemowin grammar based on our four-directional way of seeing the world. My work on the grammar was developed from questions and comments Anishinaabe Elders and language teachers like Lena White, Cecil King, Patricia Ningewance and Alex McKay had made about the western teaching methods and grammatical structures. Anishinaabe Elder Cecil King explains,

My language is an Algonquian language, I am told, and it is structured by describing things as animate or inanimate, so I am told. English definitions of the terms “animate” and “inanimate” lead people to think of things being alive or not alive. Is this how our language is structured? I think not. In Odawa all so-called

inanimate things could not be said to be dead. Does animate then mean having or possessing a soul? I think not. Is the animate-inanimate dichotomy helpful in describing the structure of my language? I think that it is limiting, if not wrong outright. For in Odawa anything at some time can be animate. The state of inanimateness is not the denial or negation of animateness as death is the negation of the state of aliveness. Nor can something have a soul and then not have a soul and then acquire a soul again. In Odawa the concept of animateness is limitless. It can be altered by the mood of the moment, the mood of the speaker, the context, the use, the circumstances, the very cosmos or our totality. English terms imprison our understanding of our own linguistic concepts. (Valentine 2001 p.119)

Through the Kikinowaawiiyemon, Zhaaganaash concepts like “animate and inanimate” were reclaimed, linear models of describing the language were returned to the circle and a narrative-based method for teaching adult learners about Anishinaabemowin structure was created. Beginner learners using the Kikinowaawiiyemon narrative were able to acquire a level of proficiency in one year, that which had previously taken three years to acquire using university language texts. The Kikinowaawiiyemon was further refined through the work of the learners to allow the narrative to be told during the 5-day language camps, intermediate and advanced classes, in Aboriginal organizations, youth drop-ins as well as secondary and post-secondary institutions. The Kikinowaawiiyemon did not however increase the learners’ overall vocabulary, but instead provided a cohesive framework for the learners to apply new vocabulary in grammatically correct ways as they acquired it in the social learning environments. Abstract expressions of the language, no matter how culturally reflective, must still be rooted in practice.

The core group of participants took on numerous community activities including language archiving, documentary making, immersion camp development, language socials, teaching classes, creating web-sites, documentaries, event planning, public speaking, attending ceremonies, developing language materials, creating hip-hop projects, consulting with Aboriginal governing bodies, working with Elders, and conducting community research projects. At every stage, their personal language development and the increased development of community language capacity was at the forefront. By taking part in community contributions,

the learners were also taking part in fulfilling their community responsibilities—or Kiimiingona manda Kendaaswin (the Original Instructions given to the Anishinaabeg by Gzhe-mnidoo). At the same time, the learners were also acquiring a long list of transferable job skills. It was hoped that their leadership development through the projects would mean that future leaders in Aboriginal organizations would not only be proficient speakers but advocates for the continuance of our language. As Tunisian scholar Albert Memmi explains, it is our language that allows “the colonized to resume contact with his uninterrupted flow of time and to find again his lost continuity...” (1965 p.110). This not only includes our language, but our ability to live well no matter what the environment.

To focus on the outcome rather than the output is a shift from quantifying participation towards a deeper level of community engagement that has a long-lasting impact. Our language is tied to a traumatic history; thus language revitalization is a community healing that can only happen through community engagement. As one participant explains,

There's a lot of heaviness around learning the language. It's connected to our past and we need to develop those positive connections because so much sadness and grief and shame exists about why we gave it up in the first place—maybe we need to heal all of that as well... the learning is emotional and needs to be tied to a lived experience” (Candace Brunette 2007)

This was later reflected in the comments of Anishinaabe traditional teacher, Larry Beardy,

“Learning Ojibwe is a healing learning. It is geared towards helping ourselves, our people, the environment. The language becomes part of you; every time you learn one sound, one word, it changes you. It doesn't matter what level you are at, the ability to speak the language of our ancestors is a gift. We need the language to be able to connect to the spirit world that connects us all.” (2008)

Carrying out language activities that use Anishinaabe pedagogy leads to the further development of a reciprocal and inter-relational foundation from which to continue the work, much the same way that conducting oneself through the Seven Teachings leads to the

development of a solid ethical foundation to live a good life. The projects woven together as a whole pedagogy were effective in supporting a sustainable Anishinaabemowin language community in a contemporary urban environment. The activities and projects were fluid and flexible, but the framework remained a solid structure for supporting the reciprocal inter-relationship necessary for reaching a level of language use that gets at those elusive social moments in everyday life. While our Ancestors who grew up immersed in our culture and language would have begun with the ethical and pedagogical foundations of our worldview; we must journey back towards that foundation through one outcome, one behavior, or one word after another. This is our return to the language. There are no “best-practices” generated from this research, only a story of working as a community to build a solid framework based on our ways of being and learning how to navigate the colonial terrain while applying our ways to contemporary contexts. Like all stories, it is up to you to take it, apply it and improve upon it.

Closing Words

A long time ago, I was told this story.
Weshkaach nikii inajimotaako.

The story was about how the Anishinaabek had come to understand themselves a long time ago.
Tipaajimik kaa onji Anishinaabek kikenimisiwaach weshkach.

At that time, the Anishinaabe were living all over the earth.
Mii iwe ahpii Anishinaabek misiwe kii ayaawaakopan ahkiink.

They stopped living together.
Kawiin tonji wiijitaamitowaach mihsawaach.

They stopped speaking Anishinaabemowin.
Kakina awiya kii pooni Anishinaapemowak.

They stopped giving thanks.
Kii pooni nanaakomowewak.

The Manito were moving about the earth.
Manitook kii papaayaawak ahkiink.

When they called the Anishinaabe, no one answered.
Ahpîi kaa kanoonawaach Anishinaaben, Kaawiin awiya kiinakwetasiin.

Maybe the Anishinaabe had forgot where they came from.
Kanapac kiiwaniikewak Anishinaabek aanti kaa wenjiiwaakopanen.

The Manito decided to hold a meeting.
Manitook kii piitaakonitowak.

They talked for four days.
Kii kaakiikitowak niwi kiishik.

While they were talking, everything in Creation stopped working.
Mekwaa kaa kiikitowaach, kakina kekoon kii poonihanohkiimakan oshijikanink.

Everyone wondered what was going on.
Kakina awiyaa owiikikentaan aaneshiwepaninik

Everyone asked Mikisi to ask the Manitoos about what was happening.
Okiikakwecimaawaan Mikisiwan ji kakwecimaach Manitoowan aan eshiwepaninik.

Mikisi arrived when the Manitoos made a decision.
Ahpîi Mikisi kaa takoshech aasha Manitoo kii onji onentaan.

The Manito gave Mikisi four days to look for Anishinaape who remembered their teachings and their language.
Manitook okiimiinaan Mikisiwan niwikiishik jinanaatawaapamaach Anishinaapen.

Mikisi started her journey to look for someone who could speak the language and remembered thier responsibilities.
Mikisi okiimaaji naantawaapaman awiyan kaa Anishinaapemonich.

First, Mikisi flew to the east, but could not find anyone who still spoke Anishinaabemowin.
Nitam, waapanok, Mikisi kii inakoojin, miitahsh kaawiin awiyan okiimikawaasiin kaa Anishinaapemonich.

Again, Mikisi flew to the south, but could not find anyone who still spoke Anishinaabemowin.
Miina, Mikisi kii inakoojin shaawaanonk, miitash kaawiin kiiyaapic awiyan okiimikawaasiin kaa Anishinaapemonich.

On the third day Mikisi flew to the west, but could not find anyone who still spoke Anishinaabemowin.
Kaa nihsokiishikaak, Mikisi kii inakoojin nehkapiihanonk miitash kaawin kiiyaapich okiimikawaasiin kaa Anishinaapemonich.

At the dawn, Mikisi flew north.
Kaa aniekishhepaayaak, Mikisi kiiwetononk kii inakoojin.

Mikisi was very tired.
Mikisi wiinke kii ayekosi.

Suddenly, Mikisi saw smoke rise up from the bare ground.
Ketatawen Mikisi okiiwaapatan e onji ishpaapatenik mohtakamikonk.

Mikisi flew towards the smoke.
Mikisi kii inakoojin kaa onji otaapatenik.

As Mikisi got closer, he could hear an Elder.
Peshooch kii aniyaach, okiinootawaan kihchi ayahaan.

The Elder was standing beside the fire and offering tobacco.
Kihchi ayahaa pootawekaapawi miina pakitinike.

Mikisi heard the Elder give thanks in Anishinaabemowin.
Mikisi okiinootawaan kihchi ayahaan e Anishinaapemonich.

Mikisi quickly returned to the Manitoos. There was still hope for Anishinaabek. The world could begin again.
Wiipach Mikisi kiikiwekoojin Manitookaank²¹.

This is our new beginning. It is time for us to return to our language.

²¹ This story was translated by the language learners and Elders involved in the *Piitaapan* project through Native Earth Performing Arts as well as the Ojibwe Language students at the University of Toronto and the Ciimaan project youth participants. It is a widely known story, told in many different ways. The story was translated for the purpose of gaining greater language skills on the part of the learners, building relationships with the Elders and for providing the communities with free language resources. It takes considerable effort for beginner Anishinaabemowin learners to translate a story back into the language, but it is well worth the effort. Alex McKay was the Elder that provided translation assistance during our learning process.

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