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Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation[1]

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Abstract
A resurgence of Indigenous political cultures, governances and nation-building requires generations of Indigenous peoples to grow up intimately and strongly connected to our homelands, immersed in our languages and spiritualities, and embodying our traditions of agency, leadership, decision-making and diplomacy. This requires a radical break from state education systems – systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism. This paper uses Nishnaabeg stories to advocate for a reclamation of land as pedagogy, both as process and context for Nishnaabeg intelligence, in order to nurture a generation of Indigenous peoples that have the skills, knowledge and values to rebuild our nation according to the word views and values of Nishnaabeg culture.

Keywords: *Nishnaabeg pedagogy; land based education; Indigenous Knowledge; resurgence*

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Kwezens makes a lovely discovery[2]

Kwezens[3] is out walking in the bush one day
It is Ziigwan[4]
the lake is opening up
the goon was finally melting
she's feeling that first warmth of spring on her cheeks
"Nigitchi nendam, she is thinking, "I'm happy".

Then that Kwezens who is out walking
collecting firewood for her Doodoom[5]
decides to sit under Ninaatigoog
maybe just stretch out
maybe just have a little rest
maybe gather fire wood a little later
"Owah, Ngitchi nendam nongom.
I'm feeling happy today", says that Kwezens.

And while that Kwezens
is lying down, and looking up
she sees Ajidamoo[6] up in the tree
"Bozhoo Ajidamoo! I hope you had a good winter"
"I hope you had enough food cached."
But Ajidamoo doesn't look up because she's already busy.
She's not collecting nuts.
Gawiin[7].

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[2] It is a traditional practice to begin by talking about how I learned this story and how I relate to it. This is a traditional Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg story that I learned from Washkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation) Elder Gidigaa Migizi (Doug Williams). This is my own re-telling of it, and it is one of the ways I tell it in March, when my family and I are in the sugar bush, making maple syrup. I have chosen to gender the main character as a girl because I identify as a women, but the story can be and should be told using all genders. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg refers to Mississauga Ojibwe people, and our territory is the north shore of Lake Huron in what is now known as Ontario, Canada. We are part of the larger Anishinaabeg nation.

[3] Kwezens literally means "little woman" and is used to mean girl.

[4] Ziigwan is the first part of spring when the ice is breaking up and the snow is melting.

[5] Doodoom is an older Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg word that children use to for their mothers. It means "my breastfeeder". I learned this word from Doug Williams.

[6] Ajidamoo is a red squirrel.

She's not building her nest
Gawiin, not yet.
She's not looking after any young.
Gawiin, too early.
She's just nibbling on the bark, and then doing some sucking.

Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.

Kwezens is feeling a little curious.
So she does it too, on one of the low branches.

Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.

MMMMMMMMmmmmmm.
This stuff tastes good.
It's real, sweet water.
MMMMmmmmmmmmm.

Then Kwezens gets thinking
and she makes a hole in that tree
and she makes a little slide for
that sweet water to run down
she makes a quick little container
out of birch bark, and
she collects that sweet water
and she takes that sweet water home
to show his mama.

That doodoom is excited and she has three hundred questions:

"Ah Kwezens, what is this?"
"Where did you find it?"

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[7] Gaawiin means no.

"Which tree"
"Who taught you how to make it?"
"Did you put semaa[8]?"
"Did you say miigwech[9]?"
"How fast is it dripping?"
"Does it happen all day?"
"Does it happen all night?"
"Where's the fire wood?"

Kwezens tells her doodoom the story,
She believes every word
because she is her Kwezens
and they love each other very much.
"Let's cook the meat in it tonight,
it will be lovely sweet"
"Nahow."
"Nahow."

So they cooked that meat in that sweet water
it was lovely sweet
it was extra lovely sweet
it was even sweeter than just that sweet water.

The next day, Kwezens takes her mama
to that tree and her mama brings Nokomis
and Nokomis brings all the Aunties, and
there is a very big crowd of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabekwewag[10]
and there is a very big lot of pressure
Kwezens tells about Ajidamoo
Kwezens does the nibble nibble suck part.

At first there are technical difficulties
and none of it works.
but Mama rubs Kwezens back
she tells Kwezens that she believes her anyway

[8] Semaa is tobacco.

[9] Miigwech means thanks.

[10] Nishnaabekwewag means Ojibwe women.

they talk about lots of variable like heat and temperature and time
then Giizis comes out and warms everything up
and soon its drip
drip

drip

drip

those Aunties go crazy
Saasaakwe![11]
dancing around
hugging a bit too tight
high kicking
and high fiving
until they take it back home
boil it up
boil it down
into sweet, sweet sugar.

Ever since, every Ziigwan
those Michi Saagiig Nishnaabekwewag
collect that sweet water
and boil it up
and boil it down
into that sweet, sweet sugar
all thanks to Kwezens and her lovely discovery,
and to Ajidamoo and her precious teaching
and to Ninaatigoog[12] *and their boundless sharing* (Simpson, 2013).[13]

[11] A saasaakwe is a loud shout or vocalization of approval used to call in or acknowledge the spirits.

[12] Ninaatigoog are maple trees.

[13] A similar version of this story is published in (Simpson, 2013). A different version of this story is told by a non-Native author (Cook, 1999). There are several other maple sugar origin stories, see the title story from *The Gift Is in the Making* (Simpson, 2013) and Corbiere (2011).

Given lovingly to us by the spirits[14]

This spring, while tapping a stand of maple trees, I remembered that this is one of my favorite stories. It's one of my favorites because nothing violent happens in it. At every turn, Kwezens is met with very basic, core Nishnaabeg[15] values - love, compassion and understanding. She centres her day around her own freedom and joy – I imagine myself at seven running through a stand of maples with the first warmth of spring marking my cheeks with warmth. I imagine everything good in the world. My heart, my mind and my spirit are open and engaged and I feel as if I could accomplish anything. I imagine myself grasping at feelings I haven't felt before – that maybe life is so good that it is too short; that there really isn't enough time to love everything.

In reality, I have to image myself in this situation because, as a child, I don't think I was ever in a similar situation. My experience of education, from kindergarten to graduate school, was one of coping with someone else's agenda, curriculum, and pedagogy, someone who was neither interested in my well being as a kwezens, nor interested in my connection to my homeland, my language or history, nor my Nishnaabeg intelligence. No one ever asked me what I was interested in nor did they ask for my consent to participate in their system. My experience of education was one of continually being measured against a set of principles that required surrender to an assimilative colonial agenda in order to fulfill those principles. I distinctly remember being in grade 3, at a class trip to the sugar bush, and the teacher showing us two methods of making maple syrup – the pioneer method which involved a black pot over an open fire and clean sap, and the "Indian method" – which involved a hollowed out log in an unlit fire, with large rocks in the log to heat the sap up – sap which had bark, insects, dirt and scum over it. The teacher asked us which method we would use – being the only native kid in the class, I was the only one that chose the "Indian method"

Things are different for this Kwezens. She has already spent seven years immersed in a nest of Nishnaabeg intelligence. She already understands the importance of observation and learning from our animal teachers, when she watches the squirrel so carefully and then mimics its actions. She understands embodiment and conceptual thought, when she then takes this observation and applies it to her own situation – by making a cut in the maple tree and using a cedar shunt. She relies upon her own creativity to invent new technology. She patiently waits for the sap to collect. She takes that sap home and shares it with her family. Her mother, in turn, meets her daughter's discovery with love and trust. Kwezens watches as her mama uses the sap to boil the deer meat for supper. When she tastes the deer, the sweetness, she learns about reduction, and when her mama and her go to clean the pot, she learns about how sap can be

[14] This subheading comes from the work of Anishinaabe scholar Wendy Makoons Geniusz, and her translation of the Anishinaabeg word gaa-izhi-zhaawendaagoziyaang, see p. 67 of (Geniusz, 2009). Anishinaabe (north western dialect is the same as Nishnaabe (south eastern dialect).

[15] I am using the term Nishnaabeg to refer to Ojibwe, Odawa, Bodawadami, Mississauga/Michi Saagiig, Sauteaux, Chippewa, Nipissing, our relatives Omawinini and all the various groups of peoples that make up our nation.

boiled into sugar. Kwezens then takes her Elders to the tree already trusting that she will be believed, that her knowledge and discovery will be cherished, and that she will be heard.

Kwezens learned a tremendous amount over a two-day period – self-led, driven by both her own curiosity and her own personal desire to learn. She learned to trust herself, her family and her community. She learned the sheer joy of discovery. She learned how to interact with the spirit of the maple. She learned both *from* the land and *with* the land. She learned what it felt like to be recognized, seen and appreciated by her community. She *comes to know* maple sugar with the support of her family and Elders. She comes to know maple sugar in the context of love.

To me, this is what coming into wisdom within a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe epistemology looks like – it takes place in the context of family, community and relations. It lacks overt coercion and authority, values so normalized within mainstream western pedagogy that they are rarely ever critiqued. The land, aki, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature.[16] Coming to know is the pursuit of whole body intelligence practiced in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals. It creates communities of individuals with the capacity to uphold and move forward our political traditions and systems of governance.

I am using Kwezens' story here in the same way it is used within Nishnaabeg intelligence - as a theoretical anchor whose meaning transforms over time and space within individual and collective Nishnaabeg consciousness. A "theory" in its simplest form is an explanation of a phenomenon, and Nishnaabeg stories in this way form the theoretical basis of our intelligence. But theory also works a little differently within Nishnaabeg thought. "Theory" is generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice and within each family, community and generation of people. "Theory" isn't just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives.

Most importantly, "theory" isn't just for academics; it's for everyone. And so, the story of maple sugar gets told to (some of) our kids almost from birth. "Theory" within this context is generated from the ground up and its power stems from its living resonance within individuals and collectives. Younger citizens might first understand just the literal meaning. As they grow, they can put together the conceptual meaning, and with more experience with our knowledge system, the metaphorical meaning. Then they start to apply the processes and practices of the story in their own lives (when I have a problem, I'll call my aunties or my grandparents), and "meaning-making becomes an inside phenomenon"[17]. After they live each stage of life through the story, then they can communicate their lived wisdom, understood through six or seven decades of lived experience and shifting meaning. This is how our old people teach. They are our

[16] Geniusz (2009, p. 67) calls this process of coming to known gaa-izhi-zhaawendaagoziyaang – that which is given lovingly to us by the spirits.

[17] Manulani Meyers, June 3, 2014.

geniuses because they know that wisdom is generated from the ground up, that meaning is for everyone, and that we're all better when we're able to derive meaning out of our lives and be our best selves (Simpson, 2013, pp. 3-7; Doerfler, Sinclair & Stark, 2013, pp. xv-xxvii). Stories direct, inspire and affirm ancient code of ethics.[18] If you do not know what it means to be intelligent within Nishnaabeg realities, then you can't see the epistemology, the pedagogy, the conceptual meaning, or the metaphor. You can't see how this story has references to other parts of our oral tradition, or how this story is fundamentally, like all of our stories, communicating different interpretations and realizations of a Nishnaabeg worldview.

It is critical to avoid the assumption that this story takes place in pre-colonial times because Nishnaabeg conceptualizations of time and space present an on-going intervention to linear thinking - this story happens in various incarnations all over our territory every year in March when the Nishnaabeg return to the sugar bush. Kwezen's presence (and the web of kinship relations that she is composed of) is complicated by her fraught relationality to the tenacity of settler colonialism (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014, p. II), and her very presence simultaneously shatters the disappearance of Indigenous women and girls from settler consciousness. She also escapes the rigidity of colonial gender binaries by having influence and agency within her family, while physically disrupting settler colonial commodification and ownership of the land through the implicit assumption that she is suppose to be there. Her existence as a hub of intelligent Nishnaabeg relationality may be threatened by land theft, environmental contamination, residential schools and state run education, and colonial gender violence, but Kwezens is there anyway, making maple sugar as she always has done, in a loving compassionate reality, propelling us to re-create the circumstances within which this story and Nishnaabewin[19] takes place. Propelling us to rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality and not just "dream alternative realities" but to create them, on the ground in the physical world, in spite of being occupied. If we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality; we become too willing to sacrifice the context that creates and produces cultural workers like Kwezens.

What if Kwezens had accepted the permanence of settler colonialism as an unmovable reality?

What if Kwezens had no access to the sugar bush because of land dispossession, environmental contamination or global climate change?

What if the trauma and pain of on-going colonial gendered violence had made it impossible for her mama to believe her or for her mama to reach out and so gently rub her lower back at that critical point? What if that same trauma and pain prevented her aunties and elders to

[18] Manulani Meyers, June 3, 2014.

[19] Nishnaabewin means all things Nishnaabe. It is a broad term that in my mind encompasses all that is meant by the term Nishnaabe intelligence. I learned this word from Doug Williams. I am using it here in a similar way to the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in their annual Anishinaabewin Conference in Sudbury, ON. Other Anishinaabe scholars such as Geniusz use the term gikendaasowin for knowledge that is also correct, but not common in the area where I live. Nishnaabewin includes Nishnaabemowin (Ojibwe language).

gather around and support her when there were technical difficulties? What if settler-colonial parenting strategies positioned the child as "less believable" than an adult?

What if Kwezens had been in a desk at a school that didn't honour at its core her potential within Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg intelligence? Or if she had been in an educational context where having an open heart was a liability instead of a gift? What if she had not been running around, exploring, experimenting, and observing the squirrel - completely engaged in a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ways of knowing? What if she hadn't been on the land at all?

What if Kwezens lived in a world where no one listened to girls? Or where she had been missing or murdered before she ever made it out to the sugar bush?

What if the university got ahold of the sugar bush and made Kwezens get SSHRC funding before she could go out in the field? What if she was home reading the course outline of someone else's learning objectives? What if she never gave the sap to her doodoom but instead went to her computer to type up her research report?

What if Kwezens motivation for learning wasn't her own curiosity and joy, but recognition within the state-run education system? What then?

It comes *through* the land

For me, this story is a critical intervention into current thinking around Indigenous education, because Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes (Deloria, 2001, pp. 58-59). To re-create the world that compelled Kwezens to learn how to make maple sugar, we should be concerned with re-creating the conditions within which this learning occurred, not merely the content of the practice itself. Setters easily appropriate and reproduce the content of the story every year, within the context of capitalism, when they make commercial maple syrup; but they completely miss the wisdom that underlies the entire process because they deterritorialize the mechanics of maple syrup production from Nishnaabeg intelligence and from aki. They appropriate and recast the process within a hyper-individualism that negates relationality. The radical thinking and action of this story is not so much in the mechanics of reducing maple sap to sugar, it lies in the reproduction of a loving web of Nishnaabeg networks within which learning takes place.

For countless generations, Nishnaabeg children grew up within the milieu of Nishnaabewin, not within the institutionalized schooling system. Many of our children still do, thanks to parents, grandparents and communities. Like governance, leadership and every other aspect of reciprocated life, education comes from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land. An individual's intimate relationship with the spiritual and physical elements of creation is at the centre of a learning journey that is life-long (Deloria, 2001, p. 60). You can't graduate from Nishnaabewin; it is a gift to be practiced and reproduced. And while each individual must have the skills and knowledge to ensure their own safety, survival and prosperity in both the physical and spiritual realm, their existence is ultimately dependent upon intimate relationships

of reciprocity, humility, honesty and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals.

Nishnaabeg-Gikendaasowin, or Nishnaabeg knowledge,[20] originates in the spiritual realm, coming to individuals through dreams, visions, ceremony and through the process of gaa-izhi-zhaawendaagoziyaang – that which is given lovingly to us by the spirits (Geniusz, 2009, p. 67). This makes sense because this is the place where our ancestors reside, where spiritual beings exist, and where the spirits of living plants, animals and humans interact. In order to gain access to this knowledge, one has to align themselves within and with the forces of the implicate order[21] through ceremony, ritual and the embodiment of the teachings one already carries (Henderson 2000).

Within this system there is no standard curriculum because it is impossible to generate a curriculum for "that which is giving to us lovingly from the spirits," and because it doesn't make sense for everyone to master the same body of factual information. Nishnaabeg society, in its fullest realization, requires a diversity of excellence to continue to produce an abundance of supportive relationships. Within the context of humility and agency, decisions around learning are in essence an agreement between individuals and the spirit world. Nishnaabewin fosters and cherishes individuals with particular gifts and skills as a mechanism for growing diversity, and childhood is an excellent time for individuals to focus in on those particular gifts and hone them into excellence. Just as it is unthinkable within a Nishnaabeg worldview for a leader to impose their will on their people, it is unthinkable to impose an agenda onto another living thing – in essence, the *context is the curriculum* and land, aki, is the context (Cajete, 1994).

In addition to the land (including the spiritual world), the context for Nishnaabewin is profoundly intimate. Gaa-izhi-zhaawendaagoziyaang requires long-term, stable, balanced warm relationships within the family, extended family, the community and all living aspects of creation. Intelligence flows through relationships between living entities. Gaa-izhi-zhaawendaagoziyaang requires love, the word zhaawen, a part of the word Gaa-izhi-**zhaawen**daagoziyaang, means to have complete "compassion for another in one's thoughts and mind. It has a connotation of bestowing kindness, mercy, and aid. It includes ideas of pity, empathy and deep unconditional love" (Borrows, 2014).[22] Anishinaabe scholar John Borrows (2014) explains:

> "For instance, my friend Kekek notes that zhawenjige is another derivation of zhawenim. It means to hunt. We hear the word used in hunting and harvesting

[20] Geniusz (2009, p.11) defines anishinaabe-gikendaasowin as knowledge, information and the synthesis of our personal teachings; anishinaabe-inaadisiwin as anishinaabe psychology, way of being, and anishinaabe-izhitwaawin as anishinaabe culture, teachings, customs, history; aadizookaanan as traditional legends and ceremonies, and dibajimowinan as personal stories and history. I include all of these components in the term Nishnaabewin.

[21] This is a term used to refer to the spiritual world by Sákéj Youngblood Henderson (2006) in *First Nations Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights: Defining a just society,* Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre.

[22] Also see pp. 37-41 (Simpson 2011).

> songs. When we sing zhawenim izhichige it means "you will be pitied, or have mercy placed upon you in your actions and what you are doing". The idea behind this word is that when we acknowledge our relations with the world, and our responsibilities to each other, then we will all be blessed or find love and compassion. We will be nourished, sustained and taken care of. The idea of zhawenjige is said to be part of an old treaty the Anishinaabe made with the animals. As long as we love them they will provide for us, and teach us about love and how to live well in the world" (p. 11).

Meaning then is derived not through content or data, or even theory in a western context, which by nature is decontextualized knowledge, but through a compassionate web of interdependent relationships that are different and valuable because of that difference. Individuals carry the responsibility for generating meaning within their own lives – they carry the responsibility for engaging their minds, bodies and spirits in a practice of generating meaning. Within Nishnaabewin, I am responsible for my thoughts and ideas. I am responsible for my own interpretations and that is why you'll always hear from our Elders what appears to be them 'qualifying' their teachings with statements that position them as learners, that position their ideas as their own understandings, and place their teachings within the context of their own lived experience. This is deliberate, ethical and *profoundly* careful within Nishnaabewin because to do otherwise is considered arrogant and intrusive with the potential to interfere with other beings' life pathways.[23] Although individuals have the responsibility to self-actualize within this system, intelligence in this context is not an individual's property to own; once an individual has carried a particular teaching around to the point where they can easily embody that teaching, they, then, also become responsible for sharing it according to the ethics and protocols of the system. This is primarily done by modeling the teaching or, as Elder Edna Manitowabi says, "wearing your teachings."[24]

Continually generating meaning is often, but not exclusively, done in ceremony and involves ongoing ethical systems of accountability and responsibility, particularly around emotional trauma and healing.[25] Individual generated meaning is an authentic and grounded power. These meanings, in all of their diversity, then become the foundation of generated collective meanings and a plurality of truths (Simpson, 2011, p. 58). This collective process, operationalized within Nishnaabeg political traditions, for example, generates a series of

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[23] Doug Williams taught me this concept through the word dnaagaa'aa (my phonetic spelling) in the context of hunting. It means "don't hurt anything if you don't need to, because you are stopping their path in life, have total compassion for other living beings."

[24] I have heard Nishnaabe Elder Edna Manitowabi explain this countless times, and following Nishnaabeg protocols would like to acknowledge this here.

[25] To me this is actually a critical part of the system. Being accountable and self aware of one's own flaws and now in the context of settler colonialism, one's experience with trauma and violence becomes critical to operationalizing Nishnaabeg intelligence.

collective meanings, including dissention, that make sense within broad and multiple interpretations of Nishnaabeg values and philosophies.[26]

Nishnaabeg intelligence is diversity[27]

There are unseen forces or spiritual elements that hold power and influence in the story of maple sugar that are only alluded to within the narrative, at least in part because older Nishnaabeg teachers culturally talk about these things as if they are sitting beside us in a room rather then coming directly at it. There is an implicit assumption in this story that Kwezens offered tobacco to the maple tree before she cut the bark to collect the sap. She does this as a mechanism to set up a relationship with the maple tree that is based on mutual respect, reciprocity, and caring. By placing the tobacco down, she is speaking directly to the spirit of the maple tree. I understand it as her spirit speaking directly to the spirit of the maple tree, entering into a balanced relationship of mutuality. The maple tree does not have to produce sap for Kwezens, the tree has agency over this act. Kwezens also has agency – she has chosen to act in a way that aligns herself with the actions and beliefs her people know promote more life and interconnection within Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogamig.[28] There are also several other spiritual interactions involved in this story of lovingly coming to know – the spirit of the squirrel, the spirits of her family that supported her, and the spirits of her ancestors. Within a Nishnaabeg epistemology, spiritual knowledge is a tremendous, ubiquitous source of wisdom that is the core of every system in the physical world. The implicate order provides the stories that answer all of our questions. The way we are taught to access that knowledge is by being open to that kind of knowledge and by being engaged in a way of living that generates a close, personal relationship with our ancestors and relations in the spirit world through ceremony, dreams, visions and stories. The implicate order does not discriminate by gender, by age, by ability, or any of those things. The implicate order only cares if you believe; if you're living your life in an engaged way. If we are open to this, then knowledge will flow through us based on our own actions, our name, clan, and helpers and our own self-actualization, as long as we uphold these responsibilities.

Kwezens already lives in a reality where the spiritual world has tremendous presence in each moment. Kwezens is a vessel of resurgence. She is a leader. She embodies the core

[26] It is my understanding that there is a high degree of non-interference into the intimate truths of individuals, and also a collective high degree of non-interference for groups of people to hold different truths. There is respect for this diversity. This is balanced with collective processes – ceremony and political processes (in governance, the generation of consensus for example) that move for instance seven collective truths into an eighth understanding, while still acknowledging and validating dissenting views. See Simpson (2011, p. 58) for a more detailed explanation.

[27] I started to think about Nishnaabeg intelligence after several discussions with Hawaiian thinker Manulani Meyer between 2012 and 2014 Peterborough, Ontario and Vancouver, BC. See Meyer (2014).

[28] This is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg name for our territory or nation that means the place where we all live and work together, and conceptually emphasizes the relational aspect of our conceptualization of nationhood. It refers to the north shore of Lake Ontario. See Simpson (2011, p.14) for a more detailed explanation.

teachings and philosophies of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg culture. She paid attention to our creation story – the one that says Nishnaabewin is both intellectual knowledge and heart knowledge, the one that says you have to be fully present in all aspects of your physical and spiritual body to access the gift of knowledge from the spiritual world (Simpson, 2011). Kwezens very clearly represents the kind of citizen capable of upholding the tenets of our nation, in spite of settler colonialism. She is in essence the goal of community, the re-creation of beings that continually live lives promoting the continuous rebirth of life itself (LaDuke, 1994). Kwezens represents Nishnaabeg resurgence – the rebuilding of Indigenous nations according to our own political, intellectual and cultural traditions. We need to re-establish the context for creating a society of Kwezens because we need to recreate a society of individuals that can think and live inside the multiplicity of our culture and our intelligence.

This presents Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg people with a critical task – if we do not create a generation of people attached to the land and committed to living out our culturally inherent ways of coming to know, we risk losing what it means to be Nishnaabeg within our own thought systems (Alfred, 1999; 2005). We simply cannot bring about the resurgence of our nations if we have no one that can think within the emergent networks of Nishnaabeg intelligence. We cannot bring about the kind of radical transformation we seek if we are solely reliant upon state sanctioned and state run education systems. We cannot carry out the kind of decolonization our ancestors set in motion if we don't create a generation of land based, community based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations and whose life work is concerned with the regeneration of these systems, rather than meeting the overwhelming needs of the western academic industrial complex or attempting to "Indigenize the academy"[29] by bringing Indigenous Knowledges into the academy on the terms of the academy itself. Our ancestors' primary concern in "educating" our young people was to nurture a new generation of Elders – of land based intellectuals, philosophers, theorists, medicine people, and historians who embodied Nishnaabeg intelligence in whatever time they were living in because they had lived their lives through Nishnaabeg intelligence.

They embodied Nishnaabeg intelligence because they were *practitioners* of Nishnaabeg intelligence.

Nishnaabeg intelligence has been violently under attack since the beginning days of colonialism through processes that remove Indigenous peoples from our homelands, whether those processes are residential and other forms of state run schools, outright dispossession, the destruction of land through resource extraction and environmental contamination, imposed poverty, or heteropatriarchal and colonial gendered violence. Our peoples have always resisted this destruction by engaging in Nishnaabewin, whenever and wherever they could. I would not

[29] While Indigenous scholars, students and leaders have made substantial in roads in some disciplines of the academy in terms of curriculum and programing, we have been much less successful in gaining the academy's recognition of Indigenous Knowledge systems and intelligence on their own merits, and far less successful in dismantling systems of domination and oppression, dispossession and erasure advanced by the academy. While there are sites of decolonization within academic institutions, they still remain a colonizing force upholding the values of heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism and capitalism.

exist, writing this paper today, if it were not for the physical survival of several generations of Nishnaabeg women in my family and the heart breaking sacrifices of my Elders who resisted colonial educational practices and live out their commitment to teaching others, the vast majority of the time in the absence of compensation or deep reciprocity, and outside of the provincial education and the post-secondary education system. Not one time has an Elder ever told me to go to school to learn Indigenous Knowledge. Not one time has an Elder told me to go and get a degree so that I can pass Indigenous Knowledge down to my children. Yet, we place tremendous pressure on our youth to gain western academic credentials. This seems highly problematic to me; we desperately need a new generation of thinkers who are articulate and brilliant from within Nishnaabewin, a generation that can think within our philosophies and enact those philosophies as a living and breathing imposition to colonialism as every generation has done in some capacity before us. Otherwise, we risk losing being Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. To create a nation of Kwezens – to survive *as Nishnaabeg* – we shouldn't be just striving for land-based pedagogies. The land must once again *become* the pedagogy.

Intelligence as consensual engagement

Kwezens very clearly embodies the idea of land as pedagogy as she went about her day learning with and from maple trees, among many other beings. Kwezens had already grown up in a community where the adult practitioners of Nishnaabeg intelligence were teaching her through modeling how to interact with all elements of creation. So, on one hand, Kwezens was just doing what she had seen the adults in her life do everyday over and over again in a variety of different activities. On a deeper level, Kwezens was also teaching us by 'modeling'; her story aligns itself with our embodied theory, our Creation stories.

Gzhwe Manidoo[30] in the very beginning of the cosmos and in the continual creation of Nishnaabeg ontology, axiology, and epistemology, set up the context for Nishnaabeg reality (Henderson, 2000; Little Bear, 2000). The context was the earth that Gzhwe Manidoo created and Nishnaabeg conceptualizations of aki are at their core profoundly relational. Borrows (2014) explains it this way:

> The Anishinaabe have long taken direction about how we should live through our interactions and observations with the environment. People regulate their behavior and resolve their disputes by drawing guidance from what they see in the behavior of the sun, moon, stars, winds, waves, trees, birds, animals, and other natural phenomenon. The Anishinaabe word for this concept is gikinawaabiwin. We can also use the word akinoomaage, which is formed from two roots: aki: noomaage. 'Aki' means earth and 'noomaage' means to point towards and take direction from. As we draw analogies from our surroundings, and appropriately apply or

[30] The Creator, the one who loves us unconditionally, according to Doug Williams. See endnote 60 in Simpson (2011, p. 46).

> distinguish what we see, we learn about how love, and how we should live in our lands. (p.10)

Aki includes all aspects of creation: land forms, elements, plants, animals, spirits, sounds, thoughts, feelings, energies and all of the emergent systems, ecologies and networks that connect these elements. Knowledge in akinoomaage flows through the layered spirit world above the earth, the place where spiritual beings reside and the place where our ancestors sit (Geniusz, 2009).

In the Nishnaabeg creation stories told and discussed in *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence,* the process in which Gzhwe Manidoo created the world is the process by which Nishnaabeg people come to know. Coming to know is a mirroring or a re-enactment process where we understand Nishnaabeg epistemology to be concerned with embodied knowledge animated, collectively, and lived out in a way in which our reality, nationhood and existence is continually reborn through both time and space. This requires a union of both emotional knowledge and intellectual knowledge in a profoundly personal and intimate spiritual context. Coming to know is an intimate process, the unfolding of relationship with the spiritual world.

Coming to know also requires complex, committed, *consensual* engagement. Relationships within Nishnaabewin are based upon the consent – the informed (honest) consent – of all beings involved. The word consensual here is key because if children learn to normalize dominance and non-consent within the context of education, then non-consent becomes a normalized part of the 'tool kit' of those who have and wield power. Within the context of settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples are not seen as worthy recipients of consent, informed or otherwise, and part of being colonized is having to engage in all kinds of processes on a daily basis that, given a choice, we likely wouldn't consent to. In my experiences with the state-run education system, my informed consent was never required –learning was forced on me using the threat of emotional and physical violence. In post-secondary education, consent was coercive – if you want these credentials, this is what you have to do and this is what you have to endure.[31] This is unthinkable within Nishnaabeg intelligence. In fact, if there isn't a considerable amount of demonstrated interest and commitment on the part of the learner, learning doesn't occur at all. Raising Indigenous children in a context where their consent, physically and intellectually, is not just required but valued, goes a long way to undoing the replication of colonial gender violence.

In the context of resurgence, which is an emergent process mitigated by spiritual forces, physical and intellectual *engagement* with the struggle of nation-building within specific cultural contexts is the only way to generate new knowledge. True engagement requires consent. Being engaged in the physical, real-world work of resurgence, movement-building and nation-building

[31] I would add that this context was one of real and symbolic normalized violence for many Indigenous women and queer scholars coming through the system between 1960s and the 1990s. "Indigenizing the academy" at this stage meant individual sacrifice for Indigenous women in order to obtain the credentials necessary to make the academy less violent towards the next group of Indigenous people coming through this system. It saddens me that these individual sacrifices so often go unrecognized.

is the only way to generate new knowledge on how to resurge from within Nishnaabeg intellectual systems - deep, consensual engagement with Nishnaabeg processes. We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment. Intellectual knowledge is not enough on its own. Neither is spiritual knowledge or emotional knowledge. All kinds of knowledge are important and necessary in a communal and emergent balance.

This creation story also emphasizes that Nishnaabeg people embody all the necessary knowledge for resurgence. We are enough because if we are living our lives out in a Nishnaabeg way (and there are many of these ways) we can access all the knowledge that went into creating the universe. In the face of ongoing settler-colonialism, my experience as an Nishnaabeg person engaging with centuries of gendered violence and the ongoing occupation of my homeland, part of my knowledge base is both a critical attunement to settler colonialism and generated theories of resistance, as well as resurgence and liberation, both from within my own knowledge system and through the sharing of the liberatory politics of Indigenous peoples and other communities of struggle who have also been forced to live through oppression. Aki is also liberation and freedom - my freedom to establish and maintain relationships of deep reciprocity within a pristine homeland that my ancestors handed down to me. Aki is encompassed by freedom, a freedom that is protected by sovereignty and actualized by self-determination.

Once this context is re-established, even if it begins as only a dream or a vision, even if it just by a few individuals, the fetishization of theoretical approaches[32] to realize that context becomes counter-productive. If bell hooks or Franz Fanon speaks to my heart as an Nishnaabekwe, as both do, then Nishnaabeg intelligence compels me to learn, share and embody everything I can from every teacher that presents themselves to me. Nishnaabeg intelligence *is* diversity - Nishnaabeg intelligence *as* diversity.[33]

Nanabush. Period.

Nanabush is widely regarded within Nishnaabeg thought as Spiritual Being and an important teacher because Nanabush mirrors human behavior and models how (and how not to) to come to know. I think it's important to point out that Nanabush does not teach at a university, nor is Nanabush a teacher within the state school system. Nanabush also doesn't read academic papers or write for *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society*. Nanabush is fun, entertaining, sexy, and playful. You're more likely to find Nanabush dancing on a table at a bar than at an academic conference. If Nanabush had gone to teacher's college, Nanabush would have been

[32] I began to think about this more clearly after a discussion with activist Jaggi Singh around tactics in social movements, in St. John's, NL, May 14, 2014.

[33] This is another idea that I learned from Manulani Meyer between 2012 and 2014 in Peterborough, Ontario and Vancouver, BC.

fired in the first three months of his first teaching gig.[34] This is precisely why Nanabush is an outstanding teacher – Nanabush not only teaches me self compassion for the part of me that may dance on bars in celebration of life and love and all things good, but Nanabush comes with inevitable contradictions held within the lives of the occupied. Nanabush also continually shows us what happens when we are not responsible for our own baggage or trauma or emotional responses. The brilliance of Nanabush is that Nanabush stories the land with a sharp criticality necessary for moving through the realm of the colonized into the dreamed reality of the decolonized, and for navigating the lived reality of having to engage with both at the same time.

In the spirit of Nanabush, part of me is being facetious with that last paragraph and part of me is not. The academic industrial complex does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg intelligence without the full, valued recognition of the context within which Nishnaabeg intelligence manifests itself – the *practice* of aki - freedom, sovereignty and self-determination over bodies, minds and land. The academy does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg intelligence without taking a principled stand on the forces that are currently attacking Nishnaabeg intelligence: colonial gendered violence, dispossession, erasure and imposed poverty. The academy does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg intelligence without the full recognition of the system that generates this intelligence and the people that have dedicated their lives to growing, nurturing and living that system – our Elders and knowledge holders. The academy does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg intelligence without fully funding the re-generation of Indigenous thinkers as a matter of restitution for the on-going damage it has caused and continues to cause Indigenous Knowledge system through centuries of out right attack (Smith, 2012).

If I imagine myself talking post-secondary education with Nanabush right now, it begins with him immediately asking me why I think spending 60 hours a week indoors in a classroom or on a computer is *Indigenous education* at all. Point taken. I've just spent several hours writing all of this down when my ancestors have always understood this and, in fact, I think my kids understand most of it. Several Nishnaabeg Elders are embodying all of these teachings right now, and any Indigenous person with motivation to learn to think inside the land should be interacting with their own Elders and experts in their own homelands instead of reading me. So while I could ask Nanabush what Nishnaabeg education is, I'd have to be ready for him to flip the table. He's not known for his patience for one thing, and for another he's spent eternity trying to demonstrating how to teach, and more often how not to teach, within the context of his own life. It's not Nanabush's fault we aren't paying attention.

One person who is paying attention is Kwezens, because in going back to the sugar bush Kwezens models her day on an important Nanabush story. Shortly after the creation of the world and the birth of Nanabush, Nanabush took a trip around the world as a way of learning about the world. That's the first lesson. If you want to learn about something, you need to take your body

[34] See John Borrow's conceptualization of Nanabush (Nanaboozhoo) in his story Maajitaadaa: Nanaboozhoo and the Flood, Part 2 (Borrows, 2013); and Neal McLeod's discussion in *Cree Narrative Memory* (2007, p. 99).

onto the land and do it. Get a practice.[35] If you want to learn about movement building, get yourself outside involved with people that are building movements. That doesn't mean don't read books, or don't talk to people with all kinds of intelligences. It doesn't mean don't find mentors. It does mean, get out, get involved and get invested. After Nanabush had completed his first journey around the world, he embarked on a second journey around the world, this time with wolf as a companion. At this point, we should all recognize pretty clearly that the learning changes when the relational context changes. Nanabush did a tremendous amount of visiting on both of his trips – he visited with Nokomis, he visited with the West Wind, he visited with plants and animals, mountains, and bodies of water. Visiting within Nishnaabeg intelligence means sharing oneself through story, through principled and respectful consensual reciprocity with another living being. Visiting is lateral sharing in the absence of coercion and hierarchy, and in the presence of compassion. Visiting is fun, enjoyable, nurturing of intimate connections and relationship building. Visiting is the core of our political system (leaders visiting with all the members of the community), our mobilization (Tkamse[36] and Pontiac visited within and outside of their own nations for several years before they expected mobilization), and our intelligence (people visiting Elders, sharing food, taking care). Kwezens knew this. This is why she was visiting the maple tree in the first place.

At several points in Nanabush's journey, Nanabush sought spiritual guidance through dreams, visions and ceremonies. At one point he had to learn to build a canoe to cross a large body of water – he experimented until he figured it out. This was both time consuming and frustrating. When he finally got a structure that would float, he had no way to propel it. This was also time consuming and frustrating. Eventually, by calming down and watching a beaver, he was able to fashion a paddle inspired by the beaver's tail and continue across the body of water.

In this story, Nanabush models how to come to know for Kwezens. He *shows* us land as pedagogy, without yelling "LAND AS PEDAGOGY," or typing land as pedagogy into a computer 50 times. Sometimes when I am teaching PhD students, I say that in this story Nanabush is teaching us how to be students, teachers, and researchers – he is giving us theory and methodology, but it's really much bigger then that. Nanabush is teaching us how to be full human beings within the context of Nishnaabeg intelligence. Nishnaabeg intelligence is for everyone, not just students, teachers and researchers. It's not just pedagogy; it's how to live life.

[35] Manulani Meyer came to a PhD class in Indigenous Studies at Trent University in 2012 that I was teaching on methodology and theory. She began by asking students not what their dissertation was about, or their theoretical framework, or their methodological approach, but she instead asked what their practice was in the context of Indigenous Knowledge. This is critical distinction.

[36] Tkamse and Taagaamose are Anishinaabeg names meaning Tecumseh. Taagaamose comes from Dr. Tobasanakwet Kinew and is used with the permission of his son, Wab Kinew. I learned the word Tkamse and its meaning from Anishinaabe scholar Brock Pitawanakwat. Both Taagaamose and Tkamse have the same meaning as the Shawnee "Tecumseh", but are different dialects of the Nishnaabe language.

Nishnaabeg intelligence as resurgence

Being engaged in land as pedagogy as a life practice inevitably means coming face-to-face with settler colonial authority, surveillance and violence because, in practice, it places Indigenous bodies between settlers and their money (Coulthard, 2, p.36). The practices of hunting, fishing and living off the land within my territory are a direct challenge to settler colonialism since 1923 and the imposition of the Williams Treaty (Blair, 2008). Being a practitioner of land as pedagogy and learning in my community also means learning how to resist this imposition, it's a process of learning how to be on the land anyway.

There are countless stories that I could tell here about settler surveillance, criminalization, and violence that occurs on the land while Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg are engaged as practitioners in Nishnaabewin,[37] but the story I want to leave you with is one that comes from someone who has invested a large amount of time in my intelligence as an Nishnaabekwe.[38]

Over the past fifteen years or so, I have spent a large amount of time on the land learning from Curve Lake Elder Doug Williams. Doug and I have hunted, fished, trapped, picked medicines, conducted ceremonies, harvested birch bark, made maple syrup, canoed ancient routes and harvested wild rice throughout our territory. This represents the most profound educational experience of my life and I hope that it is far from over. During our extensive time on our land, Doug has taught me the history of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, an oral tradition passed down to him from his uncles, who would have learned it from their parents and grandparents. He has taught me the political traditions of our people, and the ceremonies, philosophies and values that they carried with them. He has taken me to every sacred sight in our territory and shared songs, seamlessly moving between the roles of best friend, father and Elder. He has patiently listened to me. He has patiently answered every question I've brought to him. He has told me hundreds of stories cataloguing the fierce resistance of our ancestors to our way of life. He has healed me.

It is this relationship, more than any other, which has created in me the same fierce resistance my ancestors carried with them, that has fostered in me a responsibility to our territory. It is this relationship, more than any other, that has made me Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. Doug has invested more time in my spiritual, emotional and intellectual education than anyone else in my life. Yet it is completely unrecognized, unsupported and disregarded by academic institutions.

Being out on the land with Doug, living our Michi Saagiig Nishnaabewin, means we run up against colonial authorities on a regular basis, whether that is the police, game wardens or settlers providing their own home grown surveillance for the settler colonial authorities. To be honest, most of this is fairly normalized and unless there is a particular aggression or violence to

[37] For one example see http://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/21/aambe-maajaadaa-what-idlenomore-means-to-me/

[38] Ojibwe woman

the incident, I often don't even notice. But Doug reminds me continually through story that being tied to land also means being tied to an unwritten, unseen history of resistance:

> *The 1923 Williams Treaty was devastating to my people. I witnessed the trauma and the fear that was put on my people that were trying to live on the land. They lived daily watching over their backs and trying to maintain their lifestyle as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. The government with the implementation of the "basket clause"*[39] *was a sneaky way to get rid of us as people who enjoyed this part of our great land. These old men I hung around with such as Madden and Jimkoons Taylor lived a life where they had to live by sneaking around and feeling like they were "poachers." They resorted to catching other animals and harvesting those things that the government did not feel were part of the things they need to "protect" from us. These things included small animals, such as the ground hog and the porcupine, the muskrat for meat and other things were also eaten because we were forbidden from hunting deer (which was our staple). Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg were also prohibited from fishing from October 15 to July 1 every year under provincial statues. These colonial restrictions were devastating to people that lived on the land. They posted Game Wardens in the tri-lakes area – Buckhorn, Chemong and Pigeon to enforce these restrictions. We faced starvation.*
>
> *It was particularly difficult to obtain food in the winter-time and since fishing was prohibited it became a time of great suffering. People had to run up an account at the Whetung General Store to tie them over until the muskrat season opened in April. So it was November to April that was quite difficult. Some people still had to fish and would do it at odd hours and would have to sneak around and not be seen. This is a very difficult thing to do in the winter. Anyone standing on the ice can be seen for miles and this is what the Game Warden would look out for and go out and chase my people. There were many stories told of how my people escaped the Game Warden. There were many stories of our people being caught, and going to court in Peterborough to be given fines for fishing out of season. Imagine the indignity on our people when they came in front of the Canadian courts for being Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg in our own territory!*
>
> *Our people were incredibly strong and resilient. We were able to survive even though we were forced to live in an undignified way of living off the land. There is a story told of one of the young men – Shkiin, short for Shkiininini meaning young man. Shkiin had the ability to escape the Game Warden by putting on these skates you tied onto your feet. The only problem was there was the skates had no brakes, so it was impossible to stop. One day, the Game Warden showed up with modern tube type skates. He saw Shkiin fishing out on the ice, put on those speed skating skates and went after Shkiin. Shkiin tied on his skates and took off. After awhile, the Game Warden started to catch up. Shkiin thought, "uh oh I'm in trouble." Just then he saw some open water. He thought he would skate as fast as he could and*

[39] The basket clause was a legal clause added after the treaty was negotiated that negated all other treaties Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg had signed with the Crown. It is our belief that this clause was added after negotiations were complete without the knowledge of our leaders. See Blair (2008).

> *jump over the open water because he knew the Game Warden couldn't follow. So he skated as fast as he could, took the leap, it was about 20 feet and he made it. He landed, looked around and the Game Warden had to put on the breaks. Shkiin turned around, waved at him and gave him that Saasaakwe sound. The old people used to tell about that story and how Shkiin became a legend in getting away from Game Wardens.*
>
> *I admire the resilience of my people very much. One of the ways they kept up their spirit was with humour. Many stories are told of the clutzy Game Wardens that were posted on the lakes to watch out for us. There are also some sad stories. Old Sam Fawn after many years of carving axe handles, saving up money and making other items like that. With his little bit of money he was able to afford a cedar strip canoe from Peterborough. He went fishing on Fox Island out of provincial season. He was seen by the Game Warden who chased him. Sam beat him and came across form Fox Island to the mainland at Curve Lake. He put his canoe up on shore, turned it over and walked home. Everyone did that back in those days. Everyone knew each other canoes. The Game Warden was watching him from Fox Island, and he sneaked over and seized that canoe. The canoe has never been seen again. Poor Sam Fawn, worked hard his whole life, trying to live off the land. I remember him as being one of the most gentle human beings that lived in Curve Lake. The trauma created by the 1923 Williams Treaty will be longed lived. It lives in our hearts. The government can never repay us for what the damage they have caused. The damage is done. Many of the people that lived through this trauma have now passed on. I remember them dearly and I hope that somehow there are no Game Wardens in the Happy Hunting Grounds.* (Williams, 2013)

This story serves as an important reminder: by far the largest attack on Indigenous Knowledge systems right now is land dispossession, and the people that are actively protecting Nishnaabewin are not those at academic conferences advocating for its use in research and course work but those that are currently putting their bodies on the land. In many ways, the fight for Nishnaabewin is not taking place in Parliament, on social media, or on the streets in urban centres; rather, it lies with communities like Grassy Narrows, and those on the ground who are active practitioners of Nishnaabewin or who are actively protecting their lands from destruction.

When I was a PhD student at the University of Manitoba in the late 1990s, there was a considerable amount of discussion amongst academics on how to ethically and responsibly bring Indigenous Knowledge into the academy, as a way of legitimizing the knowledge of Indigenous peoples as an intellectual system on par with western traditions, as a mechanism to attract Indigenous students to the academy, and as mechanism to preserve Indigenous Knowledges (Simpson, 2008). An effort was made to produce more Indigenous scholars as a mechanism for having a stronger presence within the colonial system. When I first held a tenure track position in an Indigenous Studies Department, there were two Elders on faculty, both women, who had gained tenure on the basis of their expertise in Indigenous Knowledge, not on western

credentials. Fifteen years later, the same university has no tenured Elders, only Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics primarily hired on the basis of western credentials.

The problem with this approach then, and now, is that it reinforces colonial authority over Nishnaabeg intelligence by keeping it reified and fetishized within a settler colonial approach to education designed only to propel settler colonialism. This serves to reinforce asymmetrical power relationships between Indigenous Knowledge and western knowledge, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It sets both Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Indigenous learners up in a never-ending battle for recognition within that system, when the academy's primary intention is to use Indigenous peoples and our knowledge systems to legitimize settler colonial authority within education as a training ground to legitimize settler colonial authority over Indigenous peoples and our nations in Canadian society[40].

Nishnaabeg must stop looking for legitimacy within the colonizer's education system and return to valuing and recognizing our individual and collective intelligence on its own merits and on our own terms. Withdrawing our considerable collective efforts to "Indigenize the academy", in favor of a resurgence of Indigenous intellectual systems and a reclamation of the context within which those systems operate, goes much further to propelling our nationhood and re-establishing Indigenous political systems because it places people back on the land in a context that is conducive to resurgence and mobilization. The academy has continually proven its refusal to recognize and support the validity, legitimacy, rigor and ethical principles of Nishnaabeg intelligence and the system itself, so we must stop begging for recognition and do this work for ourselves. This colonial refusal should be met with Indigenous refusal – refusal to struggle simply for better or more inclusion and recognition within the academic industrial complex.[41] As Martineau and Ritskes (2014) state in their discussion of decolonial aesthetics, "This means the task of decolonial artists, scholars and activists is not simply to offer amendments or edits to the current world, but to display the mutual sacrifice and relationality needed to sabotage colonial systems of thought and power for the purpose of liberatory alternatives (p. II). This is true in politics, art, cultural and intellectual production, and education because these systems are seamlessly woven together within our intelligence.

If the academy is concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous intelligence, but revitalizing it on Indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its historic and contemporary role as a colonizing force (of which I see no evidence), then the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force in the intellectual lives of Indigenous peoples by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting the source of our knowledge - Indigenous *land*.

I am not saying that Indigenous peoples should forgo learning western based skills, but we currently have a situation where our greatest minds, our children and youth, are spending 40

[40] For a broader discussion see (Coulthard, 2014b; Smith, 2011; and Nadasdy, 2003)

[41] For a discussion of Native Studies in the context of the academic industrial complex see Smith (2011). For a broader discussion on Indigenous recognition in Canadian politics see Coulthard (2014b), and for a discussion of the politics of refusal see Audra Simpson (2014).

hours a week in state run education systems, from age 4 to 22 if they complete an undergraduate degree. Next to none of that takes place in an Nishnaabeg context and although many Indigenous parents and families do everything that can do to ensure their children are connected to their homelands, this should be the centre of the next generation's lives, not the periphery. In order to foster expertise within Nishinaabeg intelligence, we need people engaged with land as curriculum and engaged in our languages for decades, not weeks. Shouldn't we, as communities, support and nurture children that choose to only educate themselves within Nishnaabewin? Wouldn't this create a strong generation of Elders? Don't we deserve learning spaces where we do not have to address state learning objectives, curriculum, credentialism and careerism, where our only concern for recognition comes from within? Is the state run education system and the academic industrial complex really a house worth inhabiting (Mignolo, in Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p. 204)?

Nishnaabewin did not and does not prepare children for successful career paths in a hyper capitalistic system. It is designed to create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, inter-dependent, brilliant, loving citizens, who at their core uphold our ideals around family, community and nationhood by valuing their intelligences, their diversity, their desires and gifts and their lived experiences. It encourages children to find their joy and place it at the centre of their lives. It encourages children to value consent. This was the key to building nations where exploitation was unthinkable. But don't our children have to live in a hyper capitalistic system? Well, yes; and if we are going to survive this as Nishnaabeg, we need to create generations of people that are capable of actualizing radical decolonization, diversity, transformation and local economic alternatives to capitalism.

The beauty of culturally inherent resurgence is that it challenges settler colonial dissections of our territories and our bodies into reserve/city or rural/urban dichotomies. All Canadian cities are on Indigenous lands. Indigenous presence is attacked in all geographies. In reality, the majority of Indigenous peoples move regularly through reserves, cities, towns and rural areas. We have found ways to connect to the land and our stories and to live our intelligences no matter how urban or how destroyed our homelands have become. While it is critical that we grow and nurture a generation of people that can think within the land and have tremendous knowledge and connection to aki, this doesn't have to take away from the contributions of urban Indigenous communities to our collective resurgence. Cities have becomes sites of tremendous activism and resistance, and artistic, cultural and linguistic revival and regeneration, and this too comes from the land. Whether urban or rural, city or reserve, the shift that Indigenous systems of intelligence compel us to make is one from capitalistic consumer to cultural producer. Kwezens reminds me that, "The freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism. It is a performance of other worlds, an embodied practice of flight (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014, p. IV). For me, seeing Kwezens as fugitive provides the fire, the compassion and the loving rebellion to do just that.

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