



## Local Indigenous ways of knowing and learning in the classroom through Community-engaged learning

Andrew Judge<sup>1</sup>, Sherry Fukuzawa<sup>2</sup>, Jonathan Ferrier<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Algoma University, Canada <sup>2</sup> University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada <sup>3</sup> Dalhousie University, Canada

### Abstract

This paper reflects on the impact of community-engaged learning (CEL) in post-secondary education, as guided by local Indigenous community members, specifically members of the Anishinaabeg Nation and more specifically Mississauga peoples. This CEL way of educating highlights a fundamental difference between Indigenous axiology, where localized relationships and community contributions are paradigm for knowledge generation, and traditional Euro-Western hegemonic pedagogies, where there is a distinct separation between learners and educators. Within this framework, we aim to contribute to the larger discourse in revising the axiological foundations applied to knowledge within the Academy, based on authentic expressions of an Indigenous way of knowing and learning, which is most closely associated with the *Anishinaabe* phrase *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megvaa Doodamawaad* - "they are learning with each other while they are doing" (Ray, 2012). We seek to recapitulate the ways that knowledge in the field of anthropology (and post-secondary education in general) is valued and assessed through first-hand experiences of two *Anishinaabe* academics, and one cis female Japanese Canadian academic, involved in the development and delivery of community-engaged learning on Turtle Island.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Pedagogy; Community-engaged learning; decolonization; Two-eyed Seeing

### Introduction

The axiology of knowledge in a Euro-Western education system is often determined by settler colonialism in Canada. This worldview is the dominant way of thinking that sets the curriculum, quality assurance, and governance standards of the post-secondary teaching and research environment in Canada (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Students are often trained through this lens thereby reinforcing the status quo to perpetuate and rationalize an unjust hierarchical social system. In keeping with Tuck and Yang's (2012) definition of "settler colonialism", settlers are those who have stolen Indigenous land and reconstituted it through foreign legal frameworks as their own "property". These practices have significantly disrupted the epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land that Indigenous peoples established over multiple generations before settlers arrived (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2007). Historically, settlers claimed ownership of Indigenous lands through subjugation, violence, slavery, education, and treaties, all of which have and continue to impact Indigenous peoples in diverse ways, most notably, in the context of this article, their relationships to community and land.

As Indigenous place-based and traditional knowledge practices declined and colonialism took root, Indigenous lands, waters, and ethnobiological knowledge degraded and became a commodified value. Settler education systems reinforced the "legitimacy" of this misappropriation of intellectual knowledge by prioritizing and centralizing a settler worldview. This cemented and concentrated a settler "position of authority", that assumes superiority and control over knowledge and the resulting economy. These actions may be directly associated with a firmly held belief often heard throughout childhood that "only the strongest survive". Margulis (2010), in writing about symbiogenesis, goes so far as to say "...Neo-Darwinism, fundamentally is a religion. It is very bad. It is very limited. It enters realms where it does not belong. It is reductionist. It does not even study life" (pp. 1525-1526). To the *Anishinaabeg* worldview, the concept of the strongest surviving is foolish. Anyone who has spent time in their actual environment quickly recognizes only that which lives in symbiosis survives. At a time when the need to challenge Euro-Western education's status quo is at an all-time high and with enough critical mass of scholars who

fundamentally disagree with its perpetuation and rationalization of an unjust social system, how can we aim to restore symbiosis within the sphere of academia? What strategies can we use to overcome this race to be the strongest, as we collectively stare down the open jaws of an insatiable monster? A monster cannibal with a rapacious appetite that the *Anishinaabeg* refer to as *Wündigo* (Laduke & McCowen, 2020).

The terms decolonization and Indigenization, have become synonymous with efforts by Institutes across Canada seeking to reform injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous scholars adopting the discourse of “decolonization” and “Indigenization” this can be directly linked to land, language, and cultural reclamations that re-affirm Indigenous sovereignty (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As Tuck and Yang, (2012, p. 3) aptly describe “decolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it renders whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future”. Due to the expanding discourse surrounding concepts related to decolonization and Indigenization, a concerted effort has been made to avoid further use of these terms in this article. Instead, through the first-hand experiences of two male *Anishinaabe* scholars, and one cis female Japanese Canadian scholar, involved in the development and delivery of community-engaged learning (CEL), we seek to recapitulate the ways that knowledge in post-secondary education is valued, framed, and assessed. A framework, from an *Anishinaabe* perspective, poised to edge us deeper into the belly of the *Wündigo* beast.

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the impact of community-engaged learning (CEL) in post-secondary education, as guided by local Indigenous community members, specifically, members of the *Anishinaabeg* Nation and more specifically Mississauga peoples and based on principles connected to the *Anishinaabeg* language phrase *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megyaa Doodamawaad* - “they are learning with each other while they are doing” (Ray, 2012). The development of an undergraduate CEL course in anthropology at The University of Toronto Mississauga does not proclaim to be a standard in Indigenous pedagogy. It is, however, a contribution to a larger discourse in revising an axiological framework applied to knowledge, within the Academy, based on authentic expressions of an Indigenous way of knowing and learning. These ways aim to unite the heart, mind, and body of students, Indigenous knowledge stewards, and institutionally hired scholars. In this way of learning, knowing, and acting, we can collectively step back from the cannibal's open jaws, and step towards symbiosis.

### **Reflection by Sherry Fukuzawa. Co-creator of the CEL course *Anthropology and Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (in Canada) (ANT241H)*.**

I have come to appreciate the importance of positionality to gain insight into the ways I interpret and experience any research projects I am involved in (see Wilson, 2008; Debassige, 2010). As a settler anthropologist in a large research intensive university in Mississaugas of the Credit territory (aka Mississauga Ontario, Canada), I am often questioning my privileged position within the colonial machinations of the Academy. My positionality as a sansei (third generation Japanese Canadian) whose parents were interned in the country of their (and my) birth during the second world war, bears heavily on me. I feel a resonating inferiority complex and imposter insecurity that may come from my parents' efforts to always make sure we measured up and fit in with Euro-western standards. This attempt at complete assimilation is in stark contrast to the Indigenous peoples in this country who continue to fight for land sovereignty and a proper acknowledgement as the first peoples. As an “othered ally” I cannot speak from an Indigenous colonized experience, instead I try to use my place of privilege to promote and support the initiatives of the local Indigenous community, under their directive and control (Bainbridge et al., 2013).

Community-engaged learning (CEL) is grounded in community partnerships where learning is a process of interconnection, symbiosis, and introspection directed by the priorities of the community. Course learning outcomes and methods of assessment are determined by community initiatives that may not align with Euro-Western pedagogy and that needs to be okay (Howard, 1998). I see the CEL perspective as embedded in the foundational understanding of Etuaptmumk (Two-eyed seeing) as introduced by Murderna and Albert Marshall (Iwama et al., 2009). The Two-eyed seeing paradigm asserts that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives of the world are equally valued and respected, and therefore equally whole. Western knowledge must be integrated with Indigenous epistemologies to collaboratively address Indigenous community realities (Iwama et al., 2009). In my experience, the hierarchical structure of Western educational institutions presents the greatest challenge to the realization of the Etuaptmumk philosophy in post-secondary education because it means that those in privileged

positions must cede their power for collective decision-making that reflects anti-oppressive pedagogy (Battiste, 2013; Louie et al., 2017; Smith, 2012). Western research methods are often based on false ideals of “objectivity” as the foundation for academic rigor and acceptance. In contrast, Indigenous research methods are based on relational accountability and responsibility taking, which involve not only the acceptance of bias, but the acknowledgement that individual positionality is a foundational component of any research method (Wilson, 2008).

The goal of community-engaged learning, based on *Etuaptmumk*, means that learning must be directed and supported by local Indigenous community members with educational goals set by them and founded on their interests and standards. This “co-learning”, in a Western educational institution, is dependent on acceptance of Indigenous knowledge as an equally significant paradigm that does not need “legitimizing” according to Western standards (Bainbridge et al., 2013; Wilson, 2008). It does not reject all Western research but creates a “cultural interface” between Western and Indigenous knowledges based on “respect, relevance, reciprocal relationships and responsibility” (Pidgeon, 2016, p. 78; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Nakata, 2007a, Smith, 2012). Indigenous pedagogy must be interwoven throughout the educational fabric of an Institution for Two-eyed Seeing to be realized, beyond a tokenized gesture by the Academy (Pidgeon, 2016). A “cultural interface” rejects Westernized binary concepts of self versus others by accepting diverse ontologies (Nakata, 2007a). Navigating this “complex and contested space...at the juncture of different cosmological, epistemological and ontological positions” is more complicated than simply adding Indigenous content into a Westernized curriculum (Bullen & Flavell, 2017, p. 586). Can the discipline of Anthropology survive this paradigm shift? As Battiste (2013) points out, Indigenous pedagogies must not be assimilated within western theories. Instead differing worldviews are honored as equal but separated by ethical spaces that enable an abundance of learning traditions to occur (Ermine 2007; Louie et al., 2017). Ultimately, and in my experience, when these multilayered intersecting factors are considered and moreover applied, a symbiosis between both prevails.

*Etuaptmumk* in education must prioritize local Indigenous community relationships by giving space and respect for local Indigenous pedagogies (Chartrand, 2012). This is different from broader institutionalized “Indigenized” education programs because it acknowledges the diversity of Indigenous pedagogies across Canada, and gives authenticity and authority to local Indigenous knowledge systems “by allowing Aboriginal peoples to be the tellers of their history, culture, and perspective [with a] place-conscious lens” (Chartrand, 2012, p. 144). Indigenous knowledge is situated in place, and passed through many generations by oral traditions that are rooted in “land, environment, region, culture and language” (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017). At a time when the “authority” and “legitimacy” of the academy’s axiology is rightly being challenged, what can the stories Indigenous people have shared for generations teach us about the place we are all heading? How can a discipline such as anthropology that is rooted in colonialism give space for this?

My participation in community-engaged learning came out of an initiative by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) as a first step to change the discourse on the value of knowledge at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus. The campus sits on the treaty and traditional territory of the MCFN (see [www.mcnfn.ca](http://www.mcnfn.ca)). Since it has the name of the First Nation in its title, it seemed logical to me that there would already be an established community partnership directing the curriculum at the University. This was not the case, and I questioned if it was my place as a newly hired non-Indigenous anthropologist to have a role in correcting that transgression. Thanks to the advice of Senator Murray Sinclair (chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)) I went to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to find answers. The relationships, mentorship, and guidance I found there began with a symposium addressing the cancelation of the Indigenous curriculum by the provincial government. From this MCFN initiative, we formed the Indigenous Action Group (IAG) to prioritize Mississauga ways of knowing and learning at UTM. The IAG, composed of MCFN community members with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars from across the university, implemented an undergraduate course entitled “Anthropology and Indigenous Peoples in Turtle Island (in Canada) based on the principles of community-engaged learning previously discussed (see Fukuzawa et al., 2020 for course details). This CEL course brings in *Anishinaabe* scholars each week to share their knowledge. Student assessments are reflexive and project-based, moving away from the transactional pedagogical model of passive learning, toward transformational learning centered on relationship building, reflection, and solutions that rest on different worldviews (Bullen & Flavell, 2017; Nakata, 2007a).

The course is funded by a three year grant to ensure proper respect and thanks to the honored lecturers for sharing their time and knowledge with the students. The grant also funds a longitudinal mixed method study directed by the IAG to study the impact of the course experience on students' academic learning, personal growth and social activism (DeSouza & Watson, 2021; Fukuzawa et al., 2020; Smoke, 2020; Shaikh, 2020). Limited external funding threatens the sustainability of this course and any potential expansion of local Indigenous knowledge across the university curriculum. In my view, this predicament succinctly illustrates the greatest barrier to the fulfillment of Two-eyed seeing in a Westernized education system. There must be a paradigm shift in the decision-making process of the Academy to break down the hierarchical infrastructure promoting Euro-Western hegemonic pedagogies so that partnerships with local Indigenous communities are equitable, respected, valued, and embedded as the status quo. The discipline of anthropology often promotes itself as a "holistic" study of humankind. However, since the foundation of anthropological "holism" rests in a Euro-Western colonial structure, then perhaps it is our responsibility to set the example for the institution by intentionally dismantling our methods and acknowledging our transgressions. We must not let Anthropology denigrate the spirit of Etuaptmumk by distancing itself from our discipline's flawed past and current methods within colonial institutions. As Broadhead and Howard (2021, p.112) aptly put, to maintain the integrity of Two-eyed seeing, there must be a "reckoning" before reconciliation. Settler instructors and administrators throughout the Academy often ask me how they can be an effective ally to support Indigenous pedagogy in post-secondary education. I tell them to go to the local Indigenous community for the answers, listen and act under their direction, form trustful relationships to support their initiatives, and most of all, be willing to give up your place at the front of the classroom.

### **Reflection by Andrew Judge, PhD, Assistant Professor of *Anishinaabeg* studies, University and Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig**

Boozhoo (greetings). The spirit calls me Mkomose (Bearwalker) and my English name is Andrew Judge. I am Turtle Clan *Anishinaabeg* and mixed Irish descent. I have been initiated as both a first level Midewiwin and a Mayan daykeeper. At the time I am writing this reflection, I am a tenure track assistant professor of *Anishinaabeg* studies at Algoma University and Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig, and living in Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada). I specialize in land-based and place-based education and have served Indigenous communities for over a decade. My *Anishinaabeg* ancestry connects me to the North shore of Lake Huron and I have familial ties to Thessalon First Nation and Mississauga First Nation, about an hour drive from Bawating. My adult life has been dedicated to the knowledge of my *Anishinaabeg* ancestors.

I have been a professor of *Anishinaabeg* and Indigenous studies for a decade as of 2021. Over that time, and for some time prior, I have witnessed and participated in a wave of Indigenous knowledge-based resurgence activities within and outside of institutions throughout Canada. Many thanks must be awarded to the Elders and stewards of knowledge and their collaborators who have tirelessly worked to get us to this point. My tenure has led me to recognize several critical elements in this resurgence that are required to restore Indigenous knowledge through the application of CEL principles within and outside the academy.

My dissertation focused on the lessons learned from the impacts of relocating Indigenous scholars for academic appointments. Those lessons were part of my reasoning for relocating to the area where my *Anishinaabeg* ancestors originate. I chose to relocate to the region where my *Anishinaabeg* Grandmother and Father were born, to be close to their original Ancestral knowledge. I consider myself extremely lucky this opportunity arose. I realized early in my academic journey that to truly know who I am as an *Anishinaabeginini* (man) I had to "go home". In many respects I chose to "go home", despite never having lived in the region. In order to give back to my ancestors, I utilized the skills and education earned within a colonial system away, while simultaneously remaining committed to being and becoming *Anishinaabeg* through cultural practice, language development, and ceremony. Place based knowledge is something many Indigenous scholars believe is a key to the restoration of our Nations, but more importantly I believe this is what my *Nokomis* (grandmother) would have wanted. As my aptly titled final Masters project suggests *Ji-bmoseyaanb Nokomis gi-bmosed* (I am following in the footsteps of my Grandmother).

My specializations in land-based education and community-engaged learning (CEL) have awarded me many opportunities to create transformational experiences for students and community members in the places I have served. In my experience, doing this work at the highest levels of Canadian education for five years, as of 2021, I

have seen that these specializations are often overlooked or diminished within the academy as non-academic work. As a result, applying the principles of *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad* - "they are learning with each other while they are doing" (Ray, 2012) is not a simple task. This is likely a result of the "positioning of authority" of Western ways of knowing and learning, mentioned above. This is also despite Indigenous scholars around the world continuously highlighting the need and importance of this type of localized work in their academic writing and displayed through their actions. This begs the question: Could it be that Indigenous scholars, demonstrating alternative way of knowing and learning, specifically by utilizing local and ancient ancestral wisdom, are guiding us towards a better future? Could it be that Indigenous scholars, who've learned from Elders and Stewards of Knowledge, know how to avoid the rapacious appetite of the *Wiindigo*? I tend to think so.

Place-based, land-based, and community-engaged learning are not just catch phrases, checkboxes that appease publishers and granting agencies. These concepts and the actions associated with them are and will continue to impact lives. Both human and non-human, inanimate and animate, they are based on relationships to people, land, and '*Ndinawemaaganag*' all my relations (all parts of the natural and spiritual worlds). These concepts are a way of life for the *Anishinaabeg* peoples who practice them. Those who still remember what it means to be a human. At a time when the extinction of many Indigenous languages, cultures, and ethnobotanical knowledge systems is considered imminent, it is my opinion that these actions must be approached by the academy with vigor and respect. The lives, identities, and very existence of future generations of Indigenous peoples depends on it. We witnessed the utter decimation of lands, and waters, and all our relations, when these teachings are neglected. The time to listen, the time to shift, the time to step back from the insatiable appetite of the *Wiindigo*, and the time to realize symbiosis is now.

### **Contributions to Community-engaged Learning (CEL)**

When first approached to support an anthropology class at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus related to CEL I felt excited and honoured. This opportunity arose out of relationships strengthened by a presentation I delivered at a UTM symposium on Indigenous knowledge in the academy. Though not a member of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), relationships formed with community members there, some that began long before my presentation, allowed me to be invited to share as a representative of the *Anishinaabeg* Nation. For all intents and purposes, I was being recognized as a facilitator, translator, and Steward of traditional *Anishinaabeg* knowledge, albeit, I still have much to learn.

For at least twenty years Indigenous academics have been expressing the importance of place-based, community-engaged, and land-based learning. Indigenous knowledge stewards have been making this point since time immemorial. My experiences doing this work, based on their advice, include the following: founding a college level community-based program that regularly included local Indigenous community leaders in the delivery and design of content; designing, developing, and delivering more than 20 post-secondary Indigenous knowledge related courses at three Colleges and three Universities in Ontario, Canada and one University in Cayo District, Belize; facilitating more than a hundred community-engaged learning events, including founding several land restoration initiatives; and, delivering more than 150 invited lectures related to these topics locally, nationally, and internationally. Throughout these experiences, all centered in Indigenous and, more specifically, *Anishinaabeg* ways of knowing and being, thousands of people have collaborated. In the summer of 2020, while delivering a course entitled, "Indigenous land sustainability practices in the Carolinian zone: Knowledge for a changing climate" at the University of Waterloo's School of Architecture, I was awarded a federal government grant (worth \$360,000.) through my work at Conestoga College in Kitchener, Ontario, with partnerships with eight organizations, including university faculties, Elders, and a food bank, to continue work in land, language, and cultural restorations. Indeed, at least 15 students in the Indigenous land-sustainability practices course, noted above, mentioned in their student evaluations that the learning experience changed their life. The Faculty of Engineering at The University of Waterloo went so far as to send me a letter of recognition for this outstanding achievement.

To me these experiences are relevant because they demonstrate my commitment and contributions to a specific style of education, based in *Anishinaabeg* values and ways of knowing and being. Based on principles of *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megwaa Doodamawaad* 'to learn together while doing'. This style can be associated with what we are calling CEL. Ultimately, for *Anishinaabeg* peoples, CEL is and has always been a reflection of our way of life. However, this way of life has almost no standard of measure of value to be considered legitimate academic work within the institutions

I've served. Though perspectives on this are changing, there is a long way to go before localized CEL contributions are honoured both through tenure, promotions, and base level funding.

This CEL way of educating highlights a fundamental difference between Indigenous axiology, where localized relationships and community contributions are paradigm, and the academies indirect motto of “publish or perish”. As an *Anishinaabeg* scholar, in practicing my *Anishinaabeg* way of being in the academy, it is important to note that my axiology, ontology, methodology, theory, and epistemology are not separate (Wilson, 2008). My work is my life and my life is my work. I believe, and this may be true for other Indigenous scholars, when I leave the office, my hat stays on. In reality, I can't ever take the hat off. To me, it's time the Academy learns to recognize the value Indigenous scholars bring to the table. To value those practicing Ancestral Wisdom, which in my experience only enhances the institutions they serve. The actions of all the collaborators in the work noted above, though receiving little merit in the academy, has on many levels transformed both lands and communities, but there is much more work to do together. We have many backward steps yet to take, before the threat of the *Wiidigo* subsides, before symbiosis is again achieved.

Re-research can begin to take shape symbiotically when a community of collaborators is involved at every step of the journey. In this case the collaborators were Indigenous stewards of knowledge associated with the Mississauga Nation and their cumulative experience in practicing their culture that led to their contributions in the CEL course at UTM, I being one of them. That said, collaborators using an *Anishinaabeg* lens are more than the humans who share their wisdom with students in a class. The collaborators, when fully appreciated, are the sum total of all the parts of creation that have influenced and guided their journeys. As such, the collaborators are hollow vessels for ancient wisdom to flow through. What the *Anishinaabeg* refer to as *ndinawemaaganag* (all my relations) can, has been, and will continue to be transferred to the hearts, minds, and bodies of the people present when they are shared and will undoubtedly have everlasting impacts beyond those moments, as this is in the very design of the knowledge from which the concept originates. The realization that these impacts can never truly be measured needs to be trusted within academia for it to thrive. This perspective of collaboration is difficult to appreciate or introduce within the colonial framework of knowledge generation for reasons noted above, but it has been done and our hope is that Anthropology can let down it's guard to ensure space is created for further collaborations of this nature. To truly grasp the extent of this holistic way of approaching knowledge generation and acquisition requires another paper entirely.

Though still a facilitator of re-research, with re-research being intentionally hyphenated to honour the guidance of my friend and colleague Dr. Kathy Absolon, an *Anishinaabekwe* (woman) from Flying Post First Nation, re-research becomes a symbiotic unfolding as knowledge is internalized and acted upon. In her paradigm changing book, *Kaandosiwini: How We Come to Know*, Dr. Absolon (2011) hyphenated the word “re-research”. A strategy for her that ensured the English words - theory and methodology - so critical within the academy, align with Indigenous Cultural Knowledge. Her work accentuates an attitudinal shift happening amongst Indigenous scholars, who work to restore Indigenous knowledge within themselves and within and outside their academic settings. Absolon encourages scholars to re-discover knowledge, lost to colonialism, from their own voice and location and writes:

Terms that reflect Indigenous ways of collecting and finding out are searching, harvesting, picking, gathering, hunting, and trapping... I now hyphenate the word re-research, meaning to look again. To search again from our own location and to search again using our own ways as *Anishinaabek* is Indigenous re-research. (p. 21)

As with any discipline, land-based, place-based, and CEL re-research practices take extraordinary amounts of time and patience to master. They often depend entirely on the strength of the interrelationships of those involved, especially with the non-human relations. When done correctly, this re-research can manifest symbiosis, entering what could be considered a flow state, when place, collaboration, and re-research interweave harmoniously to offer transformative experiences to both learners, educators, and the land. This is the move away from the insatiable appetite of the *Wiidigo*, and a move towards restoring humanity.

Furthermore, *Waaskone Giizhikook* (Ray) (2012) explains how utilizing Indigenous based philosophical approaches in re-research result in a kind of methodological and theoretical convergence needed to challenge the academies “status quo”. She writes,

In my home community of Lake Helen Reserve (Red Rock First Nation), the term *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megvaa Doodamawaad*, roughly translated to mean “they are learning with each other while they are doing”, has emerged as a means of thinking about and engaging in “research”. I have come to understand this term as inclusive and without boundaries. Within this term, concepts such as theory, methodology, method, ontology, epistemology and axiology do not exist as singular entities (p. 96).

This *Anishinaabeg* concept *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megvaa Doodamawaad* ‘to learn together while doing’, used in reference for the acquisition of new knowledge, is supported by other well established Indigenous scholars including Ray (2012), Simpson (2011), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009) and Rheault (1999). It is supported by principles found in community based participatory research (CBPR), as identified by Castleden et al., (2012) who write, “Within the context of CBPR, how people are involved is as important as who is involved in maintaining a collaborative and respectful re-search project, a focal point of many ethical guidelines” (p. 176).

Ultimately, what appears to happen in the academy when the guidance of Indigenous peoples is enacted and CEL is supported, is students’ voices are heard, community members honoured, academics are rejuvenated by their experiences, Elders wisdom is embodied, and the love of all relations is felt within both the heart and the mind. This is the symbiosis noted above, and it may be imperative for our collective evolution required for the restoration of our planet, which by all accounts is in dire need of action.

Based on my personal experiences and in listening to countless stories from those who’ve been part of community-engaged and land-based learning, immediate and transformational impacts are made. As we continue to learn together by doing, as we continue to restore our humanity and the dignity of all relations, it seems we are stepping back away from the abyss, away from the insatiable appetite of the Wüindgo. At the same time we are striding towards a force of unity, poised to revolutionize what is valued as knowledge that will undoubtedly benefit future generations. For the *Anishinaabeg*, this is ‘Etuaptmumk’ or ‘Two Eyed Seeing’, this is our return to the sacred.

### **Reflection by Jonathan Ferrier, Assistant Professor University in Biology, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation**

Boozhoo, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeinini nindizhinikaaz. Nimoshag, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Ajetance Treaty, No. 19 nindoonjibaa.

My father’s parents’ and aunt’s oldest oral history recounts hundreds of years back that our family came from the north prior to life in Nimoshag, also known as Eramosa Township, Ontario, Canada (Ferrier & Smith, 2019; Ferrier, 2020; MCFN, 2019). In Nimoshag, our Nookomis (wise grandmother) lived on the Wesleyan Methodist, Simons/Copeland, Crown traded homestead with “Farm Servants” and “Illegitimate” children (Corporation of the County of Wellington 1822a,b; 1866a,b; 1869; 1871; 1873). Despite enfranchisement and servitude under Canada’s Gradual Civilization and Indian Acts, our Nookomis named my father and was able to carry on our unique Nishnaabekwe “Chippewa” regalia sloper patterns of the Nimoshag territory. One can notice how Canada’s historic and contemporary separation of Indigenous families has developed into Canada’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women record.

Reconnecting my separations from Michi Saagiig, Nishnaabeg culture has inspired my ethnobiology career. Fundamental teachings as a first generation growing up outside of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) territory, in Unama'ki, Mi'kma'ki, came from my father on the mashkiig: “our relations are sacred”. This upbringing was different from a child growing up believing that our relatives are there to be managed and profited from by extracting them. Visiting these sacred spaces, receiving lessons handed down from our Grandparents, and simply sitting in the bush gathering berries as a youngster has positioned me in a unique way as an ethnobiologist.

Growing up outside of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) territory in Mi'kma'ki but in Canada’s education system, I have experienced what Elder Albert Marshall calls ‘Etuaptmumk’ or ‘Two Eyed Seeing’ (Marshall et al., 2006). As a biologist in the academy, Etuaptmumk is complementary and honours the best of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways for everyone’s benefit. As I return to Michi Saagiig territory, I work as a member of the MCFN Board of Education, I learn Nishnaabemwin, our ceremonies, and I connect with the spiritual energy of the territory’s biodiversity on the land along its rivers and lakes. On this journey I have earned

three Migizi (Eagle) feathers for truth, wisdom, and respect, and have reciprocated the acknowledgements with Migizi feathers Gchi Manidoo (The Great Spirit) has placed on my path.

## **Creating academic reform**

As a biology professor at Dalhousie University, Mi'kma'ki, and a member of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) Board of Education we learn about facets of education that are shared and unique amongst Indigenous people of Turtle Island. Indigenous people expect culturally appropriate education grounded in the territory's ways of knowing. My MCFN Board lessons have facilitated our university committee's work on a 'Land Based Learning' outdoor space at the Life Sciences Centre. We work together with Mi'kmaq knowledge keepers from reserves, councils, secretariats, confederacies, Dalhousie's Indigenous Council, and community members in Kijipuktuk to honour Mi'kma'ki place names on large outdoor maps, talking circles with fire spaces, and garden space for Indigenous foods, medicines, and pollinators. There is an oral story that reminds us that Algonkian Mi'kmaw and Nishnaabeg protect each other's 'bundles', so making familiar Indigenous spaces in the spirit of Mi'kma'ki is a priority during my tenure at Dalhousie University.

## **How CEL decolonizes the Academy**

Teaching ethnobiology in unceded territory along the Missinnihe (Credit River) where Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and my family are revitalizing our history and traditions is an honour. Experiential learning is key in my life-long learning journey, and the experiences develop a healthy balance of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. I wish the lessons I receive and share from the land and my family impacts students and educators in the CEL course in a meaningful way. Having a mentor reflect on what their Nishnaabeinini relations and responsibilities include impacts students' respect and love for the land, their relations and the history of the spaces we occupy.

As I wake up the essence of Mino-bimaadiziwin (Way of the good life) scintillates in my worldview. My Michi Saagig mino-bimaadiziwin is admittedly challenging; but, I notice as a father raising our child Amikmiskwikwe in ceremony, observing the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and learning Michi Saagiig doodem protocols that colonial assimilation is starting to recede. Amikmiskwikwe's CEL with Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre's Aboriginal Head Start Program (3 and 4 y.o.) and her time speaking Mi'kmaq and Nishnaabemwin on the land, allows one to observe growth in relational strength and wellness over familial generations. The way one's child naturally honours the land while maintaining balance in circular ways demonstrates the value CEL students, educators, and community members can receive from Indigenous pedagogy and Nishinaabemwin (The *Anishinaabeg* language).

## **Conclusion**

Community-engaged learning in post-secondary education, in an equal and respected partnership with local Indigenous communities, is a critical component of the movement to re-conceptualize ways of knowing and knowledge generation in Euro-Western educational institutions. When Indigenous scholarship is valued and treated equitably through the application of Etuaptmumk (Two Eyed Seeing), the impacts on students are witnessed. Also, when the *Anishinaabeg* philosophical position of *Kinoo'amaadawaad Megvaa Doodamawaad* 'to learn together while doing', is applied within a Euro-Western educational settings, in this case an Anthropology Class at UTM, through the guidance and engagement of Indigenous peoples, a move towards symbiosis and a simultaneous move away from the *Wiindigo* occurs. Euro-Western hegemonic pedagogies such as Anthropology which perpetuate an unjust social system must be deconstructed and re-formed to include place-based, land-based, and community-based worldviews grounded in collaborations and relationships to people, land, and *ndinawemaaganag* 'all my relations' (all parts of the natural world). This hard work must be done now to enable the resulting symbiosis of pluralistic ontologies in the Academy, to transform learning and revolutionize what is valued as knowledge for the generations to come. For the *Anishinaabeg*, this is a turn away from the *Wiindigo* and return to the sacredness of *ndinawemaaganag*.

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