

CONNECTIONS AND RECONNECTIONS: AFFIRMING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ABORIGINAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. Aboriginal peoples have been subject to colonization that, among other things, disrupted the transmission of intergenerational knowledge needed by any people for the development of a positive cultural identity and cultural retention and renewal. In this article, a cultural camp is described. In this camp, through interaction with Elders and the land, students in an Aboriginal teacher education program reconnect to their past, connect to others in the present, and develop a positive vision for the future. The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College's Department of Indian Education teacher education program offers "Indian Outdoor Education" (EIOE) courses in the fall and winter each year. Although the courses are identified in the university as outdoor education classes, they have become our cultural camps that provide students with the opportunity to experience culturally authentic education out on the land.

CONNEXIONS ET RECONNEXIONS : AFFIRMATION DE L'IDENTITÉ CULTURELLE DANS LA FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS AUTOCHTONES

RÉSUMÉ. Les peuples autochtones ont été colonisés, ce qui entre autres choses, a perturbé la transmission du savoir entre les générations dont tout peuple a besoin pour l'établissement d'une identité culturelle positive et d'une mémoire et d'un renouveau culturels. Dans cet article, on décrit un camp culturel. Dans ce camp, grâce à des rapports avec les Anciens et la terre, les étudiants inscrits à un programme de formation des enseignants autochtones retrouvent leur passé, établissent des rapports avec d'autres aujourd'hui et acquièrent une vision positive de l'avenir. Le département des programmes de formation des enseignants indiens du Saskatchewan Indian Federated College dispense des cours « Indian Outdoor Education » (EIOE) aux trimestres d'automne et d'hiver de chaque année. Même si ces cours sont inscrits au programme universitaire comme cours d'éducation en plein air, ils sont devenus des camps culturels qui permettent aux étudiants de vivre l'expérience d'une éducation culturellement authentique sur la terre.

In this article our cultural camp is described and analyzed, to demonstrate how the teaching in our courses affirm the cultural identity of Aboriginal¹ teacher education students through culturally appropriate connections with the land and the Elders. Teaching through the venue of the land and Elders is essential because it affirms the student's identity and provides an opportunity to reconnect with their past. The Elders' teaching in the outdoor education setting not only makes the education holistic, it also provides opportunities for culturally authentic learning to take place.

Historical context

Initially our outdoor courses were just that: courses off-campus where instruction took place out of doors. Some cultural components were added, such as tipi raising and prayers by an Elder, but we found that it was not enough.

Aboriginal teacher education needs to consider the historical and societal context in which it takes place. One cannot ignore the impact of past colonial practices on the students in our programs. Many Aboriginal authors have documented the effects of historical and continuing societal, institutional and personal racism imposed by the colonial process upon Aboriginal peoples (cf. Acoose, 1995; Adams, 1989; Campbell, 1973; Means, 1995). Racism has taken its toll on the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual life of Indigenous peoples. It is testament to the enduring spirit of survival of Indigenous peoples that they always have been, and continue to be, active participants in the resistance against the imposition of oppression by colonization and its inherent racist ideology of superiority (cf. Adams, 1989; Battiste, 2000; Graveline, 1998; Said, 1993). At the same time, colonization has a history of imposing relationships of submission to authority that causes learned irresponsibility. Past schooling practices were very authoritarian with the curriculum controlled by outsiders, and day-to-day interactions controlled by teachers. In any culture, intergenerational connections are the conduit for passing knowledge from one generation to the next, the process needed for cultural retention and renewal. Residential schools with their isolation and imposition of a foreign language, culture and ideology were extremely damaging in severing these connections. Kirkness (1992) states that the legacy of the residential schools was one of cultural conflict, alienation, poor self-concept and a lack of preparation for independence for jobs and for life in general. In separating children from their families and communities, schooling had a serious impact on Aboriginal peoples in the disruption of intergenerational connections (cf. Binda with Calliou, 2001; Haig-Brown, 1988; Kirkness, 1992; Miller, 1996). The negative effects of residential schools and other forms of oppression are still felt today, causing the disruption of cultural continuity, leaving individuals without a sense of who they are in the world. The denigration of culture contributes to a sense

of unimportance, causing personal dislocation and fragmentation (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990). Acoose (1995) gives expression to those feelings of fragmentation. "I was overwhelmed with negative feelings and confused because my own way of seeing, being, knowing and understanding the world . . . had continuously been assaulted by the canadian [sic] nation's ideological forces" (p. 19). Healing needs to take place as students reconnect with self, others and the true history of their peoples. As Acoose says, there is the need for reconnection to those who have gone before in the cultural past. "I began to clearly understand the importance of reconnecting to the collective consciousness of my . . . ancestors" (p. 20).

In their interviews with graduates of one Aboriginal teacher education program, Friesen and Orr (1998) report that the program affirmed and expanded the student's Aboriginal identity by providing a supportive educational environment. For these students, unlike previous experiences in school, their culture was positively represented in Native Studies and Aboriginal language classes. In our program, the students take classes in Indian education, Indian languages, Indian studies and Indian art. As is the case with other Aboriginal teacher education programs, one of the challenges facing our program is to "look beyond the inclusion of Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal languages as add ons to seek a vision for a uniquely Aboriginal way of schooling" (Hill, 1998, p. 6). Our search for an Aboriginal way of doing our outdoor education courses meant that we needed to make changes.

Change: Alternative structure and delivery

When the educational practices are not meeting the needs of the Aboriginal students in a holistic manner, then change is essential. Senge (1990) describes the successful process of change in education. "At the heart of a learning organization is the shift of mind – from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world. . . . a learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it" (p. 12-13). Connections are important in any process of educational change but even more so in Aboriginal education. We found that the ones most able to lead students to connect and reconnect with themselves, their past, and the world around them were the Elders.² We began to ask the Elders to take a more prominent role in teaching the courses and found their knowledge and way of teaching provided us with an Aboriginal way of 'educating.' The Elders' teachings reflected an educational philosophy that stressed relationships, strove for balance and harmony, and was holistic in its approach.

Holistic connection: The Elders' ways

The Elders assisted in promoting change by expanding our capabilities as faculty and students to understand our world and ourselves in a holistic

manner; to clarify our shared visions and to improve our shared worldviews. We came to see that it was our responsibility to learn from the Elders and the land. The Elders' teachings modeled a relationship to the land that was based on interconnectedness and respect. This value is and has been at the core of many Aboriginal peoples' beliefs. Long ago Chief Seattle articulated this viewpoint:

Teach your children what we have taught ours. Whatever happens to the earth happens to the children of the earth. The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. All things are connected, like the blood which unites one family. . . . My people love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. . . . Care for it as we have cared for it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children. (Quoted in Gilliland, 1999, p. 36).

Elders speak for the need for connection: the connection in time and place, of past, present and future. "From our children will come those braves, who will carry the torches to the places where our ancestors rest . . . this is how the void will be filled between the old and the new ways" (Chief Dan George, 1974, p. 55). Elsewhere, other Elders have indicated, "a people's sense of place and identity is tied to the land/sea" (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2000, p.19). As the Elders took over the teaching in our outdoor education classes, we could see how their teaching provided students with a connectedness to the land and to the past, and how they encouraged these future teachers to make those connections for the children they would teach in the future.

Cultural camp as holistic education

In the change to make our outdoor education program into a cultural camp, we feel we have found one way of doing "uniquely Aboriginal education." Cultural camp aims to enliven Aboriginal education through organized cultural teachings under the leadership of Elders, Aboriginal community representatives, Indian Education faculty and Indian Education students. It is dedicated to investigating the connections between the land and the Elders, and to the practical dimensions of the four aspects of human life (Medicine Wheel Teachings) in the natural and social world. The Medicine Wheel is a symbol used in many different ways by many Indigenous nations. Lillian Dyck (1998) indicates that one can use the Medicine Wheel to understand ideas or to show how all things are living and interconnected. It can be used as a heuristic device or as framework for thinking about things holistically. "The medicine wheel teaches us that we have four aspects to our nature: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Each of these aspects must be equally developed in a healthy, well-balanced individual through the development and use of volition (i.e., will)" (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1985, p. 12). Students are encouraged to use a

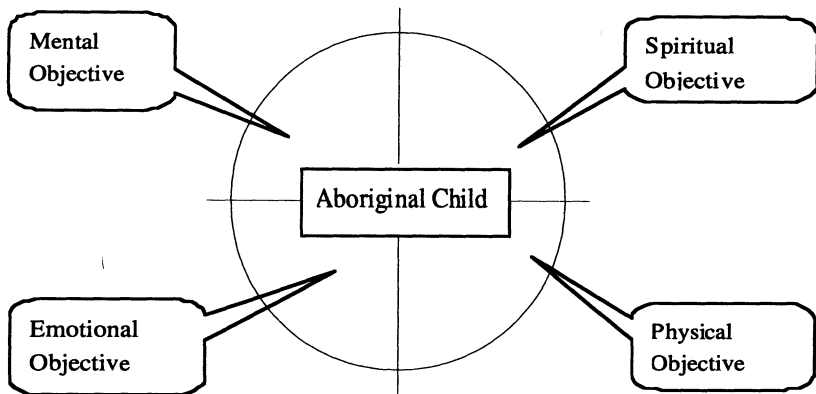


FIGURE 1. LESSON PLAN MODEL

Medicine Wheel format (Fig. 1) when developing lesson plans. For example, by equally developing the four aspects of the Medicine Wheel, students might be better able to plan for balance or harmony in their lesson.

Indian Education students are taught to develop lesson plans that have a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual objective. This holistic approach to attaining knowledge encompasses the four domains. By doing so, the students are able to provide a learning process in a manner that reflects the Aboriginal world-view. According to Lightning (1992), the learning process is described as “a process of internalization and actualization within oneself in a total way” (p. 243). Using the Medicine Wheel strives to support this view in order to encompass “a philosophy of educating for balance, harmony and well-being for the human condition” (p. 253).

The students are introduced to different methods of using the Medicine Wheel so that they can work towards a personal development plan based on their personal needs, cultural experiences, and their cultural knowledge (Saskatchewan Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2000). It occurs through affirmation with what is being taught by the Elders. Students develop their own holistic perspective regarding their relationships with their spiritual beliefs and practices, with other people, with the land and themselves. For example, the use of the Medicine Wheel in daily reflections and journal writing helps students to come to a personal understanding of the four domains in the learning experience. The Medicine Wheel presents students with a framework to help them develop a more informed cultural identity and self worth. The following visual model of the Medicine Wheel may be used to inspire creative writing (Fig. 2).

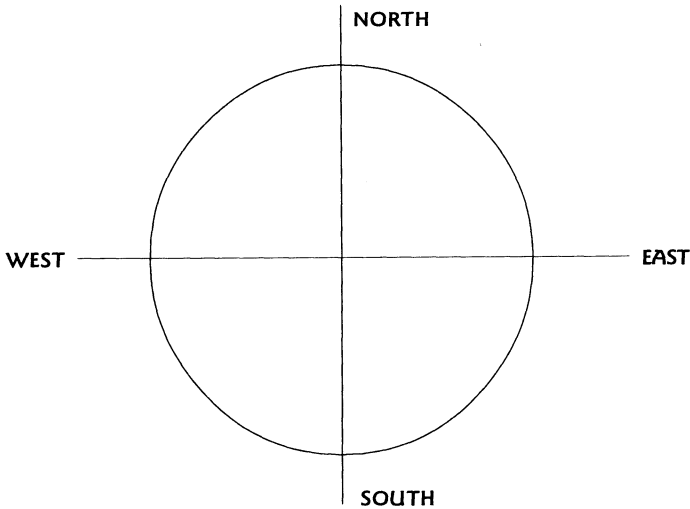


FIGURE 2. MEDICINE WHEEL

This model is based on one way of viewing the Medicine Wheel as described by Gilliland with Reyhner (1988). "The East is symbolic of the sun and the fire and our own creative spirit. The south represents water and our emotions. The West is the place of Mother Earth and our intuition; the place of magic and dreams. North represents air and our minds filled with wisdom as we learn about the mystery of life" (p. 130). Ultimately, the goal for the students is to attain a balanced lifestyle by exploring in a natural way their cultural identity and heritage.

Preparation for camp

Prior to attending the camp itself, time is spent with the students as a group planning the activities of the camp together. Readings of traditional learning styles and Elders' views of learning are presented and discussed so that students are aware of how to be with Elders in the way that is appropriate to the Elders' styles of teaching. Observation and listening are emphasized as Elders often teach through oratory and activity. Because most of our students' formal learning experiences have been in a Western education system of learning, many of them are not familiar with how teaching and learning takes place with traditional teachers such as Elders. For others, the interactions with Elders awakens their awareness of learning processes they have experienced culturally, with grandparents or other relatives, but have buried inside under the pressure of Western ways of teaching.

In preparation for living together, camp norms are established reflecting traditional values that strive to embody individual autonomy and decision making while respecting and considering the well being of the group as a

whole, and the maintenance of harmony within the group. The difference in structuring of time is also discussed with the students to prepare them to be flexible since the cultural camp breaks from the usual structuring and sequencing of content and time to a more “organic” flow of activities. We do have a tentative outline of times for activities but this may change for various reasons. For example, sometimes the weather isn’t right or an activity with an Elder takes much longer than planned. Activities begin when others end or when the Elder and/or participants are ready to start.

Students are organized into smaller groups when working with the Elders, so these are organized prior to leaving. The small group structure more closely approximates traditional experiential learning situations, providing more opportunity for individual one-on-one interaction with the Elder. The group, including Elders, students, faculty, meets as a whole in a circle to start the day and bring it to a close. Although the camp location and activities vary depending on the students, faculty, and Elders involved, for the sake of brevity what follows is an example of what might typically happen in a day at one of our past fall cultural camps.

A day at camp

Picture a clear, warm fall day on the prairies. With your classmates, you travel out of the city chatting excitedly about the days to come. You feel yourself relax as the sky and the vast expanse of the prairie landscape opens up around you. You arrive at a site nestled in the hills of the beautiful Qu’Appelle valley beside Ketepwa Lake in the traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux and Metis. Accompanying you are your instructors and Elders Willie Peigan, Clara and Stanley Pasqua, all from the nearby Pasqua Cree/Saulteaux First Nation.

A typical day combines individual reflection with opportunities for experiencing the outdoors from a cultural and Elders’ perspective. You start your day with a cold wash and a slow walk up the hill to the tipi where you choose to spend time with the Elders in a sunrise pipe ceremony and prayer. After a hot breakfast, you participate in traditional fall activities in small groups with the different Elders and instructors. Activities might include such things as bannock making, crushing chokecherries, cutting meat or fish to dry, constructing a drying rack for the meat, or cooking berry soup over the open fire. The camp is a hum of activity as people share work, talk, and laugh.

After lunch, you and your peers gather around the fire or in the tipi to hear the Elders talk: they may tell stories, relate personal experiences or talk about cultural symbols and worldview such as the importance of the circle. Elder Clara can be heard explaining how the circle relates to the cycles of nature and nature’s tendency toward wholeness. Then it’s off into the hills

with Elder Clara Pasqua in the lead to identify different plants used by the Saulteaux people in that area and to pick certain plants or berries. Before supper, you have time to be on your own or do activities with others such as canoeing. After supper it's back to the tipi or fire for a talking circle to share and reflect upon the day's learning. The evening is usually a time for fun when you may choose to do crafts with Elder Clara, listen to stories of Elder Stanley Pasqua, dance to the fiddle music provided by Elder Willie Peigan, or sing with an instructor while she plays her guitar.

Camp setting as teacher and healer

The learning experience is different out on the land than it is in the confines of a walled university classroom. The natural beauty of the life and landscape that surround them affect students at camp. When asked how learning differs in the camp setting from the university, Elder Clara Pasqua says that a person doesn't feel so closed when they get out onto the land. A transformation happens when you get out of the enclosure of square buildings, the pavement and concrete sidewalks of the city. Clara says the students are more open and she points to her heart – open to their surroundings, to themselves, to others, and to learning – when they are out on the land.

Interaction with the Elders at the camp provides different opportunities to connect with the land in a way that acknowledges how the natural world provides the gifts of life. At the camp, students are taught through example that they must live with the laws of nature in order to be sustained by nature. For the first time in their lives, some of the students are able to see how the natural world provides people with the necessities of life.

The Elders demonstrate a particular relationship with the land. They talk of the need to value the land, emphasizing the respect that is needed in relationship with it, because it is the land that gives us sustenance and healing through food and medicine. Students gain through lived experiences where they find “parallels between the spiritual attributes of plants and their medicinal properties” (Savinelli, 1997, p. 7). Repeatedly during the day, in gesture or ceremony, the Elders show appreciation for the different aspects of life and always remember to give thanks, especially for their food before eating. They model the importance of “giving back” to the land. For example, before taking any plants, Elder Clara performs a quiet ceremony, modeling prayer, offerings, and thankfulness. She will then explain to students that they may now gather sage which can be used both a medicine and as a smudge – a cleansing wash of smoke from a medicine plant. You will hear her explain why and how to show the respect for the land and the life of the plant by “giving back” to the earth when something is taken from it.

Elder Clara also explains how our natural earth can serve as a living guide if we learn to pay attention, just as McGaa refers to Mother Earth as a “living bible from which one can see, hear, touch, feel and learn a great deal. Nature or Mother Earth was made by the Great Spirit; therefore, there are obviously many revelations that the two-leggeds may learn if they simply have the sense to look” (1990, p. 32).

The students do observe and openly express the impact that the land has upon them. In their daily journals they write about their sense of peace and wholeness. They may include pictures to capture the beauty of life and landscape, or samples of meaningful artifacts that they collect. In another activity, after spending some quiet time alone on the land, students are asked to write poetry about their learning from that experience. They often write about feeling of strong bonds and connections that the land arouses in them, not just with the land but their families that they have left behind. Their poetry has the power to move themselves and others to tears. Often they are astounded by their own creative abilities.

Being in a camp setting builds personal connections with others who are there. First, everyone is in very close proximity with others at the camp for twenty-four hours a day. All people at the camp develop an intense personal bond through the common participation in different activities. There is time and openness for more personal sharing. For example, a student and instructor who went on a long walk together ended up talking about their common experiences as parents trying to guide daughters through the challenges of their teen years. Years later, the student recalled how much she had appreciated this walk and how important the resulting closeness in their relationship was to her. For the students themselves, many groups have had a propensity for late night story telling, seeing who can outdo the other with scary stories so that every noise outside the tipi means they need to stay close together for protection and comfort, then laughing at themselves the next day. These close, personal bonds formed at the camp stay with students, instructors and Elders throughout their teacher education program and beyond.

Connecting and reconnecting through the Elders

One of the most influential ways that our cultural camp reconnects students to the knowledge of their ancestors and forms a positive identity is by having the Elders as teachers. Cultural teachings are the foundation of the identity of Aboriginal people and a positive identity is one of the primary purposes of Aboriginal education. “We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity, with confidence in their personal worth and ability” (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972). It is not just children, but also our

adult students who, as future teachers of children, need a strong sense of cultural identity and confidence in their personal abilities and worth.

Teaching by the Elders is not only important for the information they provide but also by the way in which they do the teaching. "Traditional wisdom is both content and process. It speaks of how things should be done as well as what should be done. . . . The North American intellectual tradition is, for the most part, an oral one. This means that the transmission of knowledge is an interpersonal and, often, intergenerational process. . . . Oral societies depend on cultural memory. Elders link the coming generations with the teachings of past generations. The cultural teachings are the foundation of the Aboriginal peoples' identity" (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 116-117). The importance of this intergenerational link is embedded in the language. In Cree, the root words of great grandchild (or descendent) "aniskotapan" are "anis" which means connectedness and "otape" which is to pull or carry, so the literal translation of great grandchild is one who is connected and pulled or carried along (Keith Goulet, personal communication, 1998).

The teaching relationship used by the Elders was a holistic one that models not just the mental and physical but also the incorporation of the spiritual and emotional domain in the learning experience. In addition to ceremonies, the Elder Willie Peigan talks about change, how the culture of the Cree has changed in his lifetime and the importance of faith, the belief in yourself and the ability to find the strength to meet the challenges presented by a changing world. Elder Clara Pasqua may talk specifically to the young women about traditional behaviors of respect and responsibility. Many of our students have not been born into their traditional Aboriginal knowledge, therefore Clara will take the time to explain the significance of the number four, the ceremonies, the dances, the Sweat Lodge, the four-direction offerings in the Pipe Ceremony, and the Sun Dance.

Another aspect of how the Elders teach is their use of a mixture of teasing, comical gestures and laughter. These teaching strategies allow the Elders the opportunity to present serious traditional foundations and principles in a way that the students receive the new knowledge with a greater sense of curiosity and interest. The teasing drops the formality of the Western view of teacher and student. The laughter creates a warm feeling that lets the student and teacher get close. Students are able to overcome feelings of shyness and the self-consciousness of trying to do something new when their teachers can laugh at themselves and their own actions. It does not in any way mean that this learning is a frivolous endeavor. Elders are able to convey warmth and closeness with a twinkle in their eye without losing sight of the importance, attention and respect that the learning activity deserves.

One might observe that the interaction may not necessarily be face to face and that the Elders offer a significant wait time for student responses. This allows for active student participation in the discussion. Another notable aspect of their presentation is the use of a natural object during discussion time, such as a stick, stone, or leaf. Elder Clara Pasqua describes the use of this object as either a discipline technique or attention getter to help the child focus. It may be presented as an artistic or scientific object from the natural world at the appropriate time or during a teachable moment. Elder Clara emphasizes that this teachable moment must come from the heart of the teacher. Cardinal (Kenny, 1997) supports this opinion by stating “we can use science in different ways but also the Elders said make it from the heart, make it beautiful. We always did things beautifully, even our clothes, everything. Art was not a separate world in our language. It was the way we lived” (p. 77). The Elder’s teaching of this worldview emphasizes interconnectedness to the land, air, water, wildlife, human beings, and spirituality.

Elders are esteemed for both their knowledge and life experiences. They are the source of the Indigenous concepts, values and knowledge structures that are embedded in the language and ways of being in the culture. Elders are the “keepers of the wisdom, the libraries of Native communities, repositories of knowledge from time immemorial . . . [and] are especially attuned to [the three areas] of Stories, Ceremonies, and Values” (Hanohano, 1999, 216). The values, worldviews and ways of being of Aboriginal peoples, were embedded in all the Elders did; the stories they shared, the ceremonies they performed, the cultural activities that they engaged in with the students and faculty.

During the activities, ceremonies and talking circles, Elders share stories of Indigenous wisdom and of their life experiences. Stories told by the Elders are the building blocks of awareness and reconnection: a tool of decolonization as the story of the Elder usurps the story of the colonizer. “Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said, 1993, xii). In stories you see yourself and your people. The stories of the Elders, rather than being from the perspective of “other,” are stories of “self,” of their life struggles as Aboriginal people. For example, Elder Clara Pasqua tells about the time she and other women from her reserve handcuffed themselves together to blockade a highway to get money for education. Elder Stanley Pasqua tells of his struggle as Chief to get compensation for flooding of reserve land. Elder Willie Peigan describes how ceremonies were kept alive in a time when they were declared illegal. These and others accounts by the Elders

have an impact on the students. In stories of their own history, they see their peoples as strong and capable, engaged in the struggle against oppression.

Students are able to reconnect as they are exposed to the true history of their people through the stories of the Elders. In the Elders' teachings this reconnecting with the past goes beyond mere awareness to a sense of obligation to both the past and the future. Lee Maracle (Henley, 1989, p. 281) expresses this point in her poem *The Growing Family (I Am Woman)*:

I know nothing
Of great mysteries
Know less of creation
I do know
That the farther backward
In time that I travel
The more grandmothers
And the farther forward
The more grandchildren
I am obligated to both

The Elders talk about this obligation with reference to learning not only from the present but remembering where we came from and looking to where we are going. Elder Willie reminds students not to forget the past hardships and good times, but also to be strong in the present and to be sure of their future. Elder Clara Pasqua emphasizes that we are one with the land – one body, one heart and one spirit; therefore we must not forget our grandmothers and we must remember our grandchildren. Each student has an obligation not just to connect with the past but also to bring together the past and the present in order to fulfill obligations with self and, as future teachers, with children, the ones of the future.

Connecting to self: Strengthening identity

The cultural camp experience provides students with an experience of unique bonding and a respectful connection to the land, the Elders, the faculty and each other. Students return to their everyday lives with a better understanding of what it means to be Aboriginal. Many express a renewed spiritual strength that helps them accept and work at the challenges of being Aboriginal in our Canadian society. Students that lost their cultural connections due to residential school effects and/or other historical or societal reasons, begin to recognize that their Aboriginal history is rich with tradition, values, and a life-giving philosophy. This cultural connection creates a renewed interest and respect for both the land and themselves as Aboriginal peoples.

Fulfillment of the vision

To us, the cultural camp is one way to do “uniquely Aboriginal education.” The camp embodies holistic education. All participants are there to share

and learn together from one another. The pace of learning is different in that students are given time to reflect and to think about meaning, not just in terms of other (as in the author of an article or book), but also in terms of the meaning of learnings to themselves and to their own lives. The context is important because the immersion in the natural life and land of the camp helps the participants to be open and true to themselves and each other. The content of the information shared by the Elders is crucial in that it provides the bridge to connect students with the past, with the true history of Aboriginal peoples. Students not only learn about the importance of the Aboriginal worldview but also see it in practice, embedded in the actions, activities, ceremonies and the stories of the Elders. They experience a holistic learning relationship that emphasizes the spiritual development of individual gifts and attentions, and the models the emotional in the laughter and tears which are an integral part of the experience.

The threads of cultural discontinuity are pulled together to become an affirmation of cultural continuity. Students reconnect to their past, to the “collective consciousness” of their people. For all participants in the cultural camp, stories reflecting the Aboriginal perspective of history and the experience working within the philosophy of Aboriginal peoples develop the foundation needed to go forward, secure in the knowledge that all have developed a network of support as we continue to seek new visions for our life today and in the future. For this we honor, and give our respect and thanks to, the Elders of the cultural camps who have led the way.

*They told me to tell you the time is now
They want you to know how they feel
So listen carefully, look toward the sun.
The Elders are watching.*

(Bouchard & Vickers, 1995, p. 105)

NOTES

1. In different parts of Canada and the United States different terms are preferred to denote the original peoples of North America. As designated in the Canadian constitution, we use the term *Aboriginal* in order to be inclusive of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples who are each recognized as distinct groups. Where different terms are used in the context to which we are referring in our writing, we use those terms as well, such as *Indian* to refer to our College and our course names. In the international context, the term *Indigenous* is used.
2. The authors thank Elders Clara and Stanley Pasqua and Elder Willie Peigan from Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan. The wisdom provided by them in countless talks and personal interviews provided the foundation for this paper. The sharing they did with us was done in a traditional manner without formal documentation. We respectfully and gratefully acknowledge their contribution to the development of our understanding of Aboriginal education.

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