

## A PEDAGOGY OF THE LAND: DREAMS OF RESPECTFUL RELATIONS

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**ABSTRACT.** This article arises out of a partnership between an aboriginal community member and a university faculty member whose relational focus is the development of a pedagogy of the land within the Indigenous Knowledge Instructors Program. (Re)creating traditional knowledge with others in contemporary contexts, as their birthright, is the goal of the program. We struggle to communicate and locate this work within an appropriate 'community.' Dreaming of respectful relations, we are committed to thinking through the complexity of such a quest.

### UNE PÉDAGOGIE DE LA TERRE : RÊVES DE RELATIONS RESPECTUEUSES

**RÉSUMÉ.** Cet article est le fruit d'un partenariat établi entre le membre d'une communauté autochtone et une universitaire dont l'axe relationnel est l'élaboration d'une pédagogie de la terre dans le cadre du Programme de chargés de cours sur le savoir autochtone. L'objectif de ce programme est de (re)créer des connaissances traditionnelles avec d'autres dans un contexte contemporain comme leur droit de naissance. Nous nous efforçons de transmettre et de situer ces travaux dans une communauté qui s'y prête. Rêvant de relations respectueuses, nous avons pris l'engagement de réfléchir à la complexité d'une telle quête.

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.  
Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

Langston Hughes (From *Poems 1921-1930*)

. . . my aim [is] to struggle with the Thing itself which is at stake, namely, the (im)possibilities of radical political thought and practice today. (Slavoj Žizek, p. 90)

In terms of current Afro-American popular music and the sources from which it has progressed – jazz, ragtime, swing, blues, boogie-woogie, and be-bop – this poem on contemporary Harlem, like be-bop, is marked by conflicting changes, sudden nuances, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, and passages sometime in the manner of the jam session, sometimes in the popular song, punctuated by the riffs, runs, breaks, and disc-tortions [sic] of the music of a community in transition. (Hughes, 1951)

*“We must wait, acting”: The dreaming begins . . .*

The Indigenous Knowledge Instructors' Program is a central focus of our dream of respectful relations. It consists of a three part offering. Participants spend two weeks in each of two summers living on the land in the bush, located on Kaaren's traditional territory, practising an indigenous pedagogy of the land, learning through watching and doing. In the intervening seasons, students/instructors participate in a practicum, in any of a range of contexts from public schools to recreation or adult education programs, with other students who have less connection to traditional knowledge than they do. The purpose of the summer sessions is to gather together, in a very small group, people who have some traditional knowledge. In living on the land, they literally re-member – in the sense of putting it back together in the place that sustains it – the knowledge that is based in living on and with that land. There they work in relation to that knowledge, building on one another's teachings as well as considering variations in language and customary use of the knowledge in the contexts from which they come. The practicum is the opportunity to further explore knowledge indigenous to this spiritual place by re-creating understandings of it with students in other contexts. As well as the primary purpose of providing an opportunity to review existing knowledge and pass it on to others through working and living with it, the outcome of the program is a joint certificate issued by York University and the Assembly of First Nations.

DREAMS DEFERRED (1)

*There's liable  
to be confusion  
in a dream deferred.*

L.H.

While a dream is one way for people to start (and to continue) plans for passing on teachings, there is much to be done so that others may come to share and live the dreams. Out of the 'community' of Namekosiipink came a dream, a vision, a plan. As time passed, this notion of "unity" within community was called into question, pushing us to see community-making as a problem based in a need for education of ourselves and others as part of the way to accomplish the dream of a pedagogy of the land.

It all began this way: in 1996, Kaaren Dannenmann knocked on the door of the Centre for Feminist Research at York University with a plan in her hand, a plan developed with some of the other members of the community including a supportive forester. There she encountered Celia Haig-Brown, a recent white immigrant to Central Canada who had spent all her life in the West and who was looking to serve new dreams as a way into this new place, a land with which she had no history and little familiarity (although of course, all of this was happening within the nation-state called Canada).

From that moment on, the two women worked closely together on Kaaren's dream, which resonated with dreams that Celia had brought with her from earlier work in the west: to create an education program which would allow the indigenous knowledge of Namekosiipink to be passed on to others, especially the children, in ways which would keep the knowledge alive and well. As Kaaren's mother said at a community meeting, this is knowledge which must be used to be honoured and preserved. It is not knowledge which can simply be passed into a brain where it stagnates. It has more value than that. It is disrespectful to have it and not use it. As Paulo Freire said in a course Celia attended at the University of British Columbia c1984, knowledge is created and recreated in social interaction. Only as it is manifested can it be considered knowledge in any real sense.

And as the work progressed, the community which had been initially supportive became less interested in this particular work. For many complicated reasons which cannot be part of this discussion because some things are better left unsaid (perhaps until the time is right), the original community backed away from the dream and became sometimes outright hostile to the work that the two women were doing. We decided to construct this paper as a way to try to understand more fully what had occurred in an effort to make sense of it without losing sight of the dream.

**KAAREN: *Resisting deferral: The search for new community***

The Indigenous Knowledge Instructors' Program was far too important to defer. Over the years of developing the program and then implementing it, Celia and I found others who shared similar dreams: the trappers of the Treaty #3 Anishinabe Nation who first identified the need for such a program; the Anishinaape Elders who guided this work; the teachers who knew their students needed this program in their schools. Then, at conferences and through networking, we began to meet others who put all their energies and resources into pursuing dreams similar to this.

Renewed contacts and new contacts bring instant rapport when they describe the same experiences I have known. How well I know the feelings of loneliness described by Greg Spence of Moosonee, way over on the James Bay coast. How familiar are the stories of long struggles to articulate our dreams in a language that does not have words that our souls are crying out to say. How truly inspiring and exciting to hear of big successes and small successes along the way. How liberating to find this new community of people who cannot be intimidated by the grandeur of their dreams. Dare to dream, dare to risk, dare to win.

***Proper introductions: The dreamers***

We two authors stand on the land in historical and social relation to each other. As partners engaged in relational research – a North American woman of European ancestry and an indigenous Anishinaapekwe – we begin our work by articulating this stance. This article arises out of our current efforts to develop protocol to guide work in a partnership between a university and an aboriginal community. In seeking to be in good relation to the land – a concept which stretches far beyond the material without ever losing sight of it – while working in colonized contexts, we have found ourselves searching for a definable community and simultaneously struggling to contribute to the creation and re-creation of such a community. Drawing on Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) work on decolonizing methodologies and Ania Loomba's critical analysis of colonialism/postcolonialism (1998), this article addresses the complexities of knowledge production within the particularities of a location. It also points to the need for taking seriously knowledge which cannot be written (i.e., subsumed by the university's discourse communities which rely almost exclusively on text) precisely because to write it is to transform it, to endanger it and ultimately may serve to deactivate it. At the same time, the university's inability to engage with such knowledge impoverishes all our work for us, for the generations that came before, and those which will follow.

The years since colonization have left their legacy. From Kaaren's perspective, "it would be so easy to say, 'What is the use?' Five hundred and nine

violent years of colonization could have us beaten down so badly that it would be easy to just numb our pain and grief with drugs and alcohol and suicide. Our community, a hundred short years ago thriving in the abundance of Namekosipiink, now is fragmented, our peoples scattered clear across this great Turtle Island, separated by its continental miles, the churches, the state, the pessimism, by our pain and grief. Yet we are irrefutably bound together by our history, kinship, common experiences, by our pain and our grief, and by our joys and memories and dreams." In the face of these thoughts, from an immigrant perspective, Celia continually asks if non-aboriginal people can ever do such work respectfully. Taking up a decolonizing method, we negotiate, with varying degrees of success, the tensions which inevitably emerge when our work must speak to the communities from which we come and in relation to whom the work is conducted. We find ourselves facing contradiction: "It is up to us to make community: to find it, build it, or encourage it to grow in our fragmented world. But can we? Or should we even try, when in spite of good intentions, the effects of community are often more divisive, more exclusive, and more oppressive than the absence of community it originally intended to remedy or remove?" (Godway & Finn, 1994, p. 1). We are committed to trying, even as we struggle, to come to terms with what it means to be in good relation.

*The centrality of dreaming in the search for strong community*

CELIA: This is really a simple story – if we accept that "simple" gestures to complexity and fluidity and an imagined real. The simplicity comes in the inescapability of it all. I have been struggling with ways to write about the search for community, one which sees being in good relation as integral. Dreaming has become the organizing metaphor and reality which allows me to think and write about the search. There are visionaries who imagine the real world a better and healthier place and there are others who work toward the vision. There are those who hold fast to dreams under all circumstances. There are those who see their dreams deferred and pine for the time they may be realised. Sometimes this deferral brings confusion. Sometimes the same people who dream do the work; sometimes not. There are many ways of dreaming and many ways of moving toward a dream in a good way. Sometimes the road to a dream is blocked by those who would dream other roads or by those who have forgotten how to dream.

When I tried to think deeply about what transpired as my research partner Kaaren and I worked through our understandings of how the notion and the imaginative real "community" fit with the land-based pedagogy of the Indigenous Knowledge Instructors' Program (IKIP), I found myself wanting to step outside the immediate context to see how others had thought about community and its place in the work they were doing. Many of the details of the work we did must remain confidential because it was not reportable

research; it transpired in the everyday work of seeking relations and connections in order to do the work well. It was all about community building and the successes and failures of doing so. It was not easy work. As you read our paper, we hope to evoke some of the complexities in order to inspire those who are acting on their dreams of community-referenced research (Schechter 2002) and education to persevere. The relentlessness that Hampton (1995) calls for in his revisioning of indigenous education has served us well. We expect that it will continue to do so as we all engage in the demanding work of decolonizing our worlds.

**KAAREN:** For Anishinaape People, the words “my” and “our” do not mean possession or ownership as they do in English or some other languages. In English, these words are even identified as being “possessive” pronouns. In our culture possession is viewed very differently. Our teachers, for example, tell us that our children are not ours but are on loan to us. Our partners are on loan to us. Our homes, our canoes, our tools and equipment are on loan to us. Even the articles of our clothing are on loan to us. Our very bodies are on loan to us. We are very carefully taught that everything on loan to us must be cared for and then returned in the condition, or even better condition, than it was when we acquired it.

For Anishinaape People, then, the words “my,” “our,” “your,” “his” or “hers” refer to a relationship. When I say, or when any Namekosipiwanishinaape says, “Trout Lake is my home,” we do not mean that we own Trout Lake, that we possess it (and therefore you do not and neither does anyone else) but rather, it means that Trout Lake is that part of our great Mother the earth with which we have a very special relationship. That relationship includes those with whom we share that home – our aunts, cousins, etc., the moose, bear, gulls, ravens, mice, moles, flies, mosquitos, fish, the trees and grass and rocks, etc., etc. That relationship is characterized by a spirituality and sacredness, an intimate knowledge and huge reciprocal respect and reverence. This very amazing relationship involves a give and take that requires consciousness and constant nurturing. My Trout Lake takes care of me, is very gentle with me, and teaches me everything I need to know; in turn, I take care of my Trout Lake to the best of my abilities, and I remain open to learning and growing.

When I think about my Trout Lake, the words of Salish Chief Seathl come back to me. My Trout Lake is about the web of life, about all the interdependence and interconnectedness of time and space and love. In my mind, I hear the words of the great orators and paraphrase them to describe my Trout Lake. Every rock and every tree and every blade of grass on my Trout Lake tells me the stories of those who long ago walked these trails. It is said that the clear cold waters of my Trout Lake carry the memories of my grandmothers and grandfathers. It is said that the whispers of the wind in

the trees, the murmurs of the waves against the sandy beaches, the songs and sounds of the forested islands are the voices of the future, the voices of our children's children and their children. This is my Trout Lake, and I lay my claim to say that, but it can also be your Trout Lake.

For the purpose of this paper, when I say "my community," I mean that group of people and environment with whom I have a very special relationship, a very special attachment and commitment. That grouping is not static and can be interchangeable. My historical, familial community is not the same as the "new" community of those whose dreams and visions are identical or similar to mine.

#### DREAMS DEFERRED (2)

CELIA: At one point in thinking through the ways to frame this paper, I spoke with a colleague, Dr. Carol Duncan of Sir Wilfred Laurier University, about how our search for meaning related to community was beginning to focus on dreaming. She immediately reminded me of Langston Hughes's work on dreams deferred. His lifetime commitment to Harlem, especially his dream of a strong, vibrant and healthy community, accompanied by recurring disillusion regarding the ways the dream unfolded resonated with the work that Kaaren and I have been doing. At that point, I returned to his collected poetry, especially the section called *Montage on a Dream Deferred*. Sections of his work are included in this paper and help to locate the centrality of dreaming to our work.

#### *Theorizing community*

While there are many dangers in generalizing across contexts, in this conversation, Dr. Duncan's immediate passion and identification with the issues I described reminded me that so-called minority communities may have things in common. With this in mind, a turn to Homi Bhabha's (1994) theorising on community proved provocative and productive. Drawing on the work of Partha Chatterjee, he writes of the complexity of notions of community. A notion of civil society, based in capital, provides an over-arching drive for unity of intent within a nation state. Across the colonized world, this larger sphere of nation-state has been dismissive and disrespectful of many aboriginal societies and other minority communities whose values most often clash with the bottom line exploitation of labour and resources for immediate gratification called profit. The consolidation of people around a shared focus undermines the over-arching unity of the nation-state. Within the latter, "the idea of community articulates a cultural temporality of contingency and indeterminacy at the heart of the discourse of civil society" (p. 230). And herein lies the danger and the possibility of community. Not content with any reductionist notions of

social difference, Chatterjee argues that community is “the antagonist supplement of modernity; in the metropolitan space it is the territory of the minority, threatening the claims of civility; in the transnational world it becomes the border-problem of the diasporic, the migrant, the refugee” (in Bhabha, 1994, p. 231). Not surprisingly there is the usual lack of mention of the indigenous peoples who are affected not only by the majority colonizers, but also by all those other immigrant minority groups within any civil society, in our case, the one we call Canada.

For many disenfranchised members, remaining committed exclusively to a larger society cannot compete with the immediacy of community and the power of a place to belong to. While certain identifiable commitments may keep people together as citizens of a huge state, for indigenous peoples all over the globe, the state has been formed over their traditional lands, without their informed consent, often on their dead bodies. Theirs and others’ historical and contemporary discourses of community refuse to be constrained by doctrines of agreement to adhere to a larger civil society. Rather they have the power to undermine its cohesive force by drawing on deep histories and ties to the land. For indigenous people, even the signifier “land” shimmers with distinction as it embraces not only a physical dimension but also the spirits which are inseparable therefrom. Notions of capital, profit, and private ownership are incongruous to a world view based in relation and stewardship.

Recognizing the possibility of existing in the interstices of nation or any larger and constraining organizer, community insists its way into the world. Whether momentary or enduring, this community also may experience change. Minority discourse and existence within any established and defined community have the power to disrupt and transform and translate that community. Central to the possibility inherent in such a discursive move, this antagonistic split is simultaneously a productive and disruptive one which allows those who consider themselves community members at one moment to reform in another time and place when the original community becomes restrictive. The antagonism interrupts hegemony’s rule: even as it refuses to allow global capital full domination in the name of the state, the nation, or civil society, it refuses the constraints of any one of those antagonistic formations. Shape-shifting characterizes the notion of community as catechesis developed by Godway and Finn (1994) in their book entitled *Who Is This ‘We’? The Absence of Community*. Any effort to grasp that fleeting concept, to decide who indeed “we” are, comes up empty-handed. When there is apparent sharing of some common values or ideas, the next moment, a community member may disagree and disassociate, disidentify with whatever definition is developed. Community itself then



slips away. Yet in that moment of dissension lie the seeds of another instance of community.

**KAAREN:** My historical, familial community, the Trout Lake community of Anishinaapek, has always been in a state of constant change, development and motion, physically, locationally and numerically. Individuals moved from one place to another, moved from one village or camp to another.

As a young child, my mother often lived with her mother and father on the shores by Chiipay Saakiink. People often lived near this bay in the northeast corner of Trout Lake because it was ideal for muskrat trapping, moose and duck hunting, and fish spawning. My mother, who is called Tetipayaanimanook, tells how they would often receive visits from people who had been wintering in other parts of the lake. Some would stay for a short visit, others would set up camp beside them and stay for several weeks. Every day, in the winter months, one could look across the expanse of ice and see people making their way to other places on the lake.

This is so hard for me to imagine. I grew up on Trout Lake, and whenever we saw someone walking, snowshoeing, it was someone who was coming to see us, and that did not happen very often. I think there was only one time that I looked down the channel and saw someone walking, and I waited and waited, and, to my horror, he walked right past our island, and disappeared behind the nearby islands. I wondered who he was, where he was going, and what he was carrying in his pack. Later, I found out it was Masinikiishik, who lived in his cabin some miles to the east of us. We rarely saw him because he lived alone, stayed by himself, and his travels didn't usually take him by our place. But seeing him that day intrigued me, because it magnified my loneliness and my sense of isolation. Many years later, when my middle years began and I started taking children out to Trout Lake, my mother expressed her joy by saying that her heart was filled from the thoughts of human tracks once again marking the snow on the lake. She wanted the ice to be full of tracks.

That was when she told me how it used to be, seeing people every day, criss-crossing the lake. It sent a chill down my spine because this precious knowledge came to me so inadvertently. What if I hadn't been paying attention to what my mother was saying, as I do quite often? From one small piece of our conversation, I acquired one huge dimension of knowledge. What priceless pieces of information have I missed?

Today, all we see are snowmachine tracks all over Trout Lake, and I am so aware now that I want to see human foot tracks or snowshoe tracks on the lake. As I myself leave aside my snow machine and walk a few miles to visit, I realize that I ache to see others walking, or evidence of their walking.

When I was growing up in Trout Lake, we lived on one island, where my father, the first white man to take up residence in Trout Lake, had set up his fish camp. There were still many Anishinaapek living out there, with their summer homes by the tourist camps, and their winter homes on their trap lines. By the time I was in my 20s, most people had been forced off the lake, and were moving into town. I remember as a child hating the spring-time because it meant we wouldn't see anyone again for months and months. As the ice lifted and slowly melted, so did the chances of people visiting. I remember that excruciating loneliness of feeling trapped on the island.

I asked my mother if she ever felt that loneliness when she was a child and she said, no, there were always people coming and going, moving from one part of the lake to another. She said that her people would just up and pack and leave, all within an hour or two. She remembers one time, when they didn't even go very far, maybe not even a mile, and they set up camp and stayed there for a few weeks. It amazes me because I already knew this and could see exactly where the tents were set up, where the fire pit was.

When the Trout Lake people migrated, they traveled as a very loosely arranged whole every spring and autumn. Groups left in their canoes, and camped along the river, with people moving from group to group, as they wanted. They began arriving in Lac Seul and kept arriving for several weeks. They made the 100-mile trip back to Trout Lake when the mountain ash berries began to turn orange. They returned for the fall ceremonies, for the wild rice harvest and to prepare for the winter.

This original community was made up of members who were also members of other communities. There were no clearly defined criteria or rules of membership, but everyone knew who was a member, and everyone who was a member knew that they were a member. This question intrigues me because there must have been some very clear lines of demarcation that the social and kinship (clan) systems served to indicate.

In recent years, some community members have attempted to come together and regain their original position on Trout Lake. We hold ceremonies and feasts for naming our babies and for those who are passing on. We hold meetings that are attended by those who live on the lake, by those who can travel to Trout Lake (some from as far away as Curve Lake, Ottawa and Saskatoon). We get together to celebrate achievements and milestones, we come together to mourn and to heal the holes in our hearts. We talk about our future, as a community seeking recognition, to plan for our physical and economic needs. Sometimes, when we are required to describe our community or to name its members, we become very confused. This confusion has led to divisions and conflicts, some of which have affected relationships in a way that will take a long time to heal. This occurred when we were required by the Lac Seul First Nation to list our membership. We looked at those of our relatives who were not present and wondered, "Does this person

belong with us? Why does this person want to belong with us? Is that person content with where she/he is right now?"

In our meetings, we had become clear in describing our community to the point of including non-Aboriginal spouses and even our visitors. We talked about using the following statement to describe ourselves: A community can be defined as a group of people who, regardless of the diversity of their background, have been able to transcend their differences to work towards goals identified as being for their common good. My brother once put it this way: "Why can't everyone just get along? What's the big deal? When a person in the community married, the others accepted that person because that person was chosen by the community member to be their partner."

Despite the confusion of articulating who we are, we are very clear about community. Today, the community is even more loosely arranged, people dispersed clear across the continent. The original community had been affected by the fur trade and the missionaries, hugely impacted by the residential school experiences, devastated by the industries that moved to the area. Alcoholism overcame our community, signaling the spiritual collapse and violence of cultural negation. But the Namekosipiwanishinaapek who are far away still know where their home is. They've never forgotten Trout Lake; etched in their very souls is the sacred knowledge of their connection to **their** Trout Lake.

We know that community is ever-evolving and will continue to be a struggle to define. Maybe we are needing a new term here when we say community, maybe the word we are looking for is **community**.

We know which **community** members have provided a continuous presence on Trout Lake. We know who we are who were called the "Namekosipiwanishinaapek". We are those who are "the people from the waters where the trout live" or simply, "the Trout Lake people." We can know that, for now, **unity** is fleeting and momentary because it is a part of our collective healing and must take place alongside our personal healing.

**CELIA:** When I began the review of the literature for this paper, I had already thought of focusing on the contradictions that the use of the concept community inevitably incites. For example, in the thoughtful research guidelines for communities in the North developed by the Inuit-Tapirisat, one entry calls for anonymity and confidentiality of participants while another suggests that Aboriginal people should have access to the research data. Consistent with most policy documents, this one resists defining community. I did find one notable exception where a definition is included. In the Community Intellectual Rights Act established by the Third World Network 1994, there is a definition. The Act identifies itself as "an act to provide for the establishment of a sui generis system in respect of plant varieties" <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wgtrr/cira.htm>> 08/05/2002). Local com-

munity "refers to a group of people having a long standing social organization that binds them together whether in a defined area or howsoever otherwise and shall include indigenous peoples, and local populations, and shall where appropriate refer to any organization duly registered under the provisions of this Act to represent its interest." It is a problematic definition of course: are the local populations people other than indigenous peoples or are they plant populations or deer who depend on plants? "Howsoever otherwise" is attractive in its breadth but not very helpful in limiting our understanding which definitions often do. I must say that part appealed to me because it does leave open the possibilities. To have community defined by its being duly registered under this Act does not seem helpful at first glance: on the other hand, it leaves open another possibility which is that bodies legislated to serve particular interests could be seen to constitute a community of sorts.

I also found myself caught in the headlights of some Aboriginal theorists who have taken up the Eurocentric search for definitions as one of the problems of their work. Battiste writes, "The Eurocentric strategy of universal definitions and absolute knowledge has made its scholarship unable to know and respect indigenous knowledge and heritage" (Battiste & Henderson, 2001, p. 38). At the same time, it is important to engage in an analysis which can counteract the paralyzing claims of those who insist that they are "the" community and others who do not ascribe fully to their values are disrupting community.

Thus, within minority communities (in the scenario above, those who define themselves outside a mainstream), there is further possibility for renaissance. Even temporarily moving across the arbitrary borders which serve well in one instance exemplifies a refusal to be stuck with parameters which outlive their usefulness to a project or a dream. To paraphrase Clough's question on the affect of another concept (1998, p.xiv), is community functioning with a consistent narrative logic over time and across discourses? And the answer, I would argue, is simply a complicated "no." Particularly in those communities which have formed within colonized societies, "members" come to different conclusions about what constitutes appropriate ways to work together and to work with, for instance, indigenous knowledge. As Alfred claims, "a fundamental task facing Native communities is to overcome the racial, territorial, and 'status' divisions that have become features of the political landscape. Factions and conflicts based on divisions between 'status versus non-status', enrolled versus non-enrolled', or 'on reserve versus urban' arise because our communities are still subject to outside controls" (1999, p.84). These are real conflicts which can have devastating effects on relations within a community and can interfere with the urgent work of decolonizing, reclaiming indigenous knowledge and coming to some common commitment.

Taking us back to the central role of dreaming in our search for community, Laenui presents five steps he sees as integral to processes of decolonization: "(1) rediscovery and recovery, (2) mourning, (3) dreaming, (4) commitment, and (5) action" (2000, p.152). He cautions about complexity and the significance of the move from dreaming to commitment which he sees as a time when people will be able "to wade through the cult of personalities and family histories and to release themselves from the shackles of colonial patriotism." While he indicates clearly that the four steps must be fully addressed before moving to action, he further acknowledges that in desperate times "the reality of many situations does not allow for the methodical, patient, time-consuming process of the four earlier stages" (158). He warns that to move too quickly is not the decolonizing action he is aiming for, but he acknowledges that these moves are essential to survival when indigenous knowledge, lands and people are under attack. In our work, this disconcerting move became necessary. We acknowledge that it is far from ideal, that there is essential community-building still and always to be done, but that the situation of indigenous knowledge in this time and place is such that desperate moves are called for to protect and revitalize it.

**KAAREN: *A community in healing***

I choose to believe that what is called indigenous knowledge is about relationships. Whatever chaos and antagonisms exist amongst us have come from having lost, but not irretrievably, the knowledge of having respectful relations, including the ability to accept and live with one another's differences, the ability to resolve inevitable conflicts, the ability to have compassion, empathy and understanding. It seems to me that this is what respectful relations is all about. This is the basic value of indigenous knowledge.

It is also my belief that collective healing will take a lot of patience and work and a very long time; unfortunately, the length of this process will put in jeopardy some of the plans which had been identified as community goals. We decided that our reason for being a community could be summed up in the following statement: "Our aim is to create an environment that is spiritually, emotionally, socially, physically and economically healthy for all members and visitors. We are dedicated to preserving our traditional land use areas so that future community members – our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren – will always have a home."

In the world-wide community of indigenous people struggling for the protection of their land, languages and culture, individuals must come together and are coming together for mutual support, encouragement and inspiration. My own dream had been to work within my familial community of the Namekosipiiwanishinaapek to develop IKIP. At this time, it is too difficult and too painful to pursue in this context, and there is an urgency in timing and resourcing.

*The imagined real: dreaming the community.*

*There's a certain  
amount of traveling  
in a dream deferred.*

L.H.

CELIA: There have always been those people who insist on dreaming. When all else falls apart, dreams carry us to possibility beyond this place and time. When we dream community, we create a temporal space to find, make and build it, if only for that moment until its limitations exceed its possibilities.

Imagine this: Somewhere north of somewhere (which is, of course, not north to the people who dwell there, but rather it is home) people have been born and learned to crawl and walk and have grown to adulthood and then to being the aunts, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers. Other people have come from far away to live in this place. They have lived with the land and other beings around them, from animals to the soil itself, listening to the teachings and gradually learning. Sometimes, for many reasons, they don't learn for a time and then are not in good relation to each other. Always there have been the dreamers who imagined a world continuing as it should, fulfilling the great circles of time in right relation. And there have been forces working in other ways, refusing to respect the pedagogy of the land, bringing other ways of being which exist in opposition to indigenous life ways. The forces arise from worldviews which do not respect land as the life-giver of us all.

With Kaaren, let us acknowledge that Namekosiipink is a community – the people of that place are associated as part of the great Anishiinaape nation: they are family, linked by their relations with the land and their place there historically and even to time beyond conscious memory. As with all communities, this one is built in some common connections, a union which at the same time has the power to constrain and control. When these controls serve good relations, they give strength to the community members which extend far beyond the human beings involved to all things spiritual, animate and inanimate. When colonizing overlays a community, what develops is a blending of the people's original ways and those of the people who arrive as settlers. The ensuing shifts may simply be part of growth and the endless seasonal and cyclical changes of any living entity. Some communities educate and absorb colonizers and the new constellation proceeds through change in relative peace. In the case of North America, primarily because of the sense of superiority integral to the encroaching Europeans, the changes almost immediately manifested as disruptive to traditional epistemologies and ontologies and all those other ologies. The incommensurability of the world views led to colonisers: 1) promoting religion which was generally disrespectful of traditional spirituality; 2) basing assumptions

in a refusal to integrate the spiritual and emotional and physical with the intellectual; 3) valuing the “rational” to the exclusion of most holistic understandings; and 4) recognizing the noun as central to language. These beliefs have had an impact on indigenous peoples all over the world: residential schools taught children that white was right, that Christianity was the one true way, and that their cultures and languages of origin were second class or even “uncivil-ized,” i.e., outside that which is constituted as civil society. Generations of these teachings have taken their toll: while the dreamers hold fast to a commitment to indigenous knowledges, the path is blocked with mountains of knowledge hostile to such ways.

Over time, many of the people of the community of Namekosipiink moved far from the place to carry on their lives and work throughout the nation. Of course, most never entirely leave the community in that they feel an eternal connection to the place. When they can, they come back there to be “home” and be in communion with the land. They bring their children and grandchildren, they reconnect with all their relations – the land, the water, the sky and all the beings who live and have lived there including family and community members.

Within this ever shifting community, for many reasons, there are those who have the privilege and make the space to live and dream intensely. There are those who spend more time on the specific, historic land, more time with the spirits there and the ancestors. More time with the invasions of logging and mining companies, negotiating trap lines and beginning to plan ways to protect the knowledge and the land. There are those who experience the continuing effects of colonization on a daily basis, who one day emerge from the bush they call home to face acres of clear cut forest: dead trees lying down on the ground which only days before had housed many other relatives. The people in such places do not labour under any illusions of a post-colonial world.

#### CONTINUING THE SEARCH

Returning to the idea of community with the nation-state, we have come to see our work in this way. The civil society is an over-arching effort to maintain unity of purpose. In our global world and over the past two centuries, the purpose has been tied to capital, to the exploitation of natural resources and labour to serve profit maximized at the level of the bosses and owners. Within this supposed “unity,” the notion of community provides a site for consolidation which can only be antagonistic to the larger organizer. Through their own critical faculties and agency, people are able to see beyond narrow notions imposed by socialization into existing understandings of the world and how it should be (Gramsci’s (1991) notions of hegemony and the organic intellectual’s disruptive capacity provide a comprehensive

analysis of this phenomenon). They can dream and the dreams provide the possibility for on-going action.

Before all seems too cohesive, let's return to the community under attack or to one which has experienced disruption. In the present world, indigenous people are still feeling the effects of the historical assaults on their traditional cultures; they are still experiencing ignorance and outright hostility to their existence, especially their claims to territories and rights as the original people who "owned," i.e., had a relationship with, the land. To find a unified community composed of members who are committed to working to a common goal is often unachievable. And yet to defer the work until such time as there is solid community support may be just the hiatus needed by government or logging company to lay claim and continue the assault on traditional lands. To defer the work may be just the time it takes for one more elder to pass on and one more knowledge keeper to find no one to take up the knowledge and put it to good use.

Throughout the world, there are indigenous people who have recognized the need for immediate action to protect knowledge and land. On an increasing basis, such committed people are finding ways to come together, to share the lonely work to which Kaaren refers and to continue to do the work of protecting and enhancing indigenous land, language and knowledge. In these gatherings, there is a community. It is not a replacement or even a substitute for the land-based communities from which each person comes. But it co-exists with these developing and growing communities and provides is a source of solace and inspiration to return to the work of building community at home. As Laenui (2000) has warned, the immediate needs will never substitute for the methodical and time-consuming work of decolonization. As I wrote years ago in a course I took with Paulo Freire (c1984): in the meantime we must wait, acting.

#### HARLEM [2]

*What happens to a dream deferred?*

*Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore –  
and then run?*

*Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over –  
like a syrupy sweet?*

*Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load?  
Or does it explode?*

L.H.



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