

A QUIET THEFT

AN INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE OF ELITE BELONGING

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Indigenous relational frameworks, once the living foundation of land, learning, and belonging, were not merely appropriated but strategically stolen and repurposed within settler institutions such as elite summer camps, scouting movements, and outdoor leadership programs. Guided by Indigenous scholarship and Elder Dr. Duke Redbird's teachings, and grounded in historical and archival research, the study traces a dual trajectory: while Indigenous children were violently removed from their families and punished for practicing their own traditions, settler children were being nurtured within systems that extracted these same frameworks to cultivate belonging and privilege. What emerges is structural theft, the deliberate displacement of Indigenous relational knowledge into settler networks of power. Through narrative inquiry and critical reflection, this work reframes education as a site of relational extraction and argues that reconciliation demands return: of land, of learning, and of the rights of Indigenous Nations to self-determination.

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Introduction

In the quiet edges of lakes and the thick arms of northern forests, elite residential summer camps were founded, slowly and assuredly, upon the outright theft of Indigenous relational frameworks, knowledge systems so powerful they had upheld entire nations for millennia. Canoes gliding through misted waters, councils gathered in the fire's glow, and ceremonial songs echoing at dusk are not neutral traditions of "wilderness education." They are fragments of much older systems, taken from Indigenous nations whose children, at the very same time, were being forced away from their families, their languages, and their lands. What was romanticized as character-building traditions for settler youth was criminalized when practiced by the people whose life ways, spiritual practices, and survival depended on them.

This thesis explores a dual track of education: one that denied Indigenous children the right to their own ancestral knowledge, and another that quietly repurposed those same knowledges to fortify settler identity within elite society. At its core, this work asks: How did settler institutions—particularly ranger programs, scouting movements, and elite summer camps in Upper Canada and the northeastern United States—appropriate Indigenous practices, cultural traditions, and relational frameworks to construct networks of belonging, leadership, and privilege for settler youth, while those same frameworks were being dismantled and criminalized within Indigenous communities?

To support this inquiry, the study asks:

In what ways did Indigenous relational practices: land-based learning, ceremony, oral teaching, and kinship, become embedded in settler education and youth programs?

How did colonial policies such as residential schooling and the Indian Act deliberately suppress these same frameworks within Indigenous communities?

What are the lasting consequences of this dual system, one of relational theft and one of relational gain, for Indigenous and settler children today?

How might education move forward to the past, toward right relation and Indigenous self-determination in learning, land, law, and cultural life?

The study begins with an exploration of Indigenous relationality and the ways in which children and societies were cultivated and nurtured prior to contact. It then examines the impact of colonization and the paternalistic mechanisms of control that forced Indigenous children into violent systems of education designed to assimilate them into the worldviews of those who sought to conquer their nations. Finally, it follows how these systems evolved, how the frameworks taken from Indigenous teachings were institutionalized within settler education, and how this divergence produced two profoundly different outcomes for children on either side of that divide.

The entire paper threads in and out of teachings offered by my mentor and teacher, Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, from whom I have had the great privilege of learning for more than twenty years. Through this work, I hope to honour his wisdom and tell a painful truth about the history of education in this country that has, and continues to, marginalize, objectify, and diminish Indigenous children. I also seek to highlight the brilliance and gentle leadership that Indigenous nations have so graciously shared. Even today, their approach to truth-telling and reconciliation embodies the Seven Grandfather Teachings of wisdom, courage, respect, honesty, truth, humility, and love. It is our duty as settlers to tell the truth so that real reconciliation can happen, and it is my hope that this work contributes to that truth-telling.

This research also seeks to make visible how these historical processes continue to shape the present. The repurposing of Indigenous knowledge into settler structures is not only a story of the past but an ongoing reality. Indigenous ways of knowing hold entire worlds of relationship, language, and memory, worlds that settlers have drawn from without fully understanding or

honouring their origins and depth. Recognizing this dynamic is essential to understanding how colonial systems continue to reproduce themselves through borrowed and stolen forms.

From the mid-1800s to the late 1900s, Indigenous children were subjected to forced assimilation, isolation, and abuse in residential schools designed to erase their worldviews and sever their connections to land, community, language, and spirit. During this same period, settler institutions were quietly transforming those very teachings into structured systems of moral and character education, embedding them within schools, scouting programs, and eventually elite summer camps.

Elite summer camps emerged in the early 1900s, but their roots reach much further back—to the 1760s, when Robert Rogers first began extracting Indigenous land-based knowledge and military techniques, presenting them as his own to his Rangers (Rogers, 1757). These methods evolved into wilderness excursions and eventually into the scouting movement, which later shaped the culture of elite camps. Each stage was made possible, and successful, through a deliberate romanticization of “the Indian.” Within these environments, Indigenous relational teachings were transformed into the foundation of settler leadership culture, the architecture through which privilege and belonging were imagined, institutionalized, and reproduced

From the late eighteenth century onward, colonial policies in what is now Canada transformed the relationship between Indigenous and settler nations from alliance between self-governing nations negotiating treaty relations to a relationship defined by domination, ignoring the intergenerational web of relations that had sustained Indigenous life since time immemorial. (Miller, 2009; Milloy, 1999; Leslie, 2002; TRC, 2015). From this foundation, the research turns to history, drawing on archival sources, legislation, and Indigenous scholarship to trace how Indigenous relational systems were appropriated, repackaged, and celebrated within settler education, even as they were criminalized for Indigenous peoples. It situates this history within

broader colonial strategies of land dispossession and cultural theft, suggesting that colonization was not only about taking land, but about disrupting Indigenous relationality.

Tracing this intertwined history reveals how networks of power in Canada were quietly built on stolen Indigenous relational systems, and how the legacy of those appropriations still shapes education today. Just as importantly, this work seeks to recognize the depth, brilliance, and resilience of the knowledges from which these structures were taken. It acknowledges the extraordinary persistence of Indigenous wisdom, carried forward through centuries of attempted erasure by the fluidity and creativity of Indigenous peoples themselves.

The camps at the centre of this research are rooted in a specific geography: lands formerly known as Upper Canada (today, primarily southern Ontario) and a wider northeastern U.S. corridor where kindred camps emerged. I live and work on the lands now known as Ontario, one of the regions where these camps were born and continue to thrive. This region is not home to ordinary camps, it is home to some of the oldest and most prestigious summer camps in North America, where families of privilege from across Canada, the United States, and increasingly from international communities such as China send their children. Today, fees at elite Ontario camps are about CAD \$14,000 for a seven-week program (Camp New Moon, n.d.; Camp Tamakwa, n.d.; Taylor Statten Camps, n.d.). While there are summer camps across the country serving a range of communities, this has long been a destination for the elite. Its influence extends beyond provincial borders across a wider northeastern landscape that includes what is now Vermont, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New Hampshire (Brant Lake Camp, n.d.; Brown Ledge Camp, n.d.; Camp Vega, n.d.). This is the heartland of the early prestigious summer camp movement. These territories are connected by rivers, lakes, and forests that have long sustained Indigenous nations and relational frameworks. It was on this land that settlers romanticized,

uprooted, and refashioned Indigenous ways of being into a settler educational tradition that has shaped generations of privileged youth.

My hope, in telling this story, is that it carries us beyond the acknowledgment of harm. It is to name what has always been true but has rarely been spoken in settler institutions: what was taken was not merely land or knowledge, but entire ways of understanding reality. It is not our role to define, interpret, or contain these ways of knowing, but to return space, self-governance, and power to those to whom they belong. If Indigenous nations are fully supported in reclaiming their languages, lands, and relational teachings, the world that emerges will be larger than what we can presently imagine. It will be a future shaped by dimensions of understanding that have been here all along, waiting for us to assume our role as learners rather than masters, to recognize that what has sustained Indigenous societies since time immemorial exists beyond the limits of our current frameworks of knowing.

Chapter 1: Positionality: Attending To What Brings Me To This Work

When I reflect on myself as a learner, five themes consistently emerge as the foundation of my journey: relationships, nature, spirituality, mentorship, and formal education. If visualized as a Venn diagram, they might appear as equal circles with overlapping centers, but to me, the shape has always felt more like a daisy. At the center sits relationship, the source from which all else extends. Every other element, nature, spirituality, mentorship, and education, unfolds from that center like petals, distinct yet rooted in the relational.

I was born and raised in Ontario on Treaty 13 territory. My family's presence on these lands spans generations, with roots on both of my grandmothers' sides reaching back to the 1850s, and likely earlier. Since their arrival, my family has lived on Treaty 13, 14, 29, and 45 territories. At eighteen, I gave birth to my daughter and raised her as a single, sole-support parent. We have

remained on Treaty 13 for the past thirty-one years, growing with the land and changing alongside its shifting landscapes. I cannot separate myself from this place, nor from the complex legacy I carry as a settler. My lineage is interwoven with the very systems that have both benefited from, and contributed to, the displacement and erasure of Indigenous lives, languages, and ways of knowing. Naming this truth is part of my accountability.

What follows is not an explanation but an orientation. I offer it to situate myself in this work, not to center my experience, but to clarify the path that led me here. I did not come to this work through theory. I came to it through longing.

As a little girl growing up in a white, patriarchal home, I was hungry for softness, for safety, for connection. My house was unpredictable, sometimes cold, sometimes loud, often lonely. The first place I felt held outside my mother's arms was beneath a willow tree at the end of our street. Its branches bent toward the earth like arms reaching for me, and there, in the quiet cradle of that tree, I first felt what it meant to be in relation with the land. I share this memory because it was my first lived experience of relational learning, the very framework this thesis explores through historical and educational analysis.

As a teenager, that hunger for belonging took on new form. I attended a public high school in a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood, where many of my classmates had grown up attending summer camps that felt like extensions of family, places they returned to year after year, where friendship and tradition intertwined. Though those camps were largely, though not exclusively, Jewish, what stood out to me was not religion but relationship, the way they spoke about belonging, ritual, and continuity. I had never been to camp, but the way they described it filled me with a longing I could feel in my bones.

I began to pay attention. I studied the camp system, its history, its networks, its quiet exclusivity. I noticed how many of the camps I admired were tied to elite schools and long-established families.

And I noticed something else: while these spaces were filled with references to Indigenous cultures, names, symbols, and ceremonies, there were no Indigenous children there. The deeper I looked, the more visible that contradiction became.

Around the same time, I learned something about my maternal grandmother: she had been a foster parent. At first, I admired her for it. I saw fostering as an act of care, something noble, something to be proud of. I even imagined I might follow in her footsteps. That admiration led me to learn more. As I began to study the foster system, the history of the Sixties Scoop and residential schools started to unravel before me. Until that moment, I had no idea. I had grown up in Canada without any real understanding of what had happened to Indigenous children in this country, how they were taken, how they were treated, and the horrors they endured. My mother told me that no Indigenous children had ever lived in my grandmother's home, but still, the fact that she had participated in that system at all, that she was part of a machinery built on removal and rupture, forced me to confront the stories I had inherited about care, family, and who we were.

These two realizations, one about summer camps, the other about Indigenous child welfare, did not arrive in a single, blinding moment. They came slowly, side by side, like puzzle pieces whose edges I could feel but not yet fit together.

By my early twenties, after a few years of travelling abroad with my daughter, those pieces began to fall into place. I wanted to build a camp that could offer Indigenous children in the welfare system the same sense of belonging, return, and ritual that many long-established summer camps had offered their participants for generations. I imagined children returning to a place that knew them, a place rooted in land, guided by Elders, and fully supported by the people as an act of reparation. I believed such a space could help restore what had been taken.

Having left high school early, I began college in woodworking, thinking a camp director should know how to build cabins and understand "woodcraft," a word I then linked with land and skill but

would later recognize as a tool of appropriation. From there, I moved on to university, studying kinesiology and philosophy to understand both body and mind.

My dreams were tender and full of hope. I spoke often of my dream, though few understood why it needed to belong to Indigenous children alone. Many suggested I open it “for everyone,” unable to see what had been taken or what true reparation required. Still, the dream kept expanding, maybe it needed to be more than a camp, maybe a school, a year-round community of return.

But the more I learned, the clearer it became that the vision was far bigger than me. After years of study and countless attempts to bring it to life, I finally accepted that this dream was not mine to build. It was too far upstream. And so, with a quiet ache, I let it go.

It was shortly after letting go of that dream that I met Elder Dr. Duke Redbird. We first connected in 2002, drawn together by shared interests and a sense of kindred spirit. Before long, I was working alongside him, supporting his creative and professional projects. Years later, while compiling his sixty-year archive as a gift for his eightieth birthday, I discovered something that stopped me in my tracks.

In the 1960s, while involved with the Company of Young Canadians, Elder Redbird had helped propose a “school on wheels,” a mobile model designed to bring education to Indigenous communities rather than taking children away. In 1971, he and Tom Pelletier carried that vision forward through a summer camp program for Indigenous children called The Schreiber Island Project (Gerstein, Niemann, Redbird, & Sime, 1971).

For six weeks on the shores of Manitoulin Island, Elder Redbird and other Indigenous artists and leaders, including Norval Morrisseau and Daphne Odjig, created a space of art, story, and land-based learning. It was a place of creation, connection, and cultural strength. In learning about it, I recognized something deeply familiar. Elder Redbird and I had shared the same vision all along.

That recognition continues to ground and guide our work together, a steady bass note carrying the rhythm of shared purpose.

Through the incredible gift of my relationship with Elder Redbird, I have had the privilege of being invited into an Indigenous reality and shown a worldview, a way of seeing and being grounded not in extraction or control, but in reciprocity, humility, and care.

Although I had long left my own dreams behind, those early visions resurfaced when I entered a master's program in Indigenous Education. All the pieces I had once struggled to join came into sharp relief. As I studied the history of residential schools, child apprehension, and cultural suppression, a parallel story emerged, one I had been circling for decades without fully seeing. While Indigenous children were being torn from their families, punished for speaking their languages, and severed from their sense of self, settler children were being carefully nurtured in places designed to do the opposite. They were learning to light fires, sing songs, build networks, and lead, often through practices that had been criminalized when held in Indigenous hands.

And suddenly, I could no longer deny what it was: theft. What had once felt like coincidence, my fascination with camp, my family's connection to foster care, revealed itself as part of a larger colonial structure. These were not simply contrasting histories. They were simultaneous realities: one system rupturing relationship, the other quietly absorbing its shape to reproduce advantage.

After so many years of giving up on my vision, it was through the guidance of my professor and supervisor, Kiera Brant-Birioukov, that I came to understand my role differently. Perhaps my work was never to build the camp, but to name and expose this history, to make space for truths long ignored, and to honour the people and teachings from which so much has been taken.

Today, I offer this thesis as a small but deliberate contribution to the growing body of work that supports the resurgence, self-determination, and self-governance of Indigenous Peoples in

Canada. It is my way of standing alongside, not in front of, these movements, of acknowledging the harm and committing to a different kind of relationship.

Much of what I share in the following pages I have learned directly from Elder Redbird. As a settler without lived Indigenous experience, I recognize both the limits of my perspective and the responsibility that comes with writing about these histories. His teachings have shaped the foundation of this work, intellectually and relationally, and it is through his guidance that I have approached these stories with greater care and respect. In recognition of his contributions, and in keeping with the responsibilities of ethical citation and reciprocity, Elder Redbird will be noted as co-author when this thesis is published.

This thesis is not written as a critique from the outside, but as a settler's effort to take responsibility for the ways we, as a collective, have absorbed and benefited from Indigenous knowledge. This includes its influence on the design of elite summer camps, leadership programs, and outdoor education, along with the relational models they draw upon. I would go further to say that many of the values now celebrated in Canadian society, collaboration, inclusion, consensus, and the desire to live in good relation, are not European in origin. They are reflections of Indigenous relational principles filtered through settler systems that have historically refused to acknowledge their source.

The dissonance is difficult to ignore. Knowledge systems that were once criminalized within Indigenous communities by the Department of Indian Affairs and the government are now celebrated in settler contexts, often without recognition. Storytelling, once a sacred oral tradition carrying law, history, and teachings across generations, becomes campfire tales. Talking circles become "sharing circles." Ceremony is absorbed into wellness culture and weekend retreats, stripped of protocol but rich in profit. Communal parenting becomes "intentional child-rearing." The spirit is borrowed, but the roots are denied.

The hardest part of this research was narrowing it down. Every path I followed opened a dozen more. Every truth I encountered, about land, about children, about the institutional theft of relationship, carried emotional weight. I wept while writing. I wrestled with structure. And I stayed up at night wondering how to do this work without speaking over or for Indigenous people. In the end, what anchored me was relationship: to the land, to those who trusted me with their teachings, and to the sense of responsibility I carry as a descendant of a settler-colonial system that forced me to walk through a world built on appropriation and erasure, a world I can no longer tolerate.

I do not write this work in guilt. I write it with clarity, with grief, and with the belief that settlers have a duty not to interpret or imitate Indigenous knowledge, but to approach it as learners, with humility and respect. To stop pretending that what has been taken from Indigenous communities was ever taken with honour or gratitude. To face the truth that while Indigenous peoples have given so much to the cultural and spiritual fabric of this nation, they have been systematically lied to, dispossessed, and deprived of access to their own lands and territories, generation after generation. And rather than offering thanks, settlers have too often returned these gifts with pain, silence, and the violence of residential schools and child apprehension.

My deepest hope is that this work contributes to the growing call for Indigenous self-determination, not just in words, but in land, law, education, and everyday life. Because what I have come to understand is this: everything we currently know about community, about relationality, about how to belong to one another, we learned from Indigenous peoples. These are not understandings rooted in European frameworks. This journey from longing to understanding, from imagining to witnessing, forms the ground upon which this thesis stands.

It is this way of being that we, as a nation and as communities across Canada in 2025, are struggling to return to and yearning to embody. The time has come to honour where these knowledges and ways of being come from, not through performance, but through return. I write this

as a history, a record of what my people have done to yours, of what has been taken, distorted, and claimed as our own. And while this may read as another acknowledgment of harm, I hope this paper makes clear that these violences are not only in the past but embedded in the systems that persist today.

This writing is offered as a gesture of respect and responsibility. I lay it down in honour of your ancestors, and I invite you to engage, read, and respond, not because I am entitled to a reply, but because I believe reconciliation can only happen in relationship.

Chapter 2: Indigenous Relationality

In my years of learning from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, I've come to understand that what Western education often calls environmental stewardship or land connection is, in Indigenous worldviews, part of a much deeper, ancestral relationship. Elder Redbird teaches that the Earth is not simply where we live, but who we are, the original architect of our bodies, relationships, and humanity.

Our ancestors lived in a world that was a family of living creatures including humans who managed for the most part to live without greed or hunger. There was an intuitive interdependency upon the energy of intelligence and spirit... We knew that we are human beings living in one biosphere with all other living creatures. We had been living in a miracle of creation, in a symbiotic relationship with nature from the beginning of time. In other words, a symbiotic relationship with ourselves. (Redbird, 2021)

What Elder Redbird describes is a worldview built on interdependence rather than dominance, a way of knowing in which life is not a competition over resources, but a reciprocal agreement among all beings. His words dismantle the notion that humanity stands apart from the natural world. Instead, they remind us that our very being is shaped by the Earth, physically sustained and spiritually animated by her patterns and rhythms.

This understanding is foundational to Indigenous epistemologies: to be human is to be in relationship, with land, with spirit, and with all our relations. When we lose sight of this, we lose

connection not only to place, but to ourselves. This has profound implications for education, governance, and healing, inviting all who live on Turtle Island to reimagine ethical futures grounded in reciprocity and respect.

Leanne Simpson describes land not as territory, but as pedagogy, a knower in her own right. “Land is both context and process: it is both the seat of Nishnaabeg intelligence and a practical application of that intelligence” (Simpson, 2011, p. 13). From this perspective, the land is not a backdrop to human life; she is the life. She teaches. She governs. She anchors memory and spirit, providing the framework for relationships among all beings. Kahente Horn-Miller echoes this truth: “The strength of our culture lies in our continued focus on land and community” (Horn-Miller, 2023, p. 3).

Within this understanding of land as the first mother comes the teaching of All Our Relations, which affirms the interconnectedness of all beings, seen and unseen. It reminds us that humanity is only one small part of a vast circle of life, where respect, reciprocity, and responsibility flow through every relationship (Talaga, 2018).

2.1 My Lodge¹

Within this concept of relationality, Indigenous education prior to contact was inseparable from life itself. Learning was not confined to institutions or stages of life; it was woven into daily practices of being in right relation with the land, with one another, and with spirit.

As Leroy Little Bear explains, “In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy. All things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion. If everything has spirit and knowledge,

¹ Title drawn from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird’s poem My Lodge (1985). Used with gratitude and respect for his teachings and lifelong guidance. Lines such as “*Simple was my lodge of birch, / Sweet was the sugar maple, / Strong were the herbs that sustained me, / Great was my mother, the Earth*” came to mind as I wrote of land

as mother and teacher.

then everything is animate, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations” (2000, pp. 77–78). From this understanding, that wellbeing arises from living within “all my relations”, came the foundation of traditional Indigenous education.

In *Fantastic Fungi*, Paul Stamets (2019) observes that in the forest, survival is not governed by competition but by community; trees and fungi thrive because they cooperate, adapt, and respond together (pp. 39–43). This resonates deeply with Elder Duke Redbird’s teaching that trees are not commodities, but “members of a community called a forest,” and that “the relationship we have with the environment is as important as the environment itself” (Redbird, 2025). His words remind us that land is not a passive resource to be extracted from, but a living relation who feeds, teaches, and responds. This is not figurative language. In Indigenous worldviews, these are literal principles that define how knowledge is formed and shared. Where European thought isolates and categorizes, Indigenous worldviews understand that relationship itself is the teacher.

Indigenous societies have long held deliberate and sophisticated approaches to child and youth development, rooted in intergenerational knowledge transfer and communal learning (Battiste, 2002). Children were raised by family, kin, and community in ways that blurred the boundaries between learning, play, and ceremony. As J. R. Miller explains, “it made as little sense for a Native child to distinguish between play and education as it did for him or her to discriminate between humans and other beings, or between this plane and the world of the spirits” (1997, p. 38).

Knowledge was never separate from the lived relationships that sustain life. Tanya Talaga (2018) reminds us that learning was always rooted in kinship, reciprocity, and accountability to land and community, not as abstract values but as the conditions of survival and joy. Similarly, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) describes Nishnaabewin as a living intellectual tradition, a system of governance, education, and collective well-being, “designed to create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, interdependent, brilliant, loving citizens” (pp. 153–154). For

Indigenous nations, education was never preparation for economic productivity; it was preparation for a life lived in deep relation with all our relations.

At the heart of this education is the land itself, not a backdrop for learning, but the first and most enduring teacher. Brant-Birioukov, Pind, Karn, and McGregor (2023) describe this beautifully: “The soil is the organic matter of all living beings that came before... it has a spirit. It is our life-giving force, and it is where we shall return when our physical journey on earth is complete” (p. 265). Within this understanding, the cycles of life, death, and renewal are braided into every lesson.

This is, and remains, an education of belonging. Mi’kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) explains that when one is connected to community and place, “the relational aspects of communities, people, families, and their context become the important elements of how to proceed with knowledge search and production” (p. 74). Knowledge, then, is not extracted from the world; it grows in relationship with it.

This same understanding of All Our Relations shaped how Indigenous nations welcomed newcomers to their territories, extending the same respect, generosity, and kinship that had long governed their relationships with the land and all living beings. This ethic of generosity found its most visible expression on the West Coast through the potlatch, a ceremonial gathering where families and nations gave away wealth to honour births, marriages, and deaths, to reaffirm kinship, and to restore balance. Wealth was measured not by what one could keep, but by what one could give. Though the term potlatch comes from Chinook Jargon, the principle it embodies was shared by nations across Turtle Island. Among the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Cree, similar feasting and redistribution practices shaped governance and social life. Leaders were recognized by their ability to provide for others, and generosity itself was law (Davidson & Davidson, 2018).

These gatherings were not charity; they were ceremony, pedagogy, and diplomacy. Through them, communities renewed their bonds with one another and with the spirit of the land. When the

British and later Canadian governments arrived bearing “presents” and “annuities,” Indigenous nations understood these offerings through that same relational lens: as expressions of kinship and mutual responsibility (D. Redbird, personal communication, 2017). Colonial authorities, however, saw something different. What was meant as reciprocity was recast as dependency.

Chapter 3: The Conquest of Relationship

Since settlers first arrived on the shores of what is now known as Canada, it is well documented that Indigenous Peoples shared their land, knowledge, resources, and ways of surviving the harsh climates with the newcomers. This spirit of generosity is reflected in the first treaty made on these lands, between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in 1613. Known as the Two Row Wampum, this agreement was not a transaction but a relationship: a commitment between independent nations to travel side by side on the river of life, each steering its own vessel, each respecting the ways of the other.

The wampum belt that records this treaty is made of white and purple shell beads, with two parallel purple rows running its length. These rows represent two vessels, a European ship and a Haudenosaunee canoe. The white rows between and around them represent peace, friendship, and respect, the open waters on which each would travel freely. Each nation agreed to steer its own vessel, to follow its own laws, customs, and way of life without interfering with the other (Onondaga Nation, n.d.).

A century later, the British entered a Peace and Friendship Treaty with the Five Nations in 1725, centred on peace, trade, and alliance (Treaty of 1725, 1725/1726). In these early years of contact, there appeared to be a shared future, one in which Indigenous self-determination and ways of being and knowing were, at least briefly, acknowledged. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, issued by King

George III at the end of the Seven Years' War, further reinforced this illusion. It declared that all lands later known as Ontario, the Prairie provinces, and the interior stretching to the Pacific and Arctic coasts would be reserved for Indigenous nations, recognizing them as distinct, self-governing peoples. It stated that Indigenous nations were not to be "molested or disturbed" in their territories and that any future land agreements would require their consent through formal treaties with the Crown (King George III, 1763/1985).

Yet as Elder Duke Redbird (2017) reminds us, this appearance of mutual respect was steeped in deception. In his talk *Indigenous Voices in the Classroom*, he explains that early relations were grounded in Indigenous traditions of generosity and shared abundance, a worldview in which the land and its gifts were understood as communal. When the Crown introduced money and property as the basis of engagement, generosity was not simply dismissed; it was strategically crushed. Colonial officials "pretended to believe in the Indigenous way in order to get First Nation leaders to sign," all while imposing a foreign logic of ownership and extraction.

This early coexistence was not yet marked by forced assimilation or control. But over time, the canoe and the ship that once travelled side by side began to move apart. One ship became many. Shared land was renamed property, mapped, and divided. What began in relationship slowly shifted toward ownership and exclusion.

Even then, Indigenous nations continued to stand beside their new neighbours. As Leslie (1985) notes, their expertise in forest warfare made them indispensable allies in the colonial conflicts that followed. They defended not only their own territories but also the lives and lands of those they once welcomed.

Elder Duke Redbird observes that this alliance came at a deep cost. In his talk "A Dish with One Spoon" (Nov. 2020), he explains that when colonizers arrived with horses and weapons of aggression, Indigenous peoples were forced to abandon their traditions of "tend-and-mend" and

instead adopt the fight-or-flight tactics of their oppressors. Warrior societies emerged not by choice but out of necessity, to defend the land and liberties being stripped away through treaties and legislation. The emotional and cultural upheaval of this shift, Redbird (2020) reminds us, continues to reverberate across generations.

Throughout this period, Indigenous nations were still engaged by colonial authorities, though increasingly through strategic rather than respectful diplomacy. Early treaties invoked self-governance, brotherhood, and friendship, accompanied by promises of land rights, annual presents, and protection. But after the French and Indian War ended in 1763, the same year as the Royal Proclamation, the need for Indigenous military support diminished (Leslie, 1985). With it faded the Crown's commitment to uphold nation-to-nation relations in good faith. Reciprocity gave way to control, and what began in open declaration descended into policy, paperwork, and containment.

When John Graves Simcoe became Canada's first Lieutenant Governor in 1791, the diplomatic framework established by the Royal Proclamation was being quietly rewritten. Simcoe urged that the Indian Department be transferred from military to civil control, signaling a decisive shift from partnership to paternalism. The military had once dealt with Indigenous nations as allies and diplomats; civil authorities, by contrast, treated them as subjects to be managed. Simcoe stood at a crucial junction in history, among the first civil authorities to govern Indigenous nations not as allies but as a danger to be contained (Mealing, 1958).

He lobbied successfully for this transfer in the early 1790s so that he could "control the direction of the department's activities and, of course, the disbursement of its patronage" (Leslie, 1985, p. 7). This was not mere administrative restructuring; it was an attempt to reorder the land and its peoples according to a European imagination of hierarchy and control. What he proposed for Upper Canada was "meticulous, instantaneous and uncompromising assimilation to British

models” (Leslie, 1985, p. 75), an imposition that redefined Indigenous nations not as allies but as subjects under Crown authority.

Given the timeframe of his governance, it can be argued that Simcoe was a key figure in reinterpreting the word treaty, participating enthusiastically in efforts to impose British law and property regimes over Indigenous governance and kinship systems (Mealing, 1958). In this bureaucratic reclassification, the very meaning of treaty changed, a shift Elder Duke Redbird later described as deliberate subterfuge, where the original spirit of nation-to-nation relationship and mutual self-determination was replaced with the language of property and purchase.

3.1 Deliberate Subterfuge: The Stroke of a Pen²

As Elder Redbird explains, this shift, from a nation-to-nation relationship grounded in mutual recognition to a colonial framework rooted in ownership, was made possible through linguistic deception. In his 2022 Biidaaban Series talk, he points out that the English word treaty held two opposing meanings: one as a “formal agreement between self-governing nations,” and another as a transaction “for the purchase of property at a price agreed upon.” Military officials, who negotiated the early treaties up until 1791, used the first definition, the same one understood by Indigenous nations. But when civil authorities took over, they strategically leaned on the second definition, without ever informing their military counterparts or their Indigenous treaty partners. A relational agreement was quietly reclassified as a property exchange.

For Redbird, this was not confusion or mistranslation; it was “deliberate subterfuge,” used to nullify the 1763 Proclamation’s protections and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their territories

² The subtitle “Deliberate Subterfuge: The Stroke of a Pen” refers to the intentional use of written laws, treaties, and colonial documentation to dispossess Indigenous nations of their lands and rewrite their histories. Through the simple act of signing or drafting documents, “the stroke of a pen”, colonial powers legitimized conquest, erased Indigenous self-determination, and imposed distorted narratives that framed

Indigenous Peoples as primitive or absent from their own territories.

(Redbird, 2022). This marked a shift from treaty-based diplomacy between nations to a colonial legal framework designed for acquisition and control. The transition from military diplomacy to civil administration marked a turning point in how the Crown related to Indigenous nations. As Elder Redbird powerfully teaches, the mistranslation and reframing of the word treaty enabled the Canadian government to evade its own legal obligations under the Proclamation of 1763. This was an intentional legal strategy. But the betrayal did not end there.

3.2 Colony Felony³

Under John Graves Simcoe's administration, a new legal framework was imposed: English common law freehold tenure. This shift disrupted the longstanding Indigenous systems of landholding rooted in kinship, reciprocity, and collective responsibility. As historian John Leslie (1985) explains, it replaced communal land tenure with "fee-simple ownership of individual lots," a model that required land to be held in fixed individual title to be recognized as legitimate (pp. 92–93). This change laid the groundwork for future colonial governance, making possible the dispossession and partition of Indigenous lands under the guise of "civilization" and "industry."

Elder Duke Redbird reminds us of what was truly lost in this shift: the understanding of land as a living relative, as the first mother and teacher. When land becomes property, the sacred relationship between people and place is fractured. And when that first relationship is broken, all others, to community, to spirit, to future generations, are threatened.

Although the Royal Proclamation of 1763 had positioned the Crown as the "protector" of Indigenous nations and their lands, this protection implied guardianship. From my understanding

³ Title drawn from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird's poem "Colony Felony," written in 2022. Used with gratitude and respect for his teachings and continued guidance in truth-telling and reconciliation. His words, "*It was the outright theft of an entire continent,*" and, "*We have to distinguish fiction from fact / and ask King Charles III for*

a new compact,” capture the central truth explored in this section.

of Elder Redbird's teachings, Indigenous nations initially interpreted the annual giving of presents and annuities through a familiar relational framework. As he explains, "Indigenous leadership was measured not by accumulation but by generosity" (Redbird, 2018). Chiefs and leaders would acquire wealth only to redistribute it, often once or twice a year, as a demonstration of care and responsibility to the community. These Crown gifts were understood through that same lens of reciprocity, echoing potlatch and gift-giving ceremonies in which generosity was an expression of trust and relationship. As Elder Redbird has said, "whereas Indigenous communities had always had Mother Earth to provide for all their needs, now the Great Queen Victoria was promising to substitute for Mother Earth" (Redbird, 2018).

But this trust was betrayed. The Crown no longer approached these exchanges as relationships between nations, but as mechanisms of control. Indigenous peoples came to be regarded not as treaty partners but as dependents, childlike wards in need of supervision, a perception formalized in the Bagot Report of 1844, which described Indigenous communities as incapable of self-governance and in need of government control (Bagot, 1844, Section I).

From Simcoe's quiet policy shifts in the 1790s emerged a century-long legislative machinery built on the language of "protection." Between 1828 and 1858, a series of investigations, including the 1828 Commission on Indian Affairs, the 1839 Report on the Indian Department, and the 1844 Bagot Commission, laid the foundations for Canada's Indian policy. These inquiries cloaked colonial control in benevolent terms. As Leslie (1985) writes, "each report affirmed a basic principle: that the Crown had a continuing responsibility to protect the rights and interests of Native peoples, as well as a duty to foster their social well-being and economic advancement" (p. 185). What sounded like protection was, in truth, a structure of control that positioned Indigenous peoples as "inferior to Europeans," though "capable of social advancement under the 'friendly care and directing hand of the government'" (p. 186).

That “advancement” meant being “made over in the image of the white man, converted to Christianity, dressed in European clothes, and turned into settled agriculturalists” (p. 186). The 1844 Bagot Report proposed federally run residential schools; the 1850 Indian Protection Act and 1857 Gradual Civilization Act carried these ideas into law; and the 1869 Gradual Enfranchisement Act deepened Crown control through patriarchal governance and private property regimes. These were followed by the 1876 Indian Act, which consolidated these powers, and the 1879 Davin Report, which formalized the residential school system on a national scale. As Leslie observes, these measures “unwittingly perpetuated a basic paradox in Canadian Indian policy” (p. 187): separation disguised as care.

Indigenous nations were governed through containment rather than relationship. European education advanced as a deliberate tool of “improvement” and social control, designed to overwrite Indigenous systems of teaching and learning. Early missionary schooling became one of the first instruments of this intellectual and spiritual takeover. As Graymont (1972) notes, Mohawk communities at Grand River collaborated with Anglican missionaries to establish a church and school in the late eighteenth century, embedding Christian education within their community structure (p. 28). This collaboration would later be used by the Crown as evidence that “civilizing” programs could succeed under government direction.

3.3 The Right to Remain Human⁴

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, two opposing ways of thinking collided, not in balance, but in conquest. The relational, land-based intelligence that had sustained Indigenous nations for

⁴ This title draws from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird’s 2020 MIT A Dish With One Spoon speech, in which he contrasted the settler mindset described by Joseph Henrich’s “WEIRD” acronym: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, with an Indigenous framework he named “HUMAN”: Humble, Useful, Magnanimous, Abundant, and Natural. In this teaching, Elder Redbird reminds us that Indigenous peoples

have always embodied what it means to be fully human, in right relationship with all of life.

millennia was overtaken by a profit- and control-driven logic: structured, hierarchical, and extractive. In his keynote Red, Right and True, Elder Duke Redbird offers a powerful metaphor for understanding this distinction: the two hemispheres of the human brain (Redbird, 2020).

Drawing on Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary* (2009), Redbird explains that the left hemisphere tends toward logic, categorization, and detail, while the right hemisphere embodies intuition, emotion, and relational awareness. Ideally, they work together in balance. Yet, he argues, European societies became dominated by the left hemisphere's linear, analytical worldview, severed from the right hemisphere's capacity for fluidity, creativity, and connection. What occurred in the brain, he suggests, also occurred in history. When Europeans colonized Turtle Island, it was as if the left hemisphere colonized the right.⁵ What was taken extended far beyond land: it was a worldview, an embodied, intergenerational intelligence rooted in reciprocity, responsibility, and reverence.

Redbird contrasts these worldviews with striking clarity. For Indigenous Peoples, the motivation to rise each day was rooted in "self-preservation and romance, which includes family and the arts," always guided by a present-centered understanding of time as a living continuum. Indigenous nations "engaged Mother Earth as an information platform," receiving teachings for community sustenance without the need for institutions of power, currency, or domination. By contrast, European settlers brought a left-hemisphere ethos, profit over people, structure over spirit, possession over participation. They built societies around money, systems, and ownership, and in doing so, severed the relational fabric of existence.

The result, as Redbird describes, was a world where extraction replaced reciprocity and conquest replaced care. What was lost was not only territory, but the sacred bond between people

⁵ This analogy helps illustrate how relational intelligence, intuitive, emotional, and land-based, was suppressed by a colonial system privileging control, order, and categorization.

and the land that held them, a bond that, in the right-hemisphere worldview, ensured continuity for generations to come (Redbird, 2020).

Indigenous ways of knowing and being were never defined by a hunger for domination. They were grounded in relationship, sufficiency, and reverence. As Redbird taught in 2017, when a relational worldview is replaced with one of control, what is stolen is far deeper than land, it is the breaking of the symbiotic relationship Indigenous peoples have held with Mother Earth since time immemorial, the very bond that ensured their progeny's survival into eternity (D. Redbird, personal communication, 2017).

Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), writing in the early twentieth century, expressed this truth with great insight. Reflecting on the inner assurance of Indigenous life, he observed that "so long as his native philosophy held sway over his mind," the Indigenous person did not envy or seek to emulate "the splendid achievements of the white man. In his own thought he rose superior to them!" (1911, p. 14). Eastman's words speak from a place of confidence rooted not in defiance, but in harmony with land, community, and spirit.

Elder Duke Redbird echoes this dynamic in his 2016 "Indigenous Voices in the Classroom" speech. He reminds us that throughout the eighteenth century, Indigenous and settler societies coexisted, yet the flow of influence moved in only one direction. Settlers frequently noted that no Indigenous person chose to defect into colonial society, while many Europeans voluntarily joined Indigenous nations. Even when colonial families attempted to raise Indigenous children in European households, those children almost always returned to their own people. Redbird recounts how Benjamin Franklin observed this pattern in 1753, noting that Indigenous youth who were "taught our language and habituated to our customs" would quickly rejoin their kin and never return. Decades later, Hector de Crèvecoeur expressed the same astonishment: "Thousands of

Europeans are becoming Indians,” he wrote, “and we have no examples of even one of those aboriginals having by choice become European.”

For Eastman, Redbird, and many others, this was not simply a rejection of European life, but a recognition that the settler worldview, built on extraction, hierarchy, and possession, offered little appeal when measured against a life of relational integrity. The wealth and power of the colonial world were neither enviable nor aspirational. They were hollow when contrasted with a way of life rooted in reverence, responsibility, and belonging. For Indigenous nations, true strength came not from accumulation, but from relationship: with the land, with kin, and with the sacred bonds that sustained life for generations (Eastman, 1911).

3.4 The Victims of a Madness⁶

The settler nations’ calculated conquest of relationship profoundly destabilized Indigenous education. To understand its full impact, we must return to what was lost. In Indigenous communities prior to contact, learning was relational. Children grew through observation, autonomy, and shared responsibility rather than rigid schedules or discipline. Knowledge was passed through story, experience, and kinship, not through didactic instruction (Simpson, 2017).

As J.R. Miller explains, Indigenous child-rearing and education relied on the “Three Ls”, learning by looking, listening, and living, emphasizing community and spirit rather than coercion (Miller, 1997). These educational practices were embedded in daily life, inseparable from family, ceremony, and the land.

As colonial presence deepened, missionaries and church organizations, particularly Catholic and Protestant denominations, became increasingly strategic in their efforts to convert Indigenous

⁶ This subtitle is drawn from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird’s poem “Stolen Children, Stolen Souls,” published in Duke Redbird: Poetry (self-published, 2020). Used with gratitude and respect to honour the children whose lives

were taken, and to acknowledge the collective moral blindness that allowed such harm to unfold.

children through schooling. Some children were informally adopted or taken outright into boarding schools and mission homes. These were deliberate acts of cultural transformation. The “civilizing” strategy of the 1820s and 1830s targeted children specifically, aiming to separate them from their families and immerse them in Christian, agricultural, and settler ways of life (Miller, 1997, pp. 15–17).

Within this context, some Indigenous leaders sought to navigate and adapt to the new reality. Chief Augustine Shingwauk envisioned what he called a “big teaching wigwam” where Indigenous children could be “received, and clothed, and fed, and taught how to read and how to write; and also how to farm and build houses, and make clothing: so that by and bye they might go back and teach their own people” (Little Pine, 1872). His vision reflected an effort to integrate certain aspects of European learning without severing children from their communities, languages, or identities. It was grounded in relationality and in a desire to help his people adapt and thrive amid colonial pressures, not to separate them from their families or culture.

But this vision was swiftly subverted. What began as a strategy for Indigenous survival became a tool of domination. The Canadian government and church authorities co-opted Indigenous-led educational initiatives and turned them into instruments of cultural genocide, creating residential schools designed to assimilate, control, and “kill the Indian in the child” (Miller, 1997, pp. 10–11). These institutions transformed an Indigenous strategy for resilience into a colonial project of erasure.

In short, what began as a relational, land-based, and kinship-centered educational framework was systematically dismantled through missionary efforts, colonial legislation, and church-state collaboration. Education, once rooted in community and reciprocity, was forcibly replaced by a system designed to dominate and dispossess. This deliberate dismantling created the conditions

for a second, quieter track of schooling to take shape, one that mirrored what it erased, reshaping sacred Indigenous relational practices to serve power and money rather than All Our Relations.

Chapter 4: Two Rows, Dual Tracks

This paper has traced how the colonial project deliberately dismantled Indigenous relational education systems. What follows examines the simultaneous construction of a parallel system for settlers that would carry vastly different implications and outcomes. Two distinct tracks of education began to emerge in the early twentieth century: one crystallizing under the pressure of colonial legislation and the Crown's desire for control, and the other sprouting in the surrounding soil, made fertile by what had been uprooted.

Indigenous relationality was seen as so powerful, so effective, that it had to be both outlawed and imitated. Here lies the paradox. Indigenous children were systematically denied the ability to learn from their own ways of knowing and being. Returning to Simpson's description of Indigenous education as "designed to create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, interdependent, brilliant, loving citizens who at their core uphold our ideals around family, community, and nationhood by valuing their intelligences, their diversity, their desires and gifts, and their lived experiences" (Simpson, 2017, pp. 153–154), these were precisely the teachings from which they were severed.

At the same time, colonial society quietly adapted and repurposed those same sacred frameworks to serve its own elite. Indigenous relationality became a form of social capital; an inheritance of belonging built on appropriated forms. In this paradox, the two tracks of education diverged: one severing Indigenous children from land, kinship, and language; the other emerging through mimicry,

adaptation, and appropriation to create powerful leadership programs that fortified elite settler networks.

4.1 Without the TRUTH, Reconciliation is an impossible task⁷

What began as the theft of land soon became the theft of understanding, a collapse of dimensional knowing, where the full, living sphere of Indigenous relationality was pressed into the flat grid of colonial logic. From Simcoe's legislative shift in 1794 onward, schools and curricula became the government's most effective tools for severing Indigenous continuity and imposing colonial order. Indigenous nations grounded their teachings in relationship, circularity, and interconnection, in lives formed "from heart and mind" in circles that tie the human, the Earth, and the Spirit together (Talaga, 2018, p. 18). These ways of knowing were seen as fundamentally incompatible with colonial structures built on rule, power, hierarchy, and control.

To understand how such an intentional dismissal could happen, it may help to look to an unlikely place: a short allegorical novel published in 1884 by Edwin Abbott called *Flatland*. In it, a society of two-dimensional beings lives on a flat plane. When a three-dimensional sphere enters their world and tries to explain what lies beyond their limited perception, the flat citizens can neither comprehend nor tolerate the idea of another dimension. The one character who does glimpse it is treated as dangerous and subversive.

This story is not about Indigenous peoples, yet it illuminates something essential. Like the citizens of *Flatland*, many colonial officials and policymakers operated within a narrow, linear worldview, one structurally unable, or unwilling, to perceive the depth and dimensionality of

⁷ This subtitle and excerpt are from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird's 2022 poem *Colony Felony*, used with gratitude and respect. I include this passage because it supports the purpose of this section. The excerpt reads: "The Indigenous People are seeking the truth / While the government is seeking reconciliation / For inflicting 355 years of death / deprivation and starvation / On the bodies, minds, and hearts / Of the Indigenous Nations /

But Canada cannot wipe away a pain like that / Without THE TRUTH / Reconciliation is an impossible task."

Indigenous relational knowledge. What they failed to understand, they dismissed as primitive. What exceeded their frameworks, they declared illegitimate or outlawed. And what they found useful, they flattened, extracted, and repurposed within their own institutions. From this perspective, Indigenous knowledge was not simply overlooked but actively reframed as a threat to the colonial order.

What began with the tightening of land control and treaty manipulation in the late eighteenth century intensified through the nineteenth, culminating in policies such as the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869, which sought to erode Indigenous governance and impose private property regimes. These laws worked alongside missionary expansion, creating a deliberate collaboration between church and government that targeted the most intimate sphere of Indigenous life: the family. As Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald made brutally clear in 1883, “Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence... and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men” (House of Commons Debates, May 9, 1883).

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) notes, this was part of an imperial strategy in which colonizing powers disrupted families and imposed new political and spiritual orders to seize land and control Indigenous nations. Through coercion, threat, and force, parents were made to surrender their children to schools the government insisted would “civilize,” even though their true purpose was to sever. Indigenous children who had grown up learning through story, observation, kinship, and community were taken from their families and placed into systems designed to strip them of language, culture, and identity (Milloy, 1999).

By the 1860s and 1870s, Canada’s first federally funded residential schools were already in operation. Attendance was compelled through a tightening network of legislative and

administrative control. Indian Agents who oversaw rations, mobility, and land use applied sustained pressure, and missionaries routinely threatened to withhold food and other essentials from families who resisted (Milloy, 1999). This calculated use of deprivation and dependency ensured that Indigenous parents had little room to refuse. Legislative measures such as the Pass System deepened this control, restricting movement and further isolating communities⁸.

These mechanisms were reinforced through the Indian Act (1876), which not only centralized federal authority over Indigenous life but also laid the legislative groundwork for erasing traditional knowledge systems. The suppression of Indigenous education was further enforced through the banning of the Potlatch in 1884 and the prohibition of the Sun Dance in 1895, stripping away far more than ceremonial practice. These were deliberate efforts to dismantle the intricate web of community-led learning, governance, and cultural transmission that had sustained Indigenous nations for generations.

Indigenous children had once learned through daily participation in land-based practices such as hunting, gathering, fishing, and long-distance trade that required portaging and deep ecological knowledge. They learned governance through witnessing and participating in treaty-making carried out in good faith, within systems rooted in relational accountability rather than imposed electoral structures. Story, ceremony, and communal decision-making were all integral to how knowledge was shared, remembered, and carried forward. The criminalization of key cultural practices, combined with restrictions on movement and land use, severed not only spiritual and cultural lifeways but also the educational frameworks that held communities together. These prohibitions

⁸ The Pass System was an informal but widely enforced policy implemented by Indian Agents beginning in the 1880s, requiring First Nations people living on reserves to obtain written permission to leave their community. Although never legislated in the Indian Act, the system was used for decades to control mobility, limit political organizing, and sever families' access to neighbouring communities, markets, and ceremonies. Scholars note that the Pass System intensified the isolation produced by residential schools by restricting parents' ability to visit their children, monitor their wellbeing, or resist school authorities.

were foundational to the Indian Act's assimilationist design: they criminalized the relational, spiritual, and educational structures that had sustained Indigenous nations since time immemorial, ensuring that government- and church-run schools became the only legally sanctioned means of learning.



Figure 1. Secret Potlatch held at the old Parish Hall behind the Anglican Church in Alert Bay, 1922. Photo courtesy of B.C. Archives (via APTN News, 2020; public domain).

4.2 Mapping the Theft

This was the dual track of colonial education: while Indigenous knowledge systems were suppressed, a new project for settler children was taking shape. Beginning in the 1860s, as legislation on Indigenous families and communities tightened, settler youth were being offered “wilderness” experiences designed to root them more deeply into a sense of belonging on Indigenous land. What began as scattered Fresh Air excursions grew into a formalized system of organized camping (Nadel & Scher, 2019, p. 41).

The very knowledge systems that were criminalized and withheld from Indigenous children were simultaneously exalted and appropriated for settler youth. To understand how this began, we need to look to the long history of how Indigenous land-based practices and ways of being were

observed, recorded, and claimed. For hundreds of years before they entered formal educational frameworks, these knowledges were documented through a colonial gaze that framed Indigenous life as something to be captured and fixed, an early expression of the ‘Vanishing Indian’ narrative described by Francis (1992).

My reading of this history is shaped by Berry’s (1963) insight that colonial writers often portrayed Indigenous peoples as disappearing or already belonging to the past. I name this here because that way of seeing shaped so much of what settlers believed they were witnessing, and what they felt entitled to record, claim, or reinterpret. It turned living, relational knowledge systems into something to be collected, preserved, or folded into imperial narratives rather than honoured within the communities they belonged to. Holding Berry’s framework helps reveal the quiet ways Indigenous relationality was lifted, altered, and repurposed within the settler institutions that began forming across these lands.

This understanding is deepened by the work of Edward S. Curtis, whose early twentieth-century photographs helped solidify the image of Indigenous peoples as belonging to a fading world. Curtis staged, manipulated, and curated his images to create what he imagined to be a “pure” Indigenous past, removing contemporary clothing, cropping out modern tools, and directing his subjects into poses that matched his romantic vision. Christopher M. Lyman’s (1982) critique of this work shows how Curtis’s photographs were not neutral documentation but powerful acts of representation that froze Indigenous life into nostalgic symbols. Naming this second framework matters because it reveals how Indigenous relationality could be admired, aestheticized, and appropriated, even as Indigenous peoples themselves were depicted as vanishing. Lyman’s insights sit alongside Berry’s, helping illuminate how knowledge taken from Indigenous nations was misread, decontextualized, and eventually woven into emerging settler institutions.

By his second voyage, something shifts. Cartier begins to take greater interest in the lives of the people whose territories he moves through. He records their wintering practices, the way they build homes and store food, how they govern their communities. His detailed accounts of the St. Lawrence Iroquoian villages of Hochelaga and Stadacona are observant, even admiring (Cartier, 1924, pp. 35–96). On his first voyage, Cartier kidnapped two young men, Taignoagny and Domagaya, and took them to France. He returned with them the following year, using their knowledge and language to navigate the river and reach Hochelaga. It was through their forced guidance that his maps of these territories expanded. Cartier would later abduct Donnacona, their father, and several others. Most of them never returned.

This entitlement was already evident in Cartier’s second voyage. Writing to the King of France, he described the river and surrounding territories as if they already belonged to the Crown: “...of the immense number of peoples living there, of their kindness and peacefulness, and likewise of the richness of the great river, which flows through and waters the midst of these lands of yours...” (Cartier, 1924, p. 91). From the very beginning, Indigenous lands were not simply mapped; they were claimed through the language of empire, their abundance and relational depth reframed as imperial property.

When Samuel de Champlain arrived on the shores of the St. Lawrence in 1603, he, too, observed and documented the complex and sophisticated societies he encountered. “They are great hunters, and most skillful in navigating their canoes... They have an order and system in their councils that I admired” (Champlain, *Voyages*, 1613). On the topic of how he witnessed Indigenous people raising their children, he wrote in 1632, “The children have great freedom among these tribes. The fathers and mothers indulge them too much and never punish them” (Champlain, 1613/1922, p. 132). He likely meant this as criticism, but his words reveal a worldview rooted in trust, respect, and relational responsibility, a glimpse into a very different understanding of children

and care. These are among the earliest written records of how Indigenous peoples lived and thrived on these lands known as Turtle Island.

These early writings show not only observation but also the subtle beginnings of appropriation. Cartier and Champlain did not simply meet Indigenous nations; they translated their knowledge into forms that suited imperial goals, extracting relational practices while severing them from the cultures that held them in balance. What began as curiosity soon matured into strategy. By the time of Robert Rogers, admiration had become extraction. He stands apart because he did not merely record Indigenous ways of living; he studied them with the intent to use them militarily, structurally, and strategically against the very nations who had shared them.

Rogers grew up “on a frontier of settlement where there was constant contact with Indians and which was exposed to raids in time of war” (Stacey, 2003, para. 2). Unlike the navigators and diplomats who came before him, his gaze was tactical. He studied Indigenous movement and warfare to appropriate it, adopting tactics such as ambush, camouflage, and guerrilla warfare, and disseminating them as if they were his own innovations. Rule 2 of his *Rules of Ranging*, as one example, was identical to a tactic Thomas Church had documented as an Indigenous custom nearly a century earlier (Church, 1675, p. 108; Rogers, 1757, para. 2). This may be one of the earliest documented examples of erasure through appropriation: Indigenous knowledge reframed as European invention.

Before his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada in 1791, John Graves Simcoe took command of the Queen’s Rangers. In 1787, he even wrote a military handbook modeled directly on Robert Rogers’ *Rules of Ranging*. When Simcoe assumed his post as Lieutenant Governor in Canada, he brought with him the Ranger ethos, an ideology built on Indigenous knowledge of land, movement, and survival, while simultaneously advancing the belief that Indigenous nations posed a threat to British interests. Though he was not the architect of the

education systems that would follow, Simcoe had already begun shaping the conceptual ground on which they would stand. He became a catalyst at the inflection point where two once-distinct ways of being, like the parallel lines of the Two Row Wampum, were bent under colonial policy into a hierarchy of control.

4.3 From All Our Relations to Wilderne\$\$ Recreation

Long before there were maps or summer camps, the land was kin. She fed and healed, tested and taught. Through the settler gaze, that living relationship was renamed “wilderness” and sold back as recreation.

As this new relationship to land took shape, institutions quickly rose to formalize it. Organizations like the YMCA, founded in Montreal in 1851 and rapidly expanding across North America, framed nature, discipline, and moral development as tools for building strong Christian citizens (Nadel & Scher, 2019). By the early 1900s, the YMCA was running outdoor programs that introduced boys to wilderness excursions and “character training,” a core mandate of the organization’s early focus on moral and physical development (Nadel & Scher, 2019). The Boy Scouts of America, founded in 1908, built directly on this foundation, incorporating Woodcraft traditions popularized by Ernest Thompson Seton, whose model was based on romanticized representations of Indigenous nations (Van Slyck, 2006). These programs offered settler youth access to outdoor learning framed as wholesome and ennobling, even as Indigenous children were being forced into residential schools designed to sever them from their own land-based knowledge systems.

By the 1860s and 1870s, camp pioneers such as Frederick William Gunn in Connecticut, Joseph Trimble Rothrock in Pennsylvania, and Ernest Berkley Balch in New Hampshire began organizing camping trips for boys rooted in ideals of health, virtue, and independence. Though not yet linked

to the ranger ethos that would emerge with Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft Indian movement in 1906, these experiences were still grounded in Indigenous relationality and romanticized connection to land, insights gifted by Indigenous peoples but reshaped through settler institutions.

As Elder Duke Redbird shared in his 2020 speech to MIT Creative Labs, "Indigenous cultures have always cultivated keen insight, an intuition stored in our blood memory over generations, activated through relationship with the living land." For millennia, survival and sustainability depended not on domination but on harmony, a wisdom grounded in reciprocity with Mother Earth, where learning was lived rather than institutionalized (Redbird, 2020).

This is the relational intelligence at the heart of Indigenous education: fluid, reciprocal, and inseparable from the living land. What settlers later framed as "wilderness experience" was, in truth, an inherited template taken, distorted, and restructured. These programs emerged outside formal education, positioned as enrichment rather than necessity. Yet access to the most immersive expressions of these appropriated teachings remained reserved for those with wealth, shaping who was allowed to inherit the full benefits of what was taken.

Between 1860 and 1900, wilderness outings had become entrenched as a cultural rite for elite settler youth, structured, celebrated, and accessible primarily to those with privilege. This stood in stark contrast to the realities of Indigenous children, who within the same timeframe were being systematically targeted by government and church as subjects to be removed, re-educated, and reshaped. Following Nicholas Flood Davin's *1879 Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds*, officials concluded that Indigenous land-based ways of being were incompatible with their civilizing project. Children who had long participated in seasonal cycles of hunting, gathering, sugar-making, planting, and trade were now described as undisciplined and resistant to "progress." Indigenous adults were deemed "irreparable," and residential schooling was framed as the only way "to advance the Indians in civilization." Church leaders urged the government to

seize children “as young as six” to save them from the “degenerating influence of their home environment” (Milloy, 1999, pp. 23–27).

Meanwhile, a second track of education was unfolding quietly outside formal schooling, reserved for those with privilege. “The 1880s and 1890s saw many middle-class families in the eastern part of the continent living the simpler life in a cottage in the mountains or at a lake. The more affluent frequented the seashore and mountain resorts in preference to European tours” (Eells, 1976, p. 2). Out of this culture of leisure and class privilege grew organized camping, which the American Camping Association would later define as “a sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational, and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth” (Eells, 1976, pp. 3–4).

This definition, celebrated as a modern innovation in outdoor education, mirrors the holistic principles at the heart of the Anishinaabe medicine wheel. Long before the establishment of organized camping, Indigenous nations taught through the land, nurturing mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth as interconnected parts of a whole (Redbird, 2020). For settler children, already born into material privilege, access to these land-based teachings ensured that they were not only advantaged from birth, but further equipped with the relational, leadership, and survival skills rooted in Indigenous knowledge. Privilege thus became a discreet means of stealing First Nations’ relational frameworks, rooted in connection to land, that were simultaneously destroyed and romanticized. This duality reveals the calculated nature of settler colonialism. Indigenous cultural practices were not merely borrowed or admired; they were systematically extracted, reshaped, and weaponized to reinforce settler dominance. By appropriating Indigenous traditions to strengthen their own institutions while actively dismantling them within Indigenous

communities, settlers weaponized the very tools of Indigenous resilience against them (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006).

Camping became celebrated as “a recognized necessity in the all-around education of boys and girls, with nature offering many lessons which books and schoolrooms cannot teach... [including] self-esteem” (Gibson, 1939, as cited in Readdick & Schaller, 2005, p. 121). As Eleanor Eells explains in *The History of Organized Camping*, “The early camps were responses to concerns for educational reality, to the idleness of summer vacations, to a need for a return to nature. Camps which were established as an answer to the progressive education movement abounded in the early 1900s” (Eells, 1976, p. 141). At the very moment Indigenous children were being punished for speaking their languages and expressing themselves in traditional ways, settler children were learning self-worth and belonging through mimicry of Indigenous land-based practices.

Chapter 5: Relational Theft, Relational Gain

This dual pathway shaped the futures of Indigenous and settler children in painfully opposite ways. Its roots lay in the first missionary schools for Indigenous children and the earliest wilderness excursions for settler youth, but it was in the residential schools and elite summer camps of the early twentieth century that this pairing of cultural genocide and cultural appropriation reached its fullest expression. The summer camp movement that swept North America began with Robert Baden-Powell’s *Boy Scouting for Boys* (1908), which drew directly from Ernest Thompson Seton’s *Woodcraft* movement (1906). Both were seeded by the observation and theft of Indigenous relational frameworks and ways of being.

5.1 The Architecture of Appropriation

Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft Indians, founded in 1906, "stressed outdoor life, handicrafts, and the observation of nature" (Van Slyck, 2006, p. 173). In *The Gospel of the Red Man*, he declared that settlers would "take the best of the Indian" (Seton, 1936), revealing his intent to selectively adopt and repurpose Indigenous lifeways for settler youth. He and others built entire programs around romanticized versions of Indigenous practices: council fires, tipi villages, animal totems, and circle dances, stripped of their cultural and spiritual contexts and reframed as leadership training and moral education. As Van Slyck observes, "encouraging campers to find their authentic selves by temporarily adopting Indian ways, summer camps urged white children to see themselves as the rightful inheritors to North America" (Van Slyck, 2006, p. 207).



Figure 3. Grey Ernest Thompson Seton and Grey Whirlwind, 1920. Photograph courtesy of the Seton Legacy Project, Academy for the Love of Learning. Used under fair dealing for educational purposes.

Seton's most influential contribution came through his 1903 book *Two Little Savages: Being the Adventures of Two Boys Who Lived as Indians and What They Learned*. Far from a simple adventure story, it functioned as a manual for settler youth on how to "play Indian." It opens with a revealing

line: “Because I have known the torment of thirst, I would dig a well where others may drink” (Seton, 1903, p. 1). This was not mere poetic flourish. Seton was expressing a deep personal yearning for connection to the land; one he felt was absent in the settler world in which he grew up.

The book’s structure reads like the scaffolding of a youth movement: “The Making of the Teepee,” “The Sacred Fire,” “War Bonnet, Teepee and Coups,” “Indian Signs and Getting Lost,” “Tanning Skins and Making Moccasins,” “The Indian Drum,” and “The Rival Tribe.” Each chapter provides instructions on how non-Indigenous children might imitate and inhabit Indigenous practices, from building tipis and learning symbolic language to organizing “tribes” and competing for coups. This was not fiction to be read but a step-by-step curriculum for embodied imitation, designed to build community, identity, and belonging among settler youth.

Seton’s intent became even clearer in *The Red Book, or How to Play Indian* (1904), where he wrote: “The Woodcraft Indians have been organized to give young people the advantages of camp life without its dangers. The Indian plan has been adopted in preference to others because its picturesqueness takes immediate and complete hold of the boys. Most boys love to play Indian and would like to learn more about doing it... Our watchword then is: ‘The best things of the best Indians,’ and our object: ‘The study and pleasures of Woodcraft’” (Seton, 1904, pp. 3–4).

Here, Seton moves from romanticization to codification. His language reveals how deliberately Indigenous knowledge was framed as material to be adopted and used for settler identity-building. Indigenous practices were rebranded as “picturesque” and “pleasurable,” designed to capture the imagination of white boys while severing these teachings from their responsibilities and spiritual depth.

As the Scout Guide Historical Society notes, Seton’s Woodcraft Indians predated Baden-Powell’s Boy Scouts and became the foundation on which scouting was built. Seton himself wrote, “After being sent several instalments of *Scouting for Boys* by Robert Baden-Powell in 1908, I was

astounded to find my ideas taken, all my games appropriated, and the whole scheme set forth as his own” (Scott, n.d., para. 3). Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* (1908) mirrors Seton’s program in striking ways. Its chapters on “Woodcraft and Knowledge of Animals,” “Tracking,” “Patrol Organization,” “Campfires,” and “Scouting Games” reproduce much of Seton’s earlier framework almost verbatim (Baden-Powell, 1908, Parts III–VI).

Seton’s vision took tangible form at his home in Cos Cob, Connecticut, which he named Wyndygoul. In 1902, he invited local boys to camp on his property and organized them into the first Woodcraft Indian “tribe.” There, he built a symbolic structure modeled on his romanticized view of Indigenous governance and ceremony. The boys met around council fires, earned coups for skill demonstrations, adopted totemic animal identities, and referred to Seton as “Chief.” The camp simulated what he imagined to be the moral and social world of Indigenous nations. As Van Slyck (2006) notes, it was a selective and deeply distorted version, teachings stripped of their cultural responsibilities and spiritual depth, repackaged as a training ground for settler boys. Wyndygoul became both the birthplace and the prototype of the Woodcraft Indians, laying the groundwork for the system Baden-Powell would later globalize through scouting (pp. 169–180).

This is where Seton’s role becomes most significant. He positioned himself as a cultural translator, claiming to offer renewed connection to the land while severing Indigenous practices from their roots. Through *The Birchbark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* (1906), *Indian Lore* (1912), *Sign Talk: Universal Signal Code* (1918), and *The Gospel of the Redman* (1937), he continued to package Indigenous teachings for non-Indigenous audiences. What began as Seton’s personal romanticization of Indigenous lifeways became a globalized settler curriculum through Baden-Powell’s movement. Merit systems based on coups, tribal organization, ceremonial fire circles,

totemic animal identities, and skill-based ranking became the foundation of both scouting and, later, elite summer camps (Van Slyck, 2006).



Figure 2. Wyndygoul War Dance (ca. 1900). Bain News Service, publisher. Library of Congress (public domain). Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/>

Van Slyck writes: “They earned ‘coups,’ with a decorated buffalo robe awarded to the camper who earned the most coups during the summer” (2006, p. 185). Elder Dr. Duke Redbird explains that in Indigenous communities, counting coup was “a remarkable idea employed by Indigenous people... the winning of prestige by touching an enemy warrior with the hand, bow, or coup stick and escaping unharmed” (Redbird, 2018). What had once been a sacred expression of courage, discipline, and honour was reduced to a summer game for elite settler youth.

As a result, living Indigenous relational frameworks were institutionalized within settler society, celebrated as markers of good citizenship, leadership, and moral development (Ernest Thompson Seton Institute, 2025). For Indigenous children, however, these same practices and knowledges were criminalized, silenced, or beaten out of them. While settler youth were being initiated into imagined relationships with the land, Indigenous children were being severed from their real ones. Their education was not about belonging but about erasure.

5.2 Stolen Children, Stolen Souls⁹

The children who returned from residential schools, or never returned at all, carried something very different from the lessons offered to settler children. Indigenous children carried silence, shame, and survival. Fragmented senses of self (Sinclair, 2024). Tsilhqot'in intergenerational residential school survivor Kim Harvey shared, "I encountered many uncomfortable moments trying to explain what happened to my people and why there is so much alcoholism and drug abuse... I struggle with issues of family, identity, and community every day" (TRC, 2015). Survivor Iris Nicolas recalled, "At the residential school we were told we were pagans and would grow up to be good-for-nothing Indians. Did they realize the impact their words had on us? ...This fear is still inside of me" (TRC, 2015).

Residential schools sought to dismantle and sever all connection to families and traditions within Indigenous communities (Sinclair, 2024). They were not only sites of neglect but of systemic abuse. Teachers were often "illiterate persons, ignorant of the first elements of teaching and powerless to impart any ideas" (Milloy, 1999, p. 177). Without oversight or accountability, violence became commonplace. "There never were, in this period, any comprehensive guidelines on the range of permissible discipline," Milloy writes, and "without any serious response by the Department and the churches to dozens of incidents of severe punishment or neglect that caused injury or death... abuse flourished in the schools" (1999, p. 140).

Inquest records reveal children forced to eat rotten food until sick, punished for refusing porridge recycled meal after meal, or beaten for complaining about their treatment (Milloy, 1999, p. 143). Survivors like Christine Haines described being locked in cold, dark rooms on bread and water and strapped "on the face" for disobedience (Milloy, 1999, p. 143).

⁹ This subtitle is drawn from Elder Dr. Duke Redbird's poem "Stolen Children, Stolen Souls," published in his self-published collection *Duke Redbird: Poetry* (2020). Used with gratitude and respect.

Edmund Metatawabin recalls being forced to eat his own vomit from a bowl “like a dog” after fainting from sickness (Metatawabin & Shimo, 2014, p. 70). In another memory, a boy who wet himself was stripped and made to wear his soiled underwear on his head, naked before his peers (p. 43). He also testified to sexual abuse: “Step forward and pull down your pants,” Brother Jutras told him. “He reached forward and cradled my penis, touching it, examining it carefully...” (p. 35). He later learned that Jutras was not a doctor but the school’s baker.

These are only a few of the countless violations Indigenous children endured at residential schools, acts meant to instill silence, shame, and fear, severing them from their families, languages, and cultures. For thousands of children, the violence of these institutions did not end in trauma but in death. Many were buried in unmarked graves, their names unrecorded, their families left without answers.

The story of Chanie “Charlie” Wenjack, a 12-year-old Anishinaabe boy who died while trying to escape Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in 1966, is one that the public came to know. But his story is not unique. Each unmarked grave speaks to a stolen life and a family who waited for a child who never returned (Carley, 2025).

The rupture did not end with a child’s captivity. When children returned home, they came back altered, traumatized, stripped of language, and cut off from the rhythms of kinship and ceremony. “That link was broken with my parents’ generation being taken out of the family circle as children... When they went to residential school... they came back as strangers” (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 32). Families who had once raised children through story, song, and ceremony were now faced with sons and daughters who could no longer speak their language, who recoiled from their parents’ touch, who woke screaming from dreams they could not share (TRC, 2015).

As Leroy Little Bear observes, “Colonization created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples... By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted to destroy the Aboriginal worldview, but failed” (2000, p. 84).

What was stolen from these children was never only schooling. It was their childhood itself. The relational fabric that had once bound life together, ties to parents and grandparents, to land and language, to the sacred practices that sustained belonging, was violently torn. In place of love, children were met with cruelty; in place of safety, they endured sexual violation. These were not isolated incidents but systemic, repeated acts of domination that aimed to extinguish not only Indigenous cultures but the very dignity of Indigenous children.

This stood in stark contrast to the ways Indigenous children had always been prepared for life. Marie Battiste (2000) reminds us that Indigenous pedagogy is not simply about information, but about spirit, relationship, and the sacred trust of learning within community. The loss of that is not an educational gap; it is a wound to an entire way of being. These children were not broken. They were broken off.

The trauma they carried, and that many of their descendants still carry, is not pathology. It is the echo of genocide, not only a genocide of people, but of relation. Of kinship systems honed over millennia to maintain balance between individuals, families, lands, and nations. Nicole Muir and Yvonne Bohr (2019) describe traditional Indigenous child-rearing as a deeply interconnected system of teachings, trust, and collective responsibility. To remove a child from that world is to do more than interrupt attachment; it is to sever lifeways. Many children left those schools without a map for how to be in relationship. Indigenous children were deliberately made to feel alone.

Chapter 6: Who Belongs, and Who Was Taken

In the same decades that Indigenous relational systems were being targeted for destruction, settler families were investing in programs meant to root their children more deeply in place and in one another. What began with Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft movement in the early 1900s grew into a wave of private summer camps across the continent.

This chapter focuses on a particular cluster of elite, residential camps in northeastern North America, spaces deliberately designed to forge long-term social bonds, shape leadership identities, and consolidate networks of privilege. Between 1906 and 1960, more than 250 residential camps opened in Ontario, Vermont, New York, Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania (Van Slyck, 2006). While many served as recreational or charitable programs, a select few became power-building institutions for the settler elite.

6.1 Manufactured Belonging

These camps were not simply scenic getaways for the privileged. They were engineered spaces of exclusivity, continuity, and network-building, attended historically and presently by the children of political leaders, celebrities, corporate executives, and cultural elites. Their alumni lists read like a who's who of North American influence. Mark Zuckerberg attended Island Lake Camp in Pennsylvania; Gwyneth Paltrow spent summers at Brown Ledge Camp in Vermont. Sigourney Weaver and Vanessa Williams sent their daughters to Camp Vega in Maine. Malia and Sasha Obama attended Camp Wicosuta in New Hampshire. Disney Chairman Michael Eisner's children summered at Keewaydin in Vermont, and Jerry Seinfeld's sons attended Brant Lake Camp in New York. In Canada, Taylor Statten Camps have hosted generations of powerful families, including Pierre and Justin Trudeau, Eaton, Molson, Labatt, Hindmarsh, Birks, Creed, Smythe, Weston, and Laurier (Svetkey, 2025; Oleksinski, 2020).

What has been celebrated and richly rewarded for settler youth as leadership training, character building, and network formation at camps like Vega, Keewaydin, Wicosuta, Brown Ledge, Brant Lake, and Taylor Statten is the very same architecture of belonging, relational frameworks rooted in connection to land, kinship, and community, that were stripped of their cultural and spiritual integrity and forcibly removed, generation after generation, from Indigenous children and families through residential schools.

These elite private camps distinguished themselves through their extended duration, running for two full months rather than a few weeks, and through their remoteness, often situated in wilderness settings far removed from urban life. This remoteness was itself a kind of architecture, designed to cultivate intimacy and exclusivity (Van Slyck, 2006). As Leslie Paris notes, “The actual journey to camp tended further to differentiate clients of private, full-season camps from those of less elite camps” (Paris, 2008, p. 39). “Children attending organizational and charitable camps often spent only a few weeks instead of a full two months at camp” (Paris, 2008, p. 100). The difference was profound. Shorter stays could not replicate the depth of belonging forged through extended immersion and ritualized journeys. For those with fewer resources, access was limited to short-term or heavily standardized programming, often closer to urban centres or in regions far from the Great Lakes. This reveals the inequities embedded in how these appropriated knowledges are distributed: only the elite have sustained access to their most powerful forms.

Elite camps were not simply places for recreation. They were sites where belonging was intentionally cultivated through an enduring architecture of ritual, return, and shared experience. Nowhere is this more visible than in this description of Taylor Statten Camp in Algonquin Park. As journalist Roy MacGregor observed:

It’s of little wonder that the camp survived for decades without advertising. Friendships born there on canoe trips have popped up later in boardrooms, and boy-girl acquaintances

have surfaced later as marriages. It is a perfect summer version of the Old Boy network, created and sustained by such other-season institutes as Toronto's Upper Canada College. A small sampling of those who have been to Taylor Statten Camps includes the illustrious in politics (Pierre Trudeau, David and Stephen Lewis), showbusiness (Rich Little, Patrick Watson, Warner Troyer) and sports (Barbara Ann Scott, the Conachers, Eric Nesterenko, Henri Richard) ... A look at some of the families who have been, or are presently, represented at Taylor Statten is even more intimidating, for it includes names like Eaton, Molson, Labatt, Hindmarsh, Birks, Creed, Smythe, Weston and Laurier. Other campers' parents have served as top executives for such corporations as Imperial Oil, Air Canada, Manufacturers Life, Pulp & Paper Canada and Consolidated-Bathurst. And that is but a very partial list (MacGregor, 1976).

This quote makes clear that these camps were not only recreational spaces but powerful incubators of social capital, leadership pathways, and intergenerational privilege, networks built upon appropriated Indigenous relational frameworks, while Indigenous children were simultaneously being stripped of their own.

6.2 The Children Who Were Taken

By the 1950s, reports of overcrowding, malnutrition, neglect, and abuse in residential schools were becoming impossible to ignore, and Indigenous families increasingly resisted sending their children. Government inspectors themselves documented the high mortality rates. "It is indeed pitiable to reflect that the children of these schools, born with the same possibilities of health and life as their white brothers, are so ill cared for that one out of every four never returns home" (Bryce, 1907, Report to the Department of Indian Affairs).

As communities pushed back legally and politically, maintaining the residential school system at its previous scale became more difficult. Yet rather than end the project of assimilation, the federal government simply changed its language and methods. In 1951, amendments to the Indian Act gave provincial child welfare agencies jurisdiction on reserves. No longer taken to church-run schools, Indigenous children were now apprehended under the guise of “neglect” or “protection.” As Cindy Blackstock (2009) notes, “What began as government-sanctioned removal of children into church-run schools became, in the latter half of the twentieth century, a child welfare project cloaked in the language of care” (p. 140). The goal remained the same: to dismantle Indigenous kinship systems and assimilate children into white society.

Placing Indigenous children with non-Indigenous foster and adoptive families was seen as a more effective means of “integration.” Many were sent far from their communities and even across international borders, severing language, culture, and family ties. “The mass apprehension of First Nations children that followed the closure of residential schools furthered the colonial agenda, and the social work profession was intimately involved in this mass ‘scooping’ of children starting in the 1960s” (Alston-O’Connor, 2010, p. 54).

Even as reports of abuse mounted, child welfare agencies did not intervene. “I know of no records suggesting children’s aid organizations took note of the reports or did anything meaningful to intervene” (Blackstock, 2009, p. 140). Social work institutions were not bystanders; they became architects of the next phase. “The professional oversight bodies did not effectively monitor the quality of child welfare services... This lack of invigilation, accompanied by a systemic ignorance of the impacts of colonization, often resulted in the mass removals of Aboriginal children and their placement in non-Aboriginal homes... This pattern of mass removals became known as the ‘Sixties Scoop’” (Blackstock, 2009, p. 140).

What had once been the church's mandate became the purview of government and provincial welfare systems, extending the same logic of removal under a new name. The profound distrust many Indigenous families hold toward social workers today is not unfounded. As Sinclair (2024) reflected, "social work is often synonymous with the theft of children, the destruction of families, and the deliberate oppression of Aboriginal communities" (as cited in Alston-O'Connor, 2010, p. 55). This was not rupture but continuation, shifting colonial control from one institution to another while maintaining power over Indigenous children, families, and futures under the guise of protection.

The contrast could not be starker. As Indigenous children were being stripped of language, kinship, and the right to grow within their own relational systems, elite settler institutions were deepening their investment in those very frameworks. While Indigenous families were being torn apart, elite camps were cultivating generational continuity, ensuring that settler children returned to the same places, built lasting networks, and inherited structured belonging. Across Indigenous nations, children were forcibly removed, often without warning, consent, or return. Mothers and fathers were stripped of their roles as protectors and teachers. Siblings were scattered, kinship lines severed, languages silenced. What Indigenous communities had built through millennia of intergenerational love, responsibility, and relationship was deliberately targeted and dismantled through government policy.

At the same time, settler families were investing in programs designed to deepen their children's sense of place and one another. Elite summer camps became spaces where children returned year after year, sleeping in the same cabins, paddling the same routes, and forming lifelong bonds. These camps were structured to fortify continuity and belonging for one group of children, while the other was systematically denied the right to grow up in relationship at all.

Chapter 7: Indigenous Nations Today: Surviving the Cultural Genocide

The divergence between settler and Indigenous education systems was never abstract. It was lived and embodied, and its effects remain visible across the territories where elite summer camps now thrive. In what is now Ontario, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Pennsylvania, Indigenous nations continue to live on lands that have been systematically diminished and controlled, even as those same lands became landscapes of privilege for settler children.

Many Indigenous communities in these regions still bear the intergenerational impacts of forced removals, residential schools, and child welfare interventions like the Sixties Scoop. For generations, children were taken from their families, their languages suppressed, and their relationships to land deliberately severed. This rupture did not end with the closure of residential schools. As Justice Murray Sinclair stated, the harm of residential schools “did not just happen to one generation of children, it happened to their children, and their children’s children” (Sinclair, 2024). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission affirmed that “the impacts of residential schools have been profound and lasting, affecting survivors, their families, communities, and future generations” (TRC, 2015, p. 135).

The residential school system was not only about assimilation; it was about breaking the spirit of relational societies. As Edmund Metatawabin recounts in *Up Ghost River*, children were removed from their parents, stripped of their languages, assigned numbers instead of names, subjected to starvation and medical experimentation, and endured routine physical and sexual abuse. “In the residential schools, the secrecy began at dawn: we were beaten from the time we first awoke,” he writes. Hunger was used as a weapon, silence enforced through fear, and cruelty became the language children learned by watching and listening. Many, like Metatawabin, carried wounds so deep they became inherited stories etched into families and communities. “As

parents,” he recalls, “we continued to imitate the cruelty of the school, ignoring our children or worse, abusing them emotionally, physically or sexually” (Metatawabin & Shimo, 2014, pp. 288–290). The resulting trauma is not a distant historical event; it is alive in bodies, nervous systems, and community structures today.

This legacy is compounded by the systemic erasure of justice. “There is no concept of justice in Cree culture,” Metatawabin explains. “The nearest word is kintohpatatin, you’ve been listened to by someone compassionate and fair, and your needs will be taken seriously” (2014, p. 285). Yet for decades, when survivors of residential schools tried to speak, their testimonies were met with silence, disbelief, or outright denial. Government obstruction and the erasure of records at schools like St. Anne’s, where Metatawabin attended, only deepened these wounds, teaching generations of Indigenous people that their pain could be ignored or dismissed. The result is not only personal trauma but collective dispossession, of land, voice, and trust.

Today, Indigenous youth continue to face disproportionate barriers in education, housing, and health, the direct legacy of systems designed to dismantle relational knowledge and punish Indigenous identity itself. And yet, these Nations endure. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Anishinaabeg, Wendat, Mississaugas of the Credit, and Métis Nation, among many others, continue to protect their languages, hold ceremony, and return to the lands where their ancestors walked. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, ancestors carried the seeds of culture and governance through the apocalyptic violence of occupation, “packing them away so that future generations could replant them” (Simpson, 2011, p. 10). The flourishing of Indigenous nations today is that evidence. Each language still spoken, each ceremony still carried, each generation still rising testifies to a survival that colonial imagination could not extinguish. Indigenous-led educational initiatives are quietly and powerfully re-rooting learning back into land, water, and kinship, even as colonial systems continue to set the terms of funding and governance.

Still, the contrast remains striking. While settler children paddle on appropriated lands through elite camp programs, Indigenous communities often fight for access to those same territories for ceremony, education, or subsistence. Where settlers are offered curated “wilderness experiences,” Indigenous peoples must navigate permits, colonial land management structures, and environmental restrictions on their own homelands.

As Simpson reminds us, “The largest attack on Indigenous knowledge systems right now is land dispossession, and the people that are actively protecting Nishnaabewin are not those at academic conferences... but those who are currently putting their bodies on the land” (2017, p. 170). This work is not only cultural preservation; it is political, spiritual, and educational resurgence.

Today, these communities stand not as relics of a past erased but as living nations, carrying knowledge systems that continue to outlast colonial structures. Their resurgence unfolds in the same geographies where settler children are still taught romanticized fragments of those very teachings.

Chapter 8: Camp Pillars: The Architecture of Belonging

To understand the power these elite camps hold, we must name the pillars that sustain them: return to place, land-based learning, intergenerational continuity, portaging, council fires, ceremony, tradition, and tournaments. This is not simply an intellectual exercise. It is an act of truth-telling, to make visible what was taken, what was gained, and what was lost.

Naming these pillars reveals how deeply Indigenous relational teachings have been embedded within elite settler institutions, and how those same teachings have been withheld from the very peoples from whom they were taken. This work is about clarity, so that all of us, Indigenous and

non-Indigenous alike, can see who benefits from these inheritances and who has been systematically excluded.

Together, these elements form a powerful architecture of belonging, forging networks that extend across lifetimes. This is not accidental. It is an intentional design that binds participants to one another and to place. Yet it remains largely unexamined. Many camp owners, directors, and alumni may never have traced the deeper origins of these practices, even as they continue to benefit from their quiet strength.

8.1. Intergenerational Continuity

From what I have come to understand as a settler learning from Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers, intergenerational continuity has always been a central structure of Indigenous life. Kinship networks extended far beyond the nuclear family, encompassing grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, clan relations, and community members whose roles were fluid and shared. Children grew up not only under the care of their parents but in the daily presence of multiple generations, “learning by looking, listening, and living” (Miller, 1997) alongside those who carried the stories, songs, and skills of the Nation. Knowledge was transmitted not through a single “teacher” but through a web of relationships that held and guided children as they grew. Each child was expected to one day take their place within this living network and help carry its strands forward (Simpson, 2017).

This intergenerational intimacy was bound to place as well as to people. Families and Nations returned to familiar rivers, lakes, and gathering spaces over successive generations. In these places, children experienced not only their own growth but the lingering presence of ancestors and the promise of those yet to come. Land held memory. Songs carried instruction. Stories anchored belonging. As Kahente Horn-Miller reminds us, Indigenous ways of knowing are not abstract; they

are rooted in the land, in breath and movement, in story and song. “It is the elements of our lived experience in the world that inform our songs, our dances, our ceremonies, and our stories” (Horn-Miller, 2023, p. 5).

Indigenous education was not confined to childhood. It was a lifelong, multigenerational practice, a relational continuum in which identity, responsibility, and community were inseparable.

It is a version of this same pattern, removed from its sacred context, that underpins the enduring power of elite summer camps. Generations return to the same places, grow up within the same cabin groups, share hardships and triumphs, and build bonds that extend far beyond childhood.

Naming this truth not only brings forward what was taken but honours the depth, brilliance, and resilience of the knowledges from which these structures were drawn. The continuity of Indigenous wisdom, carried through centuries of attempted erasure, is a testament to the creativity, fluidity, and strength of Indigenous peoples themselves. These ways of being with the land have sustained life far longer than any camp program or colonial institution. In many ways, our shared survival is still tied to the same relational intelligence that colonial powers sought to sever, even as elite settler society quietly used it to fortify itself.

For camps such as Taylor Statten, which opened in 1921, there have already been at least four generations who have attended in succession. Former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reflected on his own time at Camp Ahmek, the boys’ camp within Taylor Statten, in a personal letter to camp youth and staff (see Appendix F). He wrote that his summers on Canoe Lake “generated memories that I will cherish forever” and that “camp taught [him] many valuable lessons about life and leadership.”

Trudeau’s words echo what generations of Canada’s elite have long known: these camps were not merely leisure, but social training grounds where the foundations of influence, leadership, and loyalty were quietly laid. As journalist Roy MacGregor observed, “Taylor Statten Camps... have

served as a summer cradle for an impressive portion of the Canadian elite” (MacGregor, 1976, p. 12). Friendships born on canoe trips later resurfaced in boardrooms, marriages, and parliament.

8.2 Return to Place

For many Indigenous Nations, the land is understood as the first and most important teacher. What settlers often frame as “outdoor skills” such as hunting, fishing, fire-making, canoeing, crafting, and song are, in these contexts, not recreational activities but expressions of relationship, responsibility, and knowledge transmission. These practices are inseparable from spirituality, ceremony, and community life. Teachings are passed on in the company of parents, grandparents, and extended kin, weaving technical skill with values of humility, reciprocity, and stewardship.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson describes this framework as Nishnaabewin, the practice and process of living as Nishnaabe. More than identity, Nishnaabewin is a way of being and knowing rooted in land, language, and relationship. It encompasses governance, education, spirituality, and community life, always unfolding in relation to place and kinship (Simpson, 2017, p. 155). As Elder Leroy Little Bear reminds us, “Tribal territory is important because Earth is our Mother... It is on the Earth and from the Earth that cycles, phases, patterns... can be observed” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 78). His words reject the Western habit of treating Indigenous knowledge as symbolic rather than empirical.

From these teachings, we can understand that learning from the land is not a subject or skill set, it is a way of living grounded in connection to place, community, and all our relations. Indigenous education unfolded through seasonal rounds, with families and communities moving rhythmically through their territories in alignment with environmental cycles. Simpson describes how Nishnaabeg lifeways required “cyclical and rhythmical movements,” where governance, spirituality, and sustenance emerged through seasonal mobilizations (Simpson, 2011, p. 85). In the

spring, families gathered sap in the sugar bush; in summer they fished, hunted, and gathered; in autumn they harvested; in winter they convened in lodges for governance and ceremony. “Aligned with the natural world,” she writes, “Nishnaabeg people created political, intellectual, spiritual and social lifeways that enabled them to align themselves individually and collectively with the life forces of their territories” (Simpson, 2011, p. 89).

To return to place season after season was both survival and governance, both sustenance and spirit. The land was not backdrop; it was teacher, relative, and law.

In contrast, elite summer camps transformed this profound relational practice into a privatized and exclusionary system. Research consistently shows that annual return is a defining feature of camp experience: “Camp is a context known to foster interpersonal connectedness... as well as connections to the natural world” (Sibthorp et al., 2013, p. 534). Settler youth were not only given access to land but taught to associate it with belonging, identity, and advantage. Camps became laboratories of settler belonging, cultivating continuity through their own ritual of “return to place”: annual participation, intergenerational return, and the formation of elite networks that extended into adulthood. Readdick and Schaller note that returning year after year, seeing the same counselor, and reconnecting with old friends fostered powerful feelings of safety, self-esteem, and belonging (2005, pp. 121, 129).

This annual ritual mirrored, in a distorted form, the cyclical movements Indigenous peoples had long practiced. But here, access was determined not by relationship or responsibility to land, but by economic privilege. What for Indigenous peoples had been a birthright of belonging was restructured for settlers as entitlement.

Simpson observes that Indigenous peoples aligned their social, spiritual, and political worlds with the lifeways of their territories, traveling seasonally in ways “unknown to centralized Crown governing systems” (2011, p. 85). Settlers, by contrast, imposed ownership on land, asserting

return as a right secured through property deeds, registration systems, and economic barriers. As Tupper writes, “Our collective memories do not include Indigenous peoples; they do not include acknowledgment that our home... and our cottage... are on stolen land” (2014, p. 98). Camps and cottages alike reproduce this colonial narrative, rooted in the “myth of the empty wilderness” (Tupper, 2014, p. 100). As Elder Duke Redbird explains, “For thousands of years, the Indigenous nations were functioning in a world without concepts of deeded land ownership. We believe we can no more own the land than we can own the air that we breathe” (Redbird, 2020).

The land-based return that elite camps celebrate is not new. It is inherited, reframed, and restricted. It is a privatized echo of a much older Indigenous practice, one that was violently disrupted for Indigenous children through residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, even as it was quietly fortified for settler youth through elite summer camps.

8.3 Tournaments and Field Games

Among the most celebrated features of camp life are the games and tournaments played on fields and courts, basketball, capture the flag, relay races, and other team sports that shape the daily rhythm of summer. What is rarely understood is that these activities are not of European origin. The roots of field and court sports stretch deep into the long history of Indigenous peoples whose innovations long predate European arrival.

As Elder Dr. Duke Redbird shared in a 2021 address to the Toronto Raptors, basketball itself “is very much an Indigenous sport.” He reminded them that the Olmec people were the first to throw a rubber ball through stone hoops, centuries before James Naismith nailed an apple basket to a gym wall. The material itself, he said, was sacred, the sap of trees, transformed through Indigenous knowledge into something that could bounce, move, and bring people together in play.

When Elder Redbird tells this story, it shifts something in me. It reminds me that what we often call sport or recreation once lived as ceremony and relationship, that play itself was a way of honouring life, learning balance, teamwork, rhythm, and care. What campers now experience as light-hearted competition was once an expression of reverence, a way to be in harmony with one another and with the living world (Elder Duke Redbird, personal communication, 2021).

Within all elite summer camps are generous and carefully designed field sport facilities, often resembling private athletic complexes rather than simple recreational spaces. These camps typically include multiple basketball courts, soccer and baseball fields with manicured grass, tennis courts numbering six to fifteen, and spaces for field hockey, lacrosse, and volleyball. More recent decades have added roller hockey arenas, gymnastics centres, archery ranges, and indoor turf fields. Camps like Camp Laurel in Maine advertise “professional-grade sports facilities,” while Brant Lake Camp in New York features nine outdoor basketball courts and two illuminated “feature courts” for night games (Brant Lake Camp, n.d.; Camp Laurel, n.d.).

These spaces are not peripheral. They are central pillars of elite camp life, structuring daily routines and rituals of friendly competition. For many campers, participation in these organized games is as significant as canoe trips or campfires. For directors, these fields are instruments of prestige, mirroring private school athletics and producing the kind of leadership, confidence, and embodied privilege that elite institutions reward.

But beneath these fields lies an older story. What is now tournament play was once sacred and communal practice, a way to honour skill, agility, and spirit; to build bonds and alliances between nations. Indigenous games were expressions of physical, mental, and spiritual relationship. As Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa) reflected, “Our sports were molded by the life and customs of our people; indeed, we practiced only what we expected to do when grown. Our games were feats with

the bow and arrow, foot and pony races, wrestling, swimming and imitation of the customs and habits of our fathers” (Eastman, 1902, p. 62).

These tournaments strengthened relationships between families and nations, bringing people together to celebrate shared vitality rather than domination. As Simpson writes, “Our nation is about the promotion of peace... the things that really matter in life are relationships, knowledge and experiences of the heart” (Simpson, 2011, p. 95). Competition, when it occurred, was framed as spiritual balance, measuring courage and honour, not conquest.

Under colonial governance, these practices were not only misunderstood but criminalized. The 1895 Amendment to the Indian Act banned ceremonies involving gift-giving or communal celebration, rendering traditional gatherings indictable offences. Potlatches, tournaments, and other cultural gatherings, core spaces of renewal, were outlawed.

Even as these ceremonies were violently suppressed, settler institutions appropriated them. Elite summer camps integrated tournaments, challenges, and ceremonies into daily and seasonal rhythms. Intracamp competitions, colour wars, and award nights became key bonding rituals for settler youth. “Camp provides a distinctive setting in which campers participate in group activities... work together, value others’ viewpoints and differences, communicate, take on leadership roles and be team players” (Sibthorp et al., 2013, p. 524). Shared challenges became technologies of belonging.

This transformation was deliberate. As Van Slyck documents, Ernest Thompson Seton directly taught “Indian ways” to early camp founders, designing council rings and ceremonies modeled explicitly on Indigenous forms. “The Book of Woodcraft also provided Seton’s specifications for building a ‘council-fire circle,’ the term he used to signify an Indian fire ring” (Van Slyck, 2006, p. 184). He travelled from camp to camp, Camp Dudley, Camp Chief Ouray, Camp Wigwam, teaching dances, sweat lodge ceremonies, and symbolic “tribal” competitions (Van Slyck, 2006, pp. 185–

191). Campers “paddled war canoes and learned the Indian way of making fire at their weekly council fires” (Van Slyck, 2006, p. 185).

At camps like Wohelo, council fires became central to weekly ritual (Van Slyck, 2006, p. 187). But what had once been a site of song, story, and ceremony was hollowed out, replaced with a language of camp spirit, awards, and entertainment. Indigenous fire circles, once spaces where Elders transmitted songs, ethics, law, and memory, became evening programming for laughter and applause (Miller, 1997, pp. 25–33).

This is appropriation in one of its most insidious forms: what was violently criminalized for Indigenous peoples was quietly repackaged and celebrated for settlers. While Indigenous children were held in residential schools, elite settler children were participating in appropriated ceremonies and tournaments, folded seamlessly into camp life. These rituals fortified elite networks, granting settler youth the same sense of belonging, shared identity, and continuity that Indigenous children were systematically denied.



In 1949, Indigenous boys at Old Sun Residential School were confined to desks and punished for practicing their own traditions, while that same year, settler boys at Camp Pathfinder sat in a circle wearing imitation headdresses and passing a ceremonial pipe and drum.

8.4 Portaging

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) offers a vivid account of how land itself becomes a teacher through the daily practices of travel, gathering, and making. She describes how

portages and wetland crossings function as sites of learning. Rather than treating the carry between waterways as a hardship, these moments teach cooperation, humility, and attentiveness to place. Through tactile learning, wading into marshes, carrying materials, weaving mats, students experience how the land meets their needs for food, shelter, warmth, and beauty. Cattails provide insulation, cordage, bedding, and medicine, while spruce roots offer strength and flexibility for baskets and wigwam construction. These lessons teach interdependence and reciprocity with the beings that sustain life. In Indigenous worldviews, these plants are regarded as relatives, not resources, understood to “take care of us” just as humans care for them (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 223–240).

Portaging, in this worldview, is not a performance of endurance; it is a pedagogical act. Moving together through land requires shared decision-making, trust, and care for one another, mirroring collective responsibilities within Indigenous societies. As Kimmerer notes, “in learning reciprocity, the hands can lead the heart” (p. 240). Historically, these practices were part of the seasonal round of travel: “Family groups and clans travelled cyclically throughout their territories based on the thirteen moons of the year, the seasons and their knowledge of cyclical change in the natural world” (Simpson, 2011, p. 89).

Indigenous portage routes carried not only canoes but diplomacy. The ability to move across landscapes required reading the sky, wind, and animal movements. As Riviere’s Pole, Paddle and Portage (1969) records, even the most celebrated settler “bibles” of canoe tripping are steeped in Indigenous observation: “Shawnee Indians looked for a ‘great wind’ whenever wild doves perched on low limbs or close to the tree trunk; ‘great rain’ would come if the birds flew low and silently... These were not superstitions” (p. 134). The very trails campers walk and the reading of weather they rely on are Indigenous teachings, even when unnamed.

By contrast, portaging in elite residential summer camps is framed as a rite of passage, a practice for individual development rather than collective reciprocity. Beginning at age seven with short two-night trips and increasing each year, campers are initiated into canoe tripping as a staged curriculum of endurance. By sixteen, many undertake extended expeditions lasting up to two months, returning bonded to their cabin groups and eager to become trip leaders (Author's field observations, Camp New Moon, 2002–2003; Taylor Statten Camp, 2014).

In early years these journeys are often marked by fear: the weight of the canoe feels unbearable, the blackflies relentless, the route long. Over time, through repeated shared hardship, portaging becomes embedded in camp identity. As the host of the Paddle and Portage podcast put it, "That's really what Paddle and Portage is about... celebrating the wilderness, talking about the wilderness, our experiences, other people's experiences, and including our experiences introducing people to the boundary waters" (July 11, 2025). Another episode makes the culture of challenge explicit: after describing steep, slippery trails and swarms of bugs, one host muses, "Yeah, for the chance to see a muskox... or chase a polar bear away from camp. I mean, yeah, it sounds actually kind of dreamy," noting that the landscape "can't sustain human settlements very well outside of Indigenous folks who have lived there for thousands of years" (July 1, 2025). Here, the portage is romanticized adventure rather than relational responsibility.

Camps build entire developmental sequences around portaging, not as life practice but as curriculum. Outdoor adventure education literature notes that these shared experiences foster cohesion and belonging: "Social cohesion refers to the degree to which members of a group like each other, whereas task cohesion is the degree to which members of a group can work together to achieve common goals" (Jostad et al., 2014, p. 25). "Many students participate in these experiences to develop new relationships and to feel a sense of belonging" (Jostad, Sibthorp, &

Paisley, 2014, p. 17). This bonding is genuine, yet it unfolds on appropriated land and within appropriated pedagogies.

As campers return year after year to the same lakes and trails, portaging becomes a deeply meaningful settler cultural practice while remaining detached from its Indigenous origins. Pludwinski and Grimwood (2021) note that “canoe tripping programs have been an important vehicle used by camps to introduce children and youth to ‘backcountry’ environments... Trips range from as little as a few days to multi-week expeditions,” yet these programs often remain “tethered to reproducing and sustaining colonial structures and systems” (pp. 425–428).

In camps, the portage is taught not as ceremony but as conquest and endurance, a way to earn belonging within the group. What is missing is the original ethic of reciprocity, ceremony, and shared governance with the land itself. As Leanne Simpson (2011) reminds us, Indigenous relationships with land are structured around cyclical movement, governance, and ecological knowledge: “There is a convergence between the complex ways Nishnaabeg and salmon organize themselves, govern themselves and mobilize; and that convergence is based on an intimate and inherent relationship within a localized ecological context” (p. 88). In Indigenous life, portage is a way of living in relation. In camps, it has become a way of proving oneself against the landscape.

8.5 Land-Based Learning and Skill-Building

For Indigenous Peoples, learning from the land has always been at the heart of education. Land is not a neutral backdrop for activity; it is the teacher, the context, and the curriculum. Skills such as canoeing, fire-building, orienteering, toolmaking, plant and tree knowledge, hunting, fishing, and crafting were not optional or recreational pursuits. They were woven into the rhythms of daily life and the responsibilities of caring for oneself, one’s family, and one’s community.

As discussed earlier, in Indigenous worldviews, land itself is teacher and curriculum, shaping knowledge through relationship and responsibility (Simpson, 2017; Little Bear, 2000). Learning is relational, embodied, and rooted in balance, an ethic of interdependence that links personal growth with collective wellbeing.

This was echoed in lived experience. As one survivor recalled: “When we played in the woods... We would make the bows out of cedar branches and the arrow... out of cedar shakes... and I would be copying the older people... on how to make an arrow and how to make a bow” (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, pp. 16–17). Knowledge was not delivered in a classroom; it was absorbed through relationship, to place, to kin, to practice.

Elite summer camps appropriated these same skills and reframed them as “activities” or “wilderness education.” Orienteering, canoeing, tree identification, campfire-building, map reading, and shelter-making became organized programming designed to build self-esteem and “leadership.” These were structured as contained, recreational experiences for settler children, not embedded lifeways. As Readdick and Schaller observe, “The camping experience with plants, animals, and breathtaking landscapes... might have been associated with these children's boosts in self-esteem” (2005, p. 128), and “children’s expressions of self-confidence and satisfaction with having passed the advanced swim test or learning new playground games... were excellent indicators of the benefit of having a varied program of physical and social skill building” (2005, p. 129).

Swimming programs are a particularly striking example of how these teachings are transformed into tangible advantage. At many elite camps, campers progress through formalized swimming levels year after year, ultimately graduating at sixteen with nationally recognized lifeguard and water safety certifications. These credentials open the door to employment opportunities outside of camp, often giving youth their first paid jobs and a structured path into leadership.

These camps present land as a setting to develop individual achievement, rather than as a living relation. “For many campers, camp is a place unlike other familiar settings... that provides experiences for children to learn new things, experiment, meet new people, play in creative and innovative ways, and to investigate new surroundings” (Sibthorp et al., 2013, p. 528). In this model, fire-building becomes a badge. Canoeing becomes a merit skill. Navigation becomes a leadership competency. In Indigenous contexts, however, these are not isolated achievements but parts of a whole, of governance, spirituality, and community.

This quiet repackaging obscures the origins of the knowledge itself. As Vine Deloria Jr. once noted, “Indian teachings in the fields of art, handicraft, woodcraft, agriculture, social life, health, and joy... speak for themselves. The Red Man is the apostle of outdoor life, his example and precept are what young America needs today above any other ethical teaching of which I have knowledge” (Deloria, 1998, p. 96).

Elite camps absorbed these teachings through a European lens that often minimized or trivialized their meaning. What Indigenous Peoples developed over millennia as lifeways was rebranded as leisure. What once sustained communities became résumé-building for future leaders. What had been collective survival and spiritual practice became exclusive recreation.

“Land-based learning and realities of embodiment, place, and story in perspectives of reconnection, honouring, and celebrating contribute to the knowledges youth must share among their generations, and with those yet to come” (Kress & Horn-Miller, 2023, p. xiv). Yet in elite camps, these same knowledges are selectively usurped, their relational roots cut off, their teachings transformed into tools of settler belonging and privilege. For Indigenous children, however, access to those same practices was violently stripped away. The very skills that were outlawed, punished, or erased in residential schools were rebranded as “wilderness education”

for settler youth. For one group, these land-based teachings were criminalized. For the other, they became pathways to leadership, belonging, and privilege.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: Back to the Future, Forward to the Past¹⁰

Elder Dr. Duke Redbird often speaks of the need to go “forward to the past,” a teaching he first imagined through a story in which Doc Red, an Elder-scientist, builds a birchbark time machine to repair the rupture that separated humanity from the Earth. Though framed as science fiction, this vision offers instruction: to move forward, we must first return to what is relational, reciprocal, and whole. The path ahead depends on our willingness to learn again from Indigenous Peoples, from teachings that predate colonization and continue to live through language, land, and law. It calls us not to borrow or rename this wisdom, but to honour, celebrate, and walk beside it. Education must no longer be a means of erasure, but a practice of recognition, reciprocity, and shared healing.

Elder Redbird explains that for Indigenous Peoples, the hierarchy of creation begins with Mother Earth, sacred and central to existence. Plants follow, offering nourishment, medicine, and inspiration. Animals, as teachers, guide us toward our fullest becoming. Humanity, he reminds us, comes last, held in humility within this larger order of life. Settler worldviews reversed this order, placing humans above all else and positioning the Earth as resource rather than relation (Redbird, 2020).

This divergence of worldviews, one grounded in relationship, the other in ownership, is at the root of everything that followed. What began as a difference in ways of being evolved into an

¹⁰ This title references Elder Dr. Duke Redbird’s SummerWorks presentation (Redbird, 2024), in which he reimagined the film *Back to the Future* as *Forward to the Past*. Through this vision, Elder Redbird illustrates an Indigenous understanding of time as cyclical rather than linear, suggesting that the wisdom needed for the future already exists in the ancestral past.

intentional project of control, where colonial systems overrode, erased, and absorbed Indigenous worldviews.

Residential summer camps now thrive as sites of ritual, memory, and inherited belonging. The children of politicians, celebrities, and corporate leaders return year after year to be guided, affirmed, and networked into power. Many of these camps, and the private schools linked to them, now offer “Indigenous education” programs. Students learn to canoe, bead, and portage, framed as acts of reconciliation.

A 2025 Globe and Mail article notes, Canada’s private schools now showcase land-based foraging lessons, Indigenous food preparation, and collaborations with Indigenous chefs (Joyal, 2025). Yet these programs unfold in institutions effectively closed to Indigenous children. The students learning these teachings are overwhelmingly wealthy, white, and settler.

Meanwhile, Indigenous learners continue to navigate spaces that were never built for them. As Cote-Meek (2014) writes, “Colonial and Eurocentric buildings, where Western knowledge and colonial mentalities are neutral and universal baseline markers of ‘scholarship,’ are unsafe learning spaces for Indigenous learners... Many of us navigate postsecondary institutions in survival mode. Survival mode is a traumatizing place in which to be and learn; it disrupts our cognitive functioning as students and changes our relationship with ourselves and our kin” (p. 34). These spaces are not neutral; their very architecture carries the memory of harm. Bodies remain alert. Nervous systems remember.

Even where Indigenous-led schools exist, their funding and governance are often controlled by colonial structures. While private institutions raise millions to build new lodges or waterfront campuses, Indigenous programs face strict limits on fundraising and infrastructure spending. Even when funds exist, they cannot be used to build land-based learning sites or spaces of safety and self-determination. This is the living architecture of settler colonialism.

As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reminds us, “The future chief, like all the other youngsters, acquired an education by looking, listening, and learning” (2017, p. 154). If this was the way of learning, then what did children in residential schools absorb by watching and listening? They learned the cruelty of authority, the silence of fear, the humiliation of punishment, the violation of trust. These were not teachings to carry home with pride, but wounds carried back into families, where the lessons of shame and domination replaced those of leadership and belonging.

This is why simply naming the Indigenous practices embedded in settler institutions is not enough. The injustice runs deeper than appropriation. While settler children were taught to canoe, build fires, and gather in circle, Indigenous children were punished and criminalized for practicing the same things. What was celebrated in one canoe was being violently dismantled in the other.

All of us continue to benefit from these ways of living in relationship with the land, the very frameworks the Crown once sought to extinguish and that settler society quietly absorbed to fortify itself. What was dismissed as “primitive” or “savage” in Indigenous children was repackaged as leadership, character, and resilience for settler youth.

The language of reconciliation has become easy to market. School brochures praise students for writing land acknowledgements and attending storytelling sessions. But as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) caution, these acts often become a form of “playing Indian” (p. 28), a settler performance that leaves actual Indigenous people on the margins.

Private schools and summer camps now teach cultural knowledge drawn from Indigenous traditions while Indigenous communities still fight for the right to teach their own children on their own lands, in their own ways. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) reminds us, this struggle is not about inclusion in settler systems, but about the restoration of Indigenous authority and self-determination.

And that leadership is already emerging. Elder Redbird's floating classroom, Wigwam Chi-Chemung, teaches Indigenous youth through kinship and presence. Clayton Shirt's Nimkii-Kwe Akiing brings children and Elders together on the land, rooted in traditional ways of being. These are not extracurriculars; they are acts of resurgence. Unlike elite camps with multimillion-dollar endowments, these programs must fight for every dollar and, in some cases, as with Wigwam Chi-Chemung, they are self-funded.

Elder Dr. Duke Redbird often reminds us that we cannot go back. The Two Row Wampum, though it once offered a vision of two vessels travelling side by side in peace, is no longer a living possibility in its original form. The settler canoe veered from its path long ago, gathering tools, wealth, and teachings from the very river it promised not to disturb. What remains now is not the restoration of that parallel journey, but the work of truth, responsibility, and repair.

Reconciliation cannot be achieved through performance or possession, nor through money alone. The work ahead must be guided by a different kind of return, not to the past, but to relationship. That means making space: for Indigenous peoples to live, teach, and raise their children in their own ways, on their own lands, in safety and self-determination. It means recognizing that dispossession was not only of land, but of generations. And because that dispossession was deliberate, reparative commitments must also be deliberate, ensuring that the next seven generations of Indigenous learners are supported, resourced, and honoured by the government that once sought to destroy them.

But the path forward is not ours to design. It belongs to Indigenous nations themselves. The work for settlers is not to prescribe or reform, but to listen, to return what was taken, and to support the re-emergence of Indigenous education on its own terms.

As Elder Redbird teaches, "We are all becoming the ancestors of future generations." (Redbird, 2022) Our task is to live in a way that those descendants will remember with gratitude, to design,

through education and humility, the architecture of a future rooted in balance. Let us, as he invites, covenant once more with our Mother the Earth: to act not for individual profit but for collective stewardship; to use our tools and technologies to connect in empathy, affection, and care; and to carry forward, like arrows in our quivers, the seven ancestral teachings of wisdom, courage, respect, honesty, truth, humility, and love.

Only then can we move, as Elder Redbird teaches, forward to the past, to restore what was taken, to honour what endures, and to begin again in right relationship.

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Figure 4. Seton Legacy Project. (n.d.). *Seton's relationship with Native Americans and First People* [Photograph of Ernest Thompson Seton and Grey Whirlwind, 1920]. Academy for the Love of Learning. <https://ernestthompsonseton.com/setons-relationship-with-native-americans-and-first-people-by-dee-seton-barber/>

Appendix A Indigenous Leadership Capacity Network

A speech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, presented on 02/28/2018

Ahnee, Bohsho, Sago, Tansi, good morning. I am Duke Redbird. In my native tongue my name is Mugwump Missqua Bininsay, Chippewa/Pottawatami Elder of the Turtle Clan; Member of the Saugeen First Nation Territory. I am the designated Artist-In-Residence of the Multi-Interdisciplinary Media Lab and Advisor of Indigenous Arts and Culture with the Toronto District School Board.

I bring greetings to this historic meeting of the Indigenous Leadership Capacity Network. In keeping with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit People's traditions, I wish to acknowledge that this morning's meeting is taking place on the ancestral territory of the many Indigenous peoples who have made this land their home from time immemorial. Traditionally these people were the Wendat and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, as well as the Anishinaabe nations.

The Mississaugas of the New Credit agreed to sell a tract of land called the Toronto Purchase to the European settlers on August 1st, 1805. As a result of the Toronto purchase, the protection and management of these lands has been passed to the present generation of Canadians in Toronto who now share a covenant with the Indigenous peoples to care for this territory, and a responsibility to continue the tradition of compassionate stewardship so that future generations will continue to enjoy the unblemished beauty of these lands. Remembering always that we never own the land but rather borrow its use from our children, grandchildren and future generations, continuing the traditional practices of our ancestors: Courage, Respect, Honesty, Truth, Humility, Wisdom and Love.

The theme of today's talk is exploring the feasibility of introducing an Indigenous lens into the classrooms of the TDSB. As I look upon the faces in this room I am reminded of the incredible Indigenous lineage that is our heritage. As Indigenous teachers and scholars, we have all been blessed with the privilege of sharing our wisdom and experience with today's generation of

students. I share that blessing with all of you and to begin, I would like to share a bit of my personal history. I was born an Ojibway/Pottawatami child of the Saugeen First Nation in Southern Ontario. My parents worked as migratory fruit pickers on farms in the Niagara Peninsula. An accidental fire took my mother's life when I was little over a year old. I was taken by the Children's Aid Society and placed into white foster homes and spent the first 16 years of my life being shunted from one foster home to another. The experience in those days was brutal, the white world considered Indigenous people as primitive and savages. I was taught that I was racially inferior and only the white education could save me from the terrible burden of "Indian-ness" that I carried in my heart and soul. This was not just my experience, it was the experience of thousands of native children of that era. The apology of June 12, 2008, by the then Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and the regret expressed by the Pope in Rome, exposed to the Canadian public a shameful chapter in Canadian history that took place over the 19th and 20th centuries. My generation was removed from our parents, our families, and were taken into Residential Schools and foster homes. We were indoctrinated and forced to assimilate into the white society. Many of us graduated from that experience completely ignorant of our traditional culture and our traditional values. The generation of Indigenous people that I belong to grew up in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. We were damaged, and if the hippie generation hadn't come along, which allowed my generation to express itself outside of the restrictions that the majority of society placed on us, we would have been completely lost. The 1960s were a time of burgeoning awareness by what was called the Baby Boom generation, who were looking at the values of their antecedents and tried to find a new way of doing things in the future. The Baby Boom phenomena opened up channels and we, the Indigenous Peoples with them. There began to be greater opportunities for examining the society in which we lived and the values by which society functioned. At that time, 60 years ago, I was personally faced with the challenge of discovering my own roots. My personal vision quest took me on a journey from the shores of Hudson Bay to the Aztec Pyramids of Meso-America. Talking

with storytellers, elders, and wisdom keepers I learned amongst other things that the major difference between Indigenous peoples and the white Colonists was in the nature of the motivations that existed in our separate societies. For instance, the colonial world that was brought to Canada by the early settlers and colonists, included money and power – which were unknown and absent motivators in the traditions and culture of native peoples. In pre-contact North America, there were no institutions of power. And money did not exist. The only reason to get up in the morning in those days was for the pursuit of food and shelter and the raising of the family. Romance was satisfied through the arts, music, dance and nature. Social interaction, seeking understanding of the environment and the wisdom of nature fell under the category of self-preservation. No concept of money! No institutions of power! Even the languages of the new world were linguistically structured differently than the binary based languages of Europe. Words like ‘why’, ‘either’ and ‘or’ were absent. Indigenous peoples could describe ‘how’ something happened but not ‘why’ it happened. The Old World and the New World were as different from each other as a typewriter is to a computer. The European idea that humans were superior in the hierarchy of creation and were driven to impose man’s will upon the geography and the environment that he inhabited, was in direct opposition to the Indigenous cultures that believe humans should change themselves to suit nature and live in harmony with our Mother Earth.

As a young man when I first heard the creation stories from the elders, they all agreed that the genesis of my people was always right here on Turtle Island. They never spoke of a land bridge or a migration from some other place. In fact, I learned from the elders that we, the Indigenous People, have always lived on Turtle Island since time immemorial. This knowledge was in direct contradiction to everything I had been taught in school from kindergarten through university. In those days, it was taught that a migration had taken place over the Bering Strait from Asia 12,000 years ago and that was the origin of my people. This theory has been revised by research published last year in the April 2017 edition of Nature the International Weekly Journal of Science which

categorically argues that humans have lived in North America for at least 130,000 years. The elder's teachings were right all along.

Growing up, I was also led to believe that North America was virtually empty at contact except for a few tribes of nomadic people who had wandered across the Bering Strait from outer Mongolia after the last Ice Age. I was taught that my ancestors were Stone Age peoples who had not evolved through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the Atomic Age. I was told that we were a primitive people and in some texts, we were even called savages. I was taught early that the Colonial powers of Europe had superior technology, civilization, and knowledge, and were following the Darwinian evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest. They used this argument along with the Doctrine of Discovery, a document issued in 1493 which provided a framework for Christian explorers in the name of their Sovereign to lay claim to territories uninhabited by Christians. The presiding theory of the time was that Indigenous Peoples, because we were non-Christians, were not human and therefore the land was empty or Terra Nullius. This doctrine of Terra Nullius claimed that no one owned the land prior to European assertion of sovereignty therefore, they could use this claim to justify their illegal occupation of our lands.

We now live in the 21st century and we are endeavoring to sweep the misinformation and ignorance of the past into the dustbin of history and begin the process of introducing the real story of Canada and the peoples of Indigenous ancestry.

In an effort to help you understand the Native perspective regarding these topics, let me begin just before the arrival of Europeans. The Indigenous population of Americas was estimated to be between 20 and 100 million or more. No one knows for sure, there were no census takers in those days. One thing is for certain the continent that my people called Turtle Island was well occupied and traveled for at least 130,000 years and was the home to over 500 separate nations speaking diverse languages, practicing different traditions and representing many unique cultures.

The Indigenous Peoples who populated the vast forest and lake regions of Eastern Canada lived in tranquility and harmony with the land. Our forests were home to a multitude of creatures from the majestic moose to the tiny deer mouse, the forest gave shelter, sustenance and life. Our lakes teemed with all manner of marine species. In fact, early explorers from Europe told of being able to lower baskets into the rivers and retrieve them full of fish; our skies in the fall were darkened by masses of birds heading south. Early settlers reported that the sun was virtually blocked out for days during the annual migration of the passenger pigeons. Amidst all this abundance our Indigenous Peoples lived in a condition of security and well-being that was the envy of the Europeans who first made contact with our people.

When reports of the New World began to filter back to Europe, academics of that day were astounded to learn that the Indigenous people of North America resided in harmony with the Earth and were at peace with their neighbors.

It seemed impossible to a fifteenth-century European that whole nations could exist with complicated social structures, without the so-called essentials of civilization. Here on Turtle Island our nations were socially sophisticated people engaged in trade and good governance without a written language, without books and libraries, without schools and universities; without civil and religious institutions, without Kings, armies, police forces, magistrates, judges or prisons; without coins, currency or banks; without concepts of deeded land ownership, without factories, guilds and poorhouses. Yet, these nations maintained orderly social structures, interacted and traded with their neighbors, raised their young, honored their old. In short clothed, fed, sheltered and doctored themselves, without taxes or organized enforcement agencies to ensure adherence to the rules.

This morning, all of us in this room, got out of bed, and started our day with a combination of the following motivations: money, power, self-preservation and romance, (which includes family, community, nature, music, art and dance). That's it. That's all there is to motivate human beings to do what we do. That is the world we live in today.

Another momentous and critical difference between today's world and that of the First Nations peoples of the Americas before contact with Europeans is that our Indigenous ancestors lived in an oral culture without a written language. To the Indigenous people speech is central and natural to communications. This is in direct contrast to the European practice of writing, which when viewed through the Indigenous lens, becomes marginal and unnatural to comprehending truth. This view corresponds with the beliefs of some of the greatest writers and philosophers in Western tradition from Plato to the romantic philosophical writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and even the modern linguistics of Ferdinand De Saussure and the anthropology of Claude Levi Strauss who all favor the spoken word over writing and the written word. The Indigenous people practiced the metaphysics of presence. It is like when I am talking with you now, it seems as if my talking with you is a presence, a direct expression of my thoughts, my emotions and even my spirit. My talk is how I present my thoughts and feelings to you, I seem to verbalize my true self. My words come directly from myself, they are a perfect one-to-one fit for my thoughts, feelings and intuitions. Writing however, is less immediate, it is more mechanical. If I write you a letter and I am not there when you receive it, I feel that you might misread it, but I am always present to you if I am speaking to you and my presence helps you to understand me. When the treaty negotiations took place between the Indigenous people and the settlers, the Indigenous elders that were present valued what was being said in spoken word, the settlers however were able to pervert the words that were being spoken with their written word - which held no value or significance to the Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous experience was in the present. It was conveyed not by writing but by gifts of Wampum Belts that captured in their design the spirit of the treaty. Writing the treaties down effectively poisoned the original meaning between the negotiating parties.

The northern Indigenous philosophy of Turtle Island sees humans as an integral part of the whole, which means that we all have obligation to the other elements of existence. Europeans who came to Canada from 1600 on rapidly came to accept and even live within the Indigenous

philosophical view. It made sense to most newcomers because they saw it as a way to survive. This could now be described as an appropriate even a highly contemporary philosophical model for all of us.

Since Aboriginal societies never introduced ideas of money and power into their daily lives, they weren't affected by an erroneous assumption that was concocted in the 16th century by Machiavelli and Hobbes and in the 19th century by Sigmund Freud who gave us a psychology of selfishness when he wrote that "children are completely egoistic". He claimed "they feel their needs intensely and strive ruthlessly to satisfy them". This fallacy influenced classical economics which adopted a model that assumes that people are primarily driven to maximize their power through material self-interest. David Brooks writing in the New York Times agrees with the Indigenous opinion, that this old European worldview is clearly wrong. Native people realized that the push of selfishness is matched by the pull of empathy and altruism. This is scientific fact. As described in Matthew Richards' book *Altruism*; "if an eighteen month old sees a man drop a clothes-pin, she will move to pick it up and hand it back to him, within five seconds - the same amount of time it takes an adult to offer assistance. However, if you reward a baby with a gift for being kind, the propensity to help will decrease, in some studies, by up to 40%." The native tradition of generosity was demonstrated in the early days when Indigenous Peoples throughout Turtle Island welcomed and freely shared the land and the earth's abundance with the settlers. Gifts were exchanged and it was assumed that whatever resources were acquired would be shared by everyone. Only when representatives of the crown introduced money as payment in return for land was the tendency to be generous crushed. The Europeans were willing to buy everything assuming that natural human selfishness would overcome the love of the land. In the United States for instance, when they realized that the land could not be purchased, they declared war and conquered the Indigenous territories. In Canada, the Colonial government introduced a treaty process that reflected the Indigenous worldview of sharing long after the Colonial officials had

ceased to believe in this Indigenous approach to life. This was the way the later treaties were obtained by pretending to believe the Indigenous way in order to get the First Nation leaders to sign. As a result, the government has become increasingly hypocritical and cynical.

No doubt, as John Ralston Saul points out: “an increasing number of the negotiators, representing Ottawa from the time of Confederation on, thought they could negotiate and sign in bad faith. In their minds, there was only one model – European – and so these treaties were simply tools of power involving a transfer in ownership of land.”

We are now in the 18th year of a new century, I hope that all people living in North America will realize that the dominant society views the world through a completely different lens than that of the Indigenous Peoples which seeks to live in harmony with the earth. The dominant culture continues to assume that their lens is superior to the Indigenous Worldview, and believe that Indigenous People want to adopt Western education and economic development.

Traditionally, communities who viewed the world through an Indigenous lens, did not scramble to embrace western philosophies. There is no doubt that we were, and we still are, happy to borrow all the technologies that are available but we want to use them with a traditional lens.

Today we are seeing scholars and academics of Indigenous ancestry considering the impact of western technological cybernetics and augmented realities on our traditional Indigenous cultures. Leroy Little Bear, a Senior Professor at the University of Lethbridge states, and I quote: “In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy.”

In our veins runs the blood of peoples whose wisdom concluded that the world is composed of an intelligent energy that pervades everything, gives it mobility, and imparts a specific knowledge to each species and entity. They also saw the presence of personality in the universe.

The motivation for accumulating great wealth and power through political institutions was absent in our communities. We had neither the tradition nor desire to exercise control over our environments through industrial or military means. Our work was dedicated to self-preservation

and romance not to the mind-numbing and soul-destroying labor, in factories and plantations. Money and power were never an issue simply because they did not exist. Also, the absence of written language meant the absence of schools, academies, colleges, guilds, and universities yet our people were very learned and had knowledge of the flora and fauna of this continent that matched the perceptions of the most informed scientists of our day. How is this possible? We know that the early settlers were dependent upon the experience and proficiency of the Indigenous Nations, yet they were mystified how a people without traditional European-style institutional education could acquire such sophisticated knowledge. The answer was and still is to this day, profound by virtue of its simplicity. Education is the ability to assemble information strategically to accomplish goals. Wisdom on the other hand is the ability to choose the correct goals. Wisdom is not a topic that is taught or studied in the curriculum, taught in our schools, in universities, nor is it a practice in modern life. Technology can put a man in space, or a micro-computer and nanobot in every creature on earth yet technology cannot answer the last question that should ever be asked of anything. And it is an Indigenous question: IS IT WISE?

Both by observation and intuition, the Indigenous People realized that wisdom is an acute knowledge that is embedded in the very fabric of creation and everything produced by creation is by definition wise. In addition, Indigenous People of North America considered that The Great Mystery is the creator of all things, and so believe that the universe is both wise and sacred.

The European idea that man is paramount in the hierarchy of creation and should impose his will on a wise and sacred universe is foreign to the native way of thinking. Many Indigenous people believe that the dominant culture's constant meddling and interference with this perfection is at best profane and at worst criminal. A wise human being lives life avoiding the pitfalls of profaning the sacred while at the same time seeks to bring the sacred into the house of the profane.

I don't want to give the impression that life in North America before 1492 was utopian and problem-free. On the contrary. We are all human pilgrims on a journey through life. Indigenous

peoples vented their prejudices with as much vigor as any human anywhere on earth. What sets our people apart is the way that we acquire and pass on our culture and customs. As Dr. Chelsea Gabel's research shows "historically Indigenous elders passed on the norms, knowledge, and moral values of society onto younger generations; traditional learning processes and knowledge, storytelling and song are all passed on from elders to youth. These essential processes were disrupted by colonialism and the residential school system. Being removed from the land, the destruction of traditional lifeways and intergenerational trauma have eroded intergenerational closeness particularly between the oldest and the youngest."

In the future, everyone will be doing a lot less labor because of robotics and digitized technology. Right now, the average person judges his success by how much he can accumulate in wealth and power acquired through perseverance and hard work. With less need for humans to do manual labor, their estimation of self-worth will have to adapt from a colonial construct to an Indigenous worldview characterized by innovation, invention, creativity and imagination. The challenge for the Indigenous community is how to share with Canadian Constituency these ideas that have always been the Indigenous lens. Perhaps the only salvation for the world that is being created through technologies is the wisdom of the indigenous peoples and their love of the land.

The theory of the 10th man devised by the Israeli Defense Forces states that "whenever 9 people looking at the same information come to the same conclusion, it's the 10th's duty to disagree and actively look for evidence to the contrary."

Our Indigenous cultures have always had individuals held in high esteem and value called 'Contraries'? Wikipedia describes 'a Contrary' as a member of a native tribal group who adopted behavior that was deliberately the opposite of other tribal members.

In today's world of information technology, artificial intelligence and robotics, modern corporations have introduced the Theory of Dissent as a type of Devil's Advocate to deliberately question the value of any decision taken by management. This duty to disagree is a highly paid

specialist position in the situation rooms of big business and industry from Silicon Valley to Wall Street.

Another remarkable idea employed by Indigenous people was the practice of counting coup. It refers to the winning of prestige by touching an enemy warrior with the hand, bow, or coup stick and escaping unharmed. In today's terms, we want to touch the heart of the dominant society with a coup stick called sustainability and the love of our Mother Earth. And by offering our contrary-ness as the 10th man in the room, in this case 2,000,000 Indigenous lenses against the 40,000,000 Canadians holding the dominant worldview, we can retain our traditional relationship with the earth and at the same time offer the world an option of sustainability that will guarantee a healthy and balanced future for generations to come.

However, pursuing a conventional education hoping that our degrees will guarantee a place in the Brave New World of the future is fraught with uncertainties and the danger of losing our connection with our traditional ways and heritage.

It was while I was at York University, enrolled in Interdisciplinary Studies program, that I began to explore the notion that vision quests and dream journeys were a legitimate, educational experience and could be compared to obtaining degrees in higher educational learning. Vision quests result in enlightenment, dream odysseys are like classrooms of the mind. Certainly, my ancestors put more emphasis on the wisdom obtained through dreaming than that which was obtained through observation or experience. I know the old people back home viewed, with healthy skepticism, opinions that I learned in school but readily accepted information that I had received in my dreams. I, like all of you, labored with my studies in the accepted manner and fulfilled the mandatory requirements: writing essays, passing tests and defending my thesis using all the tools associated with accepted academic practice. I was successful and graduated with my Master's Degree in 1978. However, I had a curious disquieting feeling that I had not explored all my potential and had not tapped all the resources available to me. In my travels, I met both

Indigenous men and women who had never set foot in a University yet had a knowledge that far surpassed the academics that taught me. In fact, I often encountered anthropologists, sociologists, archeologists and numerous researchers seeking the wisdom of these very same people: wisdom keepers, traditionalists, elders, call them what you will, they shared one teaching in common and that was that there is a creative energy that is available to us all and our intuition, imagination and ideas can be germinated in the womb of that energy. It may defy logic, it may not be rational and it may not conform to academic and scientific standards but it is the stuff of dreams and therefore, outside the normal rules of scientific research.

But not everybody can or wants to live as hunter/gatherers, or dreamers close to the earth. The fact that the traditional Indigenous worldview is different from the dominant worldview makes us a valuable voice against the majority.

Prime Minister Trudeau, says that Canada is the first post-national state, implying that we are moving from a natural resource-based economy to an information-based economy. Not unlike the traditional Indigenous management of resources who used Mother Earth as a knowledge platform to inspire innovation, creativity and invention.

The agenda of the Trudeau Government is clearly the link to art, culture and innovation and by linking them you create opportunities. The Prime Minister seems to be speaking our language. He has promised one and a half billion dollars over the next five years to Canada's complex and robust cultural infrastructure.

The money is part of a larger Government effort to include the arts in all aspects of life. These Federal initiatives correspond to what we in the Indigenous community have always desired and promoted and we see an opportunity to share in an integrated way the rich culture and art of our First Nation, Metis, and Inuit communities.

But those of us who want to integrate into the majority, we have a valuable lens to share at the very pinnacle of the decision-making processes that are going to shape the future of Canada. The

recent partnership agreement with Suncor by the Mikisew Cree First Nation in Alberta is “an historic deal for energy development in Canada.” Mark Little, president of Upstream at Suncor claims that “this unique partnership has been part of a journey that demonstrates, how innovative thinking and collaborative spirit can result in a mutually-beneficial opportunity and that it has changed the way Suncor thinks about their Aboriginal neighbors.”

Archie Waquan, Chief of Mikisew Cree First Nation says "We are ecstatic to see this partnership come to reality. It has allowed us to collaborate in a true partnership and demonstrates the possibilities of how future successful business models between First Nations and industry across this country can be achieved,"

Today the Indigenous community wants to use the new technologies as tools to bring native enlightenment into the modern world. Our forefathers understood that the universe is a living organism and needed to be respected. Having mastered the basic knowledge of nature, children were encouraged to participate in new events that would further reveal the possibilities and limitations of a world created and sustained by a great mysterious energy. Correct behavior requires sensitivity towards all other beings. A great tradition. A tradition that was sustained without drugs and alcohol, institutions of power, or money. But was achieved by observing the wisdom that is embedded in the universe and using it to enhance the human condition through peace, tranquility, happiness and gratitude.

In the traditional way of life of our ancestors there are many elements that can be integrated into a modern world. There are native children today in our classrooms who are aspiring musicians and hip-hop artists, expressing their poetry along with the rattle and drum. There are also those students who will become leaders, elders and wisdom keepers sitting in the boardrooms of industry and sharing their Indigenous traditions. We are all seeking places that we can express Indigenous values in a modern world that celebrate and uphold the values of our native cultures and communities.

As we continue our journey as teachers let us share our heritage with generosity and frame our culture with the seven ancestral teachings of wisdom, courage, respect, honesty, truth, humility and love.

I wish you much continued success and gently remind you that we are becoming the ancestors in training, that the grandchildren of our grandchildren will be quoting in the classrooms of the future.

Chii Miigwetch.

Appendix B A Dish with One Spoon

A speech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird for MIT Creation Labs, presented on 11/10/2020

Good afternoon and welcome. The Theme of today's talk is A Dish With One Spoon, and it is framed in four categories. The BLINK OF AN EYE, otherwise known as the Big Bang that delivered the gift of life to Mother Earth and the Indigenous People; the STROKE OF A PEN that enabled the Europeans Colonists to take it all away and erase our culture; the CLICK OF A MOUSE, technology which we have acquired to retrieve our freedom, our culture and traditions; and the SPEED OF LIGHT the acceleration necessary to guarantee a viable future for everyone on this planet. A Dish With One Spoon is a term used traditionally by Indigenous Peoples to describe an agreement between separate communities of nations. It put parameters around the sharing of essential resources that were delivered by the Creator in the BLINK OF AN EYE, known as The Big Bang. Think of it this way, all people who occupy this planet are eating from a single dish called Mother Earth. One spoon signifies that all living creatures share Her resources. They are expected to limit their consumption of the resources so that enough is left for all other creatures, humans included. This comprehension ensured the continued viability of Mother Earth and all her offspring into the future.

For the Indigenous People the hierarchy of creation starts with Mother Earth. She is central to existence, and we believe that She is sacred. The plants and vegetation come next, and they are empowered with the gift of healing us, feeding us, and inspiring us with visions. The creatures who have achieved their evolutionary perfection are teachers who guide us on our journey toward our ultimate destination as human beings. Since Indigenous People were hunters and gatherers our relationship to the universe was on a mythic or spiritual level. We understand that we function as all creatures do and that when we are born our primary drive is to be social. Babies seek attachment, companionship, affection, intimacy, and have an impactive capacity for empathy. In the Indigenous world those characteristics were allowed to mature and the communities we lived

in were motivated by creative imagination that fosters the arts, and self-preservation rather than competition, materialism, power and money.

Indigenous People know, as we all do, that we have but one life, that every moment is fragile and that it is a challenge to exist. Our life is unrepeatable and each of us have our own personal history on this earth. We develop empathy when we experience another human being and understand that every moment of the day is a combination of death and a celebration of life.

For 93% of the time that humans have existed on this planet, we lived as foragers, hunters and gatherers. However, unlike humans on other continents that had domesticated animals as an energy source, the Indigenous People in the Americas did not domesticate animals, nor did we invent the plowshare to dig into the land. In fact, when Indigenous people first saw horses tilling the land many were aghast that the sharp blade of the plow was cutting into Mother Earth. The best example of how Indigenous people cultivated an agricultural food source can be seen through the planting practices of corn, bean, and squash known as the three sisters. This method has been called companion planting, where each plant helps the other to survive. Three seeds were planted together in mounds of soil in a trinity of cooperation on the surface of the earth. We now know that the benefit of this type of agriculture is that no carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere and so it ensures the vitality of the soil from one generation to the next. We did not have to use pesticides because the micro-biosphere of the earth contained a diversity of organisms that were all connected and related. As a result, our agriculture was self-fertilizing and self-propagating.

Humans created language to organize themselves socially for survival and a social life. Indigenous People had acquired something called mythical consciousness which allowed them to follow a spiritual pathway to human development instead of a physical one. To quote Dr. Leroy Little Bear, professor emeritus from the University of Lethbridge: “In Aboriginal philosophy, existence consists of energy. The Indigenous people concluded that the world is composed of an

intelligent energy that pervades everything. It gives it mobility and imparts a specific knowledge to each species and entity. We also saw the presence of personality in the universe.”

The motivation for accumulating great wealth and power through political institutions was absent in our pre-contact communities. Our work was dedicated to self-preservation and the arts. The only reason for Indigenous People to get up in the morning before contact was for the pursuit of food and shelter and the raising of the family; romance was satisfied through the arts, music, dance and nature. Social interaction, seeking understanding of the environment and the wisdom of nature fell under the category of self-preservation. No concept of money! No organized institutions of power! Also, the absence of written language meant the absence of schools, academies, colleges, guilds, and universities. Yet, our people were very learned and had knowledge of the flora and fauna of this continent that matched the perceptions of the most informed scientists of our day. How was this possible? We know that the early settlers were dependent upon the experience and proficiency of the Indigenous Nations. Yet, they were mystified how a people without traditional European-style education could acquire such sophisticated knowledge. The answer was and still is to this day, profound by virtue of its simplicity. It has been said that education is the ability to assemble information strategically to accomplish goals.

The cultures of the Middle East 4000 years ago organized themselves around monoculture farming practices. The expansion of single crop plantations led to both the domestication of animals and human slavery. Indigenous cultures on the other hand lived in harmony with the land and knew from time immemorial that their survival and sustainability depended upon a symbiotic relationship with nature. We learned to change ourselves to suit nature rather than attempt - as the Empires of the Old World had done - to change nature to suit themselves. The Colonial Power's from Europe brought with them in 1492 what they believed to be an infallible truth. This truth, delivered by their God, was that all humans are born with Original Sin and that only Christians are

entitled to have dominion over the earth and all her manifold resources. This was and is in direct opposition to the Indigenous cultures who had no notion whatsoever of Judeo-Christian ideas. Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island were inherently motivated to live in harmony with Mother Nature.

The Indigenous world has an enlightened and symbiotic relationship with nature. Prior to Colonial contact, the energy we used was freely obtained from the earth: sun, wind, water, and geothermal heat. We were socially sophisticated, we engaged in trade and good governance without a written language, without books and libraries, without schools and universities; without civil and religious institutions, without Kings, armies, police forces, magistrates, judges or prisons; without coins, currency or banks; without concepts of deeded land ownership, without factories, guilds and poorhouses. Yet, we maintained orderly social structures, interacted and traded with our neighbors, raised our young, honored our old. In short, we clothed, fed, sheltered and doctored ourselves without taxes or organized enforcement agencies to ensure adherence to the rules. Our energies sources were available to everyone and were delivered by the creator in the BLINK OF AN EYE. Agricultural and carbon-based societies require currency, banks, factories, guilds and poorhouses. None of which were present or conceived as necessary in an Indigenous world that lived with a concept of a Dish With One Spoon.

The settlers who arrived here 400 years ago bought and sold land, animals and people. They used money and power in their desire to acquire Indigenous lands, and they did not have the same relationship with our Mother the Earth. We invited the settlers to live amongst us and share the land and resources with a Dish With One Spoon.

The European powers however used the Doctrine of Discovery to justify their unscrupulous occupation of our lands and territories. The Doctrine of Discovery was issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493. It was used to justify Colonial claims on land and waterways and promoted Christian domination and superiority. The fake news of the day was that Indigenous People were “savages”,

“barbarians”, “inferior and uncivilized,” among other constructs the colonizers used to subjugate, dominate and exploit the lands, territories and resources of Indigenous Peoples.

The Colonial powers through the STROKE OF A PEN distorted the history of Turtle Island. They taught that when the settlers arrived, North America was virtually empty except for a few tribes of nomadic people who had wandered across the Bering Strait from Outer Mongolia after the last Ice Age. This biased and misleading characterization of the Indigenous world served the initiatives of conquest and control of the continent. THE STROKE OF A PEN taught that my ancestors were Stone Age Peoples who had not evolved through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the Atomic Age. THE STROKE OF A PEN told us that we were a primitive people and in some texts we were even called savages. THE STROKE OF A PEN taught that the Colonial powers of Europe had superior technology, civilization, knowledge, and were following the Darwinian evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest.

The Indigenous People living in the Americas already knew that we are human beings living in one biosphere with all other living creatures. We had been living in a miracle of creation, in a symbiotic relationship with nature from the beginning of time. When the empires of the Middle East developed around the great river systems of the Tigris, Euphrates and Nile valleys, a great division took place. Through agricultural energy sourcing the great empires of the Middle East became dependent upon the utilitarian and competitive nature embedded in the left hemispheres of their brains at the expense of empathy, creativity and imagination rooted in the right side of the brain. This did not happen in the Americas.

Hunter/gatherers lived directly from the energy of the earth unlike agricultural societies that produced their energy from barley, oats, and wheat which necessitated organizing large groups into patriarchal hierarchies and acquiring all the tools associated with protecting the storage of energies produced by agriculture. The agricultural societies of the Middle East became increasingly more complex, and they devised a tool called money to enable the marketing of the

products of their agriculture. As the agricultural communities grew into cities and nations, they established the idea of writing which enabled them to transport and mobilize information as well as products.

As villages evolved and became cities, nations and empires the world moved into fossil fuels to create technologies that would do the work of humans and animals. At one time the climate would determine production, but with the Industrial Revolution the climate became irrelevant. The burning of fossil fuels to produce energy is not climate dependent.

The Indigenous populations continued to follow the symbiotic relationship with nature and the natural cycles of life utilizing imagination, invention, innovation, and creativity over utilitarian exploitation of the land and resources through the establishment of institutions of money and power. Europeans who 200 years ago entered into what they called the Age of Enlightenment for themselves from what they considered their own Dark Ages ironically forced the Indigenous enlightened occupants of the Americas into what can only be called the Indigenous Dark Ages. The Colonizers brought horses and weapons of aggression to support their so-called enlightened conquest of the New World. This in turn caused the Indigenous People to abandon their traditions of Tend and Mend and adopt the Fight or Flight tactics of their oppressors. Warrior societies evolved in order to defend the land and liberties that were being taken by the STROKE OF A PEN through treaties and legislation. The lingering effects of that period in history are still affecting the emotions and sensibilities of the Indigenous Peoples of today.

And now 200 years later with the imminent climate crisis the dominant culture is seeking the enlightened wisdom of the Indigenous experience to rescue us from certain annihilation caused by Western ideas - ideas that disconnected their populations from the biosphere and from their fellow creatures on this earth.

The Indigenous People realized Mother Nature is an information platform and organized their communities using the same templates that were gifted by Mother Earth in the beginning, namely

biochemistry and bio-circuitry as nature created them. The Indigenous communities understood that our body is a replication of Mother Earth, it was from the Earth and the information She provided that we learned that all our organs and brains included were created in order for the body to survive. The body is constantly calculating and assembling information which results in feelings that instantaneously manifest in emotions of courage, fear or confusion in men and manifests in women a desire to Tend and Mend. Keen insight can be described as an intuition that has been sequestered in our blood memory over many generations that ensured our survival when it was triggered by our relationship to nature. A wise brain examines a variety of options and then acquires a consensus which allows a decision to be made that will ensure the survival of the individual. If we compare our brain to Mother Earth, She functions the same way. She considers all the options available, because everything is related and She keeps the wise decisions and discards the rest knowing that all decisions will affect all other areas of life. Western Civilization, since the Industrial Revolution that started in 1760, has tried to find a template that will harness nature to suit the whims of human beings. What a bad idea!

There are things that modern technology will never be able to do. We're headed toward a world where people are being partially programmed by algorithms. In the past Indigenous People were programmed by our symbiotic relationship with the Earth. Today, a lot of what the average person will do will be designed, set up, contextualized and motivated by algorithms rather than nature.

Technology and social networks are creating an electronic re-tribalization on a global level with the CLICK OF A MOUSE. We are creating a globe of villages as opposed to a global village. The downside is that the global villages may be designed by surveillance capitalists persuading us to become better consumers of products by mining our interior arenas. The upside is that we have an opportunity now to share from the Indigenous communities around the world a long tradition of living in communion with nature and bringing that sensitivity and sustainability to a modern world.

In this era of multi-various platforms of information, let us not forget that the origin of all knowledge and wisdom comes from a platform called Mother Earth.

Since She's always mutating and evolving, and always in a state of flux, this process has been passed on to Indigenous communities who replicated Mother Nature and as a result are also mutating, evolving and in a state of flux.

The settlers brought a culture from across the oceans that considered that the Earth was put here for the sole purpose of being mined and commodified by human beings. Indigenous People have always had a culture that recognized human survival depended upon a symbiotic relationship with nature. Our purpose was always to care for Mother Earth and cherish Her benevolence.

I think I can safely say that historically the Indigenous People have never triggered an environmental crisis. I think I could argue that the environmental crisis that we are experiencing today and that the youth are marching against was brought upon us by the pursuit of money and power and corporations who have been mining our interior arenas and selling us products that we don't want or need. It was Einstein who said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." If that's the case, surveillance capitalism is not going to save us from a dismal future. We must re-examine our values and begin to nurture four of the things that make us happy and human: innovation, invention, creativity, and imagination.

The mind is organized matter, a system with various functions like memory generated by chemical and electrical processes that science and humans know practically nothing about. When you interpret thinking and language you will find that the expressions that you articulate to yourself come instantaneously demonstrating that there was pre-conscious indication of a thought before you could articulate it. The language you speak will influence your perceptions and interpretations of the world. We now know that most Indigenous languages are verb-based and have a fluidity that allows the flow of thoughts and ideas to correspond to the flowing of a river rather than carved in stone. For example, we find that most Indigenous languages did not have the word "why". You

could describe “how” something happened, “what” happened, “where” it happened, but not “why” it happened. If there was a notion of why it was always expressed as the great mystery associated with creation and spirituality. Another feature of Indigenous languages is the absence of “either” and “or”. The fluidity of the Indigenous languages allowed for both options to be embedded in the one idea, always. Nowadays, we see this capacity of “either” and “or” being one and the same in quantum computing, which is a leap forward from the binary computing of the past. Functioning without the bias of comparative value such as up being more valuable than down, or good being more valuable than bad. Binary Latin-based languages from Europe separated the world into categories of “either” and “or”. Indigenous languages and communities function without these biases so that we cannot describe them by a patriarchal or matriarchal definition of community.

Babies are born social and acquire language from their parents. If the language that the parents are using emphasizes and communicates affection, intimacy, attachment, love and empathy it will nurture and support the maturity of those instinctive traits in the adult. However, if these innate characteristics are repressed by binary biases in the language, the child is directed towards separation, judgement, materialism and narcissism which can result in aggression, violence, and bullying.

If a child learns language with fixed concepts “carved in stone” so to speak with the concepts of “either/or” they perceive their world as separate, categorized, and partisan. However, if the language flows like a river as it does in Indigenous languages, the child doesn’t question and judge everything based on an “either/or” bias but rather recognizes the reality that all options as in nature are available experiences in life. Since Indigenous languages were non-binary, it was impossible to conceive of and create the world of Judeo/Christian Greek/Latin-based civilizations.

The Indigenous world before contact was motivated by self-preservation and romance as expressed through the arts, and not by money and power that was expressed through acquiring dominion over the Earth and all Her resources. The source of this wisdom came from the intelligent

energy of creation that pervades everything. In other words, Indigenous energy sources were spiritual, not carbon-based. Through imagination, creativity, innovation and invention, Indigenous Turtle Islanders can reclaim at the SPEED OF LIGHT the wisdom of their ancestors.

Fossil fuels, coal and nuclear power are old technologies that need to be replaced by new technologies which ironically are the original energy sources that the Indigenous People have used since time immemorial: the wind, the sun, tidal waves and geothermal energies. They are free and don't produce pollution. Prior to contact Indigenous People were using the energy of the water to travel by birchbark canoes, the energy of the wind to control forest fires, the energy of the sun to grow plants and geothermal energies like hot springs to warm their homes and heal their bodies.

Every generation of humans is given the opportunity to experience the meaning of life so that when we arrive in the spirit world, we will journey with all of creation to a manifested destiny of unconditional love. Dr. Bruce Lipton, an American Developmental Biologist refers to it as a process of metamorphosis similar to how a larva changes its chemical structure to become a caterpillar and then a butterfly. Humanity could be metaphorically referred to as a larva that became a caterpillar 4000 years ago. The advent of agriculture, money and writing created a ravenous appetite to consume and destroy everything in its path. Nature in its wisdom at a critical time in its existence assigned the caterpillar to a chrysalis which created a metamorphosis for the caterpillar to emerge as a butterfly with no carbon imprint whatsoever on the face of the Earth. The chemical structure of the caterpillar was repurposed and redirected.

Nature today is suffering an environmental crisis caused by the overuse of fossil fuels and is signalling to us that it is time to enter into a chrysalis-type of restructuring, repurposing and realignment of our values and consciousness so that we, like the caterpillar may emerge into the future as sensitive as a butterfly.

In this world today 8 trillionaires alone control and have the same wealth as one half of the population of the world. They use centralized energy resources protected by the military

organizations and corporations to squeeze the very life out of human existence. Turtle Islanders intuitively knew 400 years ago that the settlers were peculiar, not unlike what is described by Joseph Henrich in his new book *The WEIRD People in the World*. WEIRD being an acronym for Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, a mindset that could not be understood by Indigenous People because we had our own acronym called HUMAN: Humble, Useful, Magnanimous, Abundant, and Natural. This was specifically articulated in a speech by the great Indigenous leader and warrior Blackhawk during the war of 1812. I quote: “The great spirit gave to us a world that was composed of the finest and best land for our home and use. The woods and prairies teemed with buffalo, moose, elk bear and deer with other game suitable for our enjoyment while the lakes, rivers creeks and ponds were alive with the very best kinds of fish for our food. The islands were our gardens where the great spirit caused berries, plums and other fruits to grow in great abundance while the soil when cultivated produced corn, beans, pumpkin and squash of the finest and largest quantities. Our children were never known to cry of hunger and no stranger red or white was permitted to enter our lodges without finding food and rest. The great spirit created this country for the use and benefit of his children and placed them all in full possession of it, and we were happy and contented.”

Since Indigenous languages were non-binary, without concepts of institutions of power and money it was impossible to conceive of and create the WEIRD world of Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic systems. The weird people took our definition of a HUMAN world away. But now we can have this all back at the Speed of Light by re-claiming all the energies that were given to us in the BLINK OF AN EYE: wind, solar, water and geothermal. Energies that are freely given by nature and can be shared as in *A Dish With One Spoon*. As songwriters John Lennon and Yoko Ono wrote in a song called *IMAGINE* in 1971 “imagine all the people sharing all the world”. When this song topped the charts around the globe, the technology did not exist to bring the world that John Lennon imagined into existence. It does now. The generation

of the 21st century has the means to construct the architecture that could only be imagined in John Lennon's day. The world John Lennon imagined did exist in the Americas before contact with the WEIRD people. We lived in a world without greed or hunger, a world that was a community of humans, we relied upon an energy of intelligence and spirit. Our dreams were mythic and were balanced equally between the journeys that we took in our sleeping state and the river of life that we navigated every day. As humans we journey from the source of creation at birth into the flood of consciousness and the river of existence, to eventually be birthed into eternity. The generation of humans born in the 21st century have a task unlike any that has faced humanity since the beginning of time, one that is strewn with peril, for the very salvation of human existence depends on their success. That task is to replace the collective consciousness of the entire world from WEIRD: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic to HUMAN: Humble, Useful, Magnanimous, Abundant, and Natural in one generation. It is imperative that the children of the 21st century have access to a worldview that celebrates the idea of a compassionate communion with all living things. We want the generation of the future to apply the traditional values and wisdom of our ancestors and uphold a sacred covenant to family, community and nature.

It is incumbent upon the SPEED OF LIGHT generation, born after 1995 to explore an Indigenous worldview and use technologies to change negative patterns and rethink the manner in which we engage the environment. It will be the children of the 21st century who have been educated to understand the need to protect the earth and of their own volition choose to use available technology to enhance their lives. Recognizing that the future of all existence and humankind is dependent upon a robust and sacred relationship with Mother Earth.

In the world before COVID-19 we were captive of the surveillance capitalists who were mining the interior arenas of our personalities developing algorithms that were designed to sell us products that we didn't want or need. We were the ones who bought the products. Nobody forced us to give our money to corporations. They convinced us that we needed them but what the COVID

pandemic has taught us is that all along what we really needed was what makes us human: a healthy environment, connection, empathy, affection, and love. Now we have the opportunity to construct the architecture of the future through information sharing that is open-sourced and in partnership with nature. We can use our agency to retrieve our freedom that we abandoned when we were educated to live in a WEIRD world governed by WEIRD people.

Let us covenant with one another and with our Mother the Earth that our primary goal in life will be for the collective stewardship of this beautiful blue planet and not for individual profit. Let us use our technology to connect with one another in empathy, affection, attachment, companionship and intimacy as we were ordained to do when we were born. In short, let us retrieve with the SPEED OF LIGHT the gift from the universe that our Indigenous ancestors described as the Dish with One Spoon.

Appendix C Red Talks

A speech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, presented for RedSky on 02/25/2021

Until approximately 4,000 years ago, all people who walked on earth were called Indigenous. Indigenous simply means originating or occurring naturally in a particular place. Our ancestors lived in a world that was a family of living creatures including humans who managed for the most part to live without greed or hunger. There was an intuitive interdependency upon the energy of intelligence and spirit.

INDIGENOUS HIERARCHY OF CREATION:

Begins with Mother Earth who is central to existence & sacred, plants and vegetation come next, and they are also sacred because they heal, feed, and many have psychedelic properties that inspire our imaginations with visions. The creatures are teachers. Since they have achieved their particular evolutionary ceiling, they guide us on our journey. Last but not least, are Human beings.

This is in contrast to:

THE EUROPEAN HIERARCHY OF CREATION:

Which puts human beings first after God, animals/creatures second after man, plants third, Mother Earth comes last, and along with animals and plants She is considered profane.

In the past Indigenous People were informed by our symbiotic relationship with the Earth and our cultures always recognized that human survival depended upon this symbiotic relationship with nature. Our purpose was always to care for Mother Earth and cherish Her benevolence knowing that if we took care of her, she would take care of us.

We realized that a healthy, thriving Mother Earth is essential to the survival of all living creatures, and we organized our communities using the same templates that were embedded by the universe in the beginning, namely biochemistry and bio-circuitry as nature evolved them. In other words, we were guided by nature and responsive to it.

Indigenous people understood that the human body is a replication of Mother Earth herself. It was from the Earth and the information She provided that we learned that our anatomy, organs and flesh included, were created in order for the body to thrive. We knew that we are human beings living in one biosphere with all other living creatures. We had been living in a miracle of creation, in a symbiotic relationship with nature from the beginning of time. In other words, a symbiotic relationship with ourselves.

Since Mother Earth is always mutating and evolving, and always in a state of flux, this process has been passed on to Indigenous communities for generations who replicated Mother Earth and as a result are also in a state of flux. Since time immemorial Indigenous Cultures have understood and nurtured the gift of keen insight. Keen Insight can be defined as an intuition that has been sequestered in our blood memory over many generations that ensured our survival when triggered by our relationship to nature.

The source of all Indigenous wisdom comes from the intelligent energy of creation that pervades everything. Therefore, Indigenous energy sources are spiritual, not carbon-based.

Indigenous people traditionally lived directly from the energy of the earth. The energy we used was freely obtained from the earth: sun, wind, water, and geothermal heat. Our energy sources were available to everyone equally. These included: the energy of the water to travel and sustain us; the energy of the wind to control our environments; the energy of the sun to grow plants and feed us; The geothermal energies like hot springs to warm our homes and heal our bodies.

In the Indigenous worldview Mother Earth assigned plants the task of healing us, feeding us, and inspiring us with visions. We hold a great respect for plants, the plants are our relations, they are us and we are them, exemplified by the breathing in and out of our mutual existence.

Oxygen released by plants, enters us through breathing and we convert that oxygen and what we eat into energy. In contrast each time we breathe out we release carbon dioxide and water, which plants in turn ingeniously combine with a lot of sunlight to make their own food and once

again, more oxygen. We are in a perfect symbiotic relationship with nature when we breathe each other in and out of existence. Leading scientists in the field of botany have recognized that Indigenous cultures have maintained strong traditional systems of custodianship over plant relations to safeguard their knowledge and uphold the associated responsibilities for their use.

Indigenous cultures have lived in harmony with the land and knew from time immemorial that their survival and sustainability depended upon a symbiotic relationship with nature.

They focused on cultivating wisdom rather than establishing the concept of formal education. Wisdom is embedded in every creature on earth. It is not available to technology, and technology cannot answer the last question that should ever be asked of anything. And it is an Indigenous question: IS IT WISE?

For the last 4000 years, Judeo/Christian Roman Greco Peoples have been driven to impose their will upon the geography and the environment that they inhabit. This is in strong contrast to the way Indigenous traditionally people live.

Binary Latin-based languages from Europe that separated the world into categories of “either” and “or” did not exist in the Americas. European languages create concepts “carved in stone” so to speak, being in a state of one of two mutually exclusive conditions. That causes the brain to perceive the world as separate, categorized, and partisan.

It is through binary biases woven into the fabric of a language that a child is directed towards separation, judgment, materialism and narcissism - which can result in aggression, violence, and bullying not unlike the world that we live in today. In a verb-based-language-world concepts flow like a river. The language does not demand children question and judge everything based on an “either/or” bias, but rather encourages children to be compassionate, affectionate, empathetic and social, recognizing the reality that all options as in nature are available experiences in life. A world that is HUMAN: An acronym meaning Humble, Utilitarian, Magnanimous, Abundant and Natural.

Nature today is suffering an environmental crisis with many causes and is beckoning to us that it is time to enter into a period of restructuring, repurposing and realignment of our values and consciousness. A Dish With One Spoon has been interpreted by the Colonial powers as a dish with a Knife and Fork and no Spoon at all.

The crisis that we're in at this time of human history would not have occurred had the interpretation of A Dish With One Spoon as understood by Indigenous People been distributed throughout the European world. Instead, they distorted the wisdom embedded in the concept and replaced the spoon with a knife and a fork. In fact, in the earliest version of the nursery rhyme that appeared in England in 1765, the fork actually runs away with the spoon and that could be indicative of the danger of letting technological forks run away with human spoons.

Today's crisis is a result of excessive use of fossil fuels, coal and nuclear power in the world. They are old technologies that were delivered to us by European ancestors and are creating havoc on a global scale. They need to be replaced by new technologies which ironically are the original energy sources that the Indigenous People have used since time immemorial: namely, the wind, the sun, tidal waves and geothermal energies. They are free and don't produce pollution.

It's time to expand our time horizons from seconds and minutes to decades and far beyond. In the same way that conscientious individuals do not shoot arrows in the woods without knowing if there is anyone present that could be hurt, we must stop shooting arrows into the future without considering their impact on future generations. The arrows that were released 250 years ago at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution are just landing on us today in our woods. The pandemic and climate change are examples of how decisions in our past are impacting us today and will continue to impact generations well into the future unless we acquire the practice of long-term thinking.

Indigenous cultures have a tradition of considering seven generations into the future when making decisions in their communities. Chief Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation Iroquois

Federacy is quoted saying: “We are looking ahead, as is one of the first mandates given us as chiefs, to make sure every decision that we make relates to the welfare and well-being of the seventh generation to come, and that is the basis by which we make decisions in council. Will this be to the benefit of the seventh generation?” We don’t know the answer to that question. Learning about the Indigenous culture is one thing. Learning from Indigenous culture is the profound switch necessary that could rescue humanity from certain annihilation caused by ideas that disconnected whole populations from the biosphere and from their fellow creatures on this earth.

We need to remember that in the natural world, all other organisms are doing what we need to do: build and design in a way that will ensure our progeny lives gracefully on the planet for billions of years.

Therefore, first we must focus on regenerating our environment. We must restore, repair and care for our planetary home that will take care of our offspring into the future. We must embrace love for rivers, mountains, ice sheets and savannas, and reconnect with the long and life-giving cycles of nature.

In order for us to become better ancestors to future generations, we can use the Seven Ancestral teachings to guide our decision making and increase our understanding of Mother Nature and the world that surrounds us. Think long-term (Wisdom); Be compassionate (Courage); Set and uphold boundaries/parameters (Respect); Be transparent (Honesty); Recognize the natural order of life (Truth); Unite and collaborate - you can’t do anything alone (Humility); Make Mother Earth’s happiness central to your own happiness and that’s Love.

All of these characteristics of behaviour, if applied to our everyday life, are obeying the first law of nature: to take care of the place that’s going to take care of our offspring into the future.

By living this way, we are beginning the transformative process of removing the arrows of the past from landing in the future. We will be incorporating the real meaning and spirit of a Dish With One Spoon which is the sharing of not only the land and its resources but also the humanity

within us as expressed through the seventh generational mindset. In this way we become better ancestors than the ones that led us where we are today.

Let us covenant with one another and with our Mother the Earth that our primary goal in life will be for the collective stewardship of this beautiful blue planet and not for individual profit and let us use our technology to connect with one another in empathy, affection, attachment, companionship and intimacy as we were ordained to do when we were born.

Put these ancestral teachings as arrows in our quivers and let's shoot them into our future thus ensuring our progeny will be well-equipped to continue the first and only law of nature: to be born, reproduce, and be birthed into eternity.

Thank you and Miigwetch

Appendix D: Biidaaban

Aspeech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, presented on 12/06/2022

Ahnee, Bosho, Sago, Tansi, Greetings, thank you for the kind words of introduction. I am an Elder from the Saugeen Ojibway First Nation on the shores of Lake Huron and a grandfather and great-grandfather. I have worked for the Toronto District School Board since 2014 when the Urban Indigenous Education Centre was just an acorn of an idea, planted and nurtured by Tanya Senk and Dr. Susan Dion. The organization has since grown exponentially, sharing the fruit of the tree of Indigenous knowledge. I'm always delighted to have the opportunity to share the history and philosophy of the Anishinaabe people who have lived in this part of Turtle Island we call Canada for thousands of years.

Today I am speaking on a topic that impacts every one of us in the room. It is a topic that was highlighted in a recent opinion piece by Jody Wilson-Raybould, former independent Member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville who claims that times of transition and transformation can be confusing. We hear about how bad the Indian Act is. The first Indian Act was passed and imposed on First Nations by the federal government of the new Dominion of Canada in 1876. It divided First Nations into small "bands," segregated First Nations peoples on "reserves," imposed a system of government and control by the federal government, restricted basic human rights and established the residential "school" system. The Indian Act, with its 122 sections, was drafted as a means for the federal government to administer and control the lives of "Indians."

It is a racist, colonial and oppressive law of institutionalized wardship that has done massive harm to generations of First Nations people and continues to do so today. But it still exists, and we hear about how hard it is to get rid of it. But is it really? That is the question. If the Proclamation of 1763 was honoured and treaties that were made between the Crown and the Indigenous nations

upheld, there would be no need to have a Ministry of the federal government devoted entirely to the dilemma of how to solve the so-called “Indian problem”.

The Canadian Government is obliged to obey the British Proclamation of 1763 which states in part:

And whereas it is just and reasonable, and essential to Our Interest and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians, with whom we are connected, and who live under Our Protection, should not be molested or disturbed in the possession of such parts of Our Dominions and Territories.

How is it that the government is not obeying this proclamation that they are obliged to obey? How is it that we, as a sovereign nation of Indigenous Peoples, were not to be disturbed or molested, yet that is exactly what happened: we were completely disturbed and molested. To answer this question, we must first examine what we mean by the word ‘treaty’ and explore together the dictionary definitions of the word. According to the Oxford Dictionary a treaty is:

- 1) A formal agreement between two or more sovereign nations
- and/or
- 2) A formal agreement between people, especially for the purchase of property at a price agreed between buyer and seller.

When you have two completely opposing definitions of the same word, it’s called a contronym and it opens the possibility of deception, fraud, and intentional misrepresentation. The Indigenous signers of treaties, whether between themselves or Europeans, understood the word treaty to mean ‘a formal agreement between two or more sovereign nations’. The European colonial military authorities assured the Indigenous peoples that the treaties they were negotiating were agreements between sovereign nations. First Nations traditionally had their own governance systems, in which women often held the majority of positions of power. Sandra DeLaronde in Winnipeg, Project Lead on the Missing and Indigenous Women and Girls Implementation Project in Manitoba said

“Indigenous women have been marginalized and ghosted by the government since the time of the treaties. When we talk about the situation with Indigenous women and girls being victims of genocide, that’s where it started. When the treaties were being translated by the civil authorities representing Canada, Indigenous women were ignored and the translators also deliberately used the second definition of the word ‘treaty’: ‘A formal agreement between people, especially for the purchase of property at a price agreed between buyer and seller’. This was a deliberate mistranslation to swindle the autonomous Indigenous lands from the Indigenous people. Not

So, we can see that by strategically mistranslating the early negotiated treaty documents, the Canadian Government was able to negate the Proclamation of 1763. For thousands of years, the Indigenous nations were functioning in world without a written language, without books and libraries, without schools and universities; without civil and religious institutions, without kings, armies, police forces, magistrates, judges or prisons; without coins, currency or banks; without concepts of deeded land ownership, without factories, guilds and poorhouses. Indigenous populations of the Americas maintained orderly social structures, interacted and traded with their neighbors, raised their young, honored their old, in short clothed, fed, sheltered and doctored themselves, without taxes or organized enforcement agencies to ensure adherence to the rules.

The European colonists coveted Southern Ontario, territory occupied for generations by Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Wendat Peoples. The land was so prized that the War of 1812 was fought between the American and British colonies for possession. With the help of Indigenous nations, the Americans were defeated at the Battle of Queenston Heights and the Niagara Peninsula remained in British hands.

We all learn in the Canada History textbooks of the great deeds of heroes like Sir Issac Brock, Tecumseh, and the soldiers and warriors who fought to keep the Niagara Peninsula under the governorship of British North America. However, what is not highlighted or revealed in the textbooks is the fact that when the peace treaty was signed between the Americans and the British

at the Treaty of Ghent in the Netherlands, the Indigenous signers of the treaties between the British crown and the Indigenous nations, were not invited to the treaty table. As a result, the Indigenous people who helped win the war for the British, lost sovereignty over their own lands.

The Treaty of Ghent took place in 1815. The paradox here is that, 200 years earlier, the Dutch had already made a treaty with the Indigenous people called the Two Row Wampum in 1613. And they made no mention of that when the British and Americans signed the Treaty of Ghent in the Netherlands. They did not ask why their Indigenous allies were not at the table.

The Dutch had agreed to share the land and resources with the Indigenous Peoples - each in their own canoe - and would not interfere with each other's way of life. Consider that even before 1613 the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples had already made an agreement amongst themselves called A Dish with One Spoon. A Dish With One Spoon is a treaty that has been respected between Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island for over 1000 years. It describes a treaty for sharing hunting territory among two or more nations. One spoon signifies that all Peoples sharing the territory are expected to limit the resources they take and leave enough for others, for the continued abundance and viability of Mother Earth into the future.

There has been much talk recently about a much maligned, and rightly so, "Doctrine of Discovery". It was a document issued by Pope Nicholas V and pronounced by Pope Alexander VI that was used by European monarchies in order to legitimize the colonization of lands outside of Europe. The fact that King Charles II of England in 1670 was a practicing Protestant and Defender of the Anglican Faith, did not stop him from using a Catholic document to legitimize the theft of the territory known as Rupert's Land in British North America, and claiming it for the Crown.

What's not taught in our classrooms is that 89% of the land in Canada is still called 'Crown Land' and the inference is that it has been inherited by the present monarch, King Charles III who is also Canada's Head of State. Only 11% of Canada is privately owned. The Crown land is administered on behalf of the Crown (i.e. King Charles III) by various agencies or departments of

the government of Canada. The Canadian Act has no provision for any Canadian to own physical land in Canada. Canadians can only own an interest in the Crown's estate. I'm not sure this is widely known by society, and it is certainly not taught in the classrooms of our schools. I wonder if the real estate agents that sell all the properties in Canada inform their clients that what they have purchased is usage rights. The purchaser controls how it is used, and by whom. The purchaser can transfer their rights to another by selling it but at the end of the day, it's still essentially owned by the Crown.

Crown land is the equivalent of an estate that passes from monarchy to monarchy in perpetuity. Revenues generated from the Crown Land constitute a major income stream for the Government of Canada.

In these times of overflowing information and saturated attention spans, I wonder how many realize the dangerous ramifications of the proposed Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act. Alberta's Danielle Smith, who in her first days as premier is boldly replicating the same nefarious tactics of early treaty negotiators who introduced the most egregious theft of Indigenous sovereignty in Canada's history. It should make the Canadian public soberly ask themselves: do they want to have done to them what the Department of Indigenous Affairs is doing every day to the Indigenous peoples? In doing so, it ought to become evident that the so-called "sovereignty act" amounts to a threat to Canadian democratic reality as Confederation threatened Indigenous democratic reality. I would like to see the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the TDSB as a policy guideline on how to move forward in a good way towards reconciliation of the treaties.

In closing, since it's getting close to the holiday season, I personally sent a smoke signal to a distant cousin of Santa Claus', by the name of "Notwithstanding Clause", to disavow the legitimacy of the theft of Indigenous Sovereignty by the nefarious double dealing of the Canadian government since 1867. King Charles III could rectify the past wrongs of his ancestor Charles II

and return all Crown Lands to the jurisdiction and autonomy as identified in the United Nations declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The signing of the treaties between the Indigenous Peoples and the Settlers sealed our fate forever, as participants in negotiated covenants. Treaties that oblige all of us to go on a journey into the future together.

We are all becoming the ancestors of future generations. I would like to invite you to collaborate with the Indigenous peoples of Canada and help design, through education, the architecture that will guide our students toward a more perfect future for all.

Chii Miigwetch.

Appendix E: Summerworks

A speech by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, presented on 08/05/2024

Ahnee, Bosho, Tansi, Greetings and thank you for the kind words of introduction. I am honoured and pleased to open the SummerWorks Festival. I was offered this wonderful gift of Blueberry Jam, which is in keeping with a time-honoured tradition of presenting a gift to an Elder during any important event. Traditionally the offering would be a blanket, tobacco, or tea. When an important visitor visited, they were often gifted all three by the host, a blanket to sit by the fire and tea to drink and homegrown tobacco to smoke in the peace-pipe carried by an Individual known as the pipe carrier. Over time these gifts became ceremonial and were reduced to just one token such as tobacco. The tradition of giving tobacco harkens back to a time when tobacco was difficult to grow and was considered to be a very valuable commodity for trade. We no longer use tobacco as a form of currency, even in the prison systems it has been eliminated. As Elders we do not want to encourage our children to continue a tradition that has outlived its relevance. The token gift is by way of respect and many Elders, including myself, prefer tea or a gift that corresponds to the gifts that Mother Earth provides.

On Turtle Island the year is divided up into 13 moons rather than 12 months, there are 3 moons of summer. They are known as The Strawberry Moon in June; The Raspberry Moon occurs in July; and the Blueberry Moon in August. We take the calendar from the shell of the Turtle's back which is made up of a 28 little plate border and 13 large plates in the center. If you multiply 28 by 13 you get 364 days, and we add one day to celebrate the Winter Solstice and the return of the sun.

According to the Gregorian Calendar it's 2024. If the Indigenous People had the same calendar, the year would probably be 102 thousand and 24. This of course is an estimate, but I'm sure you understand what I mean.

I was recently inspired by that movie to imagine a sci-fi film of my own that would be called FORWARD TO THE PAST and it would be a reverse scenario where the present, which is so discombobulated that it requires going “forward to the past” to set things straight.

My film opens in 200 B.C. where a group of ancient Moche metal workers have just invented gold electro-plating that uses chemicals to create electricity. We see the opening credits FORWARD TO THE PAST. The year jumps forward to 1820, and Indigenous people are still using chemicals for electro-plating.

What takes place in the rest of the film is that two Philadelphian inventors, Pedro Salom and Henry G. Morris, used chemical electricity in a vehicle they called the Electrobat. This impressive invention so alarmed railway workers at that time who saw it as a threat to their jobs tending steam engines, that they destroyed this devil machine. Eventually, the internal combustion engine was invented by Henry Ford and others with the help of Rockefeller and Standard Oil. And this has created the discombobulated future that we are now living in. My character Doc Red in Forward to the Past is so alarmed by what is happening to Our Mother the Earth that he invents a birchbark time machine to canoe forward into the past with his daughter Naz CanFly to 1820 to warn the Philadelphians that the railway workers are about to destroy their factory where they are making the electric car. This intervention by Doc Red and his daughter Naz CanFly turns the past around so that the electric car is developed instead of the fossil-fueled internal combustion engine car. As a result of this Forward to the Past intervention by these two Indigenous heroes, the world of today becomes 100% electric and the fossil fuels that have caused Global Warming remain in the ground where they belong. And we all live happily ever after.

My film is a sci-fi fairy tale, but! Had the European settlers understood the ingenious technology of chemical generated electricity and batteries available to them 500 years ago from Indigenous science, not only would they have pursued chemical generated electricity and batteries, they also could have been persuaded to integrate hundreds of other Indigenous innovations much

sooner. While my story is science fiction, what I'm going to share with you today is what is possible if we decide to go down another road called and/both not either/or.

I am often asked by folks I meet, what is the role of an Elder and why are Elders so important to the Indigenous community? And I explain that the role is very much like the technology that is described as Artificial Intelligence and is utilized in programs such as ChatGPT and Sora Video Generator. These programs use algorithms to retrieve information from the cloud - the cloud is not a physical entity but instead is a vast network of remote servers around the globe which are hooked together and meant to operate as a single ecosystem, not that much different from the Earth Herself. Indigenous people were using a similar means of retrieving wisdom in a cloud called the human brain. An Elder uses what I call an Elderithm, which is information embedded into the collective consciousness of the Indigenous world from the lived experience of their ancestors. Just as ChatGPT reveals information through a series of prompts, an Elder similarly reveals wisdom through a series of prompts called questions.

With this in mind, I borrowed an idea from Albert Einstein who described the Theory of Relativity with the equation $E=mc^2$ that shows how (E) energy is related to mass (m) and the speed of light (c^2). It means that even a tiny bit of mass can turn into a lot of energy, kind of like how a small amount of ingredients can make a Big Bang, a Big Bomb, or a Big Cake

I have an equation of my own that describes a Theory of Relations, and it goes like this $E = \text{'art'} + H^2$. It spells out the word Earth. Art is the center of Earth. It describes how the (E) environment is related to a-r-t 'art' plus humanity (h) which is squared with all living things. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the role of both art and humanity in shaping and integrating with all our surroundings and all living things. A slight adjustment in the lens of our worldview can change the focus of humanity's creativity from exploitation to exploration and the value of preserving the planet.

The discovery of algorithms, at an organic level, through science, opens to humanity a sense that can only be described as an experience that we have come to know as beauty, art, and creativity.

Environment and art therefore are interrelated and need a medium and interpreter to recognize this relationship. Science and technology can be that medium and interpreter, and Humanity can be the artist, able to manifest the higher virtues of being a human being through awe, wonder, and gratitude for the miracle that is life. The hope is that society can design an architecture inspired by this co-creative process, and that humanity can exist within the awe, wonder and miracle of life on this planet.

We need imagination, intuition, creativity, and art in our environment; seeing the forests of possibilities that surround us rather than the details that distract us on platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, and Netflix. Nature has spirit and soul, technology has neither. Our future needs to be well-balanced between the technologies we use as tools and nature that we use as inspiration.

Technology must be used in the service of humanity, life, and enlightenment towards a better future on this earth. If we are to heal the side effects that technology for profit has inflicted upon our present generation, it will be incumbent upon us to return to the source of our existence - Mother Earth. In our distracted world of today, we seldom marvel or engage with nature from our hearts. We treat nature as though Her only purpose is to sustain us humans, and all other lifeforms are disposable. To balance ourselves against the negative effects of technology, such as anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder, and social phobias, to name a few, we must commune with Our Mother the Earth and be the voice that addresses the highest virtues of being, human through awe, wonder, and gratitude for the miracle of life itself.

I describe this as Indigenous spirit. Indigenous people have always had a symbiotic relationship with the Earth and utilized the Earth as the ultimate information platform for wisdom long before digital technology for profit was invented.

Thank you and Miigwetch.

Appendix F: Personal Correspondence

From Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, received while working at Taylor Statten Camp the summer of 2014.



Justin P.J. Trudeau

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Chef du Parti libéral du Canada



June 30th, 2014

Dear Friends,

As you travel to various camps across Ontario to make new friends and learn new skills, it is with great pleasure that I wish you all a fun and safe summer.

In my teenage years, I had the pleasure of being both a camper and later a camp counsellor on Canoe Lake, and truly those summers in Algonquin Park generated memories that I will cherish forever. Camp taught me many valuable lessons about life and leadership, and I know that over the next few months you will all establish lasting friendships and have a great time at your respective camps.

I would like to thank the Ontario Camps Association for continuing to enrich the lives of countless children and families, ensuring that all kids have the same opportunity to have a relaxing and enjoyable summer.

Please accept my warmest welcome, and I hope you all create your own memories that will last you a lifetime!

Sincerely,

Justin P.J. Trudeau
Member of Parliament for Papineau

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