



# INDIGENOUS VOICES, INDIGENOUS SYMBOLS

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# INDIGENOUS VOICES INDIGENOUS SYMBOLS

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# Te Taihu o Ngā Wānanga

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introducing our contributors.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Indigenous voices, indigenous symbols</b>	
Rachael Selby .....	4
<b>Matariki – a symbol of survival</b>	
Hohaia Collier.....	11
<b>Windigo presence in selected contemporary Ojibwe prose and poetry</b>	
Linda LeGarde Grover.....	19
<b>Māori symbolism – the enacted curriculum</b>	
Jamie Lambert.....	28
<b>Who says I don't want to come to school? School policies disenfranchise American Indian youth's educational vision</b>	
Patricia Quijada & Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho .....	36
<b>Sámi craft, a shadow of art in the art of discourse?</b>	
Gunvor Guttorm.....	47
<b>The implementation of a world indigenous education authority</b>	
Ray Barnhardt .....	60



## Introducing our Contributors



**Rachael Selby** is a Senior Lecturer at Massey University in Palmerston North and a kaiāwhina at Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa, Ōtaki, New Zealand.

She is a writer, editor and oral history researcher with a particular interest in recording the lives of indigenous people in New Zealand. Rachael is from Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga and Ngāti Huia.



**Hohaia Collier** is the Director of Administration, Hapū Development and Accounting Methods degrees at Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa. He was raised in a traditional Māori environment on the East Coast of Aotearoa New Zealand but was educated in mainstream schools.

He joined the New Zealand Army in 1972 and served variously in South East Asia and the Middle East until his release in February 2002. He has taken a special interest in the impact of colonisation on indigenous cultures, leadership and languages. During his career he was responsible for designing training for officers and soldiers and served as the Senior Training Officer of the Multinational Force and Observers responsible for monitoring the Camp David Peace Accord between Israel and Egypt at the Rafa Border (Palestine).

In 2000 he graduated with a Bachelor of Administrative Leadership from the University of New England, and in 2001 was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his services to the New Zealand Army and the development of cultural understanding. In 2005 he graduated with a Master of Laws and Philosophy, and in 2007 a Master of Mātauranga Māori. He is currently engaged in doctoral research into Māori traditional leadership models. Hohaia and his wife Maria live at Paraparaumu Beach, New Zealand.



**Linda LeGarde Grover** is a professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth and a member of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe. She is a poet, fiction writer, newspaper columnist and researcher whose publications include articles on the American Indian boarding school experience, Native literature, and Ojibwe pedagogy.

Her poetry collection "The Indian At Indian School" was the 2008 chapbook selection of the University of Arkansas Sequoyah Research Center, and her short fiction collection "The Road Back to Sweetgrass" received the 2008 First Book Award of the Native Writers Circle of the Americas. She is an Ojibwe traditional dancer and a storyteller who is active in community efforts to improve Indian education and strengthen Native families.



I te taha o tōku māmā he uri ahau nō ngā kāwai whakapapa o Te Awemāpara, Ngāti Porou whānui tonu. I te taha o tōku pāpā he uri ahau nō ngā kāwai whakapapa o Te Māhurehure o te nōta, ā, o Ngāti Hinekura o te wai tuku kiri a Waikaremoana, Mataatua whānui tonu. Ko Ashleigh Jade Tapine taku tamāhine. Ko Jamie Lambert ahau. He kaimahi au mō Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

**Jamie Lambert** is a Senior Curriculum Advisor for Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWOA), in Te Awamutu, Aotearoa New Zealand. TWOA is a tertiary education organisation where the teaching and learning is characterised by āhuatanga Māori (Māori ways of being) according to tikanga Māori (Māori ways of doing). “I am passionate about Māori education”.



**Patricia D. Quijada**, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Her research interests include Indigenous identity development in home, community and school contexts, Indigenous epistemologies, and multicultural education in community and school contexts.



**Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho**, Ph.D. is an assistant professor and researcher who was part of the Native American and Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI) while preparing for the professorship. She learned that investments need to be made to create long-term effects, especially in revitalizing Native-American and Indigenous cultures. Her research includes leadership issues related to organizational learning and ecology, hybrid identities/communities, social justice, race, ethnicity, and gender. Currently, she prepares graduate and doctoral students in educational leadership at the University of Texas at San Antonio, TX, U.S.A.



**Gunvor Guttorm** was born in Karasjok on the Norwegian side of Sápmi and now lives in Jokkmokk which is in the Swedish side of Sápmi.

She is a researcher in Sámi traditional art and applied art. Gunvor has taught both undergraduate and graduate courses on traditional Sámi art, crafts and applied art at University College level, both in practical and theory. She completed a PhD in duodji (Sámi traditional art and applied art) at the University of Tromsø in 2003 and is one of two people worldwide who has a PHD in duodji.



**Ray Barnhardt** is a professor of cross-cultural studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where he has been involved in teaching and research related to Indigenous education issues since 1970. He has served as the Director of the Cross-Cultural Education Development Program, the Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. He currently serves as chair of the WINHEC Accreditation Working Group/Board of Affirmation.

# Indigenous voices indigenous symbols

**Rachael Selby**

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This 2009 edition is the third in a series of three journals focussing on the theme: indigenous voices. The 2007 Indigenous voices journal presented papers based on interviews completed with indigenous women and men in Hawai'i, North America, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. The call for papers had encouraged the growing community of indigenous writers and researchers to use research interviews that had been completed for various projects and to draw from those interviews the visions which indigenous peoples have for the future. The 2007 journal was the result.

At the WINHEC meeting at Chaminade University in Hawai'i in September 2007, delegates asked for the theme for the 2008 journal to focus on indigenous places after memorable keynote addresses which challenged delegates to reflect on the importance of place and location, of rivers, mountains and coastal settlements. Delegates were treated to presentations about not only geographical locations but places spiritual and cultural places of importance. Delegates and friends of WINHEC again took up the challenge and this resulted in the 2008 journal being launched at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2008 in which eight writers addressed the theme of place. The tradition continued and at La Trobe University there was a suggestion that the theme of symbols and symbolism be explored in the 2009 journal and the editorial board responded to the call. Early in 2009 they called for papers for this journal, the theme being: indigenous symbols.

Symbols and symbolism are powerful to indigenous peoples throughout the world. The clothing and costumes that delegates wear to the opening and closing ceremonies often represent long held traditions and reflect the places in which we dwell, climatic difference, practicality and preference. The gifts that are shared by indigenous peoples at various

gatherings are symbolic of place, values, what is precious to us and our beliefs. They represent our handcrafts, skills, and knowledge, they reflect colours which are symbolic to us, jewellery we wear, adornments and musical instruments, songs we sing, language we use.

In Hawai'i in 2007, all delegates received kukui nut lei on arrival at the conference venue, Chaminade University. The kukui nut had many uses in times gone by: the oil being used for healing. The lei were symbolic of the hospitality of Hawai'i, respect for visitors and they represented wellness. The hospitality was also reinforced by the meals provided, the entertainment, the sharing of knowledge, the venue and the people who cared for the visitors during the annual meeting.

At La Trobe University in 2008, the Sixth Annual Meeting of WINHEC was hosted by Gary Thomas, Executive Director, Equity and Student Support Services. The WINHEC website records:

Gary and his fantastic team of staff and students provided a seamless flow of hospitality allowing the approximately 80 participants to enjoy three days of inspirational presentations and workshops from leaders of Indigenous higher education across WINHEC's eight member nations. The serious work of the forum was enhanced by the stunning cultural experiences provided by the hosts during ceremonial and truly wonderful evening events.

There was much that was truly symbolic in Australia: hospitality towards other indigenous peoples is highly valued and appreciated. The new Executive group from the Sámi University College presented gifts which were symbolic of their place. One of the gifts they gave to others was a small bag made of reindeer skin. I learned of how precious the reindeer is to the Sámi people, how reindeer herders are special people and how the reindeer is a precious gift to give to small children on special occasions. It is far removed from many Pacific Island and warm coastal communities that delegates were from.

These are examples of how our behaviour towards other peoples represents our values and beliefs, the way in which we provide hospitality to others reflects our own values and our appreciation of those who are our visitors. There is no doubt that when indigenous peoples

gather we recognise each other's values and appreciate them and the gifts we exchange serve reminders long after we have each returned to our home nations. .

The papers in this edition represent indigenous symbols. They contribute to the growing body of indigenous knowledge that this journal promotes. Hohaia Collier's paper introduces the symbol of the new year – Matariki. Matariki is the appearance of the Pleiades, a group of stars whose appearance marked the new year. In New Zealand they appear in the sky in the month of June, hence June is the Māori New Year. In recent times Matariki has gained some importance and acknowledgement within Aotearoa New Zealand. Matariki was a time to undertake particular activities and many of these are described by Hohaia Collier. He in turn, attributes his own gathering of knowledge to his parents and an uncle whose teachings remain with him today. One of the reviewers of Hohaia's paper, Peter Hanohano from Hawai'i was stimulated to write a poetic response to Hohaia. It is reprinted in part, as it demonstrates how our imagination is stimulated by the reflections of our colleagues and about how this journal presents the world views of indigenous peoples and provides opportunities to share these with each other:

The astral and celestial bodies that you describe, indeed, regulate the rhythms of life and all that lives. Their rising and setting are symbols that guide and determine our own life cycles. As you described the importance of Matariki in the customary practices of planting and harvesting in the life of your whānau, I was struck by how your uncle's life was symbolic of the remembering, restoring and regenerating of these practices in your life and the lives of your siblings. Now, you and your siblings carry on these same practices and teachings in the lives of your respective children. Thus, for me, Matariki represents not just the regulation and timing of these practices, but more importantly, now Matariki is a reminder of the great legacy left to you and your family, because of your uncle. And in time, the rising and setting of Matariki will serve as a reminder to your children and their children about the great teachings and time spent with you in doing these same practices. Thus, the cycle represented by the symbol of Matariki is alive and lives on in those most important to you.

So, what I experienced in reading your essay was:

Symbols as circles – for Indigenous people, symbols, including those in the heavens, serve as a reminder of the great Circle of Life, and how all things are related and connected. Because you took the time to be with and learn from your uncle, the circle continues. There are many Indigenous people who are not so fortunate. We have to remember them, and stories such as yours give us all hope to reconnect to the Circle of Life that belongs to each of us respectively.

Symbols as stories – in the symbols, we find the stories. In the stories, we find meaning. Meaning gives reason for life.

Or put another way:

No symbols, no stories. No stories, no meaning. No meaning, no life. Symbols as self – because there is meaning, there is life. Meaning gives us reason to live a good life. In living the good life, we find ourselves. We find the good life in living for others. Celestial bodies, such as the moon, sun and stars are reflections of our ancestors, whose wondrous deeds and memories are forever etched in the constellations that make up the Indigenous skies. They give meaning to our lives today, and serve to remind us of the great legacy that is ours to remember and perpetuate. They are not mere figments of an imaginary or distant past, but burn brightly to remind us of our true identity and relationship to Sky Father and Earth Mother. They give foundation to our place/standing in this universe.

My heartfelt thanks, Hohaia, for sharing these precious moments and teachings from your learned uncle, and may the embers continue to burn brighter in your life and the life of your whenua.

Mahalo nui (many thanks),

Peter.

In reading this I was struck by how much we have in common, how our beliefs and values unite us and how our differences are often less important than those things that we share. We can celebrate difference and marvel at our individuality while also celebrating those lessons of our ancestors.

Linda LeGarde Grover's paper deals with the way in which the Windigo is presented in Ojibwe prose and poetry. The Windigo is a symbol which is variously explored by Ojibwe writers. Indigenous peoples will identify with the ways in which those from the Spirit world assist parents to caution their children and perhaps to follow traditional ways. Māori people will think about taniwhā when they read about the Windigo, others will recognise these spirits and the role they play in our lives and in the raising of our children. The paper concludes with verse written by Linda LeGarde Grover, complete with symbolism.

Jamie Lambert's paper, Māori Symbolism – the enacted curriculum, explores images, words, behaviours and actions that communicate layers and levels of meaning in the Māori world.

She reminds us that symbols are interpreted as well as have specific meaning for individuals or groups. Jamie Lambert's paper builds on Turoa Royal's paper in the 2008 journal which described the marae as the resource centre of the Māori world. The marae is also a powerful symbol of place, of home, of belonging, of tradition and provides a link between today, yesteryear and the future.

Patricia Quijada and Elizabeth Murakami-Ramvalho from the University of Texas, present the frustrations of American Indian youth who feel that their efforts and their desire to complete their High School education are not supported sensitively by their teachers and by the School that they attend. Most distressing are the young people's perceptions that their teachers 'don't care'. It is a story of frustration for all who read it. The research undertaken by the writers found that the young students want to do their best for their parents and families and for themselves. They acknowledge that they have responsibilities to themselves and to the School but there are family obligations which they cannot overlook. Their expressions of frustration that the School is unable to deal with these is symbolic of the Education system's inability to address the issues in ways that are more creative and more innovative than sending intelligent young people to the cafeteria for an in-school suspension. It reminded me of publicity given to Wellington High School in New Zealand in 2007 when a research project conducted by Massey University's Sleep/Wake Research Centre investigated teenagers' sleep habits. It found that teenagers have different sleep patterns. In response, the High School (of over 1100 students) restructured the timetable and experimented with a later start for senior pupils. They were invited to sleep later and to start classes at 10.15 a.m. rather than at 8.30 a.m. Initial results found that the students were more rested and their school performance improved immediately. Lateness to school ceased immediately. We can learn from others around the world and find creative ways of dealing with issues. Flexible options can be tested and tried.

Gunvor Gottorm from the Sámi peoples has presented an argument which challenges the ways in which Sámi craft, *duodji*, is viewed and constructed in crafts and art theory. She indicates that there are difficulties when the language, *duodji*, is abandoned and the word, craft, replaces it. It makes it particularly difficult to assess Sámi craft from the point of view of art. She introduces new perspectives to the overall discussion on Sámi craft. This raises

issues for all indigenous peoples who deal with key concepts and symbols which are lost in translation.

The final paper records the journey that WINHEC has taken to develop its international accreditation. It describes the rationale for and implementation of the WINHEC accreditation system which has developed since the creation of WINHEC's Accreditation Authority in 2003. The paper is important as it is highly symbolic of the contribution to Indigenous self-determination in higher education. This journal is a forum in which the journey and key developments in WINHEC should be recorded. Ray Barnhardt's record of this development is a significant contribution to the journal and the story of WINHEC.

The Editorial team has this year, been challenged to work with more speed than usual. This is a result of the Annual Meeting moving back to the northern hemisphere in August 2009 after a December meeting in Australia in 2008. The call for papers was heeded in 2009 and nearly a dozen papers were submitted, some are still in various stages of development. We are grateful to the writers who have been able to meet our deadlines this year and invite more WINHEC members and friends to note the calls for papers in the future. We have sent all the papers for review to our editorial team and to experts from outside the editorial team. They were asked to comment on whether the papers a) contribute to indigenous knowledge b) are suitable for an international audience c) address the journal theme and d) are of a suitable length and presentation. My thanks go to the Editorial Board. It is a pleasure to work with a team who are responsive, encouraging, timely and professional.

# **Matariki, a symbol of survival**

**Hohaia Collier**

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## **Abstract**

The Māori people of Aotearoa, like their Pacific relatives, did not have a written language by which they preserved their historical narratives. What they did have was a gift of observation that allowed them to establish and build an empirical foundation of knowledge based on the activity of natural phenomena. Signs or symbols within nature provided guidance on what they could do. The appearance of significant astral bodies was noted as being coincident with tidal flows, the flowering of certain trees and the appearance of game birds. When aligned with significant landmarks they located fishing grounds far out to sea and allowed the terrestrial traveller to mark his location and to find shelter.

I was raised in an environment and in a time when that traditional knowledge system was at risk of being overtaken by new technology. Small pockets of cultural resistance remained however and I was fortunate to have experienced firsthand how traditional knowledge could survive and be passed on to those of us willing to accept the custodian's role. This paper reflects on the gift of observation of my ancestors and how that gift was exercised in establishing relationships among several sets of natural phenomena that were the basis of our economic activity and survival.

## **Te Ngārehu Tairoa – The Lingering Ember**

My uncle John Sadlier was born at Waipiro Bay on the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa / New Zealand in 1916. His father was half-caste Irish and his mother a Māori. He was raised and spent a significant part of his life on our ancestral lands at Whakawhitirā, about two hours north of the city of Gisborne.

In the mid 1800s the largest occupied area on the East Coast stood at Whakawhitirā and more than 3000 people lived there. Today there are 27 people living in the vicinity of the marae,

our ancestral meeting place. They are known as Te Ahi Kā, a term that means ‘the burning fires’ a historical abstract symbol that meant that an area of land was in occupation. These people maintain our traditional lands where significant gardens once flourished, where we fished, fowled, farmed and hunted, where we were born and where we return to be buried. John Sadlier resisted the post-world war two urban drift and until his death in 2004 was Te Ngārehu Tairoa o Te Ahi Kā (the lingering ember of the fires of occupation), a further abstract symbol.

Over his long life he saw many changes in the area and while he gradually accepted the technology of the later settler, he remained a gardener, fisherman and food gatherer whose methods were located in the appearance of selected stars and constellations in the eastern sky. The appearances of these stars were symbols that indicated that conditions were propitious or otherwise for various activities to occur and acted as self-regulating conservation mechanisms.

Between 2002 and 2004 I spent much time interviewing my uncle and recording his experiences so that later generations will never lose the significance of the symbolism of ngā whetū o te tau (the stars) and their place in our survival. This essay is a selection of the experiences that I was fortunate to have been entrusted with. Much of my source material was recorded in the Māori dialect of Te Whānau a Uruahi (a sub tribe of the east coast of Aotearoa) and I have reproduced some of his quotes here in English for a wider audience.

John Sadlier and his siblings, my mother included, were raised in an environment of hard work where everyone had their responsibilities. His brothers were involved in taking care of the farm animals but he was chosen to be the one who would care for the gardens on the alluvial river flats of the Waiapu and Mangaōporo Rivers. While he was a competent farmer himself, he preferred to garden and to supplement the family larder with Kahawai (a type of fish) and sharks from the Waiapu river-mouth and eels and whitebait from the riverbanks. He was also a skilled hunter who trapped weka (a flightless native bird) and kererū (wild pigeon) and kept a constant supply of wild pork coming in to the kāuta (the cooking shed).

There were specific times when these activities occurred and they all had to do with the appearance of significant stars or constellations.

The stars told us when to do certain things. They were symbols that told us when it was time to plough up the gardens, when to sow the seeds and when to harvest the crops. The moon was our guide for fishing and hunting. The clouds in their various forms were also symbols, the same as low fog. Cloudy nights were good for eeling and whitebait netting and the low fog kept the smell of the pigs down near the ground so the dogs could get on to them. We had to be able to see these symbols and read the signs.

## **Matariki, te tohu o te tau – the symbol of the new year**

The most significant symbol was the appearance of Matariki (the Pleiades). This is a group of stars in the constellation of Taurus known as Messier 45 (M45). The appearance of this star cluster marked the start of the Māori year in the month of Pipiri (June). The family were all involved in breaking up the hard soil and ploughing the gardens. Once the gardens were done, it was a good time to snare kererū and to hunt weka. It was also a good time to fish and collect kuku (mussels), koura (lobster) and pāua (abalone).

Now we have these scientists from DOC (Department of Conservation) telling us not to catch pigeons and weka and the fisheries put a quota on the shellfish. It is not our hunting and fishing that has depleted the stock, it is their roads and pine forests and people diving and long lining from big motor launches. Matariki was a symbol to us of what could be taken and in what numbers because the birds also knew the significance of Matariki and the fish rode the currents that in turn were controlled by the position of the moon. They went to certain places and we had a certain amount of time to take our catch before the rāhui (ceremonially imposed restrictions) went on.

In July we were really into the heart of winter and this was when the lamprey were running and the big eels were lethargic and could be taken and smoked. It was also the time to go out to the beaches nearby to gather parengo (seaweed) to be dried and used as a relish with preserved birds and pork.

When we got those birds and eels, we would preserve them in their own fat which was poured over them in a tahā (dried gourd with significant markings). These tahā were dried and cleaned out then rubbed on the outside with shark oil to make them leak-proof. If we put pigeons in a tahā, it was marked with a pigeon feather on the stopper, same for weka. If it was pork or other mīti tahu (meat rendered down by roasting) we attached a tusk to the stopper. Shark had a shark tooth. I guess it is just the same as a label on a can of beans from the supermarket. We didn't pollute the contents with preservatives though; the process of preservation was natural and lasted for years if needed. It is quite humorous to think that our Pākehā (European) friends would turn their noses up at us eating dried seaweed but now they pay for sushi. They are a strange breed!

## He hononga – a relationship

It is interesting to note that the appearance of Matariki had special significance to the ancient people of Peru, who aligned their building projects with the main stars of the Pleiades.

There is significant evidence that the kumara (sweet potato) and the potato arrived in the Pacific Islands then Aotearoa from our ancestor's voyages to the west coast of South America, using Matariki as a navigational aid. One type of potato is in fact known as 'Peruperu.'

The peruperu seed that I have has been in our possession for a long time. I think it might have been off-loaded in the very early years of occupation here and has been passed down over the years. I think that makes sense because when you look at it, there is no land apart from scattered islands between us here on the east coast and the west coast of South America. We are the most eastern point of Aotearoa, the closest land mass to Peru.

The building of the Andean cities and their roading layout was based on quincunx practice. My uncle's maara (gardens) were oriented in accordance with quincunx practice as well, with the four corners and the centre marked during the first appearance of Matariki, each being aligned to one of the zodiacal signs in that constellation.

My uncle was an acknowledged expert on the various types of kumara and under which conditions they would provide the best yield. He passed this knowledge on during the Matariki period when the fields lay fallow. Our job as his understudies was to break up the hard soil and hand plough the old maara behind our horses. It was at this time that my uncle laid out the new maara with a mathematical precision based on a knowledge system that preceded Galileo's discourse on the relationship of the moon and the tides and was being used to navigate the southern ocean at a time when the great navigators of the western world were afraid to go out of sight of land lest they fall of the edge of the planet.

## **He akoranga mō te ora - learning for survival**

The influence of Matariki lasted through the winter months until late September. During this time we (my generation) were taken into whare wānanga (periods of learning) on weekends and in the evenings. We learnt many things that were symbolic of the way that our lives had been and would continue to be ordered.

We had not seen many of the technologies that were commonplace elsewhere in the 1960s. Electricity had not reached our homes so we knew that this was a time to work while there was ample light. There was no refrigerator or deep freeze unit so we preserved food in the way our ancestors had. There was no typewriter or computer so our learning was oral and repetitive and maintained in the mind. There was no telephone so knowledge of when things were happening was a case of empirical understanding and review.

The appearance of Matariki was a symbol of the new-year and what it was about to bring. If the star cluster was clear and easily visible straight after the first new moon of June, it was a sign that there would be good crops. It therefore became a time when the men gathered to reflect on past seasons and plan for the new one, to mend fishing nets, to shape fish hooks, to store seeds and to tell their stories to us in the hope that we would carry on the work.

## **Puanga kai rau – puanga of a hundred foods**

In late September, one of the stars of the M45 cluster (Rigel) known to the Māori people as Puanga takes on a dominant aspect. For us of the East Coast of Aotearoa this occurred after the first full moon in Whiringa-a-nuku (the fifth-month of the Māori year, October). This was the symbol that told us it was time to begin the planting of kumara, potatoes and corn.

When Puanga shone brightest of Te Huihui o Matariki (the assembly of the Pleiades) we knew that the soil was beginning to warm up. When that happened the trees began to flower and that flowering was the symbol for sowing and fertilising your seeds. It was also a symbol that certain shellfish were in prime condition. There were other stars attached to Ranginui's cloak (the night sky) that indicated when to sow specific seeds at this time. Tautoru Orion's Belt) and Whakuahu (Castor) would appear and we put in the potatoes and corn. When the maara were all bedded down, we waited for the appearance of Autahi (Canopus). She was the main star for navigating to the fishing grounds offshore.

## **Te rerenga o whānui (the flight of Vega)**

Whānui (Vega) was probably the most significant astral symbol to us of the East Coast. In Kohitātea (the eighth month of the Māori year, January) Whānui made its appearance and between then and the appearance of Poutūterangi (Altair), which marked the tenth month of the Māori year, she appeared at different positions in the evening sky. Each position, when aligned with significant landmarks on certain nights, was a symbol that divined the activity of the family in the intervening period.

Whānui was a symbol for the hauhake (harvest). On the first full moon after she first appeared we knew it was time to harvest the first lot of potatoes. These were heaped up, covered with the leaves and then covered over with soil. These mounds were lined up at right angles to the rising sun so that they were kept warm throughout the day. This harvest carried on throughout the flight of Whānui across the evening sky.

Between the lifting of the potato crops there was fishing and hunting to be done. Whānui's flight was another example of how we conserved our food resources. It wasn't a case of outsiders legislating our conservation ethic. Ranginui signalled to us that we had this period, when Whānui was in flight, to harvest our crops, to catch fish, to trap birds and to preserve them for the winter months. The moon during Whānui's flight signalled the best time for fishing and diving.

My brothers and I grew very close to our uncle and to this day the oldest of us, still lives in our valley and continues to prepare his gardens in the same way, waiting for Matariki to signal the start of the new-year and then for the other astral symbols to guide him for the rest of the year.

## **Te roanga atu – the continuation**

Part of our way of life is for us as an extended family to return home whenever possible for a monthly church service. This extended family lives mainly in the neighbouring city of Gisborne though many of us live many hours away. Arriving on a Friday night, we gather and re-live the stories so that the next generations know about the special relationship that they have with their environment.

Teenagers can easily identify significant stars and speak with authority about their importance not only in divining what is to come but also on the future welfare of the family. They do the jobs that I did in my youth. They understand and can apply quincunx practice to

set out their maara. They can align geographical features with the appropriate stars and navigate to our fishing grounds. They do not need scuba to obtain shellfish, relying instead on their knowledge of the tides and their relationship to the moon. They know that the observation of celestial phenomena and the ability to read the signs and symbols in nature will allow them to predict the coming seasons.

## **Conclusion**

As I conclude this essay, it is the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2009. Today, Matariki appeared above the eastern horizon. On this day also, the Māori Party celebrates the fifth anniversary of its formation as a political voice for Māori in the Parliament of New Zealand. The formation of the Māori Party in 2004 was in response to the legislated theft of the foreshore and seabed of Aotearoa by the Crown, represented by the Labour Government of the time.

It was an act of cultural survival as Tariana Turia crossed the floor of Parliament, abandoning years of Māori support for the Labour Party. That the celebrations for the Māori Party are coincident with the appearance of Matariki is symbolic of the inherent desire of Māori to live as Māori. As we celebrate this expression of sovereignty, we look to the eastern sky, to Matariki.

Our ancestors were close and accurate observers of the heavens. They named many of the stars and constellations in a way that was different to western astronomers. These western astronomers look to the deep heavens and seem to be preoccupied with predicting when the next asteroid will hit earth or when the planet will next enter an ice age or worse still, when life will cease to exist on earth. The astronomy of our ancestors by way of contrast was focussed on those astral bodies as symbols of survival, of guides to us that allowed us to regulate those activities that ensured our survival. The symbolic appearance of Matariki then was to foretell the nature of the coming season and to determine and regulate the cycle of food gathering. This is expressed in the following lines from an oriori (a mother's lullaby).

You come hither from the realm of Rigel,  
From the assembly of the Pleiades,  
From Jupiter and Altair,  
These alone oh child are the symbols  
Which provide food at Aotea.

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# Windigo presence in selected contemporary Ojibwe prose and poetry

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Weeindigo (Weeindigook or Weendigoes) A giant cannibal (or cannibals). These manitous came into being in winter and stalked villagers and bested wanderers. Every hungry, they craved human flesh, which is the only substance that could sustain them. The irony is that having eaten human flesh, the Weendigoes grew in size, so their hunger and craving remained in proportion to their size; thus they were eternally starving.

Basil Johnson<sup>1</sup>

The presence of the ravenous and frightening Windigo spirit in work by contemporary Ojibwe writers ranges from the specific to the symbolic, the universal struggle between good and evil. Values and desirable ways of being are the heart of cultural foundations of indigenous people worldwide as are stories of actions and consequences; both traditional storytellers and contemporary writers link the dialectics of that inclusion to their literary application. This paper will seek and explore the presence of windigog in selected Ojibwe prose and poetry through an examination of (1) stated and unstated inclusion, (2) literal and figurative beings (3) individual and group entities, and (4) indigenous epistemology.

## Terms and Word Usage

The word Ojibwe (Ojibwa; Ojibway; Chippewa) will be used for the indigenous nation in the center of North America<sup>2</sup>. Our word for ourselves and all indigenous people is Anishinaabeg, original people created by the Great Spirit<sup>3</sup>, who also created manitous(spirits): those on the side of goodness, including Mother Earth, our hero Nanaboozhoo, plants and trees, waters, rocks and air all things animate and last of all those who live on the dark side, including the Windigog<sup>4</sup>.

## Introduction

The fate of the windigo is to walk the world exhausted and ravenous, unable to rest or to satisfy physical and spiritual cravings. Human interactions with windigog have included

sightings, encounters, and changes in the environment: rumblings in the earth; wails and screams; a vibration in the air that causes the shaking of tools, utensils, and cooking kettles.<sup>5</sup> The possibility of their arrival creates wariness and nervous edginess; victims rarely live to give witness, and those who are not devoured might become windigog, themselves.

### **Examples of Ojibwe views from the Oral Tradition**

“The purposes of traditional Ojibwe education were both to serve the practical needs of the people (to learn life skills) and to enhance the soul (to grow in spiritual ways)”<sup>6</sup>. Indigenous pedagogy, or the oral tradition, is the means by which knowledge, history, culture and worldview are passed from one generation to another.<sup>7</sup>

A story from the Saginaw, “consisting originally of individuals who were refugees from the great Odjibwa family”, is included in Henry Schoolcraft’s 1839 collection. Schoolcraft’s retelling describes the windigo as a large man who took over a family’s lodge and devoured the wife while her husband was out hunting, leaving her infant boy motherless. “The father now knew that it was the Great Spirit who had thus miraculously raised him a son from the remains of his wife; and he felt persuaded that the boy would, in time, become a great man, and aid him in his revenge on the Weendigoes.”<sup>8</sup>

William Jones’ Ojibwe texts contains translated interviews from the beginning of the 20th century. The stories begin with a locating of the event in time and place, in a manner that is usual in Ojibwe oral tradition<sup>9</sup>; the description of the Windigo becomes part of that sense of place. “Truly big was the creature; not even half so tall were the trees, was how high he reached ... they became alarmed at a great rumbling in the earth, the earth shook ... ‘It is the Windigo,’ they said. Nearer it kept coming.” When a brave man stepped forward to fight, “everywhere over this region was the sound of her voice heard when she, the Windigo, was slain.”<sup>10</sup>

During the 1960s, University of Minnesota Duluth anthropology professor Tim Roufs visited extensively with Paul Buffalo, an Ojibwe Elder on the Leech Lake Reservation.<sup>11</sup> “That Windigo and Gwashun story is only for cold weather. But it is getting cold ... ” Buffalo began. “There was a little boy they call Gwashun....” who was cautioned to stay from the ice out in the big lake, in particular the center, where the ice was weak. “If you go beyond that

point on the ice, you might get in danger...There's a WINDIGO out there. He is a dangerous man." Buffalo explained, "It's a story to teach young people what the waters are, what the ice is, so they'll be cautious when they're playing on the ice. And always, when the little kids at that time hears....'WINDIGO'...they knew it was very dangerous."<sup>12</sup>

Other accounts are found in Jim Clark's and Maude Kegg's biographies. "Long ago a people far away were called Zagwaadagaag. They're the ones that are feared when they are hungry," Maude Kegg said. She spoke of a family discovered "lying about, scattered about in pieces. The flesh must have been chewed off their bones. There were just the bones of the dead ones there. That man must have eaten them." Kegg recounted a story told by her grandmother, about an old man who long ago had almost become a windigo. "And she said, 'When it's beginning to be spring, perhaps in March, and it's starting to warm up, then it melts,' she said, 'the ice he must bear within himself,' she says."<sup>13</sup> This reference is to the Windigo heart of ice.

Jim Clark (Naawigiizis), too, remembered stories told by his grandmother.<sup>14</sup> "This is a story that she told us about a wiindigoo. A windigoo is a giant, and from her story a windigoo is a person who has turned cannibal. Also the story is about how they could detect a person who will turn cannibal. I guess the person himself knew when this urge came on him – when he would crave human flesh. So he would tell his people what to do, or for, him. He would give specific instructions on treating his urge."

Like Paul Buffalo, Naawigiizis recalled the windigo story as a means of cautioning children away from danger. "We had to camp at site and the first thing they told us was there was a monster on the other side of the ridge. They made us listen. What we all heard was the waves hitting the stones on the shore, and it did sound like someone smacking, or licking, their chops. We had been camping there for about five days, and when the work was finished we were getting ready to move back home. Us kids wandered to the top of the ridge and there was this big inviting lake. All this time we could have been there, playing in the water."

## Windigo presence

Windigog appear in Ojibwe poetry, short stories, essays, novels, and a fifth category of writing that involves the retelling and passing along of Ojibwe history and cultural instruction. Interwoven through all are the oral tradition and Ojibwe epistemology. The following examples of contemporary Ojibwe literature contain references to windigo as well as windigo-related themes and concepts of hunger, gluttony, fear, challenge, pursuit and chase. In each work the windigo is specifically named.

Wub-e-ke-niew (Francis Blake, Jr.) in his biographical/philosophical translation of aboriginal thought from an Ahnishinahbaeo'jibway perspective, presents a concept tacitly present in all of the literature included in this project: the windigo was created, like everything else, for a purpose, and thus is part of the cosmos; "neither good nor bad"; it simply exists, its amorality enigmatically "in harmony and connected to Grandmother Earth."<sup>15</sup> It is as it was created to be, part of the mystery of the Great Spirit. Variations in human attitude and belief have no bearing on its reality.

The windigo, tradition, and winter stories from the White Earth reservation are present in Kim Blaeser's 1994 poetry collection Trailing You. In "Ice Tricksters and Shadow Stories" a woman in the isolation of winter listens to "voices of ice....Remembering the story, how ice woman froze the wiindigoo at just that point in the moccasin game."<sup>16</sup> Blaeser's "Surviving Winter or Old Stories We Tell Ourselves When a Blizzard is Coming" recounts stories of cave-ins and burials, snow caves and liquor, lurid lessons in coping. The urgent voice that offers stories while warning the reader to watch out for the dangers of winter brings to mind the moccasin game story in the former. As the woman in "Ice Tricksters" recalls how the ice woman froze the Windigo, in the last verse of "Surviving Winter" Blaeser concludes that "I used to think we told these stories to survive winter but now I know that winter comes so that we tell stories and learn to survive life."<sup>17</sup>

Originally published in White Earth Reservation's newspaper *The Progress* more than a century ago, Vizenor's "Nanabozho and the Gambler" pits the "compassionate trickster" hero Nanaboozhoo against the Great Gambler, playing the dish game, a game of chance, for his life and the continued existence of the Anishinaabeg. If he lost, the price would be larger than his own existence. "... that forfeit is life," said the great gambler. "I keep the scalps

and ears and hands, the rest of the body I give to my friends the wiindigoo...”<sup>18</sup> taunting Nanabozho with the prospect of his body going to the dark wiindigoo as the spoils of a game. Nanabozho’s skill and the great risk he took resulted in a loss for not only the great gambler but the wiindigoo as well. And the Anishinaabe people continue to exist today.

Guilt and fear over a long-ago linguistic miscommunication with a white man that had resulted in a physical altercation clouded the trip to Blunder Bay for “an older man ... one of those who had never gone to town” in Basil Johnston’s story “Yellow Cloud’s Battle With the Spirits”. As part of his recent conversion to Christianity, “Old Yellow Cloud had been assured that he had nothing to fear from Weendigo, the evil being who devoured those guilty of any form of excess”, the bear walker, or any other “old superstitions”. On the way home Yellow Cloud, believing that he was being attacked by the bear-walker, prayed but found to his dismay that “White man’s prayer was in vain against an Indian monster...there was only one thing to do. Stand up in front and face the monsters with raw courage.” The result of the battle that followed, told with humor and compassion by Johnston, was Yellow Cloud’s breaking the headlights on the priest’s car with a club.<sup>19</sup>

Marci Rendon’s poem “dancing blue” is an impressionist expression of the death of a husband and father who drowned while out trapping. Rendon links death and massacres of the past (“wounded knee red lake sand creek wounded knee”) to the present; however, her interpretation is not limited to the confines of the metaphorical or symbolic: the windigo waits behind the kitchen door, laughing ominously in anticipation of his inevitable victory.<sup>20</sup>

Louise Erdrich is the most prolific of contemporary Ojibwe writers; however, that alone does not explain the number of encounters the reader has with Windigog in her works.<sup>21</sup>

Erdrich’s work has been extensively researched, including several papers that contain references to Windigog and address Windigo-related themes.<sup>22</sup> Like Francis Blake, Erdrich connects oral tradition to the articulation of stories and lessons. Her storytelling style is classic Ojibwe: Shirley Brozzo, in her analysis of food themes in *The Antelope Wife* notes that “writing in vignettes, or short pieces of story or history, is Erdrich’s way of staying true to her oral tradition.”<sup>23</sup>

Erdrich’s poem “Windigo” begins with a definition: “The Windigo is a flesh-eating, wintry demon. In some Chippewa stories, a young girl vanquishes this monster by forcing boiling

lard down its throat, thereby releasing the human at the core of ice.” Presence signaled by flapping towels, groaning dogs, and rattling kettles, he courts the young woman, who conquers him through a figurative melting of the ice within. The poem is unsettling combination that brings to mind the ambiguities in Ojibwe cosmology and storytelling.

In The Antelope Wife, Klaus Shawano is visited by a mysterious dog, “scuffed-up white with spooky yellow-brown eyes, and a big pink dragging tongue”, who stands on his chest and talks to him, tells jokes and tales, and gives advice in the humorous and indirect manner of traditional Anishinaabeg. Klaus calls him “windigo dog”.

Fleur Pillager, whose life story plays across the pages of most of Erdrich’s novels connecting land and lives, is introduced in Tracks, in the aftermath of a tuberculosis epidemic that killed her family. The tribal policeman “did not want to enter the cabin, fearing the unburied Pillager spirits might seize him by the throat and turn him windigo”<sup>24</sup> but Nanapush, braving the terrifying prospect, broke into the cabin and found the teenage girl huddled in a corner. The trauma, combined with the necessity of leaving the bodies unburied until the ground thawed, created a depression and sickness of spirit that resulted in the two survivors becoming lethargic and ill. “The blood within us grew thick,” recounted Nanapush. “We needed no food. And little warmth. Days passed, weeks, and we didn’t leave the cabin for fear we’d crack our cold and fragile bodies. We had gone half windigo.”

### **Windigo concepts and themes**

Jane Inyallie expresses the hunger of the disenfranchised and uprooted in her poem “the forgotten son”<sup>25</sup>. The street person “boozes drugs and smokes until nothing satisfies his appetite”; at the sight his own reflection he weeps with the realization of his past and future. His hunger dissipates; defeated, he has lost his power to pursue even what is self-destructive.

The consumption of Native identity is addressed by several Ojibwe poets. Marci Rendon asks “what’s an Indian woman to do?” “when the white girls act more indian than the indian women do?”<sup>26</sup> addressing a cultural imperialism that involves the acquisition of Native clothing, names and accents by majority women. Rendon speaks to the same theme in her poem “i am tired of being romanticized”<sup>27</sup>, continuing, “your emptiness attempts to devour me mind & heart & soul ... you pass me by searching hidden valleys secluded caves for bits

of you think you'll find in me". In Joyce carlEtta Mandrake's "Values"<sup>28</sup>, an old white woman declares that she feels cheated because she was not born an Indian. Mandrake silently asks if the speaker, too, has been cheated out of her land, ceremonies, and language. Finally I, Linda LeGarde Grover in "To the Woman Who Just Bought a Set of Native American Spirituality Dream Interpretation Cards"<sup>29</sup> write into free verse the experience of standing in line at a bookstore behind a woman who purchases an ersatz cosmology she desires.

In conclusion

### Windigo

At the end of that last summer  
    *that last summer we were like you*  
when even the pines could give us no shade  
and their brown, sharp needles, paler each day  
fell,    *at first I thought the sound was rain*  
and lay lifeless where they fell,  
where they cut and scratched our feet till they swelled.  
At the time of day that no shadows were cast  
a piece of fire fell from the sky  
and the sun grew on the ground.  
Ravenous, it began to eat the earth.  
Some escaped the smoke and heat carrying  
babies, grandparents, the infirm  
but after the dry hungry summer  
we were in a weakened state,  
even the strongest. We chose, one by one,  
to live alone or die with our people  
My brothers chose to die with their wives.  
Myself, after my old parents, my wife,  
our children, all but one, fell like pine needles,  
walked with my firstborn.  
My first daughter, a fast runner she'd always been  
and strong as a man, slow to tire she  
walked beside me for how long  
    days, nights, lifetimes.  
We were as few as the fingers on both my hands  
when she tripped and fell, like so many had,  
and I thought that like the others she had died  
but she struggled to stand, weeping without tears,  
salt-dried black eyes reddened, starved with grief.  
As I lifted my firstborn, my heart recalled her birth  
her mother, her small brothers and sisters her grandparents  
    and tor  
then, like my daughter, it wept without tears  
and struggled to stand, starved and dry with grief.



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<sup>1</sup> Basil Johnston, *The Manitous: The Supernatural World of the Ojibwe* (NY: HarperCollins, 1995), 247. Chapter 13, pages 221-237, is titled “Weendigo” and contains both traditional explanations of the spirit and Johnston’s interpretation of the concept to current times.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *The Everlasting Sky: Voices of the Anishinabe People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), 10-12. This section originally appeared in *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices of the People Named the Chippewa* copyright 1972 by Gerald Vizenor.

- <sup>3</sup> Edward Benton-Banai, *The Moshomis Book* (Hayward, WI: Indian Country Communications, Inc., 1988), 2-4; 5-9.
- <sup>4</sup> Basil Johnston, *The Manitous* (New York: HarperCollins Press, 1995), xiii
- <sup>5</sup> Victor Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales and their Relation to Chippewa Life* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 121-123.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri, *Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in all Directions* (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2002), 67-74.
- <sup>7</sup> Linda LeGarde Grover. "Are You Teaching Them Anything Yet, My Girl? Auntie Carol's Advice, Given in True Ojibwe Oral Tradition, as a Guide to Embedding American Indian Pedagogy into American Indian Studies Classrooms", *Bimaadizing: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Native Thought* V1.3, Spring 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Mentor Williams (editor). *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends from Algonic Researches, The Myth of Hiawatha, The Race in America, and Historical and Statistical Information Respecting ... the Indian Tribes of the United States*. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1991). 169-174.
- <sup>9</sup> Thomas Peacock, *Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), 45.
- <sup>10</sup> William Jones (collected by), *Ojibwa Texts Volun V7.1* (Leyden and New York: E.J. Brill, Ltc., 1917), 175-179.
- <sup>11</sup> Tim Roufs (edited). "When Everybody Called Me *Gah-bay-bi-nay*: 'Forever-Flying Bird'" An Ethnographic Biography of Paul Peter Buffalo. Website, Tim Roufs, University of Minnesota Duluth:  
<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/Buffalo/pbwww.html>
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Maude Kegg, *Nookomis Gaa-Inaajimotawid: What My Grandmother Told Me*, (Bemidji, MN: Indian Studies Publications, Bemidji State University, 1990), 15-17.
- <sup>14</sup> Jim Clark, *Naawigiizis, The Memories of Center of the Moon*, (Minneapolis, MN: Birchbark Books, 2002), 27. Other stories with windigo-related themes and beings can be found on pages 28, 52, and 55.
- <sup>15</sup> Wub-e-ke-niew (Francis Blake, Jr.) *We Have the Right to Exist: A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought* (New York City, Black Thistle Press, 1995), 206; 256.
- <sup>16</sup> Trailing you, and refer to the moccasin game; explain
- <sup>17</sup> Kimberly Blaeser. *Trailing You*. (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1994), 7-9; 41-42.
- <sup>18</sup> Gerald Vizenor. *Summer in the Spring*. Minneapolis, MN: The Nodin Press, 1965), 15-17, 129-131. The story is included with the term "windigo" replaced by "flesh eaters" in "The Four Ages of Man", *The Everlasting Sky*, (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000, 1-4.
- <sup>19</sup> Basil Johnson. *Ojibway Tales*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 57-64. This collection of stories about the mythical Canadian Moose Meat Point Reserve was originally published in 1978 by McLelland and Stewart, Toronto, Ontario; the characters are linked and connected in a variety of ways, and stories that illustrate a reservation life during the 1940s-1960s are humorously and levelingly told from a Native perspective.
- <sup>20</sup> Marci Rendon, *Nitaawichige: selected poetry and prose four Anishinaabe writers*, (Duluth, MN: Poetry Harbor Publications, 2002), 59-63.
- <sup>22</sup> Excellent bibliographies can be found in Brightman's "The Windigo in the Material World", *Ethnohistory* 35:4 (Fall 1988) as well as Brown & Brightman's "Orders of the Dreamed": *George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth*, 1823 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988).

<sup>23</sup>Shirley Brozzo, "Food for Thought: A Postcolonial Study of Food Imagery in Louise Erdrich's *Antelope Wife*", in

<sup>24</sup>Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*, (NY: HarperFlamingo, 1988), 2-3.

<sup>25</sup>Jane Inyallie, "the forgotten son", *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples*, V.XI, 2000,

<sup>26</sup>Marci Rendon, "what's an indian woman to do?" *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers on Community*, (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 138-139.

<sup>27</sup>Marci Rendon, "i am tired of being romanticized", *Dreaming into Being*, (Marci R. Rendon, 1994), 6.

<sup>28</sup>Joyce carlEtta Mandrake, "Values", *Traces in Blood, Bone, & Stone* (Kimberly Blaeser, editor; Bemidji, MN: Loonfeather Press, 2006), 130.

<sup>29</sup>Linda LeGarde Grover, "To the Woman Who Just Bought a Set of Native American Spirituality Dream Interpretation Cards", *Sister Nations* (edited by Heid Erdrich and Laura Tohe, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 91-92/

<sup>30</sup>Linda LeGarde Grover, unpublished poem, 2007.

# Māori symbolism - the enacted marae curriculum

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**Te Awemāpara, Ngāti Hinekura, Te Māhurehure familial connections**

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Symbolism and other metaphoric representations of aspects of Māori (Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand) culture such as whaikōrero (formal speaking), moemoeā (dreams), and whakataukī (proverbial sayings) has existed with Māori for generations. This paper examines Māori symbolism and its importance in Māori culture more specifically the maintenance, sustenance and transmission of our indigenous knowledge systems for generations to come. Traditional use of symbols is also explored through the contextual application of the marae (traditional Māori living complex) and how symbols exist in various parts of the marae. The enacted curriculum is also investigated looking at specific examples of how these symbols can enact both non-Māori and Māori formal curriculum areas.

## Symbolism

Symbolism as a part of an expressive culture operates on a number of levels and across a range of frequencies according to your perceptions and having deeper understandings of what is truly represented. These symbols appear as images, words, behaviours and actions function in different spaces and places with differing meanings. This depends heavily on context, that is they are culturally and contextually relevant. Much of the value is encoded in metaphor. Symbols stand for concepts that are often too complex to be stated directly in words (Womack, 2005). Furthermore, Womack cites social anthropologist Raymond Firth (Ibid) who writes “it is assumed that symbols communicate meanings at levels of reality not accessible through immediate experience or conceptual thought. These meanings are often complex and of different layers. In addition, because symbols convey multiple levels of meaning at the same time, they are multivocal (they speak with multiple vocals), polysemic (they have multiple levels of meaning) or multivalent (they make multiple appeals). (Ibid) Because symbols are often about how that particular symbol is interpreted it is not only about the intention of the symbol but also about how it is interpreted by the onlooker. The intention

and interpretation of symbols is a key factor of communication especially in a culture that relied heavily on oral and visual communication such as Māori. Pre-European contact, the Māori people of Aotearoa (New Zealand) relied heavily on oral and visual communication. There was no written language as we would discern it today. The written language included various methods of communication including oral, visual and spiritual. The written language would be better described as a visual language as there were no words (as we know words today) that were written, but there were other forms of knowledge and information transmission and heavy use of symbolism and metaphoric language. Māori symbolism is epitomised by the marae (communal living complex). The marae itself is a symbol of history and genealogy and continues to give Māori a sense of belonging. Symbolism was significantly represented in traditional means of learning and retaining history through the traditional house of learning, known as the whare wānanga.

### **Traditional education systems**

One of the oldest learning institutions in Māori history is that known as whare wānanga. Whare wānanga were held in order to preserve tribal lore and it was decided that this tribal lore including long conversed myth and ritual was taught to a certain number of young men of each generation. These men were given the task of transmitting the tribal lore to the young men. The subjects taught were classified as:

1. High-class ritual and other lore;
2. historical and other matters of less importance; and
3. the arts of black magic.

In some cases the whare wānanga were held in places that were of special relevance and or significance to the topic being learnt. In other instances the whare wānanga was but a name and a system; no special house bore the name, and the knowledge pertaining to it might be taught in the open air or in any house set apart for the purposes. There was a significant amount of ritual associated with whare wānanga and its participants. The related customs of these instructional courses included the scholars having to show that they had successfully memorised the matter taught through the whare wānanga. (Best, 1974) The memorisation of

this information and knowledge was aided by images, metaphors, figures of speech, chants and songs. Buck (1982) explains that in order for the elders to keep their own memories green, the old people in the evenings or early mornings sang through their repertoire of songs while reclining in the tribal meeting house (structure included in the marae complex) and the older children learned them so as to join in with the community singing.

According to Hemara (2000) the element of surprise was sometimes used to impress a particular piece of important information on a student's mind. The faux-anger state that was sometimes used was done so in order for students to trigger cognitive expansion and therefore, students would ask more questions. Whaikōrero (formal public, ritualistic speaking) were also used as a symbol to represent cultural expression of whānau (family), hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe) histories as well as political relationships and family links with each other and other iwi (Ibid). Whaikōrero (formal public, ritualistic speaking) was carried out on the marae (communal living complex) and children were exposed to the histories, genealogies, arts, politics rituals of their hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe) in a public arena. The children observed their elders behaviour and mimicked them. In this case the elders stand as not only a symbol of knowledge holders but are symbolic of the type of knowledge that they are transmitting. The forum in which these histories, tribal links and other relationships were explored and the related skills applied was through the traditional marae complex.

## **The marae**

The marae is a focal point for Māori where families and communities come together for various reasons. The marae is a local ceremonial centre, dedicated to the gatherings of Māori people and to the practice of traditional rituals. (Salmond, 1975). The marae complex usually consists of several buildings including a whare tīpuna (ancestral house; otherwise known as whare nui, whare tūpuna or whare whakairo), whare kai (dining hall), and whare paku (ablutions) at the very least. There are a number of views of what marae are and stand for. At one level Tauroa & Tauroa (2000) state that marae are places of refuge that provide facilities to enable us to continue with our way of life within the total structure of the Māori

world. They go on to say that we the Māori need our marae so that we may pray to God; rise tall in oratory, weep for our dead; house our guests; have our meetings, feasts, weddings and reunions; and sing and dance. The marae is an institution that has existed for many generations and will exist for many generations to come. It provides Māori with an opportunity to be one with our environment and to truly express ourselves in ways that are unique only to Māori of Aotearoa (New Zealand).

With all this in mind, marae are a powerful symbol for Māori living as Māori. It symbolises a connection to being Māori and it also represents the traditions, rituals, customs, protocols and ways of doing and being of those who have gone before us and those who will remain when we are gone.

The whare tīpuna (ancestral house) is conceptualised metaphorically as a human body, usually representing the eponymous ancestor of a tribe (Harrison, 1999). Harrison describes the whare tīpuna as follows: Beginning at the top of the house, the apex of the gable, attached to the tāhūhū (ridgepole) is the koruru (head). The maihi (bargeboards) are the arms, outstretched to welcome guests. The tāhūhū stands as the backbone and the heke (rafters) that fall off the tāhūhū are the ribs. The porch of the house is named the roro (brain). The kuwaha (mouth) or door is the symbolic entry where the spiritual and physical spheres meet and come together. The matapihi (window) is seen as the eye and the interior of the house is known as the koopu (womb). Those inside the house are then comforted by the embrace of that particular ancestor. The poupou (carved posts) that embellish the sides of the house depict distinguished descendants from the eponymous ancestor.

This paper examines the whare tīpuna and the whakairo (carvings) that adorn the ancestral house and details how these are symbolic of much more than what appears on the surface.

## The marae as a symbol

Symbolism occurs at various levels at, in and on the marae. This occurs in a range of forms including, whakairo (carved representations), waiata (song) and whaikōrero (formal public speaking).

More specifically, as one example, whakairo has many symbolic connotations especially inside the whare tīpuna. These carved representations surround those who are inside with tradition and history with their sheer presence, and symbolic representation of aspects that tradition and history that comes with each of the carved pieces. More often than not, the carved pieces that enliven the walls of the house represent ancestors who are directly connected to the eponymous ancestor that that particular house is named after. These poupou (carved figures) represent ancestors in the spiritual state and therefore were represented in abstract form. Harrison (1999) explains that “Ancestors, tribal atua (tribal Gods) mythical heroes and fabulous creatures are represented. Personification also plays a distinctive part. The feeling for departed ancestors is closely interwoven with carving because of the prestige bestowed on their descendants through their achievements.” The position of these ancestors in whare tīpuna all over Aotearoa (New Zealand) has been likened to the sculpted and painted ancestors found in castles and halls all around the world (Ibid). However, for Māori they represent the living present and future.

There are various surface patterns used in the carving of these poupou. More specifically surface patterns such as Raperape or Kirikiore, Ritorito or Puwerewere, Taratara ā Kae or Taowaru and Rauponga are symbolic of deeper meanings. Raperape are used as whakapapa (genealogy) symbols. They are used to imply whakapapa, or are used to identify whakapapa of that person. The general use of the Ritorito pattern was to denote priesthood in men and noble birth in women. The placement of these patterns on certain parts of the carved figure emphasised points of movement of the shoulders, buttocks and legs, therefore implying agility and speed of a youthful person. Taratara ā Kae denotes abundance and material wealth and is mainly found on food storage houses, where it symbolises abundance and

wealth in terms of food. Rauponga symbolises genealogy. The lines and placement of each line denotes genealogy and different generations (Harrison, 1999).

The use of these surface patterns and the application of their meanings provide a field for the introduction of mnemonics in sculpture to support the oral tradition of Māori. According to Harrison (1999) the symbols found in whakairo are:

1. Mnemonic: Something intended to assist the memory (for example, a diacritical mark).
2. Ideographic: A written or carved symbol that represents an idea or concept.
3. Calligraphic: Writing or painting of high aesthetic quality.
4. Hieroglyphic: A pictographic script in which the symbols or figures are conventionalised and have hidden meanings.
5. Diacritic: A mark or sign.

All of these concepts are applicable to whakairo in one way or another. Mnemonic application could occur in the learning of the art of carving to assist them with the names of the patterns or techniques that carvers use. The surface patterns mentioned above are ideographic in nature as they all represent further ideas and concepts. Carvings are calligraphic, hieroglyphic and diacritic in nature and form.

## **Enacting the marae curriculum**

Marae is a catalyst for the thinking and rethinking transformative education. This opens up the possibility for the thinking about the 'enacted marae curriculum'. A common question that is being asked in Māori educational circles in the adult learning arena in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is how we can incorporate more Māori knowledge into curriculum that is taught especially by wānanga (Post compulsory education with an indigenous Māori focus). I suggest that we explore the possibilities of using the traditional marae complex to enhance current curriculum activities which will move towards enhancing and therefore enacting current static curriculum.

In order for this to occur there are a number of issues that need to be considered and resolved. Firstly, essential components of Māori ways of being and doing need to be implemented in to the education system over a period of time. There needs to be a plan of how this will be integrated so as not to implement a tokenistic approach to appreciating indigenous knowledge. Penetito as cited in Tapine & Waiti (1997) supports this by stating that the education system needs a long term plan for Māori education, and it needs to include critical elements from Māoritanga (Māori ways of being and doing) over a long period of time. If they are injected into the system immediately without proper trial and error it will simply bastardise and misrepresent Māori knowledge and practices. People need to be able to build up a whole set of associations with this knowledge as they accumulate it. It is just as important for us as Māori as well as non-Māori to remember that Māori have the same potential, mental capacity, and ability to operate intellectually as any other group (Ibid). As with other indigenous cultures around the world Māori people has seen the dominant group impose its culture, values, knowledge and practices on Māori society, and this has had overwhelming effects upon generations of Māori and will continue to influence future generations. Penetito claims that Māori have been subject to this hegemony for so long that in many cases they find themselves in situations where they believe their knowledge, customs and practices are in some way inferior and less coherent than non-Māori culture, knowledge, customs and values. This belief is something that is learnt and observed. Those who are colonised learn to hate themselves, and it is something which is learned. They learn it from what they see of themselves through other peoples' eyes and what they hear from other peoples' mouths (Ibid). Self determination through education needs to occur first through a mind shift in Māori and non-Māori and place importance on our own voices and our own symbols to assist us in this endeavour. The agenda for returning intellectual coherence and moral force to Māori education involves Māori telling their own stories, creating their own images, listening to their own voices. It requires a return to the belief that we are no better or worse than any other group (Ibid).

Secondly, an important change needs to occur in learning environments. These learning environments need to be flexible enough to be able to accommodate educational changes. An important role for any learning environment is to prepare for the educational changes that are taking place. Where curriculum changes occur in traditional areas, these can be accommodated with reasonable facilities. However, where changes occur in new fields these

are not nearly as quickly or impressively effected (Harrison 1999). An awareness of cultural diversity is taking place in Aotearoa (New Zealand) education and programmes together with facilities for the projection of these changes are being developed and used by the authorities who realise that cultural diversity is a valuable resource which properly nurtured, contributes positively to the functioning of a cohesive society. Effective teaching about cultural influences on learning can best take place in an environment that reflects these values. Furthermore, it will help young people to be secure in their own culture on one hand, and to have contact and first hand knowledge with another if they so desire (Ibid). Above all the marae will provide a living example of the benefits to be gained from people of goodwill working together towards the achievement of a common goal.

The marae can assist in the achievement of this mind shift as well as the achievement of curriculum changes to reflect Māori values and knowledge systems that are supported by traditional symbols and imagery. For example, curriculum areas that can be taught using whakairo include mathematics (geometry, symmetry and measurement), science (for example. appropriate wood types, density testing, tree uses and lifecycles), technology (e.g. how to carve, identifying grains of the wood and appropriate tools for appropriate wood types and carving styles and techniques), te reo Māori (the Māori language) (for example learning genealogy, relevant terminology, traditional stories associated with and represented through carving) art (e.g. visual presentations of people, actions, genealogy, stories through carving), social studies (e.g. identifying connections between the chosen poupou and relevant tribe of the student, identifying different patterns or carving styles from different tribes). These are excellent examples of how Māori learning environments can accommodate non-Māori curriculum areas. In the same vein where Māori knowledge would be best taught using Maori learning environments that are enhanced by a myriad of supporting symbols presented in various forms including song, dance, art, story and formal speeches. These aspects make us unique from other indigenous and non-indigenous cultures around the world.

This paper has explained and highlighted that the marae is one of the oldest knowledge institutions in Māori culture and is currently underutilised in formal education settings. This paper invites the use of code and symbol through the enacted marae curriculum. Elements of the enacted marae curriculum would include a facilitator who has an understanding of the symbolism that exists throughout the marae and the application in different shapes and forms.

Other elements would also include the ability for participants to be able interact in both Māori and Pākehā worlds of education and contextual application in each. The potential of the enacted marae curriculum for Māori education is that the concept is applicable across different curriculum areas, ages, abilities, capabilities and levels of understanding.

Ultimately, this means that anything can be taught using the enacted marae curriculum and has the potential to encourage Māori students to operate to learn aspects of their education using traditional Māori methods and forms.

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# **Who says I don't want to come to school? School policies disenfranchise American Indian youth's educational vision**

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In 1948, all traditional Hopi spiritual leaders met and spoke of things I felt strongly were of great importance to all people. They selected four interpreters to carry their message of which I am the only one still living today.

Thomas Banyacya, Hopi tribal elder from Kykotsmovi, Arizona (1992)

Thomas Banyacya embodied a mission of affirming and expanding upon the wellbeing of all living beings and nature. When he gave a keynote address at a United Nations conference in 1992, he warned us about the consequences of living out of balance with nature and spirit. At the time he explained that he was the last of the traditional Hopi interpreters assigned to carry the message forward. He persevered in his mission to transform people's lives by sharing his message until his passing in 1999.

As we reflect on the life efforts of those like Banyacya ten years into the new century, we continue to question whether the up and coming generation of American Indians are being well prepared by educational institutions to embrace their own future. Banyacya's life experiences are one of many that describe a historical pattern of enduring racism and assimilationist practices common amongst indigenous peoples including American Indians. For example, he was forced to change his name during the period in which the Bureau of Indian Affairs enforced name westernization; he attended a college that despite being created for American Indians, did not include Native American cultural studies; and he was imprisoned when resisting registering for the draft (McCloud, 1998). By publicly vocalizing and actively contesting these government issued requirements, he demonstrated how he resisted assimilation movements intended to erase identity and culture.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the importance of affirming youth's epistemologies and axiologies in schools. Doing so will foster a critical social and political consciousness among youth that will transcend in transformative resistance behaviours. In so doing, it is anticipated that youth will develop and engage in the complex cultural dynamics of society as talented, motivated, and critically engaged adults. We problematize how school policies created to retain students and establish order in school settings are in effect serving to disengage students from the learning process. Therefore, in this article, we aim to focus on the importance of contextualizing school policies by illuminating how one school rule, In-School-Suspension (ISS) disengages students from the learning process.

Research reports 61.8 percent of all American Indian youth graduated from U.S.A's high schools in the 2005-06 academic year, evidencing how 39.2 percent do not complete a high school education (United States Department of Education, 2009). These alarming statistics illuminate the urgency of this paper.

At one of the high school sites observed (approximately 200 students), the ISS rule was established to deter tardiness and absenteeism from the school. If students arrived after the second bell teachers were required to lock the classroom door. Students were conscious of this rule and rarely attempted to negotiate entrance to their classroom. Rather, students went directly to the cafeteria, which is where the ISS room was housed. The average number of students in ISS oftentimes exceeded the average number of students in academic classrooms. For example, there were several days where the number of ISS students was close to thirty students, which was approximately 15 percent of the student body.

Data for this article is part of a larger corpus of data that was collected over the course of a year at a public high school that serves a majority of American Indian students in the Southwestern part of the U.S.A. Using a Tribal critical Race (TribalCrit) lens, this study employs qualitative narratives from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. We see these students' experiences in schools in the U.S.A. as informing the experiences of native students in other areas as they prepare to complete secondary school.

### **Rationale for the Examination of Transformative Resistance among American Indian Youth**

One of the accomplishments tribal elders like Banyacya left as a legacy to new generations included resistance to disengaged attitudes toward moral and spiritual principles. He cautioned

that in general, “humans turned away from moral and spiritual principles,” and “they misused their spiritual powers for selfish purposes” (Banyacya, 1992, para. 7). Indeed, in the U.S.A., there is a concern that school age children, and most specifically, high school age youth are becoming increasingly disengaged (Mc Dowell, 2000). McDowell perceives that “kids today are disconnected from most adults and lack a sense of personal identity and purpose” (p. 8). While we believe there is a disconnection between adults and youth, we contend that youth do have a sense of personal identity and purpose. In fact, we believe adult – youth relationships should be reciprocal. Of concern is how adults treat youth as children by not granting youth agency and discounting their identities and way of engaging in the world.

While summarizing the literature on improving the academic performance among American Indian students, Demmert (2001) noted successful examples related to internal and external influences. Internal influences relate to developing a strong sense of identity, self and motivation. External influences contributing to improving the academic support for American Indians included family support, early intervention, and mentors or role models. He concluded that “if parents and educators have an interest in promoting the development of smart, healthy, well adjusted children, we must provide a safe, challenging, and enriched environment early in the life of a child” (p. 42). However, he also noticed that the effect of the relationship between teachers and students in the research literature was scattered and inconclusive. This fact is especially troubling, particularly when students spend most of their day with teachers in schools.

In fact, scholars who study self-determination in students are concerned. Twenge, Zhang, and Im (2004), for example, were alarmed that a lack of internal and external locus of control is evident in teenagers entering college; they defined these students as part of a “generation whatever” (2004). These scholars concluded that “30 percent more young Americans now believe their lives are controlled by outside forces rather than by their own achievements” (p. 315), compared to the beliefs of young people in the 1960s and 1970s. Children as young as 9 years old confirmed feeling that their lives are controlled by outside forces. Moreover, the scholars identified the alienation model as affecting these students: individualism, self-serving biases and cynicism. In essence, dominant structural forces impede upon the individual’s personal actions and contribute to the alienation children are feeling today which manifests in low school achievement, depression and decreased self-control (Twenge et al, 2004).

We strongly relate to students that feel disengaged in schools due to the current sociopolitical climate; however, we contend that school structures contribute to such disengagement. When schools are unresponsive to the students' needs, reinforce standardized, one-size-fits-all policies, it becomes very challenging for students to maintain their enthusiasm and engagement in the classroom. Policies and regulations that are not sensitive to the students' needs push them to lose hope and focus on their own academic formation. Previous scholars have demonstrated how standardized curriculum and pedagogies are not serving the needs of students (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002) especially since very little flexibility is permitted with these policies.

We center our concern with the increasing disengagement of American Indian youth in school settings. American Indian children and youth who reside on reservations experience high degrees of adaptation in order to live in a society that continues to advocate for individualism and assert assimilationist policies that discount indigenous epistemologies. Individualism was identified as a problem in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, with Dewey explaining that individualism only emerges through the destruction of the community that raised these same individuals, or "independent self-identity is possible only through resistance of the very social system which made possible the survival of the individual in the first place" (Dewey as in Karler, 1992, p. 288).

By placing the burden of responsibility on the student, schools are reinforcing a dominant epistemology that does not affirm and foster student's identity, engage the student in the learning process as an active contributing individual, and perpetuate an educational system that is authoritarian in nature. This pushes students to believe that schools are academic communities that will not help them in their growth and preparation for the future. Similarly to pedagogical adaptations, there is a need to examine school structures and policies that are not conducive to learning. In order to understand the needs of Indigenous communities and youth, we examined the framework of tribal critical race theory and theories of transformative resistance.

### **Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit)**

TribalCrit provides a framework to understand the epistemologies and values of Indigenous communities and in particular American Indian youth. TribalCrit emerges out of Critical Race

theory in Education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker, Deyhle, Villenas & Nebeker, 1998; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

There are nine elements that guide TribalCrit (see Brayboy, 2005). The overarching tenant emphasizes that notions of colonization and racism are endemic to society (Brayboy, 2005). Of the nine tenants, three tenants are central to this paper. The first advocates how “concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). A second tenet that contributes equally to our analysis is how “government policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). The third and final tenant states, “Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups” (Brayboy, 2005 p. 429).

TribalCrit provides an analytic framework that validates Indigenous epistemologies in school learning. Employing a TribalCrit framework problematizes frameworks that assert students of color and in this case American Indian youth enter schools with cultural deficiencies. Scholars have often emphasized how the academic gap and academic deficiencies of American Indian youth is a result of the students and/or families’ lack of ‘cultural’ knowledge and skills. Such analysis places a higher value on the cultural knowledge of the school. When the students cultural knowledge is not in sync with the schools knowledge it is considered deficient. By not validating the knowledge Indigenous youth bring to school settings; schools are simultaneously rejecting their lived experiences.

### **Transformative Resistance**

American Indians who succeeded in secondary schools, according to Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock (2003), were those who demonstrated resilience. The authors defined resilience as “a quality that enables children and adults not to give up despite the failures that school and society lay out for them” (p. 64). Resilience, according to the authors, is demonstrated by those who bounce back despite numerous setbacks and difficulties. We expand the authors’ observation on resilience arguing that in order to develop resilience individuals need to *resist*, and transform these setbacks into stepping-stones to emerge stronger.

Transformative resistance, according to scholars like Solórzano and Bernal (2001), is “motivated by a desire to create more just and equitable environments” (p. 309). With this finding, Solórzano and Bernal present a different form of resistance that social scientists largely have ignored. Most of the literature on school resistance has focused on working-class males and self-defeating resistance such as that found in the seminal work of Willis (1977) and MacLeod (1987). However, self-defeating resistance does not change oppressive conditions; instead, it perpetuates oppressive structures.

To break away from oppressive structures, García and Guerra (2004) suggested that we closely examine the deficit-thinking that permeates U.S.A’s society. García and Guerra call our attention to schools and educators that may mirror such deficit-thinking. They argued that this reality necessitates people who challenge the individual race, gender, and class prejudices expressed by educators, as well as critically examining “systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from non-dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 55). Patricia Quijada, the first author of this article, journaled her visit with a group of American Indian youth in one of the schools. Her example shows the importance of engagement and transformative resistance demonstrated by students as they persist through school—despite oppressive structures and policies:

As I begin my ten-minute commute to the small rural public high school I admire the natural beauty from the earth and embrace the morning sun, which is beaming onto the beautiful red rock. The red rocks are beautifully visible and empower me as I travel to the school site located in the southwestern part of the United States. My admiration and respect for our mother earth is fueled by a consciousness that that I am on sacred native land. I recognize that my Cupeño and Mexican ancestry position me as a visitor on this land, an acknowledgement I consciously make on a daily basis.

As I drive to the small rural high school, whose campus enrollment never exceeds 200 students, my thoughts center on the youth I am about to meet. Have our paths crossed before this meeting? The probability of knowing them is high since I have been in the community for several years. Perhaps I have met many of their parents while attending informal and formal community gatherings. Of interest to me is how the youth will speak about their experiences in school? How will their stories and vision for their future align with how the media positions youth? Will their narratives perpetuate or disrupt the dominant discourse that currently positions youth as undergoing an identity crisis, troubled, and oftentimes-lacking vision?

These questions spin in her head especially when acknowledging the alarming dropout statistics among American Indians in this school. Once there, she meets with Katrina, Shauna, William, and Joshua, 17 year olds who are enrolled in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Katrina says:

Some of the rules just don't make any sense. I get really upset when I think of some the school rules. They just don't make any sense. Like the In-School-Suspension rule... You see before school, I have to get my brother ready for school and I have to take him to school. Since my brother sometimes runs late I am late too. I am always late for algebra. When I get to school I go straight to the In- School Suspension room which is our cafeteria. I don't bother to explain why I am late and how I have to get my brother ready for school because I tried once and they didn't want to hear what I had to say.

Katrina shares her frustration with the In-School-Suspension-policy. Central to Katrina's concerns is how her responsibility to school and family are equally important priorities in her life. Getting her younger siblings ready for school is a responsibility Katrina and many other youth share. In her case, her parents work off the reservation and have to leave early in the morning to make it to work by 8:00am. In this instance, it would be easy for Katrina to miss her first class period, yet her dedication and responsibility to her education pushes her to arrive during first period, even if she is late. Later in the focus group she shared how she often hopes her teacher will allow her into class despite her being late.

Another student shares her perspective on the In-School-Suspension Room. William shares the following:

Yeah I just don't understand why we have this rule...I mean it doesn't make sense. In the morning many of us are late because we have a number of things that come up and we can't get here in time. We have our own responsibilities at home that we can't get here on time. I don't even explain anymore because our teachers don't seem to care. They just think we are lazy and don't realize we have responsibilities that we have to get done before we get to school ...

The school policy of having students report to the In-School-Suspension room if tardy for class mirrors a policy often found in urban schools. How do such policies impact students in our classrooms especially rural communities? Katrina and William illuminate how youth are responsible and resist school policies that are trying to 'push' them out of school by continuously coming to school despite arriving late. In fact, Katrina and William both demonstrate a dedication to their education and the vision they have for their future by

persisting through school and seeking to graduate from high school. In fact, Katrina and William's narrative reveals the realities of students who are grappling with two equally compelling responsibilities--school and family. For Katrina and William familial responsibilities are central to their lives. Katrina and William's dedication to ensuring their younger siblings are dressed, fed, and arrive on time to school indicates their understanding of responsibilities and their role in the family.

Embedded within the narratives of these youth and the others who participated in the project is a desire for school teachers and other adults to understand and validate them. In fact, repeatedly, students illuminated how teachers and adults at the school site did not validate them. Shauna shares the following:

I wish our teachers would understand more about what it is like to be teenager nowadays. I feel like if they [teachers] did, they would understand that we have problems, we have feelings, we have ideas and we have dreams. Sometimes I feel as if we are treated as kids but we have real problems, real issues...I sometimes wished they would listen to me and I could talk to them and get their advice.

Shauna problematizes how adults in her school setting position her as a teenager who is emotionless and not impacted by the "adult-like" challenges and responsibilities she grapples with and negotiates on a daily basis. Despite these policies Shauna and the others shared a concerted concern over how to deal with these policies. Joshua shared the following:

For me, sometimes I have to remind myself that I want to graduate from high school and go on to college. I don't want to be a burger flipper. So I still come to school. I get frustrated with these school rules because I feel like sometimes my teachers don't want me here, but I still come to school.

Joshua demonstrates how his vision of his future pushes him to persist through school despite how he is treated by his teachers. Later in the interview Joshua shares how his teachers make him sit in ISS and work through his math problems without their assistance. "It just doesn't make sense why I can't sit in math class and learn from my teacher."

Based on these narratives we advocate that teachers and policy makers must recognize the potential youth bring to the school by affirming their identities and epistemologies and believing they have the agency to engage in self-defeating resistance such as *not* dropping out

of school. By persisting through school, these youth are demonstrating their awareness of how schooling will bring them better career opportunities.

### **Conclusions: Validating the Vision of American Indian Youth**

Transformative resistance is shown by the students' ability to resist, transforming school setbacks into stepping-stones to emerge stronger. In this short article we sought to bring to light the important issue of strengthening the students' balance between schooling and life, their nature and spirit. At the local level or school level, the students' narratives illuminate how the establishment of school policies must be re-examined and problematized in the specific context. At this school site, the In-School-Suspension was working against responsible and family-oriented students. In fact, Katrina illuminates how youth are responsible and resist school policies that are trying to 'push' them out of school rather than retaining them in school. These students demonstrated that they and their families have important contributions to make.

At this school site it was common for the In-School-Suspension room to have a higher student-teacher ratio than the "regular" classrooms illuminating that the policy needed to be re-examined, especially for responsible and committed students. In this school this policy may need to be adapted and modified given the number of family responsibilities youth grapple with prior to school.

In fact, embracing indigenous cultural ways of being and knowing, especially with respectful regards to American Indian life, includes recognizing youth and elders contributions. Preparing to be part of society means building upon the knowledge from a cultural past and investing in the cultural future (Benham & Mann, 2003). Depriving these cultural epistemologies from students steals from tribal cultural property (Strom, 2008). Hence, we advocate that establishing a collaborative governance and leadership between the school and community would be an important step for the school to make, including the consideration of the needs of students as part of leadership decisions. Doing so, schools would validate the students' educational visions, demonstrate respect for the students' respective families, and prepare students to become future leaders in their communities.

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# Sámi craft, a shadow of art in the art discourse?

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In this article, I will study the position of *duodji*, or Sámi craft, in the construction of a crafts and art theory of an indigenous people – the Sámi. I will examine the difficulties that rise when *duodji* gives up its name *duodji* after becoming involved in art criticism. Sámi craft both has and does not have distinguishing characteristics which are an expression of and have similarities with Sámi design. In discourse, we use a different background for art than for Sámi craft: we approach it through art theory. *Duodji*, or Sámi craft, on the other hand, has historically often been part of anthropological and ethnological discussion. This makes it especially challenging to assess Sámi craft from the point of view of art.

The objective of this article is to present a view that will introduce a new aspect to the overall discussion on Sámi craft. I will study the issue from the perspective of the post-colonialist art theory.

The construction of a post-colonialist theory is based on the experiences that societies have of their own heritage and the colonialist power; it is also based on the prejudices which became rooted in societies in the colonial period and against which we have to fight in the process of decolonization. Colonialism has had an influence on both the colonized peoples and the colonialists. Therefore, I will deal here with how indigenous peoples have “managed” with and adapted to cultural and political influence; I will also deal with how colonialists have created and maintained the image of what they themselves are like and what kind of power of depiction, or representation, they have.

## The critique of art discourse

The post-colonialist art discourse focuses on criticizing the ideological heritage of colonialism (Haageman – Høholt 1999: 126). The goal is to show how the craft and art of those representing “otherness” have been dealt with in European art-historical discussion. However, it is also important to make indigenous craft and art visible and to assume a position in contexts that have not earlier naturally provided room for indigenous influence. In other words, it is important to begin a new *discourse*.

Art contributes actively, through its products, to the social discussion on the post-colonialist condition. This discussion deals with both politics and art forms. This means that art itself is not separated from social life: artists often join and shape the discussion through their art. However, at the same time some artists do not want to participate in the discourse through art; instead, they prefer to emphasize art formal aspects. As a result, a discursive controversy appears when the various ways of understanding the world compete for making their views visible (Jørgensen – Phillips 1998). In the post-colonialist discourse, the focus is on criticizing Eurocentric cultural views and representations (Haageman – Høholt 1999: 121–124). Here, self-representation becomes important, and a work of art depicts the experiences a person has of the post-colonialist period.

Gerald R. McMaster claims that Western art history has reached its end, asking whether the same also applies to aboriginal art history (McMaster 1999: 85). When discussing the “mainstream” of art, Gerald McMaster refers to another artist, Carl Bean, who has joked that the mainstream of art is quite shallow and about to dry out (McMaster 1999: 81). Why is this so? The reason for this is that the concept *art* itself is, just like aesthetics as a subject of study, strongly connected with the development history of the Western world. But since world art history – which is based on European interpretations and analyses – has already embraced the art of marginalized groups, the members of such groups can be part of history in the same terms but in a different way. McMaster claims this on the basis of his view that, in art, there is no uniformity (ibid. 85).

## Representation

Representation is a concept in post-colonialist criticism which can be understood in many ways. According to Gayatri Spivak, the theory of representation can be divided into two parts: one that deals with ideology, meaning and subjectivity, and another one that deals with politics, the state and law (Spivak 2000: 75). *Representation* and *depiction* deal with for whom we speak, whose ideology we represent when we speak, whom we represent when we depict things and what our experiences are when we depict.

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains the term *representation* as the way in which the Western world has viewed and depicted “colonialist others” and, at the same time, created a representation of itself. In the book, he describes how the view of what the Orient is has been formed (Said 1997: 64–67). His book does not deal with the cultures which make up the Oriental countries: it is about how the West depicts (re-presents) its opinions and world-views (Loomba 1998: 43, see McEvelley 1999: 96). In his criticism, Said claims that we make a difference between the West and the East as a result of the Western view that the Orient is an unchanging culture; therefore, we have a term like the *orient* (Said 1997). According to Said, everything that the authors of the Western world published about the Orient during the Enlightenment and colonialism was written in order to depict an exotic, backward “other” (Said 1997). Thus, the East became the opposite of the West.

Vuokko Hirvonen compares the term *Orientalism* to *Lappology*. According to her, the concept *Lappology* could be used in the same way as Said’s concept to analyze how outsiders have depicted the Sámi ever since the days of Schefferus’s book *Laponia* (Hirvonen 1998: 27). Indeed, we can say that both representation (the *vertreten* of Spivak) and depiction (the *darstellen* of Spivak) have been the focus of both *Lappology* and *Orientalism*.

The concept *representation* can be divided into three parts: 1) The representation of others. This happens when someone represents people from other cultures, for example when the politicians and researchers of a dominant population say that they represent peoples that are not able to represent themselves. Gayatri Spivak calls such representation *vertreten* (Spivak

2000: 76–146). 2) Here, representation, or depiction, means that others tell the world what cultures are like. Spivak calls such representation *darstellen* (ibid.). This also refers to the situation in which a work of craft or art depicts or re-presents an aspect of society or the thoughts of the craftsman or the artist. 3) Self-representation. This is the opposite of representation and depiction by others. In it, the terms of the people that are being discussed or represented are taken into consideration. However, from the post-colonialist perspective, the colonial conditions have often had a strong influence on the self-representation of those living under colonialism.

The concept *representation* has, then, been used in a hierarchical way when dealing with European artists (or those who share this tradition) and the artists of other nations who do not share the European art-historical tradition.

## **Self-representation**

*Self-representation* emphasizes and makes visible the discourse on Sámi craft and art from the point of view of marginal craft and art. Still, self-representation also runs into difficulties, since the understanding of what craft and art are is almost bred in the bone in all of us. The craftspeople and artists of the nations that emphasize ethnicity are expected to represent their nations both through their works of craft/art and personally, while the artists of the European art tradition represent only themselves. The present view of art is based on a theory – created during Kant’s days – which had the freedom and autonomy of art as an ideal (Phillips – Steiner 1999: 3–9). The other craftspeople and artists except the ones who have shared this idea (that is, the artists of the Western world) are expected to *represent*, in some way, their own cultures, whereas a Western artist is just an artist (Lundahl 2000: 11). The craft and art of the former ones carry characteristics that represent their cultures, which results in double representation (ibid.). This became quite clear when the artist Synnøve Persen said in the paper *Min Áigi* a few years ago that art was universal. According to her, the name *Sámi artist* is a burden and something that she feels uncomfortable about, because ethnic categories should not be applied to art (*Min Áigi*, No. 69, 2002). Does this mean that the term *Sámi artist* produces negative image/associations in the same way as for example *lapp/finn*

(“Lapp”)? We cannot say so as the term *Sámi* has been created by the Sámi themselves. Thus, the problem is not the actual term *Sámi artist*, but the kind of expectations that fall on Sámi subjects. I will give an example. If an artist creates art that can be clearly defined as Sámi art because of its “clear” Sámi characteristics, he/she is a Sámi artist. Here, it is easy to understand that the term *Sámi artist* becomes a burden, as the norm has been determined in advance and, therefore, art is by no means free. Nevertheless, there is a difference between a situation in which craftspeople or artists are expected to represent their home region and a situation in which they *use* their experiences of their home region in their production. Thus, there is a difference if Synnøve Persen is expected to paint reindeer in order to be considered a Sámi artist and if Nils-Aslak Valkeapää paints reindeer because the idea rises from his experiences of life.

Globalization has resulted in providing different cultures with common frames of reference, but, at the same time, it has also allowed us to strengthen and revive local features (Eriksson – Baaz – Thörn 1999: 40). This, again, has aroused new questions that concern nationality, citizenship, political power; they also deal with what kind of legitimacy and cultural and political influence nations have. Thus, globalization and multiculturalism give us the opportunity of learning about the unknown, but they also make it possible for a nation to strengthen its identity. Stuart Hall notes that, in the building of a post-colonialist theory, we must be able to, and we need to, emphasize differences as concerns identities in order to be able to see and accept similarities. This is needed when a people establishes (positions) itself as a nation. Hall deals with the construction of self-esteem (from the constructivist perspective of identity), and, according to him, cultural self-esteem is built in certain contexts and is, thus, linked with contexts (Hall 1999: 81–99).

In connection with its founding in 1979, the Sámi Artists’ Association SDS chose to use the term *Sámi artist* (*sámedáiddár*) instead of using the word *Sámi craftsman* (*sámeduojár*). At that point, the concept *Sámi artist* or *indigenous artist* did not exist or was not a natural concept, as there had been no room for it in art history. In the late 1970s, Sámi artists began to build up their self-esteem as Sámi artists. Many of the artists involved in this had a degree in art. They wanted to show their ethnic background but they also wanted to be part of the

world community of artists. In this situation, the term *Sámi artist* could be fitted with the art theoretic framework easier than *Sámi craftsman* would have been. And this was accepted.

Today, the term *artist* is used in Sápmi, and, as concerns Sámi art, the Sámi Artists' Association SDS has also accepted craftspeople as its members. Still, not all skilled craftspeople are accepted as members. The reason is not that they would not be skilled enough in crafting, but that they do not fulfil the artistic criteria set by the association to its members. The craftspeople who make "folk art" (as defined by the SDS's art vocabulary *Sámi Dáiddárleksikona*) are often the ones who are denied membership (SDS 1993: 11). While these craftspeople are praised as being the ones who pass down Sámi craft to new generations, they are not allowed to join the general discussion on Sámi art.

When artists and craftspeople make use of their cultural experiences in crafts and art, they run into the difficulty that they represent, or are expected to represent, a collective. Furthermore, if they use the term *ethnic* but do not actively use "ethnic characteristics" in their art, the audience still expects them to represent and express a common view. This is the way I understand Persen's criticism. Apparently, a product created by an ethnic craftsperson or artist represents the community instead of *expressing* the way in which the craftsperson or artist interprets his/her experiences. According to Mikela Lundahl, such "representation" can be called double representation (Lundahl 2001: 11), if we assume that the craftsperson represents the view of the ethnic group and his/her craftwork, again, shows a common ethnic way of crafting.

As concerns representation, the term *Sámi craftsperson* can be considered as local instead of universal, as the craftspeople have the local area as their starting-point. Thus, craftspeople can represent their own region without this becoming a burden for them. Even so, they neither represent an unchanging culture nor a common way of crafting. I will take an example. If a craftsperson creates a work of craft and calls it a piece of Sámi craft, the people who look at it but are not familiar with Sámi craft may get the idea that the work is a collective product, a work of craft made by "a Sámi" and not by N.N. This keeps up the view

that a work of craft represents Sámi culture instead of craftspeople representing both themselves and Sámi culture.

It is no wonder that craftspeople and works of Sámi craft have clear ethnic characteristics and that works of craft have both implicit and explicit “Sámi” purposes. Problems arise when a work of craft is not a distinguishing characteristic but is still interpreted as one.

Both non-Sámi and Sámi have often considered Sámi craft as a common tradition of the Sámi, which has also given it certain distinguishing characteristics. In such a situation, it becomes increasingly important that a work of craft manifest the tradition of Sámi craft. It has features that show that it is part of *duodji*, and both the practised and the unpractised eye recognize these features. Often, there are also norms that concern the making and using of such works of craft. These aspects have been analyzed by Maja Dunfjeld in her doctoral thesis (Dunfjeld 2001) and by many other researchers (see also Guttorm 1993, 2001). Such works of craft are often an expression of our understanding of what “made by Sámi” means. They follow the acceptable and high-quality ways of crafting among the Sámi. In general art criticism, as well as in Sámi discourse on art, these works of craft are the first ones to be excluded. This gives rise to the questions whether *duodji*, or Sámi craft, is free if it has to observe so many “rules”, and whether these aspects are the reason underlying the fact that *duodji* cannot carry the name art? Whose criteria for assessment do we apply when we interpret craft from the perspective of art? What kinds of evaluation norms do we follow in such cases?

The craftspeople’s experiences as a Sámi and a human being must be connected with some context so that we can understand works of craft in terms of the present. Still, this does not mean that people who are not part of this context cannot interpret the work of craft from their point of view. If I make a Sámi knife but do not decorate it in any way, some Sámi may call it a half-finished piece of craft; they may also think that my departing from the “collective conventions” shows that I have misunderstood “personal freedom”. Non-Sámi may say that a Sámi work of craft should not look like that (if they are used to seeing certain types of knives and sheaths). On the other hand, if they have not seen any works of Sámi craft earlier, they

may think that this is apparently what Sámi craft looks like (thinking that Sámi craft is a product of an unchanging culture and that the product of an individual craftsman must therefore be a product of all the Sámi).

On the other hand, if a craftsman “deviates” from the tradition, his/her work of art probably no longer represents *duodji*. Here, the problem is what to call and how to evaluate such a product. If we assess *duodji* by the criteria of art, it may be left outside art critique if it complies too strictly with traditional design; on the other hand, even if it departs from tradition, it may still be called traditional design by someone who is not familiar with the Sámi tradition. Consequently, representation becomes a burden. Jean Fisher asks interesting questions about how many indigenous craftspeople and artists are “real” craftspeople/artists, if they are not supposed to change anything. She also asks whose thinking they then represent: the ones who think that cultures (here, aboriginal cultures) are unchanging, or the ones who – as members of a culture and each with their own frame of reference – approve of the changes (Fisher 1993: 305).

McEvelley asks whether the present art world welcomes unfamiliar works of craft made by other nations with such openness that they can, when assessed, be connected with a greater number of contexts (McEvelley 1999: 96). But he also realizes that the views of indigenous peoples must change. Both art traditions (of the Western world and the peoples that have been outside it) must stand ridicule and criticism in the necessary process of leaving their present positions (McEvelley 1999: 97).

McMaster calls such a new path a new *language game* (McMaster 1999: 85), and, by this, he means that which is expressed both as part of artistic expression but also in art discourse. In the same way, the post-colonialist approach, too, enables us to take into consideration the starting-point when looking at craft and art. I would add that we also need to have the courage to depart from conventional research methods and the patience to be the object of criticism.

## **Works of craft and art join the discourse**

What happens when art joins the discourse? In that situation, art can be interpreted from a post-colonialist perspective. Art gets involved in the discussion, criticizing and reproaching the basic thoughts/ideologies of the colonial heritage and the ways in which the Western world has dealt with this heritage (Haagemann – Høholt 1999: 121-126). According to Haagemann and Høholt, this has meant that art focuses less on formal aspects (practice) and aesthetic values. Instead, it becomes a narrative which expresses important goals (ibid.). Topical opposites appear, and political and cultural criticism is manifested in the works of art; this, in turn, may affect the aesthetic quality and the autonomy of art as a result of the contextualization of art (ibid: 136). Many researchers criticize post-colonialist thinkers and theorists for not tying the legitimacy of art to quality but to place (see Edwards 1999: 263–277). Young Man emphasizes that this does not mean that the artists would not know enough about the formal aspects; these just do not become the most important thing (Young Man 1986). Instead, artists make use of their aboriginal experiences when they express themselves and join the social discourse through their art. Here, art clearly has a goal. In this way, we can also examine how indigenous peoples and other nations that have been excluded from art history are making history.

## **Sámi works of craft and art as hybrids**

In this context, we can use the concept of *hybridity* in analyzing, for example, Sámi craft. For instance Homi Bhabha has used this concept (Bhabha 1999: 283–285 and Childs – Williams 1997: 122–123). Even so, we cannot say that differences do not mean anything for him. Bhabha studies similarities that exist between different nations, applying the term *hybridity* to products. In hybridity, we find ambivalence, fear, determination, anger and masochism, and the desire to be simultaneously on both sides (ibid: 124). According to Bhabha, these aspects exist both in the colonialist and those living under colonialism. Therefore, the post-colonialist discourse must have hybridity as its paradigmatic starting-point (Childs – Williams 1999: 123). Bhabha mainly focuses on the people who have lived outside their indigenous areas, looking at their works of expression, which thus appear “in a third room”. When analyzing the situation of the colonist and the colonialist “other”, Bhabha speaks in general terms; he

does not link the experiences to certain contexts. Neither does he deal with the fact that there are cultures which have lived outside the culture of the dominant population.

Homi Bhabha calls the process of using one's background actively in one's works of expression "cultural translation" (Bhabha 1999: 285). It means that people are always experiencing something, both in their own environment and in encounters with strange environments. When one makes these meetings visible, the expression becomes the result of meeting. Bhabha uses the ones who have lived in diaspora as an example. This means that craftspeople or artists may live far away from their "home region". A Sámi who has grown up in the USA without ever really visiting Sápmi may have a very different idea of what Sápmi is than the ones who live in Sápmi. Consequently, his/her craft and art may show this. Such a person's experience of Sápmi may be based on things he/she has heard and read rather than his/her own experience. Here, we can use the term "hybrid" for a product that has been created in diaspora.

According to Spivak, the concept *hybrid* is a complicated concept, as it often excludes local experience from the norm (Spivak 1999: 270–273). In such a case, the hybrid becomes the norm, and, for example, a person who sews reindeer skin shoes is not considered a real innovator, even though the local community may consider her/his works of craft to be of high quality. However, the opposite can also be true: for example, the local community may not accept the hybrid product, because it does not fit the local norm.

### **An unpractised eye meets works of Sámi craft**

How should we then evaluate products which are not familiar to us? According to Margaret Dubin, art criticism does not contain strategies for assessing unfamiliar products, and, therefore, experienced art critics apply an approach which is used in Western criticism (Dubin 1999: 149–162). In such a case, opposites, such as traditional/modern and crafts/art, come into focus. The difference between *traditional* and *modern* often refers to how the viewer has learned to see "others". Dubin continues that the distinction between handicraft/work of craft and art appears in the assessment which is done in the name of

quality, but, often, the real issue is whether the object is traditional or modern according to the *viewers'* understanding. As a result of this, aboriginal works of craft and art are not even dealt with by art criticism (Dubin 1999: 154).

Steve Edwards, in turn, is of the opinion that all nations have had their own ways of expression which have required both thinking and doing; these nations have also had their artistic conventions that they have based their evaluations on (Edwards 1999). Some works of craft may not be called art, but many works of craft have features or aspects that can be explained and evaluated through the same methods as art. This is the way I understand McEvelley's cultural relativism (McEvelley 1999: 96). This provides great challenges for Sámi craft. In *duodji*, we have assessment criteria for almost everything – from the material to the finished object – that we still use and can use. What kinds of assessment criteria should we then use when such a work of craft is moved into a glass case in a gallery?

## Conclusion

*Duodji*, or Sámi craft, and Sámi art both share a common history but also have their special histories. Sámi craft has often had the culture as its starting-point; it has been contextualized. Sámi art contains features of Sámi craft, but also features that are connected with universal art.

If Sámi craft wishes to join art discussion, it needs to overcome many difficulties. Firstly, the position of *duodji* is marginal compared to that of Sámi art in terms of the usual, or universal, understanding of art. Secondly, Sámi craft is in an even more marginal position in relation to Western art. However, we must also ask why artists feel that Sámi craft has become a burden for them and what are, in that case, the attitudes kept up by Sámi craft? Furthermore, art and Sámi craft may have their separate views of what good craft and art are. What kind of knowledge does Sámi *duodji* versus art represent? In this discussion, we must also have a look at what kind of attitudes we convey when we talk about *duodji* and art?

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# The implementation of a world indigenous accreditation authority

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In August of 2002, representatives of Indigenous higher education institutions from around the world, ranging from Māori Wānanga in New Zealand to Tribal Colleges from across the U.S.A., assembled in Kananaskis, Alberta and established the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium. WINHEC was created to provide an international forum and support for Indigenous Peoples to pursue common goals through higher education, including “creating an accreditation body for Indigenous education initiatives and systems that identify common criteria, practices and principles by which Indigenous Peoples live.” A year later, after a series of extended planning meetings in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Ōtaki, New Zealand, the WINHEC Executive Board at its 2003 annual meeting in Honolulu brought this goal to reality with the formation of the WINHEC Accreditation Authority and the approval of a Handbook to guide Indigenous-serving institutions and programs as they prepared for a new form of accreditation self-study and review. This chapter will describe the rationale for and implementation of the WINHEC accreditation system and its unfolding contribution to Indigenous self-determination in higher education.

## **WINHEC founding principles**

This World Indigenous Higher Education Consortium was founded on the principles set out in the following Articles of the 1993 United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (formally adopted in 2007):

Article #13,

Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the

use and control of ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of human remains.

Article #14,

Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

Article #15,

Indigenous peoples have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and language. States shall take effective measures to provide appropriate resources for these purposes.

Article #16,

Indigenous peoples have the right to have the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations appropriately reflected in all forms of education and public information. States shall take effective measures, in consultation with the Indigenous peoples concerned, to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all segments of society.

Indigenous peoples throughout the world have been seeking to exercise the rights articulated above, as well as those outlined in the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education (1999), through the creation of educational institutions and programs that assert, as a basic form of self-determination, that Indigenous people have the right to be Indigenous. Diverse as they were in their own histories and cultural traditions, the representatives of the many Indigenous regions and institutions that assembled in Kananaskis took remarkably little time to articulate a common purpose for an international organization to pursue their interests, as reflected in the following adopted vision and goals.

### **WINHEC Vision:**

We gather as Indigenous Peoples of our respective nations recognizing and reaffirming the educational rights of all Indigenous Peoples. We share the vision of all Indigenous Peoples of the world united in the collective synergy of self-determination through control of higher education. Committed to building partnerships that restore

and retain Indigenous spirituality, cultures and languages, homelands, social systems, economic systems and self determination.

### **WINHEC Goals:**

The purpose of WINHEC is to provide an international forum and support for Indigenous Peoples to pursue common goals through higher education, including but not limited to:

1. Accelerating the articulation of Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing, education, philosophy, and research);
2. Protecting and enhancing Indigenous spiritual beliefs, culture and languages through higher education;
3. Advancing the social, economical, and political status of Indigenous Peoples that contribute to the well-being of Indigenous communities through higher education;
4. Creating an accreditation body for Indigenous education initiatives and systems that identify common criteria, practices and principles by which Indigenous Peoples live;
5. Recognizing the significance of Indigenous education;
6. Creating a global network for sharing knowledge through exchange forums and state of the art technology;
7. Recognizing the educational rights of Indigenous Peoples;
8. Protecting, preserving and advocating Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights, in particular the reaffirming and observance of the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1994); and
9. Promoting the maintenance, retention and advancement of traditional Indigenous bodies of knowledge.

Once the purposes of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium were established, a series of working groups were formed to address the various goals that had been adopted, including a Working Group on Accreditation (Goal 4). The accreditation working group convened a series of meetings at various venues over the next year to solicit input regarding what an Indigenous accreditation system might look like and how it could be implemented. The intent was not to replicate the many existing and varied national accreditation and quality assurance regimes to which Indigenous institutions and programs were already subject, but to address the unique features that distinguish such institutions and programs from their mainstream counterparts (Barnhardt, 1991). Drawing upon the sometimes frustrating experiences of Indigenous-serving institutions and programs that had

been through an accreditation review under their respective national structures, as well as the limited but highly relevant experience of the First Nations Accreditation Board in Alberta, Canada, the Working Group on Accreditation began to piece together an Indigenous accreditation system for WINHEC implementation.

## **WINHEC Accreditation**

Accreditation is a process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the cultural and educational community being served. In the case of the WINHEC Accreditation Authority, this recognition is extended to include significant participation by the Indigenous peoples to be served through the respective institution/program, including responsibility for establishing review criteria and participating in the self-study and review process. An underlying consideration in the implementation of this accreditation process is the inherent diversity of Indigenous cultural histories, traditions and world views, all of which must not only be acknowledged, but must be recognized and celebrated as a valued asset and serve as one of the fundamental premises on which the accreditation process rests (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991).

In postsecondary education, accreditation performs a number of important functions, including the validation of credibility on the part of the public being served, and encouragement of efforts toward maximizing educational effectiveness. The accrediting process requires institutions and programs to examine their own goals, operations, and achievements, and then provides the expert critiques and suggestions of an external review team, and the recommendations of the accrediting body. Since the accreditation is reviewed periodically, institutions are encouraged toward continued self-study and improvement.

Accreditation of institutions and specialized programs is granted by a number of national, regional and professional organizations, each representing a lens through which to examine the quality and integrity of the institutions/programs in question. Though each of these organizations has its distinctive definitions of eligibility, criteria for accreditation, and operating procedures, most of them undertake accreditation as one means of assuring the public constituencies about the quality and integrity of the services rendered. While the

procedures of the various national and professional accrediting structures differ somewhat in detail, each is intended to fulfill the following purposes:

1. foster quality assurance in postsecondary education through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness in a context that values diversity and reflects locally defined definitions of what constitutes quality and effectiveness;
2. encourage institutional improvement of educational endeavors through continuous self-study and evaluation;
3. insure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution/program has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them substantially, and is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and
4. provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions (NWCCU, 2003).

Accreditation by the WINHEC Accreditation Authority strives to insure that an Indigenous-serving postsecondary institution/program's own goals are soundly conceived, that its educational and cultural programs have been intelligently devised, and that its purposes are being accomplished in a manner that should continue to merit confidence by the Indigenous constituencies being served. Thus, the WINHEC accreditation review process seeks to take into account and support the diversity that exists among Indigenous-serving postsecondary institutions/programs. This is accomplished through implementation of the following “Guiding Principles for WINHEC Accreditation Authority” (WINHEC, 2004).

1. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority will serve as a vehicle for strengthening and validating Indigenous higher education institutions and programs based on standards and procedures developed and implemented by WINHEC member institutions.
2. The criteria for accreditation review will be founded upon the diverse Indigenous language and cultural beliefs, protocols, laws and practices that provide the epistemological and pedagogical basis for the institutions and programs under review, and will be applied in a manner that is consistent with the principles outlined in the 1993 United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 1994 Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the 1999 Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education.
3. The primary focus of the WINHEC Accreditation Authority will be the internal congruence and cultural integrity of the institutions/programs under review, with secondary consideration given to linkages with external/mainstream institutions and accreditation systems.

4. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority will provide a means for institution-level accreditation of Indigenous-controlled higher education institutions, as well as program-level accreditation of Indigenous-oriented programs within Indigenous and mainstream institutions (including teacher education programs).
5. The accreditation review process will include the role of locally respected Elders and recognized cultural practitioners, and the use of the heritage language(s) as reflected in the institution/program under review.
6. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority will promote Indigenous research that is respectful of cultural and intellectual property rights and closely integrated with the communities being served.
7. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority self-study process will be guided by local cultural standards that are developed by the respective Indigenous communities, and thus will provide international recognition and validation for educational initiatives grounded in Indigenous world views, knowledge systems and ways of knowing.
8. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority will provide accredited institutions and programs with access to the following WINHEC services:
  - a. Each accredited institutional member shall receive formal acknowledgement and recognition of its accreditation status in the form of an official certificate from WINHEC, have one vote on the Accreditation Authority Board, and be invited to participate in program reviews of other applicants for accreditation.
  - b. Each accredited member shall be included in the planning and implementation of cooperative activities (e.g., conferences, scholar/student exchanges, shared programs/curricula, cooperative research initiatives) of WINHEC programs and institutions.
  - c. Each accredited member shall have opportunities to enroll students in and contribute to the offerings associated with articulated international baccalaureate and graduate degree programs focusing on Indigenous studies, including the acceptance of approved transfer credits among all member programs and institutions.
  - d. Accredited members shall have opportunities for faculty and students to form partnerships on joint research activities and to participate in faculty/student exchanges among member programs and institutions.
  - e. Accredited members shall be responsible for contributing to and have access to a database of Indigenous scholars for external review of research papers, theses, grant proposals, manuscripts, etc.
  - f. Accredited members shall be invited to participate in and contribute to international seminars, conferences, policy papers and comparable initiatives that pertain to the interests of the member programs and institutions.

## **Eligibility requirements of applicants for accreditation**

Applicants for accreditation are required to submit an application portfolio to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority and if accepted, prepare a self-study addressing the criteria for review outlined in the accreditation guidelines. Applicants may be either an Indigenous-serving institution (e.g. a Tribal College or Wānanga), or an Indigenous-serving program contained within a mainstream institution, and the review process is adjusted accordingly. Programs are assessed with regard to their integrity and support in the context of the host institution.

The characteristics of an institution/program and the conditions required by the Accreditation Authority for consideration as an Applicant for Accreditation are outlined in the WINHEC Accreditation Handbook (2004). Each component of the eligibility requirements is a pre-condition that relates to the appropriate guidelines and criteria by which quality, integrity, effectiveness and accreditation are evaluated.

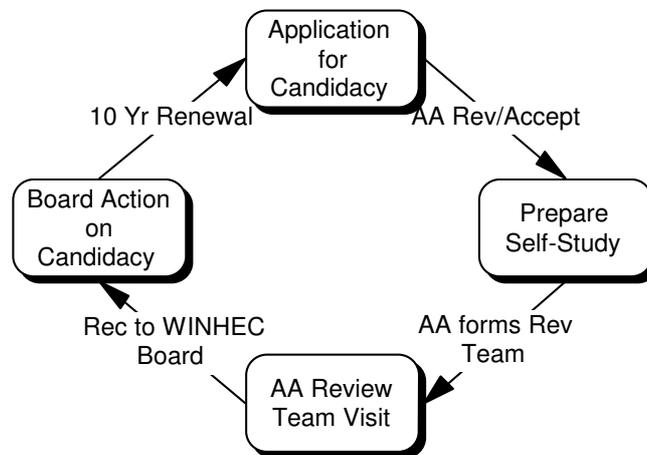
## **Overview of the accreditation review process**

The WINHEC Accreditation Authority appoints an accreditation review team made up of representatives from at least four member institutions/programs, two of which are from the same national context as the applicant institution/program. The review team includes a minimum of one Elder who has been associated with a member program or institution.

The review team prepares a report based on a review of the self-study and an on-site visit to the candidate program/institution. This report (including the self-study) is submitted to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority for final consideration of membership approval.

The review process to be jointly conducted by the institution and the Accreditation Authority includes the following steps:

1. A representative of the Authority conducts a preliminary visit to the institution/program 6 to 12 months before a review team visit.
2. The institution/program analyzes itself through a self-study, as outlined below.
3. Review team members study the institutional self-study report, visit the institution/program and prepare a written report.
4. A draft report from the review team is prepared and sent to the institution/program chair. The chair is given an opportunity to respond to the review team's written report before the final report is prepared.
5. The team's final report is mailed to the chair and the Accreditation Authority board members four to six weeks before the next scheduled board meeting.
6. The WINHEC Accreditation Authority Board of Affirmation reviews the institution/program self-study and the review team's report, interviews the review team chair and if necessary, the person in charge of the institution/program, and takes action on the basis of information obtained. These actions may include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a. The Authority may grant full accreditation with all rights and privileges thereof, which will be subject to renewal in 10 years.
  - b. The Authority may grant a provisional accreditation, stipulating specific adjustments and modifications required and a timeframe in which they must be addressed. If the modifications are met in the specified time, full accreditation will be granted. If the modifications are not met as specified, the Authority may withdraw further recognition, or extend the provisional status until the modifications are met.
7. If at any time during the 10-year full accreditation period the Accreditation Authority is notified that an accredited institution/program no longer meets the minimal conditions under which it was originally accredited, the Authority will review the information to determine if it warrants investigation, if so, an investigation will be conducted and recommendations will be presented to the Accreditation Board for action. If deemed appropriate, the Authority reserves the right to rescind accreditation under its auspices. The institution/program involved may appeal such action to the WINHEC Executive Board for further consideration.
8. Institutions/programs that receive full accreditation are required to submit an Interim Report to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority at the 5-year mark of the 10-year period of full accreditation.



**WINHEC ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY**  
**Application/Review Cycle**

The review process is a major undertaking, and a full academic year is considered to be the minimum working time needed. Preparation normally begins more than a year before the date of the site visit.

**Accreditation Self-Study**

**Role of self-study.** The WINHEC Accreditation Authority, while requiring the submission of a self-study report in connection with a review for accreditation, recognizes that the self-study process is more beneficial to the institution/program when it is undertaken in response to significant needs felt by the Indigenous community being served. Accordingly, a variety of approaches to self-study are acceptable and an institution/program is permitted to propose some variation in the design of the self-study which it considers to be of intrinsic value as long as the overarching purposes of a comprehensive self-study are met and all Authority requirements are addressed.

**Self-study steering committee.** It is important to have a steering committee broadly representative of the institution/program under review and the Indigenous communities being served so that a comprehensive assessment may be promoted. Also, others whose interests might be affected by the results of the study should in some way be involved. How the leadership and the participating personnel for the self-study are selected, whether by election, appointment, or some combination of both, should be resolved in accordance with the tradition and climate of the institution/program. Most institution/programs have multiple constituencies who have somewhat differing interests and values. An institution/program organizing for self-study is expected to have these various points of view in mind as it makes its plans and staffs its committees.

**Development of the Report.** The "Standards and Guidelines for Self-Study" which follow below provides a suggested framework of essential considerations for the self-study and for the external review team. An institution/program undergoing review is encouraged to design a narrative report best suited to its mission and supported by the necessary data presented in a concise and readable form (WINHEC, 2004).

### **Cultural standards and their use in the self-study**

As indicated in Guiding Principles #5 and #7 above, one of the pre-conditions for a WINHEC Accreditation Authority review is the identification of a locally appropriate and accepted set of "Cultural Standards" against which the cultural integrity of the institution/program can be reviewed and assessed. "Cultural Standards" refers here to a locally defined set of guidelines, principles and/or values that reflect the cultural essence to which the goals of the particular program or institution are directed and under which it operates. The intent is to affirm the performance of Indigenous-serving institutions and programs in reference to standards appropriate to the Indigenous cultural contexts involved, rather than impose a single set of generic standards assumed to be equally applicable to all institutions/programs. These local Cultural Standards must be in place and submitted to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority for reference as a pre-condition for consideration of eligibility.

**Cultural standards development.** If such Cultural Standards do not yet exist in the Indigenous region under consideration, the candidate program or institution is urged to convene a broadly representative group of Indigenous people from across the region being served who can either develop and adopt an original set of cultural standards/guidelines applicable to the tribes/region/nation involved, or review, adapt and endorse an existing set of cultural standards, such as the Alaska version in Appendix A, or the Hawai'i Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments (available at <http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/dual/nhmo/>). Once adopted by the appropriate Indigenous authorities, the relevant cultural standards/guidelines are then submitted to the WINHEC Accreditation Authority to serve as the basis on which the educational and cultural integrity of the respective institution/program will be reviewed for accreditation.

In preparing the self-study, the institution/program under consideration is expected to demonstrate that it meets each element of the standards, and any applicable policy. The self-study document is expected to include an appraisal of the institution/program's strengths, weaknesses, and achievements relative to each standard.

## **Conclusion**

In November, 2004, a Māori Teacher Education program, a Māori Philosophy and Law program and a Māori Kaumātua/Elder program, each offered by one of the three Māori Wānanga (Tribal Colleges) in New Zealand, underwent review and became the first programs to be accredited by the WINHEC Accreditation Authority. Two additional First Nations programs in Canada and two new Native Hawaiian institutions have each initiated the process to become candidates for WINHEC accreditation. In some cases, these programs and institutions are seeking WINHEC accreditation as the primary form of quality assurance and validation for their work, while others are seeking Indigenous validation in addition to existing regional or national accreditation. Either way, the WINHEC accreditation process reflects a new form of self-determination in which Indigenous peoples are asserting their rights to provide educational opportunities grounded in their own worldviews, knowledge systems and ways of knowing.

A copy of the WINHEC Accreditation Handbook, including sample “cultural standards” are available on the WINHEC web site at <http://www.win-hec.org>, or on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/ihe.html>.

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