

## Editorial

# Decolonizing + Indigenizing = Moving Environmental Education Towards Reconciliation

I stand by the fact that the land I'm in, on now, is our land. I believe God put us there. God gave us a language, the animals to live off and we just don't want to see development on that area ... As a treaty partner, I expect to be treated as a partner, not where one [Canada] is superior than us. (Chief Donny Morris, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, Court transcript of a trial that resulted in a 6-month jail sentence for the Chief and band council, cited in McCreary & Barker, 2008, p. 28)

The Canadian government has the classic addict's denial about the consequences of exploiting natural resources that rightfully belong to First Nations. (Shawn Atleo, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, Nov. 8, 2012, CBC.ca)

We no longer have the option of deferring the decolonization project. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22)

This special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* comes at a critical historical moment in Canada when environmental educators are seeking Indigenous worldviews, knowledges, and holistic systems of living well on the Land to improve the natural world for *all* peoples, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This is also exactly the same historical moment when Canada is contending with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) into the human rights abuses and deaths of Indigenous children in the Indian Residential School system (1876-1996). Environmental educators know how to recognize the truths of unsustainable consumption of the earth's resources, of climate change and global warming, and of neoliberal arrogance around short-term profits at the expense of our children's environmental future. We now need to acknowledge the truths of colonization of Indigenous peoples and their Lands in order to heal the painfully damaged relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Acknowledging and attending to the difficult process of decolonization while working towards a respectful Indigenized space of environmental education is a way forward towards a new paradigm of environmental education: Land-based education-as-reconciliation.

The pressing need for decolonizing and Indigenizing environmental issues is repeatedly witnessed and reported on the media here at *CJEE's* home base of Thunder Bay, in northern Ontario. Our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, recently declared northern Ontario's Ring of Fire chromite mineral deposit a new frontier of economic development for all and a promise of future prosperity for Canada's most populated province (Howlett & McCarthy, 2012). The Ring of Fire deposit is located upon, and will greatly impact, the traditional territories, the homelands, and traditional ways of life of the Matawa and Mushkegowuk First Nations. Yet

most Ontarians, and by extension most Canadians, have never heard of these communities, do not know their Indigenous perspectives or knowledge of their Land, or recognize the treaty (James Bay #9) that the Crown signed 100 years ago to live well together and share the resources of this Land. There is, however, a growing assumption by all levels of government that Canada must rely more on natural resource extraction for the future foundation of its economy; an estimated \$500 billion in natural resource projects are on the table. While First Nations Lands and Indigenous communities reside adjacent to every major natural resource development opportunity that Canada wants to exploit to build its economic wealth, there has been little discussion or recognition of Indigenous sovereignty over the determination of their Lands (see Peerla, 2012).

This special issue is part of the effort to recognize treaty and traditional rights of Indigenous peoples, including the right of free, prior, and informed consent for any activity on their Lands. Acknowledgement of the treaty means acknowledgement of the traditional territory of Indigenous groups and also recognizes Indigenous peoples as traditional stewards, or custodians of Land in territories that they occupied in the past, and continue to occupy in the present. All Canadians need to learn how they are treaty partners with Indigenous peoples, on Indigenous Land with an obligation to live in peace, harmony, and respect. This is the foundational understanding of this special issue on decolonizing and Indigenous environmental education.

We in Canada have to begin with decolonization of the relationship of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as does every country with a colonial past: “Colonialism is a shared condition wherein colonizers and colonized come to know each other very well” (Donald, 2009, p. 6). The damages of colonization on the earth and to Indigenous peoples and their Lands are “inextricably intertwined” (Root, 2010, p. 106). Environmental educators—who have done an excellent job of pointing out the devastation and damage to the earth by a colonial, exploitative, industrial mindset—no longer have the time or privilege to ignore or avoid the devastating sociocultural and political costs of colonization on Indigenous peoples: the theft of their Lands, the reaping of unilateral profits from Land exploitation, and the ultimate injustice of stealing their children and attempting to destroy their language, culture, and future through the Residential School system.

Decolonizing can be painful, but is a necessary process in environmental education. As Shawn Atleo (2012) recently said:

Canada has a long dark history and shadow of its colonial past that still overlaps the whole country and still gets expressed in tenures for mines, building for hydro, drilling for oil. It denies the truth of Treaty 9 and residential schools in this country. It is a great awakening that we are in the middle of, that reflects the resilience of First Nation communities and more Canadians who are joining us to advocate for real change in the relationship and compelling Canadian governments to make real changes. (CBC.ca, November 8)

Or, as Indigenous/Miq'maq education scholar Marie Battiste has stated, “the pedagogical challenge of [Canadian] education is not just reducing the distance between Eurocentric thinking and Aboriginal ways of knowing but engaging *decolonized* minds and hearts” (2002, p. 22, emphasis added). Central to this process of decolonization is Dwayne Donald’s (2009) reminder that the longevity of the relationships maintained by Indigenous peoples with their Lands is significant and speaks to an inherent sovereignty: “Indigenous peoples, as descendants of the original inhabitants, are seen as the holders and practitioners of a *sui generis* sovereignty in their traditional lands that typically finds expression as wisdom tradition” (p. 19).

In this issue, decolonization is directly connected to treaty and traditional rights to Land, or Land entitlement and determination, as well as understood as being much more, much deeper, and more complex than simply a metaphor for a non-Indigenous settler notion of social justice (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonization will take a substantial amount of uncomfortable or even painful re-education by non-Indigenous Canadians to learn and respect Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination on their Lands, but environmental education is the best “place” to do this work and lead the way towards what can be called the “Eighth Fire” of educational reform. The Eighth Fire refers to an Anishinaabe prophecy of a new peace and friendship relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (CBC, 2012).

The biggest issue preventing the Eighth Fire and standing between these two peoples of Canada (as is the case in most colonial countries) is the Land—Land ownership, Land entitlement, Land as ceremony (Simpson, 2008). Indigenizing environmental education means actively recognizing, centring, validating, and honouring Indigenous rights, values, epistemologies or worldviews, knowledge, language, and the stories of the people of the Land (Korteweg, Gonzalez, & Guillet, 2010) in environmental and outdoor education. Every environmental controversy, every environmental education issue that is Land-based, is *de facto* an Indigenous issue in Canada. Indigenous peoples and Indigenous education needs Euro-settler allies who can work to provide expertise and service that will help Indigenous peoples with their Land-based struggles. Environmental educators are particularly adept and well-positioned to work towards Land-based education and can welcome inclusive Indigenous knowledge and create respectful spaces within environmental education to help non-Indigenous students acknowledge and respect the increasingly relevant, foundational, and critically important Indigenous knowledge of the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples on whose land they live.

The authors in this special issue are, for the most part, open and optimistic as they strive towards an Eighth Fire future. However, it is important to heed the call and warnings by Indigenous education scholars such as Laara Fitznor, Celia Haig-Brown, and Laura Moses (2000) and Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) who worry that non-Indigenous researchers may be looking to find “settler moves

toward innocence” and neutrality (p. 10), rather than rising to the challenge of the decolonizing critique to take account and atone as part of the “hard unsettling work” (p. 4) of Land-based reconciliation. As Haig-Brown (in Fitznor, Haig-Brown, & Moses, 2000) has cautioned, non-Indigenous researchers have to remain vigilant in our critical self-reflexivity to not simply learn to colonize ourselves better. For, as Battiste (2005) warns, how can educators be the post-colonial doctors offering an educational cure when we have for so long been marinating in the colonial disease of Eurocentrism? As Nisgaa First Nations Rod Robinson (cited in Battiste, 2002) has insightfully noted about the necessary work of decolonization:

Today the Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians stand on opposite shores of a wide river of mistrust and misunderstanding. Each continues to search through the mist for a clear reflection in the waters long the opposite shore. If we are truly to resolve the issues that separate us, that tear at the heart of this great country ... then we must each retrace our steps through our history, to the source of our misperception and misconception of each other's truth. (pp. 21-22)

We cannot simply skip over the first serious and painful stage of decolonization given the ongoing “logics of colonialism” (Donald, Glanfield, & Sterenberg, 2012, p. 54) and legacies of trauma that still permeate all aspects of Canadian society. We cannot skip ahead to some neutralized ahistorical, guilt-free, pain-free, “romanticized” version of environmental education that non-Indigenous settlers are happier to hear or find acceptable to receive (Tuck & Yang, 2012). While it is seductive to claim Indigenous Land as “our” (non-Indigenous) “special places” where we feel connected to the natural world, the result is a double move of colonialism. The other tempting double colonial move is to claim that we gifted/enlightened non-Indigenous environmental or outdoor educators are the chosen ones to learn and pass on Indigenous knowledge and traditions (Schreiber, 2012), despite being without Indigenous language, Indigenous membership in communities, or cultural protocols of taking direction and guidance from Elders, Chiefs, and councils. Reconciliation education is non-Indigenous educators’ important responsibility: environmental educators, aware and attentive to the Land, can be proactive in becoming more aware and attentive to Indigenous peoples’ rights, history, and justice education on, through, and grounded in Indigenous Land.

The work featured in the theme-related papers of this issue of the *CJEE*, then, argues that the most productive opportunities of Indigenous—non-Indigenous relations in environmental education require us to call into question accepted or assumed modes of thinking and seeing that may be neo/colonial so that we might “work together to improve the relations of this land ” (Atleo, 2012). We have learned during this editorship that both decolonizing and Indigenizing energies, as inquiry and sustained action, need to occur simultaneously in environmental education research: decolonizing as critical reflexivity by researchers/educators that makes explicit the present marinade of neocolonialism in main-

stream environmentalism and environmental education, and Indigenizing as moving towards an Indigenized future of improved Indigenous—non-Indigenous relations as treaty partners on the same land. We are grateful to the authors and reviewers who have joined us in attempting to face this critically important topic for the future of environmental education.

We begin this special issue with a section on critical decolonizing articles that directly explore some key problematics of settler, Eurocentric, or Western environmental thinking that often remain implicit, hidden, or overlooked in environmental education. First, we have **Peter Cole's** provocative lyrical account of coyote and raven exchanging trickster wisdom in "Coyote and Raven Talk About Indigenizing Environmental Education: Or Reconfiguring the Shenanigans of Otis O'Dewey Esquire." These two messengers of wisdom—coyote and raven—ask hard questions that reveal hidden difficult truths but are delivered with ironic humour and wit, questions such as how any curriculum, including environmental education, can be "indigenized" through use of the English language (the colonizer's tongue): "it's just I can't indigenize mainstream curriculum or any other english expression except by renaming or lip-pointing and of course by doing though I can't say how it is so using the english language." Cole reminds us that there will need to be new creative ways to approach decolonizing and Indigenizing environmental education, especially in alliances with Indigenous peoples. Environmental educators cannot rely on *non-decolonized* or Eurocentric curriculum theories if we want to build a new Aboriginal—non-Aboriginal relationship in environmental or land-based education: "if the mainstream is going to facilitate our environmental curriculum there can be nothing in it for the first peoples same old colonizer story same refrain *currere currere currere*."

In "Canoe Pedagogy and Colonial History: Exploring Contested Spaces of Outdoor Environmental Education," **Liz Newbery** explores some of the painful issues of decolonizing environmental education by uncovering the history of the canoe, often the symbol of deep environmental attachment for non-Indigenous Canadians, but historically the symbol of colonialism, displacement, and cultural genocide for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Newbery reveals how the outdoors or "wilderness" is a colonial place that most non-Indigenous environmental educators reproduce as devoid of any critical pedagogy of colonialism: "the contested histories of space, the ambivalent role that the canoe played in Canada's origins, the very context for all of this learning—tended to go unacknowledged." The harm is that both non-Indigenous environmental educators and youth engaging in these canoe trips lose a possible deep connection with the Land as respected traditional territory and negate any relationship with Indigenous peoples as rich members of this shared space/place called Canada.

The next section of articles offers empirical examples of decolonizing and/or Indigenizing environmental education in practice. In **Julie Gorlewski and Brad Porfilio's** article, "Revolutionizing Environmental Education through Indigenous Hip-Hop Culture," the authors continue the critical investigation and

deep probing into how to decolonize or revolutionize environmental education for Indigenous youth. In this study, they provide an empirical case of Indigenous peoples taking back their Indigenous Knowledge and entitlement of ancestral land wisdom by communicating to each other an approach of Indigenous decolonization. Through an Indigenized form and space of hip-hop arts, urban Indigenous youth are regaining strength and resilience. Gorlewski and Porfilio have documented the strong voices of these Indigenous artists as they tell their stories of becoming (more) Indigenous, affirmed in their Indigenous identities, and connected to both the Indigenous knowledge and collective entitlement to Land. This unique Land-respect education enacted by Indigenous artists is demonstrated by their commitment to the arts collective and to mentoring younger urban Indigenous youth into hip-hop arts, Indigenized identities, and connection to Land through cultural membership. It is land-based decolonizing education *by* the (Indigenous) people, *for* the (Indigenous) people.

The promise of an Indigenized approach to curriculum is at the centre of **Jenny Ritchie's** article, "Titiro Whakamuri, Hoki Whakamua: Respectful Integration of Māori Perspectives within Early Childhood Environmental Education." Appropriately for these very young learners in Aotearoa (New Zealand), the early childhood educators respectfully included Maori perspectives through appropriate language (local land values expressed in Maori) and legends and cosmological stories of caring for ourselves as people, for others as animals, as well as the care of the whole Earth or environment around us. In respectful consultation with Maori knowledge holders and community members, Ritchie's early childhood educators learned and embedded in practice these Indigenous perspectives as "a valid counter-narrative to the dominant Western techno-industrial emphasis that continues to damage our planet." Ritchie's study provides a positive, uplifting example of Indigenous—non-Indigenous relationships in education and proves that holistic, Indigenous respectful and community-based approaches in environmental education are tenable and beneficial for all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in any colonial country.

Another empirical study of Indigenizing curriculum is **Dawn Sutherland and Natalie Swayze's** article, "Including Indigenous Knowledges and Pedagogies in Science-based Environmental Education Programs." The authors explore the validity of and balance between science learning outcomes and environmental pedagogies with "local cultural traditions, languages, beliefs, and perspectives" in an urban, informal, after-school environmental education program in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Sutherland's *Ininiwi-kiskānitamowin*, a Cree/Indigenous-inspired assessment model for science and math programming in Indigenous education settings, is applied to Swayze's Bridging the Gap (BTG) program, a culturally relevant, science-based environmental education program for inner-city Indigenous youth. The purpose of the *Ininiwi-kiskānitamowin* evaluation of the BTG environmental education program was to align BTG's environmental curriculum with Indigenous epistemologies of science (or land-based knowledge) and make stronger connections to Indigenous Elders, culture, language, and experi-

ential learning. The study reveals another positive example of how Indigenizing environmental education can help (non-Indigenous) environmental educators in understanding “Indigenous Knowledges and pedagogies as enlightening concepts and important emphases for reform while concurrently immersing them in new, inclusive ways of thinking and designing environmental education.”

The next section of articles focuses on work that claims new conceptual curricular spaces for acknowledging the two worlds of Indigenous Knowledge and Euro-Western worldview, for enacting a blended *métissage*, for two-eyed seeing models of teaching and learning in environmental education. **Julie Kapyrka and Mark Dockstator** start by reminding us that the epistemologies at work in the Indigenous—non-Indigenous relationship, historically and presently, are difficult to resolve, often in tension and opposition, even in a university classroom focused on environmental education. “Indigenous Knowledges and Western Knowledges in Environmental Education: Acknowledging the Tensions for the Benefits of a ‘Two-Worlds’ Approach” is a study that problematizes the idea that Indigenizing (university) curricula is an easy or natural fit for Indigenous environmental studies. Worldview differences and clashes between Indigenous and Euro-Western are particularly tense on the following point: Indigenous worldviews are alive, dynamic, and accumulative of ancient living wisdom traditions, whereas Western knowledge is an amassed amount of collected (textual) knowledge that claims the one “right” (colonial) model of mono-cultural knowledge. “Western thinking environmentalists tend to think of the land in terms of protectionism and conservation (no resource extraction and limited or regulated use of the land) while Indigenous peoples look to the land in terms of engaging with it by upholding relationships and responsibilities (hunting, gathering foods and medicines, and engaging in ceremony with the land).” Yet, Kapyrka and Dockstator do give us reason to hope for a new approach in environmental education, a two-worlds pedagogy of Indigenous and Western operating in tandem, with its inherent epistemological tensions that will give environmental educators “a great opportunity for learning and for mutual understanding” that “moves disparate knowledges and peoples closer together to offer an opportune stage for the future.”

**Greg Lowan-Trudeau** examines interpretive methodologies’ readiness for Indigenous Knowledge recognition and integration in qualitative research. Working from his doctoral dissertation in “Methodological *Métissage*: An Interpretive Indigenous Approach to Environmental Education Research,” Lowan-Trudeau invites environmental education researchers to follow his approach of methodological *métissage*, arguing that it is a methodology that blends Western and Indigenous knowledge and philosophies of Nature for intercultural environmental education in Canada. Methodological *métissage* is a combination of the strengths of all interpretive traditions, the best of all cultures, that can help environmental education researchers find solutions for present and future ecological problems.



**Margaret McKeon** discusses in “Two-Eyed Seeing into Environmental Education: Revealing its ‘Natural’ Readiness to Indigenize” an integrative approach that can help enrich, renew, and re-focus environmental education’s goals and core concepts. Using Two-Eyed Seeing as a framework to connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous, McKeon reviews those established environmental thinkers whose work could be enriched by extending their core concepts with Indigenous understandings of storytelling, interconnectedness, wholeness (holism), nature/land experience, caring/care-taking, relationships, transformational change, and lands/place. McKeon honours the teachings she has received as a non-Indigenous outdoor educator from a Mi’kmaq Elder by connecting these environmental education philosophies in order that *all* students and the natural world stand to benefit.

In the next article, “Decolonization, Reinhabitation and Reconciliation: Aboriginal and Place-Based Education,” **Alexa Scully** describes her experiences teaching pre-service Aboriginal education courses in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. Describing herself an “apprentice ally,” Scully is determined to ensure that Canadian learners “be in right relation to the peoples and lands of Canada through territorially and culturally specific teachings.” She offers a compelling argument for place-based Aboriginal education, asserting that this approach can be of use both to Aboriginal learners “as a tool of resurgence and sovereignty” and non-Aboriginal learners “to disrupt racialized perceptions of Aboriginal peoples [and] to create awareness of the cultural location of all peoples and pedagogies.” Place-based Aboriginal education, then, is a practice of social and ecological justice that can foster cross-cultural understandings.

Shifting from Canada to Lesotho, **Tsepo Mokuku** writes about the use of Indigenous Knowledge in environmental education efforts in his home country in the article, “Lehae-La-Rona: Epistemological Interrogations to Broaden our Conception of Environment and Sustainability.” Critical of the dominance of Eurocentric theoretical frameworks in environmental and sustainability discourse in Lesotho, he describes an African-centred approach that offers a more holistic conceptualization of environment and that privileges the local language, Sesotho over English, the language of the colonizer. Mokuku builds on the concepts of *asili* (logic of culture), *utamawazo* (culturally structured thought), *utamarofo* (vital force of culture), and *pono* (dream, vision or insight) as embodied in the Lesotho context to develop ways in which the idea of *lehae-la-rona* (our home) can contribute to environmental and sustainability education discourse. He argues that an African-centred worldview can contribute much to environmental and sustainability discourse “in its emphasis on interconnectedness, harmony, balance, holism, and revealed knowledge” and that it “could unleash untapped potential, and engender a new consciousness and unanticipated ways of envisioning a sustainable future.”

The final paper in this issue is a general paper that is not connected to the theme, but nonetheless has some resonance given its methodological approach and theoretical leanings. In “Community Story Circles: An Opportunity to



Rethink the Epistemological Approach to Heritage Interpretive Planning,” **Lesley Curthoys, Brent Cuthbertson, and Julie Clark** examine the methodological potential of story circles to “enrich and diversify” the planning processes associated with heritage interpretation. Noting that the profession has been criticized for privileging certain stories, including those of Western science, in interpretation materials and activities, more efforts are being made now to access and represent diverse community stories. The authors share their experience with community story circles and the importance of sharing stories grounded in place that make space for complex webs of relationships that honour many voices, including more-than-human community members. In the end, for Curthoys, Cuthbertson, and Clark, “the *process* of gathering, sharing, and building local knowledge was equally as important as the knowledge gained.”

We hope that you find this issue of the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* both illuminating, provocative and generative. We certainly did.

*Lisa Korteweg, Guest Editor, & Connie Russell, Editor, Lakehead University*

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