Kitakiiminaan: Learning to Live Well Together on Aboriginal Lands

Emily Root
Lakehead University
Thunder Bay, ON, Canada
eroot@hotmail.com

Kaaren Dannenmann
Trout Lake, ON, Canada
antonbeach@hotmail.com

Prepared for: Henrik Ibsen: The Birth of "Friluftsliv"
A 150 Year International Dialogue Conference Jubilee Celebration
North Troendelag University College, Levanger, Norway
Mountains of Norwegian/Swedish Border
September 14-19, 2009

Kitakiiminaan: Learning to Live Well Together on Aboriginal Lands

Emily Root and Karen Dannenmann

Situating Ourselves

Emily.

My name is Emily Root. I am White and Euro Canadian. I grew up in Pembroke, a small eastern Ontario town located on the traditional territory of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan. The great deal of time I spent with my family on the Ottawa River while growing up helped foster my feelings of connectedness to nature. Currently I am a postgraduate student at Lakehead University living in the Northwestern Ontario city of Thunder Bay, which is located on Anishnaabe land, the traditional territory of the Fort William First Nation. I would also like to acknowledge the Sami people of Norway and Sweden and their traditional lands on which the friluftsliv conference will be taking place in September 2009. I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to experience the beauty of all of these places – both the people and the land - and I am grateful to those who have been caretakers of these places.

My father's family is of German heritage and my Mother's family is British, Irish, and Welsh, and while I have never felt strongly connected to those cultural traditions, I am beginning to recognize the legacy of these cultures in my life. I have also been deeply inspired, over the past seven years, by my travels in Norway and the friluftsliv tradition there.

More recently I have turned my attention to learning from and collaborating with Aboriginal peoples in Canada on whose traditional lands I live, travel, and teach. I have been fortunate to meet Kaaren, learn about her Pedagogy of the Land and feel supported to talk with her about how to build respectful cross-cultural relationships.

Kaaren.

Aaniin. Ma'iinkan intishinikaas, atikamek intootem, Namekosipiink intoonchii. My English name is Kaaren Daanenmann and I am from Trout Lake, Ontario, where my mother's people have lived since time before our memory. My totem, my clan, is the whitefish. I am a mother of three and grandmother of five precious little ones.

First, I want to acknowledge the Land and the people whose traditional land this is, the Scandinavian Sami people. Secondly, I want to thank my teachers, my mother, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and all those people of other colours who have also given me hugely important information and knowledge and have thus grounded me in my community.

My homeland of Trout Lake, where I live, and where I hunt, fish, and trap, carries on the ancient teachings, and I am continually nurtured, physically, mentally,

emotionally and spiritually by our homeland.

My father was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1899. I like to say this because that seems so long ago. He came to Canada just after World War I, and arrived in Trout Lake in 1939, the first white man to have lived there.

It was just last year that I met my colleague here, Emily Root, and I have been continually impressed by her work and her commitment to outdoor, environmental, and social justice education. It was through Emily that I first heard about this conference on the Friluftsliv movement. I expect to be totally rejuvenated and inspired by this conference.

Emily: Introduction

We live in a world where Indigenous peoples are increasingly the human face of environmental and social crises. Globally, many Indigenous peoples are actively resisting environmental destruction, taking responsibility as stewards of the land for future generations and communicating to non-Aboriginal people traditions of how to live well with nature. Moreover, some Indigenous scholars and educators are now calling for a foregrounding of Indigenous ways of knowing in an environmental education for all students (Barnhardt & Kawagely, 2005; Cajete, 1999). Western and Indigenous worldviews differ significantly (Battiste, 2005; Graveline, 1998) and Euro-Western educators have much to learn from Indigenous peoples who are already re-imagining a fundamentally different approach to education that pays attention to land, relationships, traditions, Elder knowledge, and place.

Kawagley & Barnhardt (1999) emphasize that:

Indigenous knowledge that is deeply rooted in the long inhabitation of a particular place can benefit everyone, from educator to scientist, as we search for a more satisfying and sustainable way to live on the planet (p. 1).

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) argue that:

non-Native people, too, need to recognize the coexistence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, and find ways to understand and relate to the world in its multiple dimensions and varied perspectives (p. 9).

White, Euro-Western educators concerned with outdoor, environmental, or social justice education, must consider and listen to the inherited wisdom of these Indigenous scholars.

There is a clear need to “de-colonize” outdoor environmental education, which began as, and remains, a White Western field that largely ignores Indigenous worldviews. Friluftsliv educators and outdoor/environmental educators must learn to recognize and address ecological destruction and socio-cultural oppression as intertwined issues, both stemming from a Western colonial worldview (Rasmussen, 2002; Settee, 2000; Simpson, 2002). However it is difficult for Euro-Western educators, often positioned as coloniziers, to find effective and respectful roles as they learn from

and work with Aboriginal students and colleagues (Fitznor, Haig-Brown, & Moses, 2000; Tompkins, 2002). Yet the worldview of White people has also been colonized through our schooling, and this legacy requires us to challenge the internalized, normative Western worldview.

As we attempt to reconcile the academic discourses, lived-cultural-experiences of friluftsliv, Indigenous education, and our own journeys, the following questions emerge: How might the friluftsliv tradition become a site for respectful dialogue, culturally responsive education, and identity awareness? In what ways might we as friluftsliv scholars and educators confront our own privileges, assumptions and biases, and why is this important? Can friluftsliv scholars and educators contribute to the complex goal of meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples working towards a healthy, vibrant land?

Kaaren: The Medicine Wheel

In my part of this presentation I will attempt to describe a way of seeing and living on this planet Earth, for the NamekosipiiwAnishinaapek. It is about the relationship that my home community has with our Mother, our Land, the Earth -- Niinkeminaan, Intakiiminaan.

I will introduce the Medicine Wheel and explain each circle (when we gather at the friluftsliv conference in September). The Medicine Wheel has many circles, starting with the directions and colours. You will notice almost immediately that we have East at the top. One of the reasons for this is that all our built structures have the doorway facing East, so when I am talking, I try to face the East, as I would in our medicine lodge and sweat lodge. I use the colour Red for the East, as I have been taught, and I use Black for the South, Yellow for the West, and White for the North. You will notice that different teachers from different nations use different colours for the directions, and you will know that this is not about right and wrong, but about peoples' differing perspectives; about how they are making most sense of the world at a particular time.

Other circles of the medicine wheel include the four aspects of self, the four aspects of our collective lives, the Four Life Givers, the Four Original Teachings, and the Four Rascals. There are many more circles, but I want to concentrate on the Relationship Circle.

Starting at the top, the East, this is about respect. We will do some circle work here – how do we show respect for the Land? (Using a talking stone, each person will share how they show respect for the land.) Follow up on each of the other directions: South (Rights – in every relationship, we have certain rights and this is what I want to explore: all the things we need for a healthy way of life come from the Land and they are called GIFTS; e.g. gifts from the moose. As a member of this Earth community, we have very specific rights in order to be a part of this community.) North (responsibilities – hand-in-hand with rights, we have responsibilities. We cannot talk about rights without referring to our responsibilities as well. Let us talk about these responsibilities and list them.) West (reciprocity – every relationship, in order to work, has to have a give-and-take that is beneficial to each one in the relationship. If one is always a taker and the other is always the giver, it would soon be a very uneven, lopsided, and soon, a

non-fulfilling relationship. Let us list the ways that we can practice reciprocity in our relationship with the Land.)

Emily: The Decolonizing Journeys of non-Aboriginal Outdoor Educators

What, then, might decolonizing look like for non-Aboriginal outdoor or friluftsliv educators? First and foremost we must acknowledge that when we engage in friluftsliv, or when we teach outdoor environmental education, be it in Canada, Norway, Sweden or elsewhere, we do so on the traditional territory of the Indigenous people of that place.

Joanne Tompkins, a White Euro-Canadian scholar and educator, describes the decolonizing process for White people. In her 2002 article, *Learning to See What They Can't*, she explains that her decolonizing work with White educators involves intrapersonal and interpersonal work that validates emotions as part of knowledge and that this creates an atmosphere of trust and openness within the group. Other components of the process that she identifies are "naming power and privilege", "hearing voices seldom heard", and "building relationships". She also highlights that the process requires taking risks, and she positions herself as a continual learner.

My (Emily's) own decolonizing process has involved building respectful relationships with Aboriginal peoples, learning about Aboriginal culture and perspectives, acknowledging the traditional people of the place, and learning the history of what has occurred socially and politically on that land. At the same time it has also involved learning to recognize the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism and colonial attitudes that exist in contemporary social institutions; understanding the implications of Eurocentrism; working towards disrupting Eurocentrism within my own thought patterns, assumptions and actions; learning to recognize ways in which I am privileged; and finding ways to share that privilege with others.

Overcoming fear and anxiety.

Often positioned as colonizers, White Euro-Western educators can find it challenging to find an effective and respectful role in the process of de-colonizing outdoor and environmental education. Celia Haig-Brown (Fitznor et al., 2000) describes the challenge she faces as a White researcher engaged in decolonization:

> *As a white woman I continually question the possibility of working respectfully so as to address the injustices and inequities people live with on a daily basis. Ever conscious of the risk of merely 'colonizing better,' I ponder the possibilities of decolonizing: the interstices of appropriation and learning, of reciprocity and exploitation.* (p. 76)

At a certain point, once White Euro-Canadians can recognize Eurocentrism, they very often become fearful of what they do not know and of making mistakes that might

expose their ignorance, offend, or create further colonizing harm. While not every White Euro-Canadian experiences anxiety to the same extent, the following testimony by a White Euro-Canadian male outdoor educator (a participant in my ongoing research) captures the essence of this common experience:

> *…[Teaching at an alternative school] was a time when it was a struggle for me … I didn't know the best way to teach [Aboriginal perspectives]…what do I do? Where do I go from here? How can I move from this place? To a large extent I think I'm still in that place of not knowing how to best proceed … There are things that I don't think about because I haven't even gotten to the point of questioning it yet… but I know those things are there…how do you start that conversation? There's that uneasiness that's hard to get by and I often wonder, 'Is this appropriate?' or 'Should I even say this?' and, 'If I say this am I really illustrating my ignorance or am I being insensitive or insulting?' …Sometimes there is that sense of shame or darkness around not being able to be more aware.*

Despite the fear and anxiety that some White educators feel as they learn from and work with Aboriginal peoples, learning from experience, including learning from one's mistakes is an important part of the decolonizing process. It is important for White educators not to allow themselves to become paralyzed or to simply avoid the challenging task of learning about and teaching Aboriginal content and building respectful relationships. Dion (2007) argues that simply ignoring or avoiding the challenging topics about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in Canada, is not a respectful way to teach either. She encourages the White teachers, with whom she works, to teach more honestly and to help the students understand deeper historical and contemporary issues faced by Aboriginal peoples.

The decolonizing journey is complex, difficult, and no doubt a life-long task. I (Emily) have tried to approach it with humility, reflexivity, and a desire to learn. I have engaged in discussions with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professors, students, and peers. I have chosen courses and readings that will help me understand. I have started to notice and name the Eurocentrisms I encounter on a daily basis. Above all, I have tried to recognize my own Eurocentric lens while remaining vigilantly aware that as a White person I am unlikely to notice its extent. The journey for me so far has admittedly been frequently emotional. I have been confronted with Eurocentric attitudes amongst fellow students, faculty, friends, and family.

Kaaren: Respecting One Another's Culture

How do we show respect for one another, especially from another culture? The decolonizing process that Emily describes, in many ways, is different for me as an Aboriginal person working with younger generations, although, in many ways, the

journey is very similar. I, too, strive to begin with humility and gratitude, deep reflection, and desire to learn. It involves many long and often challenging discussions. I am often drained emotionally, but always spiritually uplifted.

The questions I most often have to ask myself are: How do I want to be treated, as an Indigenous person on our lands? What are my expectations? What does respect look like for me on my homeland? For me, one of the most important things a visitor needs to acknowledge and recognize is the history of the Land and People, and to see all of this in relation to their own being on this land.

The next question I grapple with is: how would you like to be treated, as a visitor on Indigenous peoples' lands? If I am offended by something said or done (and this happens often!) how should I respond in a respectful way? I usually say or do nothing because it all happens so quickly and I like to ponder things slowly, go over all the nuances, but try not to read all kinds of implications in the words or actions. I rarely have the time to actually sit and discuss the situation in order to develop a stronger relationship. If, on the other hand, someone says or does something that gives me great learning, or even simply joy or inspiration, I have no problem saying this. My internal reactions are immediate and I feel comfortable communicating that response.

Emily: Respectful Teaching and Learning in Friluftsliv and Outdoor Education

Non-Indigenous educators who practice friluftsliv or outdoor/environmental education often claim great respect and even reverence for nature and for the land on which they live and teach. Yet Indigenous worldviews indicate that the land and the people of the land are inseparable. We are not, in fact, respecting the land if we ignore or disrespect the traditional people of the land. Non-Indigenous peoples participating in friluftsliv and other forms of outdoor environmental education must pay greater attention to building respectful cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous peoples. The following list describes a number of specific ways in which non-Indigenous friluftsliv and outdoor/environmental educators can begin to build respectful cross-cultural relationships with Indigenous peoples (Baxter, 2007; Korteweg and Root, 2009). While some of the following suggestions may seem specific to the Canadian context, they will no doubt provide points of reflection for educators from all parts of the world.

- Acknowledge the specific First Nations or Indigenous people and communities on whose traditional territory you live, work, and travel.

- In order to learn about the culture of another we must first learn about our own. Learn about your own cultural heritage and the traditions and values of your own family. Consider how is it that you came to be living in your home-place. What assumptions, biases and privileges can be associated with your own worldview?

- Learn to listen and learn by listening. Ask questions when you do not understand.

- Make an attempt to learn the language of the local traditional people. Recognize that land, language, and culture are intertwined and local languages reflect important ways of how to relate to and live well on the local land.

- Read the treaty of the area where you live and teach, and learn about the Aboriginal interpretation of the treaty. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada are all currently implicated in the treaties: consider what it means to be a responsible treaty partner in your local place.

- Rather than speaking for Indigenous peoples, introduce students to Indigenous perspectives through invited guests and first-voice representations by Indigenous people such as in art, literature, academic articles, film, websites, and radio broadcasts.

- Increasingly Aboriginal peoples want to share their culture with non-Aboriginal people. Participate in local events hosted by First Nations communities when invited to do so. Recognize also that there will be times when Aboriginal people will want to come together on their own.

- Learn about and support issues of Aboriginal justice in your local community, such as land-claims or environmental destruction of Aboriginal lands.

- Recognize that Indigenous cultures are dynamic and diverse. Avoid making sweeping generalizations about Aboriginal peoples and cultures. Also avoid romanticizing and historicizing Aboriginal cultures.

- Learn to teach honestly and respectfully about both the systemic injustices that Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples face (residential schools, forced 1960's removal of children from parents, etc.) as well as the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples and Indigenous cultures as exemplified through self-government, language revitalization, Aboriginal law, leadership, art, scholars, etc.

- Recognize that non-Aboriginal peoples are not the keepers of sacred or traditional knowledge. However, do create welcoming spaces in your schools and community organizations for Aboriginal community members or Elders to perform sacred rituals such as smudging or offering tobacco if they wish to do so. Recognize also that there exists a colonial legacy of cultural appropriation, and misrepresentation/fabrication of so-called "native" cultural practices - work to educate other non-Aboriginal people about these issues.

Kaaren: Conclusions

I would like to summarize, and emphasize, by saying that the Land is a part of our community, the Land is a part of us, we are a part of the Land. And I would like to

share the following poem which was presented by my late brother, Harald Einar Olsen (Okimaawikaapow), and myself to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources during one of their “forest-management” planning sessions. It was our effort to save the Trout Lake Forest from clear cutting. This passage was paraphrased from the treaty speech by the great orator and leader, Chief Sealth, of the Suquamish of northern Oregon in 1854:

NamekosipiiwAnishinaape Values of the Forest, the Land, the Earth

Every part of this earth,
This forest, is sacred to my people.

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore,
Every mist in the dark woods,
Every clearing and humming insect
Is holy in the memory and experience of my people.
The sap which courses through every tree
In the Trout Lake Forest carries the memories of the Anishinaape.
Our dead never forget this beautiful land
For it is our mother.

We are a part of the earth and it is a part of us.

The flowers, the grass, the trees are our sisters;
The moose, the caribou, the eagle, the turtle,
These are our brothers.
The rocky crests, the marshes and the fields,
The body heat of the wolf pup,
And man --
All belong to the same family of life.

And so we will consider negotiating with you.
But it will not be easy.
For this land is sacred to us.
The forest is sacred to us.
The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers
Is not just water but the blood of our ancestors.

If you take this forest,
You must remember that it is sacred
And you must teach your children that
It is sacred and that
Each ghostly reflection in the clear waters of Trout Lake
Tell of events and memories in the life of my people.

The water's murmur is the voice on my mother's father
And of his mother and father,
Of his grandmothers and grandfathers.

Trout Lake is my brother and
It quenches my thirst and appeases my hunger.
It feeds my children and my grandchildren.
The forest feeds us, nurtures our souls.
Will you tell your children that the waters
And the trees are our family, too,
And will you teach them to give to the water
And the trees the kindness you would give to any brother?

We know that you are having a hard time
Trying to understand our ways.
One portion of land is the same to you
As the next for you are a stranger
Who comes in the night and takes from the land
Whatever you think you need.

The earth is not your brother, but your enemy,
And when you have conquered it, you move on.
Your people leave your father's graves behind,
And your children's graves,
And you do not see.

The children's birthright is forgotten.
Our mother, the earth, and her brother, the sky,
Are things to be bought, plundered,
Sold like shiny beads.
Voracious appetites will devour the earth
And leave behind only a desert.

I do not know.

Your ways are different from mine.

The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the Anishinaape –
Your cities which displace our people,
Turn them into homeless wanderers,
Heads down and feet shuffling along.
Your cities draw us to them and devour us,
Like moths to a flame.

No quiet place.
Where will I hear the unfurling of leaves in the spring,
The rustle of an insect's wing?
When will I hear the soft sound of the wind
Darting over the face of Trout Lake,
The smell of the wind itself,
Cleaned by the midday rain,
Scented with the balsam fir,
Invigorating me, rejuvenating my spirit?

The wind that gave me my first breath
Will also receive my last sigh.
The air is so precious to us
For all things share the same breath –
The beast, the tree, the man; they all share the same breath.

I do not know.

Perhaps it is because I am savage and I do not understand.
I do not understand how profit and power and possessions
Can be more important that the pain
Of rivers and hills blasted apart,
The tears of the trees as they are uprooted,
The silent cries of our mother, the earth,
As her bones are scraped bare and left to bleach in the sun.

This we know:
The earth does not belong to man;
Man belongs to the earth.

This we know: ***all things are connected.***
All things are connected like the blood
Which connects one family.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.
If men spit upon the earth, they spit upon themselves.
Contaminate your bed and you will suffocate in your own waste.
Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it.
Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.
To harm the earth is to heap contempt upon its Creator.

But if you take this forest,
Please keep a part of it sacred for your children
And please teach them that the ground
Beneath their feet are the ashes of their grandfathers.
So that they will respect the land,
Tell them that the earth is rich with the lives of all our kin.

Teach your children that the earth is their mother, too.
Teach them that our God is the same God,
That she is the God of all Creation,
And that her compassion is equal,
For the Anishinaape and for you.

Miikwech. Takk. I thank you.

REFERENCES

Barnhardt, R. & Kawagley, A. (2005). Indigenous knowledge systems and Alaska Native ways of knowing. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 36* (1): 8-23.

Battiste, M. (2005). You can't be the global doctor if you're the colonial disease. In Tripp, P & Muzzin, L. (Eds.). *Teaching as Activism.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 121-133.

Baxter, D. (2007). *Anishnaape Pimatisiwin Kikinoomaakewikamikong. Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff*. Working Document, Edition 2. Thunder Bay, ON: Lakehead Public Schools.

Cajete, G. (1999). Reclaiming biophilia: Lessons from Indigenous peoples. In Smith & Williams (Eds.) *Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture and the Environment).* Albany: State University of New York Press. 189-206.

Dion, S. (2007). Disrupting molded images: Identities, responsibilities and relationships – teachers and indigenous subject material. *Teaching Education.* 18 (4): 329-342.

Fitznor, L., Haig-Brown, C. & Moses, L. (2000). Editorial: (De)colonizing academe: Knowing our relations. *Canadian Journal of Native Education.* 24 (2): 75-81.

Graveline, F.J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming eurocentric consciousness.* Halifax: Fernwood.

Kawagely A. & Barnhardt, R. (1999). Education Indigenous to place: Western science meets Native reality. In Smith & Williams (Eds.) *Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture and the Environment.* Albany: State University of New York Press. 117-140.

Korteweg, L. & Root, E. (2009). *Considerations for Curriculum Integration and the Concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching*. Keynote Address: Eastern Ontario Aboriginal Education Initiative Elementary Panel. Ottawa, ON., March 26.

Rasmussen, D. (2002). Quallunology: A pedagogy for the oppressor. *Philosophy of Education. 85-94.*

Settee, P. (2000). The issue of biodiversity, intellectual property rights, and Indigenous rights. In R. F. Laliberte, P. Settee, J. Waldram, R. Innes, B. Macdougall, L. McBain, & F. L. Barron (Eds.), *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies.* Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press. 459-488.

Simpson, L. (2002). Indigenous environmental education for survival. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*. 7 (1): 13-24.

Tompkins, J. (2002). Learning to see what they can't: Decolonizing perspectives on Indigenous education. *McGill Journal of Education.* 37 (3): 405-422.