

Opening the Circle: Welcoming Brother Sun

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As our feet rest upon mother earth and our faces are turned toward brother sun it is with great joy that we give thanks for all our relations. Understandings of self-in-representation include Land, waterways, our animal relations as well as each other. As we turn our faces to the east and welcome brother sun this work reflects a new pathway dawning on the ways we think about and do Indigenous Education. In this special issue we are turning away from past conceptions of Indigenous Education. These conceptions have primarily focused on pathologizing Indigenous students and educators and have often applied deficit theorizing approaches to identifying and understanding the issues. In communications about this issue, one of our colleagues Dwayne Donald shared his position on moving forward in conceptualizing Indigenous Education. His call to action challenges educators and researchers to engage in more imaginative thinking that will deepen critical and thoughtful engagement and assist in understanding more fully the complex and tangled realities within Indigenous Education. Within this issue we seek to address this call to action by resisting tendencies to report the struggles that have been reported in many other articles but instead chose to focus on ways that looked more deeply into understanding the reasons why people may struggle to bring Indigenous thought into educational contexts.

There is a tendency to look for tools and treat Indigenous education and thought as buzz words or the new vogue. We are not interested in Indigenizing the academy or other education contexts. We are interested in exploring the more important questions revolving around examining what Indigenous thought is and its multiple and shared expressions. We entitled this issue, “Indigenous Education: Pathways to (Re)membering” because, for us, it is important to recall that Indigenous thought is rooted in and informed by ancient teachings, very old pedagogies and understandings of self-in-representation. Within the current realities faced by Indigenous educator and students, individuals are challenged to understand and implement these ancient teachings within current contexts in meaningful and respectful ways.

We are not interested in perpetuating pan-Indianism or didactic pedagogies that continue to centre dominant western approaches within Indigenous education. Neither does this issue provide cookie cutter models or tool kits that can be applied to Indigenous education. Rather the articles in this issue, offer highly contextualized explorations of the myriad of ways that centre and privilege Indigenous thought within educational contexts. Some offer highly developed approaches to engaging the issues associated with such work while others offer practical examples of implementation with a full consideration of the challenges associated with such implementations and the potential rewards. Voice is

also an important consideration within the articles and many of the authors struggle with issues around positionality and the inclusion of various voices within the research. While some of the articles do directly address the tensions challenges and resistances within Indigenous education, these articles are framed around an Indigenous epistemology that centres Indigenous thought within culturally aligned pedagogies that open up opportunities to understand such challenges in new and more complex ways.

We begin our journey on the pathway to (re)membering by exploring understandings of land and self-in-relationship that inform current Indigenous education contexts and broader educational realities. The place from which we begin our journey unfolds with Debassige's consideration of Aboriginal models of literacy within Anishinaabe traditional teachings in order to facilitate the ways Indigenous knowledge may be taken up within educational contexts on Manitoulin Island. The next place on our journey funds us with Styres, Haig-Brown and Blimkie who examine the possibilities of a pedagogy of Land within urban educational contexts in Central South Ontario. The authors share some aspects that have allowed Land to inform both pedagogy and praxis in teacher education focusing on student success, within schools and teacher education programs. Continuing on the pathway of (re)membering land, Restoule, Gruner and Metatawabin explore how Mushkegowuk Cree concepts of land, environment and life were expressed during a ten-day river trip with Aboriginal youth, adults and elders from a particular First Nations community located on the west coast of James Bay.

McGregor continues on the pathway with land as she centres her understanding of education within Nunavut on land and the ways it shapes that territory's culture, history, education and politics. She provides an entry point for considering the ways Nunavut might be positioned within conversations on Indigenous Education in Canada given that it occupies the interesting position of having an Inuit majority with a public education system committed to responding to the emergent needs of that majority. Catlin offers a (re)membered consideration of the ways place-conscious writing practices can engage Aboriginal students. She discusses the challenges associated with introducing non-Aboriginal teachers in the Northwest Territories to place-conscious writing and the idea that multiliteracies might provide a more dynamic conception of literacy and student engagement.

The next phase of our journey on the pathway to (re)membering bring us into conversations where land is implicit and not a fully explored experience of these varied educational contexts. Kitchen and Hodson offer an exploration of student teacher dynamics through their consideration of a particular community-based Aboriginal Bachelor of Education program in Northern Ontario. They interviewed Aboriginal teacher candidates and their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal instructors about their experiences with culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. Deer discusses the tensions, changes and resistances that he encountered in an Aboriginal education course offered in the second year of a teacher education program in Manitoba. His interviews with teacher candidates explored their experiences in integrating Aboriginal perspectives into their practice. Madden, Higgins and Kortweg offer a different perspective on

Indigenous Education within schools boards through their exploration of Indigenous community engagement.

Along the pathway to (re)membering we find Bomberry's situated exploration of a specific First Nations community in Southern Ontario using understandings of land to create cultural connectedness. She draws upon the socio-political philosophies of the Kashwenta as a foundation for navigating relationships between nations and offers the Tree of Peace as a pathway of understanding participant experiences. Brining us full circle on the pathway to (re)membering, Styres and Zinga introduce the Community-First Land-Centre framework as an emergent and culturally aligned theoretical framework ground in Land and understanding of self-in-relationship. This article opens up opportunities for conversations around some of the questions that have arisen within other articles in this issue and moves away from the binary positioning common in discussing Indigenous Education to offer deeper critical and thoughtful engagement of colonial relations and collaborative relationships essential to moving forward in our practice and understanding of Indigenous Education.

All of the authors in this issue provide unique opportunities to consider the ways Indigenous Education may be (re)membered in various educational contexts and communities. Within the context of this special issue, (Re)membering refers to an active process that bring forward into contemporary contexts a conscious awareness of ancient knowledges and very old pedagogies grounded in Land and understandings of self-in-relationship. What is crucial to understandings of Land within shifting and contemporary educational contexts is that we must find new dynamic ways to (re)member our relationships to land.