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"Learning Like Before": Continuous Resistance in Land-Based Education

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ABSTRACT

Since time immemorial land-based learning has been, and continues to be, integral to Indigenous pedagogies, wellness, ways of life, and knowledge transmission. This paper looks at the role of Indigenous land-based education as an example of grounded normativity, or the generation of ethical relationship informed by the land. Arguing that land-based education must be considered in relation to Indigenous pedagogies, relationships, resistance and resurgence, we explore the differences in land-based and placed-based programming through the voices of individuals directly involved in land-based programming. We find that land-based education is an opportunity to practice decolonial ethics, and renew relationships to the land.

Photo by Morgan Tsetta

LEARNING AS OUR ANCESTORS DID

"Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within our intellectual traditions unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes." (Deloria, 2001, as cited in Simpson, 2017)

Since time immemorial land-based learning has been, and continues to be, integral to Indigenous pedagogies, wellness, ways of life, and knowledge transmission. The state disruptions of violent colonization has attempted to break Indigenous connection with land through purposeful and harmful policies and practices. We have resisted this violence since its arrival, and the implementation of land-based programs has been critical for resisting colonial powers by strengthening and reconnecting Indigenous peoples with their land, language, and culture. Land-based programming can be used to describe a wide range of formal and informal programming. Importantly, "land-based" programming precedes and exceeds the use of the term, seen in the everyday and stretching back to Indigenous individuals, families and nation through time.

With programming taking place across the Northwest Territories (NWT), and generations of land-based learners and teachers practicing Indigenous land-based programming, individuals and groups in the NWT have demonstrated innovation and leadership in land-based programming for decades. There are many examples where Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies, and a deep relationship to the land come from across the north. In Denendeh, this includes the Dene Mapping Project in the 1970s and 1980s (Nahanni, 1977). In Tłı̨chǫ N'de, since 1995, Trails of Our Ancestors have brought generations of Tłı̨chǫ onto the land to connect oral tradition, hands on experience, and language while traveling the land (Zoe, 2007). In the Gwich'in Settlement area, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute ran an annual camp between 1995 and 2001. These are just a few examples of formal programming that is led by Indigenous communities and individuals, grounded and reflective of community needs, exemplifying the critical importance of land-based programming. These land-based programs are informed by a conception of land beyond materiality. As Yellowknives Dene First Nation scholar and faculty member at Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, Glen Coulthard explains, "It is a profound misunderstanding to think of land or place as simply some material object of profound importance to Indigenous cultures (although it is this too); instead it ought to be understood as a field of 'relationships of things to each other" (2007, p.79). Starting from the land as central to relationships creates a set of ethical and normative relationships informed by the land, or 'grounded normativity'. Land-based programming as it is currently defined is embedded in this long history and contemporary network of formal and informal programming that connect and reconnect Indigenous nations to their lands.

The recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has increased interest and funding for land-based programs, this also creates opportunities for co-optation of the term 'land-based' or 'on the land' by initiatives that are not delivering programming that is meaningfully informed by relationships with land. We explain the definition of land-based and how it differs from place-based, outdoor education, and nature-based. We will share a vision of land-based education based on interviews with Dechinta staff members, and through the voices and experiences of land-based practitioners. Lastly, we analyze why co-opting the term 'land-based' is harmful to Indigenous communities and organizations.

LAND-BASED VS PLACE-BASED

As the popularity of land-based education has grown, public schools, post-secondary institutions, Indigenous governments, and non-profit organizations have begun to explore the delivery of programming outside of the classroom. In Denendeh, the sheer number of land-based initiatives is significant. There is a demand for land-based programming that far exceeds the resources to support delivery. For instance, the NWT On The Land Collaborative has funded 270 projects over the past six years, representing only a small fraction of the number of programs that are happening across the NWT (2021). The Collaborative funds approximately 60% of applicants (2021). Despite communities demanding that their experts, languages, and knowledge systems be placed at the centre of these programs, there is often a gap between these demands and the delivery of programming. In this section, we will distinguish between various approaches to education with the goal of differentiating between land-based education rooted in Indigenous pedagogies and ethical commitments, and place-based education that is embedded in a western approach to learning.

Land-based education is sometimes referred to as an on the land program or land-based program; we will use these terms interchangeably throughout our paper. Juniper Redvers defines a land-based program as:

"A culturally defined program or service that takes place in an urban, nature-based, rural, or remote location, which involves cultural teachings and intergenerational knowledge transfer, combined with any number of other activities or goals. Programs are informed by an Indigenous pedagogy wherein the land is the main source of knowledge and healing" (2020. p.90).

Redvers' definition demonstrates that land-based education must be rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies where the central feature is relationship with land. This relationship to Land informs all Indigenous land-based initiatives. Land-based education can look like hide tanning, canoeing, harvesting and processing foods and medicines, snowshoeing, stewardship or guardian programs, or any other activity where Indigenous thought systems are the foundation for the time on the land. Land-based education is multifaceted and has implications for science, culture, politics, language, stewardship, land rights, and resurgence (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021). While there are diverse definitions of what land-based education means to individuals, a common theme is that land-based education is rooted in Indigenous pedagogies. Alex Wilson from Opaskwayak Cree Nation who leads the Indigenous Land-Based Education graduate program at the University of Saskatchewan defines land-based education as:

"...its own paradigm based on Indigenous worldviews and beliefs and the passing on of knowledge to one another and to the next generation...It is also a form of understanding our place within, and our responsibility to, the wider universe." (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021).

Now that we have discussed what land-based education is, we should also illustrate what it is not. "If your mind went straight to 'taking the classroom outside' or 'outdoor education', bingo: that's what it's not." (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021). Outdoor education is not land-based education because it does not centre Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies. Simply taking people outside for activities like canoeing, hiking, or skiing, does not make those activities 'land-based.' Swampy Cree hide tanner, land-based practitioner, and scholar Mandee McDonald states that recently western scholars have defined land-based programs as a type of place-

based education, which also includes outdoor education, environmental education, and critical place-based pedagogy (2022). In agreement with McDonald, we argue that although they are closely related pedagogical models, they are very distinct.

Outdoor education aims to provide contextual experiences that complement and expand classroom instruction. Environmental education aims to develop a shared responsibility to live well in a place without destroying it (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). McDonald states:

"Place-based education is a term used to describe pedagogical models where curricular material is derived from a particular place and is informed by the learners' lived experiences with their local ecological or community context" (2022).

Place-based education often includes outdoor education methodologies to support students to connect with the world around them (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Like outdoor education, place-based education is mostly about location and Indigenous thought systems are not the foundation (Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2021).

Place-based education and land-based education share some similarities in their approach. For instance, both models support students to ground their learning in their lived experiences, including their community, cultural, intrapersonal, and land contexts. Further, both approaches encourage participants to care for and give back to the community who they are learning from and/or the community that they belong to. This aims to foster similar outcomes of community engagement, reciprocity, relationality, and accountability (McDonald, 2022). Lastly, a critical pedagogy of place and land-based pedagogy both aim to challenge mainstream education models. Standardized, 'placeless' education models encourage students to exploit the Land and natural resources by disconnecting students from the land, community, and themselves, in order to support the capitalist economy (Gruenewald, 2003 & McDonald 2022). Place-based and land-based models encourage students to develop relationships with the Land, themselves, and their community, to create knowledge instead of uncritically reciting information that supports oppressive systems like corporate globalization and unrestricted capitalism (Smith, 2002 & McDonald, 2022).

It is important to discuss that land-based education and place-based education are still distinct. Noel-Leigh Cockney was formerly an outdoor educator and guide before joining Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning as a Regional Programmer for his home territory, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Cockney explains in an interview what he has experienced as the difference between outdoor education and land-based education:

"...What I went to school for was outdoor education. And with Dechinta [the difference is that] it's more focused on the culture, whether that be the Inuvialuit back up at home, or the Dene down here" (2022).

Land-based education is an Indigenous method that centres the needs, values, teachings, and cultures of Indigenous community members and nation(s) whose land the program is operating on (Hansen, 2018). Indigenous peoples are at every level of decision-making for land-based programs from conceptualization to implementation. They are not simply an addition who is contracted to bring culture to or Indigenize the program.

A critical goal of land-based programs is to strengthen the resurgence, reclamation, and reconnection to Indigenous ways of being, learning, and teaching. Wildcat et al. agree that, "If colonization is fundamentally about dispossessing Indigenous peoples from land, decolonization must involve forms of education that reconnect

Indigenous peoples to land and the social relations, knowledges and languages that arise from the land" (2014, p. 1). Despite Indigenous communities experiencing land dispossession and violent genocide, land-based education and practices continue to exist within many Indigenous communities. At land-based programs, we continue to see Elders and knowledge holders generously and enthusiastically sharing their teachings with students and modeling the Dene laws on the land. We see students strengthening their connections with the land, their culture, and the community on the land. We see staff members learning with each other and with the land while taking care of each other and the students. We see all students and staff being autonomous and self-determining people. We see the embodiment of land-based education, Indigenous thought systems and ways of being.

Indigenous land-based education is therefore a necessary political and ethical project that challenges the underlying power structures of colonial systems. It works to undo the damage of dispossession, and genocide by providing participants with an immersive experience of Indigenous world making based on deep relationality with the land and living in community. By reconnecting to our Elders, languages, political practices and ethics in land-based learning communities, we generate the knowledge we need to remake Indigenous worlds.

To summarize, land-based education and place-based education share many similarities but are evidently distinct. Place-based education is used to reference models informed by Western education theory and scholarship while land-based education is used to reference programs rooted in an Indigenous pedagogy where the land is not merely a backdrop to a program, but an active participant, teacher, and healer. In land-based education, Indigenous peoples hold the decision-making power and are not merely additions to the program. Land-based programs actively resist colonialism and strengthen Indigenous peoples' connections to their land, cultures, and ways of life.

WHAT DOES 'LAND-BASED' MEAN TO US?

There are many layers and foundations to land-based education, and each Indigenous person has a different understanding of what land-based education means to them. In the winter of 2022, Jill Gilday, Dechinta Evaluator, conducted interviews with Dechinta staff members to evaluate their experiences working for Dechinta. In this section, we will share various perspectives from the interviews to demonstrate what land-based education means to land-based practitioners. We acknowledge that there is a diversity of perspectives on land-based education. While not comprehensive, these provide important insights into land-based programming from practitioners. Recognizing the limits, we will discuss common themes that emerge from these reflections.

Centering Indigenous Pedagogies

A theme that emerged from our conversations with Dechinta staff is that land-based education means that Indigenous pedagogies are centered. Indigenous people were not asked to consent to an assimilative colonial agenda and principles that do not acknowledge different knowledges such as academic, emotional, and spiritual. How can we rebuild a system that embodies lived experience through movement and connection to Dene people, and with the land? In Denendeh, it starts with nurturing a collective community that cares within Dene laws, values and principles that teach us to live life in a good way. For Yellowknives Dene, their knowledge system centres the Dene laws. When Charlene Liske, a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the Land and Culture Resource Director at Dechinta, is asked what land-based education means to her, she states:

"Following the Dene laws, it could be so many different things to different people, but really understanding what each Dene law means to you. When you live the Dene laws at work or home and have all the different skillful resource Elders on site, everything falls into place naturally. Just being happy and following Dene laws." (2022).

Liske demonstrates how important it is to have Dene knowledge systems informing the way Dene land-based programs are developed and delivered. On the land, we see Dene Elders and knowledge holders living the Dene laws every day. They are sharing what they have by sharing stories around the fire. We see them helping by chopping and delivering firewood to the tents. We hear them treating each other with as much love as possible by being kind, happy, generous, and supportive. Elders pass on the teachings to everyone through stories, demonstrations, and living in a good way. We see them working all day by hauling water, visiting, waking up early to heat up tents, harvesting and fixing fish, and tanning hides then taking time to rest at night. By modeling Dene knowledge systems, Elders and knowledge holders pass on key teachings for learning with the land and living in community.

A critical component of land-based education is that the teachings, pedagogies, and ways of being are informed by the land. Kyla LeSage, a Dechinta alumni and now Land-Based & Outreach Coordinator at Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning describes what learning within an Indigenous pedagogy can look like:

"Learning from the land is also learning from Elders because they have been living and taking care of the land for a long time. When I think about learning from the land, I think of going for walks with Elders, watching them lay tobacco down when they harvest medicines or listening to them talk about the land. By doing this I am able to see their connection to the land and the respect that they have for the land. By watching and learning from elders I am able to see that everything they do is with the land, and everything they do is for the land. Elders are always modeling their respect and connection for the land so when I see them do things on the land I think to myself, 'oh that is how we live and learn on the land" (2022).

LeSage demonstrates that the knowledge modeled is based on experience and rooted in place. The bush professors have lived, learned, and cared for the land their whole lives, they are the experts on teaching within the appropriate contexts and including all relevant teachings necessary to fulfill the task at hand. They carry knowledge and relationships with the land from across generations and are respected for their ability to share it.

Typically, the participants of a land-based camp are continually learning with the land, Elders, and knowledge holders. For example, at Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, the staff are lifelong learners because of the perpetual cycle of observing, listening, doing, and sharing. Learning in this way is different than learning from western education systems. Most Elders do not gather students together and sit them down for classroom style learning, instead it is the responsibility of the students to build relationships with the land, Elders, and knowledge holders and learn with them. Learning on the land is fundamentally a relational process, which is a central part of many Indigenous pedagogies.

Centering Indigenous pedagogies in land-based education is important because these pedagogies are informed by Indigenous nations' relationship with the land since time immemorial. Indigenous epistemologies are critical to the development and delivery of land-based programs because Indigenous pedagogies are embedded in how to be together in a good way with the land, Elders, knowledge holders and more-than-human entities.

Indigenous pedagogies expand our understanding of how to teach and learn by observing and practicing the Elders model of learning with the land in a relational process.

Community Driven

A critical component of land-based programming is that it is driven by and for the community. Being driven by community means that community members are not only involved in all stages of decision making, but also their decisions are heard, respected, and implemented. With community members making decisions about the program, these members will bring forward ideas that meet the needs of the community. This is an ethical and pedagogical commitment because Indigenous communities are the best placed to determine their educational priorities.

Land-based education must be community focused. Community values, thought systems, protocols, and ways of being should be embedded in the program. Indigenous communities, families, and individuals have certain ways of building and maintaining relationships. It's important to follow the lead of the peoples who have been in relationship with that land for many decades. LeSage, who is Vuntut Gwich'in and Anishinaabe and grew up on Chief Drygeese Territory and has delivered a lot of programming in this territory, states "When you are living or learning on another nations land, it's important to learn their teachings, learn from their Elders, learn their history, and find ways to support them in their movements such as land back or decolonization" (2022). LeSage demonstrates the importance of practicing respect for other people's cultures and ways of being by learning with and from the people whose land you are on, as well as supporting their resurgent work. Cockney agrees and provides an example of what being community-focused can look like:

"By being able to like with the Dene Laws, being really focused on teaching those to the Dene People. And for us as Inuvialuit people, like there are no really written kind of things like that in our culture but being able to understand that as Indigenous People we are so connected to our land, no matter which culture or heritage that we have. And having a strong connection and knowing why our ancestors have done certain things in certain seasons and like being able to do that with so many programs now, we're trying to rebuild so much of that Indigenous knowledge into the generations now" (2022).

Creating a reciprocal relationship with the community where you are learning with them and upholding their knowledge while also supporting their needs is a critical element of land-based programs.

Since it is important for land-based programs to follow the lead of people who have relationships with the land that the program is operating on, then it is also essential for community members to be decision makers from conceptualization of a program to its implementation to its evaluation. Yellowknives Dene Elder and bush professor, Charlie Sangris describes his work at Dechinta as both part of a collective, while also supporting his self-determination:

"This really, you work for the people at Dechinta. Like you're the boss of your own. You don't listen to those in town who tell you what to do. You know certain times you go anytime you want and learn. Everybody makes their own decisions. It's good that way. Instead of one boss. We talk among us, and we decide what to do and how to do things. It's good that way. Just like everybody, we have meetings, and we all help" (2022).

Being surrounded by the brilliance of Elders like Sangris is foundational for land-based education. It's not simply having Elders at a program that is important. Inclusion in decision-making, integration as leaders in a learning community, and supporting self-determination and autonomy throughout the program planning and delivery is integral to creating a program that reflects the grounded normativity as a field of relationships. Elders are not a token addition but necessary for learning within a land-based pedagogy. More than a pedagogical practice, the inclusion of Elders, and the centring of the radical self-determination of all participants in the program, demonstrates the importance of considering grounded normativity and land-based ethics in the outcomes of education, but in the very structures and design of the programming itself. Self-determination is not an end goal of education, but lived, embodied and practiced every day.

At Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, we have observed that when Elders, knowledge holders, and community members are given the opportunity to conceptualize the programs that we deliver, not only are they more engaged in the program, but so are their community members. This is because community members are best positioned to identify what their community needs, and if a program is addressing a need then people will attend. Sangris shares what being a land-based teacher means to him:

"Dechinta believes in taking your land back and doing all your stuff, you're learning how to do things in the bush. Teaching the younger generation how to do things in the bush. Learning like before. Like us, we used to go trapping, that's what we do for a living. We learn how to, you know, we had no money, so we had to go trapping to make money for our own. Now we need to teach those kids how to do this too. Learn how to set traps, set net, teach them how to do all that" (2022).

Sangris is at the heart of creating meaningful programming for his community as he embodies the Dene laws, embeds his Dene worldview, and generously shares his Dene brilliance at camp. He passes down teachings and knowledge that have been carried from generation to generation, to help support future generations stay connected and grounded in Dene ways of being. This is important because Sangris is identifying that his community needs to learn how to do things in the bush and this guides what activities he wants to do at camp, which, in turn, creates a program that participants are engaged in and that helps meet the resurgent goals of the community. A program that responds to what an Indigenous community is requesting through ongoing dialogues and reciprocal relationships is the embodiment of land-based education.

When land-based programming is developed by and for the community, meaningful and impactful programs are created. To do this, community members must be involved in all levels of decision making. By implementing the ideas and approaches of community members, land-based programs will meet community needs, and thus, better support their resurgent work. Land-based education programs remove typical hierarchical structures where university degree holders are placed on pedestals above the abundance of knowledge that Elders and community members hold. This decolonial structure values the knowledge that is shared by Elders and community members to create a space of learning on the land that responds to what communities want.

Reciprocal Relationships

A foundational part of land-based education is strengthening reciprocal relationships with the land, each other, and ourselves, or a practice of grounded normativity (Coulthard, 2007). When we are learning with the land, we are going for medicine walks with Elders, checking fishnets with bush professors, and learning to make drymeat with knowledge holders. These relationships are inextricably intertwined with land. Learning, teaching, and

becoming knowledgeable does not happen separately from being (Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, 2022). Thus, strengthening our relationships with land, others, and ourselves is critical for effective land-based education.

Building reciprocal relationships with land, families and communities, creates intergenerational wellness. Embodied Dene ways of being and knowing re-story the westernized education and learning narrative. It is from this experience that Dene people are well-practiced researchers, theorists and thinkers with methodologies rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and beyond (Absolon & Willett, 2004). LeSage elaborates on how learning with the land a holistic, relational experience and is a necessary part of land-based education:

"You can learn about Indigenous histories and terms such as intergenerational trauma, decolonization, resurgence by reading a book but it is through actually living and learning on the land that you are able to experience not only these histories and terms but how they can be put into practice. When I was learning on the land, I realized these terms mean reconnection, respect, relearning and growth. By reconnecting on the land, you begin to heal from trauma while also learning about how being on the land and practicing culture and traditions are forms of decolonization and resurgence. Being on the land your body, mind and soul are actively living out our histories and traditions which cannot be experienced the same through reading. For me, I was able to see my whole life change while I was learning on the land, I felt grounded and embraced by the land and I was finally able to understand the Indigenous histories and topics that I had read during my university degree" (2022).

LeSage explains that learning with the Land cannot only happen from reading articles or attending lectures within academic institutions. It must involve actively engaging with the land, building relationships with Elders, and mirroring the way Elders relate with the land. It is embodied learning. It is a way of life.

In land-based education, individual and collective knowledge is applied to work towards communal goals (Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, 2022). Strong relationships are integral for the appropriate and ethical application of this knowledge. For instance, if we are pulling fish nets, the community works together to take the fish out of the nets, bring them back to camp, cut the fish up for frying or drying, then cook the fish for everyone to eat. It isn't often that one person is doing all these important parts by themselves. Often a few people check the net together and bring back the fish, next a skilled fish fixer cuts the fish for dry fish, filets, or cooking over the fire. Then, someone makes batter for fish fry and fries or roasts the fish on the fire to share with everyone. Throughout all these steps, people are teaching, learning, and embodying land as pedagogy. Cockney shares why creating community on the land is essential for land-based programs:

"...With the programming that I've been involved with, the values are being able to create that community and having those connections with people, like how our ancestors have always lived...Just those values themselves are what we're trying to instill in people. Of really taking care of the land, and taking care of the communities, and our families and everyone else in the communities" (2022).

The emergent and created community is a fluid and relational process that's necessary for land-based education. Students need to strengthen connections with Elders, knowledge holders, and each other to embody and live land-based practices. Building these relationships with each other on the land is a form of governance at camp that informs what and how we will learn, and how we will support and care for each other. When we are on the land together, we take care of each other. We make sure people are warm, they are fed, and they have coffee or

tea. We see people chopping wood and bringing it to Elders tents. We harvest medicines and make tea for each other. We hear Elders sharing knowledge on topics that participants are interested in. Reciprocal relationships are vital to foster a sense of community on the land for meaningful connections that support well-being and learning while on the land.

Not only is it critical for land-based programs to strengthen relationships with the land and each other, but also it is equally important for nourishing our relationship with ourselves. Redvers interviewed eleven land-based practitioners in the North and drew out five factors of individual resilience that land-based programs support: Self-confidence, cultural identity, interpersonal relationships and support, feeling healthy and well, and physical activity and fitness (2016). One of the community members who Redvers interviewed stated:

"The land, it knows people, it knows us. The moment you go out there you feel more comfortable, everything comes alive in you just like it was sleeping, but when you get out there something magical happens and you feel like an animal, you feel alive again. It's interesting because you breathe more deeply, you go out on the land, you watch and see, you'll take that deep breath, and it's like 'oh boy', something's feeling good here" (2016, p.88).

This quote demonstrates how the land is innately healing, and gently nourishes our relationship with ourselves. LeSage reinforces that land-based education helps enhance self-confidence and sense of identity:

"I feel like the biggest thing would be that it [land-based education] gave me my voice as an Indigenous person and that, that pride of being an Indigenous woman is a big thing where I'm now breaking down those barriers for women that colonialism put in place on our communities. But I think, the biggest thing would be that I was able to finally have a voice and feel that what I had to say was important and that people could understand what I'm trying to say to them" (2022).

This is important because when we strengthen our relationship with ourselves, we are better able to share our strengths and voice with our communities, which supports a strong sense of identity for individuals and challenges colonial barriers to (re)create strong communities.

An entire paper could be dedicated to why having reciprocal relationships in on the land programs is important. Reciprocal relationships, grounded in an ethical and normative foundation, or grounded normativity, is foundational to Indigenous pedagogies and epistemologies, and therefore, is necessary for land-based education. The purpose of learning is the maintenance of respectful, sustainable relationships between all beings (Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, 2022). Thus, it is critical for land-based programs to be rooted in reciprocal relationships with the land, each other, and ourselves.

Resistance & Resurgence

It is essential that land-based education actively resists colonial policies and practices, while also implementing and reinforcing resurgent practices. Coulthard explains:

"Colonialism and its violence is ultimately separating our people from the knowledge and power that is in the territories. Any education that is worth its name and is truly decolonizing has to include connecting people to those knowledges that are grounded literally in the ground and in the land." (National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education, 2020).

In this section, we share the importance of land-based education supporting Indigenous leadership as part of resurgence, and the resistance that is built into simply having Indigenous people and families on the land.

Colonialism actively works to remove Indigenous peoples from the land to break our relationship with the land, so the Canadian state can violently extract resources from the earth for its capitalist benefit. Land dispossession is the fundamental goal of colonialism. Thus, a radical form of resistance is simply Indigenous peoples being out on the land. When Indigenous peoples are out on the land, there are constant moments of resistance and disruption of the "predominantly scientific, capitalistic, Judeo-Christian world governed by physical laws, economic imperatives, and spiritual precepts" (King, 2003, pg. 12). (Re)connecting to Elders, language, land-based practices, and each other is one mechanism for regenerating and repairing the damage these systems have caused our families and communities on an individual and communal level. Cockney elaborates on how delivering land-based programs challenges colonialism:

"...with my grandparents and my mum, they were the ones that always took me out on the land, so being able to take those experiences and start to teach the younger generation, my generation, all these skills and the history of our people too. Like not a lot of our people know where exactly we come from because we're so removed from a lot of that history because of the residential schools" (2022).

Cockney's reflection demonstrates how colonial practices attempted to disconnect us from the land, but land-based programs address this issue by re-establishing a connection to land and teaching this history to younger generations. Land-based learning is a direct response to the intimate and structural violence of intergenerational trauma experienced through residential schools, state run education systems and the child welfare system (Absolon & Willett, 2004; King, 2003).

Denenzie Basil, a member of Łútsël K'é Dene First Nation and a Land-Based Coordinator at Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, explains why resurgent work is important to him:

"I hear elders tell stories about people being on the land all the time, how our people used to take care of the land and it's not like that today. It's less and less young people on the land practicing our culture and traditions such as doing fish camps and on the land programs. So just being a part of, you know, the resurgence of that it's important to me, it's important to all the people in the NWT. That's our culture and tradition. We need to keep it alive and shared" (2022).

Basil shows us that creating land-based learning opportunities like fish camps is critical for creating an opportunity for young people to learn how to be in relationship with the land again, and to be able to pass down those teachings to future generations. Dechinta faculty member and Nishnaabe theorist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes in "Land as Pedagogy" that:

"A resurgence of Indigenous political cultures, governances, and nation-building requires generations of Indigenous peoples to grow up intimately and strongly connected to our homelands, immersed in our languages and spiritualities, and embodying our traditions of agency, leadership, decision-making and diplomacy. This requires a radical break from state education systems- systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism" (2014, page 1).

For Simpson, land as pedagogy is more meaningful than just connecting students to their local natural environment. She writes that for Indigenous peoples, connecting to land is an embodied intellectual and political project with the goal of re-animating Indigenous political cultures, developing critical thinking skills and fostering an ability to collective dream and vision different futures than the ones we inherit from the colonial project (Simpson, 2017). Simpson confirms that land-based education is more than simply taking people outside, it is a radical form of resistance and a vital form of resurgence. As Simpson states about being at a Dechinta hide camp, "We were awash in Dene brilliance. Brilliance that Dene resistance made sure was passed down to the next generation. Brilliance that residential schools could not stamp out" (2021). At its best, land-based education should be explicit about resisting colonialism and supporting the resurgent work of communities. It is an ethical commitment.

CO-OPTING OF 'LAND-BASED'

With the increased recognition of the important role that land-based programming can have in effective decolonial education, there are more programming opportunities and substantive supports. While it is important to recognize the impacts of increased opportunities to be on the land, not all programs intentionally center the substantive transformative work of connecting Indigenous nations to their land and asserting and practicing Indigenous sovereignty. Coulthard identifies this dynamic as the colonial politics of recognition, where limited recognition for Indigenous peoples struggles against decolonization resulted in limited rather than substantive decolonial transformation (Coulthard, 2014). As demonstrated through both theoretical analysis, and engagement with reflections on specific programming, land-based education must centre Indigenous peoples, knowledges and authorities in order to realize the transformative decolonial potential. However, critical analysis of land-based programming indicates two risks. First, is the colonial drive to co-opt, control or appropriate. The second, is the more subtle colonial politics of recognition, risking the separation of land-based programming from the substantive transformative impacts.

Due to the advocacy work of Indigenous nations, the term 'land-based' has grown in popularity within the past few years. Indigenous nations, academics, and grassroots organizers have influenced philanthropic, government, and corporate funders to see the value of land-based education for our communities. Further, the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada reinforced the need for land-based programs to support resurgent work in communities (2015). Indigenous peoples are just in those beginning stages of reclaiming our cultures and relationship with land after both decades of colonial violence that continues to have impacts today, as well as contemporary colonial policy and practices. As soon as we begin to strengthen that relationship and colonial institutions start supporting it financially, then non-Indigenous people feel the need to 'own it' as well. They start their own land-based initiatives, yet they do not centre self-determining Indigenous knowledge holders. In these programs, Indigenous knowledge is merely an add-on or a checkbox. For example, it can be a canoe trip where Indigenous youth are brought out on the land with non-Indigenous facilitators/guides, but a knowledge holder comes for one day of the trip. This separates land-based programming from the substantive transformative impacts and waters it down.

Ultimately, non-Indigenous land-based initiatives can perpetuate white supremacy and colonialism by taking up resources, including delivery capacity and funding intended for Indigenous land-based initiatives, and creating spaces that centre non-Indigenous peoples to learn at the expense of Indigenous learners. Métis artist and academic David Garneau explains this doubled violence of colonial attitudes as both consumption, and a replacement. He says:

"The colonial attitude is characterized not only by scopophilia, a drive to look, but also an urge to penetrate, to traverse, to know, to translate, to own and exploit. The attitude assumes that everything should be accessible to those with the means and will to access them; everything is ultimately comprehensible, a potential commodity, resource, or salvage. The academic branch of the enterprise collects and analyses the experiences and things of others; it transforms story into text and objects-in-relation into artifacts to be catalogued and stored or displayed" (2016, p. 23).

In land-based education, this colonial attitude can be seen when settlers come into land-based spaces and consume Indigenous pedagogies and knowledges, on Indigenous lands. Making these Indigenous pedagogies consumable, the colonial entitlement then distorts and twists these programs to make them accessible to whiteness. Moreover, with the increased interest in reconciliation, this distortion protects colonialism's white fragility by celebrating the "reconciled" at the expense of the hard work of decolonization.

Systems that uphold white privilege are so normalized that having anything that is not meant for whiteness destabilizes and calls out the assumed privilege and power of whiteness. In land-based education, this destabilization takes place across scales. As David Gillborn explains, "... the most dangerous form of 'white supremacy' is not the obvious and extreme fascistic posturing of small neo-Nazi groups, but rather the taken-for-granted routine privileging of white interests that goes unremarked in the political mainstream." (2005, p.2) In land-based education, making land-based programs accessible to whiteness means removing the parts of Indigenous pedagogies that undermines, or makes explicit the power and privilege, and violence that white supremacist systems uphold. By extracting the palatable, comfortable aspects and discarding the confronting and critical portions, whiteness removes land-based education from its radical decolonial centre. Many non-Indigenous organizations and institutions have started adopting the term 'land-based education', but the use of this term is not equivalent to the many years, deep relationships, and radical grounded normativity that informs Indigenous land-based pedagogies.

There is an inherent benefit to being on the Land. Any opportunity to be on the land is important. However, it is possible to effectively describe and conduct programs without causing harm to Indigenous knowledge systems, people and Nations. Non-Indigenous land-based programs can more effectively be described as nature-based, place-based, or outdoor education programs. It is important to be aware of the work being done to ensure that harm is not being perpetuated. Outdoor education, place-based education, and nature-based programs are beneficial for youth, but they are not on the land programs. It undermines the integrity of Indigenous knowledge when the term 'land-based' is co-opted for these programs.

SHARE EVERYTHING YOU HAVE

To return to the reflections of Charlie Sangris, land-based programming means to work for people, to work in a way that brings together the best of self-determination and autonomy, embedded in a web of relationships oriented to community, family and the land. Reflective of grounded normativity as a set of ethical and normative obligations, land-based programming is both critical of the systems of colonialism that continue to displace Indigenous nations from their lands, laws and relationships, and generative of new ways of being in relation to each other and the land.

Land-based programs need to be created by and for Indigenous people from nations on whose territories that program takes place. Indigenous people need to hold positions of power and teaching so that other Indigenous people, especially youth and children, can see themselves as capable human beings full of potential, with rights and deserving of respect. Elders, knowledge holders, teachers, aunties, and uncles help us think differently – a direct act of disrupting colonialism. Land-based education needs to centre all aspects of Indigenous pedagogies, especially the aspects that reject colonial realities and reimagine Indigenous systems. Land-based learning is about more than the educational experience. Care and healing is necessary to recover from the intergenerational trauma and systemic racism that continues today. Returning to Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing is returning to what strengthened individuals, kinships, families, and communities to be so resilient and survive more than 500 years of colonization and genocide.

The architecture of Indigenous worlds was and is made intercommunally with all living beings towards continually regenerating life– first by mutually generating the knowledge and ethics to do this deep labour and second by living and being everyday transformed by the frequencies of that communally generated knowledge. We believe being attentive to body, mind and spirit in relation to the land, breathing in the midst of this network, is a mechanism of continually remaking Anishinaabeg, Dene, nêhiyaw, Inuit, and Métis worlds. We want to be everyday transformed by the ecologies of those living beings and the continual renewal they collectively generate.

Situated places of learning become pedagogies of land that affords us opportunities to rethink, refigure, and complicate what is considered the right environment for learning. Indigenous relationalities pay particular attention to the land, colonial displacements, and encounters with more-than-human entities (Nxumalo, 2019). Our connection to land invites us to be a certain way, to care in a particular way, and live in a good way. Even with disconnection and displacement, once we return to the land and begin re-learning Dene ways of knowing, doing and being, there are possibilities of feeling a connection through blood memory because this particular place is a part of who Dene people are. Western education theory and practices take-for-granted the nature of place while 'place' has potential to challenge and expand our understandings of how everyone individually relates to the world with humans and more-than-humans (Duhn, 2012). Possibilities for radical shift begin with acknowledging how we affect and are affected by the more-than-human relations intertwined with past and present histories.

Learning within this network of deep relations necessarily means our minds must be sharp and awake in order to refuse the forces of racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy and of course colonialism. These structures in various hidden and overt forms work to end Indigenous worlds. So we must think critically, like our ancestors did, to ensure the cycles of life are replenished. Land-based education cannot be a tool of the state designed to reproduce itself. It cannot be a program that exploits, extracts, disciplines, encloses, incarcerates, or educates. It cannot be a program based within a web of colonial gendered violence and world endings. It cannot be a degree or a career or an income generating stream in colleges and universities. In our way of thinking, land-based education cannot be any of these things, because what we've learned from the land, is that in order for us to ensure life continues, we need to radically reorganize the human component of our global community

Land-based education is a generative refusal that at once must interrogate the structures that currently regulate life and generate Indigenous alternatives. Land-based education is oriented across scales, from the intimate to the global– it is necessarily internationalist and anti-colonial in scope. Thinking about land-based education in our current circumstances requires skepticism and continual collective reflection to ensure our programs are doing the work we intend them to do.

This is a very long and complicated way of saying what the Dene often sum it up in its simplest and most profound form when they say in kindness and humility, "share everything you have".

** A note on authors:*
The authors of this article are Rachel Cluderay, Rena Mainville, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Kelsey Wrightson. Each author carries their own unique perspectives and offers insights based on their positions and experiences. While the first-person plural is used throughout this article, it is not intended to be reductive of the unique positions the authors hold. Where insights and arguments are made that reflect the unique experiences of a single author, this has been identified by the individual author's name.

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