

Educating Bodies for Self-Determination: A Decolonizing Strategy

Denise Nadeau

Concordia University and Toronto School of Theology

Alannah Young

University of British Columbia

The transformation of the effects of sexual, racial, and colonial violence on Aboriginal people requires unlearning ways of thinking and being. This process involves a reaffirmation of Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogy. This article examines a program developed for urban Aboriginal women in Vancouver that focuses on restoring the felt sense of the sacred interconnections with relations and developing an embodied spiritual pedagogy incorporating traditional teachings. The principles for educating bodies for self determination are remembering, reclamation, and collective witness. These guiding principles provide a framework for a decolonizing strategy in holistic education for Aboriginal peoples.

Introduction

In writing this article, we acknowledge our place in Creation and remember the Ancestors who have gone before and the teachings they left with us for the benefit of the future generations. We acknowledge the sacred gifts of the earth, the air, the fire, and water that give life and sustain us. We acknowledge the minerals, plants, animals, and the humans as our relatives. We acknowledge the traditional ancestral territories in which we visit, work, live, and we honor where our original Ancestors' lineages come from and the gifts they offer in our lives as they continue to direct our intention to reflect our spiritual teachings in practice.

We write from our respective traditions. Alannah is Anishnabe and Cree from the Opaswayak Cree Nation, presently living in traditional Coast Salish Territory and working at the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. She has worked with teachers from several Indigenous nations, and these have shaped her Indigenous spiritual practice. Her work is informed by Indigenous knowledges, non-violence principles, and critical race theory. She is currently involved with developing Indigenous leadership education that supports self-determined, decolonizing agendas. Denise is a European Canadian of French-Irish heritage, raised in Quebec. Her French ancestors intermarried with Mi'kmaq women and occupied Mi'kmaq territory on the Gaspé peninsula. Her religious world view and spirituality have been shaped by ecofeminist and postcolonial Christian theology, critical race theory, anti-racist feminism, and the Catholic Worker movement, as well as many

years in both Native and non-Native communities in British Columbia and Montreal.

We came together because we both had an interest in exploring the body as a site for decolonization, based in our belief in the essential connection between body, land, and sovereignty. We interpret this from our different traditions: Alannah through reclaiming and reaffirming Indigenous knowledges, Denise through reconciling the cultural and religious split of body and spirit and through restoring the body's connection to earth and community.

This article describes a program we developed for women who have suffered ongoing sexual, racist, and colonial violence in their lives. This approach to regeneration and restoration from violence centers on the body and draws on Indigenous knowledges and praxis. In doing this, we connect with Indigenous cultural resilience theory of people like Heavy-Runner (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997) and Smith (1999) who have demonstrated how the ability "to survive and even thrive in the face of adversity" has been linked with tapping into our own natural spiritual resilience. In Aboriginal societies, cultural identity is a primary source of strength, and spirituality is a core aspect that contributes to this resilience. The transmitting of cultural values and teachings helps unlock human potential and "mediate multiple forms of oppression in 'new' ways" (Smith, in press).

Focus

The focus of our work is on balancing spiritual and body wisdom as a way of reconciling relationships affected by violence. Our emphasis is on lifting up people's unique gifts and goodness. We do not have dreams of "fixing" people, but rather we want to share what has helped us and the people with whom we have worked. In this article, we suggest that the process of restoring a lived awareness of sacredness in the body and of recovering one's connection to identity, community, and earth is a form of decolonization. The approach we have developed, which we call *educating bodies for self-determination*, involves both the individual and the collective, that is, the self in community. It combines spiritual teachings, bodywork, movement, and performance in a group education program for those recovering from colonialism and racism.

Between 2001 and 2003, we piloted a program called *Still Movement: Restoring Sacred Vitality* with Native women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. The education program was designed as a 12-week program of sessions of two and a half hours and was repeated three times. The goal of our program was to support Native women's leadership development through affirming strengths and restoring connection. Because the women in our groups had experienced many levels of violence, our priority was to support the repair of the disconnection of the body-spirit caused by multiple violations. More specifically, we explored how to recover the

body-spirit's relationship with self, land, and community: to restore the sense of sacred interconnection undermined by violence. This means restoring relationships to Earth as teacher and to one's place in the framework of relatives and natural teachers.

The work of educating bodies for self-determination is located on the borders of education, spirituality, psychology, and social work. At the same time, we see it primarily as education rather than a form of therapy. Our reasons for this include increasing accessibility for women living in the inner city and providing an approach that is both collective and individual. We have avoided where possible using the word *healing* to describe the core of this work. Our intention is to promote health as well-being, and this includes the ability to be self-determining. Popular use of the word *healing* implies a process that often legitimates and maintains victim-oppressor position. The colonial framing of the "healed" and the "not-healed" position has often distracted people instead of focusing on individual and communities' self-determination that is so essential to our understanding of wholistic health practices.

Accordingly, one of the objectives of educating bodies for self-determination is to teach people basic somatic (from the Greek word for the living body: *soma*, a focus on the physical body to address emotional and mental stress) and spiritual resources that they can use to access their own internal knowledge, intuition, and vision instead of looking for external validation from the colonial gaze. This involves a process of reclaiming the sacredness of the body, grieving collective losses, and celebrating collective gifts and strengths. We transmit spiritual and cultural teachings; teach skills to wake up the body, release tension, and recover a sense of the sacred; and we dance, sing, draw, and create as a group. We believe bodies are "significant sources of knowing" and we combine Indigenous knowledge and somatic expressive arts education in an embodied pedagogy (Baker, 2001).

Traditional knowledges (TK) and Indigenous knowledges (IK) can be seen to have the same meaning. Traditional knowledges are unique tribal customs, practices, and knowledge systems including environmental, herbal, medicinal, spiritual, architectural, cosmological, as well as ceremonies, songs, and dances. However IK is seen to include contemporary forms of knowledge that may not have a pure traditional source or may be derived from a combination of contemporary sources (Young-Ing, 2004). We draw on IK because these systems are ecologically centered and affirm the interrelationship between individuals, communities, and ecosystems. A prominent concept in IK is enhancement, which seeks to include the person's vitality or spirit. Whereas teaching and training offer students new data and methods, "enhancement offers them help in discerning their identities and integrity" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). In transmitting IK, the teacher teaches Indigenous theory, values, and cos-

mology, both through the ceremonies and songs and in the transmission of oral traditions.

The word *somatic* comes from the Greek word *soma*, the living body. The body is inseparable from our feelings about ourselves and our experiences of others. Somatic education provides skills that focus on the physical body to address emotional and mental stress and to reconnect with spirit. We use drumming, singing, and dancing as traditional forms of somatic education, that is, traditional IK forms of engaging the body-spirit as one. As in most Native American and Indigenous philosophies, we do not separate the spiritual and physical dimensions of being.

Part of the work of educating bodies for self-determination involves restoring sacred vitality. The term *sacred vitality* refers to the feeling of energetic connection with one's own sacredness, with the earth, and with others in community, a feeling of being fully alive. This aliveness allows one to *stand one's ground* in experiencing one's rootedness in a web of relations. Sacred vitality supports transformation; affirms individual gifts, collective strength, and sacredness in the face of oppression; and creates new forms of power and nonviolent, embodied ways of being self-determined in this world.

In this article, we illustrate how the process of educating bodies for self-determination is a form of decolonization. We first briefly analyze how mainstream healing programs directed at Aboriginal women often function to maintain a colonial agenda. We then describe what we do, give some examples of how we do it, and some of the major issues we face in this work. We conclude with some reflections on the meaning of decolonization as applied to Native women living in the context of inner cities.

Healing Initiatives and the Politics of Trauma

Many healing initiatives that address the "problems" of Native peoples, especially in inner-city areas, fail to link individual suffering to the broader psychosocial conditions in which most live. Pastoral counseling, social work, and therapy approaches focus on the negative aspects of people's behavior and pathologize the effects of violence. In doing this they operate as a form of "welfare colonialism," with the assumption that these populations need to be managed or changed and require help and guidance. This "non-demonstrative colonialism" is still part of the relationship between Native peoples and the Canadian State, a form of coercive tutelage that veils the outright land grabs and assimilation policies of earlier colonialism (Paine, 1997; Dyck, 1991).

A significant example of these ongoing colonial dynamics is found in the language of trauma applied to Native communities. The extensive class, race, sexual, and colonial violence that many Native women have experienced is lost in the diagnostic terminology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a label found in the American Psychiatric Society's *Diag-*

nostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) and applied to a wide range of physical and emotional responses. PTSD, like much trauma language, reduces suffering to a condition of medical pathology rather than a spiritual or moral problem caused by political violence. This *social suffering*, a term from medical anthropology, is transformed into individual cases of dysfunction. The language of deficiency and dysfunction reduces to personality traits or syndromes behaviors that have emerged as survival or resistance responses to oppressive conditions.

Rather than address the causes of the poverty and distress that have led to the dislocation and disintegration of communities, many aspects of the trauma industry manage disruptive behavior with medication or criminalization (Culhane, 2005; Kelm, 2001; Waldram, Herring, & Young, 1995). As well, the extensive use of talk therapies does not deal adequately with Native women's body-spirits. The various treatment programs, shelters, social service agencies, counseling services, and so forth that operate in inner cities thus serve to reinforce a sense of powerlessness and undermine women's ability to resist. It is these underlying dynamics that explain why so often therapy programs do not work for Native women.

Reframing Trauma and Recovery

We use the term *psychosocial trauma* to describe the effects of routinized violence that Aboriginal women experience. Rather than focusing on the individual, this concept of trauma gives primacy to the social network in which the human is embedded (Martin-Baro, 1994). Psychosocial trauma is trauma that is foreseeable and predictable; it affects an entire network of social relations. As long as dehumanizing social relations continue, the symptoms of trauma remain both in individuals and in communities. It is only in changing the social relations between colonizer and colonized that psychosocial trauma can be alleviated.

In Native communities, another level of relationship has been damaged. Indigenous philosophies are based in cosmologies of relationships that include the interrelatedness of plants, animals, minerals, and humans. Multiple forms of colonial violence over generations have resulted in a spiritual disjuncture: a loss of connection with these relations. Niezen (2000), in *Spirit Wars*, describes this as a "radical instability in the human relationship with the spirit world" (p. 35). The many aspects of colonialism that attacked religious identity, many of which continue today in various forms, eroded communities' sense of their spiritual identity. For many this spiritual dispossession was and is experienced in loss of awareness of connection both to those in their community and to the land.

For Native women this historical spiritual disjuncture operates at two additional levels. Whereas before, "our cultures promoted womanhood as a sacred identity, an identity that existed in a complex system of relations of societies that were based on balance" (Anderson, 2000, p. 57), now, through the process of a sexist and racist colonialism, Native women have

lost their collective status as sacred. At the individual level, when neither a woman's traditions nor her body are respected, this is played out in a loss of a sense of honor, lived out in the body. She often has a devitalized, dispirited experience: this can be interpreted as the body-spirit having lost touch with its connection to many of its relations.

Educating bodies for self-determination addresses this loss of connection with relations. It is based on a cosmology that sees all relations as sacred, as imbued with spirit. The body is sacred and connected to land and all living beings, and it is capable of self-determining and self-regulating, that is, it is able to adapt, change, and be repaired and restored in relation to other organisms. This sacred, connected, and becoming body is infused with sacred vitality, the flowing of energy between sacred beings and the divine. When this flowing of energy is interrupted, then the task of repair involves restoring these connections in the body and reaffirming the network of relations. Although social and economic justice is absolutely necessary to restore the web of relations shattered by political violence and oppression, there is an equally urgent need to recover the individual's and the collective's sense of dignity so that this struggle for justice can take on a form that honors traditional teachings.

A Case Study: Still Movement-Restoring Sacred Vitality

The program we offered in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver addressed the recovery of relations and restoration of a sense of collective dignity through the use of a combination of ceremony, body work, and expressive arts activities. As such, we based it on traditional or cultural principles and values. One key principle was the Good Life Way, which is conscious of respecting reciprocal, relational responsibilities as central values. The Indigenous values of relations, beauty, and balance were also reinforced throughout the program. Other principles included non-violence as nonjudgment and compassion, toward self and others. A variety of skills and practices were given throughout the program that supported these values and principles.

An example of how we linked values through practices is with the principle of nonviolence. This is expressed in the practice of nonjudgment and compassion for oneself and for others. It is lived out in an attitude of kindness toward oneself: there is nothing to fix; one just allows one's body-spirit to do what it needs to do at any particular moment.

Some examples of how we teach nonjudgment and compassion are:

- We begin each session after a song with a time of meditating on the breath as the spirit within us and saying a short prayer that acknowledges our goodness.
- We include the practice of compassion for self in many activities:
 - guided visualizations that involve sending compassion and acceptance to specific parts of our body that have done so much for us over the years,

- sending the energy of compassion to parts of the body that hold emotional or physical pain.

The second theme is the *Good Life Way* and the consciousness of reciprocal relational responsibilities that is central to this principle. Each Native culture has its own version of the Good Life Way: The Good Life Path or Bimaadziwin in Anishnabe; *Miyowicehtowin*—having good relations—for the Cree of the Northern prairies; *Sken-nen kowa*—maintaining peace between peoples—for the Iroquois; *Hozho*, Navajo for walking in beauty, walking in a sacred manner, walking with a peaceful heart. Common to these different versions of the Good Life Way are the lived values of relations, beauty, and balance.

We reinforce the values of beauty, relations, and balance through:

- The structure of the program, through its ceremonies and activities, follows the principle of balance by addressing the four parts of the self—the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional dimensions.
- During each program we include a retreat day outside the inner city in which all participants have time to develop their spiritual and sensory relationships with the land.
- Ceremonies, teachings, and prayers expand awareness of and make connections with all relations, reinforcing principles of beauty and balance.
- Indigenous song is a central ritual form in every session, connecting participants to the land, ancestors, and all living relations.

These themes of nonjudgment and compassion, beauty, relations, and balance are the foundations of the program.

In order to help participants develop a felt sense, that is, an internal awareness, of nonviolence and the Good Life Way, we teach a spiritual and physical practice of being in the present moment in the body. We use an approach called “embodiment practice,” developed by Euro-American somatic therapist Apoyshan (1999, 2004). This involves consciously attending to sensations and the circulation of energy through our bodies and out into the environment so that we are more physically present in our bodies and in our relationship with others and the Earth. This practice not only counters the sensations of numbing often caused by violence, but it also deepens sensory engagement with traditional spiritual practices that involve the body’s wisdom through songs, dances, using shakers, drumming, and medicines.

The program has three phases. The first, “Grounding in the Spirit/Gratitude,” focuses on reaffirming a sense of each person’s basic goodness and begins to develop the somatic resources for an embodied connection with their inner gift or spirit. The second, “Transforming Anger, Cleansing and Lament,” invokes traditions of collective prayer and

ceremony that work with anger, grief, and loss. The third, “Celebrating Our Sacred Power/Performing Community,” involves somatic affirmation of individual and collective strengths or gifts and a movement toward performance and ritual collective action. Each phase and session includes spiritual teachings, somatic exercises (embodiment practice and resource development), creative expression activities (dance, movement, drawing, writing around a theme), group dances, and ceremony.

Principles for Self-Determining Education

The course works with three educational principles. These are *re-membering*, *reclamation*, and *collective witness*; all three are interrelated and contribute to each other. All function to strengthen in participants a sense of their sacredness and agency in community.

Re-membering

We remember that all things are connected. Remembering this is the purpose of the ceremony. It is part of healing and restoration. It is the mending of a broken connection between us and the rest. (Hogan, 1994)

Re-membering involves recovering historical and collective memories of culture and spirituality, as well as positive memories of resilience, resistance, and tradition that affirm a positive sense of identity. These are body memories of spirit—of grace, connection, and vitality. The word *re-membering* plays on the image of reordering the members (as in bodily members), creating a *counter-memory* or reframing in the body of goodness, spirit, and interconnection. It involves both affirming sacred moments in one’s past and acknowledging the sacredness of the self in the present. It includes reconnecting with spiritual and cultural traditions that have meaning for one’s life now and re-membering the body’s connection with Earth.

The use of ceremony is central in the practice of re-membering. Ceremony is central to the process of regeneration because it functions to restore balance. Through repetition of a song or ceremony, the participant not only connects with all those who have participated in the ritual in the past and future, but also experiences an inner connection with a cosmology that has been forgotten but is being relearned.

For those who have been silenced in multiple ways, singing is a culturally appropriate way of recovering voice. It reflects cultural self-esteem. We know how violent internalized racism is. So instead of having to introduce an intellectual analysis of the entire colonial historical dynamic, we are able to sing a song publicly and voice our sacred power in song as a way of restoring identity and self-esteem. In the course, Alannah taught the George Family song and the IK protocols associated with the song. We acknowledged Elder Bob George, Chief Leonard George, and the George family from the T’Seil Waututh Nation (Burrard Nation or Children of the Wolf Clan), who gave the song as a public song. We taught that there are

private, family, and ceremonial songs as well as public songs. The song and place protocols teach us to acknowledge our relationship with the owners of the song, our journey together, and our visitor status to the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples. Elder Vince Stogan, Tsimlano from the Musqueam Nation (People of the River Grass), has shared that Vancouver is the traditional gathering place of many Nations.

At the beginning of each class, we repeat the important protocols about demonstrating respect for places, names, and relationships, and eventually the group members take turns in leading the song. In a follow-up session, one Sliammon participant led the George family song in a public forum and remembered that her uncle, who was related to the George family, had taught her the song many years before, thereby affirming her re-membering through ceremony.

Reclamation

In order to engage in counter-memory or reframing, it is necessary to transform the individual body so that it can feel and experience deeply these sacred memories.

Reclamation is the task of reconnecting to the flow of energy that connects us with all living things. This is called body-mind integration: learning how to be fully in one's body and reclaiming the ability to express and feel all that has been forgotten through the experience of violence. In recovering a sensory awareness of the unity of the body-spirit, a person can feel the sacredness of the body, as well as the connection to the earth and to the cosmos.

Our approach to body-mind integration involves teaching embodiment practice and emphasizing the spiritual dimensions of this practice. Examples of the latter include describing our breath as spirit, sensation as the manifestation of the energy of the life force that connects us to our sacred vitality, stillness as a practice of listening to the spirit within. We practice sending compassion and acceptance to specific body parts that may be in pain or have been judged negatively. In learning to process or sequence energy in our body that may have been stagnant or tangled, we learn how to treat ourselves with compassion and kindness (Apoysan, 1999).

As part of the process of reconstruction, we facilitate what is called *resource development*. We frame these resources in the context of relations; that is, we name them as relatives and encourage participants to draw on them for help in the present moment. We spend some time in the first few sessions developing a *sacred container*, a *sacred place*, or other relative in nature that becomes a source of guidance or consolation. The participants find each of these resources in themselves through a guided visualization process that incorporates focusing on body sensations. They then draw and/or dance the resource to increase its strength and the bodily sensations associated with it. We remind participants to use their resources

outside of the course, and we draw on them in various ways throughout the sessions. This is one of many ways they restore positive memories in the body.

The use of creative expression—drawing, dance, writing poetry—plays a significant part in countering the effects of colonization. In our own lives we have experienced how easy it is to internalize the meanings and values of the dominant group, a process that is integral to the colonizing strategy (Ing, 2000; Razack 1998; Smith, 1999). The power to create one's own meaning and values is necessary to overcome this disconnection and the accompanying psychic damage. For many women from the inner city, who are defined by others and who have no space (literally) to create, these moments of surfacing their inner voice are key to reconstructing their own identity and their own values. In the experience of creativity, we all have the opportunity to "break the chain of identifying ourselves with our suffering" (Halprin, 2001, p. 29). The dance, poem, or drawing has externalized and clarified our experience for others to witness. "The ability to see, be present, respond to and address others" is the point where one's inner witness enables one to witness others (Oliver, 2001). Such genuine witnessing is a means to recover and build subjectivity and agency that have been undermined by colonialism and oppression.

Collective Witness

Collective witness is the third principle of this approach. For Denise, this refers to the movement from being present and responding to self and others as an individual into the process of expressing publicly, in community, before others, one's pride in one's identity. It is this act of declaring openly, what Scott (1990) calls "the hidden transcript of resistance" that contributes to the restoration of "a sense of self-respect and personhood" (p. 210).

For Alannah, witnessing is culturally defined and is a highly respected oral and legal account of remembering events and affirming relationships important for community development. The act of witnessing facilitates Indigenous leadership education by enhancing positive identity for community and individual health and well-being.

In the context of education for decolonization, witnessing to and by one's peers becomes an antidote to being treated as an invisible object by the oppressor. When this witnessing is placed in a ceremonial context, it acknowledges the sacredness of those witnessed and the task of witnessing as an act of reciprocity. Interrelatedness, the fact that we are bodies in relation, a collective body, is affirmed with the presence of others: acknowledging and honoring our experience in a circle of witnesses.

When collective expression is witnessed by others—first in the group and later in the community—the group moves into the power of public performance. Participants develop a collective expression of the stories they want to tell in their own ways and are witnessed by others in public.

This process involves supporting participants' initiation and leadership. In creating a performance, the group actively makes meaning for itself and bears witness to both their individual and the group's sense of power, sacredness, and connection. In order to distinguish the performance from a show or spectacle, we create a sacred boundary around it with song and prayer, marking it as sacred time and space. It reminds us that we do not have to rely only on ourselves: that the Creator, ancestors, spirits, and medicines can help us reclaim harmony.

Issues and Challenges

One issue that we faced as facilitators was the complexities of working together as an Indigenous woman and a European woman and as a traditional practitioner and a Christian. There has been the ongoing challenge of transforming the dynamics of colonizer-colonized inherent in our relationship, which is the subject of an article. Another has been the test of working in inner-city areas where group members come from many Nations and spiritual traditions. There were usually a few participants, either from residential schools or from Christian fundamentalist groups, who carried Christian injunctions against traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Others combined Christian practices with traditional ones. Some had rejected Christianity completely. This meant finding ways of being respectful of different traditions as we incorporated Indigenous knowledges into the structure of the course.

Alannah's intention has been to maintain the integrity of the teachings of oral traditions. This means to share them in a context that reflects connection to appropriate conditions, people, places, and times. She recognizes that one site of struggle is cultural appropriation, where knowledge is decontextualized from the land and community relationships. When the sources of knowledge are not credited or acknowledged, profit and power are appropriated from Native people. Negotiating ceremonies and protocols is a co-creative process that reflects and maintains equitable power dynamics. The appropriate protocol is to acknowledge historical relationships and identify how to demonstrate power-sharing and enhance community vitality in accordance with the traditional teachings.

Denise's challenge has been to represent an anti-colonial form of Christianity and only when this is appropriate. Her intention as a Euro-Canadian has been to find how she can be accountable for the history of which she is part, both acknowledging her complicity in and the benefits she has gained from it, as well as being in integrity with the teachings of her own tradition that support nonviolence, justice, reparations, and interconnection. She affirms Indigenous analyses of the role and responsibility of the Christian church in the cultural genocide of Native peoples in North America. She has learned to uncover in her own tradition teachings that complement Native teachings rather than appropriate the latter for her own.

Another significant issue that emerged specific to this case study is that as soon as a woman finishes the program, she reenters an environment where she is often devalued. It is challenging to remember one's goodness when faced by a context of crises in one's family, the racism and sexism of day-to-day interactions, a housing shortage, no jobs and one's ongoing vulnerability and exposure to violence as a Native woman. As well, there is a sense of confusion about how colonialism and displacement are ongoing and current, not just a thing of the past. Educating bodies for self-determination can only be effective when it is part of a comprehensive decolonization program that includes sovereignty and community economic and social development that has the material, spiritual, and social needs of the entire community, including women and children, at its center.

Several of the women who took this program eventually took more leadership in their communities or became more involved in community activities. Others who were already doing this continued to do so in a more embodied way and were able to draw on ceremonial ways to assist them. Some still continued to have difficulties in getting out of situations that were harmful for them, and long-term effects of the program were not immediately visible.

In the final analysis, a critical factor in this approach to repairing the effects of racist and colonial violence is repetition and the development of a spiritual practice. It is the repetition of ceremonies, affirming traditional territories, using song and voice, affirming basic goodness, and belonging as well as doing an embodiment practice. Like any education program, this will be only one small piece in each person's journey to wellness. Each one takes what she or he can use and moves on, and maybe years later the teachings will be remembered and reinforced in other ways.

Conclusion: Self-Determined Bodies and Decolonization

As Smith (in press), describing Indigenous research, has said, the decolonization project involves "the unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism and colonialism in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty, for reclamation of knowledge, language and culture and for the social transformation of colonial relations between the native and settler." Colonialism constructed the native as *other*, which has been lived out in racial trauma etched onto the body-spirit of the colonized (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004). For Native women living in inner cities, marginalized both in the dominant society and in their communities and surviving on the fault line of the intersection of sexual, race, and class violence, one path toward deconstructing colonialism has been the repairing of this trauma through restoring the body's connectedness.

The process of *educating* bodies for self-determination involves reversing the levels of disconnection in the body caused by daily racial, sexual,

and colonial violence. It starts with the development of a felt sense of one's basic goodness and the sacredness of the body and its connection to land and relations. It moves to the completion, release, and transformation of the powerful emotions of grief, anger, sorrow, and bitterness and provides a cultural and spiritual context that supports moving on with one's life. It concludes with a third step, collectively embodying the identity of the group and collectively witnessing in performance for the community and for themselves. This allows a public statement of identity that is no longer determined by reaction to the colonizer's gaze. All three phases of this decolonization process, informed by the principles of nonviolence and the Good Life Way, create counter-memories of connection and sacredness that gradually replace the body memories of violence. In highlighting individual and collective cultural resilience, it supports each woman to move toward a self-determined agenda.

The meaning of sovereignty and self-determination for Native women living off reserve and in urban centers, most of whom do not have access to band resources or a traditional land base, is a question that will be determined by these women in the future. A program that educates bodies for self-determination builds cultural resilience and provides internal resources and group support to enable women marginalized in inner cities to "challenge their status subordination" and participate in their community and society with a sense of their worth and power (Fraser, 2001). Whether the example of the Salish woman who was able to use the support of the group to challenge the prohibition of her use of sage in her meetings at an outreach program for Native seniors in a mixed race seniors center; that of the Cree counselor who confronted a social worker who was trying to apprehend a young woman's baby; or the Gitksan women who taught us her clan's warrior dance so that we could perform it at the Women's Valentine Day Memorial March all show us women engaging in everyday acts of resistance from which slowly a new collective understanding of the *freedom to be who one is* will emerge. The decolonizing task of this form of education is to equip people with the ability to define and know in and through their bodies their own meanings of self-determination.

The work of educating bodies for self-determination is one approach to reintegrating sufferers of long-term psychosocial trauma in a politically meaningful way. As a decolonizing strategy that promotes self-awareness and connection, it is a support for organizing for sovereignty and not a substitute for community and political action. This decolonization of the body involves reclaiming an identity that allows one to be self-defining and self-naming. In reexperiencing the distinct quality of aliveness in one's body—its sacred vitality—one can resist and challenge imposed structures of thinking and being that have become incorporated in the

body and recover the felt sense of connection with relations. As one participant in the Still Movement Program said,

We live within a circle of life and when we don't acknowledge all that Mother Earth has to offer—we are lost. All my relations.

References

- Anderson, K. (2000). *Recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto, ON: Second Story Press.
- Apoysan, S. (1999). *Natural intelligence: Body mind integration and human development*. Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins.
- Apoysan, S. (2004). *Body-mind psychotherapy: Principles, techniques, and practical applications*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Battiste, M., & Youngblood Henderson, J. (Sa'ke'j). (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon, SK: Purwich.
- Baker, D.G. (2001). Embodied pedagogy: Teaching as if bodies matter. *Conference Proceedings: Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education*.
- Culhane, D. (2005, March). *The door to Julia: Drugs, identity and embodied citizenship*. Paper presented at McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women 2004-2005 Seminar Series Gender Identity and Citizenship.
- Dei, G.S., Karumanchery, L.L., & Karumanchery-Luik. (2004). *Playing the race card: Exposing white power and privilege*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Dyck, N. (1991). *What is the Indian "problem"? Tutelage and resistance in Canadian Indian administration*. St. John's, NL: Memorial University Press.
- Fraser, N. (2001). Recognition without ethics. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18(2-3), 21-42.
- Halprin, A. (2001). *Dance as a healing art*. Mendocino, CA: Life Rhythm Books.
- HeavyRunner, I., & Morris, S.J. (1997). *Traditional Native culture and resilience*. Document published on the World Wide Web site of the College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. See also Native Resiliency Resource Centre: <http://www2.cce.umn.edu/nrrc/nativeamerican.shtml>
- Hogan, L. (1994). Department of the interior. In P. Foster (Ed.), *Minding the body: Women writers on body and soul* (pp. 159-174). New York: Anchor Doubleday.
- Ing, R.N. (2000). *Dealing with shame and unresolved trauma: Residential school and its impact on 2nd and 3rd generation adults*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Kelm, M.-E. (2001). *Colonizing bodies: Aboriginal health and healing in British Columbia 1900-50*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Martin-Baro, I. (1994). *Writings for a liberation psychology*. (A. Aaron & S. Corne, Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Niezen, R. (2000). *Spirit wars: Native North American religions in the age of nation building*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Oliver, K. (2001). *Witnessing: Beyond recognition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Paine, R. (Ed.). (1997). *The white Arctic: Anthropological articles on tutelage and ethnicity*. St. John's, NL: Memorial University of Newfoundland Press.
- Razack, S. (2000). Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: The murder of Pamela George. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 15(2), 91-130.
- Razack, S.H. (1998). *Looking white people in the eye: Gender, race and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. New York: Zed Books and University of Otago Press, New Zealand.

- Smith, L.T. (in press). On tricky ground: Researching the Native in the age of uncertainty. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Smith, R. (1999). *Resilience among American Indian Elders*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Minnesota, Duluth.
- Waldram, J.B., Herring, D.A., & Young, T.K. (1995). *Aboriginal health in Canada; Historical, cultural, and epidemiological perspectives*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Young-Ing, G. (2004). *Indigenous research methods project—EADM 508*. Unpublished manuscript, University of British Columbia.