

# Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Eurocentric Education

Marie Battiste

James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson

University of Saskatchewan

---

*Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is part of the collective genius of humanity of Indigenous peoples that exists in the context of their learning and knowing from the places where they have lived, hunted, explored, migrated, farmed, raised families, built communities, and survived for centuries despite sustained attacks on the peoples, their languages, and cultures. The primary source of IK is in Indigenous languages and teachings that make every child unique in his or her learning capacities, learning styles, and knowledge bases. In IK, learning is viewed as a sacred and holistic, as well as experiential, purposeful, relational, and a lifelong responsibility. Traditions, ceremonies, and daily observations are all integral parts of the learning process, allowing for spirit-connecting processes to enable the gifts, visions, and spirits to emerge in each person. The best approach to learning and understanding IK is in the dynamic linguistic foundations of Indigenous frameworks and paradigms. This article, then, seeks to center the intellectual activation of IK by the first generation of Indigenous scholars, professionals, and activities that have created the Indigenous renaissance. The article concludes by identifying some current promising practices that are seeking to naturalize IK in Canadian education through applications built on respectful and appropriate strategies.*

## *Animating Indigenous Knowledge*

The recognition and intellectual activation of IK today is a growing, purposeful, and political act of empowerment by Indigenous peoples. The task for Indigenous scholars and educators has been to affirm and activate holistic paradigms of Indigenous knowledge to reveal the wealth and richness of Indigenous languages, world views, teachings, and experiences, all of which have been systematically excluded from history, from contemporary educational institutions, and from Eurocentric knowledge (EK) systems. Through this act of intellectual self-determination, Indigenous academics are developing new syntheses and methodologies to decolonize themselves, their communities, and their institutions, as well as to bring about a blended trans-systemic synthesis in an educational context that respects and builds on both IK and EK (Blaut, 1993).

IK is a growing field of inquiry both nationally and internationally, particularly for those interested in educational innovation and problem-solving. It includes Indigenous science, arts, humanities, and legal traditions. Each manifestation reflects an ecologically centered way of life or expresses a sustainable humanity. Each is integral to the renewal and revitalization of IK. Together they are embodied in relationships, songs,

ceremonies, performances, symbols, dramatic representation, and works of art that animate the transmission of IK and authority from generation to generation. Their purpose is to maintain the integrity of the people and place and the cosmology.

EK has been constructed as the opposite of IK. Through its applications and teachings, it has long ignored, neglected, or rejected IK as primitive, barbaric, and inferior, centering and privileging European methodologies and perspectives. EK has long held the belief that only European consciousness counts as progress and that Indigenous peoples' consciousness was frozen in time. Consequently, IK and its internal perspectives have not been captured, understood, or stored systematically by EK traditions and conventional educational systems. Indeed, in most situations, reflected in the persistent and aggressive assimilation plans directed toward Indigenous peoples, EK has made concerted efforts in colonial powers forcefully to eliminate Aboriginal languages and heritages, which are the core foundations of IK.

Since the early 1970s, Indigenous scholars educated in Eurocentric postsecondary tertiary institutions have led an international and national decolonizing movement toward reversing this forced assimilation process in reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision (Battiste, 2000a, 200b). Their movement comes as a direct consequence of their extended experience with, and learning in, condescending Eurocentric educational systems. In attempting to restore Indigenous communities, Indigenous scholars discovered that when they tried to use EK to unravel the challenges faced by their people, they met with contradiction and failure. This led to their questioning and contesting the supremacy and utility of Eurocentric thought. In a quest to heal their nations and communities, Indigenous scholars and professionals have turned to IK and Elders to restore control over Indigenous development and capacity enhancement using Indigenous forms of their research and methodologies.

More significantly in the last two decades, Indigenous scholars, educators, professionals, and activists in Canada have been validating the importance, usefulness, and significance of IK, marked by an emerging query of IK among governments, international organizations, universities, scholars, and policymakers. This has generated an explosive growth in the number of publications on the relevance of IK in a variety of policy sectors and academic disciplines. Of significance was the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (Government of Canada, 1996) that unequivocally embraced the importance of IK in the reconciliation and renewal of relations with Aboriginal peoples. The new theoretical and methodological paradigms that have been created to understand IK have illustrated its role in creating shared capacities that can alleviate poverty and create sustainable development.

Today the literature animates the fundamental theory and methods of IK as a means to accord its protection and to raise its social value and its status as a system of knowledge, while Indigenous scholars generate the necessary intellectual space from EK to create a conceptual and analytical framework for its development. From Indigenous communities and Elders, the new revelations of IK and its pedagogies have generated a decolonizing and rethinking of education for Indigenous peoples. IK is far more than the binary opposite of EK. As a concept, IK benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory and methodologies, evidence, interpretation, and conclusions. It fills the ethical and knowledge gaps in Eurocentric education, research, and scholarship. By animating the voices and experiences of the cognitive *other* and integrating them into the educational process, it creates a new, balanced center and a fresh vantage point from which to enhance Indigenous communities' capacities. IK reconceptualizes the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples and underscores the importance of their own philosophies, heritages, and educational processes.

This same generational alliance has created a dynamic Indigenous diplomacy network that has protected IK and its categories in an impressive number of international laws and conventions and national constitutions (Henderson, 2008). Although most of these documents are written from Eurocentric perspectives, they establish international standards for respecting IK, representing inclusive processes that assert that Indigenous peoples voices and visions have been heard. The *Convention on Biological Diversity* (United Nations [UN], 1992), the *World Conference on Science for the Twenty-First Century: A New Commitment* (UNESCO, 1999), and the *Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous Peoples* (Weissner & Battiste, 2000) formulated principles and practices for respecting IK, Indigenous science, and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). These international documents that affirm the heritage of Indigenous people include "all kinds of scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge, including cultigens, medicines and the rational use of flora and fauna" (Daes, 1993, Section 12). They seek to protect IK from researchers, predators, and biopiracy.

The paradigm shift toward Indigenous humanities from Eurocentric humanities was generated in the UN system. Often these processes of Indigenous humanities of IK are understood as culture development or cultural diversity. In the *Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation*, UNESCO (1966) declared, "Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved" and "Every people has the right and duty to develop its culture." The Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (1998) confirmed how important it is to bring Indigenous and other cultures "in from the margins" and to the heart of policymaking for sustainable development. This

transformation required cultural policies about IK to be broadened, rethought, and revitalized. The driving question is not whether governments should adopt IK and humanities, but how they should do so more effectively.

The global consensus affirming IK is represented by the UN (2007) *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The *Declaration* united humanity, ending the divisive separation of Indigenous peoples from other peoples in international human rights law. It crystallized the rights of Indigenous peoples in international law, which have moved from absence to a normative status, to a "hardened norm," and finally to an established international legal regime. It affirmed that Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment as a collective or as individuals of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in international human rights law (Article 1). We are now seen to be free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination in the exercise of our rights, in particular, that based on our Indigenous origin or identity (Article 2). We have the right to self-determination, to pursue freely our social and cultural development (Article 3). We have the right to maintain and strengthen our distinct social and cultural institutions while retaining our right to participate fully if we so choose in the social and cultural life of the State (Article 5). We have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of our culture (Article 8).

The *Declaration* (UN, 2007) affirmed that Indigenous peoples have the right to IK. We have the international human right to establish and control our institutions, educational systems, and provide education in our own languages in a manner appropriate to our cultural methods of teaching and learning (Article 14). We have a right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations our "histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literature" (Article 13.1). We have "the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop our cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestation of our science, technologies and cultures" (Article 31). States cannot discriminate against Indigenous peoples' cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations in education (Articles 14.2 and 15), and in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, are required to take effective measures to provide education to Indigenous students in our own culture and language (Article 14.3). These rights constitute the "minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world" (Article 13). They are the standards of a decent society, but below the standards of a just society.

Indigenous perspectives are the internal perspectives of IK developed from Indigenous languages that help generate a new global consciousness linking Indigenous peoples, social justice, and sustainable development.

The notion of “blessed unrest” (Hawken, 2007) is about relationships with the land and peoples and their ability to build a consciousness that will be an integral source for a turning point or a tipping point of human consciousness about the earth: the ecological or green revolution. Neither IK nor the Indigenous perspectives is invoking a return to the past; rather they are a challenge to sustain knowledges, renew our understanding of our relationship with the natural world, reconnect to the spiritual dimension of being, and reshape the institutions and processes that shape our lives with our renewed understandings (Berry, 1999). These understandings are part of IK teaching about the ability to live well within the biological constraints of the surrounding life and its various processes. The teaching reveals the implicit underlying and interconnected order of a vulnerable biosphere. It has implicitly generated the largest cognitive transformation of humanity that states that every place matters and that the stewards of those lands, the Indigenous peoples, have values that will help sustain those spaces if they are allowed to thrive and flourish. It has nurtured a cascading global uprising, a movement of ideas, to reclaim basic human rights in relation to the earth. The vast movement attached to this uprising has overrun ideologies of EK, arising from personal insights but informing a collective knowledge. It has inspired a decolonization of knowledge and people searching for change in a postcolonial civilization and being dedicated to change. It has assisted human consciousness to restore, renew, and revitalize our connections to the place and peoples. In multiple sites IK allows peoples to confront despair, resignation, intolerance, racism, injustice, and power with momentum, conflict, spirit, and heart.

### *Enhancing the Indigenous Renaissance*

All these achievements have made the education of Indigenous peoples a highly contested terrain and their knowledge one of those contested issues. Social justice, equity, and antiracist education have inspired the first generation of Indigenous scholars and professionals to expose successfully the Eurocentric prejudices against IK and contribute to the activation of a renewed interest in IK in every Eurocentric discipline and profession. From their work with their communities and Elders, they are transforming their research into transformative writings that engage IK and seek respectful processes for continued engagement (Bastien, 2004; Smith, 1997, 1999). In addition, Indigenous lawyers in Canada are forcing the courts to accept concepts of Aboriginal law and legal traditions as foundations of Aboriginal and treaty rights and contributing to constitutionalizing these rights into the supreme law of Canada. In so doing they have displaced white supremacy with constitutional supremacy. Similarly, in the arts, sciences, and education, Indigenous scholars and professionals are animating these same concepts into Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy



to explore new ways of creating sustainable living. Their research and insights are unfolding the global Indigenous renaissance in education.

The Indigenous renaissance has deconstructed and discredited the traditional Eurocentric view of Indigenous peoples and their heritage as exotic objects that have nothing to do with knowledge, science, or progress. However, it has not displaced the educational empire of EK, which remains resistant to the Indigenous renaissance. Now EK competes with IK and a developing intellectual nexus of trans-systemic theories of knowledge that underscore the importance of IK and its perspectives. The immediate challenge in higher education is how to balance colonial legitimacy, authority, and disciplinary capacity with IK and pedagogies. Such rethinking of education from the perspective of IK animates the unfolding Indigenous renaissance, worldwide ecological movement, and trans-systemic synthesis.

#### *Identifying Promising Practices in IK and Aboriginal Learning*

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre (ABLKC) has been an important part of animating the Indigenous renaissance. Funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Skills Development, it was a national promising practice. The ABLKC acted as a catalyst for lifelong learning, promoting and supporting evidence-based decisions about learning throughout all stages of life from early childhood through to the senior years.

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre was co-led by the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan and the First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium in Calgary. It centered activities around six learning themes over the years 2005-2009: learning from place, nourishing the learning spirit, Aboriginal languages and learning, diverse educational systems, pedagogy of professions, and technology and learning. Each of these thematic bundles explored promising practices that incorporated the foundation principles of Aboriginal learning, these being learning from place, spirit, and language. ABLKC made nominations of selected promising practices from nominations to the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), which embody in one form or another the foundational learning principles:

- improves the learning of Aboriginal individuals (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) in various situations and respects diverse learning styles holistically based on their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical selves;
- legitimizes the voice of all Aboriginal people (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) through place and culture, including the circle of learning and respecting how one generation passes knowledge and culture on to other generations;
- encourages a transformative approach to learning that embraces IK, experience, and knowing while respecting mainstream

knowledge and experience, and includes both a formal and informal approach for learning programs that reach all ages;

- supports learning and community by linking and encouraging the involvement of parents, Elders, and community in order to build a successful learning continuum and healthy, resilient communities.

The CCL (2008) identified in *Sharing the Flame: Recognizing Excellence in Learning 2008* promising practices that honored “innovative and effective learning programs as part of our vision to be a catalyst for lifelong learning in Canada.” Although several educational programs not mentioned here are found promising, the identified programs in 2008 that have built on IK are as follows.

*Nunavut Master of Education: Leadership in Learning.*

This master’s program has the benefit of enhancing the leadership in education among Inuit in the North. In June 2009, a cohort of 21 Inuit women completed a program that was a cooperative adventure with the University of Prince Edward Island, St. Francis Xavier University, and the Nunavut Department of Education. Most notable was that this program was collaboratively designed to meet the professional needs of experienced Inuit educators by combining *Inuit Qaujimajatuqagit* (Inuit Traditional Knowledge) and Inuit languages with all the elements of the conventional graduate program. Incorporating Inuit Elders and distance and face-to-face courses with professors, the program made use of Inuit language and culture as primary elements of the program delivery.

*Mi’kmaq Studies/Integrative Science Program*

At Cape Breton University under the guidance of Mi’kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall and the leadership of Cheryl Bartlett, an accomplished biologist, the *Toqwa’tu’kl Kijijitaqnn*/Integrative Science Program brings together modern Western sciences and the Mi’kmaq conceptual world view in courses that are labeled *MSIT*, meaning everything together. These courses emphasize relationships in nature and acknowledge the profound knowledge of such relationships as they are reflected in Mi’kmaq language and legends. Course content is approximately 80-85% Eurocentric science and 15-20% Indigenous science. The program has graduated a cohort of Mi’kmaq students, many of whom are now progressing toward other science-related and health fields, illustrating the value of cultural content in assisting in Aboriginal learning (CCL, 2008).

*The Native Language Instructors’ Program (NLIP)*

This program grounded in “the foundational principles of place, spirit and Aboriginal language and represents an original and innovative approach to lifelong learning that embraces indigenous knowledge and Experience” resides in the Department of Aboriginal Education at Lakehead Universi-

ty. It offers a series of opportunities for developing fluent Native language for the speakers of Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, and Cree. In three summers away from their homes, the students, most of whom are employed in schools, adult learning, and other organizations, experience language and cultural camps with Elders, residences with Elders present, and Elders-in-residence, providing guidance, support, and cultural teachings and counsel to participants and their families. Graduates receive a Native Language Teachers Certification (NLTC), which entitles participants to teach their language; a Native-as-a-Second-Language Diploma, which provides opportunities for NLTC graduates to use their teaching skills; and a Native Language Summer Institute, where participants can expand their knowledge and become learners of their language (CCL, 2008).

The following educational programs were also identified from an online survey of promising programs among Aboriginal learners that represents a small sample of programs that emerged from the bundle *Nourishing the Learning Spirit*.

- *Igniting the Power Within*. First Nations and Métis organizations and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training funded by HRSD to focus on the need for Essential Skills (ES) and PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment Recognition) information and training for local first-point-of-contact advisors and counselors led to a partnership that became a Steering Committee, which created a vision and response called *Igniting the Power Within* (Levels I to IV) certification training (formed in 2004).
- *The Little Tots*. The Kapachee Training Centre of Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, houses the Little Tots program and was incorporated as a nonprofit, community-based educational organization in 1977. The program began in the fall of 1996 and is funded by a Canadian Action Plan for Children grant through the Public Safety Agency of Canada with its target group being Aboriginal and occasionally non-Aboriginal children aged 3-6 years.
- *The Cree Language Bi-Lingual Program*. The Cree Language Bi-lingual Program, through the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS), Saskatchewan, provides culturally relevant instruction in Cree. Kindergarten and grade 1 classes receive bilingual language instruction at St. Francis Community School. The same instructor teaches bilingual language instruction for grades 10-12 at Oskyak High School.
- *Restitution Self-Discipline Program at Princess Alexandra Community School*. In 2002, the principal of Princess Alexandra Community School, Saskatoon Public Schools, Saskatchewan, implemented a system of schoolwide restitution training emphasizing decision-making by consensus and individual accountability.



- *Seven Generations Education Institute Culture Camps*. These camps complement K-12 academic and cultural needs for Anishinaabe and non-Anishinaabe children and youth as identified by community members in northwest Ontario communities. Camps are held several times a year and are founded on traditional teachings such as connection to one's environment and hunting and trapping.
- *Andaa Wiinjigewin*. This is a master's program offered by the Seven Generations Education Institute in Fort Francis, Ontario. Applicants to the program must be of Anishinaabe background, hold an undergraduate degree in a field related to Indigenous knowledges and philosophies, and submit a personal profile demonstrating health in tandem with the stages of the Medicine Wheel.
- *Stardale Women's Group Inc. Foundation*. This is a learning and healing center for Aboriginal women and women of poverty. Developed by the Stardale Women's Group Inc. Foundation, the Center opened its doors for service in Melfort in 1998 and serves the communities in northern Saskatchewan as a nonprofit organization and registered charity.
- *Mino Bimaadiziwin: Touching the Sky ("The Challenge")*. Students and staff at Southeast Collegiate, an all-Aboriginal school in northern Manitoba, initiated an approach to overcome dependencies that became known as The Challenge. In 2007, the students and staff produced a documentary about The Challenge that aired on CBC and won the 2008 Best of Fest Award at the Weeneebeg Aboriginal Film and Video Festival. Their Web site describes their program, which is still in development.

### *Conclusions*

IK is foundational to learning for Aboriginal people and is a part of the collective genius of humanity. The dynamic linguistic foundations of Aboriginal languages reveal the deep cognitive structures of IK peoples' world views and philosophies and so offer an invaluable resource for naturalizing IK, as do symbolic and ceremonial aspects of IP's experience. Although global consensus of the value of IK is growing in international organizations and law, it is yet to be realized in a concerted way in learning programs in Canada except through the dedicated efforts of Elders, community leaders, and professionals. We know that when IK is naturalized in educational programs, the learning spirit is nurtured and animated. Individually and collectively, Aboriginal people are able to decolonize themselves, their communities, and institutions, leading to transformation and change; and everyone benefits. Indeed, naturalizing IK creates potential for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in trans-systemic ways that EK alone cannot do.

The key principles of promising programs, practices, and policies based on naturalizing IK and unlocking the potential and enhancing the capacity of Aboriginal learners in many situations are as follows.

1. IK is a necessary foundation for education, especially of education of Aboriginal peoples from which relevance, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility evolve in lifelong learning.
2. Racism, colonialism, assumptions of the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples, and the superiority of others continue to plague education; learning antiracist and anti-oppressive pedagogy can begin to neutralize these negative effects. However, only by naturalizing IK in the education system and understanding the rights of Indigenous peoples can positive empowerment take place for Aboriginal learners and their communities.
3. Aboriginal people of Canada have their own IK—epistemology and pedagogies—as have been identified and constitutionally protected as an Aboriginal right. Aboriginal epistemology is found in languages, philosophies, histories, ceremonies, and stories as ways of knowing.
4. Preparation for teaching IK and languages is the most pressing issue for professionals in educational institutions. They will need to decolonize educational practices, a process that includes raising and legitimizing the collective voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, exposing the injustices in colonial history and deconstructing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic, and historical reasons for silencing Aboriginal voices (past and present). By recognizing the dynamic context of knowledge and knowing, and by communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate, teachers and learners can create positive spaces where they can both learn and grow.
5. Comprehending Indigenous languages, their structure, translations, and speaking are central and irreplaceable resources to how IK can be acquired and learned. This is more than learning to speak or read in an Aboriginal language, but learning from the perspectives of the peoples who speak these languages.
6. Learning from place is how Indigenous peoples mark their knowing, and learning through visiting, remembering stories that entertain and teach, recalling events as markers of history, and providing continuity in learning and identity. The long-term ecological history of the land is a cloth woven from the threads of stories and ceremonies provided by many members of the community. It teaches natural laws that are central to our relationship with all life and to our physical and spiritual survival.
7. Indigenous peoples' communities are relational structures of kinship that are core to learning through life for they integrate the founda-

tions of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility that all community members are taught to achieve. To become human beings, they must be continually engaged in all the structures and systems of learning from the parents, the Elders, the leadership, and the community organizations.

8. The Indigenous perspective is the internal perspective of IK, developed from Indigenous languages and being in place and is significant in naturalizing IK. It must be the cornerstone for bringing IK to educational practice. IK is not an *add and stir* method of cultural topics, but rather a foundational learning process that draws on a particular perspective of holism, recognizing the interrelated and holistic nature of one's place in the universe and the historical links to Indigenous peoples.
9. Learning IK in schools must be consistent with customary protocols for learning and teaching so that teachers, administrators, and others on staff can develop respectful relations in their communities. Learning by following appropriate and consensual protocols allows teachers to enter into, comprehend, respect, and animate the multiple layers of IK.
10. Elders, knowledge-keepers, and cultural workers are indispensable to the process of appropriately naturalizing IK and Aboriginal language education in schools and in teacher-training institutions. The preparations, ceremonies, and rituals required by Aboriginal pedagogy are essential for learning.

Few professional schools, universities, or educational systems across Canada have made naturalization of IK a priority in their EK curricula. Their primary pedagogy remains the assimilation of EK to Aboriginal students. Despite this trend, naturalizing IK is important in pockets of various schools, universities, and educational systems mainly through the efforts of Indigenous professionals and scholars and their allies.

Although as yet no full system of learning can be identified as promising in naturalizing Indigenous knowledge in a trans-systemic knowledge system, the ABLKC Bundles have identified the following key characteristics in programs that focus on naturalizing IK in Aboriginal learning.

1. Many existing promising Aboriginal programs have been developed as alternative programs to respond to the gaps and needs of Aboriginal students in EK systems of elite colonial institutions or are in self-governing Indigenous institutions. They exist to remove or ameliorate barriers in responding to Aboriginal students' needs for flexibility, ladderized transformative programs, and genuine relationship-building, as well as developing receptivity to IK or heritage or the necessity of social transformation.
2. Promising practices are community-based, thus providing a necessary foundation for the inclusion of relevant Aboriginal perspectives

and community capacity while enhancing the same through demystifying EK and conventional processes. Although IK is included, these programs are still experimenting with and acknowledging the difficulties of making IK fully functional in their systems.

3. Promising practices in IK have succeeded by working from the core of the needs and aspirations of the immediate student and her or his heritage. Thus they validate IK and its relations to the person. They do not treat the students as a commodity, but as important members of a community. They affirm diverse learning strategies that arise from students' financial and family circumstances, sex, and age. They affirm the need for unity and solidarity among students and educators and the need for recognition of differences and diversity.
4. The heart and soul of these programs is a healing process of genuine caring about and sensitivity to the students, their heritage, and the knowledge that they come with and that they need to continue to learn. Because their history has been marked by omission, disparagement, or false characterizations, Aboriginal peoples are the self-conscious underclass of Canada contained by false concepts of race, deficits, and dependencies generated by EK. Haunted by their loss or erosion of Aboriginal languages, traditions, and cultures, Aboriginal people need IK to be acknowledged, affirmed, and animated in their programs to give learners a place where they can be nourished and can learn and develop.
5. Promising programs meet learners where they are, move them toward the skills they need to survive in a school's formal and hidden curriculum, and then raise them to the next level of learning whether this be institutional, trades, professional, or next skill/capacity-building. This leads to students' continual rebirth and renewal to meet their aspirations and needs and in turn strengthens the capacity of their families and communities.

Contemporary Canadian education systems will have to reconcile IK with EK. This is a constitutional requirement as well as a promising practice. This task of naturalizing IK in EK to create a trans-systemic synthesis in education is a difficult and arduous journey. Aboriginal people like Indigenous peoples have already started this synthesis from the perspectives and methodologies of IK. However, at present no fully functional college or university exists that responds fully to Aboriginal learners. For the most part, they still must respond to structures that have the potential to resist IK such as institutional autonomy; academic freedom of the privileged faculty; and collegial forms of academic and/or professional self-governance that institute rules, regulations, and conditions that limit ways of learning and knowing. Few EK-dominated education systems in Canada are attempting such a reconciliation or creating a trans-systemic synthesis of the two distinct but complementary know-

ledge systems. This is the transformation that is long overdue, urgent, and necessary.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and the Canadian Council on Learning, which provided the funds for the foundation of this article. The article draws from the summative work of the Bundle Leads, Marie Battiste (Nourishing the Learning Bundle), Youngblood (Sa'ke'j) Henderson (Pedagogy of Professions), and the contributions of findings made through round-table exchanges with Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavyhead (Learning From Place) and Leona Makosis (Aboriginal Languages and Learning) and a team of scholars from Blue Quills Community College, Alberta.

#### References

- Andaa Wiinjigewin. Retrieved January 24, 2010, from:  
<http://www.7generations.org/Published%20Material/Andaa%20Wiinjigewin.pdf>
- Bastien, B. (2004). *Blackfoot ways of knowing: The worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi*. J. Kremer (Ed.), *With language consultation by D. Mistaken Chief*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.
- Battiste, M. (Ed.). (2000a). *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M. (2000b). Maintaining Aboriginal identity, language, and culture in modern society. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 192-208). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Berry, T. (1999). *The great work: Our way into the future*. New York: Bell Tower.
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2008). *Celebrating effective learning practices*. Retrieved January 24, 2010, from:  
[http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/Events/SharingFlameIdeaBook07\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/Events/SharingFlameIdeaBook07_Eng.pdf)
- Blaut, J.M. (1993). *The colonizer's model of the world: Geographical diffusionism and Eurocentric history*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Daes, E.I. (1993, February). *Study on the protection of the cultural and intellectual property rights of Indigenous peoples*. Paper presented at the sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Commission on Human Rights, United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- Government of Canada. (1998). *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996*. Retrieved July 2008 from: [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html)
- Hawken, P. (2007). *Blessed unrest: How the largest movement in the world came into being, and why no one saw it coming*. New York: Viking.
- Henderson, J. [Sa'ke'j] Y. (2008). *Indigenous diplomacy and the rights of peoples: Achieving United Nations recognition*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich.
- Igniting the power within*. Retrieved January 24, 2010, from:  
<http://www.ignitingthepowerwithin.ca/>
- Smith, G.H. (1997). *Kaupapa Maori: Theory and praxis*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland.
- Smith, L.-T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Indigenous peoples and research*. London: Zed Books.
- Stardale Women's Group Inc. Foundation. (2010). Available: <http://www.nald.ca/Stardale/>
- Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development. (1998).
- United Nations. (1992). *Convention on biodiversity*. CBD I.L.M.818. Available:  
<http://www.cbd.int/convention/>
- United Nations. (2007). *Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples*. UN Doc. A/61/L.67.
- UNESCO. (1996). *Declaration of the principles of international cultural co-operation*. (1996). Available: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/n\\_decl.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/n_decl.htm)
- UNESCO. (1999). *World conference on science for the twenty-first century: A new commitment*. Available: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001207/120706e.pdf>



Weissner, S., & Battiste, M. (2000). The 2000 revision of the United Nations draft principles and guidelines on the protection of the heritage of Indigenous people. *St. Thomas Law Review*, 13, 383-414.