

# Editorial: Awakening the Spirit: Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization through Land, Water, and Sky

*Jo-ann Archibald, Q'um Q'um Xiiem*  
*University of British Columbia*

*Shelly Johnson, Mukwa Musayett*  
*Thompson Rivers University*

*Corrina Sparrow*  
*Musqueam Indian Band*

*Andrea Lyall, Tłalillogwa*  
*University of British Columbia*

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This volume of the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (CJNE) is co-edited by the research team of the four-year research project *Awakening the Spirit: Revitalization of Canoeing in Musqueam*. A conference, *Awakening the Spirit: Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization through Land, Water, and Sky*, was held on the unceded and occupied territory of the x̣ʷməθkʷəỵəm (Musqueam) People in Vancouver, British Columbia in October 2017, which served as a culminating project activity for this research project. The x̣ʷməθkʷəỵəm community and research team hosted 200 participants from across Canada, the United States, Europe, and New Zealand. This inspirational two-day conference addressed the following themes and sub-themes:

*Theme One: Culture and Language Revitalization in Coast Salish Communities*

- Revitalizing and strengthening cultural practices in Coast Salish communities;
- Coast Salish ways of teaching cultural revitalization through land, water, and sky;
- Coast Salish youth, Elder, LGBTIQ-2S engagement in cultural revitalization; and
- Indigenous leadership in Coast Salish culture and language revitalization.

*Theme Two: Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization in Provincial, National, International, and Academic Partnerships*

- Revitalizing and maintaining cultural practices as well as student learning and engagement through Indigenous community and university partnerships;
- Intergenerational transmission, knowledge creation, and revitalization of Indigenous cultural practices through land, water, and sky;
- Language documentation and revitalization with Indigenous communities;
- Engaging and centering Indigenous youth and/or Elders in cultural and language revitalization work; and
- Interdisciplinary research that investigates the continuity, maintenance, and revitalization of Indigenous culture and language.

After the conference, the editors of this CJNE 2019 theme volume sent out an open call for research articles, reflective stories, or critical essays that addressed some aspect of the two aforementioned themes. The overall theme of *Awakening the Spirit: Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization through Land, Water, and Sky* speaks to the intimate relationships and holistic connections amongst nature, Indigenous knowledge systems, humans, and more-than-humans. This theme is particularly relevant to the editorial group.

Next, we introduce ourselves and share our perspectives about the journal theme, followed by the chapter summaries and editorial conclusion.

In 2017, **Jo-ann Archibald**, *Q'um Q'um Xiim*, from Stó:lō and St'at'imc First Nations in British Columbia, retired from her University of British Columbia (UBC) positions as professor, associate dean for Indigenous education, and director of UBC's Indigenous Teacher Education Program-NITEP. She grew up in the Stó:lō area and has great affinity and respect for the rivers and water systems; Stó:lō means river. Her Indigenous name, *Q'um Q'um Xiim*, means *strong clear water*. Water is a core part of her cultural identity. But so, too, are the mountains, land, and forests. *Q'um Q'um Xiim's* inner spirit has not only been awakened but has been strengthened and fed through the critical work of Indigenous educators, Indigenous cultural knowledge holders, and allies. The teachings that come from the land, water, and sky continue to be valuable sources of sustenance if we humans create respectful, responsible, reverential, and reciprocal educational and research spaces for them.

**Shelly Johnson**, *Mukwa Musayett*, is Saulteaux (Plains Ojibway, Bear Clan), and an Anishinaabekwe from the Treaty 4 territory in east-central

Saskatchewan. After a 24-year career in social work and eight years as an academic at the University of Victoria (UVIC), Thompson Rivers University (TRU), and UBC, in 2017 Shelly became the first Canada Research Chair in Indigenizing higher education and an associate professor in education at TRU. Her Saulteaux name, *Mukwa Musayett*, means *I'm walking with bears* and is reflective of her Bear Clan membership. Traditional teachings are that Bear Clan members are the organizers and leaders of warriors, as well as the teachers. Their responsibilities also include maintaining and keeping the stories of the clans intact. Shelly's organizational, storytelling, and academic responsibilities help to bring the teachings gained from spirit, land, water, and sky into research and teaching spaces for the benefit of future generations.

**Corrina Sparrow** belongs to x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm and Qualicum Nations, and also has familial ties to the Netherlands. Corrina currently serves as social development manager at Musqueam Indian Band and has a role in leading its community wellness division. Having been a helper in Coast Salish communities for almost 18 years in different capacities, Corrina has had the honour to witness remarkable examples of love, strength, and resiliency of Indigenous children and families. Corrina believes the greatest source of this strength and grounding comes from Indigenous cultural teachings and values, relationality to each other, and to the land, water, and spirit realms. The theme for this journal is so relevant and timely as Indigenous societies continue to work tirelessly to awaken and disseminate these ancestral knowledges, and to draw from Indigenous innovation systems to improve outcomes for children and families, now and in future.

**Andrea Lyall**, *Tlalillogwa*, is a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia and a professional forester. She loves being on the water since her ancestral name, *Tlalillogwa*, from the Dzawada'enuxw Nation, is the image of a whale cresting the water's surface. In these articles, *Tlalillogwa* read about the *concerted* efforts by community members and academics to relearn, reintroduce, and to continue intergenerational teachings about cultural and language revitalization. It often takes more time and work than one would initially expect to wake up Indigenous knowledges but this process is also very meaningful, rewarding, and essential for the survival of Indigenous languages, cultures, and livelihoods.

#### *Article Summaries*

This thematic CJNE volume uses a geographical structure for its nine articles to honour the land, water, and sky which inspired the authors' research and reflective scholarship. Because the revitalization of canoeing research project and international conference, *Awakening the Spirit: Indige-*

nous Culture and Language Revitalization through Land, Water, and Sky, took place in the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm community, we begin with work from and on Coast Salish First Peoples' ancestral and unceded territories. Next are the articles from other regions in British Columbia, Nunavik/Northern Quebec and Ontario. The international context concludes this CJNE volume with one article based in the United States and the other located in both Canada and Kenya.

In *Pulling Together in an Indigenous Cultural Revitalization Canoe: Indigenous Women's Water and Land-Based Research Methodologies in Action*, Shelly Johnson, Mukwa Musayett, and Corrina Sparrow present an Indigenous community-based research project in partnership with two universities in British Columbia. They include the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm community based in the Vancouver area, the University of British Columbia-Vancouver campus, and Thompson Rivers University. The research project adapted an existing x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm community plan that became its theoretical framework. The authors tell the story of transforming a 350-year-old red cedar log into an eight-person canoe to revitalize canoeing in this community. Youth, Elders, family members, canoe carvers, community leaders, and university researchers learned and worked together to develop community and university protocols, ceremonies, policies, canoe-related processes, gatherings, and learning opportunities throughout the four-year project.

The article, *Decolonizing Framework for Land-Based Pedagogies*, by Alanah Young Leon, Wilson Mendes, and Eduardo Jovel, describes the chronology, decolonizing pedagogies, and educational programs of an urban Indigenous garden at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus, which is located on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional lands of the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵəm People. A partnership amongst Indigenous Elders, community Knowledge Holders, and university faculty and students formed the Medicine Collective. A land-based decolonizing pedagogical framework that honours, negotiates, develops, and carries out both local and other Indigenous protocols and Indigenous knowledge systems for the learning activities of the Indigenous garden is presented.

Vicki Kelly, Paula Rosehart, Gabriel George, Angela George, Lori Vileneuve, and Ramona Elke, in their article *From Reconciliation towards Indigenous Cultural Resurgence: A Métissage on the Co-Imagining of Staʔəlnamət and Stel nūmut*, weave together threads of narrative to highlight different experiences of collaboration, relationship building, and reconciliation efforts made between a university, Indigenous communities, and school districts. Co-written by representatives from Simon Fraser University, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and teacher-learners, the authors demonstrate a co-creation process of a

new graduate program. Indigenous participatory pedagogies and interdisciplinary learning opportunities made available to faculty, students, and intergenerational community members are innovative aspects of this new program.

Sereana Naepi's article, *Knowledge Making: Indigenous Undergraduate Research as Cultural and Language Revitalization*, describes how the Knowledge Makers Program (KMP) at Thompson Rivers University contributes to the Indigenization of the academy through an Indigenous undergraduate research program that values Indigenous languages and cultures. Building on similar initiatives in New Zealand, the KMP seeks to increase Indigenous student engagement in research opportunities, and builds Indigenous student capability and capacity for research and knowledge mobilization to make incremental institutional change.

Michelle LaFlamme, in *On Grizzlies and Gratitude: Nuxalk College Reflection*, shares her personal reflective story of her university teaching experiences in the semi-isolated First Nations community of Bella Coola, British Columbia. The partnership between this community and two post-secondary institutions, the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the University of the Fraser Valley, led to offering an Indigenous literature course in the community. In LaFlamme's pedagogical narrative, decolonizing and Indigenizing approaches go hand in hand. LaFlamme as an instructor shares examples of classroom pedagogy based on Indigenous ways of learning, ceremony, sharing, and caring that create students' critical engagement and learning success with the course material.

The article by Jrene Rahm, Pierre Desrosiers, Jessica Kotierk, and Tommy Weetaluktuk, *Sivunitsatinnut ilinniapunga (For our future, I go to school): A Description of an Archaeology Field School and Photo Exhibit Project in Nunavik, Northern Quebec*, describes the development and outcome of an Indigenous community and university partnership. In partnership, the Avataq Cultural Institute, the Inuit community of Akulivik, Nunavik, and the Université de Montréal offered an archaeological field school for Inuit youth in Akulivik, Nunavik. A photo exhibit of Inuit youths' experiences with the field school was shown in the community and in Montreal, Quebec. The youth selected the photos and their perspectives were presented in Inuktitut, English, and French. This case study shows the benefits of giving a voice to the participating youth; facilitating intergenerational relationships between Elders, families, and youth; reclaiming Inuit ways of being, knowing, and becoming through being on the land; and bringing the school, community, and university together in meaningful ways.

Bonnie Freeman and Trish Van Katwyk, in *Testing the Waters: Engaging the Tekéni Teyohà:ke Kahswénhtake/Two Row Wampum into a Research Paradigm*,

use a critical ethnography partnership framework in the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and language between a Haudenosaunee community, academic institutions, and Indigenous/non-Indigenous researchers. It considers the Two Row Wampum Treaty and its meaning during a commemorative three-day canoe journey on the Grand River in 2016. The authors posit that an Indigenous research paradigm is spiritually based and connected to the land and natural environment. Lessons learned in the process draw on the principles of the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace that seeks to bring diverse nations together for cooperation, collaboration, and mutual well-being.

The article, *Weaving Words: Conceptualizing Language Reclamation through a Culturally-Significant Metaphor*, by Kari A. B. Chew demonstrates the significance of involving Indigenous societies in formal language reclamation efforts and research. As a Chickasaw person, the author draws from personal experiences as well as Indigenous theory and Chickasaw nation-based methodology to provide a framework to explore opportunities for long term Indigenous language continuation. By also examining internal/external influences that may hinder this process, the author highlights meaningful pathways for Indigenous communities and researchers to navigate their own journeys towards language reclamation.

Andrea Lyall and Kendi Borona, in *Indigenous People-Forest Relationships, Cultural Continuity, and Remobilization Using Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Case Study of Kenya and Canada*, developed a case study involving their two countries of Canada and Kenya. This international case study demonstrates the dynamic relationships among Indigenous Peoples and their forests, lands, and Indigenous knowledge systems. Both sites share Indigenous community members' perspectives and stories about the struggles and goals for sovereignty within conservation and resource-based policy frameworks. The impact of colonization, power issues with governments, and displacement of Indigenous Peoples' and their lands are common to both countries. The cooperative efforts between both Indigenous scholars to share their respective country's history about forest-land tensions and the promise of Indigenous knowledge systems to shape future forest policies demonstrate the importance of creating international alliances.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The co-editors of this CJNE volume are inspired by the range and depth of the nine articles that address the theme *Awakening the Spirit: Indigenous Culture and Language Revitalization through Land, Water, and Sky*. In Coast Salish tradition, we raise our hands in thanks and respect to the authors and the

many reviewers who contributed their knowledge, expertise, and effort to make this CJNE volume an excellent one. We have learned more about community-based research, community and university partnerships, and ensuring that Indigenous knowledge systems guide the revitalization of Indigenous culture and language, as well as pedagogy.

Community-based research with many diverse Indigenous Nations in Canada, the United States, and Kenya show how local Indigenous knowledge of land, water, and sky guide research ethics, theory, methodology, pedagogy, and policy. The authors of this volume developed respectful and responsible research relationships with Indigenous community members, Elders, cultural knowledge holders, and youth, all of which took additional time than originally planned. In these articles, Indigenous community members and leadership demonstrate their long-term commitment to culture and language revitalization through sharing cultural knowledge, carrying out significant ceremonies, providing additional funding, and allocating precious land resources to various projects.

University and community partnerships for both research and educational purposes emphasize the goals of revitalizing Indigenous practices such as canoeing, language reclamation, forest usage, and sparking learners' educational experiences in Indigenous archaeology, Indigenous gardens, Indigenous literature, and Indigenous undergraduate and graduate research. These projects also address the tensions and continuing impact of colonization on Indigenous Peoples and their connections to land, water, and sky. Transformation of policies, programs, and practices at all levels of education and in various disciplines are occurring or are implicated in these articles.

Indigenous research has a critical role in the development of capacity and capability to effect change in both Indigenous communities and the academy. Relationships between researchers and communities can be strengthened and tested throughout the research process, whether the relationships are long-term or new. There is much to learn from the inclusion and consideration of diverse traditional Indigenous teachings within contemporary research practices, and how outcomes shapeshift and change when they are transplanted from one to the other to create new knowledge.

It is wonderful to see so many Indigenous societies and community members applying ancestral innovation and knowledge systems from their own territories to benefit cultural revitalization, reclamation, and resurgence efforts. It is also encouraging to see academic institutions and faculty members continuing to seek how to partner with Indigenous Nations on formal research projects in relevant and meaningful ways, and that benefit the community members directly. Together, this provides the potential to

transform research relationships and outcomes between Indigenous people and academic institutions in the future.

At the same time, we acknowledge the tensions, challenges, and issues that confront those who are involved in Indigenous research. The authors have shared difficulties related to the intergenerational impact of colonial laws, policies, and practices: the continuing need to include decolonization approaches, while at the same time ensuring that Indigenous knowledge systems are not overshadowed by decolonizing considerations. We also acknowledge and appreciate that the Indigenous teachings embedded in the land, water, and sky still exist and can awaken our spirits, if we let them.