

## Call for Papers



*Canadian Journal of Native Education*

### Spring/Summer 2003 Theme Edition Advancing Aboriginal Languages and Literacy

The First Nations House of Learning, UBC, is pleased to announce a cooperative editorship for the Spring/Summer 2003 CJNE theme edition with

Jo-ann Archibald, University of British Columbia  
Eileen Antone, OISE, University of Toronto  
Heather Blair, University of Alberta

We encourage Aboriginal/Indigenous educators and community language and literacy educators to contribute articles that focus on advancing Aboriginal languages and literacy. Submissions may include both language and literacy as topics or may emphasize only one of the topics. Submissions that examine either local or global contexts will be considered.

We are interested in Aboriginal/Indigenous perspectives and culturally appropriate ways of thinking, teaching, and learning. We want to hear about innovative research, programs, strategies, and efforts that advance Aboriginal languages and literacy development. For example, how do literacy training programs use holistic approaches to learning? Submissions may be presented as stories, vignettes, reflections, critical essays, and research articles.

Please send 4 titled hard copies with abstract (1 with name, contact address info; 3 without for blind review) to:

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CJNE uses APA style (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th edition). Submissions should be no longer than 6,250 words in length.

Deadline: September 15, 2002

## Editorial Self-as-Relationship in Indigenous Research

*Stan Wilson*  
*University of Alberta*

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When our grandson was born in Australia, my mother, who lives on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, was concerned about what would happen to her great-grandson's umbilical cord. Her concern was not allayed until our son Shawn and his wife Helen assured her that the cord would be brought back to Canada and buried appropriately on our reserve. Her worries about this were over only after we conducted a ceremonial burial of the cord in a special place near our home. The same concern was expressed when our granddaughter was born in Edmonton. Our son Jamie and his wife Kristen kept the cord and placenta for a ceremonial burial on the reserve.

Indigenous people's sense of self is planted and rooted in the land. The sacred bond with the land is more substantial than a propertied relationship and entails responsibility to all living forms that are sustained from the soil: grasses, medicinal plants, fruit bushes and trees, insects that live off the plants, birds that in turn eat the insects, four-leggeds that forage on the grasses and hedges, and animal hunters that prey on smaller animals. As an Aboriginal person I am constituted by my individual self and by my ancestors and future generations, who will originate in and have returned to the land. My relationship to the grass, to the trees, to the insects, to the birds, and even to the hunter animals derives from the fact that my ancestors now are part of the ground. Because the life surrounding me is part of me through my ancestors, I must consider and care for all its constituents.

The (literally) grounded identity of Indigenous peoples differs strikingly from the "floating" identity of African-Canadian youth as described by Kelly (2002). Rasmussen (in this issue) also discusses this identity that seems to attach itself to concepts and ideologies rather than to place. The identity of Indigenous peoples, whose concept of self is rooted in the context of community and place, differs strikingly from the identity of many Euro-Canadians whose concept of self is frequently encapsulated in independence of the individual. The self-as-relationship of Indigenous people, who understand themselves as constituted by their relationships with all living things, extends beyond the self-in-relation (italics mine) described by some feminist developmental theorists (Surrey, 1985), who understand self as constituted by the relationships between people. The self-concept of Indigenous people may be closest to that of many Asian people, whose identity is rooted in the Confucian notion that there is a small self and a bigger self that is devoid of individuality (Pedersen, 2000). Citing Ho (1991), Pedersen reminds us that our relational responsibilities require that we incorporate reciprocity, inter-

dependence, and interrelatedness between individuals into our research methodologies.

Like all living creatures, we as Indigenous people are sustained by our connection to the land. Many of us include all other living organisms and entities as part of our identity. I know Aboriginal people who refer to themselves as a squirrel, a hawk, a bear, and thunder being. These labels are not simply names they use to identify their individual characteristics or personalities; rather, at different times they have identified themselves as those beings. This self-recognition enables us to understand where and how we belong to this world, and it has the profound effect of ensuring that wherever we may happen to be at any given time, alone or in the company of other people, we do not feel alone. This knowledge nourishes us.

Those who suggest that Aboriginal people experience an identity crisis may be right in some sense. Many Aboriginal people may be trying to negotiate and reconcile the differences between their notion of self-as-relationship and the Western individuated notion of self. Those who recognize this difference and accept it without trying to make it an either-or conflict are freed from that struggle.

#### References

- Kelly, J. (2002, February 8). *Presentation at the Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton.*
- Pedersen, P.B. (2000). *Hidden messages: In culture-centered counseling.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Surrey, J. (1985). *The "self-in-relation": A theory of women's development.* Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, Wellesley Center for Women.

## Eulogy for Cathy Sewell (1962-2001)

Cathy was a contemporary warrior. With a drum in one hand and a computer in another, she sang, she wrote, and she spoke to effect change and empowerment for her people. As the President of the Aboriginal Student Council at the University of Alberta, or as the Education Director of the Confederacy of Treaty Six, Community Relations Coordinator and recruiter at the Office of Native Student services, or as a regional leader and mentor for the American Indian Sciences and Engineering Society, Cathy sought and made changes to improve conditions for Aboriginal students.

She left home at 18 to make her way in the world, and in her short time here she managed to pack several lifetimes into those two decades. With the superior music training she received from Grant MacEwan Community College, coupled with her incredible talent, she and Cheryl Seeweepagaham formed Canada's first Aboriginal women's a cappella ensemble *Asani*. They took people and places by storm. They were and still are sought after. They performed for heads of state and at national and international conferences and conventions. They performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City, South Africa, and at the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education in Hilo, Hawaii.

Meanwhile, as if the challenge of making music with *Asani* was not enough, she sought higher education with equal gusto. She attended the University of Alberta from 1991 to 1996 and earned her bachelor's degree in Native studies with a minor in linguistics. She then went on to study for her master's in international intercultural education. And as if that was not enough, Cathy was a compassionate teacher and educator. She taught Introduction to Native Studies for three years in the School of Native Studies in the University of Alberta. She co-developed the first and only course in Canada on contemporary Indigenous women's music.

Cathy believed that answers to Aboriginal social issues lay in the combination of education and the foundation of culture. She believed that education had to be a two-way street. In one way Aboriginal people needed to utilize the tools found in education to build their communities and reempower themselves by implementing their own cultures into a traditional, yet contemporary framework. The other way was to educate non-Aboriginal people about the traditions and contributions of Aboriginal people to Canada and the world.

Using education as a process of enlightenment, Cathy saw that there was a way to make real changes and to bring Aboriginal people into real changes and to bring Aboriginal people into real partnership and relevance with all Canadians. Cathy pursued this goal in all she did. When you were with her, she came at you from everywhere. Her drum brought thunder. Her voice was a melody of joy. Her intellect challenged you to think and to become aware of who you are. Cathy was a singer, writer, scholar, educator, leader, organizer, and a warrior. We miss her, but are better for knowing who she was and have benefited from what she did.

*Lewis Cardinal*