Sacred Pain in Indigenous Metaphysics Dancing Towards Cosmological Reconciliations

Cash Ahenakew

Dr. Cash Ahenakew is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia and a nominee for the Tier II CRC in Indigenous People's Well-Being. Cash is Plains Cree and an Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation member with a ceremonial name of "pii tai poo taa" (flying eagle). This positionality informs an interdisciplinary program of research in the areas of Indigenous education, pedagogy, methodology, and health and well-being.

A Few Thoughts on Sacred Pain

I'd like to start by acknowledging the Indigenous peoples, communities, and lands of the Treaty 6 region. A while ago, my uncle Edward Ahenakew traced our family tree. I found that my great grandmother was Ellen Ermineskin who is Chief Ermineskin's daughter. So, I feel I've arrived back home in many ways. So, thank you. It's an honour to be in your presence today, as well in the presence of the ancestors around us.

This article starts with a paradox related to, on the one hand, our political and material necessity to survive and thrive, as Indigenous peoples, in modern societies and, at the same time, on the other hand, the existential necessity to offer an alternative to ways of being grounded in modern capitalism. This paradox is replayed in many Indigenous peoples' struggles within formal schooling. We engage in political-historical relationships and struggles, marked by labels of colonizers and colonized, and much involuntary pain marked by theft, deceit, and broken promises that have resulted in widespread Indigenous dispossession, destitution, and cultural genocide. We thread a long and painful journey when we choose an academic pathway. This is often a journey of perseverance, of understanding subjugation intellectually, at the same time that this subjugation is continuously reinscripted in our bodies through participation in Western knowledge production. The inclusion of Indigenous people is often conditional: if we deviate too much from the expected scripts, the space of inclusion becomes very sour (Ahenakew, 2016; Ahenakew & Naepi, 2015); at the same time, this is the work to be done.

On the other hand, we also, sometimes, ask deeper existential questions that draw attention to the ultimate reality of inter-connections beyond human-defined identities, linear time, or embodied existence: who

are we in relation to each other? Who are we in relation to the land, the sky, and everything in between? What are our responsibilities to those who have come before and those yet to come, human and non-human? What have we learned? Where do we go from here?

Asking the latter set of questions set me on a journey to focus on pain. I was particularly interested in how pain is understood in Western epistemology, in contrast to how pain is conceptualized in certain Indigenous ceremonies. I wanted to know if, by conceptualizing pain differently, we would be able to have a different relationship to pain, especially the pain of colonialism, to be able to find other ways of learning from, living with, or healing it. I focused my work on practices associated with the Sun Dance ceremony, like sweats, fasts, pipe ceremonies, and flesh offerings. How could these practices change our relationship to the inter-generational pain of colonialism? How could these practices change our relationship to the elements and to non-human beings, like the air, the heat, the water, and the trees? How is the act of offering (of flesh, of sensual deprivation, of vulnerability) a way of reconciling and renewing relationships with everything around us? And how can the experiences of reconciliation and renewal be expanded to our political and existential everyday experiences, our everyday life?

These questions have driven my inquiries into sacred pain. However, when I mention "the sacredness" of pain, I am locating this argument at the interface of our rational and metaphorical minds (Cajete, 2000). Therefore, my argument will not be completely linear and will draw on symbolic (metaphorical) devices to invite readers to look at pain differently, beyond what we have been over-socialized by, through over-exposure to Western metaphysics, ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, institutions, and perspectives. This is now part of who we are, too, and decolonization does not mean necessarily banishing these knowledges from our being, but maybe learning the lessons they came to teach, both good and bad. Looking at this "invasion" as a trickster move, we already shift our position from victims of a tragedy, to that of observers of a painful poisonous phenomenon happening around and *within* this specific temporal existence. Decolonization, in this sense, is not an event but a continuous lifelong process of turning deadly poison into good medicine available to all, based on the teachings of a trickster poison itself. I return to this idea of decolonization, again and again in this article.

The first metaphor I invoke (see Figure 1) is that of the shine and the shadow of modernity (Ahenakew, Andreotti, Cooper, & Hireme, 2014; Andreotti, 2012; Mignolo, 2000, 2011). Mignolo (2000) defines modernity as a local (European) imaginary that turned into a global design that

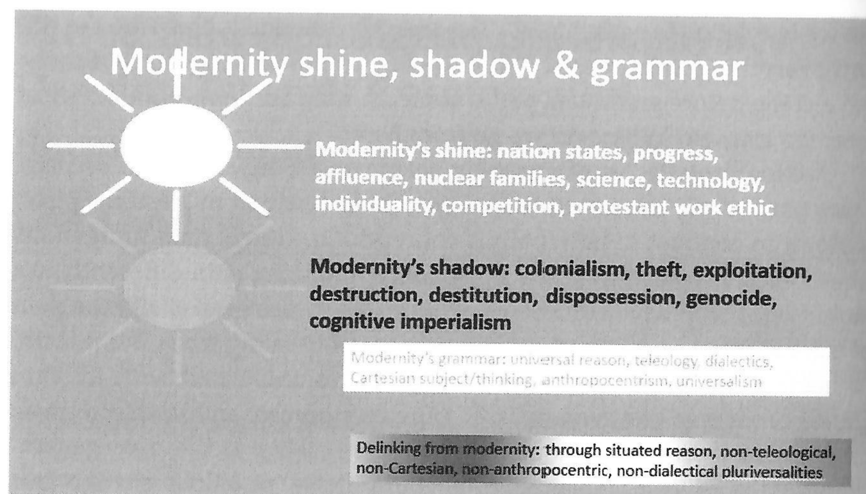

Figure 1. The shine and shadow of modernity.

started in Europe with the incorporation of the "Americas" into the trans-Atlantic trade circuit. This imaginary is driven by the desire for "progress," human agency, and all-encompassing (objective) knowledge (Andreotti, 2014) used to engineer and control an effective society through science and technology. Mignolo (2011) talks about the fact that, for us to believe that modernity is good and "shiny," we have to deny that it depends on violence, exploitation, and expropriation—its "darker" side—to exist.

Mignolo (2011) says that the effects of the darker side of modernity, such as war, poverty, hunger, and environmental destruction, are perceived by those who champion modernity's shine as a lack of modernity that needs more modernity to be fixed. For example, globally we believe that more capitalism, Western schooling, and modern development are necessary to fix the problems of the so-called "Third World." However, these problems were created and are maintained, precisely through the exploitation of modern capitalism and the expropriation of modern development. In addition, these problems are exacerbated with the universalization of Western schooling as a form of cognitive imperialism. Similarly, here in Canada, we believe that more money, more credentials, and more positions of power for Indigenous people in Western institutions and corporations will create a more just society.

We are led to believe that we can think (or "research") our way out of local and global problems through the same frames of thinking and modes of existence that created the problems themselves. This is evidence of our attachments to the shine of modernity that necessarily require the denial

of its shadows: the fact that, for us to have the shiny things we want, we have to export violence somewhere else. We forget that someone else pays the costs of our comforts (now perceived as entitlements). The Indigenous communities in Guatemala affected by the Canadian mining companies are a good example. The violence committed against these communities generates profits that flow back to Canada, fund our welfare system, subsidize our universities, sponsor scholarships for students, and we are not even mentioning the pain of the land itself affected by mining. Why do we insist on ignoring the violence we (systemically) inflict on other beings? Why do we continue to want things that harm others? How is the pain we are causing accounted for *differently* in the Western ontology of individuality and in the Indigenous ontology of inter-being-relationality? And how can we experience this Indigenous ontology of inter-being-relationality if we have been colonized by the ways of knowing/being that numb our senses to it? How can we avoid "planting" an Indigenous epistemology onto a non-Indigenous ontology that privileges thinking over experiencing and that (arrogantly) perceives itself as all-encompassing? (see Ahenakew, 2011).

Here it is important to disclose that I am also guilty of it. I suffer from cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 1998). Although I would like to think I am engaged in the lifelong and lifewide process of decolonization, I often fail. This failure humbles me and reminds me that this process of figuring out an inter-being-relationality is not just cognitive, conscious, or something we can do without humility, generosity, or (self) compassion. Neither is this an excuse for indulgence or complacency. What I mean is that decolonization is not something that can be done with arrogance, anger, or moral weapons pointing only to the errors of Others without considering how Others are part of us as well. As we harm others, we are harming ourselves and we will not be able to figure our way out of this individually or just focus on our communities. We need to consider our responsibilities to everyone and everything, because we are not separate. In this sense, there is no way "out" (there is no outside); the only way towards somewhere else is through it—with eyes, hearts, flesh, and dreams wide open, without fear of looking at ourselves in the mirror and seeing what has been maimed, what calls for compassion, what shouts for revenge, what has been turned into a weapon, what offers compassion, and what yearns for wholeness, for reconnection.

I have used an image to animate this idea. From the perspective of inter-being-relationality, we are all part of the same body: humans, non-humans, the elements, the land, the ancestors (those who have been and those who will come again). Colonialism has worked like the (ongoing) severing of an arm: one hand of this body has tried (unsuccessfully) to cut

off the arm on the other side, maiming it. The arm is still hanging in there, all cells of that arm occupied in dealing with the situation of extreme pain: some cells trying to reattach to the body, other cells trying to be numb to the pain, other cells in necrosis trying to cut themselves off, others reproducing the cutting against brother-cells in self-hate. You can imagine the magnitude of the problem. However, the other side of the body is also in intense pain, but it is also in denial, and therefore it numbs very differently, mostly in ways that defend the cutting. This numbing is based on strategies that justify the cutting through the affirmation of self-importance, which validates a perceived entitlement for ownership, individualism, security, judgment, and control.

Likewise, Duran, Duran, Braveheart, and Yellow Horse-Davis (1998) use the soul wound as a metaphor for the historical trauma I am referring to. They say that this wound involves the colonized, the colonizers, and the land itself and that it can only be healed through a renewal of relationships, through a recognition that the wounding and the pain affects us all and that *numbing* is not *healing*. However, there is a major challenge here for the healing process, because a modern epistemology of individuality and an Indigenous epistemology of inter-being-relationality have different conceptualizations of pain, healing, well-being, and death (Ahenakew, 2011). Dominant modern ways of knowing have conceptualized pain as an individual problem equated with suffering, healing as the elimination of pain, well-being as the absence of pain, and death as the end of life. Not surprisingly, people socialized into this way of thinking/feeling are afraid of pain as they try to enjoy a pain-free life and avoid death. Meanwhile, many Indigenous ways of knowing conceptualize pain as something that is not individualized and that can have many meanings; for example, it can be an important messenger, a visitor, a teacher, an offering, or a test. From this perspective, well-being does not require the elimination of pain. Most importantly, suffering is related to turning one's back to the message of the pain (of one's body, of the land, of others) and, therefore, healing requires *un-numbing* and facing the messenger, facing the inevitability of pain, and developing the courage and resilience to have a relationship with it.

I often observe my modern self, the modern part of me, overtaken by cognitive imperialism when it is experiencing chronic pain. This part of me firmly believes in numbing precisely because it sees itself as small, weak, tired, and incapable of withstanding (more) pain. It feels it is going to be overcome by pain. And, if we believe we are really inter-related, this part inhabits all of us. But we have other parts, too, and what I try to do is listen deeply to those as well. Another side of me wants to stop the pain, to exit this body, to go somewhere else, to return home, where there is no pain.

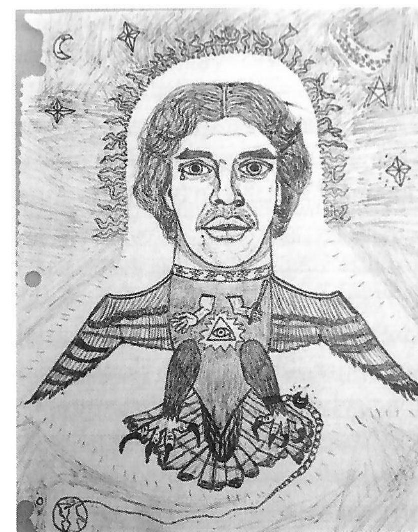

Figure 2. Cash Ahenakew drawing at 17 years old.

The picture I drew at 17 years old, with braid cut off (Figure 1), when I had experienced a series of traumas, represents that part of me in a constant exist narrative: "Let me out of here, I have had enough." Another part of me, yet, looks for ancient wisdom, for steadiness of mind, for expanding the heart through ceremony to welcome and hold the pain. Ceremonial language understands this as an offering, and "extra" voluntary pain is often necessary to remind us that our hearts, connected, are much larger than the pain we feel or have inflicted on others.

As I crave forgiveness, my modern self, paradoxically, is also afraid of being forgiven. It is easier to continue to justify the necessity of cutting, the denial of relationships. It is much easier to be responsible only for my individuated self. Forgiveness, by the land, would be, for the modern self, a humbling, decentering, disarming, and demanding experience that would reignite the numbed senses and call for an infinite responsibility for everything past, present, and future. This visceral responsibility collapses the modern self's entitlement to individuality, identity, ownership, knowledge, and autonomy. In this responsibility, freedom is (existential) responsibility itself, not individual, collective, or intellectual choice. Political commitments based on this kind of responsibility cannot be based on substantial claims to citizenship, economic prosperity, representation, recognition, redistribution—or even sovereignty. On the other hand, this existential responsibility does not preclude the use of these concepts strategically, when they are necessary to alleviate the effects of the shadow that has

fallen upon all of us, unevenly (disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples). However, ultimately, strategies that increase the shine cannot address the cause of the shadow: the more we walk towards the "shine" the bigger our shadow is. Therefore, when we use the shine strategically, the existential responsibility may prevent us from investing in (or enjoying) them as "the end game," which can be frustrating (for the modern self within us).

The imposition of the desire for the shine has happened through enforced separations: residential schools, displacements, dispossessions, enforced family separations, segregations, reservations, and setting one community against the other. The result is that we are placed against the wall: we either become useful to the capitalist system by agreeing to walk towards the shine of modernity or we are left in the shadow paying the costs of the shine, being ruled and watched by an authoritarian regime and, to top it off, being perceived as the problem, as an obstacle to progress and development, an obstacle that needs to be "helped" or eliminated altogether (Walter & Andersen, 2013). In this paradigm, the worth of life is defined by market exchange value. We become "human capital": our culture becomes capital, our relations become capital, even our struggles are fought according to moral *capital* (e.g., a competition between who has been wronged the most). This choice of existence is extremely limited and cruel. No wonder our kids are opting out.

The metaphysics of separability turns (all of) us into "things." It is important to remember how this trauma works through history, first by turning the land into property, then turning certain people into property, then everyone into "human capital"—or *homo-economicus*—for exchange-value markets. This is important insofar as this language has increasingly dominated discussions about Indigenous studies and struggles recently. There will come a time, very soon, when Western institutions will only remain open to Indigenous people who buy into the game of affluence within capitalist societies. Before universities were affected by state-driven neoliberal agendas, the university civic mandate (although not necessarily benevolent) allowed for Indigenous people to assert their claims for identity and sovereignty based on recognition and human rights, which allowed more room for alternative ontologies and resistances to be expressed. Nowadays, the discussion is dominated by a neoliberal framework where the slogan of "access and partnership" implies the market as a consensual "forward." In this context, the claims of Indigenous peoples are only heard through the language of (territorial) property, (business) development, and prosperity (as social mobility) (Ahenakew & Naepi, 2015). If you are not capital, you are not.

The historical trauma of today is placed upon the historical trauma transmitted inter-generationally, both reproducing dismemberment. This pain of dismemberment manifests as embodied practices of self-hate, disconnection, and "checking out." However, Jacqui Alexander (2005) asserts that these practices, ironically, are driven by a yearning for wholeness:

> since colonization has produced fragmentation and dismemberment at both the material and psychic levels, there is a yearning for wholeness, often expressed as a yearning to belong, a yearning that is both material and existential, both psychic and physical, and which, when satisfied, can subvert, and ultimately displace the pain of dismemberment. (p. 281)

This yearning for wholeness is not about individual wholeness but collective wholeness (including the land). Alexander explains that when this yearning is mobilized through modern categories of belonging that over-code identities and promote further separations, it again reproduces dismemberment creating more pain and emptiness, leading, eventually, to self-harming practices as a form of withdrawal from the world. In this context, healing becomes complicated because this wholeness simply cannot be achieved through a metaphysics, ontology, or epistemology of separability. This is the very metaphysics that grounds bio-medical science and practice today. This separability prescribes more trauma as a treatment for trauma.

I will illustrate this with a story. A psychiatrist asked a teenage girl why she was engaging in the "irrational" behaviour of hurting herself. She told the doctor that the pain she felt was like a phantom-limb pain—it was happening but she could not identify why or where. The doctor could not understand her because what she was saying did not fit his cognitive framework. She had all her limbs; she could not possibly suffer from phantom-limb pain. His job was to make the pain disappear quickly and cost-effectively, so that she could again be functional at school, eventually find a job, make money, pay her taxes, and not be a burden on his society. Numbing her, by making her brain dependent on the drug industry to forget this pain, was the only possible treatment. Her mom took a different approach. She immersed the girl in inter-being-relationality and supported her to develop the language to talk about the pain as real and important, as a call for profound changes in the world. Drawing on ancestral knowledge, she offered the girl ways of healing that, rather than affirming the boundaries of her individuality, expanded her sense of being, showing her that relationality, indeed, involves pain and responsibility (which might be perceived as scary), but it also involves sources of joy and connection much more existentially satisfying than what is achieved by the false promises of happiness through consumption, status, "achievement," and competition that the mainstream has on offer.

So, can a different relationship to pain offer us a different horizon? I will use another story to address this question. Recently, I have had a feeling of emptiness inside of me. It was like a feeling of hunger in your chest between your heart and your stomach. I could not recognize who this visitor was; its presence was not felt for many years. I walk with the spirit of depression sometimes, who is a good teacher (sometimes he is just depressing) and this is the place he usually is, but this was different. It was just empty. Then someone did something to me and I was really angry, really jealous. The anger and the jealousy occupied that space in my chest. And I tried to walk it off. I walked miles and miles fuming, but I could not get it out of me.

It reminded me of my youth, when I was really angry. Then I went home, smoked the pipe, and I realized that smoke was a powerful medicine in that space. It filled the space and shrunk those entities inside of me. I could acknowledge they were still there, but they did not have as much influence over me.

If you are overcome by these entities, it becomes a power struggle—you either try to repress them (and they come back stronger whenever they can) or you allow them to rule your behaviour (and let them wreack havoc in your life and the lives of your loved ones). Our ancestral knowledge shows we cannot deal with them on our own—because we are not separated, we are insufficient, not self-sufficient, or autonomous. We need the help—of the elements, of the spirits, of the land, of the ancestors, of the Elders, of the animals, of the trees—to reconcile with these different energies within us.

The ceremonies, like smoking the pipe, invoke the sacredness of pain, the sacredness of life, and the sacredness of relations. This is a visceral sense that cannot be reproduced by thinking alone. It does not require thinking. It does not demand any belief or convictions; therefore, it does not fit the modern self's cognitive frameworks. And as you temporarily surrender your intellect to invite the elements to mediate the relationships between you and the entities visiting you, you revitalize your relationship with all relations. This revitalization is an entry-point into the long and winding road of collective healing of the soul wound. In this road, we start relating differently to all life by recognizing the world, the whole spectrum of emotions, relations, entities, and possibilities for healing and for violence, right here, within ourselves—wounded but undivided. That is where decolonization starts—and it never finishes.

Reading about sacred pain has helped me to continue in this road. The idea of the sacred pain has been around for time immemorial and has been rearticulated at different times, in many different cultures, including pockets in the Western cultures. I have been thinking about it in relation to the Sun Dance ceremony I participate in. The Sun Dance has always been associated with community renewal and well-being, but has also been associated with political resistance, such as in 1884 when Big Bear called a Sun Dance "in response to new reserve conditions and the onset of a famine" and to "protest treaty abuses" (Shrubsole, 2011, p. 4). The most prominent features of a Sun Dance are the fasting, dancing pledges, prayers, drumming, singing, sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies, and piercing rituals, which involve the tearing of flesh as an act of self-sacrifice, embodiment of pain and suffering, the dismantling of egos, the initiation of visions, the acquisition of medicine, and the renewal of relationships (Shrubsole, 2011).

The Sun Dance (and other ceremonies) operates under a logic of non-anthropocentric circular reciprocity, which is different from transactions of capital or reciprocity understood as calculated gift exchanges between humans. Circular reciprocity involves a form of gift giving that does not expect anything in return, as the idea is for the gift to be passed forward. This form of radical sharing is the basis of community well-being (Kuokkanen, 2007) and encourages people "to act responsibly toward other forms of life" (Deloria, as cited in Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 39). In this sense, "poverty" is defined as not being able to share what you have (Andreotti & Souza, 2008), which amounts to unnecessary and wasteful accumulation.

Glucklich's (2001) work explores "sacred pain" from a psychological-neurological perspective to understand the place of suffering in contemporary religious and sacred practices like the Sun Dance. Glucklich states that suffering is not a physical sensation, but an emotional and evaluative reaction (e.g., grief which can involve the absence of physical pain) to any number of causes, some entirely absent of physical pain. He asserts that "pain can be the solution to suffering, a psychological analgesic [pain killer] that removes anxiety, guilt, and even depression"(p. 11). He argues there is a difference between "the unwanted pain of a cancer patient or victim of a car crash, and the voluntary and modulated self-hurting ... [which produces] cognitive-emotional changes, that affect the identity of the individual subject and her sense of belonging to a larger community or to a more fundamental state of being" (p. 6).

Additionally, according to Glucklich, the goal of sacred pain is "to transform the pain that causes suffering into a pain that leads to insight, meaning, and even salvation" to which I would add self-empowerment. The participant emerges feeling stronger, out of a sense of isolation and alienation, to a closer relationship with the community (cited in Owen 2013, p. 132), and, I would add, the land itself, the ancestors and the spirits.

Although Glucklich describes the Sun Dance as "a sacrificial performance, for the good of others, for the purification of one's own community, and for the improvement of the world" (p. 140), he does not take sufficient account of the Indigenous relationship of circular reciprocity between humans and non-human realms. In this sense, pain is offered as a gift for healing for the community, not as an exchange, but as part of the circular reciprocity story (the gift does not come individually, but through communal means). The de-linking of pain from suffering that happens in the ceremony through the practice of voluntary pain already changes one's cognitive and emotional relationship with it. Offering pain as a gift to the community is about renewal of the whole cycle of life.

When I reflect on my own experience of sacred pain of thirst and hunger, fasting for four days, of the process of ego-logical physical cravings met with deprivation, and of the flesh offerings gifted to Spirit, I wonder why I feel compelled to describe it as "agony" when, in reality, during the ceremony these processes are experienced differently, at best times as joyful release (the very happy place), sometimes as sacrifice, and at other times, when ego is in overdrive, as plain suffering. We have little control over these spiritual and chemical responses from our nervous system and, when things get hard, we are told to keep trying, don't quit, and dance harder. One purpose of the ceremony is to allow you to release your heaviness. If you are holding on to your heaviness (e.g., if you are using it to define your identity), you may find it difficult to release. If you are denying your heaviness (e.g., convincing yourself you are okay, when there is work to be done—and there always is work to be done), you will be asked to face what you are repressing, to feel it fully, and then to release.

There is no easy way, and pain and breakdown are necessary for us to realize we are not what we have pictured as our self-images; we are not the boundaries of our individualized selves. In our renewed connection with Spirit, with ancestors, and the land, we are much better, more intelligent, and more powerful than we thought we were. We have become attached to a very small idea of who we are as separate beings, which breeds insecurities and fear of the unpredictable responsibility of re-sensing our connections; and this is, perhaps, our greatest challenge for the future of the planet.

What if we could practice sacred pain as a form of reconciliation on the land's terms and as a way of dancing away from the soul wound? How could sacred pain transform our experiences of physical pain, mental suffering, spiritual wounding, and soul wound? How do sacred pain experience, soul wound dancing, and Sun Dance ceremony help immerse us within the cycles of reciprocity? What if we could realize the healing power lodged in our inter-connectedness? Finally, how might the above remind us our responsibility within the reincarnation cycles of spiritual renewal and continuity?

> We do believe in life after death. The many deities and spirits come from that belief. We return in the form of animals, trees, birds, spirits and other forms. We are part of the whole. We are the whole. We are a part of the spirit world now. We will be a part of it in the future. We have always been a part of it ... all things are one, and all life is one in one circle of time. (Paiute Medicine Man; Toombs, as cited in Mills & Slobodin, 1994, p. 3)

References

Ahenakew, C. (2011). The birth of the 'Windigo': The construction of Aboriginal health in biomedical and traditional Indigenous models of medicine. *Critical Literacies: Theories and Practices, 5*(1), 3-13.

Ahenakew, C. (2016). Grafting Indigenous ways of knowing onto non-indigenous ways of being: The (under-estimated) challenges of a decolonial imagination. International Journal of Qualitative Research, 9(3), pp. 323-340. DOI: 10.1525/irqr.2016.9.3.323

Ahenakew, C., Andreotti, V., Cooper, G., & Hireme, H. (2014). Beyond epistemic provincialism: De-provincializing Indigenous resistance. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 10*(3), 216-231.

Ahenakew, C., & Naepi, S. (2015). The difficult task of turning walls into tables. In A. Macfarlane, S. Macfarlane, & M. Webber (Eds.), *Sociocultural realities: Exploring new horizons* (pp. 181-194). Christchurch, NZ: University of Canterbury Press.

Alexander, M. J. (2005). *Pedagogies of crossing: Meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the sacred.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Andreotti, V. (2012). Education, knowledge and the righting of wrongs. *Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives, 1*(1), 19-31.

Andreotti, V. (2014). Conflicting epistemic demands in poststructuralist and postcolonial engagements with questions of complicity in systemic harm. *Educational Studies, 50*(4), 378-397.

Andreotti, V., & Souza, L. (2008). Translating theory into practice and walking minefields: Lessons from the project 'Through Other Eyes.' *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning, 1*(1), 23-36.

Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education,* 22(1), 16-27.

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science: Natural laws of interdependence.* Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishing.

Duran, E., Duran, B., Brave Heart, M., & Yellow Horse-Davis, S. (1998). Healing the American Indian soul wound. In Y. Danieli (Ed.), *International handbook of multigenerational legacies of trauma* (pp. 341-354). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Glucklich, A. (2001). Sacred pain: Hurting the body for the sake of the soul. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Kuokkanen, R. (2007). *Reshaping the university: Responsibility, Indigenous epistemes, and the logic of the gift.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Mignolo, W. D. (2000). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mills, A., & Slobodin, R. (Eds.). (1994). *Amerindian rebirth: Reincarnation belief among North American Indians and Inuit.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Owen, S. (2013). Prayer with pain: Ceremonial suffering among the Mi'kmaq. In J. Fear-

Segal & R. Tillett (Eds.), *Indigenous bodies: Reviewing, relocating, reclaiming* (pp. 129-143). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Shrubsole, N. D. (2011). The Sun Dance and the Gustafsen Lake standoff: Healing through resistance and the danger of dismissing religion. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 2(4), 1-17.

Walter, M., & Andersen, C. (2013). *Indigenous statistics: A quantitative research methodology*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Reconciliation in the Face of Epistemicide

Rebecca Sockbeson

Dr. Rebecca Sockbeson is of the Penobscot Indian Nation, Indian Island Maine, the Waponahki Confederacy of tribes located in Maine, United States, and the Maritime provinces of Canada. A political activist and scholar, she received her master's degree in education at Harvard University and her doctoral degree at the University of Alberta. Rebecca is Associate Professor in Educational Policy Studies, specializing in Indigenous Peoples Education, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada.

The following talk pulls together some intensive thinking and feeling I have been working with for quite some time, and I thank you for affording me this opportunity and for listening to some of this heart-thinking, as I believe it aligns well with the theme of *Mobilizing Indigenous Epistemologies: Re-visioning Reconciliation*. The relational accountability principles of Indigenous research methodology (Weber-Pillwax, 1999) prompt me to most immediately acknowledge how this thinking has been nurtured and influenced during my time as a doctoral student in the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPE) specialization, supervised by Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax. At a research meeting in 2008, we discussed the recent apology made by Prime Minister Harper, and Cora shared with several of us graduate students that throughout the Indian residential schools (IRS) settlement process, a crime had been identified, but a criminal had not been named. This reality sunk into my being and further mobilized my commitment for justice for our people. In that discussion, we immediately named the criminal as the Canadian government and the colonial enterprise of institutionalized racism that continues to systematically dispossess Aboriginal people of land, language, culture, and life. I will start and end this discussion with my poetry, which helps me to express the interconnections of my heart and mind.

Naming the Criminal

Intergenerational trauma
has met our intergenerational survival
as Indigenous peoples
Intergenerational—the passing on to the next generation
Intergenerational survival
The passing on of how to survive
the trauma imposed upon our people
This is the Indigenous knowledge of love and compassion
We must be reminded of the power of love and compassion
It has helped us to survive