

WALKING TOGETHER

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum

Indigenous Pedagogy Way of the Tireless Runner: An Aboriginal Pedagogical Guide

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Government of Alberta ■





WAY OF THE TIRELESS RUNNER: AN ABORIGINAL PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE

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June Kaminski, an educator working in nursing informatics, prepared an electronic slide show on her research on First Nations students in the greater Vancouver area. Using Appreciative Inquiry, she focused on First Nations pedagogy. The following is adapted with her permission from information presented in her slide show.

The name *Kwantlen* is derived from an Aboriginal word meaning *tireless runner* or *tireless hunter* and refers to the Sto:lo Nation, now called the Kwantlen First Nation, living along the historic Fraser River. Today some Kwantlen people live off reserve in Surrey, Delta, Langley, Cloverdale, White Rock and Richmond.

First Nations Pedagogy

Pedagogical activities include teaching in a way that learning includes respectful relations building on experiential learning, listening well, allowing space, story-telling and story-making, supporting quaternity, dialogue, positionality, relevance, reciprocity, reflectivity, and utilizing a strong Elders-informed, ecologically situated, creative, visual-auditory learning space within a self-governance philosophy and natural world context.

Profoundly different from approaches in the mainstream educational system, First Nations traditional education supports

- wholistic (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional) growth and development of the person
- experiential learning
- oral tradition
- student-centeredness.

Further, and of vital importance, is the fact that it is grounded in spirituality.

Storytelling and Storymaking

Stories are used to illustrate, to learn, to highlight, to share traditional nuances, to bring new knowledge, and to understand the world and contexts in which we live. Teachers need to begin to tell and make stories.

“Story-telling plays a major role in the oral transmission of knowledge, skills and values needed to live. Stories speak of the origins of life, proper relationships to various forms of life and life experiences. Also, the sharing of one’s life story and experiences is a well-established method of teaching. Stories act as mirrors wherein the learner is allowed to view him/herself and thus gain insights and understandings to help him/her along the road of life.” (Pitawanakwat, 2001).

Elders and Formal Education

Elders are the carriers and emblems of communally generated and mediated knowledge. In the Western paradigm, such relations and processes of knowledge transmission is “informal.” Yet, these same processes are at the heart and soul of what is “formal” to Indigenous knowledge.

Elders are first and foremost teachers and role models. Elders possess formal knowledge and expertise. Through orality, the Elders provide lessons on how to go about living the right life.

Learning is always socially situated, socially constructed, socially produced and socially validated within social settings that exist as contextual settings.

Elders teach others about culture, tradition and about the vision of life that is contained in First Nations philosophies and handed down in ceremonies and traditional teaching.

Respect and Respectful Relations

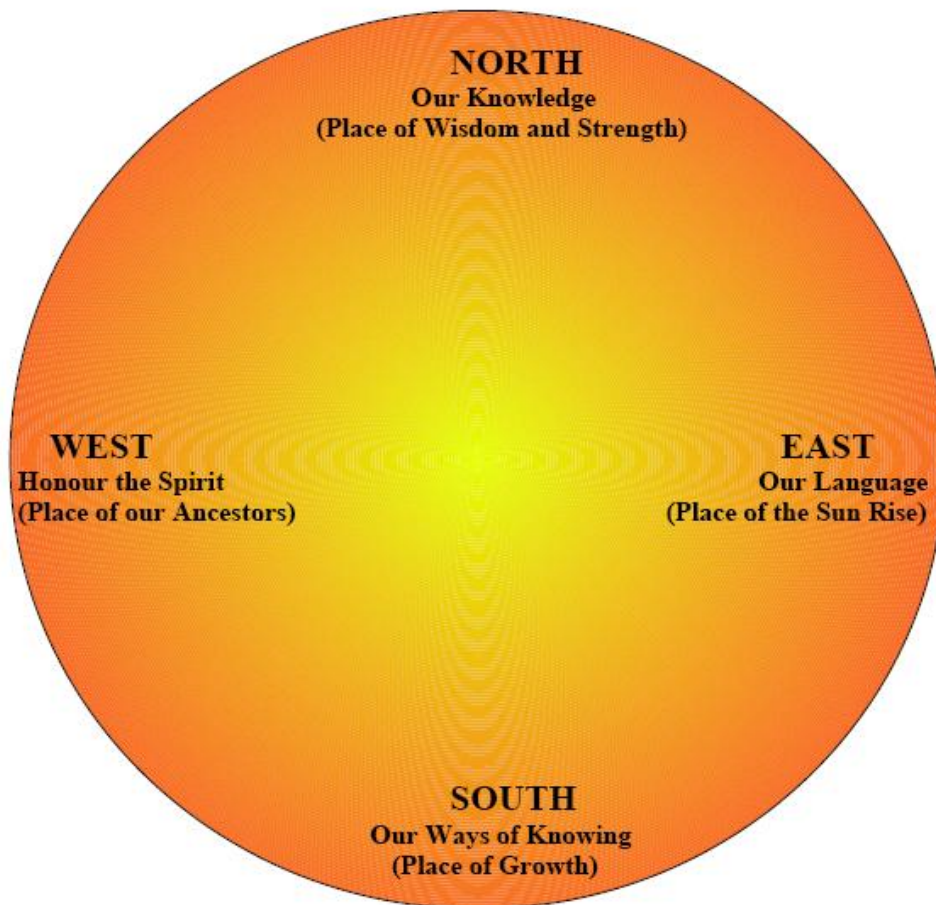
Respect stems from the belief that individuals are responsible for themselves. It is the responsibility of others to teach respect.

In the past, before European influences, First Nations people had their own social systems that addressed issues such as discipline and respect. The traditional idea of respect includes

- respecting personal space
- teaching a code of silence at an early age
- accepting and living with others’ differentness
- resolving conflicts

- using compassion, empathy, understanding
- listening well
- allowing space
- respecting self
- respecting others
- respecting nature.

TEACHINGS OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS
for First Nations Educational Planning



Inherent Aboriginal Values

Aboriginal values include

- rights and freedoms of the individual
- rights and freedoms of the group
- respect for Elders
- respect for land and community
- respect for self
- sacredness of life
- spirituality
- wisdom
- honour and fortitude
- generosity
- extended family
- peace, harmony
- acceptance
- quietness, patience, dignity
- connectedness of all living things.

Circle Talks

A circle is used to discuss issues of importance. In its simplest form a circle talk is done in a complete circle. Only the person holding the stick talks; all the rest listen. The stick is passed around in a clockwise direction. A person talks until finished, being respectful of time. The circle talk is completed when everyone has had the opportunity to speak.

- A person may pass the stick without speaking, if they so wish.
- If desired, the stick may be passed around again.
- What is said in the circle stays in the circle.
- A circle is used to discuss issues of importance.
- Participants are extremely respectful of each individual and what that person has to say.

Quaternity



Intrinsic to First Nations discourse is a pattern of writing that is cyclically organized, repetitive and centre-focused. This pattern of writing does not conform to the classic trinity of introduction, body, and conclusion that tends to be unidimensional, monologic, definite, linear and text-bound

Positionality

The notion of one's frame of reference or positionality is one that is highly supported and advocated by various Elders who challenge the limited vision of modern Canadian education. Our Elders tell us that we each must know who we are and how we engage and interconnect with our surroundings.

First Nations Knowledge

First Nations knowledge



is a living process to be absorbed and understood, not a commodity to possess



shows preference for experiential knowledge



values the ability to learn independently by observing, listening and participating



shows preference for multiple intelligences approach



values introspection, reflection, meditation, prayer and self-directed learning



is structured by language and by a sense of order that is symbolic, verbal and unconscious



is both empirical (based on experience) and normative (based on social values).

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