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Erasure no more: Canada's First Nation's Resurgence of land-based practices

Tonalla Renteria

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Introduction

Since the arrival of settler Europeans to North America, Indigenous communities have undergone the destructive processes of settler-colonialism. Settler-colonialism operates by dispossessing the native inhabitants from their land and also heavily involves the extraction of natural resources from Indigenous land for personal calls of profit, development, and illegal land claims. Settler colonialism has therefore disrupted Indigenous nations' ability to perform land-based cultural practices. The settler colonialism narrative is one that seeks to the continual encroachment and possession of Indigenous land. Therefore, Indigenous communities continue to struggle to preserve and protect their sacred relationships with land. In response, the Indigenous argument for "Resurgence" seeks to fix issues such as dispossession, broken relationships, and cultural degradation in relation to Indigenous land. Resurgence calls for Indigenous communities to create alternative pathways of cultural rejuvenation that are different from the settler-colonial narrative.

My research paper will primarily focus on Indigenous resurgence of First Nations communities in Canada. I contend that First Nation's application of resurgence through land-based practices allows for cultural revitalization and an alternative to the dominant settler colonial narrative. From the many variations of Indigenous land-based practices, I chose to focus on food sovereignty and storytelling because of their adaptability to preserve Indigenous culture practices in the 21st century. In the face of adversity, First Nation communities are concentrating their energy and efforts to ensure a future where Indigenous survival is possible in the modern 21st century. I will offer examples to help the reader understand how the implementation of land-based practices contributes to Indigenous resurgence, whether it be new innovative forms or

classic preservation of Indigenous cultural traditional practices. One thing is for certain, Indigenous resurgence possibilities are ever growing and here to stay.

History of Resurgence

Indigenous resurgence began to surface in the late 2000's in North America. The following Indigenous scholars have been at the forefront for contributions of academic works associated with Indigenous resurgence: Taiaiake Alfred, Glen Sean Coulthard, and Leanne Simpson, and Jeff Corntassel. Indigenous resurgence is an intellectual and cultural movement that calls for a re-shift away from the settler-colonial narrative that has wreaked havoc among North American Indigenous populations for centuries. This shift is a redirection towards the rejuvenation of traditional cultural practices that includes but is not limited to: governance, education, storytelling, dancing, harvesting, music, and diets. The settler-colonial narrative is one that seeks to the continuation of diminishing Indigenous traditional ways of life through the extermination and degradation of Indigenous lands.

Indigenous resurgence has been influenced by many aspects over the centuries including Indigenous stories, visions, and scholarly sources. One of the first published works of an alternative future where Indigenous communities would flourish again was *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* by George Manuel and Michael Posluns. The authors envision a future where, “Indigenous societies have harnessed modern technology within their respective cultural and linguistic frameworks to recover and revitalize their languages, cultural worldviews, and ways of living” (Parley, O'Donnell, George, Beaton, and Peter-Paul 2016, 21). I believe this vision of an alternative future is coming true. Throughout my paper, I will provide various examples of resurgence of land-based practices that incorporate modern technologies. These technologies include virtual reality, online networking sources, and modern cooking techniques. These

technologies are being used to help carry out their message to a broader geographical audience with the intent to inspire Indigenous communities throughout Canada and beyond.

The most publicized and internationally recognized example of Indigenous resurgence was the political movement known as Idle No More in winter of 2012. Idle No More was an Indigenous lead movement with the help of non-Indigenous supporters to protest Canada's proposed Bill C-45. The following is a glimpse into Bill C-45 structural change within First Nation communities:

Jobs and Growth Act (Omnibus Bill) which has lowered the protective threshold of reserve land "surrenders" and dropped protected waterways from 2.8 million to less than 100 in Canada, extinguishing Canada's duty to consult First Nations when developments will affect First Nation communities. Bill C-428: Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act which seeks out changes to the Indian Act which little to no duty to consult, as well as implications which negatively affect funding formulas, deny a First Nation's ability to pass by laws, and disrupt matters related to wills and estates (Idle no more 2020).

The now passed bill was a clear indication of Canada's government using their power to "erode Indigenous sovereignty and environmental protections" (Idle no more 2020). Idle No More received an influx of mainstream attention and support through in person and social media outlets. However, Idle No More is not a new phenomenon because Indigenous resistance against the settler-colonial state has been around since European Settlers landed in the Americas. My understanding of important signifiers of resurgence within the Idle No More movement is first the changing of the narrative within the dominated settler-colonial landscape for one that incorporated Indigenous voices. Second, an example of Indigenous nations coming together to support Indigenous resistance movements. Last, Idle No More did not stop the passing of the bill but has provided a starting point for further Indigenous resistance networks to learn and grow stronger from. As we have seen with Idle No More, this type of Indigenous resurgence is

beneficial in making political awareness to the masses about socioeconomic issues regarding Indigenous communities (Idle No More, 2020). However, I will be focused on Indigenous resurgence that does not directly communicate with the settler-colonial state. The other form of resurgence I will highlight is one that focuses on empowering and internalizing the cultural preservation of Indigenous land-based practices.

Methodology

I applied multiple forms of data collection to answer my research question: How can First Nation communities use resurgence as a way to revitalize Indigenous cultural practices to be sustained in the future? I attained these sources from secondary data sources such as the online CSUMB library database. This included academic journals from Canada on Indigenous education, health, studies, and policy. My research included analyzing ways in which Indigenous land based practices contributed to the resurgence processes. Therefore, I used content analysis to further analyze the storytelling land based practices section of my paper. I interpreted the storytelling methods of: *Biidaaban: First Light VR film*, *Dakwākāda Warriors*, and *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*. Indigenous resurgence timeframe begin in the early 2000's and really took off on the mid 2010's which helped to consolidate sources available. Overall, I aimed for my research to analyze traditional and contemporary forms of Indigenous land-based resurgence in efforts to illustrate the diversity and broad range of application.

Literature Review

Resurgence is the 21st century revitalization of traditional practices and governance to create an alternative future for Indigenous communities as articulated by North American Indigenous scholars: Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Taiaiake Alfred, and Jeff Corntassel. Theoretical works and findings of resurgence were a response to the settler-colonial narrative of dispossession policies directed at the removal of Indigenous communities from their land. In response, Indigenous scholars have used resurgence to showcase alternatives to protecting Indigenous land rights and cultural practices. This is being done through a national liberation and the rejuvenation of cultural values, practices, language, and art. Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Taiaiake Alfred, and Jeff Corntassel have all academically contributed to the concept of resurgence by their theoretical findings which stress the importance of a localized communal resurgence through land-based applications. First Indigenous Scholar mentioned is Leanna Simpson who articulates the power of resurgence through storytelling.

Leanne Simpson: Use of Resurgence through storytelling

Leanne Simpson is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg First Nation author academically acknowledged for her publications in Indigenous knowledge, storytelling, and theory. Resurgence is depicted beautifully in Leanne Simpson's *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* and *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. Simpson uses her own Nishnaabeg cultural traditions, language, and stories to lay the foundation for a new future in which Indigenous people can flourish once again. Simpson defines and supports resurgence in many different ways throughout *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* using examples from Nishnaabeg poetry, songs, visions, community gatherings, storytelling, and Elder(s) interpretation of Nishnaabeg words. She believes that by focusing on

these Indigenous cultural outlets, resurgence can start the path of renewal and rejuvenation. One of the many ways Simpson defines resurgence is through the interpretation of the Nishnaabeg word “Biskaabiiyang”. She states,

Within Nishnaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural Resurgence.(Simpson 2011, 51)

This interpretation of Biskaabiiyang beautifully articulates what resurgence truly envelops.

Therefore, Indigenous resurgence is the de-colonial alternative to redefining what it means to be Indigenous in this modern 21st century. Resurgence looks to the past for guidance in order to envision a new future which encircles both. Resurgence takes many different forms but ultimately the underlying message is the regeneration of Indigenous culture to connect multiple generations together. This spiritual connection will allow for future Indigenous generations to feel confident and proud of their Indigenous heritage.

Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence is meant to spark interest and hope into First Nation communities to embark and embrace the concepts of resurgence and apply them to fit their communities’ specific needs. Simpson defines this as, “I have been careful throughout this chapter and the book to not define "Resurgence." It is my hope that readers will take the concepts and ideas presented in this book, return to their own communities, teachings, languages and Elders or Knowledge Holders and to engage in a process where they figure out what "Resurgence" means to them, and to their collective communities" (Simpson 2011, 25).

There is no singular definition for resurgence. Resurgence does not follow a specific set of guidelines. Respectively, resurgence through storytelling is adaptable and flexible to the array of different Indigenous stories across North America. Simpson, uses storytelling as an interpretation of resurgence, because storytelling is “a tool to vision other existences outside of the current ones by critiquing and analyzing the current state of affairs, but also by dreaming envisioning other realities” (Simpson and Manitowabi, 2013, 286-87). Thus, storytelling ignites Indigenous thought and communal connection through the creation of Indigenous space. This Indigenous understanding of space plays an important role in the decolonization processes because it centers the focus around Indigenous epistemological views. Indigenous people share the common epistemological relationship and understanding to space, which is defined as “more than a geographical location” but “holistic in relations that interactively form societies with human and nonhuman” alike (Otjen 2019, 140). Through storytelling Indigenous communities can assert their own cultural heritage by creating spaces where Indigenous knowledge allows for resurgence possibilities. Next, Taiaiake Alfred’s use of resurgence as a counter narrative to settler-colonialism.

Taiaiake Alfred: Resurgence against settler-colonialism

Taiaiake Alfred is from Kahnawá:ke in the Mohawk Nation near Quebec, Canada. Taiaike Alfred was the former head of the University of Victoria’s Indigenous Governance program (IGOV). Taiaike Alfred is a distinguished Indigenous scholar whose academic contributions are undoubtedly prevalent in the Indigenous Studies field. Alfred currently works to “design land-based cultural restoration plans” in the Mohawk community as contributions to resurgence. With previous work focusing on the “retraditionalization, structural reform, and leadership training” for different First Nations communities (Cornell University 2020). Alfred

has traveled all across North America as a keynote speaker bringing forth awareness to Indigenous resurgence. Alfred states that, “Indigenous resurgence has arisen out of the need to look at the effects of Indigenous people being dispossessed from their land and being unable to practice their language, spirituality and culture in relation to the land” (Concordia University 2020). Alfred’s research has critically analyzed settler colonialism land dispossession effects on Indigenous people. He believes that resurgence in land-based practices is the best solution for preserving Indigenous Nations cultural survival. This is done first through the “an individual basis” that self emanates outward to the “family, clan , and community” which then allows resurgence to transcend into “broader relationships that form an Indigenous existence” (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, 612). Now, we will examine how Jeff Corntassel suggests everyday acts of resurgence is a more sustainable model for Resurgence application amongst Indigenous communities.

Jeff Corntassel Every Day Acts Of Resurgence

Jeff Corntassel is part of the Cherokee Nation and currently is an Associate Professor and Graduate Advisor in the School of Indigenous Governance (IGOV) at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Jeff Corntassel was the first delegate to represent the Cherokee Nation for the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. Corntassel’s research includes “Indigenous political movements, community resurgence, and sustainable self-determination” (University of Victoria 2020). His resurgence research in community sustainability is depicted best in his article *Everyday Acts of Resurgence: People, Places, Practices*. Corntassel explains that everyday acts of resurgence are about the choices Indigenous individuals “make on a daily basis to engage with their lands, cultures and communities. The seemingly small actions are significant in informing both the micro and macro processes of community resurgence”

(Corntassel 2018, 18). Although everyday acts may seem insignificant to the contribution of decolonization processes, this is far from the truth. Multiple everyday acts can collectively impact the decolonization processes.

Everyday acts of resurgence is then described as, “reconnecting Indigenous communities responsibility to the land, water, and non-human relationships” which is a critical component for resurgence to be successful. Resurgence strengthens Indigenous individuals, nations, and communities when everyday “actions are done with meaningful intentions to reconnect even further with the land” (Corntassel & Hardbarger 2019, 104). Doing everyday acts of resurgence create a greater sense of nationhood for Indigenous populations. Elders, parents and older community members are faced with the sizable task to “critically evaluate parenting and educating” Indigenous youth (Simpson 2011, 127). Thus, laying the foundation for future Indigenous generations to have a greater sense of identity through resurgence of cultural practices which are being implemented today. It is crucial for Resurgence to happen amongst Indigenous youth because they are the future for Indigenous cultural survival. Indigenous youth are held with the responsibilities to carry on their ancestral Indigenous traditions, languages, practices and epistemologies. Prioritizing the transfer of Indigenous ancestral knowledge to Indigenous youth will allow for the continuation and growth of resurgence. This is proven most successful through everyday acts of resurgence. Last, this paper explores Glen Sean Coulthard’s concept of Grounded Normativity to interpret Indigenous knowledge systems of land.

Glen Sean Coulthard: Grounded Normativity

First Nation Yellowknives Dene Indigenous Scholar Glen Sean Coulthard is an Associate Professor in First Nations and Indigenous Studies for the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. Coulthard is also the co-founder of the Dechinta Centre for

Research and Learning which is a “community-led educational experience” located in Denendeh territory in Northwest Canada. Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning supports acts of resurgence by empowering “Indigenous arts, culture, language and educational programming” through land-based applications (Dechinta 2018). Coulthard’s academic contributions center around protecting and bringing forth attention to the cultural values Indigenous communities have with their land. Coulthard first mentions the Indigenous concept Grounded Normativity in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Grounded Normativity is an Indigenous concept that provides a framework for explaining the relationship Indigenous people have with land, space, and time. He describes this as, “Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experimental knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time.” (Coulthard 2014, 13). Coulthard argues that Grounded Normativity is an anti-capitalist relationship to the land. Indigenous relationships towards land values preservation, connectivity, and stewardship with land and all the inhabitants residing within it.

In contrast, Canada’s relationship to land is hierarchical, extractive, capitalistic, and exploitative. Coulthard stresses the importance of Grounded Normativity to be a framework for creating alternative pathways for Indigenous communities and individuals to reject Canada’s governmental structures of the continual dispossession of First Nation land. Land is the key to preserving Indigenous cultural, political, educational, and knowledge systems. Therefore, if Canada continues the dispossession of First Nation Indigenous land; First Nation Indigenous individuals and communities will lose their sense of being, because their way of being is inherently embedded into the land. Simpson states, “our knowledge comes from the land, and the destruction of the environment is a colonial manifestation and a direct attack on Indigenous

Knowledge and Indigenous nationhood” (Simpson 2003, 377). Everyday acts of resurgence based in Grounded Normativity will strengthen Indigenous populations to further dismantle settler-colonial continual infringement on Indigenous land.

Coulthard defines Grounded Normativity connection to resurgence as, “Indigenous resurgence in response to the dispossessive forces of settler colonization, in both historical and current manifestations, employ measures and tactics designed to protect Indigenous territories and to reconnect Indigenous bodies to land through the practices and forms of knowledge that these practices continuously regenerate” (Coulthard 2014, 254). Indigenous knowledge comes from Grounded Normativity. Grounded Normativity is not limited to the confines of borders, but transcends beyond Indigenous sacred land to Urban city dwellings. Land based practices create a generative process of preservation and flourishing of Indigenous political, educational, and knowledge systems. This is whether these relationships be direct knowledge from the land itself or indirect knowledge through past down teaching from the land. Resurgence can ultimately take many forms, but I argue everyday acts of resurgence centered around knowledge from the land must come first.

Findings: Application of Resurgence: Food and Storytelling

It is important to note that Indigenous resurgence does not have a singular definition and therefore currently is not restricted to academic boundaries. The application and understandings of Indigenous resurgence thus comes down to a personal interpretation. I am focusing on food sovereignty and storytelling as they showcase qualities for being the most sustainable mode of cultural rejuvenation within Indigenous communities. I claim that Indigenous Food Sovereignty and storytelling practices embedded with Grounded Normativity have the best chances for

Indigenous cultural survival in the 21st century. First, I will examine the various forms of Indigenous Food Sovereignty practices that contribute to the resurgence processes.

Food Sovereignty

Indigenous Food Sovereignty is an alternative form of food production that is rooted in environmentally conscious and community oriented values and practices. Agroecology best describes the system of food sovereignty production as a “multifunctional approach to food production that incorporates livelihood provision, conservation of biodiversity, and ecosystem function and community well-being” (Wittman 2011, 95). Indigenous Food Sovereignty is an alternative to the highly industrialized, globalized, and liberalized food regime that dominates the global food production economy. The need for a resurgence in Food Sovereignty is best explained by First Nations Food, Nutrition & Environment Study (FNFNES); whose sole imitative is to study First Nation populations health and nutrition patterns with relation to their current environment. FNFNES Final Report for Eight Assembly of First Nations Regions reports the following concerns and lived realities for many First Nation people as follows:

First Nations are experiencing a dietary transition away from traditional foods that has been attributed to a multitude of factors including: a decline in the availability, quality, safety and access to traditional food due to development, pollution, and climate change; government regulations that impact harvesting; financial and time constraints that influence participation in harvesting; and cultural losses from the breakdown of social systems and intergenerational learning due to colonial assimilation policies and the legacy of the residential school system. Traditional food has key nutritional, cultural, spiritual, and economic values for First Nations peoples and is often more nutrient dense than commercially available ‘market’ or store-bought food replacements. As the proportion of traditional food decreases in the diet of First Nations, there is a risk of a decrease in the nutritional quality of the diet and rise in nutrition-related health problems. (FNFNES 2019, 20)

This has left many Indigenous communities without a physical and spiritual place to connect to their traditional ways of being. In other words, settler colonial development prevents Indigenous communities from Grounded Normativity, which is key to preserving Indigenous language, culture, traditions, and epistemological relationships to their land. Settler-Colonialism development not only interrupts Grounded Normativity but restricts First Nation communities ability to consume their own native food which is high in nutritional and cultural value.

In response, Indigenous Food Sovereignty projects can revive “self-determination, cultural reclamation, and rebuilding family and community connections” within Indigenous population by rebuilding connections with their land Muller 2018, 2). Indigenous Food sovereignty projects carve out geographical and spiritual space for First Nation communities to practice, preserve and implement Indigenous Knowledge systems and understanding of the land. Leanne Simpson explains the importance of re-building relationships with the land as, “the land strengthens our relationship to our extended families and deepens our spiritual understanding of life and our place in it. Consuming traditional foods revitalizes our cultures, our languages and our ceremonies and it reinforces our sovereignty within our families, communities and Nations” (Simpson 2003, 30). Indigenous Food Sovereignty is ultimately Indigenous communities reclaiming a strong relationship with their land through the implementation of individual and community projects. For example, my research will examine three Indigenous Food Sovereignty practices in North America that allow for resurgence to shine. First, a closer look at the White Earth Land Project use of anishinaabe-manoomin (wild rice) to re-connect community members with traditional practices with their land.

Anishinaabe people also known as Ojibwe, traditionally inhabit the Western Great Lakes region which include parts of modern day: Northern United States and Southern Canada.

Anishinaabe people make up various different Indigenous tribes and communities which includes: Ojibway, Algonquin, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Saulteaux, Nipissing, and Mississauga, Ojibwe, Cree and Metis. The mission of Native Harvest Ojibwe Products, a subdivision of White Earth Land Recovery Project works to “facilitate recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation, while preserving and restoring traditional practices of sound land stewardship, language fluency, community development, and strengthening our spiritual and cultural heritage” (Native Harvest 2020). White Earth Land Project aims to revitalize and protect native seeds, crops, fruits, plants, and animals of the Anishinaabe people located in northern Minnesota. White Earth Land Project has focused on the implementation of anishinaabe-manoomin (wild rice) harvest projects. This project includes different aspects that aim to engage the Anishinaabe community back into a traditional relationship with the land. One aspect is through the extensive Ojibwe vocabulary which listed around sixty-three words and phrases to explain personal interactions with anishinaabe-manoomin.

For example, the Ojibwe phrase “aaba'oodoo” which is interpreted as “s/he unties wild rice”(Native Harvest 2017). I interpret this as a unification of two separate entities that when united create a collective whole. This is an example of Grounded Normativity, because Indigenous relationship with land center around respect for land and describes the power food has to the internal well-being of the individual. The importance of anishinaabe-manoomin is not only about the preservation of Indigenous language, but guiding community members with detailed understandings of their relationship with anishinaabe-manoomin during harvest. Also, White Earth Land Project focuses on the reintroduction of Native grains back into the Anishinaabe people’s diet which is critical to the decolonizing of the native diet. White Earth Land Project is one example of many that embarks on the resurgence of traditional food

sovereignty practices. This is a form of Indigenous resurgence because White Earth Land Recovery Project is internalizing and protecting Indigenous communal practices for the future of the next generation of Indigenous youth. The paper will now examine three contemporary forms of resurgence in food sovereignty practices. Up next, we will look at how a First Nation chef is paving the way for a more creative form of native Indigenous food accessibility.

Enoch Cree chef Shane M. Charthard is leading the way for bringing attention to progressive Indigenous cuisine in Canada through his book: *Tawâw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine*. Tawâw is a Cree word that means — there is room, you are welcome. The chef and author uses Tawâw as a way to indicate to readers that these ingredients are inclusionary to anybody who is interested to learn and respect their origins and cultural significance. Charthard grew up in Central Alberta where he learned to “raise livestock, hunt, and fish on his family’s acreage” (House of Anansi 2020). Over the years, his love of the land and interest to learn more about “his history” was enhanced by “visiting with other First Nations peoples, gathering and sharing knowledge and stories” about Indigenous food within Canada (House of Anansi 2020). In Chartrand’s interview with The Globe and Mail he discussed the importance of understanding and preservation of Indigenous food as, “ In the First Nations world, we have a massive responsibility to take those traditions and carry them on” (Rosendaal 2018). This cookbook provides Indigenous communities with written information about the cultural significance of Indigenous traditional ingredients.

This cookbook is important for the urban Indigenous population to connect with traditional Indigenous food sources even if they are far from the land where the food is harvested. This cookbook engages the reader to “pay more attention to the sources and cultural relevance of the food they eat” and with that opens the conversation around the “Indigenous experience” (Rosendaal 2018). One of the recipes in his book includes the Gold Medal Plates award-winning dish called “War Paint”.

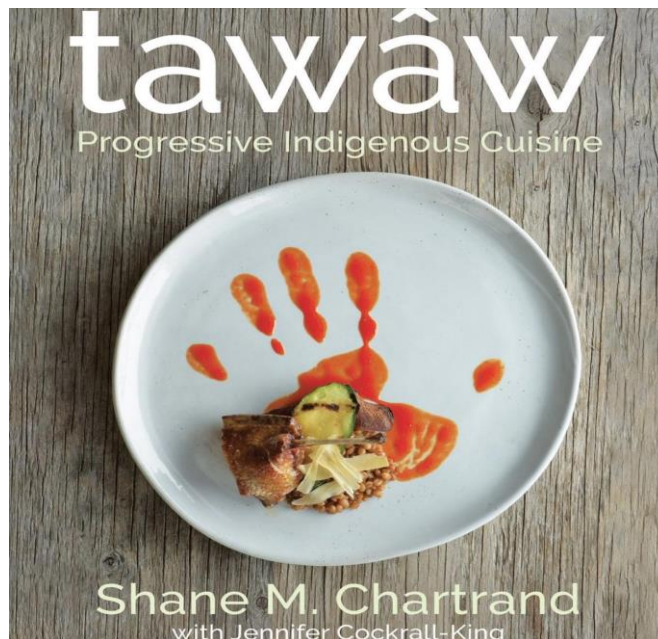


Figure 1. Tawâw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine. Photograph by Cathryn Sprague. 2019. House of Anansi Press Inc, Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication.

Figure 1. shows the striking dish that uses red pepper sauce to form a highly contrasted hand on the plate. A very impactful dish that showcases native Indigenous ingredients with a modern presentation. Chartrand’s cookbook is an example of Indigenous resurgence of food sovereignty practices because it provides innovative recipes that inform readers the importance of traditional

Indigenous dietary ingredients with a broader intent to reconnect readers to understanding the historical and cultural significance of respecting each ingredient. Next, Chef Watson's clever word play on an all native ingredient menu that brings attention to preserving the Indigenous pre-colonial diet.

Chef Steven Watson is a Peguis First Nation instructor at Winnipeg's Commonwealth College in Canada. He developed a menu called 1491 that uses only traditional Indigenous ingredients derived from the area. 1491 is the year that Columbus landed in the Americas therefore the menu is strictly only using Indigenous ingredients prior to the introduction of European foods. His creation processes involved "researching the ingredients and technologies Indigenous peoples would have had to work with in that time" and took it one step forward by creating dishes that would satisfy a modern day Indigenous palette that is accustomed to high levels of salt and sugar (Watson and Heidenreich 2019). Watson's overarching goal of this project is to create food that "connects Indigenous people with their culture" through the incorporation of spiritually significant ingredients into his recipes, such as sage and tobacco. He is embarking on the mission to bring forth 500 years old "of cultural knowledge to the fore" (Watson and Heidenreich 2019). This is an example of Indigenous resurgence because Watson is educating Indigenous communities on the traditional foods that were part of their diet before colonization. Reconnecting to traditional foods is an important part of resurgence because it creates a space and time to reflect on the cultural and geographical significance of these ingredients. Last, an Indigenous cultural network that focuses on engaging urban Indigenous populations to reconnect with land practices.

Ojibiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network was founded in 2018 with the efforts to reconnect urban Indigenous communities living in the city of Toronto through the

implementation of Indigenous food sovereignty projects. This includes community and youth based projects that are tailored towards “food and nutrition education, sustainable food systems and practices, and traditional ecological knowledge” (Ojibiikaan 2020). Ojibiikaan provides the necessary tools and resources for urban Indigenous populations to grow and harvest traditional foods in an urban setting. Ojibiikaan wants to provide Indigenous communities in Toronto with an outlet to reconnect with traditional land based practices which includes: “medicine walks, snowshoeing, sugarbush tapping, gardening and traditional cooking” (Ojibiikaan 2020). Ojibiikaan approach to land-based practices is one that honors and respects the land along with bringing attention to the historical and cultural significance of these practices.

For example, Gikinoo’amaadiwag mashkikiike program was launched in Fall 2019 with the aim to teach urban Indigenous youth about medicine-making. Medicine-making is an important component of Indigenous food sovereignty because Indigenous traditional food has medicinal and nutritional value that contributes to the overall “health and wellbeing” of the individual. Gikinoo’amaadiwag mashkikiike project was contributing to the resurgence of traditional Indigenous culture and food systems by engaging youth with “medicine practices, language and traditional ecological knowledge” of Indigenous plants located within the urban areas of Toronto. Now the second application of resurgence that I would like to highlight is contemporary and traditional forms of Indigenous storytelling.

Indigenous Storytelling

Indigenous storytelling is a “practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurtures relationships and the sharing of knowledge. Storytelling is also a central focus of Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies” (Iseke 2013, 559). Indigenous storytelling is important in the foundational process for sustaining Indigenous cultural epistemologies, history, and cultural practices. Due to past and current dispossession of sacred land from settler-colonialism many Indigenous communities are faced with difficulties passing on traditions, such as storytelling. Storytelling is important in creating a foundation for sustaining Indigenous cultural epistemologies and practices. Storytelling is also helpful in the effort to build stronger communities, individuals, and for fostering the next generation Indigenous youth. If Indigenous Storytelling is not preserved there is a concern with the possibility of Indigenous communities losing their knowledge, culture, and traditions. The importance of storytelling is not only a way for Indigenous communities to reconnect with ancestors but a way to pass on ancestral wisdom and knowledge to next generation youth. Indigenous Storytelling plays a key role in resurgence because it is “recovering and revitalizing Indigenous languages” that help to contain “Indigenous languages' cultural knowledge that inform Indigenous worldviews and values” (Parley, O’Donnell, George, Beaton, and Peter-Paul 2016, 23). Without the preservation of Indigenous storytelling there is an increased likelihood that Indigenous communities will lose a part of their identity. Their Indigenous identity must be sustained in order to ensure a future where cultural survival is feasible. Next, this paper will examine new media forms of Indigenous Storytelling amongst Urban and Youth Indigenous populations.

Indigenous Grounded Normativity is a way of relating to space through ancestral cultural knowledge which is not restricted to the confines of geographical borders. Indigenous knowledge

comes from the land but honoring the relationship with land can be performed in many different ways. For example, contemporary urban Indigenous people, “living in an urban environment does not erase the connection with the land, because their lives are informed by ancestral teachings from the land passed on and practiced in relationship with each other” (Dion and Salamanca 2018, 196). This is especially prevalent for urban Indigenous populations and contemporary Indigenous youth who search to create new forms of storytelling to embrace their Indigenous cultural heritage. Modern Indigenous storytellers are applying “modern media forms encourage connections and creation of new stories to meet the needs of current and future generations as part of the process of Indigenous storytelling” (Iseke 2013, 573). I will now examine Simpson’s revitalization of traditional storytelling to fit contemporary First Nation Indigenous issues.

Leanne Simpson’s book, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back* articulates Indigenous cultural resurgence through the use of Nishnaabeg language and Creation Stories. Simpson presents many examples of Nishnaabeg stories in both English and Nishnaabeg language to weave together a cohesive journey of the complexities around Anishinaabe thought processes. Simpson interprets traditional stories to a more contemporary setting that makes sense to guide her life as being an Indigenous woman in the 21st century. In particular, the story of Wiindigoo and Gezhizhwazh which is translated from Roger Roulette, a Nishnaabeg language expert.

The story goes ... she [Gezhizhwazh] sacrificed herself to be taken by the Wiindigoo because they were going toward where the Ojibwe people were living. And there was a band of them. So she thought, if she sacrificed herself to be taken by the Wiindigoo in that way, she'd have an eye on them, of what they were going to do, what their plans were, even though during the time she was with them, they would cut pieces of her and eat parts of her. But in order to save her own people, the Anishinaabe, she would be taken as lunch. And then she knew their plan. So, when she had the chance to go to the Anishinaabe village, she told them what the Wiindigoo's plans were. She wanted to be the first one to strike and she also showed the Anishinaabe how to kill the Wiindigoo. And she's seen as a hero

because she was the main killer of Wiindigoo. And that's the story. (Simpson 2011, 72)

This story is then interpreted by Simpson to fit the contemporary setting of the current relationship between Indigenous individuals and the settler-colonial state. Wiindigoo can be interpreted in many different ways including an analogy for the exploitative nature of colonialism and capitalism hierarchical relationship towards natural resources. In response to this very destructive exploitative behavior one must strategize a plan to outsmart Wiindigoo in order to ensure future prosperity. Simple describes this as, “Gezhizhwazh stories teach us that in order to resist, one has to first diagnosis and reveal the problem and then prepare a strategic response” (Simpson 2011, 72). The interpretation of a traditional Indigenous stories such as Wiindigo and Gezhizhwazh into the contemporary setting is a clear example of how Simpson embodies resurgence. Throughout *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, Simpson lays the foundation for how resurgence can be a cultural movement that strengthens First Nation communities to embark on the journey of cultural renewal. She believes that resurgence is about embracing the fundamentals of Indigeneity which are grounded in land-based practices, such as storytelling. Furthermore, an example of a futuristic form of Indigenous storytelling that encapsulates a future where Indigenous culture is ever prevalent.

Lisa Jackson is an award winning First Nation Anishinaabe filmmaker who has produced an array of notable works that include different contemporary styles of media in documentaries, music videos, musicals, animation and virtual reality. Jackson’s 2018 VR (Virtual Reality) film: *Biidaaban: First Light VR* won the Canadian Screen Award winner and was nominated for a Webby. According to the Tribeca Film, “Biidaaban explores how the languages of native peoples can provide a framework for understanding our place in the world and open up a space for new

imaginings of the future” (Tribeca Film 2020). The Virtual Reality film takes the audience through a virtual journey of what a future Toronto would look like if elements of nature took back the city. The film uses Indigenous language as a symbolic indicator to Indigenous youth that their language and culture will survive in the future. The implication of resurgence in Jackson’s film is her use of innovative media forms such as Virtual Reality to tell a story of Indigenous futurism. This form of storytelling creates imaginative space for future Indigenous youth to vision alternative futuristic Indigenous realities. In Lisa Jackson’s 2018 interview with *Filmmaker Magazine* she explains the importance of using Indigenous language in a future setting as, “Indigenous futurism is a way to step past those stereotypes to something more thoughtful and sophisticated where we imagine our cultures and thought systems in the future. Hearing the languages is very moving for many who experience the piece and knowing that young Indigenous people can listen to their languages spoken in a future world like this is very exciting” (Filmmaker Magazine 2018). My interpretation of the importance of this film to resurgence is that Indigenous realities can go beyond the scope of physical relationships to the land and transcend to virtual imagination relationships. Nonetheless, both form of land-based relationships can be understood through traditional storytelling and new media forms of storytelling, such as *Biidaaban: First Light VR*. Last, a closer look at how a First Nation comic book artist aims to engage Indigenous youth into learning their traditional language.

Cole Pauls is a Tahltan First Nation comic artist from Northern British Columbia, Canada. He incorporates Southern Tutchone culture and language into his most recent comic book: *Dakwākāda Warriors*. The comic book follows “Indigenous superheroes who are saving the world from various evil forms using language revitalization as their secret weapon” (Vernet

2019). One of these evil forms includes evil aliens from another planet that are trying to colonize the Indigenous superheroes planet (earth) as depicted in (Figure 1.2).

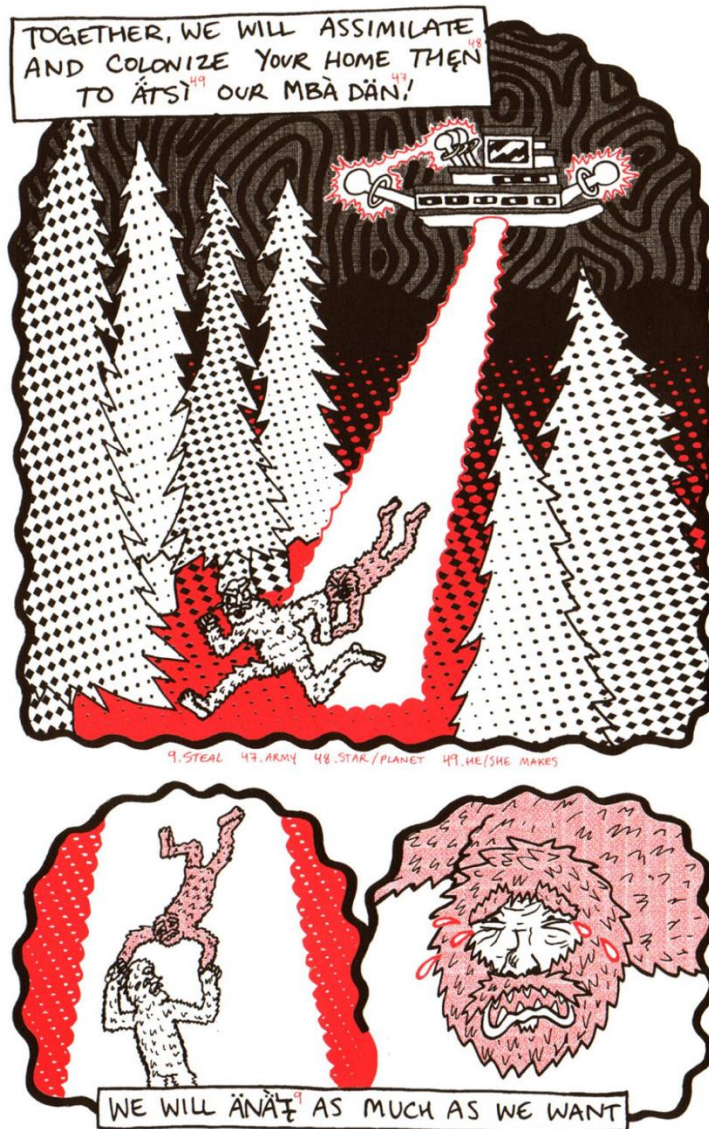


Figure 1.2. Dakwäkāda Warriors. Artwork by Cole Pauls, October 1st, 2019. Conundrum Press.

Figure 1.2. shows a glimpse into Dakwäkāda Warriors artistic style that incorporates science fiction, Indigenous traditional artwork styles, Tutchone language, and the overarching plot. The stark contrast between black and white helps to make the scenes more engagingly intense. Pauls

uses this plot to indicate a very common dilemma Indigenous communities face in regards to settler-colonial actions towards trying to diminish their rights to their land. He also explains reasons behind his comic books targeted audience as follows: “I made my book for Yukon Indigenous Youth as a learning tool and a way for them to see themselves in the media” (Mingo and Pauls 2019). He sees his comic book as a form of cultural and language preservation for the future. This comic book is one of the ways in which Indigenous youth from Tahltan First Nation can connect with their culture in the 21st-century. *Dakwākāda Warriors* is Indigenous resurgence because it is a contemporary form of storytelling that is specifically designed to engage Indigenous youth into their language and culture.

Conclusion

This research paper intent was to show an array of Indigenous resurgence land-based practices to indicate some of the variations of traditional to more contemporary forms of resurgence taking place in the 21st century. To me the beauty of Indigenous resurgence is the power of the Indigenous collective to adapt, readjust, and prevail in contemporary times when the settler-colonial dominance is still ever prevalent. Not only this, but it shows the strength within these communities that their cultural identity will not be erased. Collectively these everyday acts of resurgence will build a greater sense of nationhood which is important for Indigenous youth to understand the importance of carrying on traditional values of indigeneity. This is the future of resurgence, but right now there is a need for an Indigenous cultural re-set that begins first with the revitalization of land-based practices.

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