100 Days of Acknowledging Land

The Medicine Wheel in A/r/tographic Fieldwork

BY VALERIE TRIGGS

Faculty of Education,
University of Regina

SHANNON LEDDY

Faculty of Education,
UBC

MICHELE SORENSEN

Faculty of Social Work,
University of Regina

NICOLE RALLIS

Faculty of Education,
UBC

RITA L. IRWIN

Faculty of Education,
UBC

CHING-CHIU LIN

Faculty of Education,
Simon Fraser University

ABSTRACT

In this article, we, a mixed circle of Indigenous and settler educators/artists/researchers, explore how sustained land acknowledgement practices might deepen relational engagement with place and support ongoing Indigenous feminist work of Indigenizing and decolonizing postsecondary education. Framed by the Medicine Wheel and guided by a/r/tographic practices, we undertook a 100-day inquiry into personal and embodied relationships with specific elements of land: temperature, wind, light, language, earth, and change. Through daily artmaking and writing, we engaged land as teacher, story-holder, relative, curriculum, and pedagogy. Seeking to disrupt perfunctory land acknowledgements, this research foregrounds our sustained, site-specific, research that engages the Medicine Wheel to help position us with the land. Drawing on cyclical and reflective analyses from Medicine Wheel teachings, we consider how acts of noticing, reciprocity, and artistic expression might foster more accountable relationships with land, self, and community, through learning the animacy of the land. The Medicine Wheel disrupts a continuance of educational practice taught only from colonial worldviews. Its sacred knowledge and healing potential rekindle relationship and invite shifts toward collectivist styles of thinking rather than static individualist positionings.

KEY WORDS

A/R/TOGRAPHY, INDIGENIZING EDUCATION, LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, RELATIONAL METHODOLOGIES

INTRODUCTION

We are a circle of six artists/researchers/teachers and friends, of various mixes of Indigenous and colonial ancestry working in university faculties of social work and education in western Canada. Each are committed to honouring the territories in which we are located and to be mindful of our shared responsibilities and relationships to/with the land. Collectively, we undertook an a/r/tographic research project beginning on winter solstice, 2023. A/r/tographic research involves investigating while generating movements and meaning within and between practices. In the current project, we engaged in 100 days of acknowledging land which consisted of encounters with various land elements. We endeavored to begin decolonizing our teaching practices by creating opportunity for ourselves to persistently notice and respond to relational entanglements in the very land where we most wanted our work to materialize and have influence. Through years of postsecondary teaching, we have found that although official land and territorial acknowledgements are frequently offered in university settings as well as in our courses, both Indigenous and settler students do not always feel personal connections to them. Drawing from Indigenous authors across Turtle Island (i.e. Simpson [Mississauga Nishnaabeg], 2014; Styres [Haudenosaunee], 2011) who argue for the importance of *actual land* in educational practice, we invited the land as both curriculum and pedagogy.

To position ourselves in relation to land, to guide reflections and organize our a/r/tographic fieldwork, we draw on the Medicine Wheel, a conceptual framework used in many Indigenous communities on Turtle Island. Each author selected one of six directions through which to invite the land to relationally position them. These directions correspond to elemental forces and teachings that offer insight into how land-attuned, artful practices might support more relational and decolonizing approaches to postsecondary education. Through sustained, site-specific, interdisciplinary inquiry, we hope our contribution to this issue ignites conversations about Indigenous pedagogies, unsettles colonial ontological and pedagogical frameworks, and offers opportunity for deeper relations to land, self, and community.

MEDICINE WHEEL

Medicine Wheels are used as conceptual frameworks for everyday teachings in many Indigenous communities. Potawatami scholar Wall-Kimmerer explains that Indigenous knowledge is based on observation and experimentation like Western science but includes spiritual relationships and explanations: "Traditional knowledge brings together the seen and the unseen, whereas Western science says that if we can't measure something, it doesn't exist" (Kimmerer, in L. Toninio, 2016, n.p.). The directions of the Medicine Wheel are comprised of interacting components that emphasize interrelated cycles, and balance between them. Access is opened to intergenerational relations as well as relations beyond human experience, encompassing the spiritual (Menard, 2024), and more-than-human world (Kimmerer, 2013). As a result, learning and repositioning within each aspect of the Medicine Wheel carry both ethical and sacred dimensions. Mashford-Pringle (Algonquin) and Shawanda (Odawa Kwe) (2023) describe conducting and analyzing research within Medicine Wheel theoretical frameworks as a way of departing from Western worldviews.

Some Indigenous groups emphasize four Medicine Wheel quadrants (East, South, West, North), represented by distinct and sacred colours: yellow, red, black/blue, white. The sections of the Medicine Wheel have also been used for teaching four guiding ethical principles: reciprocity, responsibility, relationship, respect; four sacred plant medicines: tobacco, cedar, sage, sweetgrass; four stages of life: childhood, youth, adulthood, elderhood; four sacred animals: eagle, coyote, bear, deer; four parts of selves: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual; four elements: air, earth, water, fire (Bopp et al., 1984). Other Indigenous groups emphasize seven directions to the Medicine Wheel including up, down, and inward to self. For all, the Medicine Wheel offers ways of living. Ojibwe Elder

Pitawanakwat (2006) writes that harmony, balance, and respect for all parts of the Medicine Wheel are needed to sustain life.

While we respectfully note we cannot claim to understand all Medicine Wheel teachings, nor reduce them to our own experience, nor conflate them with Western ways of doing research, we value them as honouring and upholding Indigenous knowledges deeply embedded in land. According to Wenger-Nabigon (2010), working with Cree Medicine Wheel concepts conveys "wisdom traditions of cultures with tens of thousands of years of knowledge evolution embedded within the traditional ways of life and worldviews" (p. 150). She argues that this work provides potential for establishing balance between people and environment and restoring cultural ways of knowing in a world desperately needing relations of balance and interconnectedness. As artists/researchers/teachers, we consider Medicine Wheel contributions to decolonization by using Indigenous knowledges in postsecondary teaching and research. Mashford-Pringle and Shawanda (2023), Verwoord, Mitchell (Wet'sewet'en Carrier), and Machadeo (2011), and Graham (Thunderchild First Nation) and Stamler (2010), also advocate use of the Medicine Wheel in research, as a decolonizing theory and methodology.

While decolonizing and Indigenizing are often linked in educational discourse, they are not necessarily interchangeable. *Decolonizing* calls for unsettling dominant power structures and colonial assumptions about knowledge, linear progress, and human-nature relations. Alternatively, *Indigenizing* centers Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being, including relationality, reciprocity, responsibility, and land-based learning as vital sources of pedagogy and knowledge production. Smith (Māori iwi Ngāti Awa / Ngāti Porou) (1999) maintains that Eurocentric/Western systems tend to uphold hierarchies of knowledge, marginalizing non-Western epistemologies. The methodological undertaking of this paper uses a Medicine Wheel framework and a/r/tographic fieldwork to prioritize interconnection, cyclicality, and sacred values deeply embedded across many Indigenous feminist worldviews. Through these priorities, we contribute to this journal issue not only by challenging colonial paradigms, but by co-creating practices that honour Indigenous teachings and shift how knowledge is generated, embodied, and shared.

Dumbrill and Green (Haisla/Tsmishian/Kemano) (2008) argue that using models for Indigenous knowledge in Social Work helps disrupt a continuance of courses taught from Eurocentric worldviews or perspectives that perpetuate colonization of Indigenous peoples. Leddy (Métis) and Miller (2023) also argue for decolonial literacy—involving supporting and engaging Indigenizing education, specifically through place/land-based education using the Medicine Wheel's holistic framework. Working with land as teacher and Medicine Wheel as guide for research and understanding, we aim to contribute to subverting current colonial archives of knowledge.

When we write about land in this article, we consider it broadly. Simpson (2014) describes aki (land) as including all aspects of creation: "landforms, elements, plants, animals, spirits, sounds, thoughts, feelings, energies and all of the emergent systems, ecologies and networks that connect these elements" (p. 15). In this research we focus on elements of temperature, wind, body change, light, language, and earth flora. Each of us has engaged with land elements in both artmaking and writing. We are strongly influenced by Pitawanakwat's (2006) descriptions of an Anishinabe Medicine Wheel with seven sacred directions. We explain these directions and relate their teachings as we share a portion of learning in a/r/tographic fieldwork with the land and how the Medicine Wheel afforded our understandings of/in/with particular lands.

A/R/TOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

As artists/researchers/teachers, we are familiar with a relational form of research called a/r/tography. This interdisciplinary research practice inquires in the world through rich cycles of research, teaching, learning, and artmaking (Irwin, 2004). It searches for emerging interconnections that might create additional meanings. Rather than transferring meaning

between artmaking, research, and teaching, a/r/tography finds new connections to offer sustenance and balance or spur new conversations and awareness of alternative trajectories of movement in one's life and work.

For 100 days—not all of which were consecutive—we each acknowledged our chosen aspect of land and shared these acknowledgements on Padlet (a free collaborative online platform). Choosing a 100-day timeframe was intentional. Sustained duration allowed us to move beyond novelty or performativity and into deeper rhythms of noticing, listening, and repositioning. The passage of time revealed shifts in our attention, emotion, and relation with the land. As Kimmerer (2013) reminds, practices rooted in repetition, like gratitude and stewardship, are not outcomes, but ongoing relationships. The 100-day arc offered time to recenter our often-vulnerable bodies with the land's knowledge systems and to endure through discomfort, weather, and daily life, while making space for gradual emergence of transformation and insight. In this way, temporality itself became a pedagogy, one that asked us to attend again—and again. A/r/tography relates well with Medicine Wheel practice because both are grounded in relations. In addition, a/r/tography's interest in embodied, wholistic living, including realms of the spiritual (Irwin, 2006) which are vital in Indigenous knowledges (Leddy & Miller, 2023), aligns with Medicine Wheel practice.

In the next sections, we share our initial positioning with land elements, including our journal entries (indented and dated) written as part of our land acknowledging practices.

EAST: MICHELE SORENSEN (TEMPERATURE)

In daily land acknowledgements, Sorensen focused on local temperature—the measure of hot or cold at a consistent time each day. In response, she knitted rows of coloured yarn correlating with a chosen range of temperatures:

> In this research, I take inspiration from artist, Leah Dorian (Métis) (2013) who suggests art and healing are linked. Dorian describes art as acts of restoring Indigenous cultural beliefs and values...I'm curious how artmaking and attending to land as a teacher might disrupt land acknowledgement and, in turn, "reconciliation"—moving the term from definition into action. I begin by knitting temperature changes. 10 balls of yarn in assorted colours: I assign each to a 10-degree increment of temperature: White yarn for temperatures 0 C to -10 C. Blue yarn: -11 C to -20 C. I use the highest temperature of each day to provide consistency to my practice (M. Sorensen, journal notes, 12.21.23)
>
> Today, if I did not have to go outside, I wouldn't. I drove to the hospital, then shuffled through snow to the door to get the 7th radiation treatment. Now that snow and cold have arrived it is an increasingly difficult daily trek. After today, 9 more treatments (M. Sorensen, journal notes, 01.10.24).

While teachings of the East invite emotional awareness and presence, we now journey to the South, aligned with summer, and the heart. South invites consideration of love, movement, and reciprocity—qualities manifested by the wind in Valerie Triggs's inquiry.

Figure 1

SOUTH: VALERIE TRIGGS (WIND)

> In my 100 days of land acknowledgement, I plan to practice inhabiting and responding to the invisible—the wind and its qualities. I want to read about wind, honour it as part of land, make a wind rug responding to wind speed and direction. I have read that in some Indigenous traditions, wind is considered a person, acting with intelligence and having idiosyncrasies (Simpson, 2014). In creating a wind rug, I use coloured fabric strips to map the homes of the wind—the places/directions from which they come. I will use longer strips when wind is stronger than 35km/hr. Today wind is from the northwest at 12 km/hr—for which I'll use dark blue (V. Triggs, journal notes, 12.21.23).

From the vitality and generosity of the South, we move to the West, a place of maturity and vision. The West offers space for reflection and integration of heart and mind. In the following section, Shannon Leddy explores change and community, through artistic expression and poetic acknowledgement.

WEST: SHANNON LEDDY (CHANGE)

Leddy's land acknowledgements involved daily poems, drawings, or paintings responding to land in two radically different locations: Northern Denmark and Metro Vancouver. She considered the physical realm of her lived experience, focusing on healing its disconnects, and the importance of both letting-go and growing-together in community with self, others, and the land.

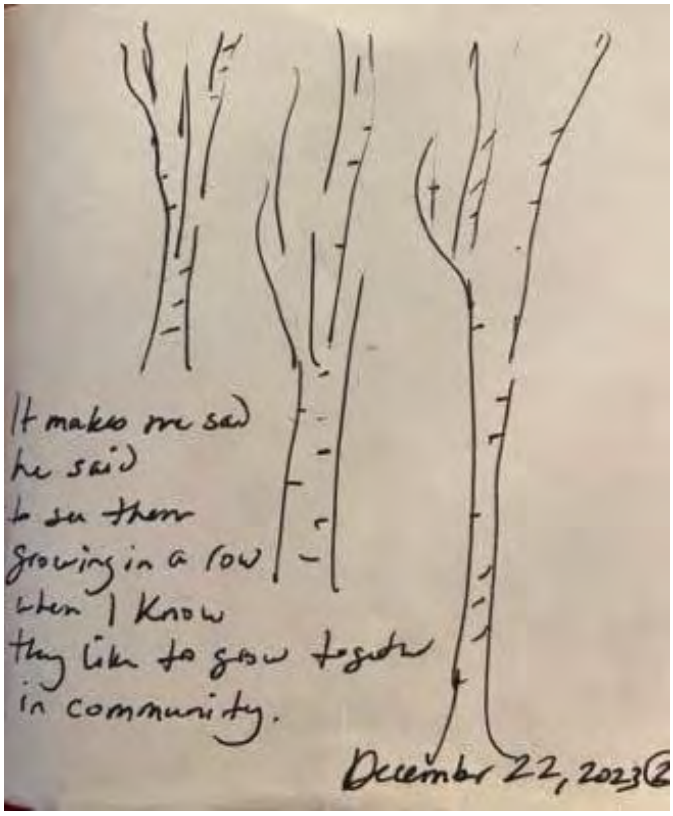

Figure 2

> As the date of our departure to Denmark looms, I am both excited and wistful. Although I am an uninvited guest on xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sel̓íl̓witulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) territory, I have grown to understand what it means to be a good guest here. As a Métis woman, I feel I belong in Canada. In Denmark, I am a stranger on a strange land, with much to learn (S. Leddy, journal notes, 01.05.24).

While the West teaches about harvest and transition, the North brings winter's stillness, where wisdom, memory, and reflection reside. In this quieter space, Rita Irwin attends to light as both metaphor and teacher, engaging the layered teachings of darkness and illumination in poetry.

NORTH: RITA IRWIN (LIGHT)

Irwin began her practice with photography—investigating reflections of light, light's relation to colour, and the feeling/sensation of 'lightness' in light. She inquired into the stillness that learning from light requires.

Figure 3

> The maximum duality of light across the world exists today with winter solstice in the northern hemisphere. For me, I'm beginning my day as the sun rises in northern Alberta, on my husband's farm. I will arrive back in Vancouver after the sun has gone down on the west coast. I feel blessed to be on these lands both here and there. As I prepare to leave this farmland, I want to acknowledge that these are the ancestral lands of the Treaty 7 people representing five First Nations: Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney-Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee) peoples. When I return to Vancouver, I'll be living and working on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilw̓ətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. I am indebted to their stewardship of these lands for millennia (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 12.21.23).

Gradually, Irwin turned her daily practice to exploring the work of Indigenous poets who teach about light in terms of relation and reverence for land. She looked to poetry that is attuned to stories and learning around the light of built fires, at daybreaks, or on moon-lit nights.

Irwin quotes Sigo (2020):

> Native people of the Northwest had no choice but to live in relation to poetry (…). We had to learn to identify and convert the individual elements of earth into forms of protection and sustenance, a so-called lifestyle (p. 171).

Arising from the stillness of North, the Up direction brings us to sky, to spirit, to breath. Language becomes the thread through which relation to land is spoken and sung. Nicole Rallis reflects on this direction in daily Hul'qumi'num word practice, for listening and speaking with land.

UP: NICOLE RALLIS (LANGUAGE)

> 12.21.23. I live on Vancouver Island, BC. My home is geographically located in the central region of Vancouver Island and is home to ten First Nations near Shawnigan Lake. Shawnigan is an anglicized adaptation of the Hul'q'umi'num word Showe'luqun. The lake is the shared unceded territory of the Malahat (MÁLEXEŁ), Quw'utsun and W̱SÁNEĆ Nations who have peacefully gathered along its shorelines for millennia.
>
> For this project, I decided to engage with the land through Indigenous language, seeking to decolonize my knowledge of the places I walk daily. Hul'qumi'num and SENĆOŦEN are the two traditional languages spoken where I live, but Hul'qumi'num is more widely spoken across multiple Indigenous communities in Cowichan today. To learn more about the language, I used FirstVoices—an online interactive language learning platform that collaborates with Elders, youth, and speakers to create and share language resources

like words, phrases, songs, and stories. My practice involved not only learning a new word each day but also creating word art for each. I also recorded myself speaking the word as a living, breathing practice that honours the vitality of the land and the peoples from which the language emerged. By visually and audibly engaging with the Hul'qumi'num language, I strive to develop a deeper connection with the land and with the culture that continues to steward and sustain it (N. Rallis, journal notes, 12.21.23).

Figure 4

From the air and language of Up, we now turn to Down, toward soil, fungi, and unseen webs of relation beneath our feet. Ching-Chiu Lin's journey reminds us that learning with the land begins with attending to the overlooked, the cyclical, and the deeply interconnected.

DOWN: CHING-CHIU LIN (EARTH)

I began my 100 days of land acknowledgment by walking in the woods in Fall, 2023 without focus or direction. I was looking for clues, hoping the land might offer me guidance. I became obsessed with searching for mushrooms, different colors, and types. I took photos of mushrooms every day for a month, amazed by their beauty: extensions of the earth. During this period of exploration, an Indigenous colleague introduced me to the book Sand Talks by Tyson Yunkaporta (Wik Mungkan, Australia), who examines how contemporary life diverges from patterns of creation. He asks, "How does this[divergence] affect us? How can we do things differently?"

I find I am newly aware of the importance of looking for connective relations amidst acknowledging the land's abundant diversity (C. Lin, journal notes, 12.21.23).

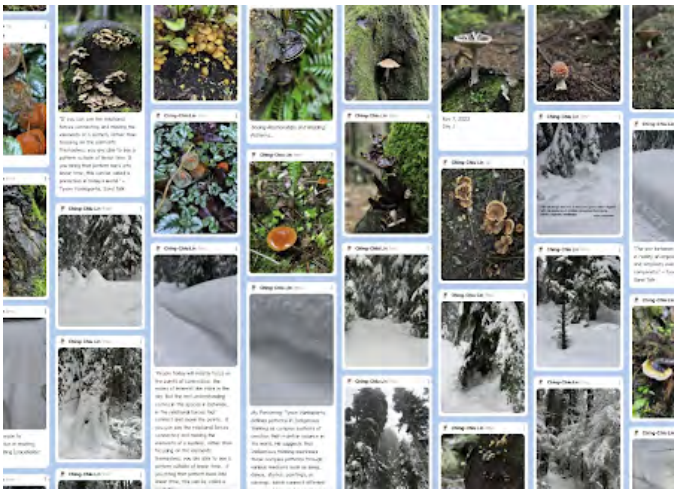

Figure 5

MEDICINE WHEEL ANALYSIS IN A/R/TOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK:

We now draw from Mashford-Pringle and Shawanda (2023) to use the Medicine Wheel as a framework to interrogate our initial positionings, to inquire into our expanding relation to learning with land. As they note, a linear or conventional model of analysis is premised on activities leading directly to outcomes. Instead, the Medicine Wheel "takes a circular approach to broaden the scope and to capture outcomes and elicit responses that are often overlooked" (p. 5). It helps researchers make sense, bring order, and enable "an in-depth analysis of data, people, and their symbolic and physical interactions" (p. 5). As a decolonizing analysis tool (Verniest, [Cree] 2019), it also provides a visual space in which to circulate variables or think one category/theme through another.

While some researchers use the Medicine Wheel for building identity, Verniest (2019) claims that it can be used as an analytical tool to illustrate Social Work

clients' locations, states of being, and their roles and forms of action, These capacities for aiding introspection and evaluation are significant in our inquiry of engaging daily practices of acknowledging land to find how we might feel more responsibly connected to land and others.

The seventh dimension of the Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel is the Centre—the fire of Self, connected to all other sacred, interrelated, and interconnected teachings—as well as to our collective of colleagues. Before visiting this concept of self in our conclusion, our next sections return to the Medicine Wheel to analyze our 100 days of positioning acknowledgements.

EAST: SORENSEN (KNITTING TEMPERATURE)

East is the direction to which we turn to greet the new day. Manitowabi (Anishinaabe) (2018) explains that East also represents childhood, springtime, and opportunity for new beginnings and renewal. Renewal is important for Sorensen, as she struggles with breast cancer chemotherapy, radiation treatments, and their side-effects. Amid daily recording and responding to temperature during a cold winter, she looks forward to Spring, hoping for physical healing and future restoration. In teaching a Social Work course about working with Indigenous populations during her 100-day practice, Sorensen noticed healing was an important emphasis in her curriculum, pedagogy, daily class discussions, and in student-responses.

Dumbrill and Green (2008) argue that teachings from the East invite examining where one comes from, "who has been included and excluded from the space we occupy, who is defined as Other, and who has the power to so define" (p. 498), a process described as decolonizing education.

> Looking more closely at temperature, I suggest, will allow me to move into another realm of knowing what it means to 'acknowledge' where I am on Treaty 4 territory (M. Sorensen, journal notes, 12.21.23).

East invites learning to be present, absorbed in the moment, as a child. Being present is a gift that must be practiced. Bopp, Bopp, Brown and Lane (Yankton Sioux/Chickasaw) (1985) argue that accepting this gift and its opportunity to learn, involves becoming present: merging one's being with an undertaking at hand, becoming completely absorbed.

Bopp et al. maintain that East involves learning to love as a child loves—unconditionally. It also involves accepting gifts of trust, uncritical acceptance of others—and warmth—an important gift for Sorensen. Temperatures between -20°C and -39°C offered many occasions for longing for and accepting the gift of warmth.

Figure 6

One cannot learn, however, from the East alone. Bopp et al. (1985) emphasize the journey to the South to learn of sacrifice, sensitivity to others' feelings, and love that expects nothing in return.

SOUTH: TRIGGS (WEAVING WIND)

"From the south", Kimmerer (2013) writes, "comes the green that covers the world in spring, carried on the warm winds" (p. 209). Summer in Potawatomi is "the time of plenty, and also time for our tribal gathering, for powwows and ceremony" (p. 380). Pitawanakwat (2006), describes this as a time of continued nurturance for all creation.

South represents summer fullness of youth, physical strength and vigor (Bopp et al., 1985). It teaches the heart's beats: generosity, sensitivity to others' feelings, loyalty, compassion, kindness, and love. This is a different love than the unconditional love taught by the East. Bopp et al. explain that love to be developed here is capacity for love of one person for another, as well as for passionate involvement in the world—training the senses to notice and respond to land. This love does not seek to control, possess or own:

> The Wind: An Unruly Living, by Bendik-Keymer (2018) engages wind to circumvent ideas of self-possession or possession of others. Bendik-Keymer asks what kind of living he might live if he took the wind as a rule of living. The wind, he claims, does not rule—it is un-ruly. It's a relative—one that airs things, exposes us and reveals our vulnerability.
>
> To relate to things, like the wind, he writes about getting to know winds like people. Not just knowing about them but being with them (V. Triggs, journal notes, 01.10.24).

Learning love from the South is grounded in reciprocity and in the recognition that there are no experts in healing journeys toward healthy relationships. As Verniest (2019) notes in counselling contexts, what matters is learning to express feelings openly in non-harmful ways to others, and to allow space for grieving through the release of tears.

After preparing body and spirit for relationship and healing change, more teaching is found when turning from South to West where learning involves becoming accountable to community through merging of heart/mind.

WEST: LEDDY (DRAWING CHANGE)

West brings teachings of adulthood. As mentioned in the first reflection on the 'West', Leddy's 100-day practice of acknowledging Mother Earth focuses on responding to land through drawing, painting, and poetry. West is the place for letting go of disconnections between body and mind (Leddy & Miller, 2023); the place "where the sun sets, day cools, frogs awaken…" (p. 102). In this direction, it is time for harvest. The West offers the harvest of self-acceptance—loving ourselves as both spiritual and physical beings.

Bopp et al. (1985) claim the greatest gift of the West is "vision". Teachings from West reveal where we have come from as children and youth, the cycle of life, and fuller understandings of ourselves as physical beings in a material world. Mashford-Pringle and Shawanda (2023) associate West with bodily knowing in figuring things out. Bopp et al. (1985) describe visionings involving an inner eye, or spiritual vision. Dumbrill and Green (2008) argue that educators can learn from teachings of the West to put ideas into action; radical action is needed to make space for other ways of knowing. During 100 days of acknowledging land, Leddy embarks on several new trajectories. After leaving Vancouver and arriving in Denmark, she writes:

> The cold is deep, the wind sharp and fierce. For the next three months, I will live in this small town 500 metres from Kattegat, 25 kilometres from the top of Denmark. The town is a 20-minute walk away, and we have no car. Although I spent half my life in Saskatchewan, I'd forgotten what it was to live with winter (S. Leddy, journal notes, 01.11.24).

Bopp et al. (1985) describe the West as a place of sacrifice where we might learn "the mystery of sacrifice is that there is no sacrifice" (p. 58). By letting go of youth and making peace with aging, our lives, and deaths, we have opportunity to learn the power of

change and healing. Through learning acceptance of change, we prepare ourselves for entering the spirit world.

> The late dawn of the new year
> creeps into our room
> we are earthlings
> tucked into the warmth
> of one another
>
> On the sills of the window
> in the next room
> we keep our Mother's children
> Teachers from the land
> needing our care and attention
> reminding us of what is important
>
> This new year
> there will be art and love and life
> there will be death and injustice and war
> all of it lived
> on the only place we have to call home
> (S. Leddy, journal notes, 01.20.24).

Pitawanakwat (2006) argues it is important to consider teachings from the West about freedom in change and acceptance, before fully enjoying the Northern direction.

NORTH: IRWIN (LISTENING TO LIGHT)

North offers rest, a time to slow down (Manitowabi, 2018, Pitawanakwat, 2006), a time to learn. This is time to honour and listen to Elders' oral stories that offer ways of understanding oneself in relation to the world. Stories are integral parts of Indigenous life. For some Nations, winter is traditional storytelling season. Through daily expressions of gratitude and acknowledgements of light as it increased after winter solstice, Irwin writes she learned from First Nations' poets that:

> Light begins with a story (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 02.02.24).

Sigo (2020) argues that "[Poetry's] restlessness and need for flexibility are two of its greatest strengths" (p. 173). These attributes are important teachings in the opportunities that North as a place of wisdom and courage offers for reflecting and learning from mistakes, considering the web of interrelatedness between individuals, communities, and Mother Earth, and for actioning renewed visions (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Mashford-Pringle & Shawana, 2023). Wisdom is gained through gifts of perseverance, synthesis, speculation, and ability to interpret hidden meanings. In her 100-day practice, Irwin acknowledges the wisdom of Indigenous Elders wisdom of the land, and the importance of stillness for reflecting.

Bopp et al. (1985) argue that North's winter wisdom involves both memory and detachment. Memory can engage the care and nurturing of the physical body that has carried one through many other cycles of teaching Pitawanakwat, 2006) and can activate contemplation of one's connections to circles of life, healing, ancestors, original teachings, and stories. Teachings from North emphasize light and warmth of fire. However, the closer to the end of a journey, Bopp et al. (1985) suggest, the more there is opportunity to stand somewhat apart, experiencing oneself as a small but sacred part of a very large process.

Irwin writes about light's reflection. On a window at night she experiences:

> Light invites more than what is first seen (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 12.26.23).
>
> The trickster of light. Our front entry door looking outside. I can see outside but if others were outside, they could not see inside. Here, late at night, the ghost of light reflected (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 01.07.23).

North teachings initiate wisdom that Bopp et al.

(1985) describe as the beginning of detachment. Detaching begins from a sense of connection with everything else. Perhaps this is the wisdom of Indigenous poets as argued by Sigo:

> Native people of the Northwest had no choice but to live in relation to poetry from the very outset of creation. We had to learn to identify and convert the individual elements of earth into forms of protection and sustenance, a so-called lifestyle (2020, p. 171)

UP: RALLIS (BREATHING LAND)

Languages of Indigenous peoples evolved within ecosystems of land, water, and sky (Absolon, [Anishinaabe] 2019). Words for each Medicine Wheel direction are "linked to geographic features and the sun's path" (p. 79) in each Nation and location (Leddy & Miller, 2023). The Up direction offers teaching on the importance of the words we speak into the air. Rallis writes:

> Each day, as I set out on my walk, I carried the intention of honouring land and its original stewards through paying deep attention. The act of walking itself is a meditation and a way to physically connect with the landscape. As I traversed train tracks along the lake, forests, and public shorelines, I reflected on the history and stories embedded in these places. Learning a new hul'qumi'num word each day served as a bridge to these stories, offering a glimpse into the worldview and traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems of the communities who have lived here and breathed these words for millennia (N. Rallis, journal notes, 02.04.24).

While all can learn from Medicine Wheel teachings, honouring and learning Indigenous languages of Turtle Island offers insights beyond what is available to those who know only English. Simpson (2014) argues that "in order to foster expertise within Nishinaabeg intelligence, we need people engaged with land as curriculum and engaged in our languages for decades, not weeks" (p. 23). Rallis has taken these encouragements seriously in her days of acknowledging land.

DOWN: LIN (DISCERNING EARTH)

Ching-Chiu Lin began 100 days of acknowledging land by photographing the diversity and beauty of mushrooms observed during daily walks. For over 30 days she followed only mushrooms. Kimmerer (2013) describes how interaction is critical for fungi in harsh or stressful times and when resources are scarce. A network of threads, fungi work symbiotically with algae, blurring distinctions between individuals and community, teaching the intricate ways in which life is organized.

While focused on plants rather than fungi, Peltier (in Peterson & Friedrich, 2022) argue that closely observing and appreciating plants is part of the wisdom of land literacy, which recognizes one's belonging to a particular place and aligns with Indigenous ecological perspectives, such as the Medicine Wheel.

> 01.15.24. As winter arrived, I began cross-country skiing, immersing myself in landscapes and attending to intricate patterns formed by the snow. The varying shapes, layers, and textures of snowflakes, fine powder that whispered under my skis to the dense, packed layers that crunched beneath my weight, invited me to ponder Yunkaporta's suggestion:
>
> "Look beyond the things and focus on the connections between them…look beyond the connections and see the patterns they make" (2020, p. 77) (C. Lin, journal notes, 01.15.24).
>
> This reflective journey through snow-covered terrain deepened my appreciation of the sophisticated relationships and patterns connecting all elements of the natural world.
>
> It was through observing mushrooms, however, that I began to understand Yunkaporta's thinking:

> If you can see the relational forces connecting and moving the elements of a system, rather than focusing on the elements themselves, you are able to see a pattern outside of linear time. If you bring that pattern back into linear time, this can be called a prediction in today's world (Yunkaporta 2020, pp.79-80).

> I wanted to see these "relational forces" in mushrooms (C. Lin, journal notes, 04.11.24).

Down invites observations of how land continues to sustain and perpetuate life through entangled webs of multiple pulses and temporalities.

ACTS OF RECIPROCAL RELATING IN A/R/TOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

A/r/tographic fieldwork accommodates circulations of human-nonhuman encounters. It engages relational processing of feeling affected by land, recognizing existences in particular places, and re-invigorating or making visible that existence in one's response. Before concluding with the Medicine Wheel's seventh direction which teaches the emergence of the relational self, we pause to consider several additional methods of artistic embodiment that emerged in this inquiry and helped invigorate our learning: description, metaphor, anthropomorphism, and factual inquiry.

Throughout our inquiry, description was a significant response to land. We described in words and sounds, as well as through directing our bodies to align, draw near, lean in, listen—echoing land shapes and retracing forces and elements through the movement of eyes, spine, hands, cameras, paintbrush, or knitting needles—to show as much as to tell. Not for explanation but for attunement: replacing anesthetic dullness creeping unnoticed into our repetitive routines. Leggo (in Triggs, et al., 2014) describes intimacy through the body, such as learning to breathe light, hear light, taste light—and know its language. Kimmerer (2013) explains description as a form of love, and Tsing (2015) advocates revitalizing both description and imagination, especially when attending to what has previously been ignored. For example,

> Silvery white ice crystals cling to the rough snarls of bark (V. Triggs, journal notes, 01.24.24).

Another action of rapport with land involved metaphor, which connects new teachings with previous experience. Metaphors open opportunities for changing relations with land.

> Mushrooms are extensions of the earth (C. Lin, journal notes, 03.03.24).

> Learning a new hul'qumi'num word each day served as a bridge to stories embedded in this place (N. Rallis, journal notes, 02.20.24).

Kimmerer (2013) quotes Russel who explains metaphor as a sign of deeper truth and thus, close to sacrament. The world speaks to Kimmerer in metaphor.

We also became aware of our use of anthropomorphism, a leap beyond metaphor to connect human and more-than-human more intensely.

> The trees call out: "Stay awhile" (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 01.15.24).

> The late dawn of the new year creeps into our room (S. Leddy, journal notes, 01.20.24).

Stengers (in Myers, 2015) argues that anthropomorphism can "induce empirically felt variations in what can be seen and known" (p. 44). Anthropomorphism involves more-than-humans displaying human traits and capable of human behaviour. Our relationship is changed as we become aware of the land having capacity and impulse to grant us its teaching. For a moment, wind screeches through window-frame gaps but in another moment it can also do otherwise. Kimmerer advocates this use of language: "It is human perception that makes the world a gift… The stories we choose to shape our behaviours have adaptive consequences" (2013, p. 30).

Lastly, factual interest about land can also interrelate spirit, emotions, and intellect. Kimmerer (2013) ex-

plains how appreciation of land is enriched by knowing more about its processes and many ways to exist. Sorensen draws on facts:

> The temperature continues to be extremely cold. With windchill, it is -48°C (M. Sorensen, journal notes, 01.03.24).

Others find information from traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge, localized to places, awakening one to the presence of what is already known, yet cannot be fully known:

> This morning, I walked to Garry Point named after Nicholas Garry, deputy governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1882-1835. The Coastal Salish peoples fished, dug for clams, and gathered berries here. I am filled with gratitude for the stewardship of these lands by the Musqueam people (R. L. Irwin, journal notes, 12.29.23).

The Medicine Wheel in a/r/tographic field research brings inquiry into intimacy with animate world, for many, a deeply spiritual pursuit, regularly acknowledging all that came before us and all that is more than us.

Description, metaphor, anthropomorphism, and factual inquiry may all be part of learning what Kimmerer describes as the language of animacy: "the language that let us speak of what wells up all around us" (p. 55). Beginning to learn a grammar of wonder and reciprocity may have inspired the profound gratitude that spontaneously emerged within our practices. Gratitude is described by Kimmerer as of highest priority in ancient protocols whenever people gathered. Giving thanks for land reminds us of our dependent interrelation, an action that blurs boundaries of our knowing.

CENTRE: ALL (RELATIONAL POSITIONING)

Through gratitude and the directions of the Medicine Wheel, tinder is gathered, and thoughts and practices are brought forward to rekindle the flames of the Medicine Wheel Centre. Pitawanakwat (2006) explains we all carry a fire within and are responsible for maintaining its embers and sparks. The self is this fire, but the fire is not only for self; it is an opportunity for reciprocity, a gift for revitalizing the land. This fire is sustained not by internal drive, agency, or potential for self-realization, but by decolonizing forces of resilience and relation that offer balance and interconnection. The Medicine Wheel helps visualize and share land teachings of interconnections and dependencies involved in sustaining a fire. We conclude by reflecting on the fueling of this fire of self through becoming *with* land and with one another. The Medicine Wheel has iteratively brought us through six directions of land, to re-positioning our selves, in relation. Decolonizing includes community, self, and land, not individual existences.

As educators, we recognize the need for poetic reflection, and embodied, responsive engagement with land, within educational practice. The relational and sustained nature of this a/r/tographic fieldwork invites us, and others, to land acknowledgements that are pedagogical, artful practice, rather than performative acts. For classrooms, this means making space for long-term, embodied engagements with land, language, and local histories. Each of our 100-day practices offers entry points for learning with land: through movement, craft, language-learning, poetry, photography, observation, drawing, and storytelling. We offer our acknowledgement research to this special journal issue, to inspire educators in resisting extractive forms of learning and creating land-attuned practices in ways that respect local Indigenous knowledge systems.

Maintaining the flame of Self requires positioning and repositioning in openness to land's teaching while offering our gift of generating tinder for more relational selves. We have found the Medicine Wheel serves as an ever-giving guide in this lifelong journey. Bopp et al. (1985) suggest it would take more than a thousand lifetimes to engage fully with the abundance of land gifts embedded in the Medicine Wheel and this, we feel, is part of the ongoing lifetime work of decolonizing.

Absolon, K. (2019). Indigenous wholistic theory: A knowledge set for practice. *First Peoples Child & Family Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 14*(1), 74-87. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/95/160

Bopp, J., Bopp, M., Brown, L. & Lane, P. (1985). *The sacred tree: Reflections on Native American spirituality*. Four Worlds Development Press.

Dumbrill, G. C. & Green, J. (2008). Indigenous knowledge in the social work academy. *Social Work Education: The International Journal, 27*(5), 489-503. DOI: 10.1080/02615470701379891

Graham, H. & Stamler, L. L. (2010). Contemporary perceptions of health from an Indigenous (Plains Cree) perspective. *International Journal of Indigenous Health, 6*(1), 1-12 https://doi.org/10.18357/ijih61201012341

Irwin, R.L. (2004). A/r/tography: A metonymic métissage. In R.L. Irwin & A. de Cosson (Eds.). *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry* (pp.27-40). Pacific Educational Press.

Irwin, R. L. (2006). Walking to create an aesthetic and spiritual currere. *Visual Arts Research 32*(1), 75-82. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20715404

Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed.

Kimmerer, R. (2018). Mishkos Kenomagwen, the lessons of grass: Restoring reciprocity with the good green earth. In M. K. Nelson & D. Shilling (Eds.), *Traditional ecological knowledge: Learning from Indigenous practices for environmental sustainability,* pp. 27-56. Cambridge.

Leddy, S. & Miller, L. (2023). *Teaching where you are: Weaving Indigenous and slow principles and pedagogies*. University of Toronto.

Manitowabi, S. (2018). *The Medicine Wheel teachings. Historical and contemporary realities: Movement towards reconciliation.* https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/movementtowardsreconciliation/

Mashford-Pringle, A. & Shawanda, A. (2023). Using the medicine wheel as theory, conceptual framework, analysis, and evaluation tools in health research. *SSM Qualitative Research in Health 3*(2003), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2023.100251

Menard, A. (2024). ᓈᑕᐃᐦᐃᐁᐃᐣ nâtawihiwewin: A Guidebook for Health Care. *Indigenous Connect* https://indigenousconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/telehealth_Jan-16-2024.pdf

Peterson, S. S. & Friedrich, N. (2022). *The role of place and play in young children's language and literacy*. University of Toronto Press.

Pitawanakwat, L. (2006). *Ohibwe/Powawatomi (Anishinabe) teaching: Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat*. http://fourdirectionsteachings.com.

Simpson, LB. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 3*(3), 1-25.

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* Zed Books.

Styres, S. D. (2011). Land as first teacher: a philosophical journeying. *Reflective Practice,*

12(6), 717-731. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2011.601083

Triggs, V., Irwin, R. L., & Leggo, C. (2014). Walking art: Sustaining ourselves as arts educators. *Visual Inquiry: Learning and Teaching Art 3*(1), 21-34, Intellect, Ltd.

Toninio, L. (2016, April). Two ways of knowing: Robin Wall Kimmerer on scientific and Native American views of the natural world. *The Sun Interview*. https://www.thesunmagazine.org/articles/22248-two-ways-of-knowing

Tsing, A. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton.

Verwoord, R., Mitchell, A. & Machado, J. (2011). Supporting Indigenous students through a culturally relevant assessment model based on the Medicine Wheel. *I-Portal: Indigenous Studies Portal,* University Library, University of Saskatchewan. https://iportal.usask.ca/record/33332

Wenger-Nabigon, A. (2010) The Cree Medicine Wheel as an organizing paradigm of theories of human development. *Native Social Work Journal 7*, 139-161.

Verniest, L. (2019). Allying with the medicine wheel. *Critical Social Work 7*(1). DOI:10.22329/csw.v7i1.5778

Yunkaporta, T. (2020). *Sand talk: How Indigenous thinking can save the world*. HarperOne.