

EIGHT POINTED STAR OF MI'KMAW PEDAGOGY: NEW COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS FOR ENDOGENOUS EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article seeks to amplify the conceptualization of an educational process that allows Mi'kmaw peoples to engage in endogenous education processes, in which the elements guiding education are inductively determined to support Mi'kmaw ways of being. The elements of Mi'kmaw pedagogy are represented in the model of an eight-pointed star. The efficacy of this model is demonstrated through its application within the context of a boat building project facilitated in a Mi'kmaw elementary school.

Résumé

On cherche dans cet article à amplifier la conceptualisation d'un processus en éducation permettant aux peuples Micmacs de créer des processus éducatifs endogènes, dont les éléments dirigeant l'éducation seront déterminés de façon inductive afin d'appuyer les manières d'être des Micmacs. Une étoile à huit pointes représente les éléments pédagogiques micmacs. L'efficacité de cette méthode se manifeste dans le contexte d'un projet de construction d'un navire, projet auquel a contribué une école élémentaire micmac.

This article is set in the context of Indigenous education and community development. Traditionally education and its manifest implications for development, within this context, has been assimilative; with Western oriented education, displacing Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. This displacement has resulted in an erosion of cultural and economic diversity, and in particular, an erosion of Indigenous identity and sovereignty that many Indigenous groups feel powerless to restrain. When the North American Plains Indians of the late 1800's were facing cultural annihilation, their search for alternative responses led them to the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance was to bring a peaceful end to European expansion. Now a century and more on, many Indigenous groups still seek alternatives to cultural and economic subjugation, such a search for alternatives may include an *endogenous education*, an education arising out of a particular people in a particular place.

Arturo Escobar, a Columbian anthropologist whose analysis of development discourse and practice, including education, theorizes on the catalyst for a search for alternatives when he states “. . . as the links between development and the marginalisation of people's life and knowledge become more evident, the search for alternatives deepens. . . In sum, new spaces are opening up in the vacuum left by the colonizing mechanisms of development, either through innovation or the survival and resistance of popular practices” (Escobar, 1995, p. 216). This article will explore one of these new spaces, an innovation in Mi'kmaq education that embodies resistance. In this article we use a peopled approach to writing (Fine, 2003), that personalises the political (Kahn, 2004), to : 1) provide a contextual framework to situate the problem, 2) to contextualise our relations as allies and authors in contributing to the conceptualisation and the inductive development of the 8 pointed star of Mi'kmaq pedagogy. To address a third outcome, we have used Clark's (2017) Mosaic approach and co-construction of knowledge to demonstrate the practical application of this educational model using the reflective feedback of grade five and six Mi'kmaq students as they build 12 foot long rowboats.

A Contextual Framework to Situate the Problem

For the purposes of the article we are unable to divorce the concepts of education, and development because education is generally understood as an essential element of development (Carnoy, 1974; Chen & Dahlman, 2005; Hill, 2007; Kennedy, 1961; Willis, 1977; World Bank, 1989), and development a direct consequence of education and socialization (Bronfenbrenner date; Vygotsky, DATE; Willis, 1997). Within this psycho-social, and economic context, the West has used, and continues to use, Euro-Western methods of education for its own endogenous

development. However, with the advent of European imperial expansion and latter day neoliberal forms of international capitalist expansion, these methods of education have been exported and imposed on other people where they have become an exogenous education and development initiative. Normative, mainstream education and development exported, and then imposed on Indigenous peoples, can be seen as perpetuating the West's particular values, which arose out of the West's own endogenous development, a process in which these values are prescribed as universal within a global exogenous development context. This prescription of universal values through the vehicle of education is most clearly seen in Universal Primary Education (UPE), a program connected to the United Nations Millenium Development Goals (UN-MDG). That is to say, Euro-Western education has evolved from promoting endogenous Western development to one of perpetuating exogenous Western normative ideals through its exported education and development programs throughout the world, including Canada, and even more particularly, Nova Scotia.

Western Education as Endogenous and Exogenous

"Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education." (Kennedy, 1961). This linking of progress in education to national progress demonstrates how Euro-Western education, when implemented within its particular cultural context, aspires to an endogenous development of equality, justice, prosperity and an equitable future for all. However, Kennedy goes on to discuss how an educational investment in "every young American's capacity" expands "the base of our economic and military strength." (Kennedy, 1961). We see here the characterization of education, so common in the latter part of the 20th century, as the typically Western market understanding of education. In the end, this economic or market understanding of education effectively relegates Euro-Western education to the role of human capital development and the commodification of knowledge so that it can be traded in a human capital market economy.

I mention the relationship between education, endogenous development and the commodification of knowledge within the Western context because an exclusive focus on economic development represents, in many respects, the defacto Western endogenous development philosophy. Bernstein emphasizes this point when he describes "a new concept of knowledge and of its relation to those who create and use it. This new concept is a truly secular concept. Knowledge should flow like money to wherever it can create advantage and profit. Indeed, knowledge is not like money, it is money" (Bernstein, 2000 p.86). David Corson, a scholar at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, further supports

Bernstein's conceptualization of education when he explains how "education almost everywhere in the English-speaking world is set firmly within capitalist social relations (1999, p. 8), and it is within these relations, and in resistance to these relations that Indigenous peoples are struggling to reclaim and revalue their languages and cultures. (Corson, 1999).

Fenelon & Hall, articulate the dimensions of this struggle, in their book *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization: Resistance and Revitalization* (2009), and argue that Western education undermines resistance to the globalization and neoliberalization of the Western "intellectual archive", and they further advocate for Wallerstein's world-systems as the appropriate analytical lens through which to view this problematic. They suggest that world systems theory, especially its notion of internal expansion, most accurately theorizes the spread of neoliberal ideology with its "dominant, globalizing policies" which "personalize[s] and privatise[s] 'labor' as another commodity, which is deeply destructive to the nature of community" (Fenelon & Hall, 2008, pp. 1880-1881). They argue that this neoliberal ideology further contributes to the alienation of Indigenous cultural forms, "typifying them as 'unproductive' and 'unprogressive.' Thus, Indigenous societies are presented as "an obstacle for capitalist globalization to overcome" (Ibid). Friedman reiterates this point when he explains his concept of "flattening" the world where capitalism seeks to eliminate "sources of friction and inefficiency" such as cultural and linguistic differences, or ideological disagreements. However, he also states that ". . . some of these inefficiencies are institutions, habits, cultures, and traditions that people cherish precisely because they reflect non-market values like social cohesion" (Friedman, 2005, p. 204).

Indigenous communities are recognizing and responding, in varying degrees, to the homogenizing power of Western education. The analysis of these actions is important because they represent endogenous responses to internal expansion as it is being experienced in disparate communities around the world. As such, they offer a point of entry for the purpose of this article, which is to conceptualize a Mi'kmaq model of education that promotes endogenous education and consequent community development.

Contextualizing My Relations as an Ally and Contributing Author

Contexts, and the stories we create in them, are important. I am blank for review, and the context of my birth, early socialization, and education was apartheid era South Africa. I learned in that context of a "beauty beyond any singing of it" (Paton, 1978). I also learned on leav-

ing South Africa, to avoid conscription into the military, of the power that education has to define reality, society, and our relations (Amsterdam, 2000; Apple, 1983; Bruner 1996, Smith, 1999; Willis, 2011; Wilson; 2008). Although I did not recognise it immediately, this insight came to define the larger proportion of my professional life. This epiphany didn't occur in isolation, and as a means of introducing myself as a contributor to this paper, I will tell a story that has informed my perspective and led me to this place that allows me to share what I have learned.

I could start by discussing my shocked disbelief in discovering that, while I might learn Zulu in apartheid era South Africa, I could not learn Cree, Algonquin, or any Aboriginal language in my community high school in Toronto, Canada in the late 1980's. Instead, I will start with a story of my very first week, teaching in my very own classroom, in a remote Cree community in Ontario in 2001. I stood there, a newly minted teacher with my M.Ed. coursework completed, ready to teach grade eight history. I opened up the textbook (LeBel, 2003 p. 31) and found the first unit covering "Contact and Colonization" with a specifically difficult topic for me as an immigrant white South African "An Overview of Cultures". This section described in a brief one page synopsis the "Complex and Diverse Societies" that existed in North America prior to contact. I have come to think that irony is not a strong enough word for the incredulity I felt at the prospect of a white South African male "teaching" Cree youth about the complexities and diversity of Aboriginal cultures. Instead, I made inquiries into how I might be able to invite a community elder in to speak with my class, about their history, culture, and the complexities that this embodied. It was not until years later, preparing for another history lesson in Nova Scotia, that I read in more detail, the politically contrived content I had fortuitously not covered in my previous forays into the History curriculum. While reading the class assigned text created and disseminated with the "financial support of the Government of Canada" (LeBel, 2003 p. iv), I discovered a section called "The Impact of Contact" which outlined a story of "Aboriginal Peoples and the Fur Trade". That story (Willis, (2011) calls these stories part of the monomyth) ended with the following quote:

The introduction of infectious diseases such as smallpox, measles, and influenza led to devastating consequences. Because Aboriginal peoples had not been exposed to these illnesses in the past, they had no immunity to them. As a result, many populations were decimated; some were even wiped out entirely. As the fur traders pushed further into the interior, they transported these illnesses with them. The introduction of alcohol and the subsequent addictions it created also had devastating and long-term implications for Aboriginal societies. Thus, over time, contact led Aboriginal peoples from a lifestyle of **independen-**

dence to one of **interdependence** and finally to one of **dependence** (LeBel, 2003 p. 31).

While this story was able to challenge even my jaded perceptions of politically motivated education (Apple, 1983; Giroux, 2004), it was the euphemistic description of the wholesale robbery of the Americas on the following page of that same textbook, that eroded any remaining confidence I had in an ideologically just education system. The colonization of the Americas is summarized as follows:

The old trade routes to Africa and Asia were all but forgotten by the Europeans when faced with the bounty of the Americas. The money generated from the exploitation of the new colonies had transformed Europe into a **capitalist** society. A global trading network, controlled by the great powers of Europe, has emerged as the new world order (LeBel, 2003 p. 32).

The ending to the section quoted above is supported by a highlighted quote from Paul Kennedy, (historian) which states **“European societies entered into a constantly upward spiral of economic growth and enhanced military effectiveness which, over time, was to carry them ahead of all other regions of the globe”** (Kennedy as cited in: LeBel, 2003 p. 32). Is it possible to reconcile the Canadian Government’s complicit participation in these textbooks? What about the educators approaching this text uncritically, can we measure or comprehend the injustices that stem from the miseducation perpetuated through these stories and their dissemination through the institutional medium of compulsory provincial and federal education systems? I ask these questions because I am avoiding the really difficult questions of how we might reconcile the aforementioned texts omission of Shirley’s proclamation of October 19, 1744 which states that the sum of “fifty pounds” will be paid “for each scalp of a woman or child” and the omission of Amherst’s proposal wondering if it “[c]ould be contrived to send the smallpox among the disaffected Tribes of Indians? You would do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets” (as cited in Boyd, 2004 pp. 18-19). Attempts at reconciling these, and other systemic, and individual atrocities are ongoing, and every Canadian has been called to action (Canada, 2012).

I believe, in being called to action, we are being called to repoliticise our relationships (Willis, 2011). But as Kahn (2004) argues, “We cannot understand the character of the relationship between self and polity without first understanding love. To understand love, however, we need to explore the character of the will in dimensions that are beyond the imagination of liberal thought. . . That which we will do for love cannot always find its measure in justice” (pp.9-12). In reading

both Freire (1968) and Kahn (2004), I am faced with love as a mechanism through which social justice can be achieved. Kahn (2004) articulates a conception of a political love that corresponds most closely with my particular experience which is aligned with the concept of "arishi (to speak mutually)" which in the Aymaran context is "[t]he metaphor for love" (Hardman 1996:25–31), when he states that:

love is the experience of power through the creation/discovery of meaning. This combination of creation and discovery links us to others through love. The creations of love are expressions of a common universe of meanings. As subjects who love, we share that world with others. Love is the creation of a universe of meaning, but there is no singular experience of such a universe (p.223).

The caveats to this process are also outlined by Kahn when he states that "if it cost us nothing we could not love" and "[i]f we are unwilling to sacrifice we cannot love" (p224). In other words, we cannot speak mutually if we hold onto absolute certainty, and the power to unilaterally define the world (Smith, 1999).

Therefore, the act of love requires a sacrifice of certainty, privilege, and the embracing of humility. As educators, school administrators and policymakers, we are called to action to sacrifice the conceit and certainty of the monomyth perpetuated by the unpoliticised relations to education characterised most acutely by the examples I have provided. Instead, we should be exploring the universe of meaning embodied in the process of speaking mutually. To do this we should be creating spaces that mobilise and amplify a diversity of perspectives in the universe of meaning. To this end, my research (blank for review, 2018) is centred on education as a medium through which to build community capacity and agentitive storytellers. This philosophy was enacted in a community boat building workshop which involved grade five and six Mi'kmaw students in a three day boatbuilding workshop (outlined in more detail in a subsequent section). The student's who were building boats in addition to becoming the authors of a children's book called "We Built a Boat" (in press), documented through a revised Mosaic approach their own learning and learning outcomes (blank for review, in press). It is through these processes that centrality, conceit and certainty on the part of the educators and researchers were sacrificed, and young Mi'kmaw voices to challenge the monomyth, mobilized and amplified. It was during this process that I met and began collaborating with Irene Endicott, in the hopes that her vision and story of the Eight Pointed Star of Mi'kmaw heutagogy might be mobilized and amplified.

A Narrative Account of the Inductive Origins of the Eight Pointed Star of Mi'kmaw Pedagogy

I am blank for review. I'd like to start my origin story with a favourite quote that helps me focus on my motivation:

One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding (Freire, 1972 p. 93).

I was hired as a teacher at Pictou Landing First Nation School, in 1995, when Pictou Landing First Nation first opened its own community elementary school. It was an exciting time for the community. There were high hopes and dreams for a school that would be culturally and linguistically relevant to the children of Pictou Landing First Nation. The initial teaching compliment of the school was limited to four teachers. One was a community member and fluent speaker of the language, another was also L'nu (Mi'kmaw), and from a neighbouring community, but was not a speaker of the language. The other two, including myself, and the teaching principal, were from the settler community, who had previous experience teaching in First Nation communities elsewhere in Canada.

Over the years, although there was a concerted effort to hire and retain L'nu teachers who were fluent speakers, what often happened was these teachers would stay for a while, but then find employment as teachers in their home community, and would leave for that opportunity. In other cases, teachers who were Pictou Landing First Nation community members left the teaching profession to take leadership roles in their community, one to become Director of Education for the community, and one to become an elected Band councillor, and then, more recently, as Chief of the community.

In 2009, I became principal of Pictou Landing First Nation School. At that time we had no classroom teachers who were community members. Three teachers identified as First Nation, however none were brought up in the culture and none spoke the language fluently.

As a small learning community of teachers, we identified common goals and looked into ways of reaching them. We sought out professional learning on culturally responsive teaching through our own research and reading, and through workshops and presentations. This ongoing learning resulted in us examining our unconscious bias and learning to "listen to our deficit monitor" (Hollie, 2012) when working with our students. Listening to your Deficit Monitor includes these five must knows

about unconscious biased thinking (Deficit Lens):

1. As humans, we are potentially predisposed to biased, prejudiced, ignorant, misinformed, or deficit thinking about others.
2. It is mostly subconscious. We need a signal to bring it to level of awareness.
3. With this awareness, we can make the choice to go "deficit" or go "responsive."
4. Unconscious bias comes from social stereotypes, attitudes, opinions, and stigma we form about certain groups of people outside of our own conscious awareness.
5. Culture has a profound influence on our behavior, and it is, for the most part, unconscious. While it may seem relatively easy to correct a single act of unconscious bias, it is almost impossible to notice how deeply we are ensnared in a web of instances in which bias affects our fundamental institutions (Deficit Thinking). Deficit thinking is institutionalized historically (pp. 17-39).

As educators, we learned that we have unconscious biases about First Nations, and we committed ourselves to being aware of these and work to validate and affirm the cultural norms of our students rather than believing these ways to be deficits they bring to their learning. We made the choice to "go responsive" and chose to be active agents promoting ontological justice and equality.

Working in a small community based First Nation school, we realized we had the unique opportunity to listen and learn from the community about views of learning and about best practice in teaching. Very informally, I set about to survey community members such as Elders, parents, children, and the many community members who worked in our school, about how they felt they best learned, and what was important to them in education. In addition, the classroom teachers also began to take note of ways of teaching that seemed to engage their students the most.

As I listened to the responses and took notes, I began to see a pattern of eight ways of learning and knowing that were held in common, these were:

	- Learning happens best through links to the L'nu (Mi'kmaw) language and culture.
	- We learn best through a "watch- then-do" approach.
	- There are multiple ways to solve a problem and learn, and they should all be considered.
	- Stories and story sharing is a powerful way to teach and learn.
	- Learning happens through visual and artistic expression.
	- How will what I am learning help my community?
	-It is important to learn content in the context of the local land and natural waterways.
	- Learning through a "hands on" experiential approach is best practice.

These interconnected eight ways of learning have become a framework for us in planning for instruction across the curriculum. Because we

found eight common ways of learning, we chose the traditional image of the eight-pointed star to embody these collective approaches.

The eight-pointed star has been used as an important symbol for the Mi'kmaq nation. It retains its importance as a cultural symbol, and is often found in designs in works of art and cultural artifacts and on emblems today. We have adopted it in our framework of Mi'kmaq pedagogy (figure 1) to remind us of the significance of each way and how they are interconnected, and to embrace this pedagogy in how we teach.

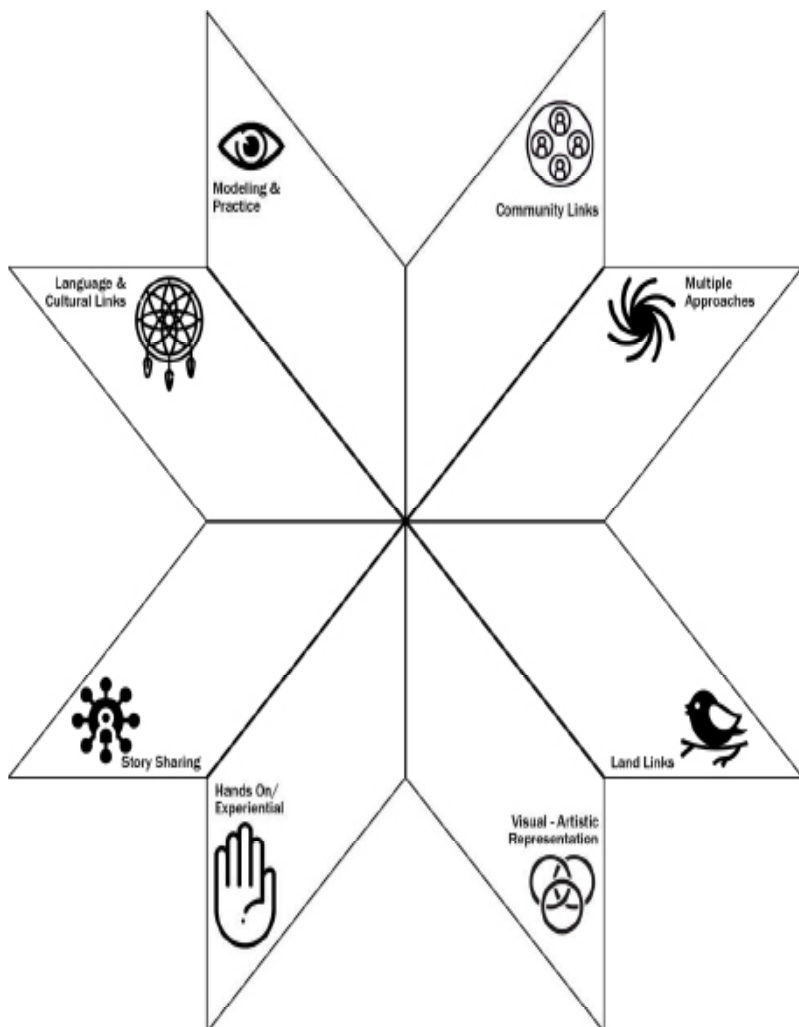


Figure 1: Framework of Mi'kmaq pedagogy.

Reflections on the Implementation of the 8 pointed Star of Mi'kmaq Pedagogy

In order to access students' perspectives of the practical application of curriculum developed through this model, we generated a reflective booklet loosely populated with invitations for reflection. These invitations as Stacey (2019) argues prioritizes the agentive role of the respondent as they can determine, how, and if they will respond to any invitation. Our invitations were aligned with the process of boatbuilding and included but were not limited to:

Write or draw about the sounds . . . smells . . . tastes . . . feelings of boat building

When you were building a boat today, how did you figure things out? What did you do first?

What is good about building a boat?

What is not so good about building a boat?

Write or draw about a fun time you've had during boat building today?

What did you learn on Day 2? How did you learn this?

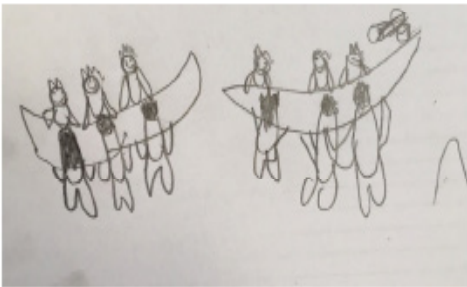
How is working together different to working alone?

Would you want to build a boat with someone else? Who? Why?

The student's in responding to these invitations, and through their own independent and self-initiated documentation of their learning, using their in class ipads, generated materials that demonstrated how each of the facets of the 8 pointed star of Mi'kmaw pedagogy were actualized through the boatbuilding activity.

We have provided a sampling of these responses to demonstrate how this pedagogical tool was incorporated into practice.

	<i>Language & Cultural Links</i> I was waiting for [our community elder] to finish his opening prayer so we can launch our boats and boat away to a new island. It was super heavy to bring down to the beach. 
	<i>Modeling & Practice</i> I learned how to use a saw. I learned how to use it because they showed us, and let us do practice runs. I like to learn from examples, so I can understand. Like what they did with the drill and hammer. They show us what they are doing. Then I copy what they are doing like they are doing the example.
	<i>Multiple Approaches</i> It's faster to work together. It's more fun talking with someone. Also because when working with someone they can give you quick feedback. 

	<i>Story Sharing</i> 
	<i>Visual-Artistic Representation</i> 
	<i>Community Links</i>  <i>It seemed like everyone in the community came out for the launch.</i>

	<i>Land Links</i> When the boat went in the water, I felt extremely excited and nervous at the same time. 
	

Concluding Remarks

The 8 pointed star of Mi'kmaw pedagogy is in no way the panacea for addressing ontologically just education, and community development and engagement. However, it is an acknowledgement that as educators and scholars we should not just be looking through the ubiquitous lens of Indigenizing curricula and institutions through the inclusion of content, but, should as Irene eloquently puts forward, be aspiring to L'nu and other Indigenous and endogenous ways of how to teach that challenge Western normative and hegemonic ideals. In so doing, communities and their schools could construct knowing, relations, and promote community development premised on Indigenous and endogenous ways of being, and in these small ways transform our world.

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