

By June Kaminski



Supporting Self Governance

In First Nations Education



Setting the Context....

Aboriginal people had their own systems of formal education prior to Colonization - systems which were highly successful. Self Governance in education requires the development and implementation of sustainable educational systems under the full control and jurisdiction of aboriginal people based on the recognition of inherent hereditary and treaty rights.



Focus on Education

To make Self Governance in Education a reality, several processes need to be put into place, including sustainable funding, the preparation of aboriginal educational leaders, and the development of educational systems that meet the needs of each community. This dialogue will be focused on the development of these processes.



Moving towards Self Governance

As First Nations, individually or in association with each other, try to move away from self administration and toward genuine self governance, they need to focus on certain key tasks that lay the foundation on which self determined community and economic development can be built.



Tasks & Principles

TASKS

- Expand Jurisdiction
- Build capable governing institutions
- Diversify revenue sources
- Broaden accountability
- Invest in capacity building

PRINCIPLES

- Voice & Legitimacy
- Direction
- Performance (in holistic unity with the land)
- Accountability
- Fairness (includes the roles of elders, men, women, youth)



In the Beginning...

Although the notions of Literacy and Pedagogy are essentially Colonial or Eurocentric in origin, they can be used to draw well-deserved attention to the distinct and noteworthy ways that Pre-Colonial education was offered and engaged in.



A Solid Foundation...

- Distinct practices used for millennia to teach both “theory” and hands-on practical knowledge were repressed and banned during Colonization, yet the methods have endured and are both unique and extremely valuable in the 21st century

A Wider Scope....

In fact, the efforts to afford a liberal education for all K-12 and especially post-secondary students provide mere whispers of the potential that First Nations pedagogy promises: well rounded, holistic, intelligent graduates and people dedicated to and active within their communities



Elders are at the Heart...

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

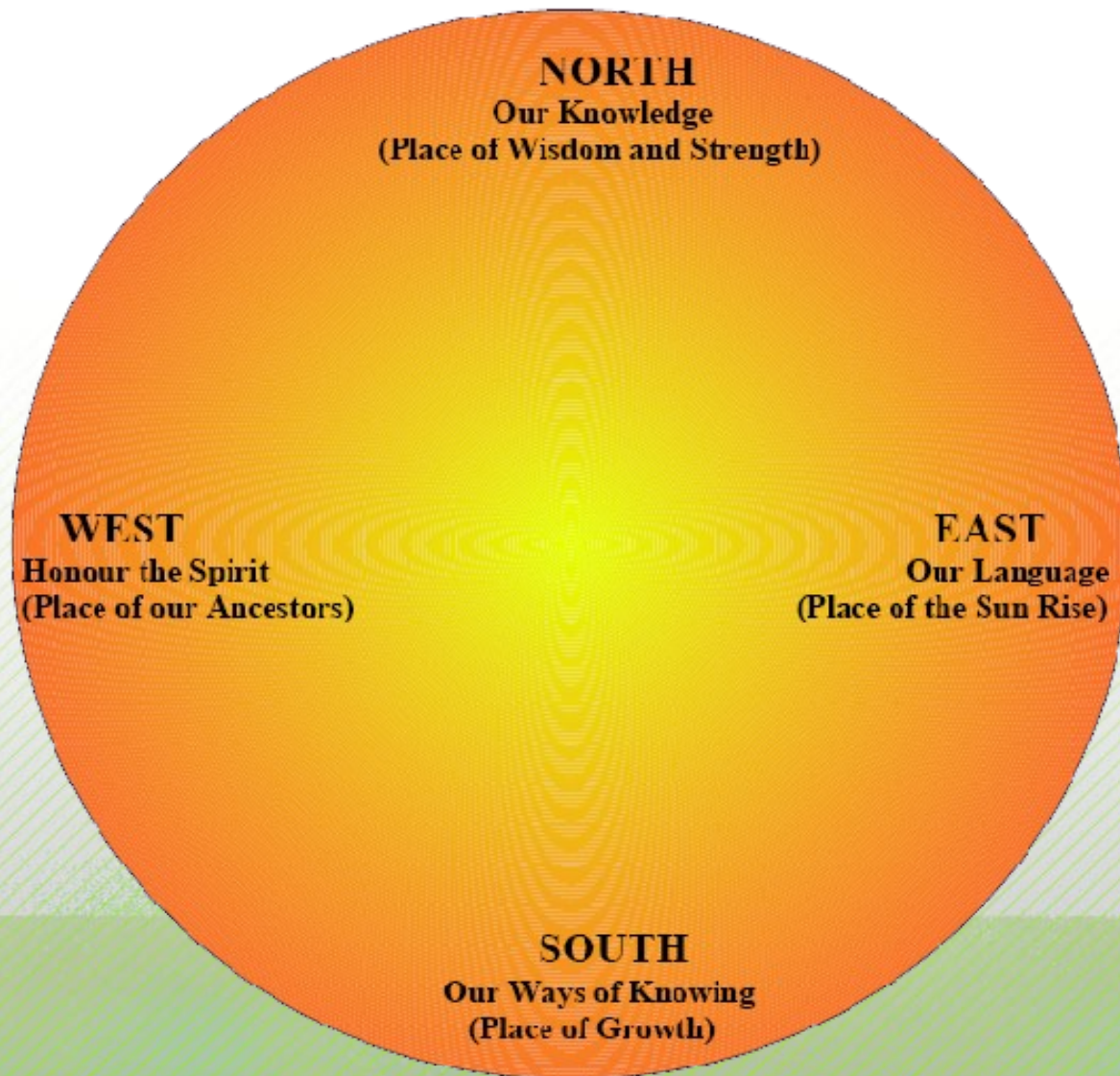


First Nations Pedagogy

- Respectful relations,
- Building on experiential learning,
- Listening well,
- allowing Space,
- Story-telling and story-making,
- supporting Quaternity,
- Dialogue,
- Positionality,
- Relevance,
- Reciprocity,
- Reflectivity,
- Elders - informed,
- Ecologically situated,
- Creativity,
- Visual-auditory learning space
- Within a self-governance philosophy and
- Natural world context



TEACHINGS OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS





Holistic Perspective

Pedagogy must be Holistic in Scope:

- **Body** (physical)
- **Mind** (intellectual)
- **Heart** (relational)
- **Spirit** (soul centered)

Economically Sound
Capacity Building



Aboriginal Literacy

- Narrative
- Artistic
- Cultural
- Language
- Need to develop culture, identity, avoid assimilation




Positionality....

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





Cultivation of the Inner Fire

- A key construct of PreColonial teaching and learning is the strong focus on the Inner Fire – one's sense of identity and purpose, as well as the stamina, vision and determination that keeps one on the Sacred Path
 - Entails the developed awareness of one's Special Gifts, which are given back to the Community
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Special Gifts...

- The nurturance of each person's special gifts, talents and abilities so that s/he would be able to share their gifts with the community is a central tenet of Pre-Colonial teaching and learning.
- Spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional growth was cultivated
- Vision Quests, Meditation, Intuition, Dreaming and Rites of Passage are all valid methods of gaining knowledge

Aboriginal Knowledge

- **is a living process to be absorbed and understood, not a commodity to possess**
- **values ability to learn independently by observing, listening, and participating**
- **values introspection, reflection, meditation, prayer, self directed learning**



Aboriginal Knowledge....

- **is structured by language and symbolic, verbal, and unconscious order**
- **is both empirical (based on experience) and normative (based on social values)**
- **Is deeply interconnected with the natural world**

Visioning Activity

- **Premise:** We build the future on our past and present. Therefore, we wish to carry forward the best of our past and present on which to build.
- Visualize yourself 12 years into the future – it is 2020. **Visualize a First Nations Education system as it really should be. Share Your Vision.**





Further Dialogue

- First Nations Pedagogy for Online Learning
<http://firstnationspedagogy.ca>

- First Nations Pedagogy
<http://firstnationspedagogy.com>

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