



## **Finding Our Way Home: An ecological sense of self and honouring the places we are from**

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR AND THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

This article is the result of a prolonged and sustained inquiry into the nature of Indigenous Pedagogy. In it I explore Indigenous understandings of place and the role of the environmental ecology and its complementary cultural or spiritual ecology. I outline my lifelong journey as an Anishinaabe person and how I came to be an Indigenous artist, educator and scholar. I track my lived curriculum and examine key experiences along the way, then I describe how this resulted in the creation of an Indigenous arts-based pedagogical process. Over the years I have fine-tuned this always-morphing practice in various educational contexts from pre-service to in-service teacher education using Indigenous approaches to Teacher Inquiry. During these courses we explore the Indigenous learning pathway from the pedagogy of place and the pedagogy of the imagination, to the pedagogy of presence. This is the pedagogical process described in the article.

### AN INDIGENOUS ARTS-BASED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

As an Indigenous scholar I have been deeply involved in arts-based and Indigenous approaches to research, specifically arts-based narrative research, narrative portraiture and Indigenous Métissage. And it was through Métissage and lifewriting that I came to the understandings of my learning pathway articulated in this article. I have since invited many pre-service and in-service teachers as well as students in numerous Masters of Education in Environmental Education and Educational Practice to explore this pathway through their own living inquiry and arts-based research process. For them it has become a process of weaving a Métissage through the active braiding of dialogue, art making, and life writing.

As an Indigenous artist I have been on a lifelong journey around the circle of the arts: first movement, then music, visual art, and poetry. I also trained in movement therapy and visual art therapy to understand the role of the arts in learning, and in fostering well-being and healing. After the completion of my M.A. and Ph.D in Holistic and Aesthetic Education I began to play the native flute as part of my arts-based research practice. I visited Indigenous sacred sites and played the native flute to understand Indigenous traditions of music making. I also explored the living legacy of oral tradition and the role of story. I eventually completed a two-year apprenticeship in Northwest Coast Art. As I studied with master carvers I began to understand artistic practice as an knowledge practice. This led me to my current research in Indigenous Art and Indigenous knowledge practices. Where artistic practice acknowledges its intrinsic integration within the wholeness of creation in unique ways. I have also acted as a visiting scholar and supervisor for a Masters in Applied Indigenous Knowledge or *He Waka Hiringa* program in *Aotearoa*. New Zealand.



## INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

For me ecological education is a kind of activism. Today in Canada we have a type of grass roots activism arising from the Idle No More Movement. Aboriginal and Canadian relations are shifting and there is a blurring of the previously distinct paradigms. The young are in pursuit of holistic and Indigenous approaches to the environment. And I believe they are embodying a need for re-integration of what has been divided into discrete parts, many of them want to advocate for wholistic and integrated approaches to life and to education. No one worldview, epistemology, hermeneutic or methodology will address the complex issues of our time. It requires all of us gathering together from our various places and working towards reanimating and revitalizing our relationship to Mother Earth. It requires a radical shift within our imaginations and a new kind of embodied activism. It is about how we live our daily lives and it requires us to awaken to a powerful vision that honours the circle of life, the human and the more than human, as well as the next seven generations.