

Creation of an Indigenous Epistemological Framework for Wapana'ki People to Cultivate Wholeness and Wellness Through Land-Based Art, With Digital Relationality As Axiology

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Introduction/Objectives/Aims/Problem/Goal: Indigenous people have been seeking reparations and reconciliation for historical and continued harms from the colonial disruption of our traditional lives. We seek a return to what we had yet we must navigate the imposed western ideology we are currently in. How can Indigenous Wapana'ki people proceed with finding sources of wholeness, wellness and connection to their traditional ways in a vastly expanding digital world? how can Indigenous Wapana'ki people find their roots to ancestral ways of knowing, occupying and thriving off the land in Canada while being consumed by the expansion of the digital tools endlessly at our fingertips? Finding the right formula has led me to create an Indigenous epistemological framework through the theorizing, embodied inquiry and autoethnography of land-based art (harvesting materials from the land) along with digital relationality as axiology.

Methods: Methods include a mixed method approach of autoethnography, embodied inquiry, and digital relationality around porcupine roadkill and birch bark harvesting, as well as community bridging sessions for reflexivity purposes around wood paddle carving, clay harvesting, hide scraping, fish leather tanning, basket weaving, corn husk doll making, etc.

Results: Results show that by nurturing the relationship with the land, through physical labour over the harvested materials for the art practice, a meditative state is established that provides mental clarity, emotional awareness, and spiritual knowing. This is the wholeness that Indigenous scholars and ancestors speak of that we once had, that western ideology is lacking particularly in its education system. An avenue for wellness and the activation of the whole self, is through the harvesting of materials from the land for the purposes of art making, nurturing that most important relationship that Indigenous people had pre-colonization, which was the relationship with the land.

Conclusion: Indigenous ways of knowing is the answer for reparations and reconciliation for the Canadian government and the educational institutions to have a real effect on the wellness of Indigenous people in this country, particularly with the several high rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, incarceration rates, addiction rates, and the recovery from the intergenerational trauma of residential schools, Indian day schools, and on-going inequities that is overdue and necessary for a healthier Indigenous population in Canada.

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