



Journal

STUDENT ID #: T00773143 | INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

week 1

INITIAL REFLECTION

I've just been here for a week and a half. My land is a land of tradition, we take very serious the respect for the elements (fire, rain, water, wind), Ometeotl (the force of the union is the most accurate translation I can think of), honor our liniaje, among other things. I've been feeling a little down because I miss my land and my people. Everything is uncertain for me here. But today, I felt peace attending to this class, in Mexico we call it "apapacho", is the feeling you get when someone you love covers you with a warm blanket and gives you a hug. Many things can feel like this. The class felt like a little apapacho for me. I was amazed to have a glimpse of the respect for the land, the collective trauma that they went to, the resilience... I felt a little bit understud because the idea of the word circle, sharing food, the song you gifted us, felt a little bit like home. I felt really grateful, and honored to have the opportunity to learn about this. Also, I feel a little bit cautious because I don't want to be disrespectful for such an important land and it's people.

For my goals for this class, I want to adquire as much knowledge as I can in orther to be respectful, acknowledge the importance of the community, and align my values to this. I'm willing to open to my classmates, even if it's so difficult for me. I really want to integrate practices that allow me to separate the colonial practices as much as I can, and to feel a little bit closer to this land.

Also, I have an special interest in two main subjects: women and LGBTQ+ in the indigenous ways, not just because I'm part of these two spaces, but because the core of my work has a lot to do with them. I'm certain that integrating the knowledge, emotion, and sensation of this way of knowing will allow me to enhance my practices with a much more complete approach.





AN teal leaf AMAZING teal leaf VISIT

When Elder Harold came to our class, he opened a space that felt very different from a typical lecture. He invited us to introduce ourselves in Secwepemctsin, teaching us greetings, how to say our names, and how to share where we are from. I have to say that it surprised me to know the story he told us, I've listen it in Mexico, with some variations (for example, is a fox, not a Coyote), but is a story that we usually tell children. How much impact the transition of knowledge in forms of storytelling holds that this story ended up in Mexico?

The difference between the story that he told us of the raven and the coyote, and reading the Balancing Rock story were shocking to me. The spoken story was much more powerful. Both of them were beautiful, full of meaning, but listening with the rhythm, the variations of the sounds, the smile that evoked in him and in the class.

That is the passion that stayed with me. It is not only the content but by the way knowledge is carried through oral tradition. Nothing was written, yet every word, gesture, and rhythm of the language carried meaning. Unlike written texts, which can be revisited at any time, oral stories live in the moment of telling, in the relationship between speaker and listener.

What moved me most was the experience of learning directly from Elder Harold. The complex-

ity of the language that he explained, and the wisdom of his explanations reminded me that knowledge is not only about what is said, but about how it is passed on.

Other thing was to learn some words. For a learner unfamiliar with Secwepemctsin, the new words felt unfamiliar, the fear of doing it wrong came to me, and it was difficult to retain them all after class. This tension made me reflect on the vulnerability of oral traditions in a world that privileges writing, but again, this is the way that someone told us was "best", but is it really? Foucault (1972) reminds us that language and discourse are never neutral; they shape what counts as knowledge. To dismiss oral storytelling as is to deny its truth and its power to shape reality.

As I listened, I thought about my own background in Latin America. Many Indigenous communities in Mexico have also preserved knowledge through oral traditions, despite centuries of colonial attempts to silence them (and urge me to think about the languages that are about to disappear, because we haven't preserved them). To not acknowledge a language is, to erase the culture that carries it. That erasure is not only historical, is ongoing.

For me, the contribution of this class lies in how it reshaped my understanding of where I am. Learning even just a greeting in Secwepemctsin reminded me that I am a guest on this land, one with responsibilities. The Balancing Rock story, too, stayed with me: instead of endless cycles of violence, there are other ways to seek balance, to resolve conflicts, to acknowledge strength without domination. These teachings have relevance not only for the Secwépemc but for all of us searching for just and peaceful ways to live together.

In the end, what I carry from Elder Harold's visit is gratitude. Gratitude for his generosity in sharing his language, for the wisdom, and for the reminder

that words create worlds. The reminder that learning is not just about information but about relations.

I will leave the story that is told in Mexico here: <https://www.fablereads.com/es/fabula/el-zorro-y-el-cuervo#:~:text=El%20cuervo%2C%20lleno%20de%20orgullo,solo%2C%20pensando%20en%20su%20error.>



Había una vez, en un gran bosque vivían un zorro y un cuervo. Un día, el cuervo encontró un delicioso pedazo de queso y voló hasta la cima de un árbol para comérselo. El zorro, que pasaba por allí, vio el queso en el pico del cuervo y lo quiso para él. Así que ideó un plan para engañar al cuervo y conseguir el queso. Se acercó al árbol y comenzó a halagar al cuervo. "Querido cuervo, jeres tan bonito! ¡Y cómo brillan tus plumas! Nunca antes había visto un pájaro tan hermoso," dijo el zorro. El cuervo, muy contento y orgulloso de las amables palabras, quería escuchar más elogios. Entonces, el zorro dijo: "Estoy seguro de que también tienes una voz encantadora. ¿Podrías cantar una canción para mí?" El cuervo, lleno de orgullo y deseoso de mostrar su voz, abrió el pico para cantar. Pero al hacerlo, el queso cayó al suelo, y el zorro rápidamente lo tomó. El zorro se comió el queso muy rápido y se fue caminando. El cuervo se quedó solo, pensando en su error.

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week 3

A SONG FROM THE HEART

In our recent class, two moments stayed with me vividly. The first was Lex's song and the story he shared about the bunny, the coyote, and the raven. They stripped the bunny of everything except for his heart and his music. The second was Tracey's reminder that suicide rates are highest among Indigenous youth, and that the fact of children taken away is still going. These moments both highlight what is taken and what is left behind and how survival sometimes rests on the smallest remnant of voice, culture, or song.

The story of the bunny reminded me of the broader process of dispossession and dependency. Colonization did not only steal land; it also tried to strip away ways of living, languages, and relationships. The Indian Act, as Diabo (2017) says, institutionalized this process by controlling almost every aspect of Indigenous life. Yet, even in this stripping away, there remained heart and music: the memory of laws, stories, and song that couldn't strip away from them.

The 1910 Memorial to Laurier emphasized that settlers were guests, welcomed but expected to show reciprocity and respect (Teit, 2010). This echoes the laws given by Coyote where each nation holds its land and responsibilities, and outsiders must not trespass without permission. To me, this law carries the same spirit as the bunny's music: even after dispossession, the laws remain a heartbeat.

At the same time, Tracey's words about suicide among Indigenous youth echoed painfully with Taiaiake Alfred's warning that reconciliation, when it ignores land and culture, leaves young people alienated. The loss of children through residential schools was the most impactful, I think. As the CBC

(2017) summary of 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act explains, these schools were designed to "kill the Indian in the child," in the attempt to vanish language and cultural identity. This systemic removal shows how settlers started the violence, but the fact that they still take away their children is the prove this violence remains, with another political argument.

Yet, stories, songs, and laws continue to carry resilience. In Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws, Ignace and Ignace (2017) record how Coyote's stories explain the land, rivers, and salmon. These are not just myths but living legal orders, teachings that root identity. Hearing Lex sing in class, I felt how music, like these stories, becomes a vessel for survival and love. Even when nearly everything is stripped away, voice and memory remain.

For me, this reflection is also a reminder of responsibility as an uninvited guest on this land. The 1910 Memorial described settlers as guests who were expected to respect the laws of the hosts. That role demands humility. To hear Lex's story and Tracey's reminder is to be confronted with the ongoing reality that colonization is present.

And yet, I also see hope. If the bunny's music survived even after everything else was taken, perhaps that is what Indigenous youth, Elders, and communities continue to carry: music, law, and story as forms of survival and resurgence. For me, listening is part of that responsibility, not to consume or appropriate, but to hear with respect, to honor the laws of the land, and to act with reciprocity.

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CONNECTING BEYOND READING

Yesterday, I watched two very different but equally powerful films with my partner, Rosa: the documentary *So Surreal: Behind the Mask* and the comedy-horror *Seeds*. Both films left me thinking deeply about our readings and the histories we've been engaging with in class.

In *So Surreal: Behind the Mask*, two Indigenous communities shared how masks connect them with the spirit world, integral parts of their ceremonies, songs, and dances. These masks were once prohibited, stolen, and locked away in museums and private collections, and now communities are fighting to bring them home. One line that stayed with me was the idea that true wealth was measured by how much you shared, in contrast to Western notions of accumulation. It reminded me of the 1910 Memorial to Laurier, where the Chiefs described how early "real whites" respected their laws and never attempted to steal their land or life, but later settlers imposed theft and dispossession (Memorial to Laurier, 2010). What was taken was not only land but cultural heritage. As Garba and Sorentino (2020) argue in *Slavery is a Metaphor*, settler colonialism involves not just the theft of territory but also of symbolic and cultural worlds; masks here stand as stolen heritage, material and spiritual at the same

time.

The second film, *Seeds*, was at once cathartic and unsettling. The filmmaker explained: "I wanted to be violent because they didn't contain when they came after us." The film doesn't shy away from ongoing colonial strategies, corporate land theft, abuse of Indigenous women, and the constant reminders of occupation: highways, the English language, and the destruction of livestock. Yet it was not only about trauma. It was about rage, autonomy, and resurgence. Seeing elders react emotionally to hearing their language in the film underscored what Tuck and Yang (2012) insist: decolonization is not a metaphor. It requires the literal return of land and the restoration of Indigenous life, language, and sovereignty.

Both films also connected to what Arthur Manuel describes as the grassroots struggle in the *Decolonization Handbook*. He explains that movements like *Idle No More* and *Defenders of the Land* emerge from communities themselves, people putting their bodies on the line to protect land and culture, refusing to wait for governments or courts to grant justice (Manuel, 2017). *So Surreal* shows this struggle through the retrieval of stolen masks, while *Seeds* embodies it in the

refusal to let colonial violence define Indigenous realities.

At the end of *So Surreal*, there was an interview with two elders who offered a prayer and shared their reflections on the films. Their words grounded everything we had just witnessed, reminding us that these stories are not only about the past but are also about ongoing struggles and hopes for future generations.

Ultimately, these films made me reflect on what it means to "give back." The prohibition and theft of masks, the erasure of language, the lands dispossession... none of these can be undone by symbolic gestures. As Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us, decolonization is not a metaphor but a demand for the repatriation of land, culture, and life itself. Both films are powerful reminders of that truth. I also think that watching this film with Rosa, a person I love and as new comers here was powerful. All the way back home we talked about the powerful experience, she asked me about the class we could connect in a different level.



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week 5

DEAR MARY



Dear Mary,

I can feel how your journey began long before the residential school, when your village was displaced, when your land was taken, and when you had to learn English in a place that tried to silence your language. Even then, you carried so much strength.

Then came the unimaginable, being taken away from your parents, reduced to the number "50," separated from your sisters and brother. The bath they forced on you, under the cruel idea that you needed to be "cleansed," was never about cleanliness. It was an act of violence meant to erase who you were... but they could not.

I was deeply moved by how your beautiful smile still appears when you recall sneaking food or running into the bushes to see your brothers and speak your language. You called it "wrong," but I only see courage, the strength of a little girl determined to survive, to hold on to life, to resist in the only ways an eight-year-old could in a place built to break her. Those were acts of love and resistance.

You once asked if any education is worth it when it comes at the cost of a child's happiness. The answer is no. Your parents and Elders were always right: a child must be allowed to laugh, to make mistakes, to feel loved.

Losing your brother is a pain beyond words. Please know that it was not your fault. The love and effort you showed in trying to see him one last time speak of your enormous heart. When you talked about being forced to pray to a God who was not yours, I thought of the gatherings you loved, the singing, the prayers, the connection. Even when you were punished, you still found ways to protect your spirit. Some children kept running away to find safety, and you understood them.

You turned that pain into purpose. As a priest and a social worker, you've changed the story for the children and families who came after you. You are rewriting history through compassion, dignity, and love.

When you reunited with your parents and felt distant because "they had changed you," I wanted to tell you: they didn't change your essence. The core of who you are remained, bright and strong, even after everything.

You faced bullying and racism in other schools, yet you kept running forward. You worked hard so you wouldn't have to return, you built a life, you found love, and you shared your truth even when others couldn't fully understand it. It's so clear how much healing and strength flow through you. The way others look at you with admiration and tenderness says everything.

Your story is one of resistance, love, and profound healing. Thank you for sharing it, for keeping your language and heritage alive, for showing what courage looks like.

You are loved. You are admired. You are seen.

With deep respect and care,
Ximena



week 6

THE MOUNTAIN

AS THE WOMB OF A MOTHER

When I began reading about the violence against Indigenous women in Canada, I felt a heaviness that I could not separate from my own experience. I was reading about disposability, dehumanization, and genocide while living through another painful reality, the femicide of my patient's cousin and the disappearance of another's aunt. The words on the page were a painful reminder that made difficult to me seeing light through all of the sorrow. Sometimes you need someone to remind you that apart from all the horrendous things, the strength and beauty (in this case of indigenous women) is the way to follow through the pain. They echoed in my therapy sessions, in my silences, in the stories of my patients, in the sorrow for my own people.

Reading the Executive Summary of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) forced me to sit with this truth: violence against women is not accidental or isolated. It is structural and deeply rooted in colonial systems that have transformed relationships into hierarchies of power. As the report explains, this violence is "a race-based genocide... empowered by colonial structures, evidenced by the Indian Act, residential schools, and breaches of human and Indigenous rights" (National Inquiry, 2019, p. 3). Every missing or murdered woman leaves behind a network of relationships torn apart, children, parents, communities, and lands that lose a piece of themselves.

The day I walked to the mountain and I offered my stone to the land I asked for permission to be here, to learn, to listen. It also helped me remember that the difficulties are not just human, and the

healing is not only through people. Speaking to the mountain reminded me that relationships human and non-human are sacred, as the report insists when it affirms that "understanding what happens in relationships is the starting point to both understanding and ending violence" (National Inquiry, 2019, p. 10). Healing is not only about the absence of violence but about restoring relationships with others, with the land, and with ourselves.

But reading about Cindy Gladue broke me open in another way. In *Outrage of Injustice*, Beverley Jacobs (2020) described how Cindy's vagina was displayed in a Canadian courtroom preserved, labeled as a specimen, and shown to the public. "Who speaks on behalf of an Indigenous murder victim when her vagina is spread out in a public courtroom?" Jacobs asks (p. 1). I couldn't breathe when I read that. The dehumanization was unbelievable, the act itself a reflection of what Sherene Razack (2016) later calls "the inscription of colonial power on the flesh" (p. 285). These words were not theoretical; they were physical. They resonated in my body as a reminder of indigenous women who have been told that their suffering is invisible.

Razack's analysis of disposability helped me understand that violence against Indigenous women is not only about murder, it is about how society makes some lives unhuman. The courts, the media, and institutions transform Indigenous women into things, into data, into "matters of evidence." Yet, as Jacobs (2020) writes, "our experiences with the Canadian justice system represent a layering of violence" (p. 2). This layering is something I have seen mirrored in Mexico, where violence against women (especially Indigenous and poor women) is met with the same silence, the same bureaucratic indifference. Anyone of them must not be forgotten.

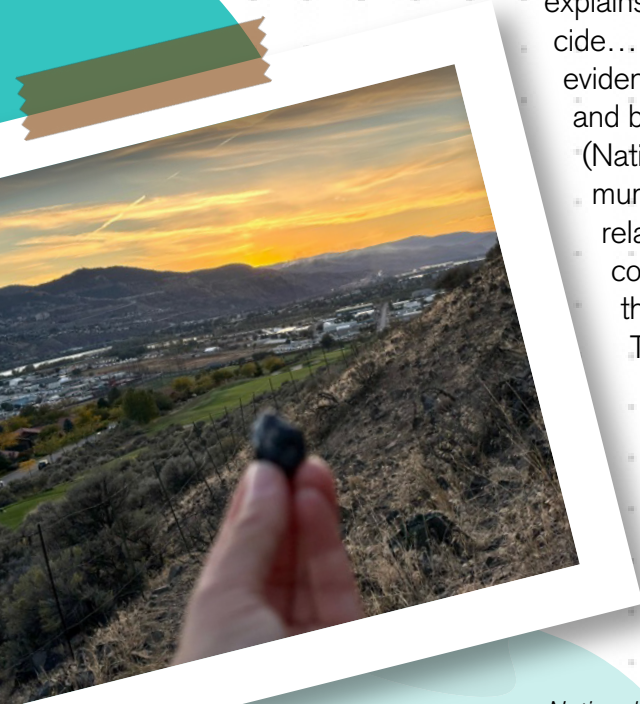
The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (Šimonović, 2019) reinforced this continuity by documenting how Indigenous women in Canada face violence at rates six times higher

than non-Indigenous women, largely due to "institutional, systemic, and intersecting forms of discrimination" (p. 3). This mirrors global patterns of gendered colonialism, where Indigenous women's economic and social marginalization is not an accident but a result of deliberate policies and ongoing neglect.

Yet amid the grief, the reports and testimonies also speak of strength. The News Release of the National Inquiry (2019) reminded me that Indigenous women continue to lead the fight for justice, even after unimaginable loss. As Commissioner Michèle Audette said, "The rightful power and place of women must be reinstated, which requires dismantling the structures of colonialism" (National Inquiry, 2019).

To speak to the land is, for me, an act of resistance and humility. It is a way of act acknowledging that I am a guest on this territory and that my presence carries a responsibility to act with compassion, with awareness, with accountability. The stories of Indigenous women are not just about tragedy, they are about survival, spirit, and the ongoing reclamation of life.

In this reflection, I hold grief and gratitude together. I grieve for Cindy Gladue and for all the women whose stories were and are still being silenced. I grieve for the families of my patients, for their cousins and aunts who became numbers in a system that still refuses to listen. But I am also grateful for the land that receives my words and is guiding my new steps, for the women who continue to fight, and for the chance to keep learning how to listen with reverence.



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week 7

THE ONE THAT CONTROLS THE NARRATIVE, CONTROLS REALITY

After listening to the story of the bush-tailed rat, I reminded that knowledge is not merely what is observed, but how we relate to what we observe. In the story, the rat is taught not through domination or extraction but through reciprocity, and respect for the land. This is not knowledge of vengeance or individualism, it is knowledge as relationship, as responsibility. Yet in the Western epistemological tradition, this way of knowing is often dismissed as “myth” or “less valid”, and it takes away its authority. Miranda Fricker (2003) calls this epistemic injustice, a profound violence that occurs when someone is wronged in their capacity as a knower. I came to understand epistemic injustice is not only about disbelief, it is about dispossession. It is the denial of a reality.

Yesterday I also realized why this class is so emotional for me, it's been difficult to see the reality of indigenous people here as a mirror of my people living similarities as I am now the uninvited guest on Secwépemc territory, and I'm constantly asking myself if I've done enough back home, the things that I could've done different, the things that maybe I should've know better, and how can I contribute here, because people are not separated from land. I cannot separate

what I am learning from what has been lived. If they are doing this to the land and it's people, shouldn't we should all feel the pain, the anger? Not in the same way, obviously, but enough to drive us into action?

The overrepresentation of Indigenous women in Canadian prisons is not accidental; it is the material outcome of a long-standing colonial desire to erase Indigenous law and governance. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action urge Canada to eliminate the over-incarceration of Indigenous peoples and recognize Indigenous justice systems (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, Calls to Action 30, 42) and does so little (or nothing?), incarceration continues to function as a colonial instrument to punish Indigenous women for surviving the very harms that the state created. Fricker tells us that testimonial injustice occurs when systemic prejudice causes a person's words to carry less credibility (2003). I am struck by the reality that in Canadian courts, the testimony of Indigenous women is not only doubted but often rendered unintelligible, because it emerges from a worldview that the legal system was not designed to hear. And it doesn't seem to want either.

Canada speaks of reconciliation yet insists on determining the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge through Western categories of evidence. Lajoie-O'Malley, Bronson, and Blue (2023) argue that what the government calls “recognition” of Indigenous knowledge is actually an attempt to absorb it by translating it into Western frameworks where it can be controlled rather than followed. The state does not want Indigenous consent; it wants Indigenous compliance. Naming this difference is crucial. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) writes, “No pasta nada en el mundo “real” a menos que antes haya sucedido en nuestra cabeza” (Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads). By naming, we create worlds. By refusing to name, by accepting dominant narratives, we sustain systems of erasure (this realization came really painful for me, because I know how hard is to speak for me, not just in English, but in life. I feel

constantly insecure of my words, I really think that is a heritage from my mother's lineage).

Thinking about the residential school system, where children were stripped of their languages and given numbers instead of names, I am confronted with what Audre Lorde (1977) calls “the transformation of silence into language and action.” But Lorde also warns that speaking truth is dangerous. For Indigenous peoples, to speak their own law, their own creation stories, their own truth, was (still is) to threaten the state's monopoly over what counts as knowledge, I kept thinking in Sara's last contribution, on what extend the colonial system is forcing the silence in the cooperative nature of indigenous knowledge as an act of protection.

I reflect on my positionality: I come from a country where Indigenous languages and knowledges were also silenced. My great-grandmother refused to teach her language to her children for fear of violence, she stopped talking. Being here, on this land, witnessing the continued attempts to limit Indigenous knowledge to “data,” I recognize the same colonial logic that shaped my own history. The difference is that here, I am the guest. I am the one who must be always actively aware of not contributing to erasure, but to honor and respect this land and what it signifies.

The bush-tailed rat story teaches that knowledge is inseparable from responsibility. The land is not an object, but a relative. Epistemic justice, then, is not just about including Indigenous voices, it is about accepting Indigenous law, land-based governance, and spiritual responsibilities as equal sources of reality-making. To refuse this is not neutrality: it is violence.

In this moment of reflection, I commit to the work that Anzaldúa calls Nepantla, the uncomfortable space between worlds where transformation becomes possible. Naming epistemic injustice can't become merely an intellectual act, it is a step toward making another world possible.

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THE ACT OF TAKING THE UNTAKABLE

Today I feel that I'm writing from that uneasy place Gloria Anzaldúa calls nepantla (the in-between space where worlds collide, rub harshly against each other, and force us to see what we would rather not, but is very necessary). Reading the Teillet Report on Indigenous identity fraud while learning from Secwépemc stories feels enraging, unpleasant, and yet, not surprising.

The Teillet Report makes clear that Indigenous identity fraud is not a misunderstanding or an accident, it is a colonial strategy. Fraudsters "fabricate an Indigenous identity out of thin air" to access scholarships, jobs, prestige, and authority intended for Indigenous peoples (Teillet, 2022, pp. 12–15). They take space that is not theirs. They take voice that is not theirs. They take stories, trauma, and ceremonies that are not theirs. They "market trauma" and "steal valour" by performing Indigenous pain as though suffering were a costume (Teillet, 2022, p. 30).

Andzaldúa writes that "the one who does not feel safe crossing borders is never whole." (Andzaldúa, 2015). Identity fraud is a violent crossing, a border trespass that transforms Indigenous identity into a consumable good. It is appropriation without accountability. It is not the creation of a new consciousness, it is an act of theft.

Reading Secwépemc People, Land and Laws, I felt the deep contrast between these acts of theft and the deep relationality that defines Secwépemc identity. Ignace teaches that Secwépemc stseptékwll are not metaphors or inventions but "recorded laws carried through land, ancestors, and obligations to all relations" (Ignace &

Ignace, 2017). Identity, here, is accountability. It is earned through responsibility, not performance.

As I write this words, I remember the story of the Transformers and the truth that carries. As they traveled through Secwépemc territory reshaping the world, Coyote accompanied them, clever, restless, always trying to take shortcuts, always wanting more than what was his to take. Coyote tries to seize power without relationship, without responsibility. And each time he does, the world changes in ways that must later be corrected.

I cannot ignore the parallel: identity fraud is a Coyote act without Coyote's humility and his ability to learn from his acts. It is trickster energy stripped of responsibility. People who commit this fraud claim ceremony, ancestral teachings, and authority as though identity to gain something for them. Teillet reminds us that Indigenous identity "exists only in relation to cultural ancestors and existing Indigenous societies" (Teillet, 2022, p. 9). Without relationship, without recognizing it, seems to me a western individualistic and selfish act.

Andzaldúa's insistence that "nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (Andzaldúa, 2015) also resonates here. This people craft a self-image (I have an Indigenous ancestor from the 1600s; I have a DNA percentage; I went to ceremony once) and through that self-image, they justify taking resources from Indigenous communities. They create identity as a fantasy and then demand that institutions validate the fantasy. It is so different to become a learner of a culture and to become a thief of it.

Meanwhile, Indigenous students lose scholarships. Indigenous scholars lose jobs. Indigenous communities lose sovereignty. The harm is not symbolic, it is material, emotional, and spiritual.

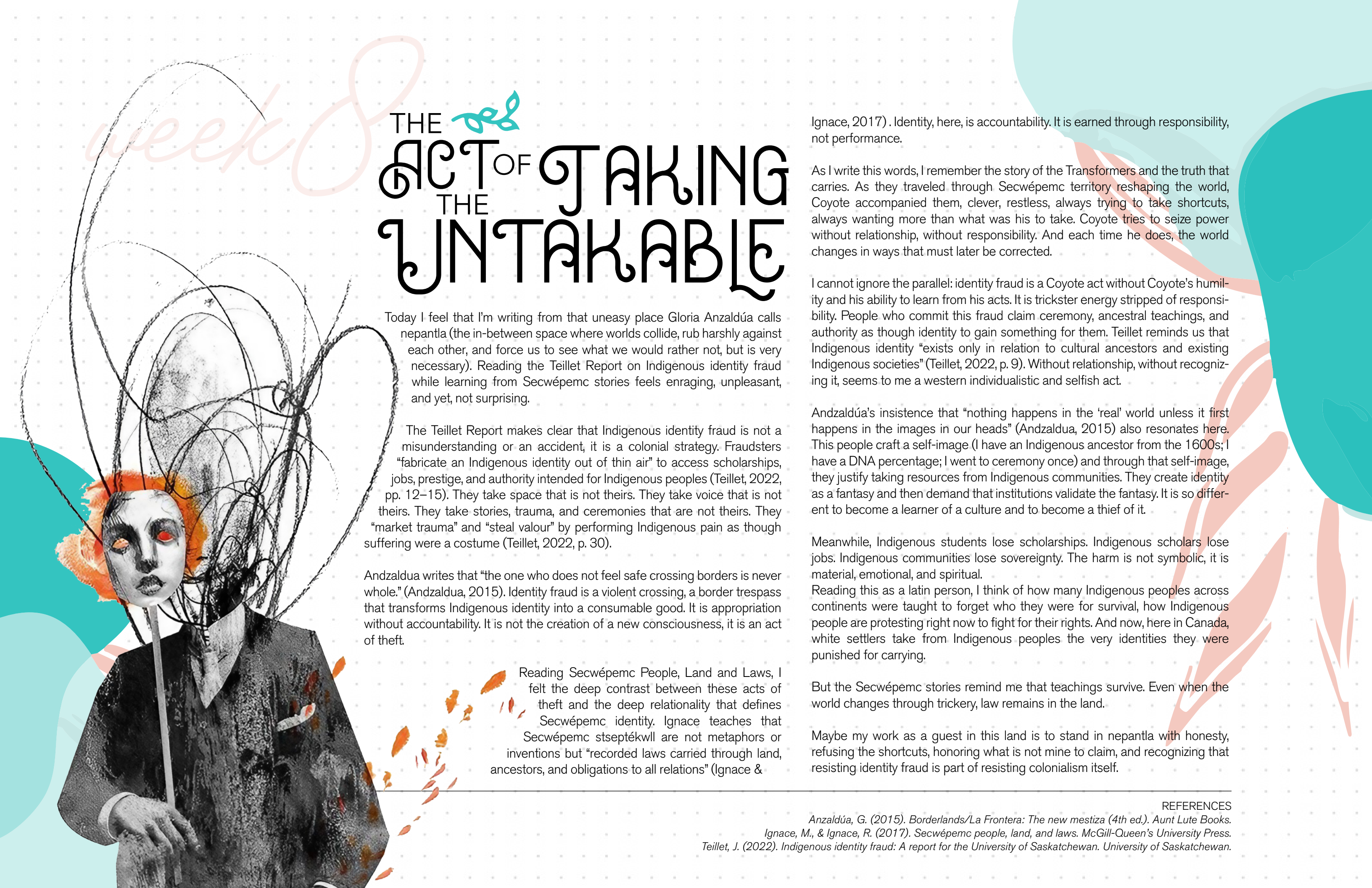
Reading this as a latin person, I think of how many Indigenous peoples across continents were taught to forget who they were for survival, how Indigenous people are protesting right now to fight for their rights. And now, here in Canada, white settlers take from Indigenous peoples the very identities they were punished for carrying.

But the Secwépemc stories remind me that teachings survive. Even when the world changes through trickery, law remains in the land.

Maybe my work as a guest in this land is to stand in nepantla with honesty, refusing the shortcuts, honoring what is not mine to claim, and recognizing that resisting identity fraud is part of resisting colonialism itself.

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week 9

A DAILY REMAINDER

Today, I keep returning to an experience I had on the bus, a moment that at first glance, seemed ordinary, but after reading Alexander, Mills, and Borrows, I now see as a living illustration of clashing legal and relational worldviews.

That afternoon, the bus driver was rude to a passenger, and the situation spiraled into an hour-long delay. I live near the reserve, so many Indigenous passengers were on the bus. The tension rose quickly. What struck me was the difference in reactions. A group of white passengers immediately became confrontational. They argued, demanded, and treated the driver almost like a servant insisting on their right to be taken home. Their response echoed a worldview I now recognize as deeply embedded in Western legal culture: one that centers entitlement, individual rights, and a “dominion” orientation where someone must be blamed, compelled, or controlled.

In contrast, the Indigenous passengers responded so differently that I still feel moved thinking about it. They were frustrated too (no one wants to be stranded) but their energy shifted almost instantly toward collective problem-solving. Instead of escalating the conflict, they asked: What can we do? How do we get everyone home? Who needs help? Within minutes, they were organized. Someone called the bus station; a mother arranged rides for the teens, offered lifts to the Indigenous people on the bus. Their approach felt relational, grounded, and oriented toward reparation rather than domination.

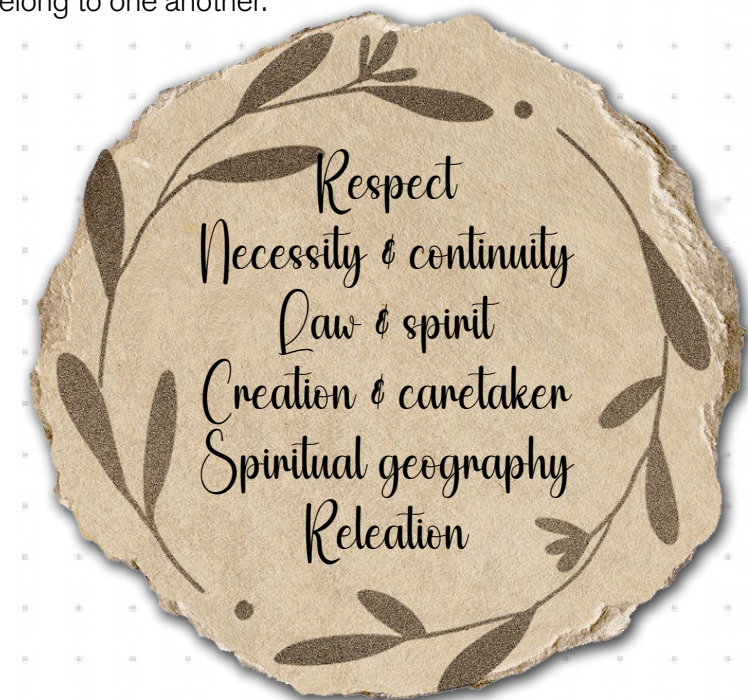
I didn’t have those words at the time. But now, after reading Mills’ explanation that “all of Creation is alive” and that relationships form the foundation of Anishinaabe law (Mills, 2010, p. 131), I can finally name what I witnessed. Their response reflected a legal and ethical order rooted in obligations to care for one another, a worldview in which humans were created last and are therefore responsible for maintaining balance, not asserting authority (Mills, 2010, pp. 132–133). It was as if the logic of Manito Aki Inakonigaawin centered on relationships, consent, and collective responsibility was playing out inside that crowded bus.

Meanwhile, the white passengers embodied the dominion paradigm that Little Bear critiques: a “user-thing vision” in which the world, including people, is something to command, manage, or extract from (quoted in Mills, 2010, p. 131). Their insistence on demanding compliance from the driver felt eerily similar to the structures Alexander critiques in *The New Jim Crow*, where law operates not through relationship but through control, punishment, and force. Alexander’s description of how systems create an “enormous undercaste” through discretionary power and confrontation (Alexander, 2010, p. 96) echoed in the way these passengers treated the smallest inconvenience as grounds for anger and entitlement.

On the bus, I felt myself suspended between these worlds. I understood the frustration, but something in me softened as I watched the Indigenous community members coordinate, communicate, and act collectively. Their actions resonated with what Borrows calls living law, grounded in story, responsibility, and the continual renewal of relationships (Borrows, 2010). It made me see how law is not only written in constitutions or court decisions; it is lived in the everyday choices people make in moments of stress.

The experience left me wondering about the legal and ethical paradigms I unconsciously carry. How often have I internalized the dominion impulse (believing someone must fix things for me, or that being inconvenienced entitles me to anger?) And what would it mean to shift toward a relational stand in those situations?

Tonight, I hold gratitude for that bus delay. It became more than an inconvenience; it became a lesson. A glimpse into how Indigenous law lives (not in abstract principles, but in gestures of care, mutual aid, and responsibility). It showed me that law, at its best, is a way of being with others. And I am learning that the kind of legal future I want to belong to is the one I saw unfolding in real time that day: grounded in relationship, oriented toward repair, and alive with awareness that we belong to one another.



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week 10



**READING
BREAK!**



week 11

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

Today I found myself returning to the Secwepemc storytelling video, the TRU Implementing the TRC Pressbook, and Leroy Little Bear's teachings on land as an educational foundation. Hearing these three together felt like someone was rearranging the furniture inside my mind, moving things I thought I understood into different places, forcing me to notice the walls and openings I had ignored.

The Elder in the video spoke softly but clearly: a story is not just a story. It is a world, a law, a memory, and a relationship. The Pressbook echoes this insistence on holism, explaining that Indigenous pedagogy is never separated from land, from community, or from responsibility (Thompson Rivers University, 2023). And then Little Bear's words pushed everything deeper: identity itself is a sacred responsibility and arises from the land, from the paradigms shaped by place, and from the metaphysics carried through story and ceremony.

What stayed with me the most was the reminder that every society has an interpretive template, a perception that shapes what counts as knowledge, reality, and truth, because this is something that I use everyday in my clinical practice, everything that we are is an interpretation of the story we are telling ourselves. Western science pretends to observe "objectively," yet even quantum physics cannot escape the role of human interpretation. "The reality you wake up to every morning is a product of your interpretive template," Little Bear says, reminding us that Western ways of knowing are not universal, they are simply one worldview among many.

The Elder's teaching made this feel less like theory and more like an embodied truth. In Secwepemc knowledge, stories teach not through explanation but through experience. Understanding does not come from extracting an "objective" meaning, it comes from staying in relationship with the story, letting it work on

you slowly, relationally. This asks us to move beyond the Western obsession with mastery and to enter instead into reciprocity.

Little Bear names this reciprocity clearly: land is animate, everything is in motion, and existence is a web of relations. Knowledge emerges from this relationality, not outside it. And crucially, he insists that the land is not just a backdrop, it is a teacher, a relative, an ancestor. "Ensoulment," he calls it, describing how Indigenous peoples understand land as alive, and how this relationship is foundational for identity and education.

The TRC Pressbook emphasizes exactly this point: that colonialism not only stole land but disrupted the intergenerational transmission of story, language, and knowledge (TRU, 2023). The question Little Bear asks, "If I were to resurrect in 200 years, will I be among strangers? Will I hear my songs, my language, my stories?" hit me unexpectedly hard. I felt that question travel through my chest, as if it found something inside me that had been waiting to be acknowledged.

What all three teachings made clear is that storytelling is not just a method, it is a pedagogy, a governance system, a way of maintaining worlds. Simpson (2017) calls storytelling an act of resurgence, a refusal to let Indigenous life-ways disappear. Little Bear warns that losing stories is losing identity, losing connection to land, losing the very sounds that make a people who they are. The Pressbook insists that relational accountability means carrying these stories with respect, humility, and care.

As a newcomer on Secwepemcúl'ecw, I am learning that listening is not passive. Listening is a responsibility. It means acknowledging that I am a guest here. It means refusing to consume stories as "content." It means letting these teachings unsettle me, reshape me, and call me into ethical relationality.

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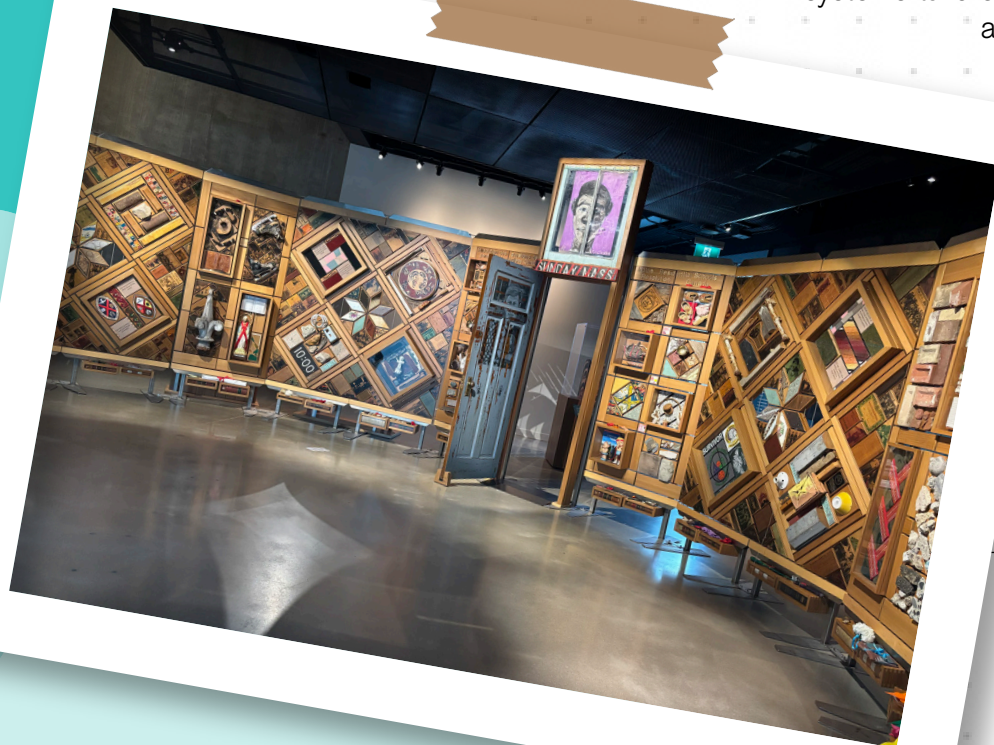


week 12

NEURODECOLONIZATION, AND THE CRUMBLING OF WESTERN NARRATIVES

I went to the CCR convention expecting policy debates, procedural updates and panels on migration systems. Instead, the first thing we did was a shearing circle, and it was a reminder that every Indigenous Nation (Métis, Inuit, Secwépemc, Cree, Anishinaabe, and so many others) carries a distinct history, language system, and relationship to land.

Later in the Human Rights museum, I was struck on how often colonial systems tailored their violence to each Nation, the settlers adapted strategies of torture depending on each region. The way policing, medical assimilation, church interventions, and land removal were all calibrated to extract the maximum cultural rupture... It is horrifying to think about colonialism as a system that studied peoples to break them more efficiently. And it is humbling to realize that despite this, Nations endured. They adapted. They are winning. They held on to stories, practices, breath.



All of this aligned beautifully with Dr. Michael Yellow Bird's teachings on neurodecolonization. In the Brown University lecture "The Power of Ceremony: Indigenous Contemplative Practices, Neurodecolonization, and Indigenous Resurgence," Yellow Bird explains that colonization is not only historical, it is neurological (Yellow Bird, 2021). It shapes the brain toward fear, compliance, dissociation, and internalized oppression. But he also insists that the brain can be rewired through breath, ceremony, contemplative practices, and land-based presence. This isn't "self-help." This is political.

Yellow Bird argues that mindfulness, when rooted in Indigenous traditions rather than appropriated through Western wellness industries, becomes a pathway to undo the neurological imprints of colonial trauma (Yellow Bird, 2021). They do not need an fMRI scan or a peer-reviewed article to know that ceremony heals, that land is medicine, that breath is a portal to remembering and it's Western science that is excitedly announcing what Indigenous Peoples have always known.

There is something almost ironic about watching Western institutions finally begin to affirm what Indigenous Nations have said across generations. In the lecture, Yellow Bird (2021) explains how ceremony and mindfulness activate neuroplasticity, enhance resilience, and undo colonial conditioning. But Indigenous Peoples did not need neuroscience to validate this, and only now, Western society (as its own epistemological frameworks crumble under centuries of false narratives), does it begin to look outward. The irony is that the Western academy is now using Indigenous knowledge to "discover" truths that were never lost, just ignored, dismissed, or confiscated. They know their truth, they always have.

It is Western epistemology that is trembling, destabilized by its own contradictions, its myth of objectivity dissolving. I would be lying if I say I'm not enjoying it a little.

Walking out of the museum and convention I felt both hurt and hopeful, hurt of realizing the magnitude of what settlers have done, and so hopeful because now I am witnesses of how can an Indigenous people in government can change the whole perspective of a province. And I think that that's what neurodecolonization means, that change begins in the mind, that healing is not abstract but embodied, that reconnection is possible in every breath.

Yellow Bird's teachings and the voices at the CCR reminded me that decolonization is not only institutional, it is neurological, relational, spiritual. Indigenous Peoples today are using Western tools not for validation, but for dismantling. They are refusing collapse, refusing

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week 13

NAMING WHAT HURTS

There are days when the weight of what I am learning presses too heavily on my chest, so insistently that the only way to breathe is to write. Today is one of those days. The stories of Colten Boushie and Joyce Echaquan are sitting inside me. They remind me that systemic racism in Canada is not theoretical or historical, it is embodied in institutions, legal systems, hospitals, and the everyday interactions that either affirm or deny someone's humanity.

Reading David MacDonald's (2021) analysis of settler silencing in the trial of Gerald Stanley cracked something open inside me. The way the courtroom (allegedly a space of "neutrality") became another terrain of racial violence was unbearable to read. An all-white jury, the dismissal of Indigenous witnesses, the quiet but deliberate refusal to say the words "race," "racism," or "bias"... it felt like watching the machinery of the state perform the old colonial act of erasure. It was not only Colten who was silenced, but the entire world that produced him.

And then there was Joyce Echaquan, a 37-year-old Atikamekw mother of seven who livestreamed her final moments from a hospital bed while nurses mocked her, calling her "thick" and suggesting she deserved what she was enduring. According to the Coroner's Report (2021), systemic racism was not incidental but a contributing factor in her death: a death caused by cardiogenic shock, but ampli-

fied by indifference, prejudice, and a catastrophic failure of care. Reading the coroner's words, "the racism and prejudice that Mrs. Echaquan faced was certainly a contributing factor to her death" (p. 20) was an example of an entire structure pretending to be benevolent.

What struck me most was not only the violence itself, but how routine it was. The nurses did not see themselves as racist; they believed they were simply "provoking" her to help her. The police who mishandled Colten's murder scene did not see themselves as participating in silencing; they believed they were following protocol. The law, as MacDonald (2021) argues, is designed to protect the settler imagination of innocence and property. The hospital, as the coroner's report shows, was designed around assumptions that Indigenous women are "addicts," "dramatic," "difficult," and less deserving of empathy.

What does it mean to live in a society where Indigenous people are always already imagined through suspicion? Through criminality? Through disposability?

The over-representation of Indigenous women in prisons echoes through these cases. If the courts silence them and the hospitals dismiss them, prisons swallow them. Indigenous women account for over 40% of federally incarcerated women, despite representing only a tiny fraction of the popu-

lation (MacDonald, 2021). This is not because Indigenous women are more "criminal," but because the system has been structured to criminalize their existence, their trauma and their survival strategies.

When Joyce cried out "they are giving me too much drugs" (Coroner Report, 2021, p. 11), nobody believed her, not because she was lying, but because systemic racism had already decided who she was allowed to be. When Colten's friends were put on trial for their own trauma, the message was the same: Indigenous pain is not legible, not believable, not grievable.

I keep thinking about the line from the coroner's report: "Had it not been for the video footage, it is likely that this event would never have come to public attention" (2021, p. 12). And I know this is true of so many stories that never make it into the public record. How many Indigenous women die quietly in hospitals, dismissed as "dramatic"? How many Indigenous youth are killed or incarcerated without the world ever knowing their names?

As I sit with these stories, I feel grief, but also anger. A desire to refuse the silence that these institutions so carefully produce. A desire to write, to remember, to refuse forgetfulness. Because naming matters, and remembering is a responsibility.

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When I look back on this semester, it feels less like a linear path and more like a circle, one I entered with curiosity, hesitation, and a commitment to unlearn. I remember my early reflections, where I tried to make sense of the land acknowledgment, injustice, of the weight of colonial structures, and of the radical possibility of Indigenous ways of knowing. What I didn't know then was how deeply these conversations would move me. How they would change the way I see myself, my work, and my relationships to land, community, and knowledge.

A moment that stays with me is the bus incident near the reserve the contrasting reactions of white people and Indigenous passengers. At that time, I wrote about witnessing two worlds of meaning coexist: one rooted in demands, entitlement, and urgency; another grounded in repair, collectivity, and relationality. That moment became a lens through which I saw the whole course. It taught me that knowledge is not simply what is written, it is lived, practiced, and shared in the small acts of organizing, caring, and making kin in moments of disruption.

Throughout the course, I held onto the wholistic goals of púsmen (heart), sképqin (head), tmícw (land), and súmec (soul) not as abstract teachings but as daily companions, even when it was not easy, there were times that I felt myself slipping into other ways.

Púsmen stretched as I learned to sit with difficult stories: residential schools, gendered violence, over-incarceration, missing languages. I could almost literally feel my heart break and renew with awareness, consciousness and even hope.

Sképqin expanded through theory, but what stayed the most were the Secwepemc stories that hold whole worlds within them and the power of listening every-one's point of view on the same topic. It felt how everything in my mind made sense.

Tmícw grounded me. Living near Indigenous lands, witnessing the presence of nations whose stories shape the places I move through, reminded me that learning is also a form of relating. I think this was one of the most meaningful to me, as a newcomer there is not just the struggle of going into academia again, is to be away of my land, my home, my climate. But with the practices that Tracy suggested me, with my little own background on land knowledge at home, and the beautiful way this land covered me since I presented myself to her, I felt protected.

And súmec, my spirit grew in the quiet understanding that knowledge is not just consumed but carried, and that carrying it is a responsibility. It helped me to know me in a different setting, in a

different worldview. I am definitely not the same, and I like who I am becoming.

Working with my classmates was another form of learning, I'm really introverted so is really difficult for me to approach someone but this class made all the difference. The Celebration of Learning showed me how differently each of us approached these teachings, through stories, art, research, personal experiences, and yet how connected our work was. Their courage helped me find mine. Their questions pushed me to think beyond my familiar frames. I felt part of a community of learners who were all trying, in their own way, to move toward something more ethical, more relational, more human.

What has surprised me most is how deeply this class has entered my everyday life. I notice things I didn't before: how power circulates through institutions, how violence is justified through language, how stories can heal or erase, how land teaches if we slow down long enough to listen, how everything is relational.

These teachings shape my clinical work, my research on Indigiqueer resurgence and the ones for other courses, the way I speak, and the way I choose to show up. They are also shaping my hopes for the future. I carry a sharper awareness of my own positionality, the privileges and limitations of my training, and the humility required to learn from communities whose knowledge is ancestral.

If I had to choose one takeaway, it would be this: Learning is relational, and transformation requires accountability.

Not the punitive kind, but the kind rooted in story, reciprocity, and presence. The kind that asks me to keep decolonizing my own frameworks, to keep making space for voices that were pushed to the margins, and to honour the knowledge entrusted to me with care.

As this circle closes, another opens. I feel more grounded in the journey ahead, one where I hope to continue aligning heart, head, land, and soul. This course did not give me answers; it gave me questions that will follow me, shape me, and, I hope, guide me toward the kind of work that contributes rather than extracts. And for that, I am deeply grateful. Thank you so much Jenna and Tracy. This journey has being special because of you. Thanks for the braveness of teaching us this way. I would really hope this was not just a course, but the way that we approached learning in every single class. For what it counts, from now on this will be the way I choose to learn in every moment through life.

FINAL REFLECTION

CLOSING THE CIRCLE