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ABSTRACT

Western European forms of discourse have been foisted upon the world as the universal value-neutral reference point. External standards have been used to assess aboriginal discourse, particularly in public contexts such as schools and courtrooms. These standards assume that there is one single correct way to proceed (to talk, write, argue, teach), and that ways of knowing and proceeding are universal and foundational. The Dene remind us that all knowledge is "storied," that is, knowing and communicating are always partial (no one knows the whole story) and contextualized (all stories are rooted in a particular time, place, and set of sociocultural conditions). Ethical forms of communication (including teaching/learning) require a balance between narration and listening. Dene elders criticize schooling for teaching children to talk too much. Dene discourse emphasizes restraint, silence, and discernment of the right moment for speaking/writing or listening/interpretation. Dene ways of speaking equalize power differences between speaker and listener. A speaker does not state the point or argument directly. In such a communicative context, the audience assumes much of the responsibility of interpretation. Story, personal experience, and culture must form the basis of curriculum for aboriginal education. This paper contains Dene testimony before the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry and a detailed rhetorical analysis of that testimony. (SV)

(OTHER) WAYS OF SPEAKING: LESSONS FROM THE DENE OF NORTHERN CANADA

by

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1 Introduction

1.1 Western Culture, and the institutions of schooling which have theorized and transmitted it, is in a crisis. Western European culture and forms of discourse have been foisted upon the world as the reference point, as the standard, as the way to live a life; and that standard has been offered as if it were universal, value neutral and in the best interests of all.

1.2 Universal knowledge is totalitarian knowledge (Foucault) which has silenced and immobilized peoples at the borders--people like the aboriginal people of North America who have been colonized in, and by, this tradition.

1.3 As universal knowledge is questioned, challenged and found to be unjust;--and we are faced with a "befouled nest" (Wendell Berry)--we are called to look for new metaphors for how we can proceed pedagogically and in the name of bios (life) itself in the contexts in which we work and live.

1.4 The Dene of Northern Canada, in their testimony to the Berger Inquiry, provide a living example of how a group of people proceeded individually and collectively to speak in their own way about what they knew to be true in their situation.

2: Contexts of Aboriginal Literacy: Teaching English is not simply teaching a language but a way of thinking, acting, speaking and listening.

2.1 External standards are what have been applied in assessing aboriginal discourse (written and spoken) particularly in public contexts such a schooling or political forums or courtrooms.

2.2 Assumption of these standards is that there is one single correct way to proceed (to talk, write, put forward ideas, arguments, to know, to teach, etc) and that these ways of knowing and proceeding are universal and foundational.

3. **The Berger Inquiry: 1975-76 in the Canadian North**
   - 3.1 A brief historical overview of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (the Berger Inquiry), headed by Justice Thomas Berger, the events leading up to its formation and the manner in which the inquiry proceeded.
   - 3.2 Significance of the Inquiry was that it provided a forum where the way to speak (and what to say) had not been dictated in advance (by English/European tradition).
   - 3.3 Some of what makes these texts significant and relevant for us in 1992 is that the Dene witnesses were:
     - (a) telling the truth
     - (b) speaking from a position of justice and ethical concerns, particular to who they are and their relationship to one another, the Europeans and the land (i.e. not universal notions of justice and ethics)
     - (c) speaking from their own positions of authority (grounded in their individual and collective experience), wisdom (arising from that lived experience) an attunement to the common good ("for our children, and our children's children")
     - (d) critiquing the English language/tradition--Western European communicative practices--as they had experienced it and as they envisioned its impact on the future. Much of this critique still applies today. Their texts were an expression of freedom: It doesn't have to be this way, it could be otherwise." (Young, 1991).
     - (e) offering possible metaphors for speaking (teaching, living) in a less oppressive way
     - (f) offering standards for proceeding which were authentic to their communicative practices, history, culture as well as their relationships with one another and their land, as well as the Others (Europeans).

4. **The Legacy of the Dene Testimony: Metaphors for Other (non-English) ways of communicating**
   - 4.1 <u>English becomes the Other (language)</u> that is no longer the standard for what constitutes appropriate communicative practices. This is in contrast to the Dene languages, or all aboriginal languages as being languages "Other than English"--a phrase which locates English as the center to which all else must stand in relation.
   - 4.2 *"The people who get to tell their stories will rule the world"* (Hopi elder woman). The Dene remind us that <u>all knowledge is storied</u>--that is ways of knowing and communicating, as well as what is known is always partial (no one knows the whole story) and contextualized (all stories are rooted in a historical time, a particular place and a particular set of socio-political and cultural conditions). The technical-rational modes of discourse ("expository text") of Western European

science and academia are storied knowledge as well, but are touted as universal, atemporal and the only mode of speaking/ writing which "exposes" the truth. The European notion of what counts as a story, and a good (good=true) story at that, has ruled the world.

4.3. Ethical forms of communication (which include teaching and learning) require a balance between telling (narration) and listening. There is a need for silence so that we can learn from Others (teachers, students, parents, history, the Earth). Dene elders critique schooling as a place which has taught their children to talk too much (Christian & Gardner, 1978). Schooling, teaching has been governed by the metaphors of productivity, efficiency and more recently of growth, and self-development. This has led to the "more is better" approach to language and literacy (whole language at its most negative). The Dene remind us of the need for restraint, silence and discernment of the right moment for speaking and writing, for listening and reading (reading in the broad sense of interpretation, not just spoken text but actions and cultural icons, as well as the land and animals).

4.4 Rhetorically Dene ways of speaking try to equalize the power differences between the speaker and listener. Speakers will tell their story without directly stating the point, the argument. In such a communicative context, the audience must assume much of the responsibility for doing the interpretive work (for understanding what the speaker is saying might mean). This is different to Western academic discourse where the speakers are responsible for making their arguments logically, concisely and coherently; and the audiences responsibility is to use their reasons and possibly superior knowledge to refute the arguments (usually by disclosing inadequacies in the internal consistencies of the argument or by reference to first or universal--i.e. not Dene--principles).

4.5 Return to the notion of the family/community as the key pedagogic relation. In a family we speak with one another in a more intimate way: using familiar language, stories, the language of love and respect, of emotion and of things that really matter to us. This is a way for us to communicate with one another in pedagogic situations, and to renew our responsibility to care for one another and the place where we live (which sustains us).

4.6 To see life and the land as teacher. (Eddie Cook: " I love and . respect my land it has taught me education I could not learn in the white man's books.). To learn from the land is to be disciplined and humble enough to learn from life, from our own experiences. It is to accept that nature is in the end the final authority; it has more power than any human group.

4.7 Our deliberations (in schools, in political arena) need to be attuned to the common good (must be attuned to the Other).

The common good is a vision for the world as our children might experience it; the common good is what might be best for our children. In such deliberations, we must be committed to speak publicly about our private lives, our experiences and the truth as we know, with all the passion we have.

5. **Dene ethics of speaking offer possibilities for Survival: for living and learning collectively respecting and honouring differences.**
   - 5.1 Story is a significant educative practice (for all cultures) and ought to become an integral part of communicative practices in education.
   - 5.2 What constitutes a story, argument, persuasion, appropriate ways of speaking, listening and reading depends (on a whole variety of factors....) and thus standards for goodness and justness must be fitting to the particulars of the situations.
   - 5.3 Teachers and educators not familiar with different traditions for speaking and listening must re-formulate the English tradition as one, among many.
   - 5.4 Readers/listeners of aboriginal students texts/stories can re-formulate the difficulties these texts create as an opportunity to take up the responsibility for doing the interpretive work.
   - 5.5 Personal experience, as well as knowledge of one's tradition must become the starting place of any curriculum and must be the authority from which aboriginal speak and write.
   - 5.6 All my relations: A saying which testifies to the very real and deep way in which we are all related to everyone and everything else. Attending to these relationships respectfully (in what we say and in what we do) must take precedence over epistemic authority (the link between knowledge and power; and arguments over who is right and how they have the right to be right).

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FOR OUR CHILDREN

EDDIE COOK[70]

Mr. Berger, I haven't got a brief, but I am going to be as brief as I could.

My name is Eddie Cook, and I'm 60 years old. I was born and brought up in Good Hope. I was brought up partly in the old ancient ways, where you have got to struggle and find ways to make your own living off the land, such as -- the system we used, like a young boy growing up, not allowed, not supposed to eat certain foods because it affect his physical condition. Certain foods, parts of animals, certain berries, and you can't even lay down on the branches and boughs you have in your tent. You have got to sit on your toes; if you are going to lay down, you lay down and go to bed, that's it.

I remember how I was only 6 years old when I first had my dog teams, two dogs, and I was taught to make a living off the country, the land and just to start with, I set the rabbit snares. I went and set my rabbit snares, say maybe about half a mile, about four or five snares, and the next morning, I got up and my dad yells at me, we were living in the tent, it could have been 40 below for all we know, it's cold, he scid get up and go see the snares, get something to eat for breakfast, and we had all kinds of meat in the tent at home, but that was the way of living, you know, that is the way we were brought up. I wasn't the only one, there were many others besides me. I went over, I got up, set the fire -- lit the fire, the stove and set off in the dark to see my snares, and I was pretty -- it was kind of creepy, dark you know and a child is afraid to go in the dark and I was glad when I reached my last snares, and when I opened the snares I happened to catch two rabbits and I really made a B-line for the tent on the way back. And so forth, and my dad showed me how to set things like snares and such -- ways of catching fur-bearing animals, and that's what I was taught, and right now I can truly say I can go out and trap -- I'm going to go and catch fur-bearing animals without a steel trap. I can go and catch fish without fish nets.

Well afterwards, I was sent down to Aklavik, that was in 1926. And I was brought in -- I was forced to learn a foreign language and learn the foreign culture. That was the English language, and I was forbidden to speak my own tongue, of which I am always proud of.

Well eventually after I finished my -- after spending five years at the R.C. Mission School, there was no holiday leave, you stay right there. You go in there and you come out when you finish. Then after 1933 I went out to Edmonton to go to what you call high school and I completed my grade 12 and graduated in 1939, and then after I wanted to further my studies and I completed my studies to study my theological studies, but due to my poor health, I had to relinquish my ideas, my ideals.

Then I came back and worked for various companies like Anderson Oil, then for the Hudson Bay Transport and then with Imperial Oil. I was working with the Canol project, and then I came back here and managed a store for the -- one of the local -- Gabriel Kakfwi who had a trading post then, I managed it for three years. Afterwards I went trapping but while trapping I had an offer to work for the Indian Agency in Northern Alberta and I accepted that, and I worked 13 years with them. But that call of the wild, the urge to go back to the country, to the land, my land. Why did I go back to my land? Because I love and respect my land, and my land was my supplier of food, it was my teacher, my land taught me. It taught me education which I could not learn in the white man's books.

Regarding the pipeline, well actually we all know there will be a great influx of strangers for the construction of this pipeline, and the consequences that would take place after, not after, even during the construction. Like meeting those strangers with different ideas, will be a bad influence on the local people. The way they say, the way they act, I know it would be great danger to our children.

There is a possibility there could be a break in the pipeline, you or anybody could say, "Oh it may happen once in a hundred years". Well, after you complete your construction it could happen in a hundred hours, but what I have -- why I agree with the people, the Dene people of the Territories, say they don't want any pipeline until the land claim is settled, and that's my wish too and I want, because we have been the inhabitants of this land for hundreds, maybe thousands of years, before any white man set foot on our land. And furthermore, we have never given our land. You may chop a tree, tree number 11, we never seeded the land.[71] We never give up our land.

My Grandfather, he was the one -- a lot of the local residents told me, my grandfather when the Indian Commissioner put the money across the table, he said "This is your money for your land". He says "Is that for my land?" He said "No, we want to be good friends". Well okay, that's good friends. "What will I do", he says, "Protect yourself, protect your land". "Well what would I do if I see a white man coming on my land?" "Well you just go and shoot him", that's what he said.

Therefore, bearing this in mind, I fully agree and always up to I die that I do not want any pipeline until a land settlement has been completed. And regarding the influx of strangers, I know what consequences that occurred, took place when the U.S. Army came to the Northwest Territories, especially at Fort Smith. Many homes were broken, married husbands -- wives leaving their husbands and so forth, and it so happens now at Fort Smith, you have not only browner people but even black people at Fort Smith.

Like I said, I love and respect my land. I recall the ways I was brought up and could make a living out of this country, so I tell and teach my children how to make a living out of the land by saying "This is how your grandfather said and taught me", and I'm wishing and I'm hoping that in the years to come, that one day my children will say to their children, "This is how your grandfather taught me to make a living off the land".

I thank you. (Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, 1975, Vol. C-20, pp. 2035-2039)

From the threads of Eddie's story, we are able to discern a moral: the importance of envisioning the future in terms of our children and the quality of their dwelling on this Earth. Such a future bespeaks the moral necessity of teaching our children how to dwell on the Earth so that the human race will survive. Eddie's text calls into question the present alienation of humankind from the very Earth which gives life itself, an alienation which is threatening the existence of humankind. By virtue of its own circularity, this text points towards the circularity of life and bids us to recognize that the renewal of that circle is dependent upon human commitment to dwelling in a respectful relationship with each other and with the Earth.

The orienting question brought to the reading of these texts has been, "What is it that is going on in this person's testimony?" In other words, what is this person's experience of being human and being Dene, and in what way is that experience disclosed in these texts? Eddie's text yields new insight into this question by addressing a number of further questions. His text calls us to ask, "What does it mean to grow up in the ancient way?" or "What was the ancient way of teaching and learning?" "What does it mean to be respectful of those in one's presence?" and "What is the ideal relationship between humans and the Earth they live on?" Finally, he beckons us to consider "What is the fitting response, the right orientation to the future?"

The Ancient Way

> Our Dene Nation is like this great river. It has been flowing before any of us can remember. We take our strength and our wisdom and our ways from the flow and direction that has been established for us by ancestors we never knew, ancestors of a thousand years ago.
>
> Frank T'Seleie, Fort Good Hope (Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, 1975, Vol.C-18, p. 1778).

Long before the arrival of the whites and their educational institutions, the Dene nurtured and educated their young. Teachers and caregivers were people from within the matrix of the extended family, while the classroom was the entire expanse of the boreal forest. Eddie's text makes no attempt to romanticize his early education, nor to downplay the urgency with which difficult lessons had to be learned. Life and death hung in the interstices between lessons learned and those lessons forgotten, or never learned at all.[72] Eddie's story of his early upbringing in the "old ancient ways" invites us to return to this epoch of the Dene past in search of the ideals in which such an upbringing was grounded and the ways in which the past might inform the present.

Eddie's early experiences beckon us to gaze thoughtfully upon the pedagogy of the "ancients." Dene youth, Eddie's text reminds us, were deprived of certain foods, rest and relaxation. At an early age, they learned to overcome fear; to perform demanding, life-sustaining tasks; to endure cold and hunger without complaint. In wisdom wrought from experience and preserved through tradition, the ancients understood that life in accord with the laws of the land exacts discipline and strength. Discipline over their own bodies attuned them to their own physical being, as well as to the physical being of others in their presence. Thus, hardiness, endurance, and strength were the goals of the early training and were part of children's everyday life.[73]

The Dene ideal of discipline also embraces the larger social realm of being the subject in the presence of the other. In the traditional pedagogical practices to which Eddie's text points, discipline merges with an underlying ethic of hard work and industriousness. In the Dene ideal, each citizen of the *polis* ought to contribute, as they are able, to the common good. To be lazy is one of the greatest character defects in the Dene ideal, as individual well-being is contingent upon the complementary interdependency of all members of the *ecopolis* in the holistic space of dwelling. Inaction, when action is the fitting response, suggests a disrespect for the others in one's presence.

A deep desire for harmonious dwelling with others--in the isolation of small family camps and now in small isolated communities--invokes thoughtfulness in one's discourse and action. Thoughtless deeds may bring offence to the others in one's immediate presence and beyond. Staring provokes a challenge (Guédon, 1974).[74] Neglecting to visit another suggests deliberate avoidance and anger (Hara, 1980). Careless actions of menstruating

females offend animals and their spirits, bringing "bad luck" to hunters (Guédon, 1974). In "the ancient way," one's actions ought to be oriented to the common good, seeking harmony through respectfulness.

In the ideal of Dene tradition, one ought to be disciplined in discourse, as well as in actions. Words slung carelessly about offer an opening for misunderstanding and insult. Part of being brought up in the ancient way is to be shown the power of speech: of words, both spoken and not spoken, and the variegated meanings which lie behind them; and of tone, variations in pitch resting on single syllables shifting meaning to and fro. Ideally speakers seek to master the art of speaking indirectly, of alluding to one's intention, rather than stating it directly. Boon's observations of Japanese communicative practices resonate with my experiences of the apparent Dene dedication to lack of clarity in speech: the art of speaking indirectly points to "the value very generally of allowing things to remain implicit rather than making oneself clear and taking responsibility for whatever consequences were incurred" (Morley, 1985, p. 69). In the art of indirect speaking, both the speaker and listener are called upon to pay as much attention to the manner in which words are offered as to the words themselves, because much of the significance of what is said is apprehended in how it has been said. As an example, jokes and stories often carry messages which are intentionally oblique so that the listeners do not presume the teller to be directing their actions. The listeners, for their part, must be thoughtfully attuned to the speakers' intent which may be carefully cloaked in words of variegated meanings and veiled by humour of various textures.

Part of the discipline of artful speaking is the discernment of the moment for silence. Silence, especially for the young, is the fertile soil for cultivating the keen perceptiveness, the vast areas of knowledge, the sense of judgement and the discipline necessary for successful living.[75] On the land, when travelling and hunting, people ought to be silent and watchful, carefully attuned to the lifeworld of the bush rather than to the people in their presence (Christian & Gardner, 1977). One must listen to learn, for only in silence can we attend thoughtfully to the actions and words of others in our presence.

Yet silence is as much a moment of teaching as it is a moment of learning. In the unlearned, silence bespeaks a willingness to learn; in the learned, silence bespeaks the power of words and knowledge, and the care with which one ought to advance either. To speak carelessly and too frequently may lead one into many improper modes of being--inattentiveness, boasting, gossiping, directing the actions of others, predicting the future with certainty--words and deeds which may bring misfortune to one's own existence or court the offence of others. Deliberate silence, on the other hand, may indicate courteousness and respect for others, or it may reflect modesty and an appropriate shyness with strangers and elders, or it also may signify anger or disapproval (Christian & Gardner, 1977). Discerning the moment for silence at once reflects a deep respect for the others in our presence, as well as a call for others to respect our presence and our need for silence.

In the Dene ideal, teaching is a moment of showing. Eddie tells us, "My dad showed me how to set things like snares and such." Children are shown the respectfulness of silence through words not spoken and deeds not done. To teach is to enable others to see or experience, to point others toward that which must be done at this particular moment in this particular context under these particular circumstances. Parenting, or teaching, is showing a child what is the fitting response--the right word, the right action--for this moment in this space.[76]

In the ancient way, young Dene children learned that they must be disciplined in mind, body and spirit, not for some narcissistic purpose, but out of respect and obligation to the continuation of life--the survival of the People and the Earth upon which they live. The "ancient way," Eddie tells us, is a mode of being where each must "struggle and find ways to make [their] own living off the land." The struggle is for each child, each person, to overcome the challenges offered by a life enmeshed in the mutual dependence of humans

on each other, and their interdependence with a bountiful, but indifferent, land. To be brought up in "the ancient way" is to learn the ethic of right action, to avoid offence and ensure harmony with the other in one's presence, and to be thoughtful as well as disciplined in one's words and actions. To be brought up in the ancient way is to be shown--by the words and deeds of others--what was fitting. In the Dene ideal,

> Success . . . for the individual and for communities as a whole, relies on a set of harmonies: between one another, between oneself and the natural world, and between oneself and the spiritual forces that can either bring success or disaster. These harmonies all entail an openness, a preparedness to listen and respond, a peaceable engagement with one's own destiny. Interrupting a person who is speaking, looking for authority to avoid personal responsibility, seeking to establish oneself as a dominant individual, failing to share openly and according to others' assessment of their own needs in the world and ideology of northern hunters, these are all disruptive, self-defeating and wrong. (Brody, 1987, p. 125)

Strangers in a Strange Land

"I have been a stranger in a strange land."
Exodus, 1:8

Eddie's text weaves the particular events and experiences of his life into the fabric of a story about his life as a "stranger" in the strange land of the whites and their world. Interwoven within that story is his critique of the whites as "strangers" to the Dene and their land, and to the very Earth itself. In this way, Eddie's testimony calls into question the actions of the whites, and in turn calls for living with respect for the other in one's presence.

For the Dene, there was no division between the physical and spiritual world, and their orientation to respectfulness of others is part of a whole array of social practices and traditions which are grounded in respect for the forces of nature and for human ability to harness these forces for spiritual purposes. Long before the arrival of the whites into the Dene world, humans possessed varying degrees of "medicine," the power to harness the spiritual forces of the universe for the purposes of good, such as physical and spiritual healing, or for evil, such as revenge and murder. The identity of those who possessed such powers and their degree of strength was not always public knowledge, making suspect the motives of others, especially those of strangers. Thus, for the Dene, the stranger in one's presence is to be deeply respected, and this reverence is disclosed in such traditional social practices as being thoughtful in one's words and deeds; avoiding harsh words with anyone, but especially strangers; and ensuring children are quiet in the presence of elders and strangers. As George Blondin (January 27, 1989), renowned Dene elder, recently summarized, "all people should be very careful of what they say and do in front of any person, be very polite to everybody and love each other as much as possible."

Eddie's story tells of his experiences as a stranger in a strange land; a life in the presence of "strangers." Interwoven throughout Eddie's odyssey into this strange world are the fibres of his experiences, experiences which engender a critique of the Strangers and their way of being. He fears that "The way they say, the way they act" will bring "great danger to our children." To call into question *the way they say, the way they act* is to critique the entire arena of discourse and action, the totality of their space of communicative praxis. Yet we are left to discern the essence of this critique.

Discourse and actions are intertwined in moments of *accomplishment*, *intention* and *expression*. When we speak and act, we are saying *something*. Our words and deeds display self-reflection, a consciousness or lack of consciousness, about this particular moment and this particular situation. In addition, discourse and actions signify a whole array of social meanings, which may or may not be conscious, but which are sedimented into the linguistic system, as well as social and institutional practices. Thus, individual actions and individual speech acts carry both a linguistic and a social history (Schrag, 1986). Similarly, corporate actions, as much as individual actions, carry such a history.

> An institution such as a university, a corporation, or a nation-state, is said to act by carrying out a certain policy, procedure, or program. The United States acted in its annexation of the Philippines in 1898 and in its declaration of war against Japan in 1941. Admittedly these "acts" of annexation and

> war are general designators of a composite and concatenation of acts in the plural, yet these general designators do point us to an interweaving of national interests that come to expression in the actions undertaken and executed. A curious mixture of an imperialistic stance and a national vocational consciousness is expressed in the annexation of the Philippines. The threat of a foreign power coupled with a distinctive political slant on the world is expressed in the taking up of arms. *Commonly referenced corporate actions, no less than individual action within a more restricted social space, are fibers of expression within the texture of communicative praxis* (Schrag, 1986, p. 38; emphasis added).

What were the actions and deeds of the individual Strangers and their institutions expressing? What sedimented social meanings were expressed in the actions of taking young children from their families and incarcerating them in mission schools? What history of social and linguistic practices forbade a people the currency of their mother tongue? What textures of communicative praxis are disclosed in the actions of a government which deliberately misrepresented its intentions when entreating with a nation such as the Dene Nation? To the Dene, the actions and words of the Strangers, both as individuals and institutions, appeared to express a deep desire to force their will, their world and their ways upon others, a commitment to what Carnoy (1974) has called cultural imperialism. For the Dene, the Strangers and their institutions are imbued with a profound lack of respect for others and their way of being. The texture of their communicative practices abrade the Dene ideal, an ideal dedicated to respectfulness for the other in one's presence.

Dene communicative praxis is infused with the ethical ideal of respect for the other. As Eddie's story unfolds we are drawn to several revisitations of the notion of respectfulness. Though still very much strangers, now the whites and the Dene dwell in a single land. The challenge for us all is to be respectful of the discourse and actions, of the linguistic and social practices, of the other, the stranger, in our midst.

The Land as the Teacher

Oh Great Spirit,
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
and whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me! I am small and weak, I need your
strength and wisdom.

Let Me walk in Beauty, and make my eyes
ever to behold the red and purple sunset.

Make My Hands respect the things you have
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make Me Wise so that I may understand the
things you have taught my people.

Let Me Learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock. . .

American Indian Prayer
Origin Unknown

Eddie's text discloses a deep reverence for the land and all that can be learned from a life lived close to the Earth. "I love and respect my land. . . it was my teacher," he recollects. "It taught me education which I could not learn in the white man's books." This statement calls us to ask: what does it mean to learn from the land? What is the ideal relationship between humans and the Earth they live upon?

To refer to *the land* is to speak metaphorically of the entire surface of the Earth, all of its inhabitants and natural resources, as well as the specific "realm or domain" of the Dene people.[77] For the Dene, the land is the space in which one lives, in which one must

struggle to, as Eddie says, "find ways to make your own living." *To make your own living* is to provide sustenance for yourself, and the others for whom you are responsible, by means of the skills and knowledge acquired through experience. As we have seen, good fortune plays a critical role in successful living on the land, but the gratuitous benevolence of spiritual forces must be aided by concrete, human actions. To make a living from the land--to be a hunter--demands hard work, endurance, discipline, and an expansive knowledge and wisdom of the land and the animals, as well as keen perceptiveness and concentration matched by a discerning sense of judgement and a deep respect for all that is known and unknown, fathomable and unfathomable. Within the moments of teaching and learning in this curriculum, teachers demonstrate for others--through their own words and deeds--what is a fitting response to each situation, and learners experience directly that which must be learned.

Thus, existence in direct relationship with others and with the land exacts respectfulness in thought and action, humbleness before a world infused with forces far greater than the power of human will alone. Life on the land teaches people a more humble and respectful way of being in the world. Derived from the Latin *humilis* "low, humble" which comes from *humus* meaning "earth," to be *humble* is to be close to the Earth. Thus, to be humble is to be teachable, to dwell near the Earth with a willingness to learn from all that presents itself, including the Earth itself.

Lopez (1988) reflecting on his experiences in another aloof and far flung land, Antarctica, writes:

> And yet this land informs, some say teaches, for all its indifference. . . .
>
> Over the years one comes to measure a place, too, not just for the beauty it may give, the balminess of its breezes, the insouciance and relaxation it encourages, the sublime pleasures it offers, but for what it teaches. The way in which it alters our perception of the human. (p. 68)

The Hope for the Future

Finally, Eddie offers his audience his hope for the future. "I'm wishing and I'm hoping that in the years to come, that one day my children will say to their children, 'This is how your grandfather taught me to make a living off the land.'" As we have seen, *to make a living on the land* is to dwell close to the Earth and to learn its ways; it is to be disciplined, teachable, thoughtful in word and deed, and filled with respect for others in your presence and beyond.

Eddie's hope underscores the way in which the Dene ideal of respectfulness reaches beyond respect for one another to embrace a humbleness for the Earth upon which we dwell. "I love and respect my land," Eddie reiterates, and this is what he wants to "tell and teach" his children. Perhaps we all need to learn the lessons Eddie wishes to tell and to teach. Many people of the Western world are not only strangers to the Dene, but strangers to the Earth itself. Life in an industrial technological world is life estranged from the land, and from the humbleness and respectfulness learned in dwelling close to the Earth. Brody (1981) claims that the industrial nations have sentenced the hunting societies of the world to death. Perhaps the actions of the industrialized world--towards our Earth and each other--are condemning us all to death.

In a Harper's Magazine editorial written prior to an impending presidential election, Lapham (1988) calls into question the current nature of leadership in the Western world. His text returns us to a salient point: our survival as a species presses for an alternative to the vision of leadership offered by the Western world. His words are uncannily familiar, carrying a message which has reverberated throughout the testimony to the Berger Inquiry:

> The task that confronts the men [sic] who would be leaders is a task of the imagination. It has less to do with politics than it does with metaphor, less to do with the making of laws than with the making of words that allow men [sic] to see their immortality, not in their monuments or their weapons, but in their children. (p. 13)

Eddie's hope for the future is not unlike Lapham's, that as human beings we can begin to envision the future in terms of our children. Eddie's wish, like Lapham's critique, beckons us to gaze far beyond the present moment, to envision how future generations

might experience this world. Each action taken, every decision made, ought to be mindful of our moral obligation to the yet-to-be-born. Eddie's dream is that his children and his children's children will be able to touch this Earth. In this way, Eddie's hope for the future is a hope for us all. For the sake of our children, we must gaze beyond the present to the future, while we lean a little closer and touch the Earth.

Footnotes

[70]Eddy Cook died a few years prior to my moving to Fort Good Hope. In my work with an oral history project in that community, I had occasion to work with his wife Mary. My sons and their sons were peers and good friends.

[71]I am convinced this is a transcription error. I believe he meant to say "treaty number 11, we never ceded the land" although I am not sure what the phrase "you may chop a tree" means or how it is related to the rest of the sentence. Alternatively, Eddie may have been making a play on words between tree and treaty. He makes a similar pun in his opening statement: "Mr. Berger, I haven't got a brief, but I am going to be as brief as I could." In my experience that type of punning is very common in Good Hope, and in Dene communities in general.

[72]John Testo (1970), a Dene trapper, wrote, "Life in the bush is not easy, but nothing in life is easy. Many times I have gone to bed without supper in weather thirty below, not because I was bad, but I made mistakes" (p. 13).

[73] A Dene story-teller made this point when narrating the Saga of ?ehts'ontsia, a traditional folktale of a nine-year old boy who becomes a hero through his feats as a warrior. The story-teller told the person recording his stories, Robert Williamson (1956), "You have to understand in the olden days it was necessary to become very clever while you were quite small. You had to be light on your feet and never eat too much, and always be watchful and obedient" (p. 84).

Though a Spartan-like, rigourous training was the traditional ideal, Dene parents and relatives are deeply fond of their children and their presence brings great joy into the homes. Dene children are showered with a great deal of physical affection and special attention (Sue Hara, 1980). In keeping with the Dene ethic of respect for the other, their democratic ideal, young Dene children are treated very much like grown-ups, eating and sleeping as they wish.

[74]For the Dene, white people's habit of gazing intently at others is thought to be rude and provocative.

[75]Christian and Gardner (1977) found Dene elders to be fearful of, and perhaps disillusioned by, the talkativeness of modern youth, a way of speaking they believe is learned, or at least reinforced, by the institution of schooling. To encourage talking, in the manner schools do, is to deny children a vital part of their education: the development of "perceptiveness, knowledge, judgement, and willpower" (p. 80).

[76]Eddie's story of learning to snare rabbits fits with these pedagogical practices and the beliefs in which they are grounded. Snaring rabbits is a critical skill for sustaining human life in the bush, even though it

requires less strength, knowledge, and ability than hunting larger game. Thus, within the protective radius of the family camp and with a small number of snares, Eddie learned a critical survival skill, experienced success and made a contribution to the collective.

[77] Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, p. 672.

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Essayist Literacy - Academic Discourse		Community Language Model
Audience:	Critics and Adversaries	a. Community b. Non-Indian Adversaries
Image:	Ceremonial Combat	a. Creating a Circle of Consensus b. Real Combat
Objective:	To win To gain acceptance from portion of audience	To create continuity between values of past and present course To bring about change
Stance:	Politically neutral scholar Analytical in tone	Advocate for community values and political interests Committed, passionate in tone
Strategies:	Attack the logic and evidence of opponents Defend oneself against authorities Disqualify opposing points of view	"Language of Advocacy": Narratives, affirmations References to traditional stories Parallel monologues Think with heart as well as head
Support:	Cases, arguments, explanations Sound reasoning Print and media	Consensus, common sense, traditional values, intuition Ethos of individuals Realm of spirits
Form:	Linear	Circuitious

Personal Writing	Advocacy Writing	Critical Writing
Engaging with a topic	Adaptation to community audience	Audience does not share same references
Clarification of personal values, opinions	Problem viewed within tribal cultural/ historical context	Tribal experience viewed in a more global context
Create meaning from interplay of self and world	Community language models	Recognition of multiple perspectives
Narratives	Resolve inconsistencies in oral sources	Dealing with complexities and contradictions
	Advice or action recommended	Dialectical thinking

The year 1868 was a good year for the Great Sioux Nation and the United States Government, it was the beginning of what the white culture now calls the generation gap. Our leaders, Spotted Tail & Red Cloud and many other great leaders decided that the Sioux Nation would live by the terms of the Treaty that was agreed upon at Fort Laramie Wyoming. Two religions were allowed to send their representatives to teach the Sioux their ways, the two religions were the Protestant and Catholic religious orders, the Black Robes and the White Robes. Many of the Sioux Indians accepted the beliefs and ways of the two religious orders, thereby creating a cultural, religious and generation gap that still exists to this day, December 13, 1983.

The generation of elders who are now in their 70's and 80's were so badly brain washed back in the 1920's, that this brain washing has continued up to this generation of mindless idiots, who over indulge in narcotics and alcohol consumption, the young people of this generation are without leadership. What we have today are leaders who don't know where we came from, how we arrived here, what we are supposed to do while we are here, and where we are going when we leave this planet, Mother Earth. The young people today are asking a lot of questions. They also want some quick answers and there is no around to teach them the virtues of the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of generations ago.

The young people of this generation need to be shown and taught the ways of the Sacred Pipe. Only through the ways of the Sacred Pipe will they learn where they came from, what they are to do while here, and where they are going when they leave here. Only through the sacred Pipe, will they, the young people learn to have respect, not only for themselves but for all of creation. The young people of this generation need to communicate more with their elders and listen to them carefully and with patience in that manner will they learn something about the past generation.

Dialogue

#1: "I think it's time we blow up Oahe Dam to show this damn government we're the true landlords!"

#2: "You're crazy! The water suit initiated by the government will backfire on them, so why not wait?"

#1: "Horseshit! Those white folks won't let the Lakota utilize the water according to our treaty rights. Look at them whites in Missouri, all the way down there and still claiming rights to Lakota water. Well, I say let's let a few of them bastards drown in Lakota water; blow Oahe and give them all of the water they want!"

#2: "You're talking massacre and that leads to trouble! Listen, in 1908 the U.S. Supreme Court in Winters vs the United States established what is known as the 'reserved rights' doctrine. In short it says Indians are entitled to a quantity of water which fulfills our present, as well as future needs in order to satisfy the purpose for which the reservation was created. You don't believe the courts will go against such a long standing precedent, do you?"

#1: "Massacre you say, well, I say it's shorter and sweeter than the genocidal policies we've had to endure. Besides, the Winter's Doctrine doesn't state who will decide a reservation's present and future needs. And if you think those whites will take into consideration the Lakota view, you're crazier than me!"