

Recultivating Intergenerational Resilience: Possibilities for “Scaling DEEP” through Disruptive Pedagogies of Decolonization and Reconciliation.

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Abstract

In the face of declining human-ecological systems, as well as intercultural and interspecies trauma, we are currently witnessing a renaissance of activist-orientated environmental education. In Canada, this work is increasingly viewed as part of a broader healing response of “DEEP” reconciliation work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, and ultimately humankind and the planet. This article locates these themes of healing human-ecological trauma and Indigenous - non-Indigenous relationships, within the work of the International Resilience Network (IRN)—a community of practice which aims to collectively impact social-ecological resilience, in part through transformative pedagogical practices which simultaneously support Indigenous resurgence and develop epistemological and relational solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Through our story of the IRN’s inaugural summit, we share our learnings of such pedagogical practices amidst the tensions and paradoxes inherent within a decolonizing agenda.

Résumé

Confrontés au déclin des systèmes écologiques et humains, et à un traumatisme interculturel et inter-espèces, nous assistons actuellement à une renaissance de l’activisme au sein de l’éducation à l’environnement. Au Canada, on considère de plus en plus que cette approche relève d’un processus de guérison plus vaste, visant une profonde réconciliation entre les Autochtones et non-Autochtones et, au bout du compte, entre l’humanité et la planète. Dans notre article, nous relevons l’importance de ces thèmes dans le travail de l’International Resilience Network (IRN), une communauté de praticiens cherchant à favoriser la résilience socioécologique, notamment grâce à des pratiques pédagogiques transformatrices qui soutiennent la résurgence autochtone tout en développant la solidarité relationnelle et épistémologique entre les peuples autochtones et non autochtones. À travers un compte rendu du premier sommet de l’IRN, nous dégageons des leçons sur ces pratiques pédagogiques qui fleurissent parmi les tensions et les paradoxes inhérents à cette colossale entreprise de décolonisation.

Key words: Indigenous, pedagogy, activism, reconciliation, cultural change



Photo Credit Robin Haig

Figure 1. Dawn at the Pit Cook, TIXEN Spit

Introduction

The “Eighth Fire” (Simpson, 2008) Anishinaabe prophecy reminds us of the possibility of a new peace and friendship, hinged on a radical renewal of kinship relations, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. This vision provides us with an evocative set of images: the scorching, cleansing, and eventual re-plenishing of the land, metaphorically leaving the soil ripe for the many re-generative possibilities for Indigenous resurgence. Drawing on this theme, the editorial of an earlier issue of the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* articulated the possibility of an “Eight Fire Future” for environmental education, shaped by an Indigenizing agenda (Korteweg & Russell, 2012, p.7).

Our paper locates and explores the possibilities for further igniting the flames of the “Eighth Fire” (Simpson, 2008) through our story-telling about “DEEP” reconciliation efforts. We deliberately use and capitalize the term “DEEP” to convey the multi-levelled nature of reconciliation necessary to transform relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. “DEEP” is also intended to emphasize the depth of cultural transformation necessary to articulate our

vision of reconciliation, which we argue must occur at epistemological, relational, and ultimately material levels not only between people, but between all life forms as well. This “DEEP” reconciliation work formed the philosophical and pedagogical bedrock of the “Resilient Places–Resilient Peoples: Elders’ Voices Summit” (hereafter called the Summit), held on the traditional territory of the Tsawout First Nation on what is now known as the Saanich Peninsula at the southern end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. This four-day, Indigenous-led sustainability education forum, which served as the inaugural meeting of the International Resilience Network (IRN), was attended by over 100 people, aged between 17 and 80 years. The attendees came from Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, and Scotland (Williams & Turner, 2015). IRN’s primary goal is to increase social-ecological resilience (the harmonious co-evolution of human and ecological systems) through connecting and supporting locally based innovations in participating regions (International Resilience Network, 2016). At the heart of this work is the resurgence of Indigenous territories and communities (Corn tassel, 2012), Indigenous knowledge systems, and related ways of being “in place” within all cultural groups (Armstrong, 2015; Williams, 2012).

Our “DEEP” reconciliation work occurs at a time when many people—both non-Indigenous and Indigenous, and with varying degrees of connection to territory and traditional roots—have to some extent “lost the capacity to experience the deep generational bond to other humans and their surroundings”; it is a time of “collective disharmony and alienation from the land” (Armstrong, 2006, p.467). The roots of these now deeply fractured kinship relations are embedded within the psychic and institutional fabric of societies around the world; they are historically entwined with neocolonial establishments’ systematic attempts not only to enact the cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples but also to erase the last traces of Indigenous memory within all cultural collectives, which are now intergenerationally disconnected from place (Stewart-Harawira, 2005). These developments have inevitably prompted profound existential questions concerning what it means to fulfil our responsibilities to our human and other-than-human kin. We do not intend to displace the colonial realities and subsequent place-based-work of many Indigenous communities in our articulation of these erasures. Rather in what follows, we suggest that the resurgence of Indigenous territories and Peoples is key to remedying the previously described global tendency towards widespread disconnection that has been brought on by colonial processes.

Reflections of this nature lie at the heart of IRN’s “DEEP” reconciliation work and are pivotal to theoretically grounding the Summit’s pedagogical approaches to decolonization and reconciliation within Greenwood’sⁱ “Critical Pedagogy of Place” (2003, 2010). This conceptual framework emphasizes the restoration of place-based relationality and concomitant transformation of dominant settler paradigms according to non-commodified cultural patterns within the bounds of the earth’s ecological limits. In keeping with these concepts, intergenerational

resilience—the processes whereby people ensure to the best extent possible that the next generations of human and other-than-human relations have what they need to flourish—became the Summit’s “hinge” theme. Implicit in this idea is intergenerational knowledge transmission within and between species.

IRN’s 5-7-year vision is an established community of practice which, through intercultural, intersectional, and intergenerational approaches, draws on a range of world views, creative synergies, and resource opportunities. It does so in ways that mutually transform and enhance respective local methodological approaches, enabling collective impact on social-ecological resilience. In social innovation terms, a necessary key emphasis of IRN’s work, particularly initially, is “Scaling Deep” (cultural and relational transformation) as a necessary precursor to “Scaling Up” (impacting laws and policies) or “Scaling Out” (impacting numbers) (Riddell, & Lee Moore, 2015). This decision was made not only because of the widespread need for environmental education work based on decolonizing and reconciliation approaches, but also because of social innovation’s primary roots in Western empiricism, human-social systems, and related constructions of citizenship—and consequently the decolonial imperative to avoid “moves to innocence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.10) that decentre Indigenous Peoples and exacerbate their struggles. In this vein, Tuck and Yang have argued that articulating decolonization work primarily as metaphor “kills the very real possibility of decolonization” (2012, p.3). Our emphasis on “Scaling Deep”—or, attempting critical cultural transformation in ways that re-centre Indigenous metaphysics and relationality—is therefore intended to avoid “resettling Whiteness” (i.e., settler cultural and political dominance) (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p.3).

IRN’s work critically intersects with research by Indigenous scholars (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Coulthard, 2014), both of which illuminate the increasingly insidious nature of colonization and the entangled relationship between the Canadian state’s reconciliation agenda and neoliberalist modes of development. Also contextually significant are the colonizing structures of racism: Common to the Indigenous Peoples whose territories lie within each modern nation state represented at the Summit is a history of British colonial domination authorized through powerful racialized discourses of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism (Edmonds, 2015; MacKinnon, 2017). While “Whiteness”—privileging White bodies and Western modernist views of reality—is a major part of colonialism’s weaponry, it is not the foundational issue as far as the work of social-ecological resilience is concerned. Rather, we propose the fundamental issue regarding the collective continuance of all life forms is an onto-epistemological one, that is, the way in which individuals and institutions conceive the nature of reality and enact it (Williams, 2012). This is not to say that we do not highly value critiques of “Whiteness” (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Edmonds, 2015); these are essential to dismantling colonial structures.

We are mindful of the challenges related to navigating the terrain of decolonization and reconciliation, particularly whilst reconciliation efforts remain

circumscribed by what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard refers to as the “Colonial Politics of Recognition” (Coulthard, 2014): the accommodation of Indigenous identity-related claims within the machinery of the settler nation state in ways which effectively reproduce colonial relations, including the production of neo-colonial subjectivities in Indigenous Peoples. Even the best-intentioned decolonization and reconciliation work risks re-producing the very forms of domination it seeks to subvert. Accordingly, we do not pretend to be immune to the possibility that colonizing elements may at times unconsciously find their way into the IRN’s practice. Rather, we consider this paper to be more of a critical retrospective piece as we consider IRN’s next steps in the ongoing struggle to create decolonial alternatives.

Our intention in this article, therefore, is to offer some early reflections on environmental education as activism through the lens of “Scaling Deep” and IRN’s development methodology to date, as practice examples of decolonization and reconciliation. We do so within the context of the Summit. The Summit was not a neat and seamless activity; the findings and reflections presented here are not definitive. Rather, they are illuminative of the processual and pedagogical summit elements—i.e., *what* led to *what*—and are definitely a work in progress.

Standpoint: Self and Place

We preface this narrative by naming our own standpoints. Lewis Williams is the initiator and Founding Director of IRN, and key organizer of the Summit. She has a herstory of community-based education, intersectional decolonizing work and activism. Nick Claxton is an IRN Co-Director, and educator, committed to decolonizing pedagogies. Williams is a White, Indigenous, migrant woman who embodies both Indigenous (Ngāi Te Rangī tribe) and settler (Celtic and Gaelicⁱⁱ) origins and over time has had to reconcile these respective epistemologies, psycho-spiritual histories, and respective dynamics of power and culture. Hers is a story of deepening relationality to country and kin (Williams, 2012) that narrates the entanglement and movement of epistemology, identity, and place. Williams’ story provides possibilities of epistemological change over time (Kovach, 2009). Nick Claxton is Indigenous, from the WSÁNEĆ Nation. He was born and raised in his territory and, with this solid cultural grounding, is able to combine a traditional Western academic tradition with traditional WSÁNEĆ beliefs and teachings. Currently Claxton’s scholarship and activism focus on the revival of WSÁNEĆ traditional ReefNet fishing methods.

While our respective lineages and positioning shape each of us, our interactions with others, and ultimately the ways in which we might engage in disruptive pedagogies of reconciliation (educative practices which disrupt Euro-western normative understandings of place and people), we suggest that the bedrock of experience is always place, and the ways in which place engages with our being

and subsequently shapes learning. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars (Battiste, Bell, Findlay, Findlay & Henderson, 2005; Watts, 2013) articulate this as “Thinking Place” and “Place-Thought” respectively—a distinctive physical location which recognizes the interconnectedness of thoughts and place (Marker, 2000). Place is also central to our own Celtic, Gaelic, Māori, and WSÁNEĆ lineages, and it includes the Māori concept of *Whare Wananga*—a traditional school of learning for the purpose of transmitting tribal lore which often narrated and engaged deeply transformative practices within the context of human and other-than-human kinship relations. The WSÁNEĆ concept of SKÁU ŁTE similarly expresses the inseparability of the land on the one hand, and learning, teaching, language, beliefs, ways of being, and laws on the other.

Tsawout Territory as *Whare Wananga*

Tsawout is one of five bands comprising the Saanich peoples (or in their SENĆOFEN language, the WSÁNEĆ Nation) who, over thousands of years, have continuously occupied the Saanich Peninsula on Southern Vancouver Island and the surrounding Gulf Islands and San Juan Islands of the Salish Sea, in the region now known as Southwest British Columbia and Washington State. Relying on the lands and waters of their territory to sustain their language, culture, and traditions, the WSÁNEĆ are known as the “Salt Water People.” After their sacred mountain ŁÁU, WEL, NEW, (The place of refuge) emerged following the great flood, they also became known as the “Emerging People” (Horne, 2012). Historically, the WSÁNEĆ comprised a single group, or knot, of extended families who shared the SENĆOFEN language and a cultural order that revolved around their relations with all parts of their territory, including marine creatures, plants, terrestrial animals, spirit beings, and one another.

Tsawout means “Houses Raised Up,” a name derived from the way its villages appeared to paddlers entering Saanichton Bay. Just as it is with Māori, the practice of naming places and locations as they would appear to people approaching by canoe is a perfect illustration of how fundamental the traditional marine territory is to the WSÁNEĆ world view and traditional way of life. The Cordova Spit (which in the SENĆOFEN language is called TIXEN) is a sparsely vegetated spit which lies at the water’s edge, about 2 kilometres from the main village of Tsawout. A place of physical, emotional, and spiritual sustenance, TIXEN is the provider of traditional foods and medicines. It is also the site of sacred burial grounds. A place for spiritual reflection and traditional teaching, TIXEN was our place of learning for our day-long gathering on the land, whilst the community gym and band headquarters in the main village provided the “Thinking Place” for most of the rest of the Summit.

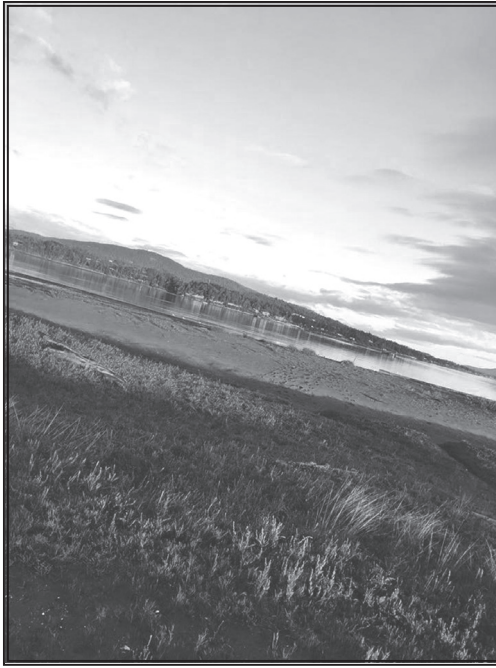


Photo Credit, Arianna Waller

Figure 2. TIXEN Spit, Saanich Peninsula

The resilience of the land and its peoples has persisted despite colonial imposition. Whilst the Douglas Treaty (1852) guaranteed Indigenous Peoples' rights to hunt over unoccupied lands and continue with traditional fishing, these developments resulted in the theft of much of the WSÁNEĆ people's traditional lands and the eventual banning of ReefNet fishing, the centre of their traditional social and spiritual economy. These economically-driven incursions endure. During the Summit, the Tsawout Nation were preparing a submission against the building of a major oil pipeline through their land, an initiative which is predicted to have many negative impacts on the well-being of the Tsawout territory and its people. It was this complex, rich, and difficult history, together with the resilience of the territory and its peoples, that formed the bedrock of our *Whare Wananga* during our time together at the Summit. By using the term *Whare Wananga*, we intend to emphasize the epistemological lacing within the Summit methodology of Māori and WSÁNEĆ thinking. In this instance, the *Whare Wananga*'s previously described relational and sacred practices of learning occurred in the "Thinking Place" of Tsawout territory. Our multi-layered account of place is also significant in understanding what often differentiates Indigenous perspectives of intercultural dialogue (such as those of the Summit) from dominant Euro-centric approaches. Indigenous perspectives ground often

abstract discussions of cultural power dynamics in the “distinctiveness of local stories that contain the deep and concrete aspects of reality” (Marker, 2000, p. 401). Given that we wished to avoid abstract discussions of colonialism and Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation, the framing of learning in an actual physical, sentient place that is very much alive, formed an important conceptual aspect of our methodology.

Theoretical Context, Concepts, and Pedagogical Approach

Building on Donald’s (2009) concept of “Indigenous Métissage,” a key goal of IRN’s work is place-situated “ethical relationality” that simultaneously combines Indigenous philosophies, ethics, and ways of knowing with an effort to engage mutual understanding of relative positioning, perspectives, and knowledge systems as constituted by both Indigenous and colonial narratives of past and present.

The two concepts of decolonization and re-inhabitation which constitute Greenwood’s “Critical Pedagogy of Place” (2003, 2010) are also central to IRN’s work. Decolonization encompasses deconstructing and transforming dominant settler paradigms, such as the anthropocentric constructions of land and citizenship, in favour of relational and reciprocal constructions of people and land (Corntassel, 2012) (decolonization of the mind). It also embraces the recovery of Indigenous lands and sovereignty, and renewal of non-commoditized cultural patterns such as intergenerational relationships. Re-inhabitation involves “maintaining, restoring and creating ways of living that are more in tune with the ecological limits of a place” (2010, p.19). Our third key concept is reconciliation, which views Indigenous place-based education as a practice of social and ecological justice (Scully, 2012). Reconciliation requires deepened relationality between cultures along epistemological, cultural, and political axes. Collectively, these three concepts underscore the need for a radical re-orientation of awareness and place relationships, a position also taken by Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015).

Cultural remapping—the recovery of Indigenous cultural ecologies, knowledge systems, and ways of being in ways that significantly re-map dominant understandings of the cultural-ecology of place (Williams, Stuart & Reedy, 2015)—was key to our pedagogical approach. In this article, we focus on two primary forms: 1) The remapping of socio-historical narratives that involve the disruption of dominant settler colonial narratives of the ecology of culture and place through a re-surfacing and repositioning of Indigenous narratives of country, culture, and kin; and, 2) The remapping of ontology and epistemology in an embodied sense upon the human psyche through the dreamtime, ceremony, stories, and simply being one with country. We use the term “mapping” (Williams et al., 2015) to suggest the impression or representation of country and kinship relations on the human psyche and being. “Remapping” (Williams et al., 2015) refers to repeated patterning and re-engagement that inevitably leads to a deepened sense of

relationality between the human and more than human world. Essentially, we are rebuilding our relationship with the natural world.

Cultural remapping acknowledges the complex mixture of Indigenous guardianship of place and non-Indigenous connections to place (Sommerville, 2010); in other words, it recognizes the simultaneous multiple and contested realities which co-exist regarding connection to place (Donald, 2009). In turn, it endorses the need to draw on critical approaches to the reproduction of culture in place (Kraidy, 2002). We differentiate between processes of attachment and identification with place that can be achieved through signifying practices—repetitive practices and memories that form over time (De Certeau cited in Fredericks 2010)—on the part of migrant communities, and the depth of epistemological rootedness in and knowing of place (being of country) that is more often the case for Indigenous Peoples (Heinamaki, 2009; Royal, 2003).

Finally, a central axiom of IRNs work is the re-indigenization of all peoples to the earth as a living being (Ausubel, 2008). We aim to restore an understanding of the innate capacity of all peoples to deeply and reciprocally connect to the earth. This axiom draws on the shamanic onto-epistemological foundations of virtually all societies (Williams, 2012). We also draw on Okanagan scholar and summit speaker Jeannette Armstrong's (2015) work on the centrality of the concept of Indigeneity ("society-wide knowledge of the requirements of the places we live in") to our ecological futures. We argue that a grounded and authentic connection to place arises through "a learned way of interrelating with a specific place to achieve consistent health and consistent health system renewal" (Armstrong, 2015). This includes orientating to the stories, world views, and laws of Indigenous Peoples as the epistemological bedrock of place; and, it requires reconnecting with epistemologies of interconnectedness that lie in one's own cultural roots, whether one identifies as Indigenous or settler. Thus, we argue for the value of, and the pedagogical challenge related to, digging through identity politics to reach more fundamental issues of ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how we know reality), and axiology (the values and ethics which underpin our actions) (Wilson, 2001). This is especially vital in the face of rapidly declining social-ecological systems and widening inequities among differently positioned groups. We also maintain that it is crucial to hold contemporary forms of colonization and attendant dynamics of culture and power to account.

In the use of the term "re-indigenization," we are not advocating for neoliberalist forms of naturalization of settler peoples as becoming Indigenous to what is now known as Canada; a now common dynamic which Tuck and Yang (2012) name as one of several "settler move[s] to innocence." Such a move would result in further territorial dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. Neither are we advocating for a "return of the commons as a redistributive counter strategy to neoliberalism's new round of enclosures" (Coulthard, 2014, p.12). Rather, locating onto-epistemology and the ethics of relationality (axiology) as

the primary undercutting challenges of social-ecological resilience provides a crucial way forward and a form of guidance for those who no longer know what it is to be Indigenous to place. Specifically, it opens the way for reconnecting with place in authentic and grounded ways which have resonance with one's own cultural roots.

We are interested in building “epistemological” (Williams & Hall, 2014) and “relational solidarity” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Building the latter, Gaztambide-Fernandez argues, requires the constant negotiation of boundaries in ways which recognize the complex and sometimes contradictory locations and histories of people. These ideas sit within the broader context of tightly-wound global conditions that constitute and displace—whether through external forms (e.g., forced migration) or internal forms (e.g., racialization)—colonial subjects, who nevertheless still occupy and settle stolen Indigenous land. In this regard, we also draw theoretically (although not exclusively) on Tuck and Yang's (2012) concept of “incommensurability,” which suggests the collective work of decolonization is often an “uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter” (2012, p. 3).

Overview of the Summit

The “Elders Voices’ Summit” was framed by IRN's broader aims: 1) Restoring intergenerational knowledge transmission and relationships between people, and between people and nature; and 2) Integrating these perspectives within innovations intended to heal and restore fragmented human-ecological systems. In supporting these aims, the Summit primarily focussed on three of four intended objectives: 1) Building relationships among network members; 2) Deepening participants' understanding of diverse perspectives and agency imperatives; and 3) Refining key themes to ensure collaborator relevance. Due to time constraints, we were unable to give much focus to a fourth intended summit objective, the development of ethical framing and protocol to guide the ongoing work of IRN. We will prioritize the fourth objective in near-future IRN development activities.

The Summit's preparation was supported by a local organizing committee and IRN's International Advisory Group. Each group consisted of university, not-for-profit, and government partners. In the year prior to the Summit, our local organizing committee worked closely with WSÁNEĆ Elders and Tsawout representatives to support the inclusion of Tsawout community members and to ensure Tsawout protocol was followed for the Summit. The spiritual foundation provided through the land and the WSÁNEĆ Elders was essential to enabling such a diverse group of people to assemble and create a space not only of trust, but also of emotional and analytical depth. This notion of holding relational space was also (implicitly) extended to the land, waterways, and kinship relations.

Cultural remapping was an integral aspect of the Summit's programming,

and was interwoven throughout the Summit's four days as we progressed our way through four themes: 1) Preparing the Ground; 2) Indigenous Knowledge and Resilience; 3) Holistic Approaches to Learning; and 4) Innovations of Indigenous and Inter-peoples' Resilience (the strengths and capacities that can develop as a result of different cultural groups engaging in the collective work of social-ecological resilience). While some days tended to emphasize cultural remapping in narrative (for example, Indigenous knowledge and resilience) and others prioritized epistemological terms (for example, holistic, land-based learning), both elements were present on each day.

Methods

We did not set out to directly research the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches to intergenerational resilience. Instead, the idea for this paper emerged as a result of being “participant observers” (Davis and Craven, 2016) of the Summit's development and implementation. This was particularly the case for Williams as she worked with co-author Claxton and the Tsawout community to develop the Summit program. Prior to the commencement of the Summit, the University Committee for Ethics in Human Research (UCEHR) of the University of Saskatchewan (where Williams is an Associate Adjunct Professor) was sent an overview of the project in order to ascertain the need for ethics approval. Whilst ethics approval was required and obtained for focus groups on youth resilience at the Summit (not drawn on here), we were not required to obtain ethics approval for the remainder of the Summit because it was deemed to be occurring in a public space. On the advice of the UCEHR, however, we asked plenary and keynote participants to sign a two-stage consent form for video recordings. We also undertook an evaluation of the Summit through participant questionnaires issued at the time of the Summit. As the Summit evaluation was a quality assurance project and participants contributed to it on the understanding that their comments would be included in a publicly available summit evaluation report (see <http://www.internationalresiliencenetwork.com>), we were not required to obtain ethics approval for this component. The Facebook posts arising from the Summit were spontaneous occurrences that we had not previously considered might serve as possible resources for evaluation. In the two cases where we have drawn from these, the Summit participants have granted permission.

In summary, the data drawn upon for this article are from the Summit programming notes, summit evaluations (20% response rate), Facebook posts by participants, and videos taken during the Summit. Findings were coded into key thematic areas, some of which can be found in the Summit Evaluation Report (Williams and Turner, 2015). The development of these themes was guided both by the pedagogical objectives underpinning the Summit and multiple readings of the data.

Participant quotes, presented here anonymously, are verbatim. In order to ensure that participants were satisfied with the way in which the information they provided is represented in this paper, each person was sent a copy of their quotation together with a copy of this article, to enable them to review the context of their quotation if they wished.

Findings: Disruptive Pedagogies of Decolonization and Reconciliation

“Re-charting the space of what constitutes intellectual work was a fine intervention.”
(Non-Indigenous participant, Canada)

The above quote is by a summit participant from an academic background. It alludes to the overall nature of the Summit’s holistic, pedagogical approach—one which worked to re-constitute the typical Euro-western learning space. The Summit incorporated academic components and was attended by university staff and students. Findings are presented below in sequential order, according to the Summit program. Due to space limitations, not all activities are covered; rather, some of the most salient examples of IRN’s “DEEP” reconciliation work are provided. We believe these instances demonstrate impactful aspects of the Summit’s pedagogical approaches and its associated tension points.

Preparing the Ground (Day One)

Participants frequently commented that the Summit had a profound impact on them, but they struggled to articulate why. To illuminate their thinking, they spoke about the deeply transformative nature of the “Thinking Place” (Battistte, et al, 2005; Watts, 2013) and related summit events. We have briefly alluded to the powers and enormous depth of relationality inherent in Tsawout territory and the WSÁNEĆ people despite their complex and difficult history. Along with the powerful spiritual foundation provided by the Elders through prayer and ceremony, the Summit’s occurrence on this powerful land and among the WSÁNEĆ people cultivated a sense of the sacred and a respectful intent for engagement. One Gaelic participant from Scotland, spoke to this specifically. He felt that “the related emotional and analytical depths which we explored and shared in our sessions was supported and held by the use of ceremony.”

This grounded space was intended to nurture diversity. It facilitated the recognition of different identities and perspectives, and it allowed for the common goal of shining a light on the successful Indigenous resurgence initiatives and the collective processes of re-Indigenization that are critical to all living beings. Following the Summit, participants commonly referenced the significance of the multi-dimensional nature of the pedagogy. One non-Indigenous woman of Gaelic ancestry from Aotearoa articulated this in the following terms:

Gathering [together was] immensely powerful....The connections I made and strengthened there will support and inform my continuing research....In such a safe and co-created place, we were able to access a depth of emotion that surely made shifts within all of those who resonated with the ideas, imagery, sounds, and stories we shared.

These approaches, combined with the theoretical articulations of collective decolonization and Indigenous resurgence work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, produced some significant realizations for participants. As one Scottish participant who identifies as coming from a Western culture noted:

The most poignant moment for me was Dr. Jeannette Armstrong's comment: "We are out of our Indigenous minds." This made so much sense to me and solidified what I had been feeling for a long time.

Our first day focussed on remapping the relational space. We relied on cultural excavation activities to illuminate Indigenous ecologies and histories, colonial traumas, and resilience. These activities acted as a kind of "ground clearing" that was conducive to deep listening and relationship-building. They consisted of the "Colonial Reality Tour" (CRT), "Elders' Time on the Land" (revealing Indigenous ecologies), "Youth Dialogue Circles" (on meanings of resilience), and our opening event, "The Whole of Human Relations" (arts-based contributions which included representations of Indian Residential schools Survivors).

Colonial Reality Tour: Led by a Songhees Nation member, the CRT took summit participants on a tour of culturally significant sites for the Lekwungen Peoples in the Greater Victoria area. The Lekwungen and the WSÁNEĆ Peoples are part of the Straits Salish Peoples, and they speak different dialects of the same Straits Salish language. This tour introduced participants to sacred sites, the harsh realities and impacts of colonization, and the ways in which the First Peoples are reclaiming the past, present, and future. Open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, the CRT and other ground-clearing activities affirmed Indigenous realities and strengthened the space for intercultural and intergenerational dialogues on the following days. Speaking of her experience, a non-Indigenous university professor from Canada remarked on the significance of having the opportunity to walk the Lekwungen lands:

These practice-based sessions led by Aboriginal leaders gave a concrete experience of place from a First Nations perspective through stories told on sites of cultural importance. Being there and hearing and seeing these has far more impact than reading a book or hearing this on a panel.

A young Māori participant whose lands were confiscated in 1864 by the colonial government of New Zealand spoke to the direct impacts on her psyche and spirit in witnessing the stories of the Lekwungen territory and Peoples:

Today was absolutely soul fulfilling. We walked on native lands, we heard the truth in their stories. I felt the mamae (pain), the trauma, the strength and the wairua (spirit). Nothing that was done to our native whānau (family) here on these lands was justified; it was and IS abuse.

Cultural remapping is evident above in both narrative and epistemological terms. Walking the land provided an embodied experience for participants: Experience of place was re-constructed through Lekwungen stories of displacement and resurgence. The first participant's reflection on the CRT above, although holistic and multi-sensory in orientation, speaks in particular to the power of narrative "in place." This is in contrast to typical academic learning forums which often tend to occur in "sterile" Euro-Western-style environments that are divorced from everyday spiritual, social, and physical realities. The second quotation speaks strongly to the visceral reality of being on land and an embodied form of re-orientation and remapping from the direct onto-epistemological experience of the sentience of place.

Indigenous Knowledge and Resilience – Intergenerational Dialogue (Day Two)

The Intergenerational Resilience panel was preceded by two plenary sessions: "The Radical Human Ecology of Resilience" and "Unpacking the Challenges – Stirring the Potential." The first session discussed Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation as a counter to neoliberalist forms of economic fundamentalism and disconnection from place. The second session provided a critique of dominant sustainability discourse and the importance of cultivating Indigenous ways of knowing and being both in Canada and globally.



Photo Credit Jason Gullie

Figure 3. Panel on Intergenerational Resilience

The panel on intergenerational resilience between Elders and youth continued to deepen relationships. Comprising nine Indigenous and non-Indigenous Elders and youth from Canada, Aotearoa, and Scotland who shared their experiences of intergenerational resilience, it constituted a powerful and mutual form of cultural remapping across generations. Whilst the theme of human-to-human intergenerational resilience remained foremost, the transmission of knowledge between species was an important secondary theme. Loss of these practices as well as their re-generation in the face of colonization was described by Indigenous Elders and youth. For example:

We are like a library...think of the knowledge you all carry....We (the Haida Nation) were 30,000 before diseases came...by 1936 we were less than 600 people. That's like having a massive fire in your library and losing all of about 600 books...periodicals, journals, books of knowledge, ideas. Then you try to put it all back together again. Every one of you has a responsibility to donate your own book of knowledge. (Indigenous Elder, Canada)

Speaking of her family's efforts to nurture resilience, one young Indigenous woman from Canada said:

Instead of holding onto anger...they held onto love....The art of connection....The honouring of all our relations, not just with the people, but with plant nations and the water nations, and that art of connection is resilience....Resilience is love.

This panel enabled one Gaelic participant to make sense of his own national context in Scotland, a country just beginning to recognize its lost Indigeneity:

Hearing Iain MacKinnon's contribution as part of the discussion—his understanding of the 1,000 year old internal colonization process that's been happening in Europe and Scotland...and the motivations for 18th-century onwards European Emigration/ empire building/colonization was hugely helpful.

Other generative practices as part of this panel included a young Māori man who used poetry in performance to contextualize intergenerational resilience within the broader theme of the importance of confronting the racism and poverty affecting many Māori. In the same panel, a woman from Ethiopia described practices of intergenerational resilience, such as the continuation and adaptation of cultural practices, as a migrant to Aotearoa. The exchange of stories and experiences enabled a global and cultural remapping of neocolonialism's various expressions.

Holistic Approaches to Learning (Day Three)

Some of the most poignant midwifing, which guided the manifestation of intended summit processes and outcomes, occurred on TIXEN Spit. Well before dawn, Tsawout community leaders, youth, and other summit participants

gathered at TIXEN to dig a traditional pit cook (earth oven). Once the pit cook was prepared and while the fire continued to heat the stones, some of this group travelled to Tsawout's sacred mountain (PKOLS) to collect *salal*, a plant used in cooking. Around 9:00 am, the rest of the Summit attendees arrived and, for the next six hours or so, the Summit unfolded on the sands of TIXEN. As the lunch cooked, Tsawout tradition carriers shared aspects of traditional knowledge from plant-lore to origin-stories. Each story stressed a message and a meaning to guide good conduct. Summit attendees frequently expressed the value of having the opportunity to be together informally on the land. Stressing how this enabled a "deepening of relationships" on many levels, one Indigenous participant from Canada said:

Preparing the pit cook [was impactful]. We got to the beach in the early morning with a group of youth and spent time working together on the land. This type of low-key activity promotes comfortable and natural conversations that can produce amazing discussions and bonding between the people and the land.

Many participants noted that these teachings, together with the opportunity to experience the sentience and soul of place, were a kind of "medicine." For example, one young Indigenous attendee from Aotearoa noted:

I want to express my endless gratitude to the Tsawout People First Nations People. I felt the synergies of their land and water flow through me.

This day proved particularly powerful for enabling the organic development of new relationships between both people and land and people. Its timing was also critical for interspersing discursive exchange (which can be very cerebral) with more embodied forms such as being with nature and the more immediate reality of the expansive Indigenous Life-World.

Innovations of Indigenous and Inter-peoples' Resilience (Day Four)

In this panel, Indigenous and migrant women from Canada and Aotearoa spoke about their experience with the Women, Migration and Well-being Project (WMWP). Held between 2011 and 2013, the WMWP brought Indigenous and racialized immigrant women (some of them Indigenous to their homelands and traditional knowledge carriers) together to draw out common understandings of well-being and land. The objective of the WMWP was to reframe anthropocentric and Western-orientated mental health programming within holistic approaches that are conducive to social-ecological resilience (Williams & Hall, 2014).

The feedback from summit participants indicates this was an impactful panel for many, with some remarking on its powerfulness in terms of opening up a critical conversation, whilst others indicated they found it unsettling. The panel highlighted the potential in efforts to build relational and epistemological solidarities (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012; Williams & Hall, 2014) across

cultural groups while also illuminating the tensions inherent in such a project. It also launched discussions about topics such as disruptive pedagogical practices in place-based learning contexts. Migrant panelists emphasized the displacement and marginalization of some immigrants, and the challenges of extractive, economically-driven immigration policies and dominant culture. In speaking about the experience of continually navigating the culturally “dominant space” of colonial society, one immigrant participant from Aotearoa noted the implicit expectation that their cultural norms would take a “back seat” to those of the dominant culture: “We are always navigating the dominant space...we get the message that we have to put our cultures, languages, our Indigeneity away.” The same speaker also stressed the lack of consultation with Indigenous Peoples over migration policies as well as the negative images of Indigenous Peoples portrayed by media.

One Māori participant from Aotearoa noted her people’s very negative experiences with (colonizing) settlers and, accordingly, a tendency for some Māori to view all migrants “with suspicion.” Emphasizing the importance of continued efforts to re-assert Māori self-determination in ways that demonstrate compassion towards immigrants and, in particular, those displaced by forms of neocolonialism, she said:

[Our] treaty is still not ratified in parliament...yet the expectation is that we should be welcoming to newcomers...we haven’t learned to do that because we don’t know what that means...if it is about women with children, mothers, family leaders coming together to prevent dysfunction....we can do that.

While to date many Māori are necessarily focused on decolonization and increasing the resilience of their own community members, some urban-based Māori who are more exposed to immigrant groups are aware of some of the parallels between members of their *iwi* (tribe) and working class, racialized immigrants. These resemblances include economic and cultural displacement.

Some participants found the session thought provoking and helpful, both with reference to the clearances and contemporary migration policy. For example, one young Gaelic participant from Scotland commented:

In Scotland many of us are searching for an identity and the scars of the highland clearances are still unresolved after 200 years....[Hearing] the difficulties that Māori people face in understanding and engaging with new waves of migration to Aotearoa was...very helpful in trying to understand the socio-cultural tension in the Highlands and the Islands.... like Māori, people of Gael lineage face large-scale migration into communities.

Some summit evaluation feedback indicated unease with this panel. It suggested that some participants saw patterns of colonialism running through the panel’s design and delivery. It may be that our pedagogical approach did not sufficiently outline the ways in which Indigenous and racialized immigrant women

are differently anchored in the broader political ecology (Williams, 2017). In this way we risked reproducing re-colonizing dynamics.

Conclusion

Imagining new ways of being together as we attempt to navigate these troubled times is both an individual and a collective endeavour. It involves acts of decolonization and reconciliation on many levels. This will inevitably mean different things to different peoples at different times. For Māori, the *waka* (canoe) is simultaneously a pragmatic and, symbolically-speaking, a spiritual vehicle; these are attributes we argue are central to and complementary within the nature of this work. In the WSÁNEĆ way, re-imagining modes of togetherness is about re-establishing and revitalizing those traditional life-ways of SKÁU ŁFE and bringing them forward so that everyone can understand what it is like to live in ways that are deeply connected to the environment.

The Summit and IRN have shown promise in fostering the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and practices that help Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples to reconnect to the land in powerful and meaningful ways. The “learning place” of Tsawout traditional territory enabled a pedagogical forum that was conducive to cultural transformation, or, “Scaling Deep.” It produced some considerable shifts in the “hearts and minds” of people (Riddell & Lee-Moore, 2015, p.12). Cultural remapping was important for informing activities such as remapping dominant cultural-power relations, as was evidenced in “Clearing the Ground.” It also proved valuable in facilitating the weaving back and forth between narrative and embodied ways of being. It enabled meaningful community exchange and accompanying spiritual, emotional, and analytical depth between participants.

Indigenous attendees offered positive feedback about their experience; observing how the Summit had strengthened Indigenous resilience through heightening non-Indigenous participants’ awareness of Indigenous beliefs and cultures. Echoing the thoughts of other Indigenous attendees, one Indigenous participant noted how it increased momentum for change through the coming together of many cultures in ways that “created a sacred space to be very open about spirit and identify the key healing aspects of decolonization.”

There were at least two key takeaways for some of the non-Indigenous participants. The first was a realization of how much effort was necessary in order to catch up with the thinking and work of Indigenous Peoples on inter-generational resilience. The second was the need for further discussion on their own part. One participant articulated this second finding as follows: [we need] “further discussion for those of us without much connection to our Indigenous histories, how we can further support this movement and work.”

Practices intended to cultivate social-ecological resilience in an era of reconciliation that has yet to move beyond “colonial politics of recognition”

(Coulthard, 2014) require vigilance in retaining a critical perspective and continuing to take great care in how we hold key paradoxes inherent in this work. Locating this project in the resurgence of Indigenous communities—in ways that enable all deep learning opportunities that are both about localized Indigenous practices and authentic connection to place—has the potential to lead to sustained and “DEEP” (epistemological, relational, and material) levels of intergenerational resilience and reconciliation. A critical aspect of ensuring the success of this work will be will be engaging with settler-migrant peoples and organizations to gain deeper insight and understanding of their cultural-power positionings within colonial structures. These will be important considerations for IRN as we take steps to develop IRN’s ethical framing and protocol in support of IRN’s long-term objective of a making a collective impact on social-ecological resilience.

Notes

- ⁱ Greenwood’s previous surname was Gruenewald, as in his 2003 article.
- ⁱⁱ Linguistically, “Celtic” refers to an Indo-European language family made up of two branches: the “Q” Celtic of Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, and Manx Gaelic; and the “P” Celtic of Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Historically, all of the peoples who have spoken these languages have endured broadly speaking colonial processes to the extent, for instance, that there are now no native speakers of Manx and Cornish. The “Q” Celtic language family can be thought of as the languages of the Gaels. Celtic has also come to mean a broader sense of identity, identification and affinity with these minority groups, expressed, for instance, through the diversity of European and global artists and audience members attending the month long traditional music festival “Celtic Connections” held in Glasgow in Scotland each January. In direct reference to the Summit participants from Scotland, Scots peoples today adopt a variety of positions in relation to colonial processes as reflected in the various terms used and perspectives articulated in connection to the quotations in this article. For further information, see, for example, MacAulay (1992) and Durcacz (1983).

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