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Waponahki Intellectual Tradition of Weaving Educational Policy

This article describes an articulation of a Waponahki intellectual tradition from the experience of a Waponahki woman attempting to position Indigenous knowledge systems in the academy. The author shows how the Waponahki intellectual tradition of weaving baskets can serve as a theoretical framework and foundation for understanding Waponahki policymaking and research. The article reports on a new law implemented in 2004 in the State of Maine that mandates the teaching of Waponahki history and culture in kindergarten through grade 12 and how teacher education programs are being developed to prepare teachers to comply with the legislation. The vision of policy direction resides in the minds of the policymaker and the community for which and with which he or she works. Like policy development, the blueprints of design for the basketry are constructed in the mind of the basketmaker; both work toward the future and continued survival of the Waponahki people. Policy development and basketmaking are more than writing texts or weaving strips of wood: both rely heavily on experience, connection to the people, and knowledge of who we are. Our basketry is intrinsic to our culture, rooted in our creation story; similarly, our policy development is critical to our decolonization and survival. The article calls for Indigenous peoples to revitalize, preserve, recognize, or even uncover their own Indigenous intellectual traditions with the vision of expanding knowledge systems.

Cet article décrit l'articulation d'une tradition intellectuelle waponahki d'après l'expérience d'une femme waponahki qui tente de forger une place pour les systèmes de connaissances indigènes au sein du monde académique. L'auteure démontre que la tradition intellectuelle waponahki de vannerie peut servir de cadre théorique et de fondement pour comprendre l'élaboration des politiques et la recherche chez les Waponahki. L'article mentionne une nouvelle loi mise en oeuvre en 2004 dans l'état du Maine et qui impose l'enseignement de l'histoire et la culture des Waponahkis de la maternelle jusqu'en 12e année. Des programmes développés dans le but de préparer les enseignants à se conformer au règlement sont également évoqués. La vision des objectifs des politiques est dans l'esprit de la personne qui élabore la politique et dans celui de la communauté pour et avec laquelle elle travaille. Tout comme l'élaboration de politiques, la conception d'un plan détaillé en vannerie est créé dans l'esprit du vannier; les deux oeuvrent pour l'avenir et la survie du peuple waponahki. L'élaboration de politiques et la vannerie ne se résument pas à la rédaction de textes ou au tissage de lanières de bois : les deux activités reposent sur l'expérience, les liens avec les personnes et la conscience de qui nous sommes. Notre vannerie est une partie intrinsèque de notre culture et est enracinée dans notre récit de création; dans le même ordre d'idées, l'élaboration de nos politiques est essentielle à notre décolonisation et à notre survie. Cet article invite les peuples indigènes à passer à l'action pour revitaliser, préserver, reconnaître ou même découvrir leurs propres traditions intellectuelles indigènes en visant l'expansion des systèmes de connaissances.

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> White people tend to think we are like a convenience store, they like to come in and buy the candy, the M&M's of our culture and spirituality and leave behind all the cleaning products, like the oppression, colonialism and racism. (Rene Attean, Penobscot Elder, Scholar, and Basketmaker, panel presentation, University of Maine, Native Awareness Month, April 1992)

Introduction

Through the lenses of my experiences as a Waponahki[1] woman positioning Indigenous knowledge systems in the Western academy, I articulate a Waponahki[1] intellectual tradition. The privilege of time afforded to me to construct this article is owed to the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) Research Project "Aboriginal Healing Through Language and Culture" at the University of Alberta.[2] I present my thinking on how the Waponahki intellectual tradition of weaving baskets embodies a theoretical framework and foundation for understanding Waponahki policymaking and research.

The educational policy examined here outlines some of the challenges and opportunities in the process of designing and implementing Legislative Document (LD) 291 and how this document functions in practice as an educational policy that works toward anti-racism education and the decolonization of the Waponahki people of Maine. I analyze the development of this policy through my own lens as a Waponahki researcher. Because this article is based on my experiences as a Waponahki scholar, mother, and community member, I have decided to present my thoughts using the first-person narrative.

Basketmaking is central to the analysis of policy development among Waponahki because it is an ancient tradition of the people that provides the bases for the philosophical context and articulation of Waponahki ways of knowing and being. I refer to the basketry and theoretical framework as a Waponahki intellectual tradition. These Waponahki ways of knowing and being are the reference points to begin the study of Waponhaki policy development, and basketmaking can speak meaningfully to the ultimate practice of the weaving or framing of the particular policy that is being reported.

In 2001 the state of Maine passed LD 291[3] (Maine Public Law 2001, Chapter 403, Title 20-A MRSA Section 4706) requiring Maine schools to teach Maine Native American history and culture and to educate Maine's schoolchildren about—and thus increase the public's understanding of—the Waponahki (Indigenous) people of Maine. This law, one of the first of its kind in the history of the United States, finally went into effect in the fall of 2004. The formal organization, building of curricula, and implementation of the law resided primarily with Indigenous people in and from Maine, creating an unusual opportunity for Indigenous people to control the form and content of information that was to be communicated about their own cultures and experiences. Similar to the process by means of which LD 291 became law for the Waponahki, the blueprints of design for basketry are constructed first in the mind of the basketmaker; both baskets and policies work toward the future and continued cultural survival of Waponahki people. Policy development and basketmaking are more than just the practice of writing text or weaving strips of wood; both rely heavily on experience, connection to the people, knowledge of history, sense of identity, and commitment to the future of the people. Our basketry is

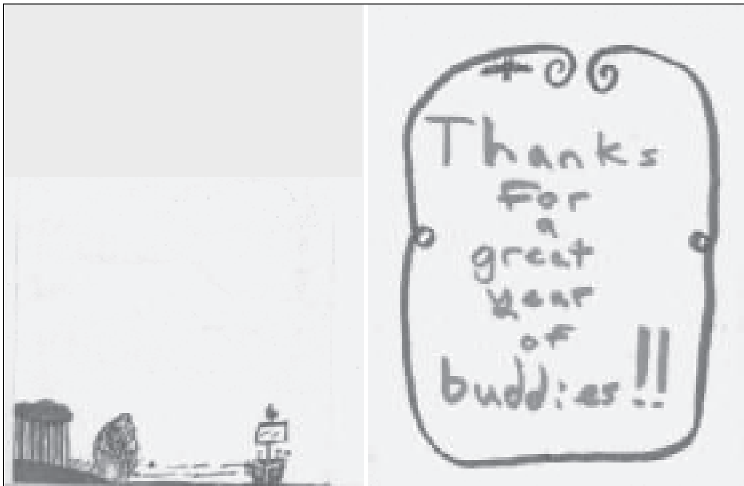

Figure 1.

intrinsic to our culture and is rooted in our creation story; similarly, our policy development is critical to our decolonization and survival.

Decolonizing the Playground and Kindergarten Experiences at School

The following story makes relevant how young children's experiences in school may positively affect teacher education programs toward anti-racism and decolonization. Almost five years ago my daughter told me that children were playing "kill the Indians" at recess and quickly explained that she chose not to participate. She further explained that the ECers (early childhood) children were the Indians and the K-1ers were the pirates that chased and killed the Indians. My daughter as a kindergartener could have been a pirate, but told me she was a "for real" Indian, and that game was "not okay because it liked to kill Indians." Note that the younger children, with less power and size, were the Indians. Concurrently, she had received a routine card from her grade 4 reading buddy (see Figures 1 and 2). On the front of the card was an intricately drawn picture of a ship where light-peach-colored figures with yellow hair were shooting at a group of brown, black-haired figures on the shore. Immediately in front of the brown-skinned people was a large bomb-like fire.

The peach-colored figures were clearly winning this violent battle. Inside the card was a thank-you note from this white grade 4 student expressing gratitude for a great year as reading buddies. I asked my daughter what the picture meant to her. She said it was a picture of bad pirates killing the Indians and that not all pirates were bad. I asked her why they were killing the Indians, and she responded by saying, "Mumma, I don't know why they want to kill us … I think it is because they do not know enough about us."

The next day I presented the card and the recess game complaint to the headmaster of the school. He replied by explaining that the boy was a very kind child and his family was too. I explained in turn that I was not concerned about, nor did I question the kindness of the boy and his family. I demanded that the school administrator look closely at the picture and understand that

Figure 2.

the card was similar to that of Nazi figures putting Jews in incinerators, or men in white robes and hoods hanging Black folks by the necks on trees and setting them on fire. The innocently crafted card reminded me of the painful history of genocide that my people have survived. The Waponahki know about the 97% population depletion of their people and a notice of bounty is posted on the wall of our tribal government office as a reminder to our people that we are strong and that we have survived (Figure 3).

Racism is similar to the proverbial road to hell: both are paved with good intentions. Although it was not the intention of the white child to threaten or cause pain to myself or to my family, pain and threat were certainly effects. To this moment I had not experienced this indescribable feeling: I was a parent listening and sensing the fear in my 6-year-old who had been threatened with personal violence because of her treasured identity. My daughter is infinitely proud of her identity as a Native person. Imagine for one moment a recess playground where children play "Kill the girls!" "Kill the Jews!" "Kill the Black people!" What long- and short-term effect does this have on a 6-year-old girl's identity? I wanted to ensure that this would not happen again and that the school would immediately implement a policy to prevent another similar incident. I wanted the school to adopt an anti-racism policy that transcended the anti-harassment policy, which does not directly address this form of racist behavior. An anti-racism policy in a disciplinary context could address this aspect of the problem.

However, for the children who are playing "kill the Indians" at recess, how do we teach in anti-racist ways, how do we teach about racism and anti-racism, about how violent and disturbing racism is? I looked more closely at what the school was teaching about my people and found that the existing curriculum was limited to Waponahki traditional foods, singing/listening to Waponahki songs, dancing/watching Waponhki dances, and building wigwam replicas. Does this curriculum on the Waponahki contradict the students' recess games or character drawings in any way?

LD 291 and Mandating Anti-Racist Policy to Teachers

As Waponahki people, we hoped that LD 291 would begin to critically address these racist experiences of our people. This story about my daughter helps to contextualize the need to engage critically with anti-racism when considering expanding knowledge systems in teacher education programs. I was one of the several Waponahki people involved in lobbying and testifying for LD 291. We addressed the legislation's stated intention to provide "greater understanding,

SPENCER PHIPS, Esq;

A PROCLAMATION.

S. Phips.

GOD Save the KING.

Figure 3.

respect, and appreciation for the Wabanaki" (Wabanaki Studies Commission, 2003, p. 1) hoping that the law would address types of behavior such as racist games and messages from reading buddies. In effect one of the 15 "Essential Understandings" that teachers are to arrive at include teaching about our oppression, genocide, and racism in addition to our world views. As a member of the Wabanaki Studies Commission, I organized a think tank of Waponahki and white educators, administrators, and scholars to create the understandings. The group readily agreed on the need to teach about our world view. Conversely, when the issue of teaching about the oppression, genocide, and racism was raised, the group engaged in an intense debate, and the decision to move ahead on it passed by a slim margin. The traditional Waponahki knowledge-holders were the strongest advocates of teaching about our oppressive colonial experience.

As Razack (1998, cited in Kuakkanen, 2003) writes, this focus on cultural difference "too often descends, in a multicultural spiral, to a superficial reading of differences that makes power relations invisible and keeps dominant cul-

tural norms in place" (p. 9). Sami scholar Kuakkanen calls for indigenous educators to use the concept of hospitality and "assist others to pay more attention and become more familiar with ideas, premises, and concepts characterizing indigenous thought" (p. 282). Consistent with Palmer (1998), she argues that the hospitality of the teacher to the student "results in a world more hospitable to the teacher" (Palmer, p. 50). That is, when we as Indigenous people are recognized as having the expertise about our cultures and experiences, we are the hosts and they are the guests, and our gift can work to instill a sense of responsibility in our guests, which will in turn create a more just world for us. However, this moment of hospitality can only work if the gift of our cultures, which "is about increasing knowledge and understanding or changing attitudes, is also equally about addressing systemic power inequalities and hegemony" (Kuakkanen, p. 285). This was evidenced in what those with the most cultural knowledge in the group designing the teaching expectations—the "culture/language revitalizers" or traditional knowledge-holders—knew to be the case. Although they advocated for the greatest amount of culture to be taught among the participants, they spoke out most strongly to implement the study of racism, genocide, and colonization into the curriculum.[4]

Positioning Indigenous Research Methodology

I approach this article as how I understand Cree/Metis Scholar Weber-Pillwax (1999) to approach her explanation of Indigenous research methodology (IRM) where she states that her writing is not intended to define the methodology. Instead she is offering some of the principles of IRM as points of consideration:

> (a) the interconnectedness of all living things, (b) the impact of motives and intentions on person and community, (c) the foundation of research as lived indigenous experience, (d) the groundedness of theories in indigenous epistemology, (e) the transformative nature of research, (f) the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining person and community integrity, and (g) the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes. (p. 31)

I share this intention in my articulation of why and how I have decided to identify the framework of my analysis as an IRM. For the purposes of the analysis of the policy, I further identify such methodology as working within a Waponahki paradigm and epistemology. In approaching the articulation of my methodology, I have considered these principles offered by Weber-Pillwax (1999) and readily apply them as I continue to make sense and articulate the methodological approach I engage in this analysis. The seminal work of Weber-Pillwax has been identified as a transcendence beyond the "positivism of western science" (Brown & Strega, 2005). They further identify the principles offered by Pillwax as "transformative to build a more just society," and recognize the engagement with such Indigenous research methodologies as a "call for critical inquirers to practice in their empirical endeavours what they preach in their theoretical formulations" (p. 282)

The articulation of the weaving framework does not represent the views of all Waponahki, nor does it intend to define a research methodology for all Waponahki. My intention here is to explain the framework of research methodology in which I engage, one that I believe honors the ancestors and the people

and thereby remembers who we are. My study of the policies is the focus of my Waponahki lens. Most important, the methodology supports my ability to engage with the study from my heart and my identity as a Waponahki woman, so interconnected that they feel as if they were the same. This is the reference point from which my research begins and does not necessarily end (Brody, 1981; Weber-Pillwax, 1999). A researcher's consciousness of and consideration of such reference points I have come to understand is fundamental to IRM.

Glooskap and Epistemicide

The idea of IRM as a framework helped me to go back to my ancestors, who are present in my research. I approach Waponahki epistemology or ways of knowing as dynamic, with vitality. At the same time, I am reluctant at this point in my work to believe that I am able to create knowledge. I believe I have the skills to help revitalize Waponahki knowledge; however, I understand knowledge to evolve through experience. For many Indigenous peoples, our knowledge is held by those who have extensive experience in life: our Elders, and even then they often claim that they are still learning (Cardinal, 1977; Ermine, 1995; Penobscot Nation Oral History Project, 1993).

Ermine (1995), a Cree scholar, asserts that Aboriginal epistemology is deeply connected to the self and that we do not need to look beyond ourselves to find it. IRM can be described similarly to how Ermine frames Aboriginal epistemology. We need to understand deeply our position, relationship to our study, and where we are located in our research (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). In other words, we must answer the question: Where is the *I* in my research?[5] This question afforded me a deeper look into or reinterpretation of the policy development process of the Waponahki, and the interpretive nature of research is often identified in the literature as hermeneutical analysis (Meyer, 2003; Ranco, 2006). This discourse, data, and document analysis, the unfolding and reinterpretation begins with Glooskap and the stepping out of the Waponahki from the ash tree.

Our story of creation tells us that we come from the ash tree. The impact of Glooskap's arrows split open the tree, and the people stepped out. The people came to be known as the Waponahki, meaning "people of the dawn." A text version of the story follows and represents perhaps the closest version of how this story is told in the Waponahki language. It is the version that is taught to our young people in the reservation schools.

> *Waponahki Creation Story*
> Glooskap came first of all into this country….
> Into the land of the Waponahki, next to sunrise.
> There were no Indians here then …
> And in this way, he made man and woman:
> He took his bow and arrows and shot at trees,
> The basket-trees, the Ash.
> Then Indians came out of the bark
> Of the Ash-trees. (American Friends Service Committee, 1989, Ranco, 2006, p. 64)

I remember first hearing this story at home as an 8-year-old girl listening to my brother-in-law. At the same time, I was going to a Catholic school off the reservation and was one of the few Native children in the school. There I was

taught and tested on my understanding of the Biblical Adam and Eve story. The power of Darwinian theory and science was also prevalent in my Catholic school, but it was offered as an alternative or secondary way of understanding human creation. The Adam and Eve story seemed more believable to me than the concept that we were once monkeys. I also learned in school that "Indians" had legends and myths: both I understood to be fictional. I believed and was exposed to the Catholic world view for at least two hours a day. When the Waponahki creation story was presented to me, I enjoyed it, but I did not believe it to be truth. I did not think much about it until I went to university and began hearing other Native people's creation stories and sensed their deep belief of their origins. In the university I was also introduced to critical theory in a feminist context and for the first time in my education exposed to Native scholarship. I learned about the colonial oppression my people had survived and still experience. I remember not really understanding the sources of the socioeconomic distress. I reduced it to a lack of motivation and perhaps even alcoholism. I learned slowly about a history and a legacy of colonization, genocide, and racism. Such teachings revealed to me that not everything I read in the Bible was true and that Waponahki ways of knowing and identifying had been disrupted through colonization. Contemporary literature and research consistently identifies the detrimental effects that colonization and its use of education policy as a tool of oppression has had on our knowledge systems, including high levels of socioeconomic distress (Deloria, 1985, 1999; Grande, 2004; Moore, 2003; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

Almost 10 years after beginning university studies, I took an opportunity as a policymaker to define with other Wapohnaki people what the State would be mandated through law to learn about our people. My own knowledge mobilization surfaced when I began to develop the curricular resources related to the Waponahki history and culture law. We decided that our creation story would be shared to help understand what our world view embodied. Concurrently, the knowledge mobilization was manifesting itself in my own family. I had explained to my daughter the previous year the story of our creation, and she did not question it; her response was that of total engagement and belief. A year passed, and she told me that her peers in her kindergarten, off-reservation and in a predominantly white school, did not believe that we could have come from the ash tree. She questioned whether this was really true. I let her know it was the truth and that many people had varied beliefs about where their people came from. I share this story as a clear example of how our people are surviving the epistemicide and to show that the intended eradication of our ways of knowing and being is not complete (de Sousa Santos, 2007).

The necessity of sharing our world view in the curriculum mandate became clearer to me, but there was something even deeper before that that needed to be taught in order for the children to grasp the notion that people can come from a tree. I believe that this lies in the need to understand the power and dominance of Western knowledge systems in the curriculum. I also believe that children have the critical thinking abilities to engage with the concept that there are many creation stories, all valuable and legitimate. At the same time, our own Waponahki children need to engage with this creation story as the place where we come from, not merely as a mythical legend. I reflect on myself

and the process of learning my creation story as a point of reference in better understanding the need to remember this knowledge.

One night after an IRM class session, my husband, a Stoney Sioux man Indigenous to Alberta, asked me what Glooskap had to do with studying policy and oppression or racism. This was a critical moment in my research, and I think it underlies the concept that we have knowledges about our oppression that drive our revitalization projects. My response to him was to remind him of our daughter doubting our creation story. I also pointed to the systemic racism and the oppression that prohibits our knowledge being transferred, and Western knowledge being perpetuated, the same systemic racism that places Western knowledge in a superior position to Indigenous knowledge, if Indigenous knowledge is even given a reference as knowledge. For example, de Sousa Santos (2007) calls for the academy to recognize these local knowledges as equally valuable to traditional Western knowledge and identifies such "monoculture of scientific knowledge" responsible for the epistemocide experience by indigenous populations. However, just as the original bounty on the heads of Waponahki men, women, and children did not destroy us, the knowledge suppression or the epistemocide experienced by the Waponahki is incomplete. This is evidenced in our survival as a people and in my opportunity to share this Waponahki intellectual tradition in the context of revitalizing Waponahki epistemology. In other words, although the intended result of colonialism was to wipe out the Waponahki, we are still here. Epistemocide, an apparatus of colonialism, set out to suppress our knowledge system, but it was not accomplished either. Thus I am able to make sense of or theorize about Wapohnaki policy development through engagement with the Waponahki intellectual tradition of basketweaving.

Weaving an Educational Policy Basket

I can make sense of the educational policymaking processes in my tribal confederacy through analyzing the weaving of policy baskets. The Waponahki people have woven what is known today as The Squaw Law,[6] the Waponahki History and Culture Law,[7] and the subsequent Language Endorsement Law.[8] We come from the ash tree. Our basketry, based on the ash tree, has been recognized internationally among other Indigenous people for our intricate designs.

Our baskets are significantly linked to our creation story, and the weaving of our baskets is fundamental to our cultural heritage and survival. We are the ash that comes from the tree, interconnected to the earth, a living dynamic entity. As our forests in Maine are being developed, the ash tree is more depleted than ever before. I align the genocide (Figure 3) that we have experienced, which is 97% original population depletion, as parallel to the decimation of our sacred ash tree (Thorton, 1987).

The blueprints of design for the basketry are constructed in the mind of the basketmaker; some are given the design in their dreams. The vision of the policy direction resides in the minds of the policymaker and the community he or she is working for and with. Both work toward our future and continued cultural survival and existence. I align the basketry with the policymaking that is rooted in the creation story; our baskets come from the ash tree; we come from the ash tree; and we design the policy. The policymaking and the basket-

making are more than just the practice of writing text or weaving strips of wood. Both weavings rely heavily on experience, connection to the people, and knowledge of who we are. The weavings of the policy basket begin with a foundational weaving or star of ash. In each of these foundational weavings I identify: the ability to sponsor state laws manifested in our Tribal Representative in the State of Maine House of Representatives; Waponahki ability to write legislation; our people's knowledge of the historical relationship with the state of Maine and federal government; knowledge of our legal rights; knowledge of what the needs of the Waponahki are and will be in the future; Waponahki ability to organize the people to lobby for legislation and testify in support of bills; the weavings are perhaps countless and they form the policy basket.

When holding a fancy basket as a Waponahki person, I understand and feel the sophistication of the mind involved in the design and creation of the piece. There is deep significance in our basketmaking; it weaves from our creation, and after all the attempts to eradicate us, we are still making our baskets. I treasure the time my daughter made her first basket, guided by one of our Elders and her older cousin. My heart felt deep joy at her engagement with the ash and her concentration. She gave it to me as a present, and as I held the basket in my hand I felt the love of my ancestors touch my heart as tears filled my eyes: the moment of hope, pride, and love is indescribable. I have since talked with peers from my community who have experienced the same warmth and hope when their children or grandchildren handed them their first ash basket. We agree that this event has deep meaning. Our baskets represent survival and sophistication of our Waponahki mind: a mind that others attempted to colonize and weaken, but it has thrived. The same holds true when we engage with the policymaking: we believe and hope that it will make a difference for our people and generations yet to come. This is in stark contrast to engaging with policymaking that will benefit only individuals and their wallets. So when we pass legislation and mobilize that knowledge, it feels deeply significant toward a space of decolonization, and perhaps even beyond.

The need to be reminded of the sophistication of the mind in the basketry and policymaking is also prompted by the painful memory of the first wave of educational policy on Waponahki people, established by a US military officer Richard Henry Pratt, who created and administered the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (Grande, 2004). The policy of the school was to "kill the Indian and save the man." The next major era of Indian policy that has had a lasting and vast effect across the US and Canada began with the creation of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Almost 100 years after the genocidal bounties on Bunawubskeag scalps and live persons was instituted, the boarding school warfare against the Waponahki began in 1865. This traumatic effort was headed by Captain Henry Richard Pratt, previous warden of a military prison at Fort Marion, Florida, who served as the founder and headmaster of the school (Churchill, in Greymorning, 2004). Pratt's mission for the school was to "kill the Indian, save the man." Here children were sexually and physically abused. Their Indigenous languages were literally beaten out of them. They were tortured if caught speaking their mother tongue. Initially, Pratt recruited students by promising tribal leaders that their treaties would be upheld if their

children were sent to Carlisle. Eventually, when these promises were no longer believed, the children were kidnapped from their homes and reservations and forced to attend the school. On entering the school, their hair was cut and their Indigenous clothing taken from them. They were prohibited from visiting their families, some for the entire time that they were in the school. This meant a period of up to 12 years without seeing or communicating with their parents. Children as young as 6 were taken from their homes. The following quote represents the schools' intention.

> In Indian civilization, I am a Baptist because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under, holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked. (Captain Henry Richard Pratt)

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School started out with 78 students and reached a capacity of over 10,700 Native students from over 145 tribes. Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the template used for the entire system of residential school warfare in both the US and Canada. It is estimated that well over 1,000 children died, an average of one in 10 who entered the school doors. Although it is documented that 1,000 children died, the school's graveyard buried only 186 children. The original cemetery has been desecrated by the recently constructed Jim Thorpe gymnasium today, a visible statement of the institution's practice of burying the truth of its genocidal practice. The school closed in 1918, and in 2003 a nationwide effort initiated by a Bunawubskeag woman Betsy Tannian, in collaboration with former students and families of deceased students, resulted in a plaque being erected at the cemetery.[9]

This overt and strategic attempt to eradicate our identity through the indoctrination of white values continues to have severe negative effects in our Waponahki communities, one of which is the low language fluency, and as Ermine (1995) and numerous other Native people assert, our world view and epistemology is embedded in our language. This initial era of educational policy against my people set an elevated stage for Western knowledge systems, making Waponahki knowledge seem inferior. This is the ultimate oppression and is deeply felt when I as a young girl and my daughter doubt where we come from. Therefore, highlighting sophistication of the mind is important here. As the late Stephen Biko (1978), an Indigenous South African, anti-Apartheid activist, wrote in his text *I Write What I Like*, "The greatest weapon in the face of the oppressor, is the mind of the oppressed." It is this very mind that is so critical in cultural survival and existence. Class discussions on IRM helped me to link what this means to research. One profound discussion offered the necessity to rethink how we think. What would happen to our research if we thought with our heart, or to rethink that our heart is enormously connected to our minds? Furthermore, that our minds are sophisticated and we are able to locate such sophistication within our epistemologies.

Hermeneutics From Within and Indigenous Research Methodology

Hermeneutics is perhaps the closest method of analysis that I have found thus far for my study. Hermeneutics as Meyer (2003) identifies it is "the art and science of interpretation." Although hermeneutics fits in the framework of IRM, it does not necessarily define it. One angle of understanding is how Meyer reframes hermeneutics as Hawaiian and defines an articulation of

"Hawaiian Hermeneutics." She encourages Indigenous scholars to reinterpret our ongoing "gloomy" data of socioeconomic distress. Instead she asks us to engage with our low retention numbers in school as representing our youths' connection to their Indigenous systems of learning and resistance to Western schooling systems.

Another layer of hermeneutical analysis is found where Ranco (2006) asserts that the history and predominant ongoing use of hermeneutics in research of Native people has typically studied us as the *other*. Ranco calls for a power shift to occur in research of Native people to power within:

> The belief that understanding comes from a change of self by overcoming subjective difference has also been a key tenet in recent hermeneutic philosophy … A better ethics, however would be involved in shifting the privilege away from the outsiders and their knowledge, to the insiders and their knowledge.

Ranco then identifies how such a power shift may occur and presents a list of culturally specific ways of approaching research offered by Smith (1999) in her *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Smith articulates this list as those values of Maori people and ethics found in Maori research by a Maori researcher called Kaupapa Maori practices:

1. Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).
2. Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).
3. Titiro, whakarongo... korero (look, listen... speak).
4. Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous).
5. Kia tupato (be cautious).
6. Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people).
7. Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge). (Smith, cited in Ranco, 2006)

Ranco identifies this list as exemplary of the necessary power shift needed in order to "reformulate the power relations between those who study and those who are studied" (p. 74). This type of list is layered under codes of ethics and protocols that many of our Indigenous communities have structured for outside researchers. Culturally specific lists like this and principles of IRM offered by Weber-Pillwax (1999) can point us as Indigenous researchers toward that place of our own Indigenous epistemologies where our research can find its deeper and more vital source. This place is also where that reformulation of power relations that Ranco calls for begins and is the one wherein we as Indigenous people are living the research.

As I reflect on this list and the principles offered by Weber-Pillwax (1999), I find both lists consistent with the epistemologies of the respective Indigenous people corresponding to each scholar's identity. One of the principles offered by Weber-Pillwax in considering IRM is particularly important to consider at this point. That is. "the groundedness of theories in indigenous epistemology." When I read Smith's (1999) list and subsequent text directly, I see how she outlines that the values come from Maori epistemology and ontology, respectively ways of knowing and being. This place of deep rootedness in Indigenous epistemology is how I place Glooskap and basketry in my study. It is the same

place where I feel the spirit of those ancestors who came before me, who suffered so deeply for me to be here. It is the place where the spirits of my ancestors are present in my study; not to articulate and engage with these aspects of my Waponahki epistemology would undermine and compromise the depth and potential of my scholarship to contribute to the intellectual advancement of Waponahki knowledge. It would create a situation where through my work I could be acting out and promoting the same pattern of Western knowledge dominance and oppression that I am trying to dismantle, undo, or avoid. Mobilizing Waponahki epistemology speaks to a space of hope that is layered in our language revitalization. As Wayne Newell, a Passamaquoddy Elder and tribal leader once told me, "Passamaquoddy language is the road map to who we are, our soul." I believe that a Waponahki epistemology or our ways of knowing have not been eradicated. I was not supposed to be here right now even writing this text; in other words, according to eradication policies against my people, it was intended that my people be annihilated. Conversely, we are still here. We are still weaving our baskets and engaging politically in developing policies that bring together our people for the good of the community. We are still here sharing our intellectual traditions and mobilizing knowledge that our ancestors suffered to maintain and pass on. The weaving of the ash has deeper meaning than the mechanics of situating strips of ash, as the development of policy is far more than the technicalities of placing text together to make laws. The weaving of the ash reminds us of who we are, where we come from, as the development of the policies requires groundedness in our identity and history; both working toward our survival as Waponahki people.

Notes

1 *Waponahki* is the term (as well as a post-contact political alliance) meaning "people of the dawn" and refers to the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac peoples who live in Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.
2. The CURA Project is dedicated to mobilizing Indigenous knowledge and honoring the vitality of Indigenous knowledge systems.
3. In Maine, the Legislative Document (LD) number is used to signify the fully published text of a law.
4. This section of the article was presented at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, New Zealand, 2005, co-presented with Penobscot scholar Darren Ranco.
5. This question was raised to a group of doctoral students at a retreat for the Indigenous Peoples Education specialization, University of Alberta, 2007.
6. The Squaw Bill is an Act to eradicate state place names with the word *squaw*, 2000.
7. The Waponahki History and Culture Law is also know as LD 291 for Maine Public Law, Chapter 403, Title 20, 2001
8. The Language Endorsement Law Chapter 115; Section 5, 2006.
9. Data of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Waponahki were compiled and used with permission by two Waponahki women, Betsy Tannian, LSW, and Esther Attean, LMSW of the Maine Waponahki Indian Child Welfare Coalition for the purposes of training social workers in the state with the goal of compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

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