

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

An Aboriginal Community Service Learning Project

As part of our service for the Experiential Community Service Learning (CLS) Program and as members of the Faculty of Education Global Cohort 2010, we were privileged to have the opportunity to work closely with the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg in Maniwaki, Quebec. We had the opportunity to make lesson plans for their school as well as to plan and implement activities in the elementary classrooms at the school. In preparation, we read the textbook entitled, *Since Time Immemorial: "Our Story"*, by Stephen McGregor, which described the history of the Algonquin Nation in the Ottawa River Valley. We made several visits to the Kitigan Zibi cultural centre to learn more about Algonquin people and to receive feedback on our lesson planning from the elders. These lessons were based off of content from the book, *Since Time Immemorial: "Our Story"*. We also worked in groups to create an activity plan to incorporate Algonquin history or language. On March 24, 2010, the global cohort had the opportunity to implement the activities we had planned at the Kitigan Zibi School. Each group was able to teach the activity to various grades with great success. This deemed to be a rewarding experience for us all. We were so appreciative with how welcomed we were by the staff and students at the Kitigan Zibi cultural centre and school. Not only did they trust us with making and sharing the activity and lesson plans for their school, but they also helped and encouraged us along the way. As a member of the global cohort, this experience was very meaningful to me as I was able to learn so much more about the unfair hardships that the Aboriginal people went through as well the effects these hardships still have on them today. I think that it is important for teachers to be aware and sensitive towards cultures different than their own and to promote peaceful living with everyone. The people we had met inspired me to want to make sure that my future students feel accepted and appreciated for who they are.

They also demonstrated how teachers can promote peacekeeping by not only being friendly and accepting of other cultures, but by actually building a trusting relationship with them.

- Jessica Mumper



Kitigan-Zibi Cultural Centre

Features

- ✎ Loss of Language.....2
- ✎ Traditional Aboriginal values and Global Education.....3
- ✎ Temporary Non-Aboriginal Teachers in Aboriginal Communities.....4
- ✎ EWW! Get Away from the Poop!....5
- ✎ The land is my classroom: My Meeting with the Elders.....6

"Acceptance of and interest in the student's community and way of life should provide the non-Native teacher with a better understanding of the difficulties." (Taylor, 1995/1999, p. 228).

KAGWEDWEWINAN		TÖDAMÖWINAN / ACTIVITIES	
Ann ejnikáayen?	What is your name?	Nidakwändawe	I climb
Ann onduwa giheneziyan?	What is your age?	Nibimose	I walk
Aawenit kújódjé?	Who is your mother?	Niwisin	I eat
Aawenit ke-waajónad?	Whom will you choose?	Nibindige	I enter
Ándj ejae?	Where are you going?	Ninisadjwe	I descend (hill)
Ándj kimákiní?	Where are your shoes?	Nidójihigie	I write
Ánta epich wa-mádjín?	When do you want to leave?	Nimadwesidjige	I telephone
Ánta epich ke-bi-gíwen?	When will you come home?	Nibimibato	I run
		Nidánimitagoz	I speak
		Nigijigábandán	I look (at television)
		Nibigósídjige	I break
		Nimínikwe	I drink
		Nizáwám	I go out
		Ninígádjige	I read
		Niníwá	I cry
		Nibíwám	I listen
		Nigándjwebinige	I push
		Niníba	I sleep
		Nibangishin	I fall
		Nigwáshkwan	I jump

Algonquin phrases at the Cultural Centre



Animal Tracking with Algonquin Words



Loss of Language

For the First Nations people, language is sacred and affects all aspects of Aboriginal life. It is their way of understanding their legacy of tribal knowledge and embodies a value system of how to live and relate to one another. Yet, on most reserves today English and French are the predominate language. This is due to the implementation of residential schools as First Nations people were rigorously stripped of their language and identity to ensure a lost culture. (Battiste, p.17-19).

I recently had the honour of collaborating on an education project at the Kitigan-Zibi reserve in Quebec to work with elders to develop and create lesson plans that would teach Algonquin students their heritage, traditions, and language through various activities. One such activity involved matching animal tracks to their corresponding animal in Algonquin. Through the integration of the Algonquin immersion program on the reserve, all children were able to match the animals in Algonquin correctly. However, Algonquin immersion classes are a rarity with only a fraction of Algonquin children able to attend these classes. Currently over half of the aboriginal student population are in Canadian provincial schools (Battiste, p.17-19).

So what does the future hold for these languages? How do future educators help bring awareness of languages into their classroom? Being in a global cohort and having a background knowledge of different cultures through my travels has enabled me to incorporate a variety of cultural perspectives into my lessons. However, the idea of integrating First Nations languages and culture authentically eluded me. After working on the curriculum development project, I feel more confident in integrating Aboriginal language and culture into the classroom. Therefore, I feel that it should be mandatory for student teachers to take courses in Aboriginal studies and to work on similar projects in order to keep the Aboriginal spirit, language, and culture alive for future generations. We must work together and make it a priority!

- Megan Hoferichter

Global educators "seek to encourage caring attitudes towards other people and other species; concerns for the plight of the disadvantaged, for the poor and the oppressed; and they emphasize the need to challenge and expand insular views of the world" (Pike, 2000, 223).

Traditional Aboriginal values and Global Education



Stereotypical notions of Aboriginal culture have been perpetuated through the media and through the educational system. Aboriginals have been vilified without reason, and represented as uncivilized, primitive and savage (King, 2003). What has been lacking in schools is exposure to their traditional values, and spiritual beliefs, which will accurately represent their respectful and peaceful nature. It became evident throughout this course and our time spent at the Kitigan Zibi reserve in Maniwaki that traditional First Nations values serve as an excellent model for the foundations of Global education.

Global education includes “concepts such as co-operation, equity, interdependence, justice, respect for rights and self-esteem” as well as environmental awareness (Pike, 2000, 223). The respect and acceptance of others, “the ability to have compassion, empathy and understanding” and respect for the environment are embedded in Aboriginal values (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002, 463).

First Nations have maintained peace within their own communities and with others through cooperation and equity. Traditionally, leaders held community meetings to discuss issues and problems where everyone had a chance to contribute to decision making (McGregor, 2004). A similar process is followed at band meetings today on reserves. Prior to colonization, summer festivals were held where many sub-groups would join and exchange gifts which symbolized friendship, trust, “continued alliances and cooperation” (McGregor, 2004, 19). Traditional wars between different First Nations groups were much more courteous and polite in comparison to the merciless European style of fighting. The two sub-groups would discuss in advance how the war would be fought and respected these agreements (McGregor, 2004).

These values were embodied by First Nations people when welcoming European settlers onto their land. They immediately tried to build friendships with the Europeans and helped them survive in the harsh climate (McGregor, 2004). When treaty negotiations were being made between Aboriginals and British and Canadian representatives, the former were not trying to make strategically self-interested arrangements, as the latter



Kitigan-Zibi School

group was doing. They wanted to negotiate agreements that would be ongoing, and would maintain equilibrium and allow all groups to live in a sustainable “peaceful co-existence” (Ralston Saul, 2008, 51). “Aboriginals considered any society that was intentionally so unfair to so many to be inferior” (Ralston Saul, 2008, 38).

From the beginning of contact with Europeans, Aboriginal people could not fathom the idea of land ownership or boundless rights to the land (Ralston Saul, 2008). Algonquin language for example, restricts the idea of ownership to a loan. Since all things (i.e. their bodies, environment, etc.) are only loaned to them, they must take good care of them. They cannot possess anything; their view is that there is a spiritual and sacred relationship between all things. “Notions of capital, profit, and private ownership are incongruous to a world view based in relation and stewardship” (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002, 458). Current society comes from “worldviews which do not respect land as the life-giver of us all” (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002, 464).

Not only is First Nations culture a part of our Canadian heritage, but with respect to Global education, it has “much to offer Canada” (Ralston Saul, 2008, 22). In many important ways, their way of life was much more progressive and civilized than ours today.

- Melissa MacIntyre

“Studying Aboriginal values, spirituality and ways of life can serve as a model for integrating the values of justice and peace, human rights and environmental responsibility into the education system.” - Melissa MacIntyre



University of Ottawa Education Students teaching Grade 3 class about Animal Tracking



University of Ottawa Education Students collaborating with Kitigan Zibi elders

Temporary Non-Aboriginal

Teachers in Aboriginal Communities



It only takes a year in a Bachelor of Education program to understand the complexities of a seemingly well-intentioned trend in teaching: non-aboriginal teachers putting their newly acquired skills to use in a classroom composed largely of aboriginal students. Many certified, but inexperienced, teachers chose to spend an average of a year or two in a remote community with students who may have drastically diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Naturally, this situation presents challenges not only for the teacher (who may be unaccustomed to the lifestyle, social norms, language, etc., of the area) but for the students as well.

When a teacher makes the decision to teach overseas, or in an aboriginal community for a few years, he or she is typically considering the advantageous factors: a chance to make decent money, gain teaching experience, and travel. However, the teacher may also want to examine the influence his or her temporary and “foreign” position may have on the students.

On a much smaller scale, our *School and Society* course gave many of us a taste of this very situation. As a class, we travelled to the Kitigan Zibi community in Manawaki, Quebec, in order to learn about, and contribute to, the teaching culture of their local school (which combined primary through to senior grades). Although we tried to approach the endeavour with as much cultural sensitivity as possible, we still had some collective concerns. For example: do we (as a non-aboriginal, predominantly Caucasian group) have the right to teach lessons based on a culture that is not inherently our own? Do the students understand our purpose in their school? How do our lessons fit into their “regular” curriculum? What can we contribute that will have lasting importance? These are just a few of the questions that were raised during class discussions, and although overall our experience was a positive one, most of these questions remain unanswered.

There are some general guidelines temporary teachers should follow in any context, whether they are local occasional teachers, or teaching Monday to Friday in an Aboriginal community. It is important to always respect the sanctity of whatever teaching environment one enters, and understand that the role of an educator is not to make everyone follow one cultural perspective, but to create a space for a multiplicity of cultural understandings to flourish. Teachers must understand that they too are learners, just as their students can also be teachers. Individuals teaching in an Aboriginal communities must take every opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture (traditions, festivities, daily activities, etc.) of the area, so as to gain a more complete sense of their students as human beings. Above all, when a teacher makes a commitment to a community for a period of time, they should respect their own commitment, and follow-through with it, even if it means overcoming certain obstacles. As our class learned, the end result can be very rewarding.

- Breelyn Lancaster

Kazim Bacchus and Jane Williams suggest that teachers have a moral obligation to help students understand that everyone bears responsibility for problems such as world poverty and injustices” (Pike, 2000)



E EWW!!! Get Away From The Poop!

Poop. As an adult, the mere fact that I wrote down that word on paper might make you laugh. Or squirm. Or even think that I am crazy. But, to a kid, the mere mention of this word incites their natural curiosity. On our final trip to Kitigan Zibi, we had the unique opportunity to hold workshops for the junior students of the school. As a group, Courtney, Megan, Melissa, Jessica, Breelyn, and I, spent time with students from Grades Three, Four, and Five, discussing and experimenting with poop, or more politely, animal scat. Using a recipe of oatmeal, cocoa powder and water to simulate real animal scat, we discussed scat, dissected scat, and even made our own!

The point of the workshop was to teach kids how to track an animal, or how to discover which animal has been lurking in your backyard, by looking at their scat. Although this activity does fit into the Ontario Curriculum for Science and Technology (2007, p. 86), the purpose was not to teach the curriculum defined by the government, but to allow the students to experience a knowledge of the land, a knowledge, once used daily by their ancestors, for survival (Chambers, 1999, p. 141-142). The original Aboriginal education did not consist of reading or writing a printed language, or figuring out obscure mathematical problems, but "...was geared to knowledge necessary for daily living" (Kirkness, 1998, p. 10).

Traditionally, education served as a preparation for everyday life. Now, the majority of education seems to aim for the highest point, or to prepare students for the highest sense of achievement according to society's ranking of success, and often forgets the necessary lessons needed for everyday living. In fact, the complaint I hear most from students, the complaint I made as an elementary student, is 'Why do I have to learn this? How is this going to help me?' And in some way, this complaint is valid. Through this workshop, we attempted to bridge this gap, teaching through experimentation a knowledge which could be put to use on a regular basis.

The Aboriginal people have a long and unfortunate history of a loss of culture and traditional education. For the most part, this problem stemmed from a misunderstanding of the Aboriginal culture by the European communities. They assumed Aboriginals were unintelligent since they did not possess the same knowledge as they did. They failed to recognize that the "[h]unter-gatherers [of the Aboriginal communities] read and write. They did not have the alphabetical or pictorial scripts that agricultural societies developed in relatively recent times. They did not use letters to represent sounds. But all hunter-gatherers read tracks; everyone who lives by hunting or gathering must notice, read, interpret, and share the meanings of signs in the natural world... [This is also a form] of literacy" (Brody, 2000, p. 183). In this sense, the study of scat can be seen as literacy. Just like words, scat can tell you something, or direct you to something. It can tell you its animals eating habits, its animal's identity, its animals proximity to you, and direct you towards or away from the animal. Scat, although often smelly and full of germs, is educational.

The experience in Kitigan Zibi was not only a teaching experience, but a learning experience as well. We learned some words of the Algonquin language, gained knowledge of Kitigan Zibi's surrounding wildlife, and most of all, learned that kids will be kids. Whether they have white skin or brown skin, whether their parents are British, Spanish, Tanzanian, or Aboriginal, kids will always be curious about the natural world, about the things they are told not to touch; kids will always be curious about poop. And, as educators, we should not deny them this curiosity and this valuable learning experience.

- Alyssa Doucet

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead



The land is My Classroom:
My Meeting with the Elders

Prior to my visit to Manawaki, and meeting with the Elders I had an ambiguous conception of how my social action community learning experience will unfold. However what I have learned from my unique community service project experience in Kitigan Zibi was invaluable. Hence, as a teacher candidate currently enrolled in the faculty of education at the University of Ottawa, I anticipate the day that I share what I learned with my future students. The community received my colleagues and I with such hospitality, and whole-heartedly included us in their talking circle. I was touched by their gesture and openness. A sense of making a difference, and responsibility to honour their trust reinforced the purpose of my experiential learning venture. Interacting with the Elders helped me realize that the Anishebe people are adamant about recovering from their historical past that entailed missionaries, and residential schools (Haig Brown & Dannanmann, 2002).

The Elders recent struggles of teaching their children their Algonquin language, and way of life were an extension of the Eurocentric notions of education which aim to replicate assimilation. It was enriching to hear the Elders express that the community and natural environment is their classroom (Kirkness, 1998). According to them education meant being able to interact, and explore ones natural place in order to survive. I was able to link these concepts to experiential learning. I recall one Elder proudly expressing that his formal education was made up of wisdoms he inherited from his Elders, and through his exploration of the land. Comically, the Elder stated that although his wife has completed a prestigious level of education; should their children fall ill. It is he who is able to prescribe natural traditional medicines. He added that knowing which tree is a remedy to which ailment, was not something he learned in the classroom. Yet it was equally important to the literal and cultural survival of his people.

The indigenous experiential based learning model reinforces Kitigan Zibi's pedagogy of the land and philosophy of education; that promotes reaching the whole child (mind, body, community, nature, and spirituality.) (HaigBrown & Dannanmann, 2002).

Furthermore Chambers (2006) adds that teachers have a role in promoting the pedagogy of the land by taking their students to sites –as buffalo jumps sites for instance- and to relate the stories, wisdoms of the landscape. As they reflect with students on the significance of the landscape, its connection to curriculum, and what those places teach us, not just about the past, but about now and two days from now. This experience allowed me the chance to reflect, re-examine and question some of the existing pedagogical issues; that I among other teachers will face in the classroom. I begin to question the traditional model of teaching, which assumes students are sitting receptacles of information rather than inquisitive explorers of their learning (Freire, 1990).

Secondly I begin to question the notion of valued knowledge. As I reflect on the stories told by the Elders during my visit to Kitigan Zibi, I contemplate if there is room for different types of knowledge within our curriculum. One that does not adhere to the banking model of education, (Freire, 1990) that seeks to create a dichotomy between ones culture, body, mind, community, nature and spirituality.

Luckily, over the course of this experience I felt a sense of shift from my linear Eurocentric lesson delivery. I experienced an epiphany that would change the way I viewed myself as a teacher. Through this experience, I became conscious that learning involves the facilitation of student directed learning through exploration- as shared by the indigenous model of education. Learning is not only characterized as the change in someone's cognitive or physical representation due to their exposure and experience with new information. Rather it is knowing "...about who you are, what you are doing... [and] a 'vibrant sense of connection among people, and between humans, and the more than human world.'" (Lloyd, Bengoeche and Smith, 2010) I begin to hold on closely to this indigenous educational view, as I reflect on its potential to promote peace and justice locally and globally, as we move toward a more holistic model of education that appeals to universal cooperation and consensus building.

- Hawa Fatwí

"There are visionaries who imagine the real world a better and healthier place and there are others who work toward the vision" (Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, p.453)

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VOL. # 1 ONE

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