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AKI GAKINOOMAAGEWIN (TEACHINGS FROM THE EARTH) AS PEACE EDUCATION

Short description / Abstract:

The Canadian classroom is the primary tool of acculturation in the aspirational goal of building a common Canadian identity. In extreme cases, as in the case of residential schools, the classroom acted as the primary tool of violent assimilation. However, if we consider various definitions of conflict and violence, we see that these terms are complicated often being discussed within a cultural context. Depending on our experiences, they could mean open killing, structural violence, systemic racism, or even learning. My recent work in Indigenous education has suggested that the way to integrate Indigenous ways into pedagogy and program design is to work towards the elimination of violence by privileging Indigenous ways. This approach not only becomes a process for reconciliation, but also embeds Indigenous values into pedagogy, practice, and teaching culture.

If we consider the role of 'Aki', translated as 'earth' in Anishinaabeg, and her role in fostering a healthy Indigenous identity, we can suggest that Indigenous identity is formed through our relationships with animate and inanimate earth-based tools practiced with Aki. This presentation will discuss a path to reconciliation, which I suggest is synonymous with peace in Indigenous contexts, based on the integration of earth-based approaches into a teacher training program using Indigenous approaches to research and formal processes of organizational change. Anishinaabeg culture is a learning/peace culture. Thus, the proper response to Indigenous colonial violence is to help our people learn their peace culture. This approach begins with reconnection to Aki using Indigenous traditional approaches to learning.