The Fictional North

The Fictional North: Ten Discussions of Stereotypes and Icons Above the 53rd Parallel

Edited by

Sue Matheson and John Butler

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

The Fictional North:
Ten Discussions of Stereotypes and Icons Above the 53rd Parallel,
Edited by Sue Matheson and John Butler

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2012 by Sue Matheson and John Butler and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-3769-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3769-9

for Elder Ted Chartrand

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ix

Introduction 1
John Butler

Section I: Stereotyping in the North

Stories of Culture and Justice in the North 7
Rose Antsanen and John George Hanson

"The Emperor has no Clothes": Everything I needed to know about life
I learned in the North.. 17
Brenda Firman

Diet and Dress: Culture Transition among Inuit as a Result
of the Canadian Residential School System, 1955-1970 28
David King

All my Neighbours are Ghosts: How the Gold in Them There Hills Left
the Specter in This Here Valley 47
Jen Laliberte

Writing the Aboriginal North or 'The Aesthetics of Survivance' 62
Renate Eigenbrod

Section II: Northern ICONs: Gender, Place, Community

Deconstructing Primitive Masculinity in Charlie Chaplin's
The Gold Rush (1925): Appetite and Hunger in the Northwoods.............. 83
Sue Matheson

Representing an Unknowable Space: Movement and Knowing
in Rudy Wiebe's Northern Writing 94
Janne Korkka

The Philosophical Traveller: Captain Thomas James Doesn't Find the North-West Passage (1631) 108
John Butler

"They Will Never Let Me Die In Their Country": Aboriginal Hospitality and Surviving in the North in Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers* and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* 121
Nicole Brandsma

Friendship in the Literature of Medieval Iceland: The Evidence of the Proverbs... 130
Richard L. Harris

Contributors 150

Preface

Iconic images of the North, the relationship of North to South, and ethnographic models of "Northernness" often promote political and cultural paradigms from elsewhere. At best they reveal little about the North or Northerners; at worst they may be downright misleading. Ironically, Western culture has enshrined North as that direction in relation to which all others are defined, yet its topography eludes definition. North is not one but a number of Netherlands; and like all frontiers, the North is, in its essence, imaginative, being magicked out of ice and snow, muskeg and tundra. Storytelling is its generative principle, the activity through which the North and Northerners call themselves into being. A collection of timely articles that examine and dispel popular ideas and stories about life in and the culture of the North, *The Fictional North: ten discussions of stereotypes and icons above the 53rd parallel* offers readers important insights regarding this region's complicated (and often conflicted) social, political, and ethical issues. Methodologically diverse, these works by scholars from Canada and Europe are divided into two sections: I. Stereotyping in the North; II. Northern Icons: Gender, Place, Community. Showcasing the history and culture of the North, *The Fictional North* begins with investigations of stereotyping: Dr. John Hansen and Rose Antsanen's paper dispels northern stereotypes by examining the contemporary experience of living and working in Manitoba's North; David King discusses how stereotyping affected the education of Inuit children at residential schools; Jennifer Laliberte investigates the history of Canada's Gold Rush in the Yukon and its misrepresentations; Renate Eigenbrod's paper provides readers with a useful introduction to the issue of stereotyping in native American literature. "Northern" or circumpolar icons are considered in this collection's second section. This section contains five papers: Sue Matheson's examination of Hollywood's treatment of the masculine primitive in the Yukon; Janne Korkka's investigation the iconography of space in Rudy Wiebe's Northern writing; John Butler examines the interesting account of explorer and navigator Thomas James, who did not discover the elusive Northwest Passage; Nicole Brandsma discusses aboriginal hospitality in books by Rudy Wiebe and Joseph Boyden; Richard L. Harris ends the collection by considering the nature of friendship in Medieval Iceland.

The editors of this collection would very much like to thank and acknowledge those who made this book a reality. *The Fictional North: Ten Discussions of Stereotypes and Icons Above the 53rd Parallel* would not have been possible without the generous funding and enthusiastic and unflagging support of our Vice-President Academic, Dr. Kathryn McNaughton. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Elders at UCN, in particular, Elder John Martin (The Pas), Elders Wellington and Madeleine Spence (Nelson House), Martha Jonasson (Wabowden), Nicholas Halcrow (Cross Lake), and Elder Ted Chartrand (The Pas) for their support of and interest in this project.

—Sue Matheson

INTRODUCTION

JOHN BUTLER

The collection of papers presented here grew out of The Fictional North Conference held at the University College of the North in The Pas, Manitoba, an appropriate setting for a conference which discussed the theme of "North" in both fact and fiction. In 2009, this conference attracted scholars and writers from Canada and Europe. Participants covered a wide range of topics; some papers were clearly academic in nature, but others were more personal and reflective, drawing on their authors' own experiences and reactions to the North in both fact and fiction. Keeping in mind the interdisciplinary scope and the excellent insights presented at this conference, we thought it best to offer as wide a variety to our readers as was possible when planning our book, and this catholicity was also reflected in the range of the authors who answered our call for papers. Our authors all, in one way or another, engaged with the subject of northern fictions through either stereotyping or iconography in a variety of approaches. As the issues raised are both topical and representative of current trends of interest in this field, the papers contained in this collection are timely, academic and personal, analytical and discursive, and, above all, emphasize the variety of approaches that may be taken to their subjects.

The first section, entitled "Stereotyping in the North," begins with Rose Antsanen and John Hansen writing about the stereotyping of the North and of Aboriginal culture; they offer a mix of social and cultural perspectives on how Aboriginal people, here the Cree and Dene, deal with the concept of justice in the North and present their take on decolonization. Next comes Brenda Firman's more personal reflection, "The Emperor has no Clothes," which gives the reader a perspective from the point of view of "a young English girl in Canadian schools" and how she developed cross-cultural awareness when she found herself working in a remote community in north-western Ontario. This is followed by David King's "Diet and Dress: Cultural Tradition among Inuit as a Result of the Canadian Residential School System, 1955-1970," in which King writes about the impact of Western culture and technology on the Inuit diet, and

the consequences it had for the traditional relationship the Inuit had with the animals they needed to hunt. Next, Jen Laliberte discusses the impact of the Gold Rush on the Yukon, as the area "became a mimetic diorama of nineteenth-century European grandeur," and the Aboriginal people were displaced. She writes of "ghosts" haunting the land now, and how they came to represent "an idyllic nostalgia" which captivates both visitors and the people who now live there. The final paper in this section is Renate Eigenbrod's, in which she discusses the idea of "survivance," a neologism coined by Gerald Vizenor, an Anishinabe writer from the United States. Vizenor spoke of survivance as how the "Native presence" appears in stories, traditions and customs of various Native peoples, and that in literary terms, as Eigenbrod explains, it entails "a continuance of nation- or culture- specific intellectual traditions in spite of disruptions." In the end, as Dr. Eigenbrod explains, although "literatures that originate on the land of the northern provinces of Canada are different than those created in southern regions…the humanity expressed in the characters of their stories is the same." Thus Dr. Eigenbrod shows that kinship, rather than difference, supports survivance.

The second section is entitled "Northern Icons: Gender, Place, Community," and opens with Sue Matheson's discussion of Charlie Chaplin's film *The Gold Rush*, which deals with heroic males slogging through the frozen wastes, but this time in the context of deflation, with Charlie Chaplin flexing his non-existent muscles and having visions of chickens in *The Gold Rush*. In this film the fictional North becomes deconstructed and Hollywood's Canada, as presented in films like *Nanook of The North*, is gleefully sent up by Chaplin. The novelist Rudy Wiebe is the subject of two papers, the first being Janne Korkka's "The role of movement in Rudy Wiebe's Northern Writing." Wiebe, Dr. Korkka tells us, is looking for "routes for navigation," and he finds them by "focusing on movement in a narrative." Water, animals and people are all moving about in Wiebe's texts, attempting to solve the enigma of the North. Next comes John Butler's paper on Captain Thomas James, which presents a pre-colonial perspective, with James in 1631 employing the latest scientific methods in his encounter with the North as he looks for the fabled North-West Passage, and manages to winter in the Arctic with minimum loss of life, something most of his contemporaries failed to do. This is followed by the second paper on Rudy Wiebe, Nicole Brandsma's "They will never let me die in their Country," an examination of survival from an Aboriginal perspective as well as from that of "heroic white males." Brandsma does this through two texts, Wiebe's *Discovery of Strangers* and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road.* We end with a leap into

the past and into another northern environment, that of medieval Iceland, where Richard Harris takes us into the world of proverbs and aphoristic sayings which populate the Icelandic sagas and which w so much a part of medieval Icelandic culture. These sayings help scholars understand why the sagas were written the way they were, and may be thought of as "formulaic expressions of communal wisdom." Dr. Harris focuses on proverbs about friendship in a transitional world, moving somewhat uneasily between traditional pagan values and the Christian world.

SECTION I:

STEREOTYPING IN THE NORTH

STORIES OF CULTURE AND JUSTICE IN THE NORTH

ROSE ANTSANEN AND JOHN GEORGE HANSEN

> Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty. But the native's guilt is never a guilt which he accepts; it is rather a kind of curse, a sort of sword of Damocles, for, in his innermost spirit, the native admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority.
> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

At the beginning of the colonial period, the New World, that is, the Aboriginal world had a justice system that was community based and grounded in the ideology healing. By the end of the twentieth century that Aboriginal justice system had been suppressed by the West, with a State sanctioned justice system imported from Western European civilizations. The notion that Aboriginal people had no justice system until the colonizers arrived is now recognized as by many as imperial distortions. The model of restorative justice in Aboriginal societies goes back to unrecorded time (Braithwaite, 1999; Weitecamp, 1999; Smith, 2009).

Although myths such as Aboriginal lawlessness, savagery and disorder were created by early Western writers, we know from oral narratives that restorative justice was practiced by Indigenous peoples such as the northern Dene and Cree. In his analysis of world justice, the eminent scholar Braithwaite (1999) draws a parallel between restorative justice and the conflict resolution practices in ancient European, Asian and Middle Eastern civilizations. Restorative justice was manifest in the written accounts of such societies and apparently practiced the world over. Braithwaite (1999: 1) held with certainty that "restorative justice has been the dominant model of criminal justice throughout most of human history for all the worlds' peoples". Weitecamp (1999: 93) concurs that Indigenous restorative justice systems can be traced back "some millennia ago" and restorative constructs and principles such as "[F]amily group conferences [and] circle hearings have been used by indigenous people". We have within our Aboriginal cultures and narratives remnants of a system of justice as healing by our people.

Smith (1999: 155) writes "[r]estorative justice in Canada, for example, applies the concepts of the 'healing circle' and victim restoration which are based on indigenous processes … and as such … "[r]estorative programs are based on a model of healing rather than punishing". Friedrichs (2006: 449) concurs that, "it is now commonly noted that restorative justice is rooted in the most ancient and enduring practices of indigenous peoples in what in the modern world has come to be defined as crime." In the same vein, Weitecampe (1999: 92) recognizes that before 1492 North American Natives were practicing restorative justice. However, after this date North America was the site of colonial struggles; struggles to repress the culture of the Indigenous people; struggles to appropriate their land and wealth. Today, the modern criminal justice system serves to create an agreement among the populations that accepts retributive justice ideology and the State's penal justice system.

Modern Western approaches to justice are largely related to the ideology of punishment and State domination. While some aspects of the States retributive and punitive justice have been challenged in recent decades, its fundamental ideals and practices remain the same. The eminent law scholar Schmalleger (2006: 11) depicts the prevailing criminal justice system as rooted in the ideology of, "criminal (penal) law, the law of criminal procedure, and the array of procedures and activities having to do with the enforcement of this law." The government and its State, and media believe that it is in society's best interest to enforce 'penal law' (punishment) as deterrence to crime and this belief is reflected in the justice systems over reliance upon the prison as a method of punishment. Although the justice system claims that prisons and jails are Correctional Institutions in reality they are based on retributive assumptions using punitive philosophy as the norm. For example, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1999: 431) examined the alleged correctional institutions and observed:

> With few exceptions, what we encountered was not a correctional system but a punitive one. This was most apparent at Stony Mountain Institution. In the segregation area, when an inmate is taken out of his cell, two guards must be present. Inmates are not permitted to walk in the common area outside their cells, even though the common area appeared secure. Inmates are allowed only one hour of exercise a day in an adjacent outdoor enclosure.

This passage clearly illustrates the correctional institution is actually rather punitive in spirit.

Indication that northern Aboriginals are suffering from a justice system that is not that of their own culture or traditions is apparent in the status quo. The Canadian Criminal Justice Association (2000) reports that Aboriginal people "especially in the north spend less time with their lawyers...are less likely to have legal representation in court proceedings... and they often plead guilty because they feel intimidated by court proceedings and want them over with" (CFNMP, 2004: 9-38). These facts demonstrate that Aboriginal people in the north are dealt with unfairly in the criminal justice system.

Smith, Goggin, & Gendreau, (2002) conducted a study, comprising 442,000 offenders, that demonstrated conclusively that harsher sanctions not only had no deterrent effect on recidivism, but that it actually in the end increased recidivism. This failure of prisons is reflected in the McGuigan (1977) subcommittee report to the Parliament on the Penitentiary, which reached the conclusion that "society has spent millions of dollars over the years to create and maintain the proven failure of prisons...failure to correct offenders and protect society clear in recidivism rates as high as eighty percent" (Cited in CFNMP, 2004: 9-14). Professor Jackson (1992: 915) recognized the ineffectiveness of prisons, he observes that the, "Aboriginal prison population was growing and will continue to grow at a disturbing rate without radical change". So locking up Aboriginal offenders is not very effective as a response to crime because Aboriginal people get thrown into prison for many reasons and much of it is alcohol and drug related. A lot of our social problems can be traced back to colonial and historical wrongs such as the residential schools, which had an impact on our families and communities (Jaine, 1993; RCAP, 1996). The fact that many Aboriginal people are poor and cannot afford to pay fines also contributes to the caricatures of justice, so it is imperative that we explore our traditional way of doing justice as healing.

Let's consider the myth that residential schools benefited Aboriginal people. The old ones say that 'the women are the heart of our nations' because women provide the life force for Aboriginal nations. However, in 2000 it has been reported that "80 percent of Aboriginal women in Ontario were victims of violence...various other studies have estimated that between 75 and 90 percent of women in certain northern communities are abused...many females were victimized by spouses, partners or boyfriends" (Dickson-Gilmore & Laprairie, 2005: 119). Such brutalities demonstrate that Aboriginal women are experiencing colonialism in its grim reality. The women are suffering injustices because they are females living in a sexist and racist Western society. However, the violence against Aboriginal women cannot be understood without exploring the past.

During the late nineteenth to the middle twentieth century, Aboriginal culture experienced forced changes; children were ripped from their homes, estranged from their families and imprisoned in residential schools where they were taught Western language and culture, including the concepts of male superiority or patriarchy. We know from documented evidence that missionaries working in residential schools often ridiculed the children, punched, kicked, slapped them around, and sometimes sexually molested them (RCAP, 19996; CFNMP, 2004; Jaine, 1993). Such State sanctioned abuse went on for generations and the result was profound social devastation and damage. The government and Church run residential schools led to a cycle of sexism and violence that remains to the present day. Robert Yazzie (2000: 43), a prominent Navajo judge notes that "in the usual domestic violence situation, a man thinks he has the right to control a woman, including the privilege to use physical violence for control". Yazzie (2000: 48) goes on to say that the "the non-Indigenous culture taught us that men are 'superior' to women". At the same time, the schools were instrumental to the overthrow of women's egalitarian societies and women's power, and male dominated politics arose in the Aboriginal communities to emulate the rules of the colonizers culture.

The abusive cycle created by the residential schools will be broken only when we decolonize the cultural values and customs that honoured women in our traditional societies. The old ones say that the women are the strength of the nation, not the men. In the culture of old, the women were valued highly and they held political power and influence. We must give credence to the women who fought for the survival of the people when the men seemed to have given up. For example, Hollow Water, an Ojibwa community about a hundred kilometres northeast of Winnipeg had been impacted with alcoholism and violence, but it was the females who initiated the healing process, and established a successful restorative justice program (Ross, 1996). Art Solomon, an Ojibwa elder said about the female that she is "the heart of the nation and keepers of the culture", (Turpel, 1991: 175, cited in Hookimaw-Witt, 2006: 65). The Lakota holy man Black Elk recognized the power of the female, he stated: "when the women are defeated then we as a nation are truly defeated" (Cuthand, 2005: 172).

Popular myths concerning northern Aboriginals and many other Indigenous people cannot be understood without understanding the Eurocentric way of thinking and its belief system. Eurocentric writers and colonizers were instrumental in shaping the caricatures of Aboriginality. Blaut (1993: 8) defines Eurocentrism as "a label for all the beliefs that postulate past or present superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans

(and over minority people of non-European descent)". The greater tendency in Eurocentric belief systems is the theory that Europe is the intellectual centre of the world, and that innovation spreads from Europe (the center), to the outside non-European world to what Blaut (1993: 1) terms “Eurocentric diffusionism”. The basic assumption of Eurocentric diffusionism is that contact with the Indigenous world did not contribute anything important to the progress of Europe. Eurocentrism glorifies the culture of the colonizers while denigrating the Indigenous human beings who are historically portrayed as backward and inferior peoples. The Eurocentric perspective dominates practically all scholarship, education and popular opinion in the Western world (Blaut, 1993; Adams, 2000).

The Aboriginal world has felt the impact of Eurocentric colonizers who tried to change the original people to be like them. One may argue the colonizers’ feelings of superiority led them to abuse and suppress the original people. The relentless colonization of Aboriginal people and the concurrent suppression of their justice ideas and practices have obstructed the Aboriginal approach to ‘justice ’. The Bear people, along with their gifts and knowledge, almost abandoned their restorative traditions. Meanwhile, the Western criminal justice system, along with its fixation on retribution and punishment flourished without interruption and continues as the ideological basis for the criminal justice system to the present day. Retribution and punishment were diffused throughout the world as if punishing were the only way to accomplish justice. However, the Aboriginal restorative justice traditions are now re-emerging as meaningful interpretations.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (1999: 22) notes that the “purpose of a justice system in an Aboriginal society is to restore the peace and equilibrium within the community, and to reconcile the accused with his or her own conscience and with the individual or family who has been wronged”. The implication of such theorizing was such that Aboriginal people emphasized healing. An Aboriginal restorative justice model “begins by Aboriginal families and communities accepting responsibility for Aboriginal criminality” wrote McIvor (1996: 10) in her exploration of Aboriginal justice that provides a model where “families and communities can rely on their traditions, values, languages and ceremonies to heal themselves”. McIvor (1996: 20) maintains that the “successes of the Aboriginal sentencing initiatives promise benefits for the Aboriginal community and for Canadian society”. Subsequent interpretations or restorative justice and tribal understandings by Aboriginal philosophers have inevitably influenced current restorative justice initiatives. As like in many other Aboriginal cultures, to the Cree people, the bear represents

justice, which would explain why Elder John Martin, a highly respected Cree, says it is the bear clan who take on the responsibility of justice. Elder Martin has discussed the responsibilities of men and woman as it relates to the Cree way of doing justice. He states:

> *We can't just say men or women, it takes the whole community to be part of that clan, the woman can be in a clan too, like in the bear clan, if they are interested in justice, and so that it is much different in their responsibilities, it becomes like I have got to do this, eh. It comes with it the way they feel, there comes a feeling that they need to do something with their people. It is the spirit that is telling us that I have to do this, have to do this for the people. So they start to take that responsibility to how I can help, how we can make it better for ourselves.*
> —John

For Elder Martin, the responsibility of justice in Cree culture emerged from within a person; it is in other words a spiritual responsibility. He also suggests that justice refers not just to men but to women in connection with the community. Justice is a community process, a subjective process, that, for the community becomes healing. The experience is healing.

Since women are an integral part of the whole community and the Bear clan takes on the responsibility of justice, it is not surprising that women, of course, are not excluded from the Bear clan. The greater obstructions to Aboriginal justice are the principles that drive the quest for justice in the Western world such as retribution and punishment. The judicial tendency in Western justice is the retributive and punitive response to wrongdoing within a state sanctioned justice system that largely excludes the community.

Indication that Aboriginal societies were practicing justice of a different philosophy and function than Western societies are apparent in Aboriginal languages. The language of the Dene people, for example, provides valuable understanding of the culture. The Dene word, *newhelotine,* usually refers to the phenomena of community inclusion: For the Dene the idea of community inclusion is conveyed in the concept *newhelotine* and also refers to being an integral part of a family and community. *Newhelotine,* manifests itself in communal life. It expresses, in other words, the phenomenon of feeling a sense of belonging to a community and family.

All life is interconnected and we have to recognize the significance of relationships. The Dene word, *newhelotine* also speaks of relationships. Since relationships are significant to a communal Aboriginal justice process. *Newhelotine,* in addition, conveys the notion that "we are all related" and connotes that existence is all connected. The significance of relationships and of the community is manifest in the Dene word, *ethe*

thena which describes the phenomenon of the people "living the right way" and working together for the betterment of the community. Because Aboriginal models of justice incorporate the community and emphasize healing, it is not surprising that a commonly held notion among Aboriginals is that wrongful behaviour, as a rule, impacts the entire community (Green, 1998; Ross, 1996).

While justice for the Cree, and Dene, and many other Indigenous peoples has been primarily that of restoration and healing, the Western world has largely ignored the reality of that approach. For the Dene, the concept of justice can be described with the Dene words "s*ho gha na de"* This Dene concept refers to the capacity for the people to be living well together. The idea does not just mean living well together but refers to a holistic worldview which has to be acknowledged because we are all interconnected to other life forms and to the environment we live. S*ho gha na de"* is reflected in the social and cultural life of the Dene. To the Cree people, justice can be described with the word *opintowin.* This Cree concept translates as a process that "involves the principles of repairing harm, healing, restoring relationships, accountability, community involvement and community ownership". It means, in other words, "lifting each other up" (CFNMP, 2004: 4-1). With this Cree concept restorative justice becomes possible. As with many other Indigenous people the Cree peacemakers explored and analyzed the realm of justice as healing.

Decolonization is one determinant of exposing the widespread myths and restoring justice to Aboriginal communities. Indigenous perceptions of reality such as Linda Smith's (1999: 39) interpretation of Indigenous liberty manifests in the notion that "decolonization is being about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory from our own perspectives and for our own purposes." Decolonizing action is manifest when the people search for justice by looking back to our past, seeking healing models, repositioning Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives. Thus, current Aboriginal restorative justice initiatives are largely related to the decolonizing movement as it seeks to recover the inherent justice ideas and practices of our progenitors. Smith (1999: 142) notes that, "cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice are engaging indigenous researchers and indigenous communities in a diverse array of projects." Decolonization action serves to create an awareness among the colonized that accepts Aboriginal ideology and restorative justice. It is, in other words, an interpretation of the Aboriginal experience that encourages resistance to subjugation and domination. Decolonization of Aboriginal justice

challenges the colonial order and encourages Aboriginal participation in a transformed Western justice system. However, in order for decolonization to occur it is imperative that we visit our old people and listen to their stories.

Conclusions

Aboriginal justice challenges the notions of retribution and punishment. Decolonization necessitates that Aboriginal people explore and restore their past traditions that focus on healing. However, in order to do this one must examine the processes and structures that promote restorative justice. It demands a critical analysis that stresses Aboriginal consciousness, life experiences and traditional knowledge. The last word must come from Robert Yazzie (2000: 47) a prominent Dene Judge from the United States who shares a story on how to help his people heal from colonialism:

> I have a law degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law. When I returned home to assume a position of authority in my own community, I thought that I had superior knowledge. I thought that I could make positive changes, armed with the power that knowledge of Western law gave me. I was wrong. I had to relearn my language and traditions and go back to a spiritual power base before I could begin to change. I say that I have been to hell and back.

References

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba. (1999). Volume 1: *The Justice System and Aboriginal People*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Queens Printer.

Adams, H. (2000). Challenging Eurocentric history. In R. Laliberte, P. Settee, J. Waldram, R. Innes, B.Macdougall, L.McBain, & F.L. Barron (Eds.), *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies*. Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan Press.

Blaut, J.M. (1993). *The colonizer's model of the world: Geographical diffusionism and Eurocentric history.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Braithwaite, J. (1999b). A future where punishment is marginalized: Realistic or Utopian? *UCLA Law Review,* 46*,* 1727-50.

Canadian Criminal Justice Association. (2000). *Aboriginal peoples and the criminal justice system.* Retrieved January 13, 2003 from www.ccja-acjp.ca/en/aborit.html.

Commission on First Nations and Métis People. (2004). Final Report Volume 1. *Legacy of hope: An agenda for change.* Retrieved from www.justicereformcomm.sk.ca.

Cuthand, D. (2005). *Tapwe: Selected columns of Doug Cuthand.* Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, Ltd.

Fanon, F. (1965). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press INC.

Friesen, John W. (2000). *Aboriginal spirituality & biblical theology: Closer than you think.* Calgary: Detselig.

Friedrichs, D. (2006). Restorative justice and the criminal enterprise. In D. Sullivan & L. Tifft (Eds.), *Handbook of Restorative Justice.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Green, R.G. (1999). *Justice in aboriginal communities: Sentencing alternatives*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing.

Hookimaw-Witt, J. (2006). *The politics of maintaining aboriginal feminism and aboriginal women's roles of sacred responsibility to the land.* A thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Toronto: Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Jackson, M. (1992). In search of the pathways to justice: Alternative dispute resolution in aboriginal communities. *University of British Columbia Law Review Special Edition* 147, 147-238.

Jaine, L. (1993). *Residential schools: The stolen years.* Saskatoon, SK: University of Saskatchewan Extension Press.

Johnstone, G. (2002). *Restorative justice: Ideas, values, debates.* Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing.

Law Commission of Canada. (2003). *Transforming relationships through participatory justice.* Ottawa, ONT: Canada.

LaPrairie, C. (1987) Native Women and Crime in Canada: a Theoretical Model in Adelberg Ross, R. (1996). *Returning to the teachings: Exploring aboriginal justice.* Toronto: Penguin Books.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Looking forward, looking back*. Vol. 1.Ottawa: Canada Communications Group Publishing.

Schmalleger, F. (2006) *Criminal justice: A brief introduction.* New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Smith, P. Goggin, C. & Gendreau, P. (2002). The effects of prison sentences and intermediate sanctions on recidivism: General effects and individual differences. *Research Summary, User Report* 2001-01.

Ottawa: Solicitor General Canada. Retrieved November 13 2003 from gc.ca/collections/Collection/JS42-103-2002E.doc.

Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*: *Research and indigenous peoples*. New York: New Zed.

Turpel, M.E. (1991). Patriarchy and paternalism: The legacy of the Canadian State for First Nation women. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 6(1), 174 - 192.

Weitecamp, E. (1999). The history of restorative justice. In G. Bazemore & L. Walgrave (Eds.), *Restorative juvenile justice: Repairing the harm of youth crime*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Yazzie, R. (2000). Indigenous peoples and postcolonial colonialism. In M. Battiste (ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

“THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES”: EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE, I LEARNED IN THE NORTH

BRENDA FIRMAN

As a young English girl in Canadian schools, I read the children’s fairytale, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. This short tale by Hans Christian Andersen tells of two weavers who promise an Emperor a new suit of clothes invisible to those unfit for their positions or incompetent. When the Emperor parades before his subjects in his expensive new clothes, a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

Fiction, like beauty, exists in the eye of the beholder. Even the location of ‘north’ is contextual within Canada. I was drawn to my version of ‘north’ by the stories of educational change in what is now Nunavut, erroneously expecting to find similar cross-cultural awareness and activity in the schools of remote north-western Ontario. In relationship with the northern landscape and the people, I began the process of confronting my own fictional north. I began to acknowledge my own responsibility as a non-Aboriginal Canadian in the history, current conditions, and future possibilities for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. With help from the writings of Aboriginal authors and scholars, I began to understand that both learning and knowledge have arisen from the land over countless generations and that each new generation needs the time and space to listen to and be with the land as it speaks. I began to understand storyteller Mabel McKay’s words, “Don’t ask me what it means, the story. Life will teach you about it, the way it teaches you about life.” (Sarris 5).

At five years of age, I left my English home and boarded an ocean-liner to cross the Atlantic. But I knew nothing about Aboriginal people until years later when I was interviewed in Toronto at DIAND (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) for a teaching position in remote northern Ontario. Perhaps I had read *something* in my history texts of elementary or secondary school – but nothing that I can

recall. The closest I came to knowing anything about Aboriginal people was watching the Lone Ranger and Tonto on black-and-white television.

Before leaving for my new teaching position, I searched for the community on my Ontario map. My search was unsuccessful. At the time, the map legend covered the north-western expanse. DIAND flew me from Toronto to Thunder Bay, connecting on a much smaller plane to Sioux Lookout. They had told me the rest of the journey would be 'on skis'. I recall hoping that the journey by dog sled would not be too long and that Indian Affairs would provide whatever I needed to survive the journey. Fiction feeds imagination when nothing concrete is known!

After a two-day orientation session conducted by officials from DIAND, I climbed on a Cessna 180 float-plane to fly to my new home. The small community, accessible only by air, was unlike any I had ever known. My only familiar point of comparison was an island of cottages somewhere north of Toronto. This was very different, of course, for this place was *home* – not a place of *escape* (except for many of the outsiders). Only the school and the teachers' homes boasted running water and hydro. These buildings appeared as aliens on the landscape. Yet they were the things that held the most familiarity for me. Fortunately, I was blessed to begin my education in a classroom with children in their first two years of schooling, assisted by Josie – a local paraprofessional with no formal teacher training. The Kindergarten/Grade One class included children from four to eight years of age. The children spoke virtually no English prior to attending school. Even so, my class was the only room with a community person as part of the staff. Josie's presence was intended to facilitate the transition from home to school for the Kindergarten students. In hindsight, I think that Josie saw much of his role as one of *protecting* the children in this foreign institution. When I searched until finally finding one toy for the young children, I imperiously discounted my sense of Josie's discomfort. The toy was a Fisher Price school bus, complete with several toy people that could be taken in and out of the bus. One night after school Josie glued the toy people into the bus and hid the bus again. Searching for the bus the next day, I asked Josie if he had seen it. Eventually, he produced the toy. When I asked about the gluing, Josie shrugged his shoulders and mumbled his fear that the children might otherwise lose the toy people. With unrecognized arrogance, I assumed that Josie had no understanding of the importance of play in children's learning. Thankfully, I was at least sufficiently sensitive to *not* share this assumption with Josie, though insensitive enough to share it with other colleagues. My arrogance, however unintentional, both shames and teaches me. One day, Josie told me "It's fall because the leaves are

changing colour." I immediately thought how Josie's speech reflected his English-as-a-second-language stature; since I believed the *correct* statement to be "The leaves are changing colour because it is fall." I was oblivious to the possibility that Josie's speech reflected his own beliefs, just as my speech reflected mine. Josie knew that nature and time follow their own teachings. I had been taught that man is in control.

The children, also, patiently offered me opportunities to learn. One young girl began each day by opening the cupboard door to curiously peer under the sink as the water disappeared while she brushed her teeth. In *her* home, the water flowed into a slop pail. I never thought to ask Josie to explain to the five-year-old how the plumbing worked. Later, I reflected how wise she was to continue her habit of checking where the water was going. If I had been more aware I could have saved myself the repeated embarrassment of an overflowing slop pail when visiting or helping out in the community. This same girl would turn her printing paper (not requested by me, but nevertheless dutifully prepared by Josie) around and around as she painstakingly struggled to reproduce the strokes that represented the letters of the alphabet. As she put crayon to paper on reproduced pictures, she seemed to have no ability to colour within the lines – except when Josie, an artist, drew outlines of local scenes in nature. Then she showed both skill and confidence.

My education was furthered by my reactions to the attitudes and actions of a colonial principal – a fair-haired prodigy of DIAND who was later *promoted* when the community refused to accept his return the following year. This Canadian gentleman arrived in the community the same year as I; accompanied by his wife, who was also a teacher, and their two children. They came to the north while their children were still young in order to save enough money to buy a house in the south. The older child was in my class. His parents taught him to seek out his mother whenever he needed to go to the washroom. She would leave her teaching duties to escort him to the staff washroom, not wanting him to use the same facilities as *they* did. In the tradition of a God-fearing man bent on protecting the right way (the *white* way) in our own best interests, the principal came into my room to assert his authority over both the students and myself. He sternly berated a small boy for wearing a cap in the classroom, expressing outrage at the affront to me, the teacher, which this act of defiance represented. My heart bled both for Charlie and for myself, but especially for Charlie, for whom the cherished cap was as much a part of his being as his face or hands. Poor Charlie, a Grade One student, was shamed at school for something that was natural and accepted outside school. Most of the adult males in the community wore caps at all

times, including at their work locations. I think the principal stopped short of ordering the caps off *their* heads. I returned Charlie's cap to him as soon as the principal left. Josie and I kept the classroom door closed after that, to allow a few seconds warning. Without conscious thought, I had joined Josie in the task of protecting the children. Charlie came to class regularly during the winter, but resumed his education in the bush once spring arrived. On the days that I walked to school early to prepare for class I would see Charlie heading away from the community, slingshot in his hand and cap on his head.

It is within this environment that I was expected to bring literacy – reading and writing in English – to the children's world. It was a simple pedagogical expectation. Teach the children to speak, read, and write English so they may become educated in order to advance within our school system and improve their lives. So they may *better* themselves and their communities by becoming more like us. My rebellion was almost immediate. At this time, prior to the arrival of satellite dishes in a community that still became isolated from the outside world twice a year, during freeze-up and break-up; the only English consistently spoken in the community was at school. In contrast, all business within the community was conducted in Anishininimowin, with translation provided as necessary for 'outsiders'. The local radio station broadcast in Anishininimowin, although modern English songs dominated the music scene. How boring for these children, how disrespectful of their intelligence, that lessons were limited to concepts that could be understood in the English vocabulary. Acutely aware that the children were being denied even the mainstream view of education, I began by asking Josie to translate my teacher-talk. As the classroom atmosphere of acceptance grew stronger we gradually moved beyond translation. Josie began to accept my invitations to 'teach what you think the children need to know about this topic'. At the time, I didn't know what else to suggest. I wonder how Josie grappled with thoughts of 'what the children need to know'.

Once, when I tried to discuss the children's progress with Josie, I asked if they were speaking in sentences yet. He told me there are no sentences in his language. After learning this, I had no idea as to how to support Josie in his work with the children in their own language. I provided time, suggested resources, and left the rest up to him. Of course, there was still an overwhelming *English* presence – both from the language itself and in the presumed 'right' way of learning and of life.

Rebellion must have been in the air that year. DIAND held a meeting at the school as a result of a disagreement about another teacher. In an unusual reversal of the prevailing situation, the local leadership wanted