

ṣəqalwaʔsəd: Coast Salish Canoe-based Pedagogy

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Abstract: This article looks at the 10 Rules of the canoe that the Quileute Tribe developed as part of understanding how communities engage with each other during the annual Tribal Canoe Journeys that take place in Coast Salish Territory. Prior to the inaugural canoe journey in 1989 canoes had not been in the waters of the Salish Seas in decades so this has served as a vessel for the reclamation of tribal protocols, culture, and practices. This article takes these rules and applies them to the classroom and how we can understand the gifts everyone brings to a classroom and create a space in which we disrupt Western notions of education. Centering Indigenous pedagogical practices, the ten rules of the canoe journey emphasize the strengths, knowledges, perspectives, and experiences of everyone in the learning space rather than focusing on where students' weaknesses lie. They allow us to ask ourselves as educators what each student brings to the space, and how we, as instructors or facilitators, can embrace this to encourage growth through the academic journey.

Keywords: Indigenous, Oceanic feminisms, pedagogy,

In 1989, canoes reentered the waters of the Salish Sea for the first time in decades. The tribal canoe journeys started with just a few communities from what is now Washington State and British Columbia as part of the Washington State Centennial celebration but have grown to over 100 canoes participating in the most recent journeys. The annual tribal canoe journey has been a vector for communities to (re)vitalize language, song, dance, traditional medicines, and arts within the communities that participate. In Suquamish, the community had lost songs and dances but since the inaugural canoe journey songs have been passed to our community and members have been able to catch songs brought to them by our ancestors. Catching songs and dances is how new songs are brought to the community and the process of new songs being written and taught, as we believe they come from our ancestors. The 10 Canoe Rules were developed by the Quileute as a set of guidelines for how we should behave and engage with each other on the

journey (Tribal Journey Organizers). While it is not confirmed, I have heard that this was loosely based off the ten rules to live your life by that the Quileute community had.

This paper expands these rules into culturally relevant pedagogical guidelines. Sandra Styres argues in her book chapter “Literacies of Land,” that “decolonizing pedagogies and practices open up spaces within the learning environment where students can question their own positionalities, prior knowledge, biases, and taken-for-granted assumptions together with the ways they are implicated in and/or affected by colonial relations of power and privilege.” (Styres 33) For Coast Salish and other oceanic and oceanic adjacent communities, the importance of land is expanded to include the oceans and waterways that were our ancestral highways.

Utilizing these canoe rules as a pedagogical practice, this paper identifies Indigenous ways of relating to each other and respecting everyone’s strengths, and experiences, helping us locate the needs individual participants bring into the educational space. These rules also encourage students to engage in their own positionality and help them identify where they sit within certain conversations and the larger society.

The Coast Salish canoe rules are a useful guide for how we engage with each other in meaningful ways and accept the differences that pullers bring onto the canoe, as well as the embodied experiences that students bring into the academic space. Eve Tuck argues that it is essential to avoid a “damage-centered” approach and research (Tuck). This means that instead of approaching historically and systematically marginalized students and communities as damaged, scholars and teachers must focus on how these systems lead us to perceive students’ attitudes and behaviors in ways that reinforce these structures and societal beliefs around who holds and creates knowledge. Centering Indigenous pedagogical practices, the ten rules of the canoe emphasize the strengths, knowledges, perspectives, and experiences of everyone in the learning

space rather than focusing on where students' weaknesses lie. The rules help us ask ourselves as educators: what does each student bring to the space? how can we, as instructors or facilitators, embrace individual and community knowledges to encourage growth during their academic journey?

While working on this paper and my own understanding of how canoe practices relate to classroom pedagogy, Rachel Cushman and Chance White Eyes published their article "Canoe as Pedagogy: Kənim, a Teaching Tool to Enrich All" in *Confluence* (Cushman and White Eyes). Through this article they also lay out the ten rules of the canoe journey and how it can be implemented within any formal educational setting. This article demonstrates the importance and applicability of these canoe rules within the academic setting and how they were designed to create a safe and welcoming environment on the canoe journeys. Cushman and White Eyes argue for a:

kənim tilixam chaku-kəmtəks or a Canoe Family Education Model for the classroom. tilixam isn't the nuclear family; it is the community that we are raised in. tilixam is the extended family and the community we call home. Learning happens when we are in sync with one another. When we openly communicate about our strengths, weaknesses, frustrations, struggles, and successes. (Cushman and White Eyes 14)

Throughout the article they demonstrate the importance of applying these rules within an academic setting and in this paper, I expand on their work by addressing each canoe rule individually and how it applies directly to the academic setting rather than focusing on the canoe rules more broadly which their work focuses on. My work with canoe journey as a methodological and research practice began with Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony*. Wilson argues that his book focuses on "maintaining transmitting and clarifying an Indigenous way of

doing and being in the research process—the basis of an Indigenous research paradigm,” and that “a strong Indigenous research paradigm can provide ways to celebrate the uniqueness and glory of Indigenous cultures, while allowing for the critical examination of short-comings” (Wilson 19). This use of ceremony as a part of research can be extended into other areas of our lives and can provide a powerful context for the inclusion of Indigenous practices within the classroom space. Following these practices creates a space in which Indigenous scholars can claim academic and instructional environments as somewhere to continue our community-centered research and practices.

Ceremonies were largely lost among my family due to the impacts of colonization. I didn’t grow up in sweat lodges or smoke houses. I learned what I know about community and culture from the many women in my life who brought me under their wings when I moved to Suquamish with my grandparents when I was eight years old. However, the one thing I did grow up with from then on was the canoe journey. It was a huge part of how I learned to engage with community and (re)claim our collective histories that my family had lost. When thinking about Wilson’s argument that research can be understood as ceremony, canoe practices were what came to mind and became central to my work.

My use of parentheses on (re)claim comes from the work of my mentor and Haudenosaunee scholar Mishuana Goeman, who addresses the difficulty of reclamation in her use of (re)mapping. In *Mark My Words*, Goeman uses “(re)mapping in parentheses to avoid the pitfalls of recovering or a seemingly return of the past to the present. (Re)mapping is about acknowledging the power of Native epistemologies in defining our move towards special decolonization” (Goeman 4) While we seek to (re)claim these histories and stories it is not a seamless process due to the impacts of colonization. Through this article, I use (re)claim to

describe the process of not only (re)claiming our histories but also (re)claiming educational spaces.

Within institutions of higher education, Indigenous scholars and students subvert the dominant narratives through their existence within these spaces. This demonstrates the long history of resiliency within Indigenous communities. Due to the historic practices of boarding schools that were designed to colonize and impose heteronormative roles on Indigenous communities, there is a long history of distrust between Indigenous communities and educational students. Federal Indian Policy sought to “kill the Indian in him, to save the man.” In his speech in which this frequently quoted phrase comes from, Captain R. H. Pratt continued to argue for the assimilation of Indian children through education:

Indian schools are just as well calculated to keep the Indians intact as Indians as Catholic schools are to keep the Catholics intact. Under our principles we have established the public school system, where people of all races may become unified in every way, and loyal to the government; but we do not gather the people of one nation into schools by themselves, and the people of another nation into schools by themselves, but we invite the youth of all peoples into all schools. We shall not succeed in Americanizing the Indian unless we take him in in exactly the same way. (Pratt 54)

Many children who were forced to go to these boarding schools, never came back home. This fact is being acknowledged more broadly through Orange Shirt Day on September 30th in recognition of those who did not return from boarding schools and residential schools (their Canadian counterpart). I present these rules as a (re)clamation of educational spaces and an invitation for non-Indigenous scholars to recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledges.

Indigenous scholars (re)claim our educational narratives and spaces of education through utilizing Indigenous research and pedagogical practices within the classroom. Throughout the journey of this article, I describe how each of the canoe rules can be applied within a classroom space, acknowledging how some of the rules overlap and complement each other. According to Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Indigenous and decolonizing perspectives on education have long persisted alongside colonial models of education, yet too often have been subsumed under broader domains of multiculturalism, critical race theory, and progressive education” (Smith, Tuck, and Yang x). They continue to argue in their introduction to *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View*, decolonial and Indigenous perspectives center relationality which distinguishes them from other social justice education models under which they get placed. The 10 Canoe Rules center how we create this relationality with each other and build kinship in the classroom.

de̱cu: Every Stroke We Take is One Less We Have to Make

Keep going! Even against the most relentless wind or retrograde tide, somehow a canoe moves forward. This mystery can only be explained by the fact that each pull forward is a real movement and not a delusion. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

Within the context of the canoe journey, each pull gets us one step closer to the goal, to the destination. This statement is intended to encourage us to just keep moving one pull at a time and focus on how that movement gets us closer to our destination with each stroke. For Indigenous research and inclusion in academia, Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* was a huge first stroke or first step in the process of Indigenous scholars creating Indigenous ways of knowing and researching within the academy. Similarly, the 1989 canoe journey was a huge step or first pull towards Coast Salish communities (re)claiming canoe

practices. As addressed earlier in this article, this created the environment for the (re)clamation of other aspects of our cultures.

Within the classroom, one step is one less we must make is important to remind students and ourselves that we will not solve everything in one class period, one term, or event within our lives but every step that we make and every step that each of our relatives make is one less that needs to be made for the community. Relative in the Indigenous context does not refer to our biological families but to broader kinship circles and communities to which we belong. This rule extends to pushing through challenges and supporting each other in these challenges. It is never about the individual but how do we collectively continue forward? It is necessary to understand what we are leaving behind in the spaces we exist in. What will others take away from this class? What will other Indigenous people have that we did not have?

During my second to last year of undergraduate studies, three of us put on the powwow with the support of faculty and staff. At the end of the winter term, we had lost many Indigenous students due to being pushed out of higher education due to underlying systems of oppression and institutional structures designed to keep historically marginalized communities out. This made us reconsider how the university was using the powwow to promote inclusiveness while failing to provide support for Indigenous students on campus, benefiting off the backs of Indigenous students' labor. The following year, rather than continuing that tradition, we spent time addressing the needs of Indigenous students on Western Washington University's (WWU) campus. The "NASU Letter" listed five actions for the campus to take to support Indigenous students: "1. Implementation of a Tribal Liaison Position who will connect with the local Tribal Nations, 2. A Traditional Coast Salish Longhouse, 3. Requiring students to verify tribal enrollment or descendency when applying to WWU and scholarships that are allocated for

American Indian/Alaskan Native students housed within WWU, 4. Full funding for the Annual Spring Pow Wow, 5. Government-to-Government Training WWU government and local Tribal Governments facilitated by the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs" (Gemmell, Natachu, and Vendiola). This was the step we were making for Indigenous students and faculty in the future at Western Washington University.

sali?: There is to Be No Abuse of Self or Others

Respect and trust cannot exist in anger. It has to be thrown overboard, so the sea can cleanse it. It has to be washed off the hands and cast into the air, so the stars can take care of it. We always look back at the shallows we pulled through, amazed at how powerful we thought those dangers were. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

On the canoe journey, this means supporting each other and not causing harm. This means that we continue to work with each other. Some members of Indigenous communities have internalized settler values and vices as means of survival. The canoe journeys, however, center healing and therefore there is to be no abuse. This includes abuse of drugs and alcohol as the journey is drug and alcohol-free. For some, the canoe journey is the only time they are clean, as they want to be a part of the community through the journey.

Harm coming from our own community can often be more devastating than harm from outsiders. Growing up, as an unenrollable descendant who was white passing, I often struggled with my peers to fit in but that faded with age as my dedication to community changed. Enrollment within the context of the United States is based on criteria in tribal constitutions that usually relies on a combination of blood quantum (a colonial concept) and/or lineage coming from matrilineal or patrilineal lines. However, being told by my own community that I did not belong was far more harmful than anything that anyone outside of the community said. Aleticia

Tijerina argues in “Notes on Oppression and Violence,” that “we take from the oppressor the instrument of hatred and sharpen it on our bodies and souls. The internalization of ‘spic’ and ‘nigger’ begins at birth. Only consciousness must follow—or death” (Tijerina 179). This has continued to impact our own communities as we use derogatory terms to ourselves and towards each other. Additionally, within this context failure to refuse colonial concepts of Indigenous identity. But it is important for healing to prevent the continuation of lateral oppression amongst ourselves.

Within the classroom, it is essential for educators to create a space in which students feel confident in themselves and in sharing their thoughts through discussion. This should not be utilized to grant privileged students to speak without being checked on racist, ableist, sexist, and other language that is problematic and traumatizing for historically marginalized communities. In doing so the classroom would reproduce systems of oppression that exist to empower those individuals and belief systems. However, we must create an environment in which students from historically marginalized communities feel empowered. This does not mean creating “safe spaces” as there is no such thing within a violent system. For educators from privileged backgrounds, you cannot declare yourself an ally as these communities get to make that distinction, but you must reflect on how you engage with students from different backgrounds from your own.

fix^w: Be Flexible

The adaptable animal survives. If you get tired, ship your paddle and rest. If you get hungry, put in on the beach and eat a few oysters. If you can't figure one way to make it, do something new. When the wind confronts you, sometimes you're supposed to go the other way. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

The weather during the canoe journey is never predictable. In recent years, it has been mostly sunny and smooth days but that has not always been the case. Growing up, we had many days where we started in seats and jackets in a downpour at four in the morning. Other days, we were in the 90s with little to no protection from the sun. On the 2023 Paddle to Muckleshoot, even the experienced canoe journey participants took for granted the recent weather and were not prepared for the downpour as we approached Samish. We always have a goal time for leaving in the morning based on the tides and currents for the trip, but as we move about and get everyone down to the canoe it does not always go as planned, especially since these mornings often require waking up at three or four in the morning. But we adapt and take more breaks when needed or stop alongside the support boat for food as needed. If you must go to the bathroom after leaving the barge, that often means the canoe has to stop while you jump in the cold water and then back in the canoe. On the hottest days, you will see people jumping off the support boat to cool down in the water, while on the stormy days, we may pull canoes on the support boat to not put our community at risk in the rough waters (a privilege we have that our ancestors did not as they relied solely on canoes). The use of these support boats is a way we have adjusted to the contemporary structures and resources we have.

When working with students, especially those from historically marginalized communities, first-generation, and low-income students, it is important to be flexible due to the needs of students. Last quarter, I stepped into my Introduction to Queer Theories class the Monday after the Club Q shooting in Colorado Springs had happened on what was the same weekend as Trans Day of Remembrance. My simple acknowledgment of this happening and knowing that it was impacting my current students was appreciated as most discussed that their professors started the day's business as usual, as if these outside events do not deeply impact our

students as well. On this day the needs of the students were not discussing theory about how systems of oppression impact them but having some space to share and discuss the lived experiences and anxieties of this violence. Being flexible to the needs of students allows students who have been underrepresented historically to feel heard. Many are away from families and communities and for Indigenous students that means ceremonies as well, so allowing the flexibility for them to visit home for ceremonies and participate in class in other ways is important for their success.

COVID-19 has presented those of us in academia with an entirely different view of flexibility and adaptability. Going between remote teaching via Zoom, online nonsynchronous teaching, and returning to on-campus teaching with hybrid options at times allowed students to participate while remaining safe. However, many students still faced and continue to face challenges to accessing their education. Depending on social and geographic location, students had difficulty accessing the internet. Others struggled with loved ones getting sick and/or passing away. This required and continues to require flexibility around deadlines and participation. Since the return to in-person teaching, I have maintained a policy to be flexible with students depending on their needs with an understanding that they communicate. The exception to this is if typically, well-engaged students suddenly disappear from class, I reach out to them to check in as I am committed to their education.

buus: The Gift of Each Enriches All

Every story is important. The bow, the stern, the skipper, the power puller in the middle – everyone is part of the movement. The elder sits in her cedar at the front, singing her paddle song, praying for us all. The weary paddler resting is still ballast. And there is always that time

when the crew needs some joke, some remark, some silence to keep going, and the least likely person provides. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

Everyone has something to bring to the canoe family. As with the term relative, this does not focus on the biological family but on the community you travel with. The skipper at the back of the canoe often has the most knowledge about the waterways, the tides, and the currents to keep us on the best path. They also help us balance the canoe, evening the weight as best as we can between the sides. The front pullers set the pace—steady and even to keep forward momentum without tiring and exhausting pullers. The rest of the pullers bring gifts that contribute to the canoe as well. This is not just through pulling but some members of the canoe family bring jokes and others bring songs as we move along the water. The ground crew, while not in the canoe, helps prepare meals and sets up camp from place to place so that we are able to continue to move forward.

Refusal to participate in traditional disciplines and lecture-style teaching, allows for the gifts or knowledges of everyone in the classroom to be included. bell hooks in *Teaching Critical Thinking*, argues that “I had been trained to believe that anyone who relied on a personal story as evidence upholding or affirming an idea could never really be a scholar and/or an intellectual, according to dominator thinking via schools of higher learning” (49). Early in my higher education experience, I was told that I wrote too much like a story which made sense given my cultural background but that I would never succeed in higher education. This did not make me feel like what I had to bring to the classroom and to the space was valued and that using the personal within my writing would cause me to fail at producing anything worthy in the academic space. As I finish my dissertation and begin my career in academia, drawing from my own experiences of isolation in the academic setting, I am committed to allowing different

knowledges and experiences to exist within the classroom. I welcome the use of the personal and tie in the knowledges we are learning to our own course material and topics we discuss in class. Everyone in the classroom brings something to that space.

c̓alac: We All Pull and Support Each Other

Nothing occurs in isolation. When we aren't in the family of a canoe, we are not ready for whatever comes. The family can argue, mock, ignore each other at its worst, but that family will never let itself sink. A canoe that lets itself sink is certainly wiser never to leave the beach. When we know that we are not alone in our actions, we also know we are lifted up by everyone else.
(Tribal Journey Organizers)

As a canoe family, we support each other. We celebrate the successes of others in our family and uplift each other during rough times. We leave our differences out of the canoe and focus on how we can grow together. If, on the water, we do not work together, we will sink at the worst or not move forward in the water at best. Working together means that we can grow and learn from each other. Leaving our fights on the shore allows us to wash away the anger and frustration. For Coast Salish people, water is healing. Our cleansing ceremonies take place in the waterways that we navigate and build reciprocal relationships with as our food sources exist within those waters as well.

Using critical kinship models in the classrooms creates a space in which we are encouraged to think beyond the classroom as a space in which a professor comes in and presents their knowledge and expertise and students reiterate the material. We use the space to build reciprocal relationships with each other and grow as a community. Through this practice, we shift from educational spaces that have caused trauma for so many towards healing for our communities. We support each other in learning and understand that everyone comes to the class

with different levels of experience with the major concepts and terminology we use, so we help those with less experience learn in the process.

dʷəlači?: A Hungry Person Has No Charity

Always nourish yourself. The bitter person, thinking that sacrifice means self-destruction, shares mostly anger. A paddler who doesn't eat at the feasts doesn't have enough strength to paddle in the morning. Take that sandwich they throw at you at 2.00 A.M.! The gift of who you are only enters the world when you are strong enough to own it. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

To engage with and be in the community, it is important to take care of yourself. In the context of the canoe journey, this means fueling your body with proper nutrition as well as responding to the needs of your body. Host tribes often feed the pullers and individual canoe families may make food and provide food in their own camps as well. Taking care of yourself on the canoe journey means staying hydrated, applying sunscreen, and preventing heat-related illness. It is important to eat to maintain the strength for the pull. Growing up, I was also taught to never say no to a gift when given. It was disrespectful to refuse a gift. With food being gifted and given throughout the canoe journey it is necessary to accept and nourish ourselves.

In academic and activist spaces, it is easy to drain ourselves or overextend ourselves. This serves as a reminder to take care of ourselves and extend the flexibility to our students. During the first quarter of in-person teaching during the pandemic, I had students who had it so ingrained in them through school to put work first, that they would be waiting on a COVID-19 test and offer to come to class to present and just wear three masks. I informed them that they should remain at home for their own health as well as those around them and that we could be flexible on that requirement to present with their group if they had participated in the

preparation. This doesn't solely include physical health either, but if someone needs a mental health day that is just as necessary.

The goal of our activism and scholarship, which are intricately tied together, is for those most oppressed to be able to survive and that includes ourselves. adrienne maree brown argues that "we must prioritize the pleasure of those most impacted by oppression" (13). Additionally, brown outlines what pleasure activism is:

Pleasure is a feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment. Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society. Pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression, and/or supremacy.

Pleasure activism asserts that we all need and deserve pleasure and that our social structures must reflect this. (13)

If we look at brown's definition of pleasure activism, it is a reminder that we all deserve to have some joy and some pleasure in our lives. If we wear ourselves out and do not take care of ourselves, we don't allow ourselves to experience the joy and pleasure that comes, the work becomes more draining, and our bodies take more sacrifices because of it.

Canoeists: Experiences are Not Enhanced Through Criticism

Who we are, how we are, what we do, why we continue, flourish with tolerance. The canoe fellows who are grim go one way. The men and women who find the lightest flow may sometimes go slow, but when they arrive, they can still sing. And they have gone all over the sea, into the air with the seagulls, under the curve of the wave with the dolphin and down to the whispering

shells, under the continental shelf. Withdrawing the blame acknowledges how wonderful a part of it all, every one of us really is. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

Within the canoe family, we do not focus on critiquing people for not doing enough because that does not change things. One year, I remember traveling with many of the younger youth in the canoe family. We had myself, who had not been in a canoe in three years, and two others alternating in and out with me, one with an injured shoulder and the other with an injured back, so none of us were at the top of our game but we were the strongest pace setters we had at the time. However, as we would pull if we stopped for a moment and the younger kids would stop because we did and did not keep the pace going. We began getting screamed at by a non-Indigenous member of the community who joined us on the canoe journey. This did not help us go faster or be in less pain and was demeaning to the youth and teens in the canoe as it made them feel they were not good enough.

Not good enough or not trying hard enough are statements often directed at first-generation and historically marginalized students, but it's never that they are not doing enough. It's the system that is failing them. The system itself is not failing because it was always meant to reinforce systems of oppression, but in doing so it fails many members of the community. Discussion is important to the classroom as it allows individuals to feel heard. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks argues that "to engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences...if we really want to create a cultural climate where biases can be challenged and changed, all border crossings must be seen as valid or legitimate." (130).

Returning to my story about when I was told my writing would never be successful in academic spaces, it was not that I did not belong but that my instructor had preconceived notions of what academic writing was and it privileged writing where the author distances themselves from the work. But we are never separate from our own work. It is always a part of who we are. Students need to feel heard and given the opportunity to cross these boundaries. This does not mean a teacher shouldn't teach but allow students the space and flexibility to bring their own knowledges in and not critique them for experiences and understandings that do not fit the dominant narrative. Crossing the boundaries of what constitutes scholarship is how Indigenous people (re)claim research about their communities and claim academic spaces as their own.

təqačì?: The Journey is What We Enjoy

Although the start is exciting and the conclusion gratefully achieved, it is the long, steady process we remember. Being part of the journey requires great preparation; being done with a journey requires great awareness; being on the journey, we are much more than ourselves. We are part of the movement of life. We have a destination, and for once our will is pure, our goal is to go on. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

On the canoe journey, while we have a destination, we are not focused on that but on what we learn along the way. What are the relationships we build? The lessons we are taught? And the experiences we gain? During the journey we have a lot of memories that we make, and how quickly we make it to the end is not generally one that sticks out and becomes a core memory. Everyone brings different experiences and teachings. In “Haa Shageninyaa: ‘Point Your Canoe Downstream and Keep Your Head Up!’,” Naadli Todd Lee Ormiston discusses the lessons she learned from participation in the canoe journey that she participates in. This journey is different than the one that happens in what is now Washington and British Columbia but one that

happens in her homelands in Alaska. Ormiston discusses what canoe journeys teach her and one of those is that “trust involves being continuously open to learning, to knowing when you don’t know, and knowing when to trust others to show you how to learn” (43) These journeys are opportunities to learn from our relatives and from our environment.

Thinking about the journey in an academic classroom, it is important to think about what we are gaining in that classroom. It is not about the final assignment (although working within the institution these are important to grade) but when it comes to learning, to think critically and engage with the topics, it’s the things along the way—the classroom activities, the discussions, and what we learn from each other that really engages the classroom. One activity I do in our “Feminist Decolonizing Methodologies” class is around land acknowledgments and getting students to look at different land acknowledgments (intentionally throwing in some that are very poorly written) to think about strengths. In this space, there are always new things that I learn from the student’s engagement, every time, regardless of the fact I have looked at the land acknowledgments many times before. While this is an in-class activity and not a graded assignment, these are the moments where students learn and grow the most. While I completed my undergraduate education in evaluation-based courses rather than traditionally letter-graded classes, I learned to reflect on what I learned and how I learned rather than solely focusing on a letter at the end of the quarter. While in the Western classroom we must give grades, providing the students the opportunity to reflect on their learning additionally allows them to provide context for their own thinking and understandings to the instructor.

ŋw̄el: A Good Teacher Allows the Student to Learn

We can berate each other, try to force each other to understand, or we can allow each paddler to gain awareness through the ongoing journey. Nothing sustains us like that sense of potential that

we can deal with things. Each paddler learns to deal with the person in front, the person behind, the water, the air, the energy, the blessing of the eagle. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

On the tribal canoe journey, we can share our knowledges and help guide each other but we must also allow the others to learn as they go. I was “taught” to pull by being given a paddle and told to follow the person in front of me and that’s just what I did. I made a few mistakes accidentally hitting the paddle in front or behind me from being off pace, but I was allowed to learn which then led to me being a pace setter in future trips. We might forget a meal or forget to put sunscreen on (a lesson I have yet to learn as I often end the trip bright red) but we are given the space to learn and grow.

Within the classroom, it is crucial for us to give students the opportunity to learn and grow. We must teach them to think critically rather than reiterate what the instructor believes or brings to the classroom. We never know what will spark a student and get them to engage but focusing on being critical of each other often results in more resistance rather than learning. Tying in the personal with the theoretical allows for students to relate to the narratives and see themselves, their family, or their friends in the situation which can create a space in which they learn. Teaching issues that are critical to the survival of many people, make it crucial to help the students most resistant to the topics to think in different ways and means.

padac: When Given Any Choice at All, be a Worker Bee – Make honey! (Tribal Journey Organizers)

During the canoe journey, this one is very simple, if there is work to be done and you have the capacity, help. This could mean cooking in the kitchen, cleaning up, helping with younger kids, or setting up camp. Within a college classroom, this looks very different. If we were applying these rules to a K-12 classroom it would be easy to say clean up and put stuff

away but that is not the case. Most college classrooms are set up to be for lecture-style classes with all the desks facing the front for the instructor to come in and give a lecture or a test and move forward. For my classes, relying on discussion-based classes, means rearranging the desks into a circle facing each other as much as possible (some rooms with immovable seats make this more difficult). Often when I show up to teach the students who arrive early already have the desks in a circle and stay after to place them back where they had been.

This also means encouraging students to show up in the best ways they can for Indigenous, Black, People of Color, queer and trans communities, and other marginalized communities. This doesn't mean everyone has to show up on the streets protesting, as accessibility may be a barrier but how can you spread the knowledge you gain in the classroom and about the issues with others? How can you support the communities in their fight but not speak for them? Encourage students to stand with issues.

P.S. Never, NEVER call CANOE a “boat”. Them’s splashin’ in words, friend. / You might get thrown in the water, or get to dance, to clear the score. (Tribal Journey Organizers)

This rule is less formal and simple if you make an error be accountable for it. We pull and do not paddle, and we are in a canoe not a boat. If someone makes a mistake, then they are held accountable. This goes to other aspects of the journey, if you misplace or lose something and someone else finds it, you have to dance for your item to be returned. This is about taking responsibility for yourself and your actions. There is always room for this in academic spaces. When it comes to teaching, we all make mistakes—it is better to own up to them than berate students or argue that it does not matter (things I have heard stories of from students regarding other instructors). It is also important if you make a mistake in something you say or do, or if you do not know the answer to something, or make an error in grading, that you are honest and

own up to it. If you own up to it, then everyone can move forward. When it comes to the students, this means encouraging them to own up to their mistakes—did they accidentally use a derogatory word, misgender someone, or state a fact that is incorrect? Admitting to this can help everyone grow and move forward and students will look to their instructors for examples of this.

Conclusion:

Recently I had my students think about what their ideal educational space would look like, pulling from an activity I did in undergrad as well. One student asked if what they described had to work within the current constraints or they could dream beyond. I told them for the purpose of this project to dream beyond. Ideally, if we could, we would reshape the entire education system, what it means and represents, but that does not happen overnight so in the meantime we have to find ways to claim these spaces as ours. It is difficult to create all the necessary changes within the context of the current education system that was built on racist, sexist, and ableist structures, but creating a space in which we survive allows for us to imagine a new education system in which we can thrive. Through using the canoe rules as a pedagogical practice in the classroom, I not only (re)claim the educational space as my own but one in which students can grow and learn to engage with each other in meaningful conversations.

Utilizing Indigenous knowledges and ways of being within the academic spaces of a higher education institution, we can create classrooms in which Indigenous students feel represented. This does not mean to simply include or diversify the classroom but to center the knowledges of the peoples whose lands we are on. These ways of knowing and being with each other create connections between the students. Teaching in what is now Coast Salish territory and utilizing canoe-based pedagogical practices allows for me to engage with students in ways that are representative of these local cultures. In order to continue to make these spaces more

accessible for communities than they have been before, we must (re)claim our own education and reshape what a college classroom looks like and how knowledge production is made.

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