Indigenous Worldviews

Cultural Expression on the World Wide Web

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Dans cet article l'auteure explore quelques unes des significations et implications d'un projet éducatif en ligne: Four Directions Teaching.com . Il s'agissait de créer un site où les gens pourraient s'imprégner du savoir et de la philosophie autochtones et que les enseignants pourraient même utiliser dans leur cursus. Ce site honore les traditions orales en créant un environnement où le visiteur est encouragé à écouter attentivement chaque ainée ou éducateur traditionnel qui partage ses connaissances dans une perspective d'enrichissement des valeurs culturelles et traditionnelles de leur nation.

> There is a growing interest in information technology (IT) by indigenous peoples around the world. Indigenous peoples see this as a means of preserving their traditional cultures for future generations as well as providing their communities with opportunities for economic and social renewal. (Dyson, Hendriks and Grant x)

In this paper I will explore some of the meanings and implications of an online education project, FourDirectionsTeachings.com, which I produced in association with the National Indigenous Literacy Association and the Department of Canadian Heritage. The goal for the project was to create an engaging site where people could experience Indigenous knowledge and philosophy, and which educators could use to incorporate into their curriculum.

FourDirectionsTeachings.com honours oral traditions by creating an environment where the visitor is encouraged to listen with intent as each Elder or traditional teacher shares a teaching from their perspective on the richness and value of cultural traditions from their nation. The Elders and traditional teachers represented on the site are: Stephen Augustine, Mi'kmaq; Tom Porter, Mohawk; Lillian Pitawanakwat, Ojibwe; Mary Lee, Cree; and, Dr. Reg Crowshoe and Geoff Crow Eagle, both Piikani Blackfoot. Each of the Elders and traditional teachers who participated on this site were approached through a National Advisory Committee of Indigenous people concerned with the protection and promotion of Indigenous knowledge. This committee was formed directly for the purposes of this website to ensure a community based approach that was respectful and accountable. This process is elaborated on further in the paper.

The vision for the project was formed during the years that I worked as an adult literacy instructor in various Aboriginal agencies across Toronto. I note this because the field of Aboriginal adult literacy was at that time driven primarily by Aboriginal women who were committed to the value of holistic knowledge derived from Aboriginal teachings. The difficulty for many of us at that time was a lack of readily accessible Indigenous knowledge resources that we could reference on a regular and ongoing basis. Through discussions with my colleagues, we began to envision the value of having First Nations teachings made accessible in a respectful manner on the World Wide Web. Sitting with these women was the beginning of a process that brought me full circle to the completion of FourDirectionsTeachings.com. New discussions are now being undertaken with respect to how Aboriginal women can use the Internet to address the many issues that affect their lives.

I am interested in exploring the need and potential for culturally sensitive resources that speak to diverse forms of Indigenous cultural heritage, and the connections that can be made between modern technologies and Indigenous epistemologies. These explorations necessitate an analysis of tensions between protecting and promoting traditional Indigenous knowledge. Much work is currently being done in the area of intellectual property, traditional knowledge and the rights of Indigenous peoples. While the production of Four Directions Teachings implicitly addressed these concerns, this paper will not address the legal issues in any detail, focusing more generally on Aboriginal empowerment related to producing online representations

of Indigenous knowledge. In this spirit, I encourage you to imagine the possibilities as you read this paper on the value of having online experiences grounded in Indigenous perspectives and value systems.

Representing Indigenous Knowledge

For many Indigenous people an Aboriginal worldview is an antidote for communities who struggle against what Michael Yellow Bird critiques as daily micro assaults. Yellow Bird contends that Indigenous Peoples face the humiliation of American and Canadian colonialism through various media. In his article, Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism, Yellow Bird tackles how Indians are portrayed in popular culture, and how the underlying meaning beneath the images is one steeped in white settler conquest that reduces the Indian to a thing less than human. He quotes Howard Adams' statement that,

> The colonizer's falsified stories have become universal truths to maintain society, and have reduced Aboriginal culture to a caricature. This distorted reality is one of the most powerful shackles subjugating Aboriginal people. It distorts all Indigenous experiences, past and present, and blocks the road to self determination. (39)

In Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations, David Newhouse, an Onondaga academic from the Native Studies program at Trent University, discusses an exercise he uses with his class to demonstrate the absence of Aboriginal people's history, presence and cultural knowledge in Canadian society. He does this by giving them an assignment that involves going back to their respective communities to research the aboriginal people in that area. Each time the students come back with little to no information. Newhouse then poses the question, "How is that you had such a hard time finding material on the Aboriginal peoples in your area?" (47). The question not only confronts notions of conquest and invisibility or disappearance, but it also points to another more contemporary concern in Aboriginal communities: the need for ways to transmit Indigenous knowledge through non-traditional means.

Marlene Brant Castellano writes of the dilemma of the modern Aboriginal educator, who must work with media that are incapable of fully transmitting traditional knowledge in a traditional manner, that is, organically, and directly from its living source.

> The dilemma for aboriginal educators is that while they recognize the limitations of texts, the traditional media for transmitting aboriginal knowledge have become largely unavailable to many aboriginal people, especially the young. The young people no longer have daily access to experiential learning on the land; they have decreasing levels of fluency in aboriginal languages that would keep them in communication with elders; and they spend much of their time in educational institutions that socialize them into dependence on the written word. There is a real danger that the elders who still retain traditional and spiritual knowledge, and who know the context in which empirical observations must be evaluated, will join their ancestors without passing on what they know. (32)

Aboriginal youth surf the Internet, travel between urban and rural areas, and are bombarded, like all youth, by popular culture everywhere. The fact that they represent the fastest growing population in Canada has created a cultural pyramid in First Nation communities, where the base represents the youth and the pinnacle represents traditional teachers and elders who can be said to hold Traditional Knowledge. As a result,

> Elders are coming together in gatherings such as the annual elder's conference at Birch Island, Ontario, to talk about how to be an elder in a changing environment, and how to adapt old forms of sharing knowledge to ensure that the next generation benefits from the wisdom of our ancestors. (Castellano 33)

The fact that these discussions are underway speaks to the need for culturally sensitive resources like the Four Directions Teachings project, which by virtue of its presence on the Internet not only serves as an immediate pedagogical aide but as a point of entry and access to Indigenous knowledge for many Aboriginal youth across the country. Castellano elaborates on the importance of connecting with youth:

> Educators writing about aboriginal knowledge and elders talking about how to communicate with young people enamoured with Walkman radios and Nintendo games are part of the process of cultural adaptation. Each of us knows that traditional knowledge of how to maintain balance in our lives, how to relate to other human beings, and how to practice respect for the Earth which supports us, is desperately needed—and not only by aboriginal people. We need to devise appropriate means to navigate in a radically changed environment. (33)

This notion of a radically changed environment resonates on many levels as governments, Indigenous community leaders, and non-government service providers and educators search for ways to respectfully reflect Indigenous knowledge systems in an era that is defined in so many ways by rapidly changing technologies. Information Communication Technology (ICT) cannot be ignored, and is increasingly and unavoidably being explored by those

who are attempting to reflect Indigenous knowledge. The questions at this point are not so much related to whether Indigenous knowledge should be reflected online as to how this is done—considering, for example, areas like language issues (what gets lost in translation?), and how to address questions of cultural appropriation (Dyson x).

Staking out a Claim in Cyberspace

Notions of a radically changed environment are further tested when thinking of cyberspace and its potential. For example, the late Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, a Canadian Aboriginal new media artist and curator, was "not uncritical of the web." Like many activists and scholars, he is conscientious about the relationship between Aboriginal values and perspectives on the World Wide Web:

> Moreover, he wonders how Aboriginal people can make the web, at least part of it, truly Aboriginal. Is it possible to bring a spirituality, an ethicality, an aesthetic? (Claxton 40)

Judy M. Iseke-Barnes, a Métis academic, also puts forward questions pertinent to this discussion in her article, Aboriginal and Indigenous People's Resistance, the Internet, and Education. She writes:

> Where does cyberspace fit in the ongoing public and academic discourse surrounding key issues of Aboriginal identity, ownership, and cultural appropriation? Todd (1996), a Cree woman and artist from Canada, emphasizes that Aboriginal world views and life must find a place in cyberspace if these spaces are to be beneficial to Aboriginal peoples, particularly considering the impact of actions now for seven generations in the future. Who will have access to create representations? How will peoples be represented and taken up by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people if only dominant images of subjugated subjects are presented? What groups will be excluded and represented in simplistic ways? What frames of reference will be used to interpret what is on the Internet? …Will cyberspace participants who have power, access, and control assume the capacity to represent indigenous peoples using these representations to serve the dominant at the expense of all others? (173)

Here Iseke-Barnes echoes the concerns of Yellow Bird. Given the ubiquity of the Internet, cyberspace, like any popular media before it, produces cultural narratives that contribute to our understanding of race and culture. More than ever, we rely on the Internet for personal and professional information and use it to not only reference materials but to communicate, learn and play. Consequently we are witnessing an exploding "knowledge exchange" through the Internet, which can be said to be representative of an emerging knowledge system. It is therefore crucial to address this medium, so that unlike the past media evolutions of print, radio, television and film, where Indigenous Peoples clearly perceived their absence, the relatively "democratic" nature of the Internet may provide some hope for rectifying the multitude of misrepresentations and inhuman stereotypes so clearly articulated by many Indigenous scholars. Lest we forget, as Ward Churchill writes in the Fantasies of the Master Race, "White domination is so complete that even American Indian children want to be cowboys. It's as if Jewish children wanted to play Nazis" (33). Rather than allow the Internet to merely serve to reinforce the low collective self-esteem so painfully described by Churchill above, we as Indigenous peoples need to stake out a claim before being steamrolled yet again by the so-called "progress of western civilization."

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Producing Aboriginal Work in Cyberspace

Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew questioned whether it was possible to bring a spirituality, an ethicality, an aesthetic to Aboriginal work in cyberspace. I would say it is possible, but it is a long and involved process that requires the efforts of many people. At least, this was the case with fourdirectionsteachings.com, which only began production after the formation of a national advisory committee made up of Aboriginal intellectuals and activists who are concerned with the protection and promotion of Indigenous forms of knowledge. This committee included the following people:

- Marie Battiste, Mi'kmaq. Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Center in the College of Education and co-author of Protecting Indigenous Knowledge: A Global Challenge. Served as United Nations expert and co-chair for the UN Workshop on

Indigenous Heritage in Geneva, Switzerland.
•James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, Professor and Research Director at the Native Law Centre of Canada, College of Law, University of Saskatchewan. Noted international human rights lawyer and an authority on protecting Indigenous heritage, knowledge and culture. Currently a member of the Sectoral Commission on Culture, Communication and Information of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and of the Experts Advisory Group on International Cultural Diversity.

use of the Internet, and Indigenous rights to the protection and promotion of Indigenous knowledge.

Not surprisingly, the presence of the advisory committee gave me the confidence needed to proceed with the project; I felt that not only was I working for the community, but that the community was involved. Indeed, the advisors were able to open doors to elders and traditional teachers across the country so that I could discuss the project with them and gauge their interest. Further, the presence of an advisory committee and the referrals that came from them assured Elders and traditional teachers that a com-

I see the Internet as potentially supporting a "truer" form of democracy for Aboriginal communities because of its potential for accessibility and community/communally-based artistic creation, especially considering the way in which Indigenous peoples have been historically scattered and isolated from one another.

• Reg Crowshoe, well-known Piikani Blackfoot Elder who is also Executive Director of the Oldman River Cultural Center in Alberta. Pioneered and initiated cross-cultural programs for many organizations and institutions across Western Canada, and recently earned an honorary Doctorate in Law from the University of Calgary.
•Diane Hill (Katsitsawaks), Mohawk nation, Bear clan, Six Nations Territory. For the past 20 years, a consultant in various Aboriginal education initiatives internationally and a promoter of culturally based educational strategies in the field of social work and the area of portfolio-assisted prior learning assessment with the First Nations Technical Institute. Currently completing her Ph.D. in Adult Education with a focus on Aboriginal approaches at the University of Toronto.
•Sylvia Maracle, Mohawk from the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Wolf Clan. Has been involved in Aboriginal Friendship Centres for over thirty years, serving as the Executive Director for the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) for much of that time. Has also served as Vice President, National Association of Friendship Centres, President, Native Women's Resource Centre and Co-Chair, City of Toronto Taskforce on Access and Equity.

I have noted these advisors because their accomplishments and work represent the diversity of issues that are at stake in creating an Indigenous knowledge project for the Internet. Their expertise is key to an innovative project like Four Directions Teachings, which is, by virtue of its very existence, charting new and unknown territories in relation to Indigenous education, community access to and

munity-based process was being undertaken and that a sense of accountability was in place. One Ongwehonwe activist and traditional teacher, Tom Porter, on hearing that Sylvia Maracle had referred me to him, quipped, "Well if you are working with her then you are moving in some good circles."

Furthermore, the project was undertaken with Sweat Lodge and Pipe ceremonies and a feast, coordinated through the efforts of Anishnaabe Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat from Manitoulin Island in northern Ontario. I did not request these ceremonies from Lillian; rather, she insisted that we begin the project in this manner so that the project would be done in a good way. Much later I would come to fully realize the impact of Lillian's insistence on ceremony. However, due to the focus of this paper I will not go into that in detail here, except to say that I believe that fourdirectionsteachings.com has a spirituality that runs through it because it was initiated through ceremony, and because the teachings come directly from Elders themselves in a manner that considers how the traditions can respectfully be represented online. In this way, I believe that a strong ethical sense and spirituality was brought to bear on the project.

As for the aesthetics of the project, Four Directions Teachings was designed to avoid the simplistic rendering of metaphysical and philosophical ideas through boiled-down or stereotypical "avatars",[1] nor was the project designed to reflect an "archaeological" outsider's view that merely provides and catalogues informational text and pictures; rather, it was conceived as a space where one could experience and engage with Indigenous cosmological and metaphysical teachings through symbolic imagery. This imagery was designed to be grounded in myth, and to restore some measure of respect to the sophistication of mythological thought that has been expropriated and

belittled by modernity. After all, modernity sees "mythology," even its own European root myths, as quaint (or even somehow "alien") at best, "just for fun," and, as with all forms of fundamentalism, reduces myth to its simplest level—thus allowing it to become equated in modern terminology with a "lie." The intent was to create an alternate space with a more complex rendition of culture, identity and notions of community. In so doing, we hoped to get away from replicating existing physical structures and hierarchies and instead wanted to embrace an Aboriginal holistic philosophy through the interface design and presentation of the teachings.

The Politics of Cyberspace

"Benedict Anderson's now-famous formulation of the 'imagined community',holds special significance in digital culture, as a means for people dislocated in space and time to form groups and engage each other" (4). However, Mark Poster does not necessarily believe the great promise of this virtual community to be a given. He writes,

> Theorists are trapped within existing frameworks as much as they may be critical of them and wish not to be. In the absence of a coherent alternative political program the best one can do is to examine phenomena such as the Internet in relation to new forms of the old democracy, while holding open the possibility that what emerges might be something other than democracy in any shape that we can conceive given our embeddedness in the present. (261)

In *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet*, Lisa Nakamura surmises that:

> Contemporary debates about the digital divide tend to be divided roughly into two camps. The first of these maintains that the master's tools can never dismantle the master's house, to paraphrase Audrey Lorde's formulation, (while) …The second camp maintains that people of color can only bring about "genuine change" in the often imperialistic images of race that exist online by getting online. (30)

In the past year, FourDirectionsTeachings.com has not only proven its accessibility to a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, but has demonstrated the potential for online resources to inspire and shape new outcomes for Aboriginal communities. Even though Four Directions Teachings has only recently been launched, we are already receiving extensive feedback that speaks directly to community mobilization. For instance, a community program in Ottawa is utilizing the site to help support their own teaching programs based on the Medicine Wheel:

> Aanii/Hello. I have only recently "discovered" this excellent resource on the Internet and want to offer thanks to the Elders for their sharing and for the Helpers who have made these Teachings available. On behalf of the Circle of Nations Learning Centre I would also like to acknowledge not only the information provided but the excellence of the website itself and the very 'accessible' and enjoyable way the information is made available.
>
> We have shared your web resource with our growing community here, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and have received several very positive responses. We are in the midst of a series of Teachings on the Medicine Wheel and finding your website has been a great and timely gift for us. I would like to offer a special and personal Chi Miigwetch to Grandmother Lillian who has been a great inspiration to me on this journey. With greatest respect and thanks. All My Relations.
>
> —Willy Bruce, Circle of Nations Learning Centre

I have included this feedback because it shows how Aboriginal peoples who are dislocated through space and time can and do connect on a higher conceptual level when engaged with resources and content that speak to them personally—and which treat Indigenous concepts with dignity rather than reducing them to their simplest outward terms (or using them to reinforce stereotypes). This is significant to note because so much of the theory on cyber technology focuses on the notion of forming groups and engaging with each other in "real time." It is as if the only way to engage is through some form of mediated or physical contact as opposed to being inspired and feeling emotionally and mentally engaged (as one should be through any legitimate art/communication forum). In this way, I see the Internet as potentially supporting a "truer" form of democracy for Aboriginal communities because of its potential for accessibility and community/communally-based artistic creation, especially considering the way in which Indigenous peoples have been historically scattered and isolated from one another on remote reserves and across urban environments. In other words, the Internet has the potential to reinforce and reinvigorate (hopefully without "reinventing" or replacing) traditional forms of thought and ways of interpreting the world around us that are grounded in authoritative and once communally held sources and symbols, rather than merely reinforcing "individual freedom" and misunderstanding/ denigrating those traditions through narrative forms controlled by the dominant society.

Further to his article, "Cyberdemocracy: The Internet and the Public Sphere," Poster writes:

> The question that needs to be asked about the relation of the Internet to democracy is this: are there new kinds of relations occurring within it which

suggest new forms of power configurations between communicating individuals? In other words, is there a new politics on the Internet? (263)

Certainly there can be a new politics in relation to (if not on) the Internet, and that this new politics is about bridging the digital divide.[2] For Aboriginal communities in a world dominated by Eurocentric views, being able to access resources like Four Directions Teachings is key to bridging a cultural divide that sees mainstream media providing few resources for Aboriginal communities where they can see themselves reflected and represented. While this may seem a small thing, creating such a presence online has generated a surge of hope for various peoples from many diverse communities. To better illustrate this, I will share some of the unsolicited feedback that we have received from educators, community workers and the general public.

From Educators

> Ahneen. Wah-geh-hizhigo-migizi-kwe, Anishnabekwe. I just found your beautiful web site. I am teaching science and technology in the aboriginal teacher education program at Queens and I will be using your materials with my faculty of ed candidates from Manitoulin, seven generations in Ft. Frances and Kenora, and also in James Bay … keep up the good work you are doing.… I look forward to seeing more great ideas on your website, and I'll pass on to you what I have been gathering and working on with my faculty of education candidates.
>
> —Eileen (Sam) Conroy

> I am impressed with the material you have gathered. The four directions and other teachings from the elders were awesome. I would suggest more language content go in… that way we would learn our teachings and get some language teachings at the same time. I would also include pipe teachings, sacred lodge teachings, prayers, songs and other material to help us with the teaching we should have received from our elders. Miigwetch for the teachings and please keep putting these things down.
> —Buddy Loyie, Seven Generations Education Institute

> As a future teacher I have bookmarked this site for use in my elementary classroom. As for the teacher resources, I am only about half way through but I am so impressed. We just had a session on teaching about the Aboriginal culture at OISE and the complaint was that there were few resources known that teachers could use readily. Your site has solved that so that teachers can cover this curriculum section with knowledge and sensitivity. Thank you.
>
> —Ellen Grech, Teacher Candidate

From Community Workers

> I work for Noojmowin Teg Health Centre, which is a health access centre located on Manitoulin Island. Our staff have reviewed your website and think it's a great resource. We would like to add a link to it on our website, www.noojmowin-teg.ca. Miigwetch.
>
> —Lenore Manitowabi

> I have been thoroughly enjoying the 4 directions website … it's a wonderful resource! I have already learned so much and I haven't listened to all the chapters. I printed off the transcripts and I reread them after I listen to the recordings. I have also shared the website because I think it is a great example of how Oral Tradition can be maintained and passed onto new generations.
> —Daniela Rambaldini, Turtle Outreach and Conservation

From the General Public

> "Wow! All I can say is, this is just the greatest. I am just a white woman, but I have always loved studying native tradition and culture. I feel shy or that I am intruding on Natives if I ask them questions about their customs. Thanks for doing this and your kindness. It is much appreciated."
>
> —Cheryl Johnson

> I can't say much more than, I am inspired. I love the site and I will pass it on to my family in the reservation. I'm looking forward to watching the rest! I really am impressed by it and I think it is an incredible tool to inform young or old about the teachings. I especially think that the younger generation may be drawn in enough with the graphics to want to continue watching; keeping their attention is the hard part.
>
> —Nancy Johnson

This kind of feedback represents for me the potential for generating a new politics through the Internet, because it demonstrates the new kinds of social relations that are occurring. Willy Bruce at the Circle of Nations Learning Centre, while not communicating directly with Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat, is in communion with her through his "journey" and the work his community is undertaking on the Medicine Wheel. For Cheryl Johnson, the "ethnostress" that she perceives in imposing her questions on Native peoples is alleviated through being able to learn according to her own time and pace. Indeed, in our user testing a lot of Native people said that they thought the site would be a great place for non-Native people to be introduced to Indigenous philosophy, and said in fact that they were grateful to know that there was a reliable resource that they could refer people to (to some extent

alleviating their own "ethnostress" associated with having to be a "cultural teacher"). So while certain types of social relations may not be happening in "real time" in virtual space on the fourdirectionsteachings.com site, it does not mean that social relations are not unaffected by the site in the real world. Being challenged online in our perceptions and the ways that we think has great potential to impact a "new politics" that, if not "on the Internet", is at least potentially of the Internet age and greatly influenced by the interactive and directly personal potential and accessibility of the Internet. What emerges from alternative online encounters as they develop might be, as Poster states, "something other than democracy in any shape that we can conceive given our embeddedness in the present" (261).

Conclusion: Moving Forward

This past year, her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, held a discussion with 50 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women from across the country. I was very fortunate to be able to sit in on this roundtable during International Women's Day 2008, where I listened to these community leaders speak about their challenges, homes, organizations, communities, efforts and achievements. I felt honoured to be there and was inspired by the vision and strength of these women who spoke in detail about issues of violence, language, literacy, education, parenting, knowledge, skills training, and community arts. What struck me was how they were applying creative strategies to problem-solving based on Indigenous concepts and perspectives and that they identified these core values as the strength, the backbone, to their endeavours. Of course by the end of the day I felt like I wanted to meet personally with each and every one of them to brainstorm and imagine how the application of new technology might further their work, and the reach their work would have into other communities. I began to imagine what Mark Poster calls a "new politics" on the Internet, a new public sphere that makes visible the work and achievements of these incredible women, and thereby contributes to new social relations that empowers Aboriginal communities everywhere. While I have yet to speak with each of these women I have had the opportunity to follow up with a handful. Together we are imagining the possibilities. And while I hope that these visions can be realized I am all too aware of the difficulty in finding the resources.

For example, funding for projects like Four Directions Teachings are extremely limited, and verges on being non-existent. The current version of the project took five years to get funded, and now with further cutbacks to new media funds in Canada and extremely narrow eligibility guidelines for existing funds, it may take yet another five years to expand the site to include representations from the North. Innovative work presenting alternative worldviews is in jeopardy in spite of the obvious demand for such resources. In speaking about the notion of shared resources of knowledge, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Chairperson, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) makes a strong case for democratization and improved access, control and rights in relation to Information Communication Technology. She writes that,

> The demand to democratize communications and information remains very much valid today even if we have access to Internet and cable television. Pluralism in the flow and production of information should be allowed so that the diverse knowledge, cultures, values, cosmovisions and spirituality of peoples from all parts of the world will continue to flourish instead of becoming extinct. (5)

These sentiments speak to the Four Directions Teachings project, which, through its communally-based representation of five diverse Indigenous Nations from across Canada, is using advanced technology to reach out to learning communities and to generate shared resources of knowledge. By having projects like Four Directions Teachings accessible on the Internet, we are better able to express cosmological visions, cultures, values and spirituality from an Indigenous perspective that is available to all.

It is a gift to undertake such work; however, because of the difficulties of getting the work funded or produced, I want to end with Victoria Tauli-Corpuz's call:

> Public funding of communications is still a component of the demand for democratization of information. Mechanisms should be put in place, however, to eliminate bureaucratic control of indirect censorship. …[And ensure] that the efforts of smaller firms and even individuals to develop software and hardware should be supported and their product should be promoted and patronized by us. (6)

This call for support is invaluable to the survival and continued work of projects like Four Directions Teachings and to future works. There are very few avenues today for the translation of traditional symbols and myth directly from their living, breathing sources into modern contexts and technological formats, and these avenues are closing as the elders pass. There is also a very great danger in claiming Indigenous worldviews to have been represented through "archival" projects and "personalized" artistic renditions that often take "art" away from the realm of Elders and keepers of tradition and place it in the hands of "specialists"—although these forms of "specialized" knowledge representation are valid and important in themselves, and also struggle with a shortage of resources. Ultimately, the artists and curators, the writers, researchers, and catalogers of traditional information, need to be allied and engaged with the keepers and producers

of new representations of cultural knowledge, in ways that produce communally accessible content, i.e., in a public domain that is widely and popularly used (versus the domains of the elite, such as museums and art galleries). I therefore hope that governments and Indigenous communities around the world work together to ensure that new information technologies become the fuel for re-kindling diverse communal fires—and not merely the homogenizing bulldozer of western civilizing ideologies, steeped in the icons of colonialism and agendas of cultural genocide, and masked behind soothing mantras of "individual liberty" and "self-expression." So let's continue to imagine the possibilities together and value the circles we come from—because ultimately, these circles fuel our common cultural fires.

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[1]The very use of the term "Avatar" in modern computer technology is a good example of how a highly complex traditional metaphysical concept (in this case derived from Sanskrit) has—like the term "myth" itself—followed a rapid downward trajectory in its popular understanding and interpretation in modern times.

[2]The concept of bridging the digital divide has many definitions in new media communities that are largely dependent upon location and country. For some peoples in Central America and Native American reserves in the US, bridging the digital divide is about having infrastructure to access the Internet, providing hard wire connections to reserves and remote regions. For other countries, the issue is about language and how to communicate on a world wide web that is mostly in English. Here, however, I am focused on a divide with respect to cultural exclusion and how digital inclusion has not necessarily meant cultural inclusion, which entails understanding from Indigenous perspectives.

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ERRATA

Dans l'article "Réflexion sur les liens entre la sexualisation précoce des filles et la violence: Proposition d'un cadre d'analyse," publié dans le volume 25, *Ending Woman Abuse,* malencontreusement une erreur s'est glissée dans la note en bas de page # 3, page 56 qui suit le sous-titre Le phénomène de la sexualisation précoce des filles et qu'aurait dû lire : Cette section est tirée textuellement d'un texte qui reproduit en partie certains extraits de:

Duquet, Francine (2005), *Les représentations de la performance dans la séduction, les relations amoureuses et les relations sexuelles des adolescents : élaboration et validation d'un instrument de mesure*, Thèse de doctorat, Tome I, Tome II, Département d'administration et de fondements de l'éducation; Option mesure et Évaluation, Faculté des Sciences de l'Éducation de l'Université de Montréal, 600p.

- et de:

Duquet, F. (2006), "L'hypersexualisation des jeunes, Reflets," *Journal de l'Association des retraités du public et du parapublic (AQRP*), Vol. 22, No.4, p.12.

L'auteure, Lilia Goldfarb, s'excuse de cette erreur.