aboriginalizing methodology: considering the canoe

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protocol for passengers

ama sqit nilhsten skwatsits tsexox
welcome to the sound of running water ideo morphic ortho graphies
welcome to conversations of stone river earth sky
this canoe tsexox missing a few glottal stops welcomes you
first a caution even to the best swimmers treaders floaters logholders
it would be advisable that while we are in motion
that you not stand up as we journey
to lake stream river ocean sky stars language spirit world

“please spare us” I can hear an academic geyser spouting up right down centre
everywhere in particular this oracular source infected with ratio caucus iuris
this mesoscopic cog(noscento) of how it [education] is supposed to be
shaped and shaping
this disease which is its own vector this malady which is its own cause
is known to cause short-sightedness tunnel vision and intolerance
to diffracted white light

“please” speaks the voice from the plume “channel your romantic piffle elsewhere
in this country we use scientific principles social science methods
including scholarly referencing”
which appeared to a succession of mostly white mostly expired mostly men
of mediated merit du club des vieux garçons
or perhaps ex nihilo like manna banana panna

coyote is feeling a bit put off by the tone she is picking up
but she puts it down to human beings being human beings of an occidental kind
uncontaminated by this accelerating discovering she transforms herself
into a fourlegged and trots along the river bank
raven skycams overhead now alloyed to the bird nation

with respect to this canoe journey there will be extremes of weather and climate
there will be portages rapids waterfalls riptides swells crests gales typhoons tsunami
forest and grass fires droughts sandstorms blizzards toxic sludge customs agents
so bring waterproof heatproof coldproof insulated breathable comfortable
light wash ‘n wear bedding clothing attitudes and a thick skin
you might want to bring a tent some bushsmarts and navigating knowhow
but please no cellphones beepers laptops palmtops modems
some ports of call require a passport and visa
some require oaths or affidavits of allegiance
some sovereign indigenous nations require that you apply in advance
to enter their domain using the correct protocol
I know you will be respectful to the shapes and textures
scents resilience resonances zoning bylaws stones
native flora “driftwood” mores ethics of the places we visit
I know that you know how to act in someone else’s home
where you are an invited guest not a tourist
so grab a paddle or rudder or line and keep time i t indians time
my experience is that a vertical attitude in turbulence
tends toward horizontal or oblique compromise
so for your own safety and that of your cotravellers
please sit be comfortable and strap yourself in
to a personal floatation device or parachute relax have fun
and don’t worry too much if there aren’t sufficient references
to published materials or any at least in the first few bends
in time the earth and sky will denecessitate the need for biblio graphics
replacing them with sound vision texture scent taste
as jake thomas cayuga elder said at a conference
at the six nations reserve in 1998 “thank you for inviting me
to come up here and waste my breath again”
a silence followed by laughter

shaping the canoe

the means of transportation I have chosen for this article
as well as my doctoral dissertation
_first peoples_’ knowings as legitimate discourse in education: coming home to the village
besides language is a canoe constructed not from the forest nations but from words
and the gesturings of those words and the spaces around those words
the idea of chapter is anathema to who I am as an indigenous person
it implies western order and format as “the” legitimate shapers of discourse
the universe being ordered into rationally constructed geometries
precluding enthalpy to be the prescribed means of navigating
rather than say entropy devalidating our own symbolic sense of ourselves
perceptions of our perceptions making us take up the tools of the settlers
hoe hoe hoe rake shovel ratiocination for the nation
the idea of paragraph is meaningless to my sense
of oral contiguousness with the land with community with acting in the world
it is a denunciation of the geography of my relationship with place
where are the plateaux the escarpments the end moraines the ridges and slopes
the practice of academically certified punctuation distances me from my sense of space time and natural speech patterns including translated ones separating me from my connection with the earth and its natural rhythms the a priori presumption being that the written word is of paramount worth the assumption being that the mechanisms of codification and transliteration of our rhythms periods commas semicolons have anything (whatsoever) to do with our paralinguistic choreographies to thus delegate the orality of my nation and its transcription to a place removed from equal symbolic even orthographic consideration is to put us in our place illiterates illegitimates iterati

the ideas of beginningmiddleend genesis exodus revelation testa corpus coda are ways of linearly encoding a western vision of the world ways of encrypting experience so that little by little we are all molded into believing unthinkingly that there are beginnings middles ends believing that experience can be diagrammed graphed morphed thus the idea of capital versus small letters as being reflections of the world is a way of “classifying words caste-ing them and those who use them differentially it is a way of playing with value and with naming some words (we are to assume) are common some proper and because I do not see any noun as being un“common” or im“proper” and rather than using caste nomenclature orthographic diversion in the practice of capital and small letters rather than being equitable and capitalizing them all I capitalize only the ones which ask to be capitalized by which I mean I am writing the things which become words “write” me retroactively and in so doing make the choice themselves as to how they prefer to be and if at all on paper the idea of only a fixed vocabulary being tolerated in scholarly endeavour disallowing un glossed unannounced neologicistic precipitation is culturally binding these categories are cultural prisons within which “other” is castigated set adrift within a panopticon/vention in (a) craft bound not for mutual acculturation but unilateral assimilation genosimilitude where are the translated places for parts of speech english doesn’t have parts of speech indigenous languages don’t have where is there unobstructed space for the animated in transit I align spatially rather than use punctuation as the default place of diacritics this english language was forced onto my nation in residential school and other places our languages were and are not “official” have you ever seen a five year old girl with a pin (inserted) through her tongue for speaking her language permission resides in me as languaged to use this imposed english as I must otherwise it will use me at its discretion forging me into molds of correct usage which would never do insofar as my own agenda is concerned english is one of the languages I was raised in
it is the language of my mother and my father knew it too
I allowed myself to be colonized by it unaware
in turn I have chosen to use it as I need to for my writing
even if it means I must write chaos chance trickster
even if it means I must bring words into existence
which thencefore were naught
if a word does not exist I let it invent me through it
if a way of getting an idea or sound or intention across works or I think it does
I employ it paying union wages including over time
I am the written the languaged the read
and the “me” I speak of here at this cross-roads this node
this inter-section this confluence is one
which exists within as well as despite language
like a stone partly beneath the earth or water or sky partly above it
it is not that the stone is partly buried or submerged but that its relationship
with earth with water with air is not defined solely in terms of the preposition “above”
as a languaged person I do not acknowledge as ultimate authority
of how I am to express myself “correctly” using english
dictionaries lexicons grammarabilia
and other imported colonialist paraphernalia
who owns this language to whom is it deeded chartered
who has given the university the government the viceroy intendency
over how documents are to be languaged over what counts
as legitimate discourse within a sanctioned institution of post-knowing
when this tool of conquerage this english was forced on us
we vowed to use it so as to communicate as best we were able
I set as my task to write for meaning rather than correctness
even at the risk of being misunderstood mis-taken
which is part of what language is all about – risk
negotiating meaning agency power relations
in order to enter those realms of anointed power
those racially predestined orbs those p/reserves of academ(ent)ia
those places where I can be of immediate help for my nation
it is deemed I am to follow western epistemologies
cast like the commandments of moses [or the manifesto of andré breton]
into petrified substantiation transited like retrograde orbiting planets
with us as indigenous peoples caught in the thrall
like occulted satellites eclipsed step sibs ellipses to the indian act and treaties
my canoe is a place of cultural understanding
it transports it connects me to the forest and the water and to my spirit
it conveys it acts as a place of gestation of birthing
in transit and final worldly threshold for generations
millenia of my relations if ever there was home for our migrations
it is this form this vessel this tree relation
this part of my article is an introduction but not to a beginning
to a continuation a continuing
with the transfer of these words from computer screen pencil pen
thought feeling spirit sound to paper

the canoe comes from the forest and from place of mind spirit
thanks here are given for the sister/brother cedar’s life medicines are burned
whereafter planks so carefully are cased from the snag’s trunk
with such delicate surgery you’d think it were an operation
on a butterfly’s broken wing
though it might seem the canoe and tree are from a conceptual space
they are from spirit and heart
and it is in those places I give thanks  

kukwstumlhkacw

paper has long been the form whereon the academy has held the forest hostage
for its wildness its untamed savagery its plantness
in the end itself returning to pulp and dissipated print
so many documents are created or photocopied ongoingly
you’d think universities were themselves forest industries
so great their tonnage of this stuff
yet here too is a forest though not called so yet is pulped pressed flat between covers printed on in aisles and paginated
even so it is just that yet not just that even is it more

this canoe’s medium will be air though most of us are aware
there is customarily in air a plenitude of water called humidity
the power needed to make and power computer engineering arises
in the turbines of dams for which forests are felled submerged
paper thus is even where it is not since its absence is only that
a presence of not having been processed from tree dimension
into eight and a half by eleven a-4 plus or minus and its direct declensions

the sentence of trees named by the sound of wind in branches
when elder brother is reddest indeed this relation of the tree nation
is all that brother can be when manifest in transform a home for my nation

in creating a framework

our educational frameworks are not imported from conceptual spaces
or other western domains
they are not semiotic xenotransplants tip-layered epistemes adventitious suckers
this would be the usual site for parentheses encasing a published reference
title punctuation year perhaps a superscript numeral
alas I offer only experience upon which to draw
in this instance it is my only referee
I the unanointed paleo-subjectivity am not unaware
that persons high on the plateau of western knowing
the in alto cognoscenti would call this practice unscholarly or “polemical”
if in fact this article became becomes published
alack we pre/preter/extra/alter/literate autochthones with our transgressive praxes
have only our experiences and stories to which we might allude
– though we could beg to intone invoke evince
the anthropologists linguists historians indian expert educators who have made careers out of studying us and we could fulfill the mandate of referencing by quoting them quoting us -- but I will refrain )and please this “we” I employ is inclusive only as a rhetorical device( and since I am not practiced at referencing nature in a scholarly manner I will let the parentheses remain outside of the visible and get on with building a framework with a purpose as we paddle together portage make and break camp I will take time to consider and plan and implement a framework of some no little importance for the lives of many first peoples

in considering a sweatlodge

for a sweatlodge it is not unimportant the journey of the parts in relation to the whole first of all (the impersonable pronoun) is not taken for granted that a sweatlodge is necessarily necessary at such and such a time or place or circum/stance it is not taken for granted that we are called upon by the ancestors and the powers and spirits and beings to construct a sweatlodge rather it is an honour an obligation to construct one or have one constructed through oneself once it has been determined necessary or appropriate the framework then -- is not identical from nation to nation nor the rituals involved including the means of harvesting our relations the willow if indeed it is the willow we speak of (some employ other members of the tree nations especially as willow is not universally present in all geographies) on the willow grow oftimes our spiritual sisters and brothers our relations the fungus nations we do not take for granted that we can dislodge these spiritual medicines from their home further it must be agreed on the placement of the lodge and the timing and not just by one another and ourselves but by all that is life everything is part of the framework and is the framework including our relations with the creator sun moon earth sky one another how many willows must be asked for how are the willows to be spoken with who will speak and when and how in what language what will be offered the willow for its life will the willow agree are there not insect and bird nations to be consulted viruses will the willow be in constant contact with the ground situated so as to remember and relate in transit and what ground where from the time of harvesting onward during transportation to the place of construction of lodge will the ground be dug into with implements or with hands or at all
will there be a pit for the rocks which will heat the water that will carry our prayers
who will do the digging what will this person say when
will the leaves of the willow be removed or not
will there be purifications at all stages
is respect to be shown generally specifically latently

in the consensus of this enterprise will “nature” be part of consensus
who will speak for “nature” who can hear her
is interpretation necessary in order to understand
the voice the language of “nature” are we not nature
how deep will the holes be for each willow how many
which hole will be dug first what direction who will dig it which second
who will tie the willows together once they are bent together
what will they be tied with what knot what colour what time of day
in what moon how are all of our relations to be honoured
when the intercultural conversation is from many nations and languages
and traditions are there hardandfast rules are there protocols
known through living respectful lives on and with the land and sky
where does authenticity reside legitimacy whose whose not

what will cover the bent willows
the skins of our relations the fourleggeds
or tarps plastic whatever is available
where will the fire be what direction how many stones will be used
how many logs for fuel what kind how will they be collected and by whom
how will the logs and the stones be set down
who will keep the fire how will our relations the stones be treated
after they have helped us in our healing there is so much more
and much of it is not for sharing on paper for academic reasons

why the instrumental of who is not one of the adverbs conjunctions or nouns which
our elders employ in interrogative discourse
because to use why it is said seems to be questioning the creator’s motives
seems to be calling onto the mat of reason what lies beyond
(or other/wise thither from) reason

a framework
is not just an architect/ural or /tectonic manifestation of a blueprint/ing
it is the enactment of a respectful relationship
with the rest of creation which shares this earth with us
a framework is never a noun never simply a metaphor
it cannot be captured thus as a part of speech a figuration
it is more than any words which attempt to denote it
a framework is a journey/ing with

**domicilic frameworks**

we constructed our homes from earth from our relations the tree nations
according to the seasons our number and available sustenance
the placement of salmon people in a comparatively accessible degree
you could argue (if you were of such a mind to) that we had theories
of nomadism and seasonal variation migration initiation
the practice was we inhumed ourselves in and with the white blanket of winter
but this was not an academically strategized model
it was practice it was survival it did not rise or otherwise spread
from rationalist scientist occidental epistemologies even retroactively
even by onside “indians” colonized elite collaborators ambitious apples
red on the outside white on the in or variations on these

our pit-home walls kept a considerable r-value between us
and the weather and the geography which was also inside
we slept and cooked and attended indoor chores in reasonable comfort
there was a hole for smoke and the breath of our ancestors
and the plant nations to mingle with ours
and at least one alternate means of egress in case of emergency
which of course was always just around the bend
we didn’t have corners in our language

we wove mats spread grasses hung our salmon engendered regenerated expired
in this domicilic framework enfolding us this home
within an elaborate performative epistemology of survivance
thank you professor vizenor for that netted gem
precluding or at least gesturing toward our continuance
on the great interior plateau our home land and native oka nada
(which for those outside of the canadian context relates to a major military standoff
near montreal quebec canada between a handful of aboriginal people
and a division of the canadian army
over replacing a sacred “indian” burial site (alias dictus cemetery) with a golf course
oka being the reserve nada being never) the less
each person had comprehensive expertise we were communal individuals
with broad as well as specific survival strategies
sleeves up our tricks ravenpockets coyotedreams
in those days before the whiteman our individuality
was not the focus and resolve it is today
exclusivizing self from selves selves from self
life spindled spun and wove us together

more aboriginal/ized epistemologies and methodologies

weaving and knitting our clothes and furniture from trees grasses wool hair roots
provided protective domestic frameworks with which to cover ourselves
in those long winter nights when we had time to theorize
about indigenous weaving metaphors and textual interpenetration
linguistic multifurcation and the strategies of risk venturing
but for the most part we huddled together in collective warmth and caring

our looms were are technological studies in simplicity denoting demarcating us
as primitive disingenuous naive stoneage gullible trusting
our simplicity made us fertile grounds for evangelical hubris
for the lies and genocides acted out on us  present tense included
by the ruling soldierly and settlerly classes from europe [sic]
trans/planted imports  choking out  native species
of course  it is the greatest genius  which is simple  s/implicit
anyone with less  than half a mind can dumbfound an audience
with complications  obfuscative  dithrambic clarifications  appropriately
gesticulated graphed and overhead projected lubyrasered  chartflipped

oh yes  we had our frameworks  and they were mostly temporary
like us  except in the long run  we returned to the earth  we never left
our frameworks  the grammar of our actions  declensioning us
subjecting us to nominal activity  deverbifying “acting” into action
even now the english language is the time machine  that takes us back
wards  to a truth that was never part of any story
we ever heard or imagined  in our primitive e/state
especially as we have  (at least had)  no past or future  tense
until our ideas became translated into english  and back
and suddenly  even our present  became on hold  mise en scène iris shot

aboriginal technological frameworks
frameworks  yes  we used what the newcomers called frameworks
to gather our relations  the salmon nations
these  were our installations  and properties and sets
molding us to the places of the river which named us
through our naming of them the  land languaged us
with the breath it gave us  we spoke  to identify  (actually to relate)  our connecting
our fishing platforms and scaffolds  held us over breakwaters hairpin bends
and back-eddies with our three-pronged spears and gaffs  harpoons
basketry traps  weirs  set lines  set-nets  dip-nets  gillnets  scoopnets
and drying racks  ready to enact the prayer
which adapted us to the condition/al/s  the laconic geographies
a few weeks of good fishing meant survival rather than starvation
and it was rarely longer a time we were given  to store for the winter
“if” was not an overly used morpheme  in our vocabulary

our frameworks and workings took into account the clarity  (or not)
of the water  its speed  its dervish  its placidity  its negotiativity
we paid intimate attention to geography  by the default position
of being unseparated from it  rather than prepositionally related  ad/hered to it
we were  and are  not speci/fic/ally different from salmon
steelhead  rainbow  silver trout  oolichan  sturgeon  dolly varden
until we all started sprouting  latin nomenclature
becoming reductively subsumed into rationalist scientist discourses

I don’t know the reason canada has just a federal department of indian affairs
there is no department of white affairs  salmon affairs
moose  beaver  deer  bear  not to forget the waterfowl
and how did the conversation get shifted into the western category of “rights”
including aboriginal rights
talking about aboriginal rights is a way of moving an aboriginal relation al conversation away into a western legal discourse
give me relationships mr prime minister and the opportunity to practice my culture on my own land and you can keep your native rights and the rest of your imported legislation or that passed to benefit the “majority” which means the 95% who are not aboriginal
don’t continue to lock us in your semiotic conceptual prisons we’re inmate enough as it is without being immured by the cementum of your white discourse

relating to relations: a framework of respect

catching fish is different from studying toward a phd (though they can both be done at the same time) in that fishing can sustain life one does not require possession of these three consonants after one’s name in order to catch fish or even to provoke them into predatory discourse nor to be able to create tools and implements and ideations relating to the fish nations it does not require a certificate or degree to understand or be able to assess the psychology limnology piscatology related to fish because psychology and assessment being human constructs are of little import to fish but saying that I do not presume to speak for fish but to share my experience of them together with my assumptive objectifications which I try to keep to a minimum in order to be able to predict indeed or survive in or with the weather and attached seasons and know the relationship between the blossoming of particular plants in the montane ultra back home and the running of particular salmonic subspecies/subspecific salmon does not require academic expertise in the fashioning of tools with which to fell trees and make of them nominations of survival weaving together t/ropes finding respectful ways of design/at/ing our relations the fish nations from earth from tree containers to hold salmon oil one does not need a masterate in archaeology or socalled “hi” tech to survive in the mindset/tler space of “pre” historic times a rich and diverse imagination and respectful action would do and did and does theory yes we devised ideas too frameworks when there was time to reflect refract diffract diffuse there was always somebody in the community wanting to gainsay needing to theorize about the world but mostly they were under six years of age and mostly it was refraction and diffusion which are about how fish see us and patterns of in/ter/ference relating to how we see them or not not to forget or neglect the importance of groping in darkness tactiling feeling for the bottomfeeders with your toes your feet
not needing to rely exclusively on visual acuity

our kind of framework/ing is looked on as primitive by the larger society because in modern western mindsetting there are factory people to perform the preliminary work to assemble package process thereby de-prioritize the need for us to rub sticks or strike stones together in order to have heat we have a thermostat and “fossil fuels” volatile combustibles in the fervour and flux of modern comfort let us not forget dams which not only destroy animals and their homes the forests meadows but they also heat us in directly proportionate ways to their destruction of life habitat yes insects viruses rodents amphibians reptiles mammals the bird and fish nations live lives real lives they are not expendable just so that we can be more comfortable how can methodology be separate from the living of an ethical compassionate life together with as first peoples of this land our responsibilities include to take into accountability not just measurability our relationships with the rest of creation we follow our original instructions as orally passed on as well as continually relearned in our ceremonies rituals daily protocols we work to regenerate mutual relationships interpenetrating considerations ethics for us is not an add-on or a form to fill in it is intimate integration with the deep structure of our understanding of creation including its ongoingsness its pre-co- and post-emptiveness our way is not to bioassay and reproduce mapped grids gradients of the western research paradigms accountability and respect is not just about seeking re-zoning approval it is more than following approved bureaucratic structural codes what about consideration for all our relations what about love for each leaf tree stone student colleague insect fish worm fourlegged microbe fungus moss lichen virus what about offering tobacco water thanks awareness prayer intoned sung danced or silently felt prayer as conversation with all of creation acknowledged compassion for the harming of these relations rather than the consuming of them as the *sine qua non* the rest of creation does not reside in the genitive case of human beings as alms to our need and proprietary claim do we dare to move a stone knowing it has is spirit knowing it has been t/here a thousand millennia do we dare dig into our mother the earth our earth the mother even with our hands even with our thoughts our metaphors and not remember we are all related what is it to drag our mother into those presumed prefigured conceptual spaces of languaging of visualizing of justifying our mistreatment of her defiling her for profit
if we knew what it meant at the level of body the place of spirit
to call life to call living things our relations “resources”
what kind of place of violation of creation has this english language created
turning a tree into lumber timber log 2by4 sawdust paper garbage
turning a tree into a resource what kind of etymology is that
what kind of ethic epistemology methodology what does it say
of the underlying motive of capitalism consumer fraud ab origine

is this not a consideration worth considering
before outcomes and risk assessments and surface rights wrongs
is there not spirit in the air we breathe the breath we share in the water
is it not an obligation for human beings to offer some thing
for the life we are about to take
a life which we do not own which we have no right
to assume is ours to take even to survive

is the framework of ethical consideration
and spiritual connection not the frame work we need
to consider and to act within the guidelines
the creator gives us however that might come across
be it direct intervention signification interpretation or presumption
even within the translated real/m of the english language
whose geographies are alien to many of our minds and hearts
is there not some respect for how things might be to others

our frameworks are not frames nor are they works
they are the movement of forest and relations through mind hand and spirit
they shape our minds around themselves
bring it into organic functioning sometimes retroactively
fashioning themselves into us through our co-optation of them

yet with respect to ethics is it not just another liberal notion meant
to contain contentment validate western traditions
is ethics not a negotiated notion arising from/as the ashes
of western epistemologies at the expense of “other”
is ethics not a cultivar rather than an adventitious shoot
meant to privilege certain kinds of knowings sowings and not others
is ethics not something which is meant to ensure
indigenous knowings and actions must fit the delineations and geometrics
of the denotation of western ethical action

who is in charge of the ethics police whose frames matter whose are expendable
who holds the reins and whip the keys to the dungeon the drawbridge
this too is the stain and cut of ethics
which does not end nor begin in white picket fences
stone mansions and marble places of white worship
it begins in the pockets of the privileged and in the pockets of those pockets
it resides too in our plank houses long houses spirit is everywhere everywhence

the land back home being thick with bush the mountains steep and rugged
the air not a viable option most of our travel was by water craft
we did not take for granted our sister and brother tree nations

peter cole
sacrificing their lives for our “needs”
whether vertically situated or oblique horizontal whole or fragmented
driftwood snag oldgrowth deadhead diseased or burnt a tree is a relation
and as such is equivalent to any other relation stone star objet trouvé

we learned to take a canoe from a cedar without felling it
slate for tools profuse with islands
not just a way of life but life itself
hunting trails berry trails trading trails
we assemble bit by bit the canoe giving thanks
in that place europhilosophy calls “conceptual space” t/here
I speak with the assembled tree nations to a particular tree
asking permission to use part of its clothing its body its spirit
as a vehicle for my journey of words ideas intentions actions feeling
as a companion
paddle paddle paddle

swooo000000o0ssshhh