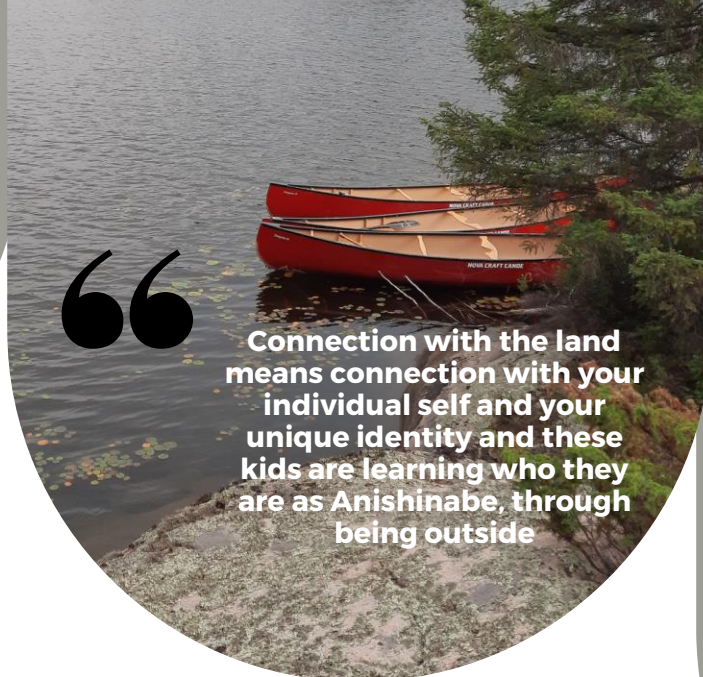


Connecting Through Canoeing:

The role of canoeing in connecting Indigenous youths with cultural traditions and the environment

Acknowledgment

The University of Manitoba, and this research takes place on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.



“

Connection with the land means connection with your individual self and your unique identity and these kids are learning who they are as Anishinabe, through being outside

INTRODUCTION

- Interactions with the natural world, through various social, cultural and historical lenses, frame views, respect and actions towards the environment
- In many Indigenous cultures, canoes are seen as living beings that shape relations to others, ones self and the natural world
- The dispossession of traditional lands has slowed the transmission of teachings on cultural practices including on canoeing and treatment of the natural world
- Organizations are working to strengthen and revitalize relationships with the land & cultural traditions through canoeing. This work focuses on one operating in Manitoba - Waterways

AIM

- Gather perceived benefits of connecting Indigenous youths to cultural traditions and the environment
- Assess changes in youths physical, mental and spiritual states, and sense of awareness and curiosity for the environment following canoe programs
- Evaluate the ability of canoeing and land-based learning in reframing interactions with the natural world

METHODS

- Interviews were conducted with 10 staff who facilitated canoe programs for Indigenous youths
- Interview responses were compared with previous work in the field of land-based learning, de-colonizing education and human-nature relations
- Responses were thematized, as displayed here

THEMES

Cultural Ties

- Canoes were not seen only as useful for daily life, but as living beings that framed social relations and played a role in forming ceremony, spirituality, and identity
- "In Indigenous cultures, previously the canoe used to be considered part of the family, and, I think by facilitating more time in a boat and a canoe kids begin to remember that familial tie to being on the land and on the water"

Connection to the Land

- Canoeing is a way for youths to explore a deeper understanding of their own identity within their cultures, and that of the natural world
- Due to the influence of traditional lands on Indigenous traditions and spiritual connections, environmental health is directly related to community and human health

Decolonizing Land-Based Education

- Culture and land are approached as two separate subjects in Canadian colonial education curricula, which implies an invalidity of Indigenous ways of knowing
- Developing recreation and sport programming to encourage activity for Indigenous youth through programming interwoven with cultural teachings, although intricate under colonial structures, can have transformative effects

CONCLUSION

- Many Indigenous communities health, identity, and overall community relations and operations are influenced by the natural world
- Interviews found that canoeing can facilitate a reconnection with ancestral and cultural ties, improve self-confidence, and deepen understanding and appreciation for nature

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