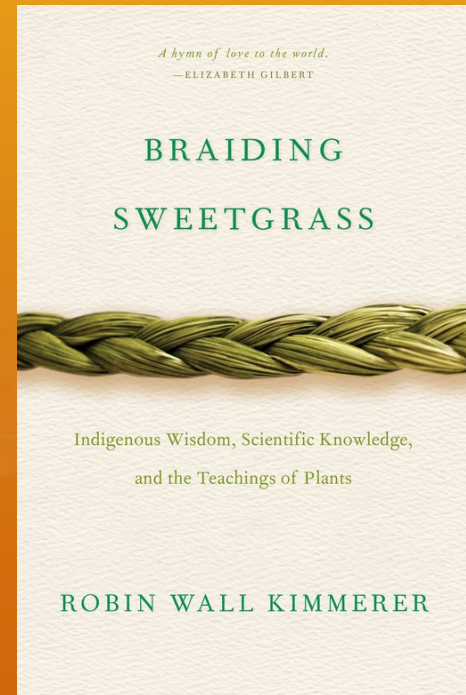
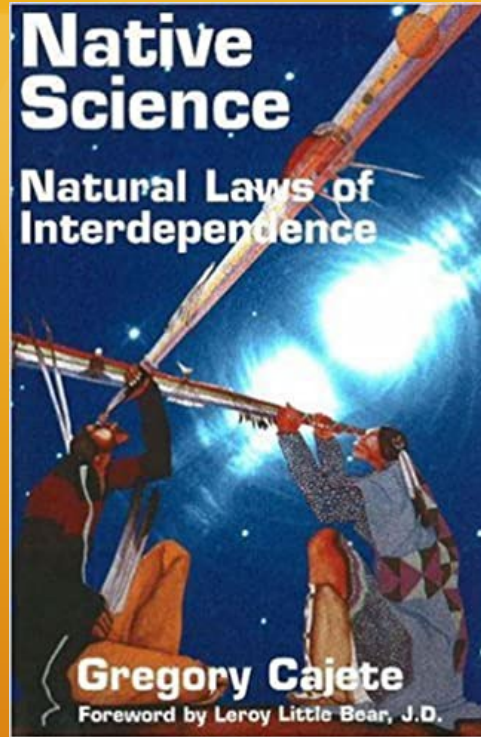


2022 Alaska Indigenous Research Program

Indigenous Knowings

Indigenous Ways of Knowing,
Being, Doing and Becoming



Knowledge of Place

River or community names in southcentral and interior Alaska that end in:

-nu

-na

-no/no'

-nika



**Eniq
(Innoko River)**

**Sidithniqay: Albert, James,
Lena**



Dinayetr: Our worldview, breath, way
of knowing/being/doing

Nikyagh

Sito' legg it'oth.





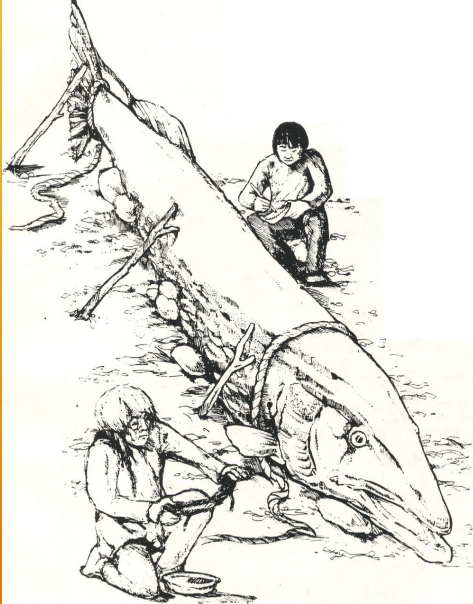
Giyema Otter mask

By Billy Williams (Deg Xinag Athabaskan), circa 1971.
Masks were rare among Athabaskan tribes. The Deg
Xinag had close ties to neighboring Yup'ik, who have a rich
masking tradition.

II-C-177



AKNS 230: Oral Traditions of Alaska Natives



(p. 5)

Belle Deacon

Athabascan Basketmaker

1992 NEA National Heritage Fellow
Grayling, Alaska

Theme Areas

Oral Traditions as Knowledge
Oral Traditions as Pedagogy
Oral Traditions as Science
Oral Traditions and Research



Belle has participated in shows sponsored by the Institute of Alaska Native Arts and the University of Alaska Museum highlighting the works of Native artists. (Photo by Rose Atuk Fosdick from *Interwoven Expressions*, courtesy of the Institute of Alaska Native Arts.)

(p. ix)

Deacon, B. (1987). *Engithidong xugixudhoy: Their stories of long ago*. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.

Oral traditions: Connections between and among language, history and wisdom

Xinag	language
Deg Xinag	local language language from around here
Yidong	long ago
Yidong Xinag	long ago language the old wisdom the ancestors' language

What is Raven?



Bird
Non-human
Non-sentient
Scavenger
Noisy

Sitsiy (Kinship Section, p. 26)

Yixgitsiy (Birds Section, p. 13)

Yixgitsiy Nołchidl
(Plants Section, p. 23)

Yixgitsiy Vozra' (Birds
Section, p. 13)

My Grandfather

Raven, 'you guys'
grandfather'

Puffball Mushroom,
'Raven's bag'

Blackbird, 'Raven's
nephew'

Kari, J. (1978). Deg Xinag/Ingalik noun dictionary (preliminary). Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.

Who is Raven?



Sentient
Intelligent
Mischievous
Creator
Teacher
You guys' grandfather

Deg Xinag	English	Comments by James Dementi
<i>Xilghiy</i>	Frog	When frogs are making noise, the whitefish come in the springtime. When a whole bunch of frogs are making noise they say the fish are coming: " <i>legg ghilux.</i> "

Osgood notes the belief that “the longer the frogs croak in the spring, the more fish there will be in the runs.

Osgood, C. (1959). *Ingalik Mental Culture*. Volume 56. New Haven, CT: Department of Anthropology, Yale University (p. 138).

Deg Xinag	English	Literal Translation	Comments by James Dementi
<i>Łeggi ney</i>	Flycatcher, Junco (called fish bird locally)	“fish” it says/calls	When they first [start calling] they’re far back in the woods – as the fish get closer they’re coming out. Can be just one or two birds calling in early June.

The Deg Xinag Learners’ Dictionary lists the same term for the junco with a slight spelling variation ***Łegg ne***. The entry also includes the call of the junco: “***Łegg yiq, Łegg yiq, di’ne,***” literally, ‘fish are coming in, fish are coming in, junco says.’

We say that the chickadees are always talking to the people...and we're told that we should always pay attention when the chickadees speak to us.



Kimmerer, R. W. (2021). Gifts of the land: A guided nature tour with Robin Wall Kimmerer. The Commons KU.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxJUFGIPYn4>

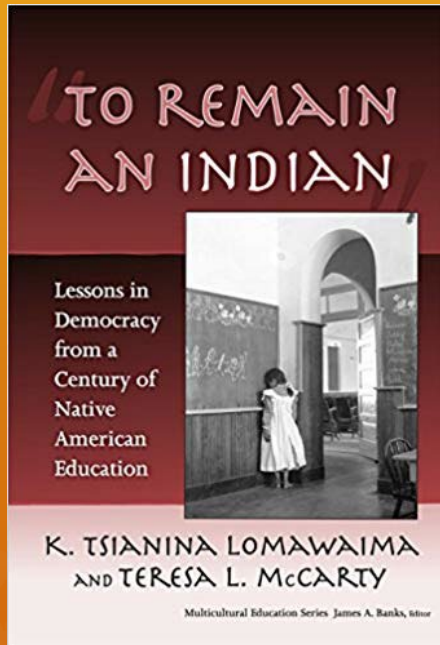
There are a lot of old stories about the chickadees talking about changes in the weather, warning people about things that are on the wind...those old stories that say we could learn from the birds and benefit from their counsel is something that gets dismissed as **fairytale**s or **folklore**, but when you really do start to listen, they're not just making noise. They're talking to each other, and why not talking to us as well.

Deg Xinag Xinaxidilighusrdi 2002

Classificatory Verbs

Deg Xinag	English translation
<i>Giliggi nalyagh ethok ye tas'ot.</i>	[You sg.] Put one potato in the pot .
<i>Teqa nalyagh ethok ye tatlat.</i>	[You sg.] Put two potatoes in the pot .
<i>Doghiyiq vito tastrik.</i>	I'll put salt in.
<i>Te ethok ye tasngit.</i>	I'll put/pour water in the pot .
<i>Te ethok ye ngingit.</i>	You put/pour water in the pot .

“Primitive” Native societies were assumed to entirely lack or possess only rudimentary forms of the building blocks of a civilized society, such as governing bodies, codes of law, or organized religion...communities were assumed to be deficient in pedagogical theories and methods, Native individuals were assumed to lack the verbal, cognitive, and even motor skills necessary to succeed in schools. (p. 16)



Lomawaima, K. T. & T. L McCarty. (2006). *To remain an Indian: Lessons in democracy from a century of Native American education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

The jail/stockade at Carlisle Indian boarding school, where Native American children were locked up for various minor infractions, like "stealing" food from the kitchen because they were so hungry from starvation diets; or running away because they wanted to go home...prisoners in the U.S. war to "Kill the Indian and save the Man." — at Carlisle Indian Industrial School (Yellowbird, 2018)

Haskell Indian Nations University
Cultural Center and Museum



Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. Y. (2000). Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd.

Can be described as the
“expression of vibrant
relationships between the people,
their ecosystems, and the other
living beings and spirits that
share their land” (p. 41).

Battiste M (2002) Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations. Prepared for the National Working Group on Education and the Minister of Indian Affairs. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

Indigenous knowledge is also inherently tied to land, not to land in general but to particular landscapes, landforms, and biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated. (p. 13)

In what ways have Indigenous Knowledges and Sciences contributed to our ways of living and/or academic disciplines?

Political organization

One of the most important political institutions borrowed from the Indians was the caucus...the word comes from the Algonquian languages. The caucus permits informal discussion on an issue without necessitating a yea or nay vote on any particular question. (p. 145)

Weatherford, J. (1988). *Indian givers: How the Indians of the Americas transformed the world*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

In what ways have Indigenous Knowledges/Sciences contributed to our ways of living or academic disciplines?

Political organization

The Iroquois Confederacy, founded by the Great Peacemaker in 1142¹, is the oldest living participatory democracy on earth². In 1988, the U.S. Senate paid tribute with a resolution³ that said, "The confederation of the original 13 colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy, as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the constitution itself."

<https://www.pbs.org/native-america/blogs/native-voices/how-the-iroquois-great-law-of-peace-shaped-us-democracy/>

The long-strand cotton of the American Indians so surpassed the quality of the puny cotton of the Old World that the Spaniards mistook American Indian cloth for silk and interpreted its abundance as yet further proof that these new lands lay close to China. For thousands of years before the European conquest of America the Indians had been using this carefully developed cotton to weave some of the finest textiles in the world (p. 43)...the overwhelmingly majority of the cottons grown today are of American origin (p. 45).

Weatherford, J. (1988). *Indian givers: How the Indians of the Americas transformed the world*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Indigenous Science/s

The Aztecs paralleled in many regards the European organization of medicine at that time, and in some ways surpassed it. Even today no steel scalpel has ever been made that cuts sharper than the obsidian implements of the Aztec surgeons. Only the laser beam can cut a finer incision. (p. 188)

Weatherford, J. (1988). *Indian givers: How the Indians of the Americas transformed the world*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Indigenous Science/s

From the very first contacts between the Old and the New World, European doctors recognized that the Indians held the key to the world's most sophisticated pharmacy. Medicine in most of the world at that time had not yet risen far above witchcraft and alchemy...the Indians of American had refined a complex set of active drugs that produced physiological and not merely psychological effects in the patient. This cornucopia of new pharmaceutical agents became the basis for modern medicine and pharmacology. (pp. 183-4)

Weatherford, J. (1988). *Indian givers: How the Indians of the Americas transformed the world*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Indigenous Science/s

The Yolngu people, in north eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, long recognised how the tides are linked to the phases of the moon.

Back in the early 17th century, Italian scientist Galileo Galilei was still proclaiming, incorrectly, that the moon had nothing to do with tides.

Norris, R. (2014). Aboriginal People - How to misunderstand their science. *Our World*: United Nations University. <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/aboriginal-people-how-to-misunderstand-their-science>

Indigenous Science

<http://tapestryinstitute.org/programs/indigenous-science/processes-indigenous-science/>

Western science *also* includes processes such as sensation, perception, imagination, emotion, symbols, and spirit...In fact, those processes are the hallmarks of some of our greatest scientists. Evelyn Fox Keller wrote of her interviews with Barbara McClintock, Nobel laureate geneticist, that “it became clear that the communal premise of McClintock’s work went well beyond the relationship between the genes and the scientist who studied them . . . Over and over again she tells us one must have the time to look, the patience to ‘hear what the material has to say to you,’ the openness to ‘let it come to you.’ Above all, one must have ‘a feeling for the organism.” (cited in [Palmer, 1998:55](#)).

Cajete, G. (2000b). *Native science: Natural laws of interdependence*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.

Native science is a metaphor for a wide range of tribal processes of perceiving, thinking, acting, and ‘coming to know’ that have evolved through human experience with the natural world.

Native science is born of a lived and storied participation with the natural landscape. To gain a sense of Native science one must participate with the natural world. (p. 2)

IK and the Sciences: Parallels and Convergences

Quantum theory & modern physics –
“stuff of the universe cannot be reduced to billiard-ball atoms, but exists at the boundary of what we call matter and energy” (p. 7).

“Nature is not a collection of objects in interaction, but a flux of processes” (p. 7).

Peat, F. D. (2002). *Blackfoot physics: A journey into the Native American universe*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press.

Peat, F. D. (2002). *Blackfoot physics: A journey into the Native American universe*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press.

Within Indigenous science, thoughts are inseparable from language. The language that is spoken is not simply a medium, or vehicle for communication, rather it is a living thing, an actual physical power within the universe. The vibrations of its words are energies that act within the transforming processes we call reality.
(p. 224)

