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Yanawana Pedagogies: Learning with Coahuiltecan Water Teachings

Pédagogies Yanawana : apprendre avec les enseignements de l'Eau de Coahuiltecan

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Women and Water: The Flow of Matriculture
Les femmes et l'eau : le flux des systèmes matriculturels

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Article abstract

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Some folks chose lakes, oceans, rivers, some shared a name in English, some named their home Waters by their ancestral languages. As a collective, we took in a deep breath, and dropped down into our bodies, and into relational ways of knowing and being in community. We were ready to begin.

As Indigenous educators, we are responsible and response-able (Kuokkanen, 2007) to our home communities, to our human and more-than-human kin (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020) and to each other to follow cultural protocols that prepare us for our work. In this paper, we reflect on our learning journeys, discussing our roles as Water protectors, mothers, community organizers, and scholars, and offer three examples of ongoing Water work.

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MARISSA AKI'NENE MUÑOZ, PABLO MONTES, AND MARLEEN VILLANUEVA

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Keywords: Indigenous pedagogy, Yanawana, Coahuiltecan, Native American, matriculture

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Resumen

En honor al lugar que estábamos visitando, Marleen se despertó temprano en la mañana para recoger Agua del Gran Lago Michigan que estaba cercano, y con amor creamos un altar improvisado con flores frescas y rebozos. Abrimos el círculo con una canción pública sobre el/la Agua sagrada y luego empezamos las introducciones: "Por favor, comparte tu nombre, pronombres y cuales Aguas te sostienen como tu hogar."

Algunas personas eligieron lagos, océanos, ríos; algunas/os compartieron un nombre en inglés, otras nombraron sus Aguas de origen en sus lenguas ancestrales. Como colectivo, tomamos una respiración profunda, nos sumergimos en nuestros cuerpos y en formas relacionales de conocer y de estar en comunidad. Estábamos listas/os para comenzar.

*Como educadores indígenas, somos responsables y tenemos la capacidad de responder (*Kuokkanen, 2007*) ante nuestras comunidades de origen, ante nuestros parientes humanos y más-que-humanos* (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020), *y ante los demás, siguiendo los protocolos culturales que nos han preparado para nuestro trabajo. En este artículo, reflexionamos sobre nuestros caminos de aprendizaje, discutiendo nuestros roles como protectores del Agua, madres, organizadores comunitarios y académicos, y ofrecemos tres ejemplos de trabajo continuo con el/la Agua.*

Palabras clave: Pedagogía indígena, Yanawana, Coahuilteca, nativos americanos, matricultura

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Résumé

En l'honneur de l'endroit que nous visitions, Marleen s'est réveillé tôt le matin pour récupérer de l'eau du Grand Lac voisin, et nous avons créé avec amour un autel de fortune composé de fleurs fraîches et de rebozos. Nous avons ouvert le cercle avec une chanson publique sur l'Eau sacrée, puis sommes passés aux introductions : "S'il vous plaît, partagez votre nom, vos pronoms et quelles Eaux quelles eaux vous semblent être votre foyer. »

Certaines personnes ont choisi des lacs, des océans, des rivières, d'autres ont partagé un nom en anglais, d'autres ont nommé leurs Eaux d'origine d'après leurs langues ancestrales. En tant que collectif, nous avons pris une profonde inspiration et nous sommes plongés dans nos corps et dans des manières

relationnelles de connaître et d'être en communauté. Nous étions prêts à commencer.

*En tant qu'éducateurs autochtones, nous sommes responsables et capables de répondre (*Kuokkanen, 2007*) envers nos communautés d'origine, envers nos parents humains et plus qu'humains (*Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020*) et les uns envers les autres pour suivre les protocoles culturels qui nous préparent à notre travail. Dans cet article, nous réfléchissons à nos parcours d'apprentissage, discutons de nos rôles en tant que protectrices de l'eau, mères, organisatrices communautaires et universitaires, et proposons trois exemples de travaux en cours axés sur l'Eau.*

Mots-clés : Pédagogie autochtone, Yanawana, Coahuiltecan, Amérindiens, matriculture

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Introduction

Charlie picked me up at about 5am. We had both not slept much the night before but Charlie showed up at 5am and so we drove to Lake Michigami.

I had asked Charlie if they would take me to the Waters so that we could leave offerings, merge our home-Waters, Yanawana, with the Lake Waters in gratitude for allowing us to enjoy a few days on the traditional unceded homeLands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. Many other tribes, such as the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, and Sac and Fox, also called this area home. We knew we'd have to ask the Lake Waters if we could gather some Water to ensure that they would be present during our presentation happening later that day.

We parked, people were already jogging, cops were already lurking. We brought out our sacred items and approached the Water. Offerings were made, people stared, we sang songs, Waters merged, and permission was granted to collect the Lake Waters.

As we were closing out, Charlie said: "I didn't know how much I needed the lake, thank you for bringing me back." I hugged Charlie, our friend, community member, local host, and knowledge keeper by the Water, feeling nourished and fulfilled as we looked out onto the Waters in gratitude. This was a coming home, a welcome back, a matriarchal reciprocity.

In this paper, we situate Matriculture as encompassing and engendering the multiple articulations of femininity, matriarchy, gender, and sexual variance. We do so because instead of thinking about 'woman' as a stable category, we draw on Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans Indigenous knowledge and feminisms to disrupt the presumed archaic stability of 'woman.' In other words, we approach Matriculture as already and always incorporating gender expansivity and as a response to the toxicity of cisheteropatriarchy that perpetually reinforces rigid gender binaries due to the continuous violence of settler colonialism (Spillett 2021, Moregenson, 2011).

Water knows no gender, yet encompasses all that gender has, can, and will be. In many communities, women tend to the Waters and many traditions flow through these sacred relations between the matriarchs and Water epistemologies. It is within this understanding that we position the ancestral and traditional Matricultural Water knowledge as flowing beyond colonial renderings of 'women' toward (re)storying Indigenous gender and sexual expansivity. As Two-Spirit Cree scholar Alex Wilson (2008) shares, Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans Indigenous people do not necessarily 'come out,' they 'come-in' to their ancestral roles, community responsibilities, and kinship circles.

Relational Introductions

We are friends, relatives, and scholars, community members who practice our ancestral ways of knowing in, with, and, of Yanawana, a sacred Watershed. Collectively, we are the dreams of our Chichimeca, Tlaxcalteca, Pame, Wixairika, Guamares, Esto'k Gna, Coahuilteca, and P'urépecha ancestors. We belong to Ofelia, Tona, Oscar, Oscar, Norma, Maria, Manuel, Genoveva, Jose, Jose, Margarita, Maria Luisa, Eustacio, Maria Nieves, Angel, Angel, Meshika, Ventura, Chencho, Leonor, Ursula, and Mario. Everything is possible because of, with, and for them.

From our loved ones, we've learned to carry and protect sacred Water, tend medicinal plant relatives, make ancestral foods, to create art, to dance our prayers, birthwork, defend sacred Land, sing medicine songs, and drum as lifeways. We uplift and support our communit(ies) as community organizers, educators, danzantes, thinkers, writers, scientists, scholars, and youth advocates. Home is Yanawana, Somi Se'k, Huatzindeo, Houston, La Huasteca, and wherever we find ourselves in relation/in ceremony. Our ancestral Waters connect us to el Rio Lerma, el Rio Bravo/Grande, Yanawana, el Golfo de Mexico, los manantiales, to each other, to our ancestors, and grandchildren yet to come.

Our collective writing is a reflection, working to theorize our practices (Stepney & Thompson, 2019) as whole human selves, inclusive of the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual ways we contribute to knowledge exchange. Trusting our ancestral

knowledges and intuition, we can speak in different epistemologies to the many layers of meaning necessary to carry Waters.

Originally, we came together to talk about teaching and Yanawana at a big formal educational conference. Instead of thinking our ways through a Powerpoint presentation, devoid of life, devoid of Water, we chose to honor each other as whole beings, and practice our Water teachings in a community of learners.

Creating a Yanawana Sacred Space

While it is true that our gathering together is a sacred practice, the dual reality remains. In places that are inherently and structurally violent, especially in colonial institutions that have long sought to extinguish Indigenous knowledges, our gathering could be understood as an act of disruption, transgression, and defiance against the expected norms of the conference. Context and positionality matter, and for each of us, as three emerging scholars, breaking from professional norms was/is fraught. Even though our intention was to create a safe space in which to share sacred Water pedagogies, nurtured by relational ways of knowing and being, our existence within multiple forms of institutionality created tension for us.

Guided by intuition and ancestral knowledges, and inspired by de/colonial pedagogies of creation resistance (Cintli, 2021) which honor Indigenous ways of knowing and being that exist beyond Western frames of understanding, we created a Yanawana Sacred Space within the large convention center meeting space. In our shared practice of changing the meaning of space through mutual nurturance, our Yanawana Sacred Space became a manifestation of the collective desires and otherwise dreams of our multiple communities.

We were taught to invite our community to co-create a circular sacred space, to make one large circle and intentionally see each other, to listen with our whole selves, and to make space for the ancestral knowledge that resonates in each one of us. Our work models organic and holistic approaches to co-learning, co-creating, and revitalizing Indigenous knowledges. We made our shared space conducive to collective thinking and conviviality. At the center of our circle, we built an altar, using the personal sacred items we each use: our rebozos with beautiful embroidery, fresh local flowers, and Water that was collected from Lake Michigan in prayer at sunrise that morning. Our altar honored Water as Life itself, connecting all beings past, present, and future, as a proleptic ancestor and teacher.

Although our ancestral Waters have carried each of us from a multiplicity of places (San Luis Potosi, Laredo/San Antonio, and Guanajuato), we are connected by our sacred relation to Yanawana, which in the Coahuiltecan language means ‘spirit of the Water;

Water of the spirit.' It is the ancestral name for one of the sacred springs of Central Texas, and the place name of the communities that rely on the Watershed. Yanawana and ancestral water pedagogies (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020; Muñoz, 2019; Montes, 2023) teach us that wherever we journey, wherever the Waters instruct us to go, we must hold Water in the honorable ways that we were taught: Water is agentic, alive, sentient, and life giving. Just as Water in Nature fills the available space and pushes the Land to accommodate its many forms, so too do Yanawana pedagogies need space to exist, thrive, and flow in co-constitutive and restorative ways.

Opening Circle in Good Relations

> Yanawana yo yana
> Yana Yanawana yo yana
> Oh yana, Yanawana yo yana
> Eya na ei nei yo way
> Abuelito, Abuelita escucha mis palabras de cariño y amor
> Oh yana, yanawana yo yana
> Yanawana Eya na ei nei yo way

We opened our community circle through song and prayer, invoking Yanawana by their ancestral name through the Abuelito/Abuelita Water song that we sing in our community. The song speaks to the reverence of Water, and loving relationship to the ancient ones, the Grandmas/Grandpas/Grandparents; it asked permission to pray with the Waters connecting the local Lake Michigan with each of our home Waters, and centered the ancient wisdom of our antepasados.

As a good relation, we each introduced ourselves, and asked those in the circle to share their

- name
- pronouns, and to consider sharing
- Where feels like home?
- What Waters hold you?

The question 'Where are you from?' is always instilled with colonial fragments, especially when considering those in diaspora, refugees, and those with undocumented status for whom the answers can be difficult or dangerous. We therefore decided to re-shape the question to allow people to enter the conversation in whatever way felt right.

The last question 'What Waters hold you?' created an unexpected pause. "No one has ever asked me to name my home Waters," was the repeated preface to a wide variety of

answers. Some folks chose lakes, oceans, rivers, some shared a name in English, some named their home Waters by their own ancestral languages. As a collective, we took in a deep breath, and dropped down into our bodies, into relational ways of knowing and being, and connected as a community of learners. We were ready to begin.

What Waters hold you?

Our Water Stories contain teachings

> Yanawana yo yana
> Yana Yanawana yo yana
> Oh yana, Yanawana yo yana
> Eya na ei nei yo way

Some of the Land-based knowledge we learn is specific to particular places in our local ecologies, to the particular network of mutual nurturance in the rich community of species specific to those places. Many locals know the local plant and animal relatives, and cultivate spiritual ways-of-knowing specific to the places they consider home. When I interviewed my father about the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo, our ancestral Waters, he shared the following story from his childhood,

> Tia Josefa in particular, Tia Josefa was my curandera. She knew to curar de susto, and how to deliver babies. She had all kind of herbs in either alcohol or vodka. I knew if it was in a vodka bottle it was stuff that we were going to be drinking. If it was in an alcohol bottle, I had to bring the alcohol, go buy her the alcohol sometimes it was a whole nickel for alcohol. It wasn't for drinking, it was going to be something that you would rub on.
>
> She would hand me a plant and she'd say, "Alright. See this plant?" Then she gave me a paper bag, and she'd say "Fill this bag with this kind of plant." Or she'd give me two plants and she'd say "Give me a bag of this and a bag of this."
>
> And I remember I asked "What are you going to use it for?" She goes "son para mis remedios." Every once in a while she would tell me what the remedio was, and what it is going to be for. I wish I had remembered and I had asked more questions now.
>
> In her kitchen there was a cupboard that she had with all the remedios. Some of these plants that I would get her would be in like mason jars. No labels,

> she'd just do it. The plants that she would put in mason jars was for making teas, the plants that she would put in vodka…was for drinking, and whatever went into alcohol was going to be for rubbing. So, she had a bunch of them, a bunch of them. Like I said, I never knew [the names of] what I was gathering, I just knew that I was helping her get some of her medicinal remedies. (Oski, 2015, cited in Muñoz, 2018)

My dad's story reminds us that the Land, river, and people are not separate entities, but instead, are an interconnected community of living beings specific to each curve of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. He has taken me to the places he remembers, though the landscape has changed in the last 60 years. I learned about the river from his stories, and by walking the Land, using all my senses, to be present with both human and more-than-human relations. While I can only guess at which plants may have been abundant at the riverside so many years ago, the deep relationships and collective ways of knowing continue as part of daily life with the Rio.

In Spanish, el Rio is gendered as male, while el agua is feminine, but uses masculine grammar. When I write in English of the Rio Grande as my ancestral river, she is often feminine, yet, I default to often call them by both names, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo, to honor Water as alive and sentient and knowing of all aspects of Creation.

For me, the Rio Grande is home, as she has witnessed many generations of my family live along their banks. When I go home, I sing honor songs to them, offer beautiful gifts of flowers or other sacred medicines, and am filled with gratitude for their generosity and nurturance. These are the same practices and responsibilities I carry with me wherever I live. Home is now in Yanawana, a few hours north. Just as Water moves across the Landscape, I imagine my voice to carry the honor songs across the Landscape, connecting me home.

> Where feels like home?
> What Waters hold you?

I share a dream that was gifted to me after a Water ceremony a group of us did in Austin, TX. As Yanawana pedagogies ask, we brought flowers, our sacred medicine, instruments, and our songs to one of the Sacred Springs of the Coahuiltecan people - tza wan pupako (colonially known as Barton Springs in Austin). We gifted flowers, songs, and medicine to the Water as the sun descended behind us. That night, my Grandma, Mama Gino, visited me. I share the dream, which has been written elsewhere, on how our relation with Water, gifted me this dream with my now ancestor:

> One day I was missing my grandma, Mama Gino, who is now an ancestor. It had been a couple years since her earthly departure, and for some reason, I was worried that one day I would forget what her voice sounded like. I thought about her all day and kept replaying her voice in my head to give myself the comfort of knowing that her voice is still etched into my memory. I remember chuckling at how she would always call me *mija* (daughter), which is a word of endearment, whenever she would talk to me. Although this may seem mundane, this simple act somehow made me feel validated as a Queer person even though she may have never known. That night, I dreamt of picking blue dawns. In my dream, I felt that I was drifting away from Mama Gino, and I asked her to guide me in remembering and to give me a sign that she was still here. Blurry with tears, I looked down and I saw blue dawns emerging from the green earth beneath my feet. In the most soothing way, I heard Mama Gino say "ve a agarrarlas" (go grab them). I picked the flowers as she instructed me and as I held them near, I heard her say "si vez, nunca voy a estar lejos de ti porque yo estoy en todas las flores que te rodean. Cuando me extrañes, escoje una flor y habla con ella, y yo estare ahi para escucharte" (you see, I will never be far away from you because I am in all the flowers that surround you. When you miss me, choose a flower, and talk to it, and I will be there to listen to you). That year, I planted blue dawns in my backyard as a way to thank my now ancestor for what she taught me that night. Mama Gino spoke life into the lesson that ancestors will always be present, regardless of how much time has passed. She reminded me that picking blue dawns was an act of honoring ancestor epistemologies (Montes, 2022: 1-2).

Although my Grandma never knew of my gender and sexual identity, I felt that her ways of knowing always already encompassed my Queer subjectivity. Water has no gender, no sexuality, yet engenders all that has been and could possibly be. Water has reminded me that existing as a Queer person, whose gender flows like Water knowledge, is both a gift and a lesson. Mama Gino calling me daughter, and not correcting it, was an act of engendering Queer possibilities, because she saw no difference in calling me *mija* or *mijo*; *she recognized me just being*. What, then, could ancestor epistemologies teach us about honoring Water, honoring the Queer self, and the ways of being that are interlocked and flowing with each other? Yanawana pedagogies have taught me that existing beyond the coloniality of the gender binary, is really an act of (re)remembering and (re)Storying. Even more so, the Water story I have shared repairs and restores my ancestor relations amidst the remnants of cisheteropatriarchy and settler sexualities that continue to wash over my family. I exist because of the cumulative nature of Water and therefore, all the rivers and tributaries that run their course through my veins, engender all the possibilities of what the Queer self can ever be; that is the lesson that Mama Gino has given me.

> Abuelito, Abuelita escucha mis palabras de cariño y amor
> Oh yana, yanawana yo yana

In 2016, I received an invitation to a Water pilgrimage where Coahuiltecan community members led a group of us to collect Water at four sacred springs. It is here that an elder of the community reminded us that being there, hearing the call, and accepting the responsibility to the Water was much bigger than a one-time event. This elder told us that by being there at the Water, we had chosen to carry the responsibility to protect the Water for the rest of our lives. I remember how we blew the tobacco smoke into the Water. This was the first time that what elders had been saying for so long became material reality. I had been told that Water speaks to us. That we are all capable of hearing what the Water says, interpreting the language of the Water. For years, I thought I knew what that meant. I approached the Water with respect and care and love. However, until this moment I had not experienced such an intimate moment with the Water. This time, as the smoke blew into the Water, I began to ask the Water what I could do to reciprocate the love that I felt from the Water. The smoke blended into the Water as these prayers/thoughts came forth and I began to hear the Water's response. This response wasn't audio as I may have imagined that it should be. The response was seeing how the swirls of smoke in the Water became shining stars. The Water was finding a way to communicate with me that I was finally able to understand. In that moment, I realized that the Water was asking me if I was open to carrying the responsibility to protect all Waters. I saw the stars as the question and I found myself bowing to the Water in reverence. I accepted the responsibility. I told the Water that I would go anywhere that Yanawana wanted me to go. That I would work hard to always listen to what the Water asked of me. A pact of protection was created. The stars shone in gratitude and my tears flowed down my cheeks in reciprocating gratitude.

Learning from our Water Stories

Kinship and kin-making

> But what does it mean to be *good* relatives—to not only recognize our kinship but to be *good* kin? Because, for Indigenous peoples, kinship is not simply a matter of being like a brother or sister to somebody. It carries specific responsibilities depending on the kind of relationship we agree upon (Krawec, 2022: 18-19).

As Krawec (2022) illustrates, kinship and kin-making is an act of responsibility. One is not simply 'related' to someone else but being *in* relation and forming kinships is embedded with a far more ontological importance. *Who* are we in relation? *What* shapes our

kinship? Kim Tallbear (2019) invites us to imagine otherwise relations and to move beyond the perpetual centering of normative kinship ties, such as non-monogamous legal marriage and nuclear biological family, toward other kinds of intimacies that exist beyond the settler notions of relationships. The Water stories we have shared shape our relations with ancestors, Land and Waters, and each other and usher in a possibility of radical intimacies. Through and with Water we learn that being guided toward other Water kin is an ancestral practice, that communal interconnectivity is far more powerful than borderizations, and that Queerness is a sacred subjectivity. Our authored stories ebb and flow between and with each other and (e)merging as an interconnected tapestry instead of isolated experiences with Yanawana. These stories shared *are our relationships* (Wilson, 2008) and hold our theories (Brayboy, 2005) and it is within this understanding that Water is both kin and an epistemological space by which kinships are made. We honor our Water stories and place them in the larger ripple of Water knowledges that began before us and that now extend further because of us.

Water is life, Water holds memory, Water has agency, Water is an ancestor and everyone and everything is connected through Water. These Water teachings allow for a shift in perspective towards accountability to Water, or Water view: the ways in which we are accountable for how Water views us (Yazzie & Baldy, 2018). Specifically, Yanawana teachings, therefore, ask us to sit with the myriad of possibilities for how the sacred Waters of Yanawana view us as kin and what the process of consent in this kinship may look like. What kind of relative are we to our ancestral Waters?

Nick Estes (2019), Kul Wicasa, a citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate, explains that to the Oceti Sakowin, enacting kinship is equivalent to *woyakuye* (being a good relative). *Woyakuye* involves honoring relations and including more-than-human beings in these relations. To the Oceti Sakowin, the Missouri River, or Mni Sose is a relative. Being a good relative to Mni Sose means standing up for and protecting Water, Land, animals, and humans from the “trespass of settlers, pipelines, and dams” (Estes, 2019: 21). We can understand the concept as contextual, full of tension, and specific to the places considered home to their community.

In a similar vein, Secwépemc scholar Melpatkwa Matthew (2020) engages with the concept of *k’wseltknéws*, which refers to Secwépemc kinship, although the English language falls short in translating the complexity and embodiment of *k’wseltknéws*. Embedded in the language are the theoretical and methodological frameworks that bring forth relationality and Secwépemc life ways, to reveal how Secwépemc peoples relate to Water, learn from Water, and are responsible to Water. *K’wseltknéws* as Secwépemc grounded normativity allows for Matthew to center the lived experiences and relations with Land/place/Water in order to open “opportunities to imagine Secwépemc knowledge outside of settler-colonial ideologies and capitalist modes of production” (2020: 3).

Secwépemc ways of knowing and being (as kin) exist independently of colonial ideas. For those of us for whom our ancestral languages are not our default frames for understanding may mourn our lack of fluency, however, notions of kin-making, Land and Water knowledges, and ancestral practices from our own families and communities offer guidance.

Queer(ing) Land and Water relations

Alex Wilson (2021) shares

> queering Land-based education also demands our focus on what might best be described as 'reconstructive practices,' that is, the radical reclamation and reassertion of Indigenous peoples' queer cosmologies, of our relationships with the Land and the beings and forces who share that Land with us, and of the knowledge and practices that have nourished and animated these relationships and enabled and supported our survival, sustainability and wellbeing (224).

Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans Indigenous feminisms encourage us to remember that gender and sexual expansivity has always already existed, and that colonialism and settler sexualities were failed attempts to eradicate Two-Spirit subjectivities (Wilson, 1996; Driskill, 2004; Simpson, 2017; Scott & Kinanâskomitinâwâw, 2024; Moregenson, 2011). Water is genderful (rather than gender-less), and is all-engendering. As long as Water brings us together, they guide our mobilities across and through space, time, and geographies, we (re)charge the spaces that are marked with colonial violences (Montes, forthcoming). Yanawana teaches us that we carry ancestral epistemologies wherever we go. Just like the process that feeds the sacred springs and from which Yanawana emerges, Water enacts a curricular mobility, always instilling the importance of flowing, tracing back, and shaping forward (Montes, forthcoming). As we explore Water teachings that are proleptic, cyclical, and genderful, revitalizing ancestral kinships, we are reminded by the contrast of how colonization interrupted the many inclusive two-spirited Indigenous ways of knowing and being in relation to our Lands and Waters.

Water-based education informs our return to Matriculture as an act of restoring, restorying, and storying our collective and relational well-being, reconceptualizing how we attend to struggles for Water justice as parallels to gender and queer justice. In this respect, queering our Land and Water relations actively reframes the man vs. nature trope as colonial, gendered violence against a passive and inanimate natural world.

> Indigenous Water justice recognises that Water is a living entity. In doing so, Water justice moves beyond conceptualisations solely focused on fairness,

> equity and participation of humans in Water decisionmaking, to also include relationality. It asks – "What does the Water need?" (Leonard *et al*., 2023: 396).

Indeed, to do so, we must also examine what tools we have to answer such questions:

> What Waters hold you?
> What do those Waters need?

Relational Ecologies

From this intergenerational and ontological perspective, kinship also requires us to reconceptualize notions of ecology, as well as our roles and responsibilities to the places and spaces we live. *Being-in-relation (*Muñoz, 2018) is a play on the phrase *human being*, which is considered a noun referring to humans. However, when inclusive of humans and non-human beings, defined relationally, the phrase gently reminds us that we humans are one tiny aspect of a dynamic universe, neither superior to nor apart from the natural world, but simply as a being in relation to other beings. Shifting the definition from a noun to the verb form of *being*, and to the specific ties and relationships of always *being-in-relation* to other beings, we recognize our being-ness requires attention. For example, when we prepare to begin ceremony or engage with ancestral knowledges, we intentionally focus our attention to be grounded and present as beings-in-relation, in community. When we welcome our Land and Water relatives, we call them by their ancestral names, or offer a song to honor their presence as beings-in-relation.

Building on this idea, as an engaged community of beings-in-relation, we can then understand how knowledge arises from beings in relation to the Land and Waters (Armstrong, 1998), in a dynamic system of relational ecologies. The flora and fauna, temperament of the rivers, seasonality of movement and energy cycles have meaning whether humans are present or not. When we allow ourselves to be present and attuned to our relational ecologies, the collective memory and ancestral knowledges arise as teachings that we might otherwise be too distracted to notice.

Collective Memory and Living Archives

Many cultures honor their elders as living archives, because they remember the stories, histories, and collective changes over their lifetimes. We extend this recognition to also understand our Waters and Lands as elder relatives, as living archives who also remember. In our own communal understandings of Water, Water simultaneously holds and *is* memory. Water holds the memories of our epistemologies, our communal responsibilities, and our ceremonial protocols. In many ways, Water is a living archive always already

woven through and by our collective memories. *Collective memory* seeks to understand how a community subjectively constructs meaning from historical events, which often include interpretations, emotions, reflections of identity, and political positions (Hom & Yamamoto, 2000). Collective memory works to narrate historical events with multiple voices from an embodied and emplaced perspective (Riaño-Alcalá & Baines, 2011), and is automatically positioned as a form of resistance against imposed dominant narratives of history (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Calderon, 2014) which normalize colonization, and therefore, can be understood as intellectual colonialism (Castillo & Tabuenca-Córdoba, 2002; Gaudry, 2011; Rodríguez, 2014). For Native and Indigenous communities, interventions such as decolonizing (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012), Indigenizing (Smith, 1999; Simpson, 2014), as well as the articulation of queer subjectivities (Wilson, 1996; Driskill, 2004; Simpson, 2017) and insurgent (Gaudry, 2011) and oppositional consciousness(es) (Sandoval, 2000), and creation resistance (Cintli, 2021) interrupt colonial structures to revitalize the Indigenous world (Smith, 1999), free from the expectation of reacting to colonial forces, values, or narratives. Ceremony lives in our collective cultural memory, as a cultural practice passed down through the generations, offering an alternative epistemological orientation to what it means to be, how we move through time, and how to be good relatives.

Response-ability

Kuokkanen writes the "self and the world are not separate entities" (2007: 41), but are connected by a "response-ability – that is, an ability to respond, to remain attuned to the world beyond oneself" (39). Beings within a relational ecology are connected by their response-ability, inclusive of animate and less animate beings. For example, while we can easily consider the potential response-abilities when we observe mobile beings, such as humans or squirrels (as an example of a more-than-human being), and less mobile living beings, such as deciduous trees, we might also consider also the response-abilites of Land, and, by extension, Water. While for some, Land is inclusive of and foundational of all Creation, inclusive of Water, we intentionally honor Water, in their many forms, as a being-in-relation, response-able and responsive to Land, to Sky, to other beings-in-relation. Our understanding of Water is not subsumed into, nor is it entirely dependent on Land. Water's abilities to respond are different than Land, depending on each context of relational ecology. Perhaps it is the slight difference in each's abilities to respond that differentiates Land from Water.

When Cruikshank (2005) asked "Do glaciers listen?" she invited readers to examine how ancestral knowledge is embedded in Native languages, and shared by those in the local community who benefit from the collective memory and understandings of the human glacier relations that is crucial for survival where they live. Colonization does not recognize

the meanings that come from fluency with the glaciers, from deeply knowing how humans and glaciers are connected. Strang elaborates,

> Water's diversity is, in some respects, a key to its meanings. Here is an object that is endlessly transmutable, moving readily from one shape to another: from ice to steam, from vapour to rain, from fluid to steam…The process of transformation never ceases: Water is always undergoing change, movement and progress (Strang, 2005: 98-99).

We push Strang's connections between form and meaning further, positing that Water as ancestor and living archive of collective memory, is endlessly response-able to, for, and with life. Water that connects us to each other, to the generations before and after us, *is life itself*. What are our response-abilities and responsibilities to our Waters as a cycle of mutual reciprocity as kin? The notions of relational ecologies and response-abilities encourages us to zoom out and consider the other-than-human beings who share our Lands and the Waters. To do so decenters our default (colonial) frames of human exceptionalism to recognize our response-abilities to all of life itself.

Future Facing Education

Interestingly, as educators, when we have such conversations with adults, feedback often includes feeling like our work is a gentle reminder of teachings they once knew. Stories invite stories, activating ancestral knowledges that - no matter how distant - resonate differently than formal institutional teachings. It feels familiar.

However, when working with young people, who have not had the experiences of extended time in formal (colonial) education, or preconceived notions of nature, Land and Water teachings are intuitive and easily learned, offering gentle lessons of how to experience the natural world around us. As such, Indigenous youth (and we argue other historically and systematically marginalized youth) have to unlearn the colonial notions that portray a false separation between themselves and the rest of creation. For example, Fast *et al*., (2021) shares how through a Land-based retreat for Indigenous youth, youth recognized the impact of colonialism in their communities, but more importantly, they were able to reconnect and create a wider web of knowledge and resistance to the colonial paradigm, creating deeper relations within the Indigenous community, speaking more openly with new knowledge, and becoming more of who they have always been (131).

Similarly, Water teachings remind us of our responsibilities as beings-of-Water; for who are we but the streams, springs, waves, and currents that shape our geographies, emplace

our kinships, and embody our subjectivities. We conclude our paper by suggesting we *weave an otherwise education* (Tachine & Nicolazzo, 2023) that honors and centers Water knowledge. In many ways, a Water-based education "[deepens] an otherwise that honors being in relations with each other, the land, and expansive waterways, and more-than-human beings."(2) In doing so, we envision a future facing path for education that builds on ancestral knowledges towards a cyclical, proleptic, genderful, relational reciprocity with Lands, Waters, and Life itself.

In this article, our Water stories traveled downstream, serpentined though valleys, and emptied in the gulf as tiny tributaries in the river of cultural collective memory in this place of Waters called Yanawana. True to our responsibilities and response-abilites as educators, we offer the following activity to remind us to more fully be beings-of-Water, moving toward a collective and relational future.

Water is kin Imprinting Water Activity

We returned from our Water teaching meanderings to bring our awareness back to our Yanawana Sacred Space, our circle, and asked that those who chose to participate please fill their cups or Water bottles with fresh drinking Water. We shared the work of Dr. Masaru Emoto (2005, 2011) who first suggested Water consciousness, demonstrating how Water is responsive to human words and intentions, and how Water holds memory. We shared the photographs of his Water work, of his process of imprinting emotions into Water and freezing, to produce beautiful frozen Water crystals when Water is regarded with positive intentions and words, and compared the distortions in the Water forms when negative words or thoughts were imprinted into the Water.

While today's technology is helpful in producing photographs of Water crystals, our ancestors have always known the power of imprinting emotions and sentiments in Water. This explains why many Native and Indigenous traditions speak of bringing offerings to the Waters: flowers, sacred medicines, songs, and prayers. These ceremonial traditions imprint Water with good energy, thoughts, and intentions, fortifying our home Waters for the benefit and well-being of all Creation and of all our relations. We shared our practices of imprinting Water as a practice of being-in-relation.

To practice this ancestral knowledge, we gently reminded each other that we are responsible for what we imprint in all Waters, including our internal Waters. We kindly asked participants to consider adding a closing thought, word, or intention reflective of how they felt to close out our learning time, and modeled how to speak good things into our Water(s), which we drank, to bring the Water teachings full of love and respect into our internal Waters. In doing so, we recognized ourselves as bodies of Water, beings-of-

Water, worthy of beautiful offerings. Drinking from our Waters also reminded us that we have the capacity not only to imprint our internal Waters, but also about the impact and imprint that our words can have on all bodies and beings of Water. What we give to the Water, we give to ourselves.

> Yanawana yo yana
> Yana Yanawana yo yana
> Oh yana, Yanawana yo yana
> Eya na ei nei yo way
> Abuelito, Abuelita escucha mis palabras de cariño y amor
> Oh yana, yanawana yo yana
> Yanawana Eya na ei nei yo way.

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