

Global City / Global Village: A Story the Longhouse Could Tell to the Shopping Mall

Paula Sampson

Contemporary scholarship recognizes the significance of place in urban contexts. Many argue that the modern emphasis on time relative to place requires recalibration if global life is to survive and flourish. One place to find a calibration tool is within many of the world's tribal communities which give primacy to landscape and location. In Aboriginal communities, kinship with place forms the basis for all social and economic transactions. Even in the twenty-first century, these ancient understandings survive and reveal themselves in the protocols and possibilities of Aboriginal narratives. It is narrative practice which links place and time and maintains the balance between them, avoiding the temporal and individualistic practices now giving rise to urban struggle, consumerism and environmental degradation. The global city is not a village, but a respectful exploration of how Aboriginal narratives of relationship could inspire more conscious and humane urban habitation is a promising enterprise. For those Aboriginal peoples who, either from necessity or choice, have traded village centrality for urban marginalization, the promise is not only one of consciousness but of justice.

NO PLACE:

Slightly north of center in the Pacific Ocean, Honolulu, Hawaii displays many of the hallmarks by which Saskia Sassen characterizes a global city: international capital investment and banking, multicultural citizenships, communications hub, transnational labor, urban glamour tourism, economic and geographic centrality, in every way a major hub of global trade.¹ Renowned for its strategic military location and as a travel destination, Honolulu has also long been a transoceanic cultural, economic and intra-Pacific educational center. On May 22, 2010 this news item appeared in a Honolulu newspaper beneath the headline, "Developer gets Waikiki deal:"

A real estate investment firm was selected to look into developing the International Market Place in Waikiki, pushing forward the on-again, off-again plans to redevelop the Waikiki bazaar "This popular area will be revitalized with destination retail and dining for tourists and residents alike, and will complement the surrounding area *to reflect the local Hawaiian sense of place*, Stephen Kieras, senior vice president of development for Taubman Centers, said yesterday.²

What do the developers mean by ". . . reflect the local Hawaiian sense of place?" Is this even a goal that Taubman, a Hong Kong subsidiary of a Michigan-based real estate investment trust partnering with a San Francisco real estate firm, could achieve? Who and where are the "local Hawaiians" involved in the planning and decision making? Traditionally for indigenous Hawaiians, land use protocols reside in narrative form with the kapuna (elders) who hold what Leilani Holmes calls "the ancestry of experience." The lament she records from a contemporary kapuna, Tutu Ohi'a, communicates how the protocols exhibit both fragility and endurance:

Today, when we say, "Take care of the land," I don't think many Hawaiians have that because

¹ Sassen, Saskia, "Globalization and its Discontents, in Bridge, Gary and Sophie Watson, eds., *The Blackwell City Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, pp. 161-170.

² Park, Gene, "Developer gets Waikiki deal," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, May, 2010, p. 19.

they live in cities, towns and they live in apartments. The only way they can get it is by us. Us telling them. Take care. Take care of the land. You know the land feeds us. And the rivers give us water. . . I used to hear the old folks talk about that.³

In the world of global cities, time-pressured assumptions and priorities about location often pay little or no attention to the spiritual, theological or moral dimensions of place. This lack, many argue, explains ecological ruin, social alienation and political upheaval worldwide. Accepting there is some truth in that assertion, I argue that balancing time and place in the global city is now an essential goal, for which the western worldview has a model in the approaches of many of the world's Aboriginal cultures. The narrative spiritualities, cultural practices and symbol systems of Aboriginal peoples have much of value to impart to their urban co-inhabitants. Whether an island in the Pacific or a North American river valley thousands of miles away, whether covered by high rise hotels or controlled from distant corporate office buildings, it is all "...still Aboriginal land."⁴ The stories that connected first populations to their places have the capacity to travel with them to the cities where many now live. Additionally, even when commercial city features such as highrises and shopping malls dominate the landscape, the place remains, as does the narrative related to it. The lessons they teach through the cultures they represent retain their power to create meaning. Aboriginal stories are transferable and flexible enough to sustain indigenous populations living in the global cities whose influence now dominates the earth's landscapes and whose consumerist orientation has all but obliterated many tribal landscapes.

Sassen argues that global cities offer opportunity for disempowered minorities to "gain presence."⁵ Many indigenous North American minorities in cities already have presence through an identity inseparably linked to sense of place, balanced with temporality and supported in large part through the use of Aboriginal cultural narratives, some ancient and some new.

PLACELESS:

Theologian John Inge represents a growing awareness among many Christian scholars that their tradition over the centuries has attributed very little importance to physical place in spite of ample biblical warrant to do so. He attributes this lack of attention to a general Christian trend which predominated particularly during the era marking the transition from Medieval to Enlightenment thought. In concert with European philosophy and science which increasingly emphasized historical time and discrete parts to the exclusion of physical place and organic systems, theology increasingly emphasized spirituality and salvation of souls to the exclusion of materiality and bodily well-being. The exclusion was not total, however. Inge points out how the Hebrew roots of the New Testament reveal an importance of place that most of the tradition neglected but did not completely erase. "The notion of holiness being associated with a place and

³ Holmes, Leilani, "Heart Knowledge, Blood Memory and the Voice of the Land: implications of research among Hawaiian elders," in Dei, George J., Budd L. Hall and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, eds. *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: multiple readings of our world*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, p.44.

⁴ Harris, Jillian, personal conversation, Native Ministries Summer School, Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, B.C., July 22, 2010.

⁵ Sassen, Saskia, *op. cit.* p. 162.

enduring across time has been a part of the Christian tradition from at least the second century.”⁶ In his effort to restore theological balance, Inge notes the historical (time) connections among pilgrimage, place and Christian identity and argues for recovery of older understandings in a postmodern world. “If it is identity that is at the root of the [Christian] problem, then there can be no escape from the necessity of a revitalized sense of place since identity is formed, nurtured and fostered by place.”⁷

Aboriginal scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., does not criticize western theology just for being too time-concerned, he also blames it for being too abstract. A theology which is not of this world produces a religion which pays little or no attention to where and how people live.⁸ In Deloria's view, the difference between North American indigenous and Christian theologies is of such magnitude that the two are irrevocably incommensurate. There is a sense perhaps in which incommensurability carries with it a certain protection against assimilation. This is only the case, however, where there is parity. The history of colonization reveals that indigenous worldviews were not just found to be different, they were deemed deficient. Therefore, any Aboriginal insights about living well in relationship with place were disregarded by the colonizing attitude Marie Battiste calls “cognitive imperialism.”⁹

Christian theology is not the only discipline criticized for neglecting place in favor of time. Critical theorists and others assert that most of western thought favors history to the detriment of geography. Foucault summarized the evolution of emphasis: “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.”¹⁰

Social geographer Edward Soja argues that postmodern geography holds promise to restore the balance between place and time as frameworks for critical theory. “The landscape has a textuality that we are just beginning to understand, for we have only recently been able to see it whole and to read it with respect to its broader movements and inscribed events and meanings.”¹¹

Educational theory is another area undergoing rigorous re-assessment in terms of its diminished regard for place. Not even Paolo Friere is immune from some respectful chiding. Asserting that pedagogy of the oppressed must be augmented by a pedagogy of place, David Gruenewald voices a growing sentiment among environmental educators that critical pedagogy has not paid sufficient attention to ecological settings. The ecological challenge to critical pedagogy is to expand its socio-cultural analyses and agendas for transformation to include an examination of

⁶ Inge, John, *The Theology of Place: explorations in practical, pastoral and empirical theology*, Aldershot: Hampshire, UK, 2003, p. 97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁸ Deloria, Jr., Vine and Daniel Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian education in America*, Goldon, Co.: Fulcrum Resources, 2001, p. 31.

⁹ Battiste, Marie, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000, p. 193.

¹⁰ Soja, Edward, *Postmodern Geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory*, London: Verso, 1999, p. 157.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the interactions between cultures and ecosystems.¹² Gruenewald does not accuse critical pedagogy of ignoring place in favor of time, but rather of favoring anthropocentrism over ecocentrism. In his proposal to pair critical with place-based pedagogy, he asserts, “People must be challenged to reflect on their own concrete situationality in a way that explores the complex interrelationships between cultural and ecological environments.”¹³

Urban educational systems are a particular focus of his approach. Building on Freire's connection between situationality and geography, a critical pedagogy of place explicates two specific dimensions: reinhabitation and decolonization. Reinhabitation practitioners employ insights from the bioregional movement to investigate how “...humanity's diverse cultures attempt to live well in the age of globalization and what cultural patterns should be conserved or transformed to promote more ecologically sustainable communities.”¹⁴

Decolonization advocates investigate those forms of cultural knowledge that nurture and protect people and ecosystems to reveal what processes and systems have significantly diminished the North American post-contact ability of cultures to thrive in their locations. As Gruenewald describes the effort, it is a work of both resistance and recovery, of liberation and renewal. Learning how to live well means learning how to appreciate place. Repudiating behaviors that oppress people can restore regard for their place as well.

Appreciation and appropriate relationships with place are fundamental to the planet's indigenous communities. From Hawaii to Taiwan, Anchorage to Sao Paulo and beyond, indigenous voices, too, offer a critique of dominant economic, philosophical and theological attitudes which have physically and in some cases spiritually overwhelmed place-based worldviews. Wayne Holst's observation is typical of those who note the differences.

From the time of first contact, a great disparity has existed between aboriginal and non-aboriginal ways of understanding the meaning of “the land.” In indigenous cultures generally, the land is considered the source of all being. In non-indigenous cultures the land is normally viewed with practicality, as a focus of objective investigation and a means of productivity or lack thereof.¹⁵

Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, working within these differences, has discovered how a particular group of indigenous narratives, ancient in origin but still alive in southern Yukon Athabaskan communities, continue to link people to land and history in a way that balances time and space and gives meaning to local issues in a global context. “Our land is our history,” states Tron'dek elder Percy Henry of Dawson City, Yukon,¹⁶ summarizing a cultural practice where place holds time, and time has meaning only in relation to place. If stories “talk about time with

¹² Gruenewald, David, “The Best of Both Worlds: a critical pedagogy of place,” *Educational Researcher*, 32:4, May, 2003.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Holst, Wayne, “Aboriginal Spirituality and Environmental Respect: a perspective on traditional Amerindian views of nature with special reference to the meaning of ‘the land’ in northern cultures,” in Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, *Sacred Earth, Sacred Community: jubilee, ecology and Aboriginal peoples*, Toronto, 2000, p. 291.

¹⁶ Tourism sign, Dawson City, Yukon, September 2011.

reference to places” and link human history to place, as Cruikshank maintains,¹⁷ they also lead their hearers into a balanced future where time and place receive equal weight as determinants of human epistemology and behavior. Susie O’Brien recognizes this equivalence and reveals a fundamental Aboriginal pragmatism. “If we ditch entirely the idea of history,” she asks in her treatment of the Tohono O’odham protest against the globalization of food, “then where do we find the incentive for collective hope?”¹⁸ For Aboriginal peoples, the answer lies in their cultural narratives.

EXCHANGE PLACE

These narratives have needed every ounce of hope available to avoid being subsumed by the narrative of capitalism. A particular phenomenon of post World War II capitalism, shopping malls were early features of global cities. The international market place is not just a location in Honolulu. It exists in various forms all over the world. Originally a twentieth century derivative of nineteenth century arcades featuring luxury entertainment and department stores selling mass-produced goods,¹⁹ malls proliferated across North America and beyond. “The modern day mall may be an American innovation, but it has gone completely global—from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai, from Tokyo to Sao Paolo Throughout Asia the brands are all formed by American images. The stores, the clothes . . . the ads, the graphics and visual material, it’s all blond haired, blue eyed images. Indonesia the same way . . . Japan. . . . Korea.”²⁰

Critical theorist Rob Shields associates the shopping mall phenomenon with two developments. One is the rise of consumerism, and the other a longing for community in a homogenized and capitalistic distribution system. He detects in a globalized world the lack of social stability once based on intact kinship systems and community relationships. Malls, originally devised to sell consumer items in a time-driven milieu – “Buy NOW while supplies last”-- now also fill a social vacuum. “Malls are not just places to buy goods, but one of the main sites of the intentionally produced simulations that constitute a new dream-like order. . . . They create nostalgic memories of neighbourhood and lost community.”²¹

Malls successfully produce what passes for community in many urban locations. “The mall. . . may be the only working and workable expression of community for a sizable segment of our population.”²² Shields quotes from a mall developers’ handbook whose stated goal is to bring “a sense of place to a placeless environment.”²³ In this way, malls not only mean commodification, they commodify meaning. They recode place as property and in so doing are perhaps able to create a sense of place, but not place itself, because they are devoid of kin relationships.

¹⁷ Cruikshank, Julie, *The Social Life of Stories: narrative and knowledge in the Yukon territory*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998, pp 16-18.

¹⁸ O’Brien, Susie, “Survival Strategies for Global Times: the desert walk for biodiversity, health and heritage,” *Interventions: the International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 9:1, 2007, p. 90.

¹⁹ Shields, Rob, ed., *Lifestyle shopping: the subject of consumption*, London: Routledge, 1992, p.3

²⁰ Underhill, Paco, *The Call of the Mall: the geography of shopping*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004, p. 143.

²¹ Shields, Rob, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-49.

²² Zepp, Ira, *The New Religious Image of Urban America: the shopping mall as ceremonial center*, 2nd ed., Niwot, Co., University of Colorado Press, 1997, p. 72.

²³ Shields, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

Ira Zepp argues that malls represent primeval place by including features such as fountains, ponds and trees. Malls may be artificial and contrived, but in the alienating and isolated surroundings of the global city they serve a purpose above and beyond provision of goods and services. In the absence of other cultural means, malls mitigate the dis-ease of living in fragmented, frenetic urban environments. “The union of energy provided by vegetation, water and people tends to diffuse the tension we all experience between the technical and pastoral, the urban and the rural or the machine and the garden.”²⁴ Zepp’s conclusion is that malls have taken on a religious role because they have become primary locations of belonging. “What, if not the mall, is our alternative to human community and sacred centers?”²⁵ Aboriginal storytellers have a possible answer to that question: the land and the cultural narratives attached to it.

National Indigenous Anglican bishop Mark MacDonald tells of the time he drove an elder from Red Lake Reserve in northern Minnesota to Minneapolis. Mark was concerned that the elder would be depressed when he observed all the urban development encroaching outward from the Twin Cities onto his traditional territory. Instead, the elder related the Ojibwe belief of how the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers came together in the area, symbolizing male and female merging to produce abundant life. He viewed all the growth as the latest manifestation of an ancient narrative. He marvelled at all the employment opportunities he saw there so his people could feed their families. “The elder replied that he liked the city, he liked the development of the land and he was impressed that a place like the Mall of America could be built nearby and attract visitors from all over the world.”²⁶

Bishop MacDonald did not share the elder’s enthusiasm, though he respected it. To many, it exemplifies what can happen when a colonized people become co-opted by the very attitudes and territorial appropriations which have dispossessed them. Peter Whitridge calls them the “. . . oppressive power relations embedded in Western scientific, bureaucratic, political and commercial representations and manipulations of human spatial practices.”²⁷ It is disrespectful to attribute automatically any such result in the mind of the Minnesota elder, but his remark brings into sharp relief the fact that place in the world’s global cities, especially those in North America, is commonly now devoted to activities which do not give priority to the vitality of or relationships with land. Whitridge observes that local sites of any kind lend themselves equally to being receptacles of meaning. He notes that the meaning-making privilege has long since moved from the aboriginal inhabitant to the colonizing settler, but does not hold this is a permanent situation.

The meaningful, cultural, and phenomenological are not on the side of individuals and collectives, and the dominating objectifying and universalizing on the side of government, industry and techno-science. Scientists and technocrats are also individuals and members of

²⁴ Zepp, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

²⁵ Zepp, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

²⁶ MacDonald, Mark, personal conversation, Vancouver, B.C., July 28, 2010.

²⁷ Whitridge, Peter, “Landscapes, Houses, Bodies, things: ‘Place’ and the archaeology of Inuit imaginaries,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 11:2, 2004, p. 215

society, and everyone's place-making articulates with a common material reality that is the object of perpetual social, political, economic and symbolic struggles."²⁸

Was the Ojibwe elder co-opted by western capitalism, or did he see in an urban setting a potential not yet realized? What would the Mall of the Americas look like if its developers had known and lived the narrative of the rivers? Can the longhouse tell a story to the shopping mall? Can a worldview which values space as sacred transform a consumer system which "makes money by putting space to work?"²⁹

RE-PLACE

It is inaccurate, not to mention disrespectful, to generalize across indigenous systems of belief and behavior. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some common themes among a great many tribal and local particularities. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs designated the Canadian Aboriginal manifestation of these themes "the North American Intellectual Tradition."³⁰ One theme is a worldview so integrated within itself that the very idea of themes or categories is itself foreign. This makes it difficult to arrive at the precise descriptions of indigenous ways usually demanded by a western academia which thrives on taxonomies. Nature, culture, spirituality, economics, production, consumption, humans, animals, land, identity, space, and time are not separate concepts or areas of discourse. Rather, all these areas of reality and endeavor are inseparately interconnected. Deloria and Dan Wildcat associate this phenomenon with "indigenism," a term they define as "a body of thought advocating and elaborating diverse cultures in their broadest sense—behaviors, beliefs, values symbols and material products—emerging from diverse places. To indigenize an action or object is the act of making something of a place."³¹

Another commonality is the priority given to place. As Leroy Little Bear asserts, "In aboriginal philosophy, space is more important than time."³² Cultural anthropologist Thomas Thorton concludes that indigenous peoples

. . . from the Americas to Eurasia to Africa to Oceania as well as immigrants or displaced people rely on cultural structures to make sense of their place in this world. Everywhere these structures make some places, some pasts, some beings and some products more salient, more memorable, more integral and more organic to one's heritage and destiny than others. They all respond to a fundamental human need to have meaningful places in this world."³³

This is not to say, however, that history and the passage of time are not important. As Deloria asserts, "I am not aware of any Native traditions that do not, as part of their oral histories, accept that changes have occurred over time, that the world and its entire biosphere is a dynamic living

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215

²⁹ Underhill, *op.cit.*, p. 19

³⁰ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Ottawa: 1996.

³¹ Deloria, Vine, Jr., and Dan Wildcat, *Power and Place*, p. 32

³² Littlebear, Leroy, "Jagged Worldviews Colliding," in Battiste, *op. cit.* p. 77.

³³ Thorton, Thomas, *Being and Place Among the Tlingit*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008, p. 190.

system.”³⁴ Events happen in sequence, but as a function of place, the location where they occur. Thornton's definition is helpful here. “Place is a framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time.”³⁵ The relationship between locations and events lies at the heart of indigenous narrative. “There is not a lake or mountain that does not have connected with it some story of delight or wonder...”³⁶ Edward Chamberlin records this anecdote first recorded by Canadian geographer Peter Usher to illustrate the all-encompassing prevalence of the tie between land and lore:

It's about a meeting between an aboriginal Tsimshian community in the northwest and a group of government foresters. The meeting was about jurisdiction over the woodlands. The foresters claimed the land for the government. The Indians were astonished by the claim. They couldn't understand what these relative newcomers were talking about. Finally one of them put what was bothering them in the form of a question. “If this is your land,” he said, “Where are your stories?”³⁷

Stories are the means by which indigenous peoples remind themselves that the land of their tribal origins is the source of their identity as a people in both material and spiritual ways. Their theology of creation centers on the land in which the Creator placed them. Intricate hunting, gathering and agricultural protocols attest to the belief that the land, held in respectful interrelationship, contains everything necessary for human survival, thanks to the generosity of the Creator. “The question of the fundamental principles of the Long House is that, when we talk about the land, we say: ‘ONGwAnDUwEN ONwENTSA.’ That is, ‘Our Mother Earth.’ It cannot be bought, it cannot be sold, it cannot be cashed in, because it is our Mother, and you don't sell your mother.”³⁸ For most tribal peoples, this connection holds even when an individual has left the traditional territory for life in urban settings.

In large measure, I submit, this is due to the appropriately implemented portability of tribal narratives. Though Thornton argues that stories lose vitality when they are “. . . wrenched from their geographic origins,” he also holds that they can continue to situate time through their symbolism.³⁹ In other words, when indigenous people are themselves dislodged from their geography or when their geography becomes someone else's global city, the stories remain with them and help them adapt. Cruikshank's hypothesis confirms this. Drawing from fieldwork in the Yukon, she asserts that “. . . storytellers continue to tell stories that make meaningful connections and provide order and continuity in a rapidly changing world.”⁴⁰ Linking time to place as they do, these narratives about relational complexity cross boundaries among humans, animals, astral bodies and spirits. This ability renders them amenable to negotiation and interpretation across the complexities of globalization. “Stories connect people in such a world,

³⁴ Deloria and Wildcat, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

³⁵ Thornton, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

³⁶ RCAP, p. 35.

³⁷ Battiste, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

³⁸ RCAP, p. 35.

³⁹ Thornton, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Cruikshank, *op.cit.*, p. xiii.

and they unify interrupted memories that are part of any complex life. Rooted in ancient traditions, they can be used in strikingly modern ways.”⁴¹

PLACE RELATIONS:

One such way empowers Aboriginal people to survive in the urban landscape of the global city. As of 2008, forty to sixty per cent of Canada’s First Nations people live in Canada’s major cities.⁴² “Aboriginal people are now part of the urban landscape and will remain so, most likely in increasing numbers, over the decades to come.”⁴³ (For the purposes of definition, an Aboriginal person in Canada is an individual who identifies with one of three distinct cultural groups: North American Indian, Metis or Inuit.)

Tim Patterson, himself Aboriginal, dispels a number of stereotypes of these urban dwellers, writing that most of them have at least a high school education and a job. They also have a balanced identity. “To the urban Aboriginal the dichotomy between modern and traditional is neither as confounding nor dramatic as many would imagine. Rather, it is normal and uncomplicated.”⁴⁴

The 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (UAPS) discovered that urban Aboriginal peoples are proud of their heritage and consider it a resource for them as city dwellers. They stay connected to their home communities but do not plan to return there permanently. In addition, “. . . a connection to their past is clearly a feature of those who think they can change the future; those who know their family tree very well are among those most likely to think they can have a big impact on their city.”⁴⁵

David Newhouse shares this view. Without in any way ignoring the poverty, substance abuse and isolation of so many Aboriginal people in Canada’s global cities, he argues that ever since the establishment of urban Aboriginal Friendship Centres in the 1950’s, for most Aboriginal people, a move to the city has not meant either assimilation or disaster. Newhouse’s complaint is the lack of attention paid to this fact. “Few see the vast array of Aboriginal cultural, artistic, heritage, educational, economic, community development and political institutions that dot the landscape.”⁴⁶

This evidence affirms Cruikshank’s assertion that “Narratives provide the foundation for local ethnohistory, helping people incorporate unfamiliar events into larger stories by connecting them with previous experiences.”⁴⁷ For example, having moved to the city primarily for education and employment opportunity, the UAPS respondents navigated through social disruptions by

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴² Newhouse, David, “The Invisible Infrastructure: urban Aboriginal institutions and organizations” in Newhouse, David and Evelyn Peterson, eds., *Not Strangers in These Parts: urban Aboriginal peoples*, Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 2008, p. 244.

⁴³ Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, 2010, p. 28. The cities are Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal and Vancouver.

⁴⁴ Patterson, Tim, *Opinion Canada*, 6:3, 2004, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Environics, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Newhouse and Peterson, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

⁴⁷ Cruikshank, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

remembering their family stories. Those surveyed liked the city for the quality of life offered but disliked its traffic, pollution and fast pace.⁴⁸

Sto'lo UBC professor Jo-ann Archibald reaches the same conclusion. "Aboriginal people living in the city can feel alienated from their home territories or dislocated from their traditional teachings in a western dominated environment. The use of indigenous traditional knowledge such as that found in story, song and speech provided a framework for the contemporary story to work for that group."⁴⁹ In a specific example, she quotes Chief Leonard George of the Tsleil Waututh First Nation on the north shore of Burrard Inlet near North Vancouver:

How can urban first Nations maintain their cultures, which have deep connections to the land, in a city environment? I try to use old philosophies as a tool... I call it learning how to become a hunter of the city, using the old philosophy of the hunter in the forest and the respect that he had, and using only what you need for that day, and taking it out, bringing it back and sharing it with as many people whose needs will be suited by it. This changed my perspective on the city. It is a wonderful resource then: go in and hunt and get things out and bring them back home."⁵⁰

Paul Letkemann observed first hand life among Aboriginal migrants to the city. His companions were not the educated, employed strata described in UAPS. Rather, these were young, mostly male, homeless with a high mobility pattern. He calls them "urban nomads" and ascribes to them the same hunting band ethos with which Chief George identifies.⁵¹ Not only do they draw on cultural subsistence narratives to survive, Letke also argues that they are themselves creating new Aboriginal mythologies of adaptation to place in an urban and often hostile environment. "They may be considered both liminal and marginal and as occupying the positions of the 'underclass,' yet they are also powerful social and cultural brokers."⁵²

Kathi Wilson and Evelyn Peters recount the ways in which Anishinabek (Odawa and Ojibwe) from northern Ontario maintain their cultural identity by continuing their relationship to place in an urban environment. They do this by creating small places, e.g., within parks or gardens, where they can place tobacco and pray, returning to the reserve occasionally, and participating in ceremonies with other Aboriginal companions, even though not of the same tribe. As Wilson and Peters point out, this illustrates traditional practice in a different place, but it is a testimony of the resilience of a tradition, upheld by tribal narrative, resulting in "...continually recreated spaces of cultural recovery."⁵³

In Tim Patterson's Calgary experiences, the richness of old tribal narratives include twenty-first century landscapes. A friend explains. "... regardless of the concrete, glass and motor vehicles

⁴⁸ Environics, *op.cit.*, p. 37. The report notes that the greater the education and economic levels of respondents, the more connected they were to their heritage.

⁴⁹ Archibald, Jo-Ann, *Indigenous Storywork: educating the heart, mind, body and spirit*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2008, p. 99.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵¹ Letkemann, Paul, "First Nations Urban Migration and the Importance of 'Urban Nomads' in Canadian Plains Cities: a perspective on the streets," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 27:3 and 4, 2004, p. 243.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 252

⁵³ Wilson, Kathi and Evelyn Peters, "You can make a place for it: remapping urban First Nations spaces of identity," *Environment and Planning D, Society and Space*, vol. 23, 2005, p. 405.

you see around us in cities, all these are not new to [Aboriginals]. They are all indicators of the time of fire . . . a Blackfoot creation story about the progression of the earth.”⁵⁴

Even when there is a great deal of migration back and forth between city and reserve, indigenous structures based on cultural norms have arisen specifically designed for the urban landscape. Pointing out that many pre-contact tribes were just as mobile precontact as their members are today, Susan Lobo describes how the clan mother system in the San Francisco Bay area functions in much the same way as it did centuries ago. Key aboriginal women and their households are identified places of refuge and continuity for Aboriginal people on the move. “The latter are still living by the rules that most hunter-gatherers employ—you have a home territory, loosely defined and encompassing a wide area, but you move around a lot; not just inside home territory, but often outside it in order to make a living.”⁵⁵ These Urban Clan Mothers provide a place where current narratives are related as to “. . . who was doing what, when, where, and with whom, in order to assist in keeping the community in balance. . . .”⁵⁶

Betty Bastien, Siksika scholar from Alberta, argues that because Aboriginal stories speak of distance, not time, they transport the listeners to the places where the stories occur. These places can be ancient and modern simultaneously. For the Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot) in Calgary, for example, oral narratives, particularly those featuring the trickster Napi, not only preserve the balance between time and place in the city, they explain the city itself. “. . . Napi is the city, he is said to live there because of all the many different things happening, the constant change, the constant movement. Napi is a funny one; he is never happy with what he creates. He continually goes back and changes things. This is why the city changes its form, a road here, a house there, next year, the house gets torn down for a shop, etc.”⁵⁷

At a recent public education conference sponsored by the Indian Residential School Survivors’ Society held on Squamish territory near Vancouver, Chief Ian Campbell summed up a day of group reflection on the painful impact of assimilative education strategies. His medium was the tribal stories, “as true today as they were thousands of years ago.” In the Squamish creation story of the flood, Campbell noted:

“There was trauma. The people could not go back to the way it was before. Look at today and the modern flood over our territories. This is no different from the ice age or the great flood. Today it is the façade of jurisdiction the government has imposed on our people. It has decimated villages in a way that is no different from the flood or the ice, but we are still here. We will survive, come through it and once again flourish just as we did in the past.”⁵⁸

By telling the story in this context, Campbell made current in time a narrative based in an ancient place, a place much changed but still existing, a place still at the heart of his people’s lives and identity. Ironically, the reserve on which the conference took place is literally across the street

⁵⁴ Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Wilson and Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 516.

⁵⁷ Whittles, Martin and Tim Patterson, “Napi and the City: Siksikaitstapi narratives revisited” in Timpson, Annis May, *First Nations, First Thoughts: the impact of indigenous thought in Canada*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009, p. 109.

⁵⁸ Campbell, Chief Ian, closing speech, IRSSS, West Vancouver, B.C., October, 2011.

from one of the region's largest shopping malls, a development from which the Squamish derive substantial rental income. Capitalism has now become part of the narrative for many Aboriginal nations. Like the elder in Minneapolis, they alone can determine if Aboriginal participation is capitulation to the dominant economy or a means of stemming the flood, turning it in a direction that works to Aboriginal benefit, culturally as well as economically. In this way, the Squamish Nation is making the case for Wilson's and Peters' argument that "Relationships to the land. . . are played out and reformulated in urban environments within continually recreated spaces of cultural recovery."⁵⁹

REINHABITED PLACE:

The retelling of cultural stories to offer wisdom for current realities can be an effective way to maintain the relationship between place and people, even in the "deterritorialized" and "homogenized" locations we call global cities. Even as theologians Philip Sheldrake and Michael Northcott lament the fractured and decentered environments which alienate individuals from place and destroy particularity, Sheldrake also credits the power of narrative to restore the relationship.

"... narrative is a vital factor in the creation of the city as a community rather than merely as an agglomeration of buildings and spaces. The narrative structure of such communities enables people to shape the world that surrounds them, rather than be passively controlled by it, and also creates ways of mapping the city and thus moving around it effectively."⁶⁰ Aboriginal inhabitants of global cities can demonstrate that, with appropriate adaptive energy applied, narratives based in ancient cosmologies still known offer as much guidance and are as geographically relevant to 21st century urban dwellers as they were to their village-based ancestors thousands of years ago.

The question remains, however, as to whether this capacity is limited to indigenous populations whose narrative story telling traditions and kinship systems are relatively intact. What about the settler populations whose colonizing patterns disrupted most indigenous traditions as they also decimated their own? Can a time-focused globalized people lacking a legacy of remembered story create a relational sense of place within a stolen landscape? No, but they could become respectfully, humbly and cautiously aware of the stories that do belong there.

Unexamined assumptions about Aboriginal spiritual traditions and cultural practices often present them as readily available and freely offered panaceas for solving global problems, particularly environmental dilemmas. A typical exemplar of this attitude is Poul Pedersen. "By offering to the world what they hold to be their traditional, religious values, local peoples acquire cultural significance. . . . They demonstrate to themselves and to the world that their traditions . . . express a truth of urgent relevance for the future of the Earth."⁶¹ Such a statement is not only condescending (Aboriginal peoples do not need to share their knowledge to validate their

⁵⁹ Wilson and Peters, *op.cit.*, p. 305.

⁶⁰ Sheldrake, Philip, *Spaces for the Sacred: place, memory and identity*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 161.

⁶¹ Pederson, Poul, "Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity: the religious environmentalist paradigm," in Brunn, Ole and Arne Kalland, eds., *Asian Perspectives of Nature: a critical approach*, Richmond, Surrey, UK : Curzon Press, 1995, p. 272.

significance), it is also disempowers the agency of Aboriginal peoples to decide for themselves whether to grant access to their knowledge.

Cruikshank brings another cautionary dimension to bear by pointing out how “damage occurs when ideas are separated from the settings in which they are produced.”⁶² There is a difference between the portability of narrative and its appropriation or universalization. Likewise, it is erroneous to homogenize Aboriginal voices by ignoring their rootedness in particular tribes and landscapes.

Marlene Brant Castllano is likewise wary because very few of the earth’s human populations live completely in oral cultures any longer. This greatly limits the possibility of community participation in either the creation or continuous interpretation of oral traditions, the norm in oral culture. The result, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, is an automatic “distancing” from the original narrative.⁶³ Whether this renders application invalid or not is a determination only a culture’s elders can make. “Oral histories cannot be validated by the standard systems of a literate society.”⁶⁴

Meeting these fundamental conditions satisfactorily makes room for possible incorporation of narrative method to recalibrate the connections between time and place and begin to re-“place” the emphasis imbalances which have produced substantial deficits in theological, educational, economic and ecological understandings. It is not only life in global cities that is at stake, but life on the globe itself.

Following Gruenwald, I propose that the notion of “reinhabitation” could be of use. Emerging from the bioregional movement, the word originally meant “learning to live in a place that has been disturbed through exploitation, though presumably non-exploited regions could be reinhabited, too.”⁶⁵ Reinhabitation is a conscious act that requires respect, humility and information.

Ecophilosopher Serenella Iovino, first to coin the term “narrative reinhabitation,” bases her work in the transformative ability of narrative in her own global city of Naples. Her goal is citizen empowerment in the face of environmental degradation in the Neapolitan context, using literary narratives to reacquaint people with their homeland. Because she attributes to narrative the power to form as well as inform,⁶⁶ she employs it to recover sense of place, the first step toward ecological action. Her argument recalls Chief Campbell’s use of the Squamish flood story:

Projects of environmental education based on narrations about territorial issues, experienced and projected landscapes, ecological and historical identity can be implemented as forms of a “narrative re-inhabitation:” a task intended to sharpen people’s ecological and political

⁶² Cruikshank, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

⁶³ Castellano Brant, Marlene, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” in Dei, George, et al., *op.cit.*, p. 34.

⁶⁴ Augustine, Stephen in Hulan, Renee and Renate Eigenbrod, eds., *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: theory, practice, ethics*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Ryan, John C. “On Bioregional Place: linking space, aesthetics and ethics.” MA thesis, Lancaster University, 2003.

⁶⁶ Iovino, Serenella. “Naples 2008, or, the waste land: trash, citizenship, and an ethic of narration” in *Neohelicon*, 36, 2009, p. 344.

awareness starting from their “locatedness,” to restore social hope and to envision long-term community projects In this framework, the eco-cultural retrieval and invention of locally embedded stories and of place-identity is both an expression of civil disobedience toward a corrupted power and a means of political resilience.⁶⁷

From Aboriginal storytellers we learn how place informed and shaped their original cultural narratives and the ancestors who told them. Originally, narratives enabled habitation of place and balanced cultural relationships with time. In the exploited lands disturbed by global cities, many Aboriginal peoples have reinhabited their narratives, applied them to new places and dislodged the pre-eminence of time. First, place informed narrative; then, reinhabited narrative informed place and empowered Aboriginal survival therein.

What, then, is the story the longhouse could tell to the shopping mall? In fact, as mentioned above, the mall has a narrative already. The International Market Place in Honolulu shouts a story of the time-pressured, artificial, consumption-driven, homogenized, absentee capitalist property that it is. But an indigenous story of authenticity, time-aware communality, particularity, relational connectivity was there first. It lies dormant, waiting to prove the truth of Castellano’s assertion that Aboriginal narrative is a “living fire, rekindled from surviving embers and fuelled with the materials of the twenty-first century.”⁶⁸ Which story will be told and heeded is a matter for attentive listeners to decide.

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⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁶⁸ Castellano, *op. cit.*, p.34.

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