Contents

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction: The Call for an Ecological Virtue Ethics xi
   Heesoon Bai, David Chang, & Charles Scott

PART I: THE CALL FROM AND TO EARTH

1. Serving Nature: Completing the Ecosystem Services Circle 3
   Nancy J. Turner & Darcy Mathews

2. Ecological Presence as a Virtue 31
   Peter H. Kahn, Jr.

PART II: MORALITY AND MORTALITY

3. A Ship from Delos 51
   Jan Zwicky

4. Thanatopsis: Death Literacy for the Living 71
   David Greenwood & Margaret McKee

PART III: INSIGHTS FROM THE CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM TRADITIONS

5. What Are “Daoist” Virtues? Seeking an Ethical Perspective on Human Conduct and Ecology 93
   Paul Crowe

6. The Ecological Virtues of Buddhism 117
   David R. Loy
7. Never Weary of Gazing: Contemplative Practice and the Cultivation of Ecological Virtue  135
Douglas E. Christie

PART IV: PHILOSOPHIES OF VIRTUE ETHICS

8. The Ethics of Sustainable Well-Being and Well-Becoming: A Systems Approach to Virtue Ethics  157
Thomas Falkenberg

Mike Hannis

PART V: EMBODIED CREATURE CONNECTIONS TO OTHERS AND PLACE

David W. Jardine

11. Worthy of This Mountain: Living a Life of Friction Against the Machine  213
David Chang

12. Stories of Love and Loss: Recommitting to Each Other and the Land  233
Tommy Akulukjuk, Nigora Erkaeva, Derek Rasmussen, & Rebecca A. Martusewicz

13. Evoking Ethos: A Poetic Love Note to Place  253
Carl Leggo & Margaret McKeon

Author Biographies  283
Index  287
Introduction

This chapter is a collaboration among 1) an Inuk hunter and artist from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, Canada; 2) a Buddhist activist who has worked in Nunavut for twelve years; 3) a graduate student from Tajikistan; and 4) a Euro-American eco-justice teacher educator, and scholar, granddaughter of a dairy farmer from northern New York State. Here, we each tell a story of love and loss set in very different cultural contexts, where we experienced very contradictory “educations”—formal education, based on job or university preparation, and informal, within our families but based on important ecological values. Our narratives are woven together within an analysis of the historical context of expansionist capitalism
and its perpetuations through institutionalized education. Formal state-sponsored education results when we apply Karl Polanyi’s *Great Transformation* to teaching and learning. A portion of the vital role of teaching and learning gets extracted from community and delivered over to a new institutionalized process we call “school.” The community is de-skilled, Indigenous language is removed, and the plant-animal-spirit-human interrelationship is mocked and discarded as unimportant.

As the stories we tell below demonstrate, responsibility, leadership, community membership, forbearance, humility, and fidelity are the intangible values offered in our families and needed for just and sustainable communities. When these intangible virtues are undermined, the outcomes are quite tangible for all members, human and more-than-human. Our narratives expose the practice of identifying local land-based cultures as “undeveloped” or backward and thus needing improvement via modernization. Schools have been used to accomplish these powerful shifts in cultural priorities and values, moving whole populations off the land to be replaced by extractive machines and systems. And yet, the centuries-old ecological virtues, attenuated as they are by these processes, remain in the cracks and crevices of our day-to-day relationships, practices, and memories. We tell stories to reactivate those virtues here.

**TOMMY’S STORY**

*Silatujuq*: Conscious of the Whole Environment and Responding to it Calmly

Modern education has always deemed Indigenous cultures and their forms of knowledge as primitive compared to the regimented and compartmentalized Western system of evaluating student performance. I used to naively think that Inuit, like my father, who can’t speak English are not educated, that they had less knowledge of the world than most people. As a child, full of imagination and seeking answers to anything, I thought that my father, too, knew nothing—nothing about the meagre homework that I brought home, nothing about math or social studies. His lifetime of wisdom was deemed not fit for modern education; or, if included, it was labelled “Traditional Inuit knowledge” and relegated to an extracurricular activity, or into a thirty-minute period in a day.
The accountability I have toward my parents gets broken by Western education. The more I go away from my community to get educated, the less I spend time with my family, hunting and learning from elders. Schools never acknowledge that they are breaking a family continuity that has existed over thousands of years; government can’t admit that they are disintegrating Inuit culture. So, I want to try to explain what I think education is, and how it has made me realize the immense knowledge and spirituality that is not taught in schools. How has my father taught me so much about life and taking responsibility for other beings, without ever having to formally teach me? How does love come into the equation of being taught? When does teaching happen?

My father is a very self-composed man. My siblings and I can hardly recollect him being angry at us or at my mother. He is very patient and will sacrifice himself for his family. I can only say this of him now that I am as an adult: I never had much view of him while I was growing up, but I knew that he was different from my friends’ fathers. He hunted most of his life, and whenever he did work, it was to raise funds for him to go hunting. At the time, I didn’t realize how balanced our life was as a family, how much time we spent together camping and hunting. My parents were one of the few parents that insisted that we go camping; they would take us away from school early in the spring, and our summers consisted mostly of camping, which we did until fall. School and Western learning were not practised during these periods, and it was one of the most carefree times of my life. It seems idyllic now.

I point this out because it was the start of my realization of how life might be balanced and how love flowed freely from siblings to parents, and vice versa. It was then that I learned the peculiarities of coming from an Inuit family; after all, it was almost the only thing I knew of life, other than what school taught me. It was a time when perseverance and confidence were built into us, when having compassion for other beings was emphasized, and when we learned that you just had to be nice to everyone. It was a life free of prejudices and discrimination. We all helped in one way or another, every one of us given a chance to complete a task, a chance to catch our first animal. It was a very family-oriented moment, and up to this day, I like to think our family can stick together in the toughest of times.

The traditional Western method of distributing knowledge never acknowledges this love or sense of family. This is a strange thing that only Western cultures can really endure. Why do our most beloved children spend seven hours
a day away from their family unit? The only time that children are really interacting with parents concerning education is when homework is involved. This can be a very good thing for many families, but when most Inuit come from families where one or both parents don’t speak English, it is a rather boring chore. My parents cared about my education; they woke me up and encouraged me in every way, but school was foreign to them. I can only try to imagine the shame my parents have had to endure not being able to help their own children with something they wanted their children to be good at. (Their persistence paid off: out of eight children, six of my siblings, including myself, have gained either a high school diploma or a college certificate.) This was the first time, pretty much in the entirety of Inuit history, that the family unit has been broken by an institution. The sharing of knowledge was broken—a serious consequence, no matter what culture you grew up in.

As Hugh Brody has said, “A hunter gatherer family shares what it has, whether that is information or food. To give to others is to be able to receive from others. Knowledge and food are stored, as it were, by being shared.” The sharing that my parents and I had was broken by the English language, which was forced upon us by the institutionalized education system.

This new idea of education to Inuit came with a different sense of being smart, too. Inuit don’t really have a word for smart. The closest thing I can think of is silatujuaq, which can be roughly translated as someone who is conscious about his whole environment and responds to it calmly. He understands his world. I would only reserve this label for elders and really good hunters, basically someone who has his matters in order. Someone who is smart is someone with the most common sense, and is the most helpful. In some way an enlightened person. This word silatujuaq comes with a serious sense of duty for the community, family, and friends—one will do anything to help, even risk his life. This concept of being silatujuaq is rarely taught in schools, where smartness is demonstrated by being able to perform tasks well on paper. If you ask me, the concept of being smart in the Inuit way should be taught, or at least tried. Knowledge is only knowledge if you use it for the betterment of your family and community.

How come my father and many Inuit men and women like him, never having gained a formal education—something that many people pay thousands of dollars for—can be infinitely more knowledgeable about life? To be able to take a situation and assess it properly for everyone’s benefit? To still have heavy
compassion for people that have hurt you, or to endure situations that command strict self-discipline—I wonder if that is even teachable in our modern school system?

I can tell you from experience that this culture of learning how to take care of oneself is very subtle and you are never told that you are being taught. It is not just your parents who are teaching you, either: you have a whole family of uncles, aunts, and cousins, and they are of all ages. The quality of your learning is only realized when you have mastered or understood what you are supposed to do, when you have a skill developed.

Traditional knowledge, though, is not easily compartmentalized and institutionalized. Inuit traditional knowledge has required its learners to be immersed in the Arctic environment, tied to its happenings and goings. Much of the knowledge is migratory and seasonal: best taught during certain parts of the year. Children were taught to observe very closely the state of furs in the animals, as it indicated when to hunt these animals for their fur warmth.

Inuit children were constantly told to share their catch, which in a way is one of the first steps of serving. Imagine a five-year-old handing out seal meat and being thanked by his or her elders. From such a young age, we are taught this compassion for our community, and it continues for life. Acquiring skills and knowledge, in the form of hunting and serving your community, is tied to loving your neighbour and your camp (traditionally). But love is a skill that is always neglected in teaching materials nowadays. Modern schools unfortunately are devoid of family love, and the acquiring of skills of different forms of loving is not included in the curriculum.

Among this serving the common good of your camp or community, as rooted in the Inuit culture, lies a series of etiquettes governing relations with people. Inuit children at the earliest age are taught not to talk back to adults, and to only talk when asked questions. (I’m not very old, so I am part of the generation that has been pretentious enough to talk back and not listen at moments.) As Inuit children had to cultivate respect for others, they in turn got the respect that they deserved; individual attention was given them, because it was included with love. This is in contrast to the modern school system, where each social and individual respect is sacrificed in favour of attaining a lot of abstract ideas about social studies, mathematics, and sciences. The modern school system might very well be beneficial, but not when it creates a lot of confusion regarding what our culture is and what we are learning.
Will we survive the onslaught of colonization through the curriculum-soaked Western education system? Will we as members of the earth realize the effects we have on other species? I think this is one area that Western education is really lacking: the attention to our connection to our environments. Western education has taught us very little about taking care of other people and the environment. It teaches singularity and individualism and is rooted in competition. The modern school system believes that there is a top and bottom student, which is very different from the Inuit concept of learning, where every individual is only good when formed into a group or a family. Individuals are to form teams to help members of the community.

Some of what I say might sound grim, or maybe give a sense of being defeated by a system that is foreign, but we have experienced some success at bridging the two cultures. We have Inuit who can converse in both languages and perform well in both types of thought. I don’t think this is so much a result of the school system, but a result of Inuit having the support of a family to help us achieve in both systems.

NIGORA’S STORY
Learning Respect, Care, and Love from Family and Animals

This story is about ecological and family virtues taught in a relationship with other family members and the environment, and it is told through my personal experiences in my home country, Tajikistan. Situated in Central Asia, Tajikistan became part of the Soviet Union along with other four Central Asian countries in the first half part of twentieth century. When Tsarist Russia and then the Soviet government colonized these areas, they both viewed it as “backward” and in need of industrial modernization because people lived either as nomadic cattle breeders or as sedentary farmers, craftsman, or merchants. Though this lifestyle was more in tune with the needs of the environment, respecting and caring for it, it was not seen as compatible with the requirements of industrial development the Soviet government had planned on. To bring this idea into reality, the Soviet regime saw formal schooling as instrumental to raising a future generation to support industrial modernization. Thus, schooling promoted industrial modernization while emphasizing traditional ways of life as
undeveloped and backward. Though this undermined the local relational and ecological virtues that were so integral to the culture in Tajikistan, that culture was not completely lost. Today, regardless of the Soviet Union’s urbanization agenda in Central Asia, close to 70 percent of Tajikistan remains rural, and 93 percent of Tajikistan’s land is mountainous. Most people still practise agriculture and husbandry as a main source of income. As an agrarian and land-based culture, many of the everyday practices emphasize and pass on these virtues from one generation to the next. These practices, and the virtues they held within my family and community, shaped my understanding and appreciation of the relations we built together. One of my early memories of learning ecological and relational virtues was experienced when I visited my grandma.

I grew up in a city called Khujand, but during my summer break I used to visit my grandmother in her village, where I spent three months a year helping her with house chores. The village was located where water came from the mountain. Crops like wheat, tobacco, potato, corn, grapevines, and many other types were grown on the hills. And people built a pond to store drinking water. Because no one had a tap to drink from, we carried water in buckets for drinking, cooking, and general household needs. People shared that pond, which meant every family took care of it with the strict agreement to not pollute it. The pond where we took water to drink would be replaced two to three times per month by a stream coming from a nearby mountain. One day my grandma took me to the pond and showed me how to fill the bucket with water. But before showing me how to do it she said that I should be very careful not to drop any dirt into it, as the village—including us, of course—used it for drinking and other household activities. She told me about a little boy from another house who peed into it. The whole village asked his father to stream a new source of water, which he did. That was one of my lessons about the importance of water in our life. I learned that water was the source of life; if we pollute it or don’t take care of it, we harm ourselves.

My grandma had a busy life; she had land, farm animals, and a big household to take care of. I was given different chores, from taking care of the house to feeding domestic animals. Through these responsibilities I remember learning about the ecological and relational virtues that were part of our village life. We grew crops like wheat, corn, and vegetables, and over the table I would hear my grandma talk about her concerns when the water stream was low and how it was going to impact crops in the village. She talked about sharing the stream
with neighbours, making sure that every family gets their share of water. That was a big part of village life, where people came together to share its bounties for common good. One day she asked me to fetch water for the cow and calf. I said it was too hot outside for me to catch water for them. She explained to me that these animals were an important part of our life in the village as they give us produce, and in return we must take care of them. They needed to drink water to make more milk and gain strength. By feeding and watering them three times a day, I grew to love them as friends—indeed, as part of my family. We practised love and care for each other and it made a whole difference.

I also learned to clean the barn and take out and dry its manure. When I felt disgusted by its smell, my cousin noticed this and said that though it smelled bad, once it was dry it would be burned to heat the house in the winter and to cook food in the summer. And the manure was used to fertilize the land that fed the cows and us as well. I learned to appreciate its importance in our life and how everything was connected. Nothing went to waste. By living these direct relationships with the land, water, and animals, I learned about the concept of interdependence. These relationships taught me ecological and relational virtues that would have escaped me if we had relied on industrialized agriculture as the only way of life. They were place-based and experiential: I knew we needed each other and it could not be otherwise. This intangible knowledge and wisdom was not taught at school, but experienced in the family. I learned that whatever wrong I did had an immediate impact on me and I developed a profound knowledge about the world around me.

Being a part of the family, everyone had a responsibility to contribute to our well-being. These responsibilities were carried collectively with family members and neighbours. Through these responsibilities I learned to respect and care for family members, neighbours, elders, and younger community members. I learned the importance of sharing. We shared land, water, and labour with neighbours and other villagers. One of the vibrant memories I have involves the harvest season. There was corn, wheat, and tobacco; and neighbours would help each other as everyone would take turns doing the work. Harvest was done manually with farm tools. Once neighbour A got done with harvesting, everyone moved to help neighbour B. During the tobacco harvest, we used to go to the field in the morning and harvest ten to twenty sacks of tobacco to bring home. Once we were home those sacks of tobacco would be divided between each family group, who would put it through the needle to
hang and dry it. We would do this work sitting in a big circle, sharing jokes, stories, and getting comparative and playful with each other. I remember working on it a whole day and feeling such a sense of accomplishment afterward. We also came together to help each other at big gatherings like weddings, celebrations, or funerals. A close net of relationships and membership was developed in these ceremonies, which strengthened communal life by teaching us interdependence and appreciation of each other. Once we knew each other through these intimate moments, it was harder for us to hurt, undermine, and disrespect each other.

These land-based cultures were big on communal life; it was never about “me,” it was about “us.” I remember having a conversation about not putting myself above others. These conversations came as we learned to do work in a group and finish tasks collaboratively. Every morning after breakfast my cousins of similar age and I would carry a bucket of water and fill all the big containers to be used by the whole household. We would spend at least forty-five minutes filling all big containers with multiple visits to the stream-fed pond. Though I felt really tired each time carrying water, I knew I was doing my part of the responsibilities in that household. This communal life also taught me to recognize that whatever food was put on the table was possible thanks to the hard work of community members coming together. That is why it was a vice to waste food or disrespect something that nourished our body. We were taught to appreciate our meal every day and the bounty of the land that was so generous to us. At the end of a big meal, we recognized through prayer the hard work of the people who took care of the crops. We knew it was a hard work because we were part of harvesting. Through these kinds of conversations and prayers we were taught to respect the land and care for it. These moments experienced and lived in relationships, care, and sharing were not always smooth. But it was the core of my upbringing. I loved my life in the village because I could run, play, and be outside the whole day. Watching TV or being on any electronic devices was unheard of during my life in the village. Instead, I was in direct contact with a close-knit community and learned crucial skills to sustain myself. School taught me many things, but it was never a replacement for the wisdom and humbleness that teaches us we are part of a bigger ecological system.

Another crucial life lesson was taught to me by my mother. She would always spend time to explain things and emphasize the importance of humility and sharing. To keep me focused on my chores, she would remind me to keep
helping my grandmother and that that was one form of respect and care we could show her. She taught me to show respect to grandparents and elders and be courteous and kind to neighbours. She worked full-time as a teacher, but she always made sure to make time for long conversations about humility, kindness, care, and respect. From her I learned to remain open to things beyond my understanding and to value the complexity of life. She taught me what it is to be just, to question things when they are not right, and to always seek answers. This helped me to question the industrial and technological forces that were portrayed as better replacements for agrarian life. With her wisdom, kindness, sharing, and care, she taught me by example how to live life. Thanks to her I learned to understand community needs and build relationships with others as a crucial means of well-being and happiness. Everything she and my grandmother spoke of, their teachings, helped me find my place as a member of both the human and more-than-human world.

Growing up, I do not think I understood any of these teachings in depth, but now I realize that they are the main pillars of my understanding of the world. I understand now that we need an education that teaches us the humility to recognize ourselves as a part of a bigger ecological system upon which we depend emotionally, physically, economically, and socially; education through which we learn that we are one member of a complex web of life, and that our responsibility is to take care of this complex web for the common good.

**REBECCA’S STORY**

“There’s Nothing Left Here Anymore”

My story echoes many of the themes raised in my Inuit and Tajik colleagues’ narratives, but from a very different cultural context, that of a small rural town in northern New York State. While I recognize the critical historical and cultural differences in our life stories—I am a direct descendant of the devastation perpetrated by white European settlers—there are connections both in the land-based value systems learned as children and the systematic undoing by expansionist capitalism of those patterns of relationship that protected social and ecological well-being in our communities.

My first and arguably deepest education was informal, made of lessons learned primarily from my mother; the second came from school. My
childhood at home was filled with lessons of kindness and caring for other creatures (horses, dogs, cats, rabbits, trees, plants, fields), respect for elders, knowledge of local woodlands, fields, and streams, and responsibility to my family and community through orderliness and hard work: cultivating and preparing food, tending animals, caring for children, keeping house. From the back of a horse in my backyard, I was taught patience, self-discipline, compassion, embodied inter-species communication, and collaboration. While she refused to see them as generating important knowledge, these values and skills were brought to my siblings and me from my mothers’ experiences growing up on a small dairy farm just a mile from our house.

My grandparents established that farm in the early 1900s, when about 40 percent of the US population worked on small farms. Grandpa milked around sixty Holstein cows, and when my mother was growing up also raised chickens, hogs, and champion Percheron horses. The horses were used to plow the fields and do other tasks around the farm that needed such strength as they could provide. My mother claims that she was raised by those gentle giants, having lost her mother to breast cancer when just a toddler: “The housekeeper used to get me out of her hair by putting me up on the back of one of Dad’s big horses and slapping it on the rump to send us out into one of the fields. More than once I found myself stuck in the grain bin, unable to get off! I spent a lot of hours like that!”

Besides being funny to imagine, those hours atop the back of a draft horse taught my mother, even as a very young child, patience, humility, and gratitude. She grew to love horses, dogs, and all sorts of other creatures like they were best friends. And she learned the land for miles and miles around the farm and the village from the back of her pony. Forget a bicycle; she had a horse! She could tell us who lived in what farm, what condition the land was in, who worked for the farmer, and what kind of crops were grown there. Of my grandfather’s farm, she understood traditional crop rotation and the use of cow and green manure to fertilize fields. We used to drive by, smelling the fresh manure on the breeze, and she’d comment to us about which crops—corn, alfalfa, winter wheat—were in which fields and why. Grandpa used those fields to graze his cows or to grow the crops needed to feed them, selling hay to neighbours or folks in the community who had a horse or two if there was any to spare. Our milk came from the farm in a small milk can that Grandpa would carry in the back door along with a creel full of rainbow trout he’d caught that afternoon in the stream across from his house.
My mother would cook the lean little trout, heads and all, served with vegetables from her own garden or one up the road belonging to a neighbour. She knew how to cultivate, harvest, cook, and can from a huge garden on the side lot next to our house. She taught me how to weed, find the ripest fruit, and shuck peas. And she knew the best places to find blackberries, from which she made jams and pies—my father’s favourite. She was thrifty, practical, and brilliant when it came to pie pastry, horse sense, wildflowers, and a whole host of other day-to-day skills that made our lives together healthy. And it was all based on a particular form of love, for us and for the land and other creatures.

Eventually all this practical knowledge came to me, though I didn’t know it as knowledge (or even love) at all, and neither did she. She did not claim those skills as knowledge; in fact, she did her best to deny their value, ironically, even as she insisted we learn. Farmers’ kids (or grandkids) were “hicks.” My mother felt that especially sharply. By the time I was growing up, in the 1970s, the number of people on farms in the United States had shrunk to just 4 percent. This decline was accomplished via four systematic methods, the effects of which I witnessed and experienced in my own extended family: 1) USDA agricultural policy began to push mechanization and the use of credit to encourage farmers to buy bigger and bigger tractors and other equipment, as well as chemically based fertilizers and pesticides that created financial and nutritional dependencies and ultimately wore out the soil; 2) the use of government subsidies to encourage a “get big or get out” approach to farming, which also preached big technology and export crops over diversified and self-sufficient systems that could support families and the community; 3) the rise of a degrading cultural discourse and class stratification system defining farmers and their families as backward, uneducated “hicks”; 4) patterns within formal schooling that defined success in terms of monetary earnings gained by “experts” in professions that could be found anywhere but those small rural towns like the one I grew up in.

My mother once told me how happy she was to be “rescued” from the farm by marrying my father. She only moved a mile away, but she “got out.” It broke my heart when she told me this. This exclamation, and my own story one generation later of being schooled (and encouraged by my parents) to find happiness by leaving my town to “get out,” “become educated,” and “make something of myself,” reflect these broader historical and cultural patterns. I could never imagine myself staying in that little town, though now I deeply regret that response and even envy my classmates who stayed to work and raise families there.
From its beginning in the establishment of that farm, my family’s story is part of the development of what Wendell Berry calls the “unsettling of America” and the dislocation of land-based cultures across the world by expansionist capitalism. We are learning from critical scholars the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous Peoples, especially as these are reproduced in schools. Extending this work, we should also study the ways the violent extractive processes of late capitalism have unsettled the settlers, impoverishing the people and the land they once tended. The social and ecological effects are profound, as my once thriving rural town (with others across the United States and the world) is now dying: rivers polluted by CAFO run-off, topsoil depleted, local grocers, clothing stores, hardware stores, diners, and cafes replaced by Walmart, Lowes, and McDonalds. Prisons are now the number one employer in St. Lawrence County. As my Aunt Mary, the last remaining family elder, said to me recently, “Of course the kids are leaving, there’s nothing left here anymore.”

But if it’s not too much to say, can we discern a common thread among the activities and efforts that these small towns turn to, to rally, resist, and resuscitate? Might that thread be love? Can’t we see in our own lives many instances where the appeal of a flash fire of money can’t compare to the warmth of friendliness, helpfulness, co-operation, and care? How do we move beyond the profit-driven gluttony that pushes people off the land and impoverishes all, if not by turning toward the bonds of love?

DEREK’S STORY

Cease to Do Evil (Then Learn to Do Good)

There is a pithy saying by the Buddha that goes, “Cease to do evil, learn to do good, purify the mind. This is the way of the awakened ones.” It’s the order that impresses me. A lot of first-world activists think our job is to “rescue” those suffering from theft and bullying by our corporations and military. And a lot of first-world meditators want to rush to the last order of business: getting our busy minds purified. But isn’t the first job to cease to do evil? Especially when most of the evil on this planet is being done in service of our land-thieving, fossil-fuel-burning way of life? Living in the belly of the beast, we are likely the best positioned to stop evil from being done; Claire Culhane convinced me of this.
In the 1960s, Claire had been a nurse in Vietnam, where she watched her hospital get (illegally) used as a military base by US-supported South Vietnamese troops. When she came home, she discovered Canada was the single biggest outside supplier of weapons used by the United States in Vietnam. So Claire began a protest movement and wrote several influential books before being profiled in *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane.* Claire frequently quoted Che Guevara’s observation: “I envy you North Americans, you are very lucky. You are fighting the most important fight of all. You live in the belly of the beast.”

My turning point with Claire was a conversation at a Burger King in Ottawa. She told me about finishing her term as a nurse in South Vietnam and going to Paris to meet the ambassador from North Vietnam. She asked him if she could go volunteer as a nurse to help the North Vietnamese. He politely refused her: “Miss Culhane, let the bombs fall on our heads. Why don’t you go home to Canada and stop the bombs from being built in the first place?” Her advice echoed the original teaching of the Buddha, and it motivated me to do much of what I’ve done since. Why was I so receptive to her advice? I think the answer lies in the ethical foundation of intercultural respect, valour, and trust conveyed by my brother, my parents, grandparents, and mentors.

Courage. The only person who has ever physically intervened to defend me in a fist fight is my younger brother. Once, when I got cornered and beaten up by the school bully, Grant, who was very small in stature and only eight years old, jumped in and ferociously attacked the much older and bigger guy. That still stands as one of the bravest things I’ve seen, and lives on in my brother’s attitude of commitment, self-sacrifice, and incandescent love.

Respect. Our parents encouraged us to study and appreciate different cultures. They pushed me to study world religions in high school, giving me my first exposure to Buddhism, which now plays such a big role in my life.

Justice. My father volunteered to fight in the Second World War, as did my grandfather and various uncles, and my mother went through the London Blitz as a child. With this background, I was deeply affected by reading *The Crime and Punishment of IG Farben* (1978) in my final year of high school. Nuremberg war crimes prosecutor Joseph Borkin documented how major corporations like Agfa, BASF, Bayer, and Standard Oil (now Exxon) profited from running factories attached to concentration camps. That book lit a fuse in me—one that burned faster when set to a punk music soundtrack of Devo, Elvis Costello, and the Clash.
Activism. When I finally met Professor Bill Phelan in my first week at university, I was primed for a shift. Bill became my principal mentor. I was enrolled in business administration, but as soon as I heard Bill describe his Sociology 110 course as an investigation into the “world emergency” posed by US militarism and the threat of first-strike nuclear war, I promptly signed up. To this day, I still pass out Bill’s reading list: Chomsky, Wallerstein, Seymour Hersh, Gabriel Kolko, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Shulamith Firestone, Ivan Illich, etc. Those readings rocked my world.

Within a year I would be engaging in civil disobedience to block a cruise missile factory outside Toronto, and helping to found the Alliance for Non-Violent Action. Also in that period, Julia McCoy and I founded the first East Timor group in Canada, through which we met Noam Chomsky when he agreed to come up and do a speaking tour about Timor at Canadian universities. After four or five civil disobedience arrests, we had our first trial, where the inspirational activist Father Philip Berrigan came to testify for our defence. But all these arrests started to bring up a fundamental fear: I was terrified of being locked up for a long stretch with just my own mind for company.

So I began to look for a meditation teacher, and by default leaned toward the Buddhists I’d read about in high school. My activist heart was with the Catholics and Quakers, but they didn’t seem to have any methods to help you mentally survive incarceration. Buddhists seemed to, but on social justice matters they were—for the most part—annoyingly silent. My mentor Bill suggested I go to meet Namgyal Rinpoche, a Canadian who had been a Communist Youth member and a monk in Burma before being recognized by the 16th Karmapa and the 14th Dalai Lama as a reincarnated teacher in the Tibetan tradition. When I told Rinpoche I was a peace activist, he said: “Excellent! Keep it up.” A year later I signed up for a three-year training program for ministers that Rinpoche had founded.

A year after graduating from that, I went to Nunavut for what I thought would be three months; I stayed for twelve years. Much of what I write about today comes from what I heard or read over those years from Elisapi Ootoova, Mariano Apilardjuk, Annie Quirke, Zebedee Nungak, Kenojoak Ashevak, John Amagoalik, Monica Ittusardjuat, Malaya Nakasuk, Jerry Ell, Joe Kunuk, Joanasie Akumalik, Tommy Akulukjuk, David Joanasie, Aluki Kotierk, and many others.
Watching the dominant civilization—my people, the Qallunaat (Euro-Americans)—bully, hound, and harm Inuit and other civilizations is painful. But to watch our civilization run around the world trying to “rescue” the people that we pushed overboard to start with is outrageous. As I understand the virtues espoused by my family, Claire, Bill, and others, the work placed in front of us first worlders is to stop our civilization from brutalizing and stealing from others. We should cease to do evil before we presume to teach anyone how to do good.

Extractivism and Western Education

Colonialism and capitalism are based on extracting and assimilating. My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they have the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction-assimilation system. The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Extracting is taking, stealing, taking without consent, without thought, care, or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment. Colonialism has always extracted the Indigenous—extraction of Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous women, Indigenous Peoples. Children from parents. Children from families. Children from the land. Every part of our culture that is seemingly useful to the extractivist mindset gets extracted. There’s an intellectual extraction, a cognitive extraction, as well as a physical one.10

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson notes the parallels between the extraction of resources and the extraction of knowledge. Her insights may help explain why the single biggest new spending item in Canada’s 2014 right-wing federal budget was $1.9 billion for First Nations education.11 To some, this might have looked like a contradiction: Why would a Harper government keen on the tar sands pour money into schools on reserves? In fact, the two go hand in hand. People are fond of the forests and rocks that the economy feeds on. If humans still draw their primary sense of identity from a place, then it’s difficult to move and allocate them to where the economy needs them. Roots—and all those virtues that keep us rooted—get in the way. Hence the economic utility of changing from a rooted form of socialization among a “tribe” in “place” to
a system with less solidity and less solidarity. Institutionalized Western education dissolves land loyalty. You have to extract the people from the land if you want to extract the stuff under their feet. This is the same basic story that Rebecca tells about her experiences in northern New York. Small farmers tend to be very connected to the land and the communities that they serve. To make dairy farming a business, it was necessary to convince the next generation that it was dirty, ugly work, and to school them (us) away from the community. Agricultural extraction, as Berry tells us, meant creating the means for monocrop agricultural processes in order to shift from land-based relationships that fed communities to industrial processes that pulled crops, animal bodies, and profit out of communities and into large corporations as a matter of “efficiency.” To do so, farmers, convinced of the need to “modernize” (often via land grant universities’ agricultural programs) are forced to go into massive debt to banks, as well as seed and machinery companies. They are told that they are “feeding the world” and that this is a Green Revolution, but it’s anything but “green” and their families find themselves stretched so thin that one or both spouses often has to go off-farm to work.

Inuit call people who behave like this Qallunaat due to “their materialistic nature,” says Mini Aodla Freeman: “The word implies humans who pamper or fuss with nature. Of materialistic habit. Avaricious people.”

When Qallunaat cannot persuade Indigenous Peoples to enclose their places and permit extractivism, then we unleash institutional Western education on them. This mode of institutionalized education extracts and encloses teaching and learning. Enclosure of the land is a mission of capitalism, enclosure of learning is the mission of Western education.

Excavating rooted Indigenous learning and persuading communities to replace it with a placeless education service is the key to undermining their sense of belonging and concern for the land. Before companies and states can take the stuff under a people’s feet, they have to convince them to embrace placeless learning. In the United States and Canada, this has been going on since at least the early nineteenth century, but has since been exported across the world as an essential tool of “development.” When people “learn from the land,” then they aren’t too happy to see it trashed. But if they learn in a school—what do they need the land for? What is developed, then, is a powerful psychological alienation from, and material enclosure of, the interdependencies needed for life.
Antidotes: Local Virtues

The world’s tyrants... (have a) weakness.... They have no knowledge of the surrounding earth. Furthermore, they dismiss such knowledge as superficial, not profound. Only extracted resources count. They cannot listen to the earth. On the ground they are blind. In the local they are lost.... Effective acts of sustained resistance will be embedded in the local, near and far.13

One antidote to these trends noted by John Berger is to identify and critique them as we have done here. To point out their non-universality, and the taken-for-granted assumptions behind them. Colonialism and its later incarnations (capitalism and neo-liberalism) have destroyed the core of the cultural matrix that generates the kind of virtues that support earth communities.

Against the fragmentation caused by mechanistic ways of knowing and the reductionist imaginaries and policies they incur, Wendell Berry insists on a recognition of the diverse and unifying connections that tie us to each other and with the living world—bodies, minds, and spirits—as the mysterious source of all possible ways of knowing or being. “These things that appear to be distinct are nevertheless caught in a network of mutual dependence and influence that is the substantiation of their unity. Body, soul (or mind or spirit), community and world are all susceptible to each other’s influence... each part is connected to every part.”14 Such, we argue, is love the necessary basis for life. We recognize the bonds of love in our own family histories, in the relationships and practices that we experienced as children and by which we learned to be responsible for one another. We now work to revitalize this responsibility in our own teaching and learning.

Another antidote is to slow down and build locally. We are not as far gone as capitalist elites want us to believe. We can reweave the fabric of community. Paul Goodman said, “Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side had won, and you had the kind of society that you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now!”15 Goodman is asking us: What are the virtues we want to embody and bring to life? Now go do that. When we wake up tomorrow morning, how will we act in accordance with this? The community garden that we cultivate, the choir we sing with, the house we’ve helped our friends build, the animals and forests we have learned to care for, the time we spend caring
for a sick relative—all these activities pass Goodman’s test. Think of the ways we cultivate rootedness and responsibility to landscapes and to each other and foster joy and creativity. Now go do them!

We believe that virtues are soaked up through the lived experiences of people (families and communities) living together in place, working and playing together, and struggling together, and that it is through hearing about people’s narratives of such lived experience that we learn best about the virtues.

We must begin to listen to Indigenous wisdom holders who have been pointing out the harmfulness of Qallunaat ways for centuries. And we must tell our own stories, where the needed virtues still pop up through the cracks in the system.

Our stories are of what we have learned through relationships: with animals, as Tommy and Rebecca and Nigora describe; with our elders, with our families, and with our mentors and teachers. We have developed strong, principled love for these people and relationships, principles that guide our willingness to protect what we love in these places and beyond. For us, it’s the best way to fight back against the violence engulfing the world. Generosity, humility, fortitude, kindness, determination, and forgiveness: we bring these virtues to life by becoming the teachers and mentors, spouses and parents, friends and activists that we wish to see in the world. Together, we defend these virtues, resist wrongdoing, and build the good.

Importantly, we do not act alone. Che Guevara said: “The desire to sacrifice an entire lifetime to the noblest of ideals serves no purpose if one works alone.” Friendships and mutual admiration spawned the collaboration in this chapter and indeed in this book. It would take hours to list the ways in which each of us has been encouraged and inspired and tangibly supported by the others here to persevere in our activism, scholarship, mentoring, and community-building. These bonds of respect and nurturance are the lifeblood of our defence of the places, people, land, and relationships that we love and that have loved us into being. As Joanasie Akumalik says: “Qungapassi” (I smile at you all).

Notes


5 W. Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1996).

6 Berry, *The Unsettling of America*.


14 Berry, *The Unsettling of America*, 110.

Author Biographies

**Tommy Akulukjuk** is a hunter, artist, and writer from Pangnirtung, Nunavut. A graduate of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut Training Program in Ottawa, he has worked for the Lands division of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and as an environmental researcher for the national Inuit group Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. He has also advised the territorial government on establishing a new Inuit Cultural School for Nunavut.

**Heesoon Bai**, PhD, a recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award and the Dean of Graduate Studies Award for Excellence in Supervision at Simon Fraser University in Canada, researches and writes about the intersections of ethics, ecological world views, contemplative ways, Asian philosophies, and psychotherapy. Her **sfu** profile is available at http://www.sfu.ca/education/faculty-profiles/hbai.html.

**David Chang**, PhD candidate, is a teacher and teacher educator in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in Canada. David taught secondary English for a decade before working as a faculty associate with Professional Programs at **sfu**. He studies ecological ethics, sustainable communities, contemplative practices, and ecological ways of life.

**Douglas E. Christie** is professor of theological studies at Loyola Marymount University, where he teaches in the area of Christian spirituality. His primary research interests focus on contemplative traditions of thought and practice in ancient Christian monasticism, on spirituality and ecology, and most
recently on traditions of spiritual darkness and unknowing and their capacity to help us respond meaningfully to the contemporary sense of exile, loss, and emptiness.

Paul Crowe is an associate professor in the Department of Humanities at Simon Fraser University, where he also teaches for the Asia-Canada Program and directed the David See Chai Lam Centre for International Communication from 2008 to 2015. His research and publications have addressed classical and contemporary fields of inquiry. His SFU profile is available at https://www.sfu.ca/humanities/people/faculty.html.

Nigora Erkaeva is a PhD candidate at Eastern Michigan University. Her dissertation employs a critical discourse analysis of the introduction of compulsory education and historical change in Central Asia in the early twentieth century.

Thomas Falkenberg is professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, Canada. He is the editor and co-editor of five books, including Sustainable Well-Being: Concepts, Issues, Perspectives, and Educational Practices and the recently published Handbook of Canadian Research in Initial Teacher Education. More details about his research and academic background are available at http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~falkenbe.

David Greenwood, professor in Graduate and Undergraduate Studies and Research in Education at Lakehead University, is Canada Research Chair in Environmental Education. His publication list is available at https://www.lakeheadu.ca/users/g/dgreenwo/node/17468.

Mike Hannis is a senior lecturer in ethics, politics, and environment in the School of Humanities at Bath Spa University, UK. He is also a member of the Research Centre for Environmental Humanities at the university. From 2014 to 2019, his research in environmental ethics formed part of the interdisciplinary Future Pasts project (see www.futurepasts.net) funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.

David W. Jardine has recently retired from a full professorship of education. He now works with groups of teachers in the Calgary, Alberta area in attempting to
decode the strange circumstances of schooling and to cultivate more sane ways of taking up the task entrusted to teachers and students in schools.

**Peter H. Kahn, Jr.**, professor at the University of Washington with joint appointments in the Department of Psychology and the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, is director of the Human Interaction with Nature and Technological Systems Laboratory. His faculty profile is available at https://faculty.washington.edu/pkahn/.

**Dr. Carl Leggo**, a poet and professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, is an arts-based education researcher and part of the a/r/tography movement at UBC. His UBC profile is available at http://educ.ubc.ca/professor-carl-leggo/. For some of his voluminous publications, check https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carl_Leggo.

**David Robert Loy** is a professor of Buddhist and comparative philosophy and a teacher in the Sanbo Zen tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism. He lectures nationally and internationally on various topics, focusing primarily on the encounter between Buddhism and modernity and what each can learn from the other. He is especially concerned about social and ecological issues. For more, visit www.davidloy.org.


**Darcy Mathews** is an assistant professor in environmental studies at University of Victoria. He is an ethnoecologist and archaeologist and works in collaboration with First Nations communities to understand the deep history of social and ecological relationships between past peoples and their environments.

**Margaret McKee** is currently an associate professor of social work at Lakehead University in northwestern Ontario, Canada. Marg’s PhD is in counselling psychology, but she is also a former obstetrical nurse and professional musician.
Margaret McKeon is an outdoor educator, poet, and doctoral student in language and literacy education at the University of British Columbia. A person of settler ancestry, her research interests include relationship with place and land, place as site of colonial relationships, place-based learning, Indigenous education, land as story, different ways of knowing, and autoethnographic poetic inquiry.

Derek Rasmussen is an activist and meditation teacher trained in the Burmese and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. He also works as an advisor to Inuit organizations on education and social issues. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, writing his dissertation on the teaching of Buddhist meditations on unbounded love.

Charles Scott teaches at Simon Fraser University in the Faculty of Education as an adjunct professor and at City University in Canada (Vancouver) in the School of Education as an associate professor.

Nancy J. Turner, CM, OBC, PhD, FRSC, FLS, an ethnobotanist whose research focuses on traditional knowledge systems and traditional land and resource management systems of Indigenous Peoples of western Canada, is distinguished professor emeritus in the School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria, Canada. Her personal website can be found at http://pspaldin.wixsite.com/nancyturner.

Jan Zwicky is the author of nearly twenty books of poetry and prose, including *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth*, *The Long Walk*, and, most recently, *The Experience of Meaning*. Zwicky grew up in the northwest corner of the Great Central Plain on Treaty 6 territory, was educated at the Universities of Calgary and Toronto, and currently lives in a coastal rainforest succession on Canada’s West Coast, unceded territory with a complex history, including Coast Salish and Kwakwaka’wakw influences.