Defining Indigenous (Chris Daniels Ph.D.)

When I first began working on my doctoral dissertation it wasn't long before I realized how problematic the term "Indigenous" is to define, largely because of the variety of ways it is used. Officially, the "Indigenous Peoples" of Canada are the "First Nations," "Inuit", and "Metis," including those who self-identify as such. In this case Indigenous is a political term that, rightly so, identifies Canada's original peoples and cultures. However, as much as I believe it accurately describes Canada's original cultures, to limit the term to its political definition and use seems problematic. The word with a lower-case "i", indigenous, is well known to us when used to reference the flora and fauna of an area in describing that which is "native" rather than artificially introduced from elsewhere, like Europe. It has been there a long time and had not arrived in the recent past. Of course, this becomes problematic as well because it is dependent on an arbitrary timeline that does not really take into consideration the nomadic introduction of animals that can occur naturally, or the seeds and pollen that can be introduced to an area through wind patterns, or naturally carried by animals, birds, and insects that migrate to an area. It is hard to argue that such, after establishing itself over years, decades, centuries, or millennia, should not be considered "indigenous" just because it has been introduced at some point in the past. That is just the way Mother Earth works, and frankly, the point is that humans are also part of nature!

When used with upper-case "I" it seems to denote people in particular, but depending on context includes a wide variety of characteristics, not all of which are agreed on. As a philosopher I strive for a "necessary and sufficient" definition and I had nothing but trouble finding such. In the end, it seems that we need to widen (or narrow depending on perspective) the definition somewhat and be clear as to what is meant by the term, rather than continue to

have it mean something different to each person, context, or group that uses it. Fortunately, it never ceases to amaze me how accurate the term "Indigenous" is in describing original peoples and practices when you consider and rely on its Old Latin roots. This is a term that, in the end, is used by the colonizers to describe oppressed people, yet when we look at its etymology it is particularly good at providing an accurate and satisfactory definition of the peoples it is attempting to label. How often does that happen?? I speak more of that in the article below.

Within a day of handing in my dissertation and sending copies off to my examining committee I had the fortune to go to a presentation by First Nations Okanagan scholar and novelist Jeanette Armstrong. By the time she was done speaking I wanted to run around and grab all the copies of my thesis so I could revise it with multiple quotes from her. Unfortunately it was too late. She was defining Indigeneity very much as I had in my dissertation,which was very exciting, but so much more elegantly and authoritatively. She acknowledged that everyone had Indigenous ancestors if you looked back far enough in your own lineage, so wanted to stress a more inclusive definition. But, her main point toward re-Indigenization, that I continue to use because it is SO spot-on, is that **Indigeneity is a *social* paradigm, not a *racial* or *political* one**. It is *how you live in the world* and in your community. It is the *relationships* you have and hold to the land in which you live.

So in one short phrase Jeannette Armstrong managed to cut through all the difficulty I was having with defining the term and the various ways it is used, and made most of a chapter of my thesis virtually redundant. I will be forever grateful to her for that.

elow is an article that is mostly excerpted from my dissertation "A*ll My Relations: A Process-Indigenous Study in Comparative Ontology*". It describes in more detail the research that brought me to my current understanding of Indigeneity and how it applies both to the world's

original peoples, including Canada's Indigenous cultures, and all our ancient ancestors. It also discusses that because Indigeneity is a social rather than racial paradigm (I managed to finally use the phrase) it is possible to be re-indigenized by re-kindling a deep, respectful, and reciprocal relationship with the land on which we live.

Defining Indigenous

The definition of the term 'Indigenous' is somewhat difficult to determine due to the diversity of usage which varies according to context and agenda, and is often associated with colonialism.[1] The use of the word 'indigenous' as meaning 'born in a country,' or 'native' dates from the 1600's Latin *indigenus.*[2] However, it originally comes from the Latin root *indigena* meaning 'sprung from the land,' and derives from Old Latin *indu* meaning 'in,' and *gene*, (root of *gignere) meaning* 'beget,' or from *gen meaning* 'produce.'[3] In other words, the etymology of the word identifies it as originally meaning 'sprung, produced, or begot from the land.' Currently, when speaking of people who are Indigenous, the term is usually associated with original or first inhabitants of a land, or those who have inhabited a particular area for a long period of time before colonialism. However, additional characteristics are frequently added depending on usage. My own contention, in keeping with its earliest meaning, is that although all Native peoples and original or 'first' inhabitants of any particular land base could be considered Indigenous, it is less accurate to limit the term to that; or that all beliefs and practices that could

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[1] Both Shawn Wilson and Graham Harvey want to link Indigeneity to oppression and colonialism as a necessary part of its definition. Wilson argues that 'Indigenous' as a proper noun is being reclaimed by aboriginal people worldwide who have oppression and colonialism as a common identifying characteristic. Harvey suggests such a move is warranted because the history of colonialism is integral to the ongoing experience of Indigenous people. Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 16., Graham Harvey, "Introduction," in *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*, ed. Graham Harvey (New York: Cassell, 2000), 12.

[2] Douglas Harper, in *Online Etymology Dictionary* (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=indigenous accessed May 4, 2012).

[3] Ibid.

be considered Indigenous are necessarily only those of Native peoples. In his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods,* however, Shawn Wilson does just that. He considers 'Indigenous' to refer to the "people and peoples who identify their ancestry with the original inhabitants of Australia, Canada, and other countries worldwide," and as an adjective to "describe things that belong to these peoples (like Indigenous knowledge)."[4]

In a report to the *Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics* entitled "The Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples," Willie Ermine and his team of researchers identify 'Indigenous' as meaning particular tribal peoples, but refrain from adding either 'colonialism' or connection to the land to what it actually means to *be* Indigenous, except as a temporal indicator as being 'pre-colonial' inhabitants. The report states:

> Indigenous Peoples are the tribal peoples in independent countries whose distinctive identity, values, and history distinguishes them from other sections of the national community. Indigenous Peoples are the descendants of the original or pre-colonial inhabitants of a territory or geographical area and despite their legal status, retain some or all of their social, economic, cultural and political institutions.[5]

This particular definition appears designed to politically and legally address what it means to be Indigenous under the 'Indian Act' in Canada and other similar governmental agencies, as well as to suit the purposes and goals of the specific study of the report. Although adequate for their purpose, it serves to illustrate the diversity of definitions, the particularity of each definition, and the difficulty of determining what it means to be 'Indigenous' in a more general sense.

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[4] Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, 34.

[5] Willie Ermine, Raven Sinclair, and Bonnie Jeffery, "The Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples," (Saskatoon, Saskachewan: Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre, 2004), 5.

In contrast are those who want to define the term closer to the original meaning of being connected to, or related to, the land. That concept does, however, seem to be included in most, although obviously not all, definitions. There appears to be a general acceptance for the idea that there is a common characteristic shared between peoples around the world that identifies them as 'Indigenous.' This seems to be the case for non-Native academic scholars such as Graham Harvey, James Cox, and F. David Peat, as well as Native scholars such as Vine Deloria Jr., Betty Bastien, E. Richard Atleo, Anne Waters, Shawn Wilson, Stan Wilson, and others. Although they all recognize that the term encompasses a huge variety of cultures, beliefs, and practices—none of which are essentially the same, and many of which are contradictory in nature—there is something that links them both in how these people are identified and how they self-identify. Both the non-Indigenous and Indigenous scholars recognize common defining traits which they identify as Indigenous, although there is not always a consensus on what should be included. In his book *Primitive to Indigenous,* James Cox, while working towards an adequate definition of the term 'Indigenous,' discusses the evolutionary history of the academic movement of the use of the term 'primitive', to 'primal,' to finally 'Indigenous,' as describing 'original' peoples and their practices.[6] He points out the variety of hegemonic religious presuppositions, as well as the overt and covert essentialisms, that are associated with the earlier terms and argues that 'Indigenous' is a term that largely avoids these pitfalls, accurately describes the common defining traits of indigeneity, while acknowledging the diversity of how these traits are expressed in cultures around the world. In the end he acknowledges that the primary trait of Indigeneity, which he says "isolates the one central belief found among Indigenous societies everywhere" is

[6] James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions*, ed. Graham Harvey, et al., Vitality of Indigenous Religions (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007).

that Indigenous people are “bound to a location,” are “native to a place” or “belong to it.”[7] The central overriding belief of all Indigenous people, according to Cox:

> …derives from a kinship-based world-view in which attention is directed towards ancestor spirits as the central figure in religious life and practice. As such, Indigenous Religions are restricted cosmologically because their spirit world is organized around a system of lineage. Ancestors are known by name; they belong to a place just as their descendants do, and they relate to living communities as spirit conveyors of ancestral traditions. In this sense, (Jan) Platvoet is right: amongst indigenous peoples, kinship rules religion: it defines its fundamental characteristic and dictates the one belief all Indigenous Religions share in common.[8]

For Cox, then, Indigenous people are—or identify themselves as—bound or belonging to a location or place. This fundamental defining characteristic generates the central, overriding religious belief of ancestor veneration, a practice which is also associated with and tied to a particular location. He goes on to say: “It would seem, therefore, that an indigenous religion is not characterized by its means of production, but by the location and kinship system.”[9] These two characteristics of being connected to a particular location and strong kinship relations are not uncommon in descriptions of what it means to be Indigenous and would likely be familiar and acceptable to Indigenous people themselves. However, the way many Indigenous scholars describe these characteristics provides a subtle but important difference in how this definition is understood.

Many Indigenous scholars do not necessarily set out to define Indigenous as such, but they often express what it means to be Indigenous.[10] For instance Nomalungelo Goduka states that “although Indigenous peoples around the world vary widely in their customs, traditions,

[7] Ibid., 69.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 71.
[10] Many of the Indigenous scholars used in this study discuss what it means to *be* Indigenous without necessarily offering a formal definition. These include Bastien:2007, Atleo:2004, Waters:2004, Goduka:2006.

rituals, languages, and so on, land is considered by all as the center of the universe, a parent, a giver of life."[11] She also says: "from the land originates their identity, art, history, and a foundation of *ubuntu*, or humanness," and "land for us is not a source of sustenance only, it also serves as a cultural and spiritual bond connecting us with our ancestors, and to the greater whole, Mother Earth."[12] The point is that although at first glance this seems to support Cox's definition, there is in fact far greater emphasis placed on land itself, and the relationship to that land, rather than belonging to or coming from a particular location. In this sense 'land' does not necessarily merely imply 'location.' It is the relationship with land itself and how this relationship connects people to the totality of the natural world, including their past, present, and future, that determines Indigenous identity, ways-of-knowing, language, religion and practices. As Goduka has pointed out above, kinship ties, including ancestors, are derivative of their relationship to the land and through the land, the greater universe. From this perspective, location would certainly be important, but primarily as it would determine the particularity of the relationship, resulting in the diversity of cultures around the world. Different location would denote varying relational characteristics, resulting in the diversity of cultural practices that are understood and labelled globally as 'Indigenous.' Therefore, a particular place-location characterizes the distinctive nature of the diverse Indigenous cultures but it is the underlying relationship with the land, indicative of a pervasive relational ontology, that illustrates their Indigeneity. Gregory Cajete says that "Native cultures are the earth, air, fire, water, and spirit of the place from which they evolve."[13] With their reciprocal relationship with the particular land base from which they come,

[11] Nomalungelo Goduka, "Prologue," in *Indigenous Peoples' Wisdom and Power: Affirming Our Knowledge through Narratives*, ed. Julian E. Kunnie and Nomalungelo I. Goduka, *Vitality of Indigenous Religions* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), xi.
[12] Ibid., x,xi.
[13] Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Sante Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 306.

distinct cultural, psychological, and physical characteristics are formed and emphasized.[14] This is also reflected in their mythic expressions in which "People living near water, emphasize water. People living in mountainous terrain look to the mountains, Desert people understand the desert and the flora and fauna."[15] According to Cajete, then, distinct land bases particularize the manner in which each culture expresses the relationship they have with 'land' itself, and through that land the greater universe. This allows for the identification of common characteristics in ontology while recognizing the diversity and individuality of each Indigenous culture.

So, the geographic place symbols provide the conceptual structure, but identity construction, while tied to a particular location, extends to a deeper sense of relationship. When people do not have a possessive sense of 'ownership' of land, 'place,' like 'kinship,' takes on a slightly different meaning than how it is understood in a normal Euro-American context. Simon Ortiz of the Acoma Pueblo community describes it as:

> You recognize your birth as coming from a specific place, but that place is more than just a physical or geographical place, but obviously a spiritual place, a place with the whole scheme of life, the universe, the whole scheme and power of creation. Place is the source of who you are in terms of your identity, the language that you are born into and that you come to use.[16]

What this passage by Ortiz suggests is that the specificity of physical place or location requires further nuancing, with 'place' thought of as a connection to the wider natural world and "power of creation." Although one is born in a specific location, that 'place' includes the geographic particularities, but as a source of identity creation also extends beyond. It is the relationship one has with the universe and "power of creation" by virtue of one's connection to a

[14] Ibid., 187.
[15] Ibid., 207.
[16] Quoted by Jyotirmaya Tripathy, "Towards an Essential Native American Identity: A Theoretical Overview," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 26, no. 2 (2006): 316.

specific place that is of primary concern. The particularity of physical or geographical place determines *how* the relationship with the natural world is manifest, not whether there *is* such a relationship. It is this broader connotation of 'connection to the land,' as implied by Ortiz, Cajete, and Goduka, that I wish to explore in determining what it means to be Indigenous.

In this context it is not necessarily clear that the two traits in Cox's definition of Indigenous as being bound to the land and venerating kinship relations are separate and distinct. How Cox defines the term fails to reflect the concept that in many cases Indigenous relationships with the land, and connection to location, *are* considered kinship relationships. Although obviously different, they are not distinct from ancestor relationships and veneration. Connection to land, and through the land the entirety of the cosmos, is tantamount to kinship and thus requires a broader definition of Indigeneity.

What then are we left with in defining 'Indigenous?' In order to work with what could be considered a necessary-and-sufficient definition I will presume a more fundamental approach which understands the term as a way of being in relationship with land. I will follow those who start from the position that Indigenous beliefs, ontology, epistemology, and practices, are those derived from being in relationship with the land, and through the land to the universe as a whole. In other words, I agree with Okanagan Syilx scholar and novelist Jeanette Armstrong who insists that Indigeneity is a *social* rather than racial or political paradigm. It is *how* you live and relate to the world rather than being from a particular race. Indigenous Peoples, then, are those who, because they have such a relationship, have developed these traits. In other words, Indigenous beliefs, values, practices, ways-of-knowing, languages, and culture, would be those *developed from radical relationship with the natural world, through the land, by and for the people who*

live on the land.[17] Indigenous *people*, therefore, are those that have or have had such a relationship, and consequently developed such beliefs, values, practices, ways-of-knowing, languages, and culture.

This, then, is the understanding I will be promoting when I refer to Indigeneity or Indigenous people. Regardless of any contextual additions, the focus on deep relationality to land in its universal sense is the necessary and sufficient factor for the definition.[18] I recognize that in different contexts, such as political, economic, and 'religious' spheres of interaction, additional nuancing may be required, such as the addition by Wilson of the common experience of the oppression inherent in colonialism.

For Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete the connection and participation with the natural world constitutes the best definition of being Indigenous and is found in various forms in all traditional Indigenous cultures, even the ancient folk traditions of rural Europe.[19] Cajete says that as far as Indigenous people are concerned all human development "is predicated on our interaction with the soil, the air, the climate, the plants, and the animals of the places in which we live."[20] It is this participatory and reciprocal relationship with the land and place, and the subsequent need to maintain that relationship, which is shared by Indigenous people, that is reflected in narratives, ritual, art, and spiritual traditions, and consequently informs their psyche in all aspects of personal and communal identity. Cajete goes on to say that in Indigenous tribes the "philosophies, cultural ways of life, customs, language, all aspects of the cultural being in one

[17] Radical in this sense refers to the pervasiveness of the relational outlook in all aspects of the lived Indigenous experience.
[18] This definition includes those who are currently identified as Indigenous, is fundamental enough to exist in a complementary fashion with additional characteristics in different contexts, yet is not based on race or limited to habitation of particular locations for any arbitrary time frame.
[19] Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, 187.
[20] Ibid.

way or another—are ultimately tied to the relationships that they have established and applied during their history with regard to certain places and to the earth as a whole."[21] He states:

> In the same fashion as myth, land becomes an extension of the Native mind, for it is the place that holds memory. Hence, it becomes one of the major roles of totemic clans to define the kinds of expressions of reverence to be given to each sacred site. Sacred sites contain the compact of kinship to certain plants, animals, or natural phenomena with which a clan group identifies. It is the landscape that contains the memories, the bones of the ancestors, the earth, the air, fire, water, and spirit from which a Native culture has come to and to which it continually returns. It is the land that ultimately defines a Native people.[22]

Similar to these statements by Cajete, this definition also preserves the diverse nature of Indigenous cultures and the characteristic of 'place' or 'locale' by acknowledging that different lands and locations will naturally develop different relationships which will in turn be expressed in unique ways. Joseph Epes Brown expresses this point by stating:

> One explanation for the current new willingness to understand Native Americans and their life-ways is that being rooted in this land for thousands of years, the Indians' otherwise very diverse cultures have all come to express rich spiritual relationships with this continent; indeed the forms and symbols bearing these values are all drawn from the details of each people's particular geographic environment. Native Americans lived, and many still do live, what one might call a metaphysic of nature, spelled out by each group in great detail, defining responsibilities and the true nature of that vast web of human-kind's cyclical interrelationships with the elements, the earth, and all that lives upon the land.[23]

While this definition includes Native and 'original' peoples, it is not strictly limited to those, therefore taking account of historic migration and nomadic trends. It also does not draw an arbitrary time frame as to how long a people need to reside on any particular land. It includes

[21] Ibid., 4.
[22]Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, 250.
[23] Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian: Commemorative Edition with Letters While Living with Black Elk*, Cmv ed. (Bloomington Indiana: World Wisdom, 2007), 83.

observed importance in kinship ties and alliances because in many Indigenous contexts these biological relationships may be closer, but are not distinctly or ontologically different than those with the rest of the natural world. In addition, it does not contest the legitimate claim that Indigenous people have undergone common hardship and cultural devastation through colonialism by the dominant Western society and how that has shaped their current conditions, identity, and physical location, but recognizes this tragic experience as happening *to* Indigenous people, not as the defining trait that makes them 'Indigenous' as such.

However, what this definition does do is open up the possibility of re-claiming Indigeneity that may have been lost or weakened through colonialism, as well as the possibility of *becoming* Indigenous. By not designating who is Indigenous and non-Indigenous along racial lines, forced social circumstances, or particular time frames, the possibility exists that with increased or renewed relationship with the land people could actually become Indigenous, or at least *more* Indigenous. Vine Deloria Jr. has encouraged people to think about the extent non-Native Americans have become Indigenous if they have "responded to the rhythms of the land."[24] This is based on a definition of 'becoming Indigenous' that does not mean becoming Native, but rather "knowing the land where we live and showing it respect."[25] Accordingly, says Emily Cousins, learning about Native religions can help in this process by offering a model of what it means to have a spiritual relationship with the land. By limiting the move toward Indigeneity to "knowing the land" and "showing respect," however, Cousins seems to imply that although non-Native can become *more* Indigenous, they would be unable to experience the level of relationship achieved by Native peoples. The more general definition I propose does not differentiate in this way and suggests that in principle it is possible for any person to gain this

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

relationship with a particular land base and develop the beliefs, practices, and ways-of-knowing that could be recognized as Indigenous. Indeed, the implication is that at some point in history all people from every culture, or at least their ancestors, including those that make up the dominant Euro-American society, were Indigenous to a land-base somewhere, and therefore have the ability to renew that deep relationship anywhere.

An example from within Native culture that both illustrates how connection to the land is fundamental to Indigeneity but can be lost or regained in differing circumstances, is that of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq. It is still contested whether Mi'kmaq are traditionally native to Newfoundland, came over with the French to help eradicate the local Beothuk Indigenous population, or were merely seasonal occupants engaged in hunting and fishing.[26] In any case Suzanne Owen has studied the resurgence of Native culture in the province since the Mi'kmaq gained recognition as First Nations on the island. In particular she has done research on the intertribal borrowing of ceremonies from the plains traditions, such as the powwow, sweat lodge, and sacred pipe, which have become increasingly popular, yet were not traditionally part of Mi'kmaq culture. The sacred pipe has been recognized as a 'pan-Indian' ceremony throughout North America, but although some Elders believe the pipe was given to the Mi'kmaq hundreds of years ago, most say it is a much more recent addition to Mi'kmaq ceremony.[27] Raymond Bucko has observed that the sweat lodge has re-appeared as a pan-Indian ceremony as well, largely done in the Lakota form.[28] The ceremony as performed by the Mi'kmaq, for instance, is

[26] Suzanne Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality* (London: Continuum, 2008), 113.
[27] Ibid., 127.
[28] Raymond A. Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice*, Studies in the Anthropology of North American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 252-53.

usually done following Lakota protocol, even though some believe that in the past there was traditionally some form of Mi'kmaq sweat lodge.[29] Owen says:

> The sweat lodge ceremony, in its present form, has only recently become part of their culture, although several Mi'kmaq spoke of how they once had a form of the sweat lodge in the past. Not all Mi'kmaq accept the sweat lodge ceremony as part of their culture yet acknowledge its importance as a 'borrowed' ceremony to help revive their cultural identity as Mi'kmaq.[30]

The reason given for the necessity of borrowing such ceremonies was that the local First Nations people had been so culturally disconnected from the land that it no longer spoke to their Elders, and therefore the relationship had to be renewed using proper protocol.[31] Proper respect and procedure was necessary even if it meant having to borrow from those who had not experienced quite the same level of land dislocation.[32] Owen spoke to one of the first lodgekeepers to bring the sweat lodge to the Maritimes and he acknowledged that they had learned the traditions elsewhere, himself originally from the Cree. Owen quotes the keeper as saying, "Now we don't need to learn their songs—songs come through from the spirit world."[33] Another said they hoped that soon they would no longer need to borrow ceremonies because the land was starting to speak to their Elders. New songs were being created (and old ones re-learned) which would lead to a re-learning of the proper protocol according to their own tradition.[34] This example illustrates the premise that connection to a specific land may be lost, but can be renewed by Indigenous people with the ability to do so. In theory, therefore, even peoples who have long lost such an intimate connection to the natural world, such as European

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[29] Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*, 127.
[30] Ibid., 113.
[31] The disconnect with traditional ways was so severe in the case of the Indigenous Beothuk population, as was the genocidal violence that was endured, that they have become culturally extinct.
[32] Suzanne Owen, "Sources of Contemporary Mi'kmaq Spirituality" (Presented at the American Academy of Religion, Montreal November 7-10 2009). Owen spoke of these reasons during her presentation.
[33] Owen, *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality*, 123. Owen quotes Joey Paul from July 4, 2003.
[34] Owen, "Sources of Contemporary Mi'kmaq Spirituality".

immigrants to the Americas and some Native peoples that were particularly hard hit from the effects of colonialism, could *become* Indigenous again, or re-establish their Indigeneity, through renewing and maintaining the required relationship with the land. This would not, of course, mean they became Native to North America if they were not already, but that the intimate relatedness to the land that resulted in the development of beliefs and practices that are 'born of the land,' is more fundamental to Indigeneity than any particular racial ancestry.

Personally, if Indigeneity IS a social paradigm rather than a racial one, I do not see the difference, in principle, between the Mi'kmaq borrowing protocol to help reconnect with the land in a respectful Indigenous way, and a non-Indigenous person doing the same, if given the permissions and gifted the teachings from an Indigenous lineage that was willing to share the appropriate protocols. Anything else assumes Indigeneity, and the experiences that accompany it, is not a human experience, but a racial one, which is very problematic. Of course, for that sort of "cultural appropriation " to be appropriate it must include the commitment to reciprocal, respectful, responsible, relationships with the natural world that are inherent in Indigenous cultures. They would have to pay their dues like Indigenous people did/do every day, rather than expect to get the benefits without sacrifice. If that commitment and sacrifice is not there, then it could, and has quite often, easily degrade into totally inappropriate cultural appropriation. The importance of that is not easy for a Western, non-Indigenous person to understand, let alone accomplish. But that discussion is for another paper.