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Coming Home: A Journey Through the Trans-Systematic Knowledge Systems

Sakej Henderson et Leroy Little Bear

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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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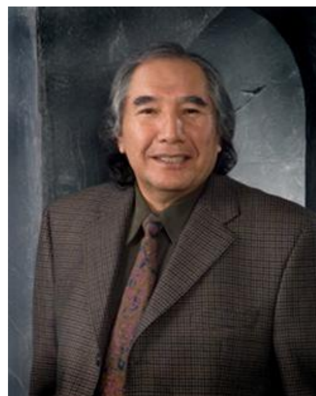
Exchanges

In the Exchanges, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. In this section, we invite our readers to offer their thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and in various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaborations with university-based partners in particular and engaged scholarship in general.

In this issue, we present a discussion between **Sa'ke'j James Youngblood Henderson** and **Dr. Leroy Little Bear** from November 2020.

Coming Home: A Journey Through the Trans-systematic Knowledge Systems

Sa'ke'j: Thank you for agreeing to this interview, Leroy. We are deeply honoured to have this interview in the *Engaged Scholar Journal,* as many of the scholars in this edition have referenced you and have been inspired by your work. Would you begin by relaying where you are located and telling the readers about your background and territory and position?



Leroy Little Bear

Leroy: That is hard for me to do because I am nomadic. [chuckles, then begins in the Blackfoot language]

I was just introducing myself as in my Blackfoot name, Lowhorn, and I am from the Small Ropes Band of Kainai of the Blood tribe, and we belong to the Blackfoot Confederacy, and we are located in southern Alberta. Our traditional territory runs from Northern Saskatchewan River to what is Edmonton today to Yellowstone of Montana, and the eastern continental divide in the Rockies and into what is now Saskatchewan. Evidence of the Blackfoot are in Wanuskewin, outside of Saskatoon, and in the Cyprus Hills and so forth. That's my people's traditional territory in Alberta.

I am a long-time believer in education, and what guides me is a saying of my Uncle Bernard. It was at the beginning of the Indian residential school era, and although he never did learn to read or write, I remember he was able to sign his name on documents if it required him to do so. One day, he told me, "I want you to go to school, and I want you to complete your schooling, because look at me, and the kind of work I do. Like the old saying, sweat at the brow, I do a hard, laborious type of work for the little money I get." He didn't have a steady job. But he emphasized, "Don't ever forget your people." So, that is what has been on the back of my mind. I kept that in my mind through schooling, college and university and so on. Along with that, I think about those lessons and the advice my relatives and elders used to tell me. I would listen to those teachings and the relatives on my reserve who used to talk to me because I didn't go to school until I was ten years old. Others went to school at age 6 or 7. So I had some time with those guys then, and when I think back now, I wish I had spent more time with them because many others, old people, would come to visit my great grandfather Heavyhead. They would tell me, "Come in and sit in here; you need to hear this." Other times they just wanted me to get wood or water. When I think back, I should have been listening and recording, as if I had a recorder.

Those were the foundational bases I had in Native thought. When I did finish high school, I thought to myself, "That is enough!" I think I wanted to roam around a bit. I found myself in the States for a while, but eventually, home was calling me. I came back. But the turning point was when I was working in a vegetable cannery, and I was in charge of a machine with sharp blades. If you moved your hand two inches in one way, you could lose your hand. But I was good at it. I could look the other way and not need to worry and think about other things. One day, I was sitting with the machine, and I had a picture of myself as a trained monkey, and I was just part of the machinery. I thought *I am just a trained monkey*! So I decided to do something else because I was just becoming part of this machine. I called the foreman on hand, and I waved him over, and I told him, "You get a guy to run this machine. I'm done," and he smiled, and I said, "I mean it. I'm going to walk off." I said, "I am really done. Go get a guy." I then walked off, and that is where my going to the university started. When I got the hang of it, I was thinking…*there is someplace here [in the university] for our people*. But I didn't see very many things that we could identify with. That is where my thoughts about Indian people, Indigenous people, started. That got me thinking about Indigenous studies. There was a catalyst by the name of Meno Bolt, who was from Southern Alberta, outside of Lethbridge in a smaller town called Coaldale. He had just gone across the country as part of his graduate work at Yale University. He interviewed all the leaders across the country on the notion of governance and included people like Harold Cardinal. He was very much interested in learning more. So between us, we started saying, "Hey, wouldn't it be great to have something like this at the University of Lethbridge?" And that's where it started. We started working on it.

In the meantime, Law got my attention, and I went to the University of Utah, but [I] initially want[ed] to go to the University of New Mexico. They didn't quite have a place for me over there. The dean told me: "I was talking to the dean over at the University of Utah, and they got spaces over there. Why don't you go over there for your first year, and then you can come down here. Our schools are very comparable, and I'll give you full credit for that year at the University of Utah at Salt Lake City." I thought that was a good plan. But once I got settled in at Utah, I stayed. I completed it because I knew the people and I liked it. In the meantime, I kept working on the notion of Native American Studies, as it was called then. We opened our doors at the University of Lethbridge in 1975. They took our proposal without changing a word, and we got funded through the provincial government and the Ministry of Advanced Education. They eventually accepted it whole, with a little bit of argument, but not much, and it was funded as a Native Studies Department at the University of Lethbridge. July 1st 1975, we opened our doors, and it has been 43 some years now at the University of Lethbridge in their infrastructure.

Above: Sa'ke'j Henderson, Marie Battiste and Leroy Little Bear

Sa'ke'j: In most of the articles we are reading for this journal, your name keeps popping up as one of the most distinguished Indigenous scholars on the continent who has advanced Indigenous knowledge in Law, Education, Human Rights and Science. To these second-generation scholars, you are more of a living legend or a model of reconciliation who has generated and walked the road of reconciliation and trans-systematic knowledges. This generation of scholars is looking to you as the first founding director of Native American Studies at the University of Lethbridge and then director of [the Native American program at] Harvard University. Can you tell us how these innovative studies have transformed over the years? Can you relay some ways it has moved from the Eurocentric western disciplinary study of Indians to study from

Blackfoot or Kainai knowledge studying of Eurocentric knowledge? That is the basis of trans-systematic knowledge. When we were college and Law students Eurocentric knowledge was considered as universal, yet we talked about it as two worlds. Not like the moon and earth but two cognitive worlds and we really couldn't find the word to describe our sensibilities toward these ways of knowing that haunted us. Many residential school students failed to move over this bridge between two knowledge systems and they got stuck somewhere in-between both systems. Our generation were the first ones that became known as the split heads, who could manage both systems. But even today it is difficult to see how you can learn an knowledge system and language in an Indigenous worldview, and also be able to translate the confusion and complexity of the Eurocentric system at the same time. The new generation wants to translate between the knowledge systems and languages, but they often have only one language and that is English or French.

Leroy: Right. Very interesting question. I am glad you've asked me to talk about that. One of the courses we offered as a seminar was about looking at white society from a Blackfoot perspective. Like Indian anthropologists looking at white people. In the course outline, we had used a whole bunch of regular readings from textbooks. It was in the middle of the semester, I got a call from the dean's office. When I got there, here was an anthropologist from the University of Lethbridge sitting there. He told me to sit down. The dean told Keith the anthropologist, "Well, Keith, express your concern." So he said, "We noticed that you are teaching this course, and it is supposed to be from a native point of view, but when you look at the syllabus, you are using western sources for the course." He said: "If you are going to teach this type of course, maybe you should find material from and written by native people." And so on. When he was done, I said, "You are right. But I will tell you something. Because most of the students in the course are non-native students, though we have a good number of native students, there is no way they can relate to a Blackfoot point of view. So I am using these coursebooks." It is like saying this is western society's way of telling the story, their interpretation of history from a western point of view, and after they read that, then I tell them, "now that you have heard that, this is the other part of the story." Let me tell you the rest of the story. We talk from the oral traditions, and if you were looking at these issues, this is how it would look. And then I go to the Blackfoot point of view and perspective and say, this is what it would look like. The students will have something to relate to and be able to transcend the boundaries, crossing the boundaries, the trans-systematic. Instead of throwing things at them, I take them to both. Of course, we offered a course in native thinking and philosophy, and this how Blackfoot, Cree and Navajo and others look at it. To this day, I am still taking that approach. I am more specific now. I am making people look at the paradigms, the metaphysics they operate from. If you can begin to realize that, these metaphysics are really your interpretational tools for reality structuring.

I give them the example of the Nobel Prize-winning quantum physicist Steven Weinberg. He says if you are going to talk about objectivity, true objectivity, there should be no human beings in the picture. But of course, we can't do that. As soon as a human enters the picture, it becomes an interpretation of that objectivity, that objective picture. So, where does that interpretation come from? It comes from interpretive tools that a society, a culture, uses to interpret reality, that objective world. What I am emphasizing to students and other audiences is that I want you to understand that what you think is truth, like "This is the way it is!" Walter Cronkite's saying, remember him? It is really not the way it is, but it is your reality based on your interpretations. So once they know that, they can say, *oh, western interpretation is based on western interpretive tools. Hey, maybe we can look at Blackfoot, Cree, Mi'kmaq and so forth. That they have interpretative tools too. Maybe if we put those side by side, hey! We will have a much better look at that objective reality; more knowledge.* But right now, we fight wars over those interpretive tools. That's what we do. Just think about Christianity, for instance. They have their interpretive tools, and just about all the wars are Christian wars. See, if we realize they were just interpretive tools, maybe we won't have wars anymore.

Notions of racism won't be there anymore because what they're using for the basis of racism are interpretive tools. See, that is what we have been telling people. That is the approach we are using in Native American studies, which is now Indigenous studies. Slow but sure, the University of Lethbridge is realizing that and slow but sure, they get a Blackfoot name for official functions and talk about their Blackfoot name. They are starting [to have] Blackfoot signs all over, and major buildings have Blackfoot names. The University now has its own medicine pipe, so when they have an official function, they ask the Blackfoot elders to come and do a smoke ceremony using their own pipe. They have their own honour song. At every official function, they ask me and Billy Wadsworth to come sing the university honour song. Slow but sure. And the latest development: they set up task forces, unit task forces, and [are] asking every unit what they are doing with regard to Indigenous people, called Indigenization. They will put it together and have better coordination of all of their efforts [in relation] to our people. Slow but sure, it is happening. TRC was a shot in the arm toward that step and now COVID-19. What is traditional ecological knowledge? What about medicines, etc. The university has responded at first slowly, and [is] now more appreciative and starting to incorporate [traditional ecological knowledge] in their work.

Sa'ke'j: That is a very impressive achievement, Leroy. It needs to be duplicated in many educational institutions. One of the things that comes up in our discussions all the time is what…the opportunities or challenges [are] for how learning interpretations can be used to create a cognitive symbiosis between Eurocentric western thought and Indigenous knowledge systems. We want to have this Indigenous knowledge for ourselves. But we also want to pass it on to other generations and create a cognitive sharing with tools that honours both knowledge systems at the same time or at least comes from one knowledge system coming to another.

Leroy: What I have been telling the university, going way back — you know my good friend, my brother — is I've told them and tried to push them a little bit. I use the example of our iPhones and smart phones, computers, and gadgets and so on. I say to them, "I have an iPhone that is a Mac, you know an Apple." I said, if you go to an Apple store, and I have an iPhone 10, the Apple people there will tell me, you got to get an iPhone 12! See.

If we were to go back now to the metaphysics paradigms of the Western system using today, the ideas behind them are not new. They have been talked about way back. And so forth. They coalesced in the age of reason and the enlightenment era. Those ideas coalesced. In science, rationalization and methodology in science developed out those paradigms…from the enlightenment era. The idea of measurement came into existence and, consequently, mathematics. Anything you cannot measure is thought to be not scientific, not science.

So things like love, intuition, and dreams can't be measured, and then they can't be scientific. Hey, you can't measure those! So they are not scientific. Well, if we did the jump over, transcended the boundaries between that and Native Science, to Cree, Blackfoot, Anishinaabe, Mi'kmaq, and so on — hey, we find that relationships are the foundational base of Native science. See, to the point…if it is not about relationship, it is not science from a Blackfoot point of view. And so when I talk to scientists, I say, wouldn't it be great if we could bring your idea about measurement and we brought in the notion of relationship, and combine those two to do science and development, we could do a methodology that would include both relationship and measurement. If you can do that, we would have a much broader spectrum to work from than you do today. It would open new science doors. See.

Sa'ke'j: How would you speculate that Native science and the Eurocentric social science and humanities are basically the same thing from different knowledge systems and their learning skills and tools?

Leroy: Very good question, very important point. The thing is that the [scientific] methodology in Western science is such that if you can picture a container, like a box, in that box was God's formula about the theory of everything. In other words, God's creation [is] in that box. The attempt by Western science, with all their magic formulas and so forth, is trying to penetrate the box, trying to penetrate the walls of the box, see? That's what they are doing with all their scientific formulas. They are trying to penetrate that wall of the box to discover God's formula, the theory of everything. Whereas when we Native people look at those, we say it is about the flux, consequently using our friend Rupert Ross from Kenora, Ontario, remember he picked up from our talks the idea about surfing the flux. The whole notion of surfing the flux in Blackfoot, Cree, Mi'kmaq and so on, the world is surfing the flux, we are looking for those regular patterns that occur that we can hang our hat on, so to speak, as reference points. By surfing the flux, see, the whole culture is about that surging the flux. That's why you can't separate science

knowledge from the Indigenous culture. Because it is the knowledge system that is trying to put order in the flux. Consequently, you can't separate culture from science. In Western science they distance themselves from any culture aspects, only objective measurement is what they look at, you see. Well, Blackfoot science can't separate these. If we adopt Einstein's science, his definition of what science is all about, he defined it as the search for reality. Science is seen as a search for reality. If this is so, surfing the flux is the search. I told old people that I was a scientist before it was cool!! You can't separate because the whole culture is about trying to find those regular patterns. Consequently, you can't separate culture from science as the Western world does.

Sa'ke'j: One of the difficulties in comprehending this approach for many of our authors and the younger generation is that Indigenous knowledge systems are verbal or oral, which means they are supposed to [be] renewed or they disappear and vanish generation to generation. They are having their deepest problems with the principles in moving between English or French and Indigenous languages. Many are now becoming instructors and are working with curriculum, and ask how do they manage that? One of the great insights was in Western science is that they relied on Mathematics rather than English or German or French or [other] European languages. As some… scientists observed, when you write the formula on the blackboard and turn around, you have to explain the formula in a language. You have two competing languages, one is a mathematical language of relationships, and then you have another relationship that is verbal and sometimes written. But how do they intersect with this or that in a spectrum or gradation of knowledges when they want to use one or the other and somehow feel they don't have the right tools or the right interpretive principles or guidelines to do that. What kind of advice can you give them on that?

Leroy: Well, I guess, I would say language, to begin, is a repository of knowledge. Maybe it is not the total knowledge and culture of the people, but to a very large extent, language is a repository of knowledge. So like I told David Bohm, in discussion with him, all that stuff we were talking about — that magic formula in science and quantum physics, if you want to understand them, why don't you just learn Blackfoot? Blackfoot can describe that. Cree and Mi'kmaq can describe that. Our languages are process-oriented languages, action-oriented, as opposed to nouns, not stagnant in nature. The whole notion about movement and stagnation — hey, that's what they are trying to transcend through Mathematics. English is a stagnant type of language. It is incapable of bringing about or talking about movement in a very good way, not a good language about emotions or actions. And so the Native languages are better equipped for that because they have a better capacity to deal with the whole notion of movement and action-oriented processes. To me, this linguistic shortcut, even if it takes a lifetime, is the best way to go to learn about those processes.

Because we Native people draw from such a broad spectrum, whereas in Western thought, we only draw our information from a narrow perspective, a narrow spectrum of awakeness, when we are awake, see? That is why it is among our people; we draw on dreams, signs on the land, signs from animals and so on. We take those as our data intake and from our rich knowledge base that we have. So to a large extent, our language is the shortcut to that. If you begin to think in Blackfoot, you would better understand, you can begin to see the relational networks and the holistic approaches. We often get frustrated with our leadership. Well, sometimes it is because they are looking at the big picture. And to look at the big picture, it is saying if I say this, or if I do this, how does it affect the relational network? It takes a little bit of time to think about that. Consequently, in school, our students were being classified as slow thinkers and couldn't think in the abstract. But in reality, it is because we have a broad spectrum from which we draw our data than they do with Western thought.

Sa'ke'j: In your innovative approach to Indigenous Studies (what was called Native American Studies originally), and its reputation in Canada and the US — do you feel a Blackfoot teaching or androgyny is the best way to adequately apply the Blackfoot ways of knowing in the Eurocentric university?

Leroy: I think the younger generation is much more accepting of these different ways. And for the Western students, white students, I think it is because their society is about individualism, and [they] have not been as loyal to their older traditions or as the older generations have been. Because of this individualism, they are open to other ways and so forth. It [is] speeded by modern technology, like the Google world, Facebook, and… social media. Of course, they hear about all the different cultures; in other words, we have more immigrants in the country. This influx increases the speed of the decline of Western modes of thinking. So yes, I think this is a very opportune time especially, as I said, with truth and reconciliation. You and I have been working at this for a long time. From way back to, let's say, constitutional talk days and so forth. So when the constitution affirmed Aboriginal and Treaty rights as the supreme law of the law, people hemmed and hawed, and there were significant reports like Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and so on. Still, they were ignored. But for some reason or other, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports caught on, and the larger society is beginning to listen. Even now, COVID-19 is acting as a catalyst for people to change their ways of thinking and…the whole notion of normal, what used to be normal to them. They are starting to realize there is not going to be normal anymore.

So yes, I see this as an opportune time for people in young Canada are going through. Like I tell audiences, I am going through a mid-life crisis, because in a midlife crisis people ask themselves loaded questions like "Who am I? What is this all about? I am in this job for 20 years. Where is this job taking me? But I am stuck in it." They say, "I have a house and kids to send to school!" and so on. In other words, when people

are going through a mid-life crisis, they reflect and rethink foundational bases and thinking processes and how they manifest into actions and behaviours and so forth. So this what I mean when I say this is an opportune time to bring new metaphysics, new paradigms to look at. At our gathering of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences in Calgary four or five years ago, I said, Blackfoot metaphysics are waiting in the wings. Mi'kmaq metaphysics are now in the wings, but now they're starting to look at them and take them seriously.

Sa'ke'j: As we both know and [as] I have experienced, it seems the university continues to get trapped by creating methodologies about interpretation of reality, whatever that is. That every year someone comes up with a new interpretive scheme, sometimes it is quantitative, sometimes it is qualitative, or sometimes, different versions of those, [like] two intersecting or blended research methodologies. The question that keeps coming up is to what extent has the methodology changed, especially from the Western knowledge system? As each of their methodologies fails to reveal what they are looking for in terms of the box of reality, how is that changed by Indigenous research and the gathering of knowledge from communities?

Leroy: In a science book by Gary Zukav, called *Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics* (1979), was an exploration of modern physics and the phenomena of the quantum realm that used metaphors taken from the Asian spiritual movement. Like a Wu Li Master who would teach us to wonder about the falling petal before speaking of Newtonian gravity — Native thought overlaps with the quantum realm. But there was a place in the book, it said, at one time, it was the church that was supposed to tell us what life is about. Over time it could not give us the answer. Individual scientists came into the picture, which I would say [in] the way the scientists would put it: we have now sent out the scientists to go find out what it all was about. They are coming back, 300-400 years, and they are saying, "We really haven't found out the answer, we think the answer is in you." You know? If that is true, then, where subjectivity was ruled unscientific, from the days of the enlightenment era and the days of measurement? But if the answer is in us, as *Dancing Wu Li Masters* says, hey, [then] native science includes not just an attempt at an objective, but subjective aspects from that spectrum. [It] is also included from which we draw. So the thing about subjectivity is included, and that's why quantum physicists say, hey, the observer and the observed are one and the same. They affect each other. Hey, as native people, we have always known that. We base our knowledge on those kinds of knowledge bases.

Sa'ke'j: I'd like to turn to dialogues, to another part of your vast legend. For decades, you created and sustained innovative dialogues based on the Blackfoot knowledge system and [that] transcended some the Bohmian dialogues and discussions with scientists and Indigenous scholars and leaders. How would you advise instructors to use

dialogues in course development or as pedagogy in the university, especially when you are grappling with Indigenous thinking and learning relationships with Eurocentric and Western knowledges?

Leroy: Well, very, very good question. I am glad you asked that. I talk to teachers many times at their conventions or professional development days. What I tell them in a nutshell [is that] here in Alberta, [it] is probably [like] in Saskatchewan. If you go into any classroom, you will not find a unicultural classroom. Yet, our universities, the education faculties, are still turning out teachers as if they are going into a unicultural setting.

Well, the notion of pedagogy is really the science of teaching or the art of teaching. If you wanted to be an effective teacher, you need to know a little bit about the multicultural classroom. By knowing a little bit about, and you don't need to know everything, but if you knew about the culture of their students and little bit about their history, you could make much better connections, and they will listen to you. What you say will resonate, and so on. In fact, the students of the other cultures will say, that's interesting, my ways don't tell me that, and you have started to have a cultural exchange, and therefore, a much better connection. The same goes for colleges and universities: if you know a little bit about those in the room, where they come from, and, if you say you are from Lethbridge or Crow Pass [or] Saskatoon, I know about that, there are things we can talk about. They will start a communication. In the process, we throw out a few Blackfoot words.

Let me give you an example: I was teaching a class, and I noticed in a couple corners how some students were way back there, and they were starting to fall asleep. They were tired. They were not paying attention to the lecture we were giving. I purposefully called on them. I said, "Remember in the last class, we talked about a Blackfoot word that translates into English, *I'm going to lay down*. But actually, the real Blackfoot translation is I am going to make myself thin." To think about that — what are some of the ramifications that come out of that? Well, it begins to say, when I am up, there are lots of energy forces that are going hit me or go through me. But if I make myself thin, not as many forces come through or penetrate me [and] I can have a better rest. So even throwing things like Blackfoot words and explaining those and what they mean, of sleep from a western point of view; this [is the] notion of teaching methodology and knowing a little bit about the audience [and] the students' culture. You make much better, good connections with them, and you develop resonance within the classroom.

Sa'ke'j: One of the eternal enduring comments of younger Indigenous scholars and students is they feel like they are on a tightrope walking between two knowledge systems. One of the things they keep asking in the university is how did we learn to trust the journey? What advice can you give about how to trust the journey to wholeness in the flux, not standing still, especially when the wire is always moving in the wind?

Leroy: Hmmmmm. We don't stand still here in southern Alberta because it is so windy. Some invisible force blows you all over the place. But, let me use, as an example, literature from native authors and English writers when they write a novel. Usually, the English writer and English novel are about somebody [who] finds themselves in their home territory, and now they are going to go explore and are leaving home. The story by native writers is usually about the character who left home and has gone someplace else and is now coming home to find more about themselves and their culture and so on. That is the difference.

If we were to advise students, and they find themselves, as you say, "on the tightrope, walking the tightrope," that is because they have been looking at things from a Western perspective. That is where the language and thought process come in. Remember the old example I always give, hey — in English, [if] I were to say good and evil, saint and sinner, the division between the saint and sinner is a watertight division in Western thinking. You are always either-or. That is what these students find themselves in. And because they think of themselves from an English point of view, it is always either-or to them. A lot of them run into a lot of mental turmoil trying to straddle that watertight division.

If you were thinking from or looking at it from a Mi'kmaq perspective, a Sioux perspective, a Blackfoot perspective, it takes you back to the flux. The flux is happening all the time. And we may have boundaries, but they are not watertight, and we can always come back home. Like the main character who left home in English novels to discover the world, in Blackfoot, you can always come back home. In novels written by native writers, the main character begins as having left home and is usually out someplace and finally finds their way and is now coming home. Hey, if they understood that, they will always feel good about where they are and about coming home. Don't be scared to cross those boundaries. In fact, crossing those boundaries will always bring you more knowledge. But use your home knowledge, the knowledge that comes from your home territory, as the foundational base. I think that is what my Uncle Bernard was telling me. Go to school, I want you to go to school, but don't forget your people. Come home.

Sa'ke'j: This has been a fabulous interview, Leroy. Thank you so much for walking the path of knowledge reconciliation with knowledge, dignity and integrity.

About the Contributors

Professor Emeritus Dr. Leroy Little Bear, BASc, JD, DASc (Hon), LLD (Hon), was born and raised on the Blood Indian Reserve (Kainai First Nation) near Lethbridge, Alberta. He began his academic career as the founding member of Canada’s first Native American Studies Department and creation of Canada’s first Bachelor of Management in First Nations Governance at the University of Lethbridge. Upon his official retirement in 1997, he served as founding Director of the Harvard University Native American Program (1998-99).

Beyond his wide influence on students and teaching at Banff’s Indigenous Leadership Program, Little Bear’s advice has been widely sought by national and regional organizations, First Nations, and government commissions and boards. His lifetime of accomplishment includes the most important political achievements for Indigenous peoples in Canada and beyond. He has participated in constitutional reforms affirming aboriginal and treaty rights and the Charlottetown Accord for the Assembly of First Nations, on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Alberta’s Task Force on the Criminal Justice (1990-91). Also, he has provided advice on significant issues in Indigenous science, quantum theory, land claims, treaties rights, Indigenous rights, self-determination, and hunting and fishing rights. He is a member of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel that provides advice to Alberta’s Chief Scientist about how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge into environmental monitoring. In recent years, he has been a member of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity board of governors and involved in bringing together the Buffalo Treaty: A Treaty Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration (2014), an agreement between First Nations in the United States and Canada, to protect and restore bison herds to the wild. In honour of his achievements, Little Bear has been awarded the prestigious National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Education (2003), the highest honour bestowed by Canada’s First Nations community, Alberta Order of Excellence (2016), and the Order of Canada (2019). He is recognized as an Eminent Scholar by the Kainai Nation, awarded honorary doctorates from University of Northern British Columbia and University of Lethbridge, and currently is the Distinguished Nitsitapie Scholar at the University of Lethbridge focused on breaking the boundaries between Indigenous and Eurocentric (Western) sciences. Email: littlebear@uleth.ca

Sa’ke’j James Youngblood Henderson was born in Oklahoma to the Bear Clan of the Chickasaw Nation and Cheyenne Tribe in 1944. In 1974, he received a Juris doctorate in Law from Harvard Law School. He became a Law professor who created litigation strategies to restore Aboriginal sovereignty, knowledge, and rights. During the constitutional process in Canada (1978-1993), he served as a constitutional advisor for the Mi’kmaw nation and the NIB-Assembly of First Nations. He has continued to work in aboriginal and treaty rights, treaty federalism in constitutional law, and international human rights. For his achievements, he has been awarded the Indigenous Peoples’ Counsel (2005), the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Law and Justice (2006), and Honorary Doctorate from Carleton University (2007) and fellow of the Native American Academy (2000) and Royal Society of Canada (2013). Email: sakej.henderson@usask.ca