

# Everyday Acts of Resurgence: Indigenous Approaches to Everydayness in Fatherhood

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## Abstract

Indigenous activism and resurgence are often analyzed at the state or macro-level because of the high visibility and large-scale nature of these actions. However, as Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes observe in their 2015 article, "...the daily actions undertaken by individual Indigenous people, families, and communities often go unacknowledged but are no less vital to decolonial processes." These are challenges that we take up in examining the "everyday" – those often unseen, unacknowledged actions that renew our peoplehood and generate community resurgence. This holds important implications for decolonizing our notions of time and place and increasingly Indigenous scholars, such as Maori scholar Brendan Hokowhitu (2009), find that Indigenous discussions of the everyday tend to be framed either in terms of "Indigenous political struggles, especially in regard to jurisprudence, or in terms of 'victimhood' conceived of as the genealogical descendent of the trauma of colonization". How then can we re-imagine and re-assert Indigenous everyday actions that emphasize the intimate, lived experiences of Indigenous peoples? This article examines how the everyday can be an important emancipatory site for Indigenous resurgence against colonial power. Focusing on fatherhood and the everyday shifts our analysis away from the state-centered, colonial manifestations of power to the relational, experiential, and dynamic nature of Indigenous resurgence, which offers important implications for re-thinking gendered relationships, family health and well-being, and governance. These daily acts of resurgence, at the community, family and personal levels, can be critical sites of resistance, education, and transformative change.

**Keywords:** indigenous, resurgence, everyday, decolonization, fatherhood, gender, renewal, micropolitics, intimate spaces

## Introduction

Camas or kwetlal, which is a starchy bulb that has been a staple food and trade item for Indigenous peoples in the northwest region for generations, has a distinct blue flower that blooms in early spring and summer. Despite its prominence as a staple food, camas is invisible to most when it's not flowering. Even when not in bloom, there is so much going on underground with the camas bulb throughout the year that is unseen and yet is critical to its growth as a key food source for Indigenous nations (Corntassel & Bryce 2012).

And while we tend to focus on larger scale events when considering the life span of camas, such as flooding, and storms, which are analogous to the destructive impacts of colonization on land, cultures and communities, less attention is given to the very sources of resilience and strength that camas exhibits in its everyday existence by taking in sunshine and rainfall so that it can thrive in the future. Ultimately the foundations for change, renewal, and resilience can be found in everyday, resurgent actions that allow plant nations,

such as camas, as well as Indigenous nations, to be sustainable for generations. In this same way, focus on high profile events, such as Oka in 1990 and the winter of Idle No More demonstrations in 2012-13, while highly significant as expressions of Indigenous nationhood and self-determination, often obscure the seemingly mundane, everyday actions that families, communities, and others engage in that comprise the core or backbone of Indigenous leadership and nationhood.

This article examines everyday actions in the context of Indigenous fatherhood in order to better understand how larger dynamics of nationhood and resurgence emerge and converge. In other words, the processes that Indigenous peoples assert for self-determination are just as important as the results of that struggle. We contend that how we act in intimate spaces, such as the home, greatly informs and instructs how we approach our relationships with the land, water, and natural world. After all, Indigenous relations to the earth are often viewed through a familial lens: grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, mother, father etc. As Cree scholar Michelle Daigle (2017: 9) points out, "When Anishinaabe people go deer hunting, they are engaging in the renewal of local foodways just as they are simultaneously navigating and resisting settler colonial jurisdictions." Furthermore, a disruption of our homeland relationships significantly impacts every aspect of our everyday kinship, including our home lives. For these reasons, our intimate, everyday moments are just as significant as what we do in public and yet these actions are poorly understood or rarely examined. According to Corntassel (2012: 89), "How one engages in daily processes of truth-telling and resistance to colonial encroachments is just as important as the overall outcome of these struggles to reclaim, restore, and regenerate homeland relationships." Our everyday actions, especially within a familial context, embody processes of leadership, governance and community that help perpetuate our relationships at the interpersonal level as well as with the natural world. Leadership by example has resonance with several Indigenous nations,

which ultimately requires that a person lives out the principles that they espouse in order to mobilize people for change.

When thinking about this article, we were motivated by the question of how will future generations recognize us as Indigenous? Will it be based on the languages we speak? The way we conduct ourselves? How we relate to the land and water? How we engage in ceremony? How we recount our family and community histories? Our everyday interactions with our sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, and other relations? Can fathers mother? Writing as Cherokee and Kwakwaka'wakw men, sons, fathers, uncles, cousins, and land/water-based peoples, we are interested in the way that the struggle for everyday forms of resurgence plays out in familial contexts, such as homes, homelands, and waterways. It is in these everyday actions where the scope of the struggle for resurgence and personal decolonization is reclaimed and re-envisioned by Indigenous peoples. Everyday aspects of life may appear routine but actually represent important sites of regeneration in terms of renewing relationships with community, family, and homelands.

If ongoing colonization can be viewed as the calculated deprivation of Indigenous experiences, examining everyday experiences and their transformative potential offer important alternatives to the state-centric reconciliation and rights-based discourses. Community and family resurgence is about renewing, remembering, and regenerating Indigenous nationhood and relationships. Practicing everyday acts of resurgence and personal decolonization entails having the awareness, courage, and imagination to envision life beyond the colonial state (Corntassel 2012: 89). Indigenous resurgence, which is an emerging field of inquiry, represents "...a radical practice in Indigenous theorizing, writing, organizing and thinking, one that I believe is entirely consistent with and inherently from Indigenous thought" (Simpson 2017: 48). Overall, this article re-frames perceptions of power and resurgence as relational, everyday processes to better under-

stand how to combat the barriers to resurgence within familial contexts as well as how home life impacts our relationships with the natural world and vice versa. In the section that follows, we examine the ways that everydayness has been treated in previous scholarly work and how that research can be used to inform future transformative work on fatherhood and parenting. In the final section, we reflect on our own practices of fatherhood and how these everyday experiences have deepened our understanding of resurgence.

### **Indigenous Everydayness: Daily Acts of Resurgence and Fatherhood**

While literature on Indigenous resurgence has been growing steadily since the early 2000's (Simpson 2017; Coulthard 2014; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2013; Corntassel 2012; Simpson 2011; Alfred 2005), research examining everydayness is relatively scarce, especially within an Indigenous context. We begin by reviewing research on the everyday in order to yield some insights into everyday resurgence and how the convergence of everydayness and resurgence can provide deeper insights into Indigenous relationships and radiating responsibilities. Then we review the literature on Indigenous fatherhood with the intention of drawing linkages between everydayness, resurgence, and fatherhood.

In terms of our methodological approaches, we draw on a storytelling and decolonizing methodologies as a way of centering Indigenous knowledge and experiences in our discussion. Community and family stories and experiences help us to honor the complexity of Indigenous worldviews and relationships. As Lyackson First Nation scholar Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Thomas 2015, 183) points out, "...storytelling forces us to keep the teachings and protocols of our Ancestors, culture and tradition alive throughout the entire research process." By decolonizing the research process, we begin to center Indigenous "concerns and worldviews" (Smith 2012, 41) in order to reclaim our voices and relationships in everyday, community settings.

### **Everydayness and Resurgence**

In one of the earliest comprehensive examinations of everydayness, Political Science scholar James Scott (1985, 33) observes that "...everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains." In short, everyday forms of resistance don't tend to make headlines given that "there is rarely any dramatic confrontation, any moment that is particularly newsworthy" (Scott 1985, 36). Instead, it's a quiet, piecemeal process that draws on the "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups" including "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (Scott 1985, 29). These quiet, intentional processes of resistance can form the basis for larger movements and an "ungoverned periphery" that becomes "intractable to state appropriation" (Scott 2009, 6).

As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005, 601) point out, "...it is ultimately our lived collective and individual experiences as Indigenous peoples that yield the clearest and most useful insights for establishing culturally sound strategies to resist colonialism and regenerate our communities." Everyday forms of decolonization and resurgence ultimately result from "...shifts in thinking and action that emanate from commitments and reorientations at the level of the self..." or "one warrior at a time" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 611, 613). In short, through small-scale, transformative movements, such as directed mentorship, master-apprenticeship programs, and informal community leadership, meaningful commitments and action toward personal decolonization and resurgence can result.

Maori scholar Brendan Hokowhitu (2009, 101) asserts that the field of Indigenous Studies fails to account for the "immediacy" of everyday Indigenous life and its impacts on Indigenous bodies. Previous scholarship tends to overlook immediacy by focusing on everyday Indigenous political struggles, such as "...jurisprudence, or in terms of 'victimhood' conceived of as the genealogical descendant of the trauma of colonisation" (Hokowhitu 2009, 103-104). There is there-

fore a pressing need to account for “Indigenous existentialism” by examining the “immediacy of Indigenous culture” and everyday life (Hokowhitu 2009, 104).

Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson states that Indigenous stories break through the everyday impositions of jurisprudence and colonial narratives: “Storytelling is an important process for visioning, imagining, critiquing the social space around us, and ultimately challenging the colonial norms fraught in our daily lives” (Simpson 2011, 34). This restorying of Indigenous landscapes occurs in everyday settings to challenge the erasures of ongoing colonization. Furthermore, small-scale, everyday actions at the family level are the sources of resilience and family resurgence. As Simpson (2011, 16) points out, “When resistance is defined solely as large-scale political mobilization, we miss much of what has kept our languages, cultures and systems of governance alive. We have those things today because our Ancestors often acted within the family unit to physically survive, to pass on what they could to their children, to occupy and use our lands as we always had.” Finally, Simpson (2011, 69), by stating that “resurgence cannot occur in isolation”, is demonstrating that acts of resurgence emanate from a web of community relationships and daily responsibilities.

A significant part of everydayness is political awareness regarding ongoing colonization and the intentional, daily processes we undertake to renew our relationships with homelands/waterways, cultural practices and communities. Ultimately, “whether they know it or not (or even want it), every Indigenous person is in a daily struggle for resurgence. It is in these everyday actions where the scope of the struggle for decolonization is reclaimed and re-envisioned by Indigenous peoples” (Corntassel 2012, 89). In line with Simpson’s discussions on relationality and storytelling, everyday acts of resurgence challenge the colonial status quo and attempted erasures of Indigenous peoples from their homelands by disrupting “...the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our

actions to restore our nationhood” (Corntassel 2012, 88).

Examining everyday acts of decolonization potentially reveals how Indigenous peoples engage in intimate spaces, such as families. As Kwakwaka’wakw scholar Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes (2015, 157-158) point out, “While large-scale actions such as rallies, protests and blockades are frequently acknowledged as sites of resistance, the daily actions undertaken by individual Indigenous people, families, and communities often go unacknowledged but are no less vital to decolonial processes.” Also, looking more closely at everyday acts of resurgence also gives us a deeper understanding of gendered relationships and how they drive resurgence movements. As Hunt and Holmes explain (2015, 158), “we connect these relational decolonial processes to queer, Two-Spirit and trans solidarity, resistance to heteronormativity and cisnormativity, locating these intersections in practices of decolonizing and queering the intimate geographies of the family and the home.” By focusing on intimacy and gendered relationships within an everyday context, our understandings of community resurgence and nationhood are deepened.

Overall, a review of the literature on everydayness and resurgence reveals four key areas that bring analyses of everyday actions to the forefront: relationality, convergences of time and place, politics of intimate settings, and gendered relationships:

1. *Relationality*: Everydayness helps us to see Indigenous relationality in action. By engaging with the everyday actions of Indigenous peoples, we gain insights into how extended kinship networks operate in ways that subvert colonial nuclear family structures. Indigenous nations and communities are strengthened and perpetuated by the everyday actions that express and nurture their relationships to lands, waters, language, sacred living histories, and the natural world. Leanne Simpson (2013) speaks of “radiating responsibilities” which drives nationhood and links our relationships to actions of resurgence and renewal. By

examining lived relational aspects of being and becoming Indigenous, we effectively subvert universal generalizations and localize struggles for family resurgence and personal decolonization.

2. *Convergences of time and place*: Everydayness encourages us to “live in a longer ‘now’ – learn your history and culture and understand that it is part of who you are now.” (Corntassel 2012, 86) This emphasis on a place-based and community-based consciousness allows us to closely examine how everyday struggles relate to the land/waterways and Indigenous concepts of history and time. For example, Cherokee speakers do not view time or distance as linear but instead have a much more flexible worldview. Basically, one can interact with events that are often relegated to the past with the perspective that these events are “immediate and ongoing” (Altman & Belt 230). Everyday acts of resurgence encourage us to remember our relationships and responsibilities to land, culture and community and to act on those remembrances. Additionally, everyday acts of resurgence can challenge attempted erasures of Indigenous peoples from landscapes by reclaiming urban and other Indigenous places (see for example Bang et al 2014).
3. *Politics of intimate settings*: Focus on everyday actions allow us to witness how we relate to each other within intimate spaces, such as families, communities, and close friendships. In a sense, it reveals the politics of peoplehood and how the resilience of our families enables us to share and reinterpret Indigenous knowledges, languages, living histories, and relationships with our relatives. These are the micro-processes of resurgence that can build to larger scale movements and community actions. The family and other intimate sites are places where we practice relational accountability, assert rebellious dignity, navigate/counter the colonial system, and move away from public performativities to embodied practices (Glass & Rose-Redwood 2014).

4. *Gender relationships*: Everydayness helps us to challenge gender binaries and heteropatriarchy by linking decolonization and resurgence to LGBTQ2S movements for social justice. As Hunt and Holmes (2015, 156) explain, “We view “decolonization” and “queering” as active, interconnected, critical, and everyday practices that take place within and across diverse spaces and times.” Additionally, by examining gender and sexuality within intimate, familial spaces, we gain insights into what decolonizing praxis might look like for motherhood, fatherhood, and other forms of parenting. Everydayness also helps us understand the ways that gendered values and decolonial practices are shared with future generations within the context of homes and families.

The four above referenced areas help illuminate both the analytical and applied capacity of everyday acts of resurgence. It should be noted that everydayness in this article entails a detailed examination of place-based consciousness and struggles for resurgence within a familial/nationhood context. Focus on the atomized individual or political/legal deficits created by ongoing colonization is not part of this analysis. Simpson’s notion of radiating responsibilities and kinship (versus atomized individualism) inform our examination of processes by which everyday actions take place and how nationhood is perpetuated.

#### **Indigenous Fatherhood**

It is difficult to discuss Indigenous parenting in any meaningful way without talking about our relationships to the lands and waters. After all, it is our kinship networks, and ultimately our families that enable us to honor, nurture and renew the relationships that sustain our nations and promote our health and well-being. In this sense, shape shifting colonial entities have sought to destroy and erode Indigenous families to the point where we may resemble patriarchal nuclear entities and our abilities to share teachings, sto-

ries, living histories, languages, ceremonies etc. with future generations has been compromised. This is coupled with the criminalization of Indigenous men and women in order for the illegalities of the state to be overlooked. As Anishinaabe scholar Heidi Stark (2016, 1) points out, "The imposition of colonial law, facilitated by casting Indigenous men and women as savage peoples in need of civilization and composing Indigenous lands as lawless spaces absent legal order, made it possible for the United States and Canada to shift and expand the boundaries of both settler law and the nation itself by judicially proclaiming their own criminal behaviors as lawful."

In this respect, Indian Residential Schools played an important role in breaking apart Indigenous families as well as the cultural (as well as social, political, and spiritual) transmission of Indigenous knowledges. Designed to strip Indigenous people of their languages and cultures, residential schools were administered by the government of Canada and run by churches beginning in 1874. By the time the last residential school closed in 1996, over one-hundred-and-fifty-thousand Indigenous children had been forcibly removed from their homes. Additionally, the "Sixties Scoop" was another government policy that removed Indigenous children from their families, and attempted to sever their ties to their kin, community and identity. One can also look at the intergenerational impacts of "day schools", the "Millennial Scoop", and even contemporary public schools as continuing threats to Indigenous nationhood.

Despite the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008 to address the genocidal legacy of Indian Residential Schools, and the completion of a final report in 2015 along with ninety-four recommendations or "Calls to Action",<sup>1</sup> the destructive genocidal legacies persist with regards to Indigenous families. As Sherene Razack (2015, 5) points out, "When inquests and inquiries instruct us in the patholo-

gies of Indigenous peoples, states provide themselves with alibis not only for inaction but also for crimes of overt violence." In the post-residential school era, shape shifting colonial entities, such as the Ministry of Child and Family Development, have found new ways to disrupt Indigenous families. According to Gitksan scholar Cindy Blackstock (2008, 163), "the number of First Nations children in care outside their own homes today is three times the number of children in residential schools at the height of their operation."

Amidst the backdrop of ongoing colonization, Indigenous fatherhood is part of a complicated conversation regarding contemporary realities and community responsibilities. According to Stark (2016, 1), "As Indigenous men's political authority had already been recognized in the public sphere by the United States and Canada via the treaty making process, their domestication into the nation-state required forceful violent constructions of Indigenous men as savages, criminals, and lawless figures." In this section, we recount some of the literature on Indigenous fatherhood across Turtle Island while realizing that there is an extensive literature on parenting across other regions of the world, such as "othermothering" among Embu peoples in Kenya (Wane 2000), Sami in Norway (Javo, Ronning & Heyerdahl 2004), and Indigenous peoples in Australia (Kruske 2012; Ryan 2011; Atkinson & Swain 1999). Overall, the existing literature provides important insights into mothering and fathering but tends to be incomplete. Much of the focus tends to be on Indigenous men in public/macro spaces and yet little has been taken up regarding fatherhood in intimate spaces. Indigenous women, on the other hand, tend to be discussed within intimate spaces but are often neglected in the public sphere. Clearly more work is needed to connect these areas and to challenge the myth of the nuclear family that can enrich our understanding of everyday acts of resurgence.

While scholarship relating to Indigenous parenting has been scant, there are at least two major projects to have investigated fatherhood roles within Indigenous communities: the American

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>

Indian Fatherhood Project in the United States and Jessica Ball's Fatherhood Project focused on Canada. The American Indian Fatherhood Project (AIFP), based out of the University of Oklahoma in the late 1990s, interviewed 375 people, 80% of whom identified as men, on fatherhood and masculinities. In summarizing the AIFP findings, anthropologist Margaret Bender (2005, 2) states, "accepting the existence of multiple masculinities is an important step toward responsible scholarship in this area. Masculinity is not a permanent characteristic of biological males, but rather is always changing, produced through the meaningful, transformative actions of situated individuals".

Lisa Lefler's 2005 research entitled "My Boys Act Like Midwives" further examines the AIFP study, but only focuses on questions relating to how fathering has changed for Native Nations across generations. Both of these articles effectively demonstrate changes to fatherhood over the last few generations, which can be traced to assimilationist institutions, state policies and laws, residential schooling, technology and media, amongst other factors. Both Bender and Lefler acknowledge the transformative potential of Indigenous fatherhood for Native men, families, and communities. However, neither of their work delves into what this might look like on a daily basis, with little to no focus on the resurgence of Indigenous lifeways or relationships to the land. In fact, this absence persists through all of the literature on Indigenous parenting prior to Leanne Simpson's (2011) *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, which will be taken up later in this section.

The second major project to focus upon Indigenous fathering is the work of Child and Youth Care scholar Jessica Ball, whose Fatherhood Project and her subsequent writings represent a significant contribution to our understanding in this small but growing field. Smaller in scope than the AIFP, Ball's Fatherhood Project interviewed eighty Indigenous fathers, with a focus mainly on communities across British Columbia, Canada. Ball (2009, 38-39) aptly notes that while "it is probably not helpful to understand

Indigenous fathers within what some have called a 'deficiency paradigm', at the same time, Indigenous fathers' accounts suggest that their challenges should not be underestimated". Following Ball, we agree that the Canadian government has criminalized Indigenous men (as well as women, see Stark 2016) throughout colonial history and currently fails to provide funds to enable Indigenous men and communities to move ahead with self-identified goals for the revitalization of men's roles in family life. So, while Ball clearly seeks to extend fathering theory beyond predominant colonial perspectives, we must also consider that centering of the colonial state might be counterproductive at times and misses much of what happens in the everyday, especially in terms of family resurgence dynamics.

Similar to Ball's research, Nicole Muir and Yvonne Bohr (2014, 67) note a dearth of research of Indigenous child rearing, contending that much of the literature on fatherhood and families "has focused on the 'deficient', non-mainstream parenting which was practiced by Aboriginal parents". While child rearing has been significantly disrupted by colonialism, whether through residential schooling or foster care, Muir and Bohr (2014, 72) seek to understand why some aspects of "traditional Aboriginal parenting are still being practiced while other aspects have disappeared". This is certainly an important question to consider moving forward, especially in an area as under-researched as Indigenous fathering. Additionally, it is worth remembering that many aspects of our beliefs and practices about parenting persist and can be seen in the ways we organize our families.

After reviewing several works that examine Indigenous fatherhood, there just isn't much writing on (or by) Indigenous fathers. The literature that exists all too often fails to consider the intricacies of Indigenous and masculine subjectivities, including the ways they intersect with each other. Unfortunately, there is scant scholarship rooted within Indigenous thought, drawing upon our own understandings of what it means to be a man and a father (Innes and Anderson

2015). Moreover, much of the research has focused on the material factors that have separated Indigenous men from their families.

Another significant gap in the literature is the failure to examine fatherhood in the context of Indigenous resurgence movements. In this respect, Leanne Simpson's (2011) examination of parenting and resurgence is significant work. We've tended to envision resurgence as a large-scale process and were struck by the following statement: "the primary responsibility of parents is that of provider; so during this life phase, contributions to the wider community and nation are kept to a minimum" (Simpson 2011, 128). Simpson's work challenges us to focus on the roots of parenting and the daily actions that strengthen family and kinship relations. Decolonizing parenting techniques, as Leanne Simpson reminds (2011, 16) us, "means figuring out the citizens we want to create, the kinds of communities we want to live in, and the kinds of leaders we want to create, then tailoring our parenting and schooling to meet the needs of our nations." Overall, Indigenous feminist and resurgence scholarship makes key contributions to our understanding of parenting, queering resurgence, and combatting heteropatriarchy (Simpson 2017; Green 2017; Hunt & Holmes 2015; Goeman 2013; Anderson 2011).

After reviewing the literature on everydayness and fatherhood, it is important to reflect on our lived experiences as fathers and see how an everyday framework potentially yields important insights into fatherhood and resurgence. In the sections that follow, and drawing on a similar format as Hunt and Holmes' (2015), we examine parenting and resurgence through our own family relationships.

#### *Jeff and Daily Acts of Renewal*

When Mick and I first thought of writing this article, we had started arranging monthly visits as fathers so that our daughters and sons could play while we talked. Over time, that changed to getting together for pipe ceremonies and food. And the dynamics with our children changed as

well. When they saw the behavior we modeled, they wanted to get more involved in ceremony and began to emulate our actions. Through observation and example, another amazing thing happened – our kids began to teach themselves and others about what they experienced. Even though Mick and I are from different Indigenous nations, there were several commonalities that we built on, including our desire to embody family resurgence through our actions and words. And our children, including my daughter Leila, bonded together through our everyday actions, which caused me to think more deeply about how infrequently we often notice or regard the daily ways that we share knowledge with our little ones. Whether through other-fathering, other-mothering, or other forms of parenting, the ways that share our thoughts, emotions, and humor have tremendous impacts on youth and the ways that they think about being Indigenous and acts of resurgence. For me, resurgence is grounded in love for my daughter, family, and the relationships that nurture and promote our health and well-being.

When speaking of everydayness, we should not romanticize these actions. It is a luxury to even have the time to consider what we do everyday with our children/relatives given the urgency and violence of everyday life. Furthermore, these moments with our children may feel thankless and can be exhausting and frustrating at times. To a single parent struggling to put food on the table, everyday life might seem overwhelming. But everyday acts of resurgence persist amidst these hardships and occur despite ongoing colonial and neo-liberal impositions on our lives. They can be very simple practices that appear mundane. Ever since she was two or so, I've asked Leila three questions pretty much everyday: Osiyo Tohi'tsu (hello, how are you)?; Gado usdi gawonihisdi hewoni (what language are you speaking)?; and, Tsalagi hiyosgitsu (are you a Tsalagi warrior)?

Leila answers these questions in Cherokee and even if our conversations are short, they are significant. They help us focus on things that matter.

Embedded in the word *Osiyo* (the first question), which is often translated as “hello”, is the word “*osi*”, which means being upright, forward-facing, and existing on a single point of balance (Altman & Belt 2011). When I speak to my daughter in Cherokee, I’m really asking her if she’s aligned and balanced with the unhurried pace of nature. Just one part of one word in the Cherokee language carries so much with it. I’m also ensuring that Cherokee is spoken on a daily basis. These questions attempt to breathe life into the language, even in a small, seemingly insignificant way. They are unseen acts of renewal – oral commitments to our lands, language and communities. We start with these basic questions and continue to build on them. In doing so, we’re also giving breath to the unhurried pace of nature and ultimately challenging western notions of time and place.

How we convey Indigenous values and practices to future generations is sometimes just as important as what we’re teaching. When a child asks why something is done a certain way, how do you respond? Do you say “because it’s traditional”, “it’s how we do things” or just “because”? Those are unsatisfying answers for anyone to hear, whether as a child or adult. After all, community ‘traditions’ are constantly changing and evolving. Even our community notions of complementarity in terms of gender roles need to be rethought and considered from queer or two-spirited perspectives. Future generations demand better answers to their questions as they weigh their obligations to re-interpret Cherokee teachings alongside a renewal of their commitments to them.

Part of the everyday is fostering awareness of Indigenous notions of place. Leila and I are living outside of Cherokee homelands and on Lekwungen and *W̱SÁNEĆ* territories. What does that entail for us in our everyday actions? There is a need to honor our Cherokee relatives while also supporting the daily struggles of the Indigenous peoples of this area. One of the ways that Leila and I have found useful is taking direction from Cheryl Bryce and working with the Lekwun-

gen Community Tool Shed, which focuses on the removal of invasive species from Songhees First Nations homelands and to revitalize Indigenous food systems, such as *kwetlal* or *camas* (Corntassel & Bryce 2012). This is hard work that is not making headlines but it is noticeable when one sees resurgent Indigenous landscapes dotted with *camas* instead of Scottish broom and ivy.

Remembering is also an important part of family resurgence. Whenever Leila and I travel back to Oklahoma it’s all about jogging her memory about where people live, where our family territory is in Westville, and where her birth cord is buried. These are the daily acts of resurgence through remapping relationships both geographically and personally. It’s about promoting land-centered literacies (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua 2013, 36) so that future generations can thrive. Additionally, as Leanne Simpson (2011, 69) reminds us, “resurgence cannot occur in isolation.” It is through our familial and kinship networks, our aunties, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers and so on. that we can enact our deepest love and resurgence Indigenous nationhood. Through our everyday acts of resurgence, we are carving out new spaces where the rebellious dignity of our children can regenerate and ultimately flourish.

#### *Mick and Daily Acts of Re-membering*

While the reconstitution of Indigenous nations can be quite daunting, these processes begin with, and are informed by, the revitalization of Indigenous families. As fathers, it is our responsibility to share what we know of ourselves, of our communities, with our children. I endeavor to share what I know with my children as often as I can, whether it is the bits of language that I have picked up, songs that have been shared with me, or any knowledges or ceremonies that I have been blessed to be a part of. Having lived outside our territories for much of my life, I have had to be deliberate in immersing myself, and now my kids, within the familial relations that I was excluded from as a child. While we have reconnected with so many aunties and uncles, grand-

mothers and grandfathers, who have brought us back into what Jessica Ball calls “circles of care”, the nature of rebuilding intimate extended kinship networks is hard work.

Unfortunately, my partner’s and my parents live in another province, and most of my aunts, uncles, and cousins live hours away up island. So while the reconstitution of such familial networks is crucial in combatting the colonial, heteropatriarchal, nuclear family and its ill effects, most of the day-to-day child rearing continues to fall to my partner and me. In seeking to resist the confines of the nuclear family, we have relied upon what Castellano (2002) calls “families of the heart”, which includes a plethora of close friends who have become “aunts” and “uncles” or other-mothers and other-fathers to our three children. These supportive networks of people who have become family to my children have eased many of the stresses related to the nuclear family model that we find ourselves in.

As parents, we are responsible for conveying Indigenous values and practices to our children. We are always trying to find new ways to address the countless questions our children ask of us. To do so, we have relied upon Hul’qumi’num language and conceptual meanings as much as possible. As our children have gotten older, we have begun to think about the ways in which we will teach them about colonization, both historical and contemporary. To instill this political awareness in an everyday sense, we have taken a storied approach that relies upon Hwulmuhw stories. One set of stories that we have found to be tremendously powerful are those about hwunitum, a Hul’qumi’num term that translates as “the hungry people”, which is often used to refer to the settlers who have come to our lands. While the phrase originally referred to American prospectors who flooded our territories in search of gold in the 1850s, we now use it to identify colonial mentalities that exist in settler cultures, and have seeped into our own communities.

Rather than being a racialized term, hwunitum is powerful because it highlights colonial mentalities as they have manifested on our home-

lands. By teaching our children about hwunitum mentalities, they have come to understand the ways in which being “hungry people” can disrupt meaningful, loving relationships in our home. In doing so, we reinterpret coastal knowledges and living histories alongside our relatives. Our extended family has begun to incorporate these understandings of colonial mentalities into their interactions with our children, allowing a sharing of knowledge and wisdom that are powerful, yet familiar and culturally-relevant.

If settler colonialism is premised on the elimination of Indigenous peoples, particularly the eradication of our nationhood and systems of governance (whose power is drawn from the strength of our families), then our enduring presence represents a powerful assault on this erasure. Colonization has sought, in many ways, to remove Native fathers from our rightful place within our families. Raised by a single mother (before the arrival of my social father, who later left as well), there was an absence of father figures in my life. This has presented many difficulties in my own fathering. Being a student has allowed me to be around my kids everyday, being present in ways that my fathers never were. However, presence is so much more than just being there physically. Thankfully, our children have incorporated these teachings into how they hold us accountable as parents. They now tell me when I am acting like a “hungry person”, which inevitably causes me to reflect upon my own actions as a father. They demand an emotional and spiritual presence that was not always there in my own childhood. In this way, our children’s rebellious dignity is a driving force in ensuring our integrity as a family.

As such, my children have been the catalyst for me really thinking about the power of the everyday, especially as it relates to parenting. Upon looking into what was out there on Indigenous fathering, I found there to be a dearth of literature, especially from the perspective of an Indigenous man, an Indigenous father. There is precious little in terms of work dedicated to the resurgence of Indigenous fathering, particularly

as it relates to the reconstitution of our communities and nationhood. So, not finding what I was looking for in existing fatherhood literatures, I have dedicated myself to working on these topics and issues, setting out to build alternatives to the toxic, colonial masculinities that currently plague our families in so many ways.

For me, Indigenous fatherhood is about our relationships; how we relate to the world; how these relationships have been deformed by colonialism, and how they might be transformed in service to Indigenous resurgence. They are about how we relate to and communicate with each other, as Indigenous peoples, as men, as parents. They are about how we relate to the women in our lives; how we relate to our children; and how we relate to the lands and waters on which we dwell. Colonization has long sought an intimate realignment of Indigenous social relationships. As such, decolonization is about reclaiming, reconstituting, and (re)creating these relationships in ways that provide meaningful change in our families, communities, and nations.

### Conclusions

It is through our everyday actions that we seek to restore and perpetuate Indigenous nationhood, homelands, and cultural practices. Focusing on the everyday allows us to promote family resurgence that takes us out of the classroom to kitchens, backyards, and other land/water-based activities where our families can remember and thrive together. It has been our contention that these everyday acts, when practiced within a familial context, embody Indigenous processes of leadership, governance, and community. As Leanne Simpson (2011, 127) reminds us, as parents we are our children's first and most often profound experience with leadership. While much of the work we do as parents often goes unnoticed, reconstituting our families provides the healthy soil out of which our children, and our nations, will bloom. As with camas, this takes constant care, whether through removing invasive species or providing a healthy environment for our nations to thrive.

A Cherokee notion of leadership starts with a person having a vision or dream. That person begins to embody that vision by putting it into everyday practice. While implementing it, the person also has a responsibility to make that vision understandable to other people through her/his words and actions. After gaining this experience, the person offers some direction for people to mobilize around that vision. In short, this is leadership by example that is common to most Indigenous nations. Key to this process is making the vision relatable to other people. This is encompassed in the ways we honor and nurture our families and homelands everyday. It is about moving beyond performance and/or symbolic gestures to meaningful everyday practices of decolonization. These everyday actions give life to our visions for family resurgence.

Our understanding of the previous work on everydayness helps illuminate both the analytical and applied capacity of everyday acts of resurgence. This takes us away from performativity to more direct embodiments of relationality, gender, home, and convergences of time and place. The intimate spaces and relationships that we embody everyday are often overlooked but help guide our relationships with the natural world and more public relationships. We hope to provide more insight into these larger, critical interrelationships. Understanding the everyday may also provide deeper insights into how daily actions can lead to larger-scale Indigenous movements and vice-versa. Everyday actions define the scope of Indigenous struggles for resurgence and personal decolonization, and highlight the micro-processes of what it means to reclaim and re-envision family resurgence. While everyday aspects of life may appear routine, they represent important sites of regeneration in terms of renewing relationships with community, family, and homelands/waterways.

When our families come together, whether to feast, to sing and play, or to enter into ceremony, we see the seeds of resurgence. Our children's laughter fills the air with the sweetest of sounds, uniting us in our love for each other and

the diverse communities we carry with us. It is in these moments that our ancestors would recognize us. These convergences of resurgences have pushed us to continue to do what we do in spite of colonial attempts to reframe and erase us. In an everyday kind of sense, this is Indigenous resurgence in action. It is our responsibility to work towards these moments and make them last, so that we can live in a longer, Indigenous present.

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