

# Book Review

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## **Cree Pedagogy: Dance your Style**

By Angelina Weenie, Willie Ermine, Kevin Lewis, Ida Swan, Mary Sasakamoose, Jeffery Cappel, and Deanna Pelletier

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### **Reviewed by:**

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Published jointly with Willy Ermine, Kevin Lewis, Ida Swan, Mary Sasakamoose, Jeffery Cappel, and Deanna Pelletier, Angelina Weenie's "Cree Pedagogy: Dance Your Style" discusses the knowledge systems of Cree Peoples as well as their distinct methods of teaching and learning. The phrase "Dance Your Style" encapsulates the Cree way of learning, a process that must be enjoyed and not simply carried out mentally. Hence, students are motivated to approach knowledge creatively and uniquely, like dancing. Given all authors are Cree, they offer unique lived experiences and perspectives adding a personal element to the book.

The author, Angelina Weenie, clearly states the book's intent as a resource for sharing Cree knowledge, how they came to learn it, and how they teach based on Cree ways of being (Weenie, 2024, p.1). Hence, when I read this book, I expected to learn about the Cree people, their ways of knowing, and their ways of teaching. As an educator, my interest mainly focused on a new perspective on pedagogy alongside Cree epistemology. However, I could take away so much more than just that. Divided into three parts, namely Cree pedagogy, earth teachings, and the pathway, the book presents First Nations Pedagogy as a pedagogy rooted in land, language, culture, community, and elder knowledge.

## **Cree Pedagogy and Earth Teachings**

Angelina Weenie shares a myriad of personal experiences throughout the book. Teachings from her mother, Elders, and professors all provide a deep understanding of the Cree ways of knowing. The writing style allows the reader to live those experiences through her. Her reflections on teachings are a must-read for educators struggling in their practice, as exemplified in the article “My identity as a teacher” (Pelletier, 2024, p.55) from Chapter 4, which provides insight into becoming the teacher you aim to be. With the increasing pressure on educators, demands from administrations, and the feeling of being isolated, this book provides a different perspective on pedagogy, a more profound one. I connected with the Cree ways at a personal level. One example was of Elders advising educators to teach from the heart (Weenie, 2024, p.3), reminding me of my parents telling me how a teacher who teaches with passion is a true educator. Also, the belief that we have each been favoured with a gift and must pass it on (Weenie, 2024, p.8) truly resonates with my cultural teachings.

In Chapter 2, Weenie discusses the efforts to reclaim Cree languages (Weenie, 2024, p.22). Many other nations are striving towards a similar goal, trying to preserve languages that are diminishing quickly. These countries include India, Brazil, and Indonesia, among others. In Chapter 5, Ermine quotes Late Elder Eli Bear, “We are a part of nature, much like the trees, grass, and the animal. Our roots and the source of our body life is the earth, and that is why the earth is our mother”, (Ermine, 2024, p. 72). Coming from India, I can relate to this type of teaching, as we are taught to give high regard to the land and consider it the mother. These connections give the book a global appeal, further solidifying Cree pedagogy as a comprehensive and universal worldview.

## **The Pathway**

The authors skillfully intertwine the narratives of Elders and community members, capturing their perspectives and experiences, including insightful views on the significance of cultural camps. As described in the book, the Cree teachings shared at these camps prompted a deep sense of introspection and inspired me to be more grateful and generous. These practices serve as a model for other communities, guiding us to find peace and serenity in our personal and professional lives (Willie Ermine, 2024, p.148).

## **Conclusion**

The language the authors use is clear and interesting and can be a great tool for teachers, researchers, and those eager to learn something new about First Nations pedagogies. The references made in the book to other texts are appropriately cited where required and make sense. The authors' collective wisdom and experiences have been blended into writing that covers theory and practice and is never one-dimensional. Overall, "Cree Pedagogy: Dance Your Style" is an excellent and current addition to the works concerned with Indigenous education. It brings to the fore the pressing issue of the need to prioritize First Nations' pedagogical techniques in education. It seeks ways of enhancing Indigenous knowledge and thought. This makes the book a handbook for educators, researchers, and policymakers in Indigenous education.