

# 3 Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory

## Chapter Outline

In this chapter, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson shares her experience as a student working with Elders and how this experience has shaped the way she thinks and writes. During the author's two years working on a mapping project, she was provided with much more than place names on a map. The experience instead provided her with a way to understand who she was and how she, although participating in a Western academic endeavour, could come to understand a Nishnaabeg methodology for research.

The author also learned from the academic who was in charge of the project, at least in the eyes of the university, how to empower the Elders to lead the project. In other words, the Elders were not there to say a prayer and smudge at the start of a meeting but instead they were to be the meeting. It was from this that the author was able to witness what she calls Nishnaabeg brilliance, whereby theory, method, story, ethics, and values were all enmeshed in Nishnaabeg politics. This experience opened her mind and heart to the brilliance and complexity of Nishnaabeg-embodied thought. She has used this experience to suggest that the intellectual and theoretical home of resurgence has to come from within Indigenous thought systems. Further, "place" is central to understanding one's self, their past and their future. The author demonstrates that it is necessary to work with Ancestors and those not yet born to give birth to an Indigenous freedom that creates generations that are in love with, attached to, and committed to their land.

## Learning Objectives

- To understand what is meant by radical resurgence theory
- To understand what is meant by Nishnaabeg brilliance
- To have an awareness of how "place" is essential to understanding
- To recognize Indigenous knowledges and understand how the mainstream regards these knowledges

## Study Questions

1. What is the radical resurgence theory?
2. What does the author mean by "Nishnaabeg brilliance"?
3. How do Indigenous and Western views of "place" differ?

4. How can Indigenous place-based knowledges be used to understand relationships?
5. What is meant by “grounded normatives”?
6. Why did the author wait until now to write about her experiences in the 1990s working with Elders?
7. Why does the author suggest that a radical Indigenous resurgence is necessary?
8. Why is the Seven Fires creation story important to the author’s understanding of Nishnaabeg thinking?
9. Why is engagement important in resurgence?
10. Why did the author think the Elders did not originally understand her questions?

## Additional Resources

### Readings

- Coulthard, Glen S. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Doerfler, Jill, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair and Heidi Kiiwetinewinok Stark eds. 2013. *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2011. *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*. Arbeiter Ring Publishers.
- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. 2017. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Williams, Doug. 2018. *Michi Saagig Nishnaageg: This is Our Story*. ARP Books.

### Websites

Land and Reconciliation <https://www.electricitymagazine.ca/2016/01/land-reconciliation/>

This site informs on ways that the right conversations may allow for reconciliation of land disputes to be plausible.

Land as Pedagogy Earth Day Canada [https://earthday.ca/research\\_resources/land-as-pedagogy-nishnaabeg-intelligence-and-rebellious-transformation/](https://earthday.ca/research_resources/land-as-pedagogy-nishnaabeg-intelligence-and-rebellious-transformation/)

This site provides an example of using Nishnaabeg intelligence to reclaim land as a pedagogy.

Leanne Simpson Website <https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/treaties>

This site provides more information on the author of this chapter.