

13 Moosehide Tanning and Wellness in the North

Chapter Outline

This chapter provides a description of the author's family background and lands from which she is from and associated. This provides context for how she became involved in the tanning of hides and the role this activity has come to play in her life. The chapter is based on a collection of the author's reflections, observations, interviews, and stories about land-based education; specifically, the chapter focuses on hide tanning as a way to approach Indigenous leadership skills. The author argues that Indigenous leadership skills are informed by Indigenous values which are learned through language and relationships to the land. The author hopes others will use her stories and perspectives to help understand high-level theoretical work in the field of Indigenous Studies, land-based education, and cultural resurgence.

After introducing the chapter's basis, the author introduces the concept of a land-based education, which she defines as the process of learning from the land in a way that is informed by Indigenous values and teachings. The author stresses the connections associated with working on hides. In particular, she identifies the people working on the hide with her: the animal, the hunter, and all of the materials that had to be gathered to tan the hide. The concept of gratitude is stressed and the importance to be grateful to ancestors who protect and pass on knowledge, children that knowledge is passed to, the space to work, the material, animals, water, health, etc.

The chapter then provides interviews from two individuals with whom the author tans. They provide overviews of how they came to be involved in tanning and the importance of tanning camps for their personal and cultural growth. The author then turns attention to how on the land programming helps to foster relationships between participants, the land, and their cultures.

The chapter concludes with an examination of the Urban Hide Tanning Camp. This Yellowknife camp has two main goals: to provide a community space for Indigenous people to engage in hide tanning or to simply "hang out" in a safe space, and to provide mentorship for Indigenous people who want to learn how to tan hides. The camp, although Indigenous-led, is not exclusively for Indigenous people. The camp was invited to the Banff Centre and the author discusses the challenges of having the camp in a space with much regulation. Despite this the camp was a success with Indigenous participants from across Turtle Island.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges of land-based practices but also stresses the productive and positive results from land-based education. Those who participate are given the opportunity to learn experimentally while also learning values of respect and reciprocity for the land, animals, water, and communities.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the opportunities that hide tanning can bring to the contemporary world
- To understand the challenges of implementing land-based programming
- To recognize how land-based programming can strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
- To understand how land-based programming can work within an urban setting
- To recognize the implications that increased urbanization has on Indigenous land-based programming
- To understand the positive and productive results that can occur as a result of land-based programming

Study Questions

1. What is land-based education?
2. What opportunities can hide tanning bring to the contemporary world?
3. How can land-based programming strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
4. What are some of the challenges of utilizing land-based programming in urban settings?
5. What are some of the implications that increased urbanization can bring on Indigenous land-based programming?
6. What are the major challenges of implementing land-based programming?
7. What are some of the positive results that can occur as a result of land-based programming?
8. What connections may result as a result of being involved in hide tanning?
9. How can a tanning camp provide mentorship for its participants?
10. What role does respect and reciprocity play in the process of hide tanning?

Additional Resources

Readings

McCoy, Kate, Eve Tuck, and Marcia McKenzie, eds. 2016. *Land Education: Rethinking Pedagogies of Place from Indigenous, Postcolonial and Decolonizing Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Michell, Herman. 2018. *Land-based Education: Embracing the Rhythms of the Earth from an Indigenous Perspective*. JCharlton Publishing.

Rhea, Zane. 2018. *Land and Water Education and the Allodial Principle: Rethinking Ecological Education in the Postcolonial Age*. Singapore: Springer.

Robidoux, Michael and Courtney Mason eds. 2017. *A Land Not Forgotten: Indigenous Food Security and Land-Based Practices in Northern Ontario*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Websites

Indigenous Land-Based Learning Programs

<https://landbasedlearning.wordpress.com/indigenous-land-based-learning-programs/>

This webpage provides links to and summaries of Indigenous land-based learning programs and is devoted to the issue of homelessness for Indigenous people in urban settings.

Land-Based Learning <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/land-based-learning/>

This website provides a case study of Indigenous land-based learning.

Land-Based Education <http://www.opased.com/land-based-programs/>

This website provides an example of land-based education at Oscar Lathlin Collegiate which is part of the Opaaskwayak Educational Authority Inc.