

Miaja



8eckatc anicinapek kapi nakatamo8atc nakickotati8in

.....



Report on the 3rd edition
Gathering on the anicinabe heritage

Miaja!

It's time to get going.

The canoe is ready.

Autumn heralds a new cycle.

It's a busy time: we start to watch for moose,
we prepare for the return of the geese...

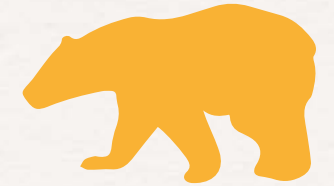
Miaja is an invitation to action.

The mind and body are in motion.

It is a time to meet and get prepared.



Tina Nottaway



On September 9 and 10, 2021, in Pikogan, the third edition of the MIAJA gathering was held, the great annual event dedicated to the celebration of Anicinabe culture in all its forms.

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The MIAJA gathering was held for the first time in 2018, in Val-d'Or, on the theme of Anicinabe culture. The second edition, organised in 2019 in Kebaowek, honoured the Anicinabe language on the occasion of the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

In 2021, just before the beginning of the International Decade of the Indigenous Languages, the members of the Anicinabe Nation met to discuss, in their own language, the preservation of their heritage.

For two days, speakers presented the projects that keep the Anicinabe cultural memory alive in each community. In a collaborative spirit, all participants were invited to share their concerns and express themselves on the links between heritage and self-determination.

The Minwashin organization, for its part, presented several initiatives related to the repatriation of archives belonging to the Anicinabe Nation.

MIAJA being a creative incubator, artistic activities based on Anicinabe culture were also presented throughout the event.



What does heritage mean to us?

The French term “patrimoine”, derived from the Latin patrimonium, refers to all property and rights inherited from the father. This word has a cultural history that does not fit in well with the anicinabe way of thinking.

If it is necessary to use this vocabulary to feed the dialogue with the institutions of memory (museums, archives and libraries) that preserve traces of anicinabe culture, it is also essential to question the meaning of this word.

Indeed, the exchanges during the MIAJA gathering highlighted the need to keep in mind that the term “patrimoine” does not fit with the way anicinabe thinking considers the transmission of culture.

This report therefore aims to give an account of the collective knowledge that was developed during the MIAJA meeting, in the very terms of the anicinabe way of thinking.

Promoting the anicinabe culture and language implies affirming the worldview of our language and culture. This means placing the issues of decolonisation at the heart of knowledge, at the heart of our language.

Language shapes our relationship to the world. To capture the anicinabe worldview, we need to use the words of the Anicinabemowin.



The context rather than the translation

Language is important to describe heritage. And to discuss this today, we will have to use both Anicinabemowin and French. But for the two languages to understand each other well, the French will have to adapt to the context of the word, and not just rely on the translation. This is quite an exercise for those who do not understand Anicinabemowin.

When we were taken to residential school, we could no longer speak our language without being punished. I remember that the first sentence I said in French was: "René joue avec son ballon". I had no idea what it meant, but I learnt it by heart and they were happy, so I repeated: "René joue avec son ballon". It was much later that I understood what it meant.

8 It will be the same today for those who do not understand the Anicinabe language. It will be hard, long, difficult to stay and listen to me for fifteen minutes speaking my language. You're going to look like people who don't know what "René joue avec son ballon" means. But that's where I want to take you. You have to get out of your comfort zone.

Do not try to translate, do not try to transpose. Rather, experience the knowledge of the original word. We took the word "welcome" and translated it literally: "Mino Picaok". Except that this concept does not exist for the Anicinabek. We don't say "welcome" because it goes without saying that everyone is welcome.

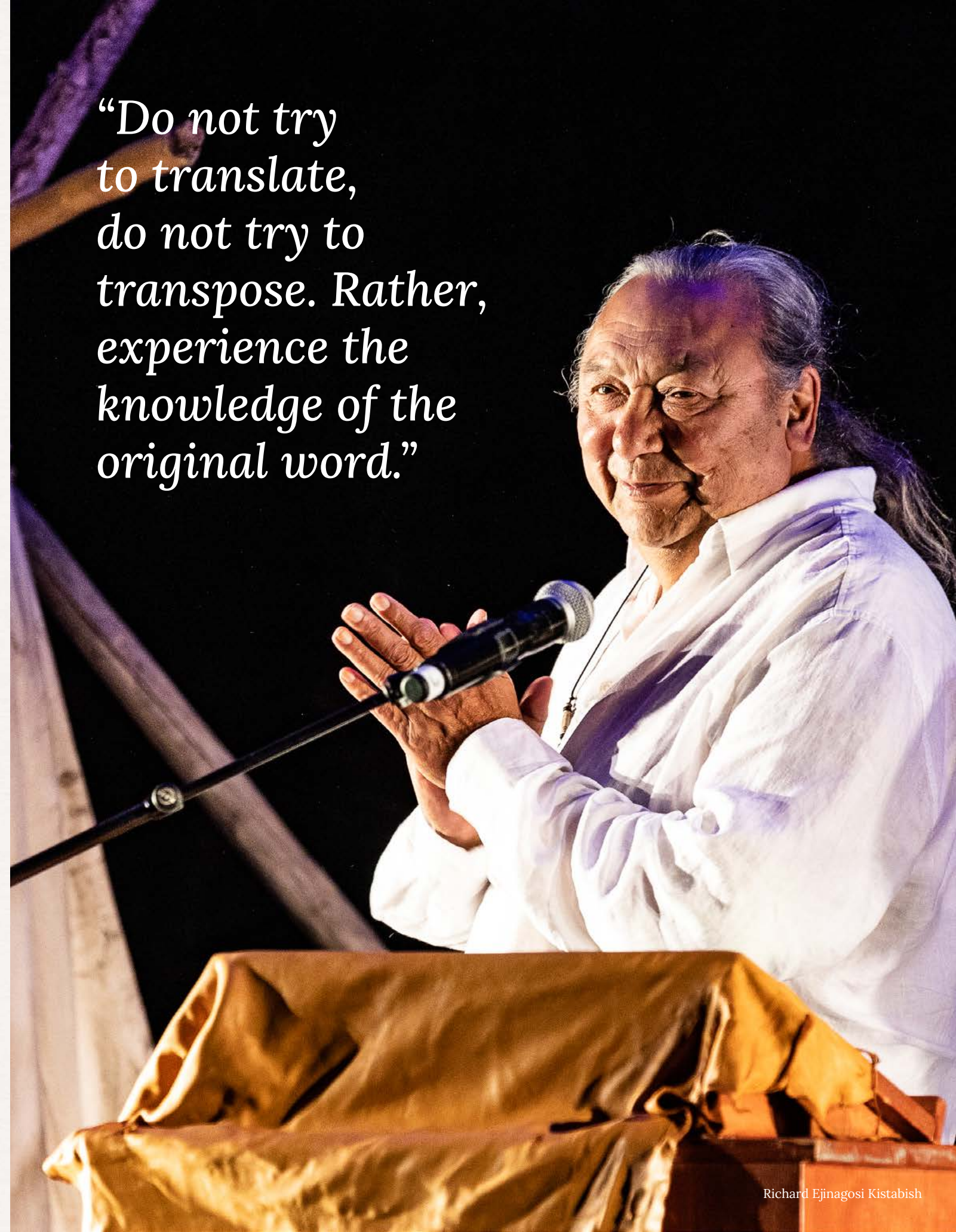
You will see, it is difficult. But it is the only way to decolonise our language, to understand it and to respect it according to our culture and values.

Kitci meegwetc.



Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish

"Do not try to translate, do not try to transpose. Rather, experience the knowledge of the original word."





Traditional jig night

A holistic view of our cultural heritage

What actions are we taking in our communities to preserve the Anicinabe cultural heritage?

The answers given to this question allow us to draw up an inventory of the situation but also go beyond that.

They reflect a reality where cultural heritage colours the way we are present to the world, to others and to ourselves.

In this worldview, the transmission of knowledge is intrinsically linked to territory, language, arts and spirituality.

Aki*

*“Education takes place
on the territory”*

◇◇◇
Ronald Brazeau

The Anicinabe heritage is inseparable from the way people live together
in the territory.

This cultural heritage is embodied in a concrete transmission of knowledge in
the forest, in contact with the ancestral territory.

The practice of traditional activities strengthens family ties and social relations.



Icikiciwin*

“Language is the meaning of life and today we have lost this relationship, this understanding of the world, because language has been put aside for many decades.

Today, the challenge is to make it present in public space, at school, and also to be present in the territory, where the language was born.”

Nancy Wiscutie-Crépeau

The Anicinabe language carries the ancestral knowledge born from the dialogue with the territory.

The transmission of the stories stemming from this symbiosis with the territory forges the identity of the younger generations.

The transmission of cultural heritage can only be done in the words of the Anicinabemowin.



Anicinape ocitowin*



“Finally, we realized that art, like everything else in First Nations culture, is communal.”

Patricia Kack

Although the initiatives related to the arts in the Anicinabe communities are varied, they all reflect the same spirit: they are part of the movement to transmit ancestral knowledge.

Whether the creation involves the use of new technologies or traditional materials, it is the creativity of the ancestors that is mobilised and revived. The cultural transmission takes place in the repetition of the gesture as much as in the making of the object. The object thus created is rich in cultural memory.

Women play an important role in the transmission of this knowledge.

The arts create a bridge between generations and between people. The transmission of cultural heritage prepares the future by establishing a connection between the ancestors and the younger generations. The Elders are obviously an essential link in this process.



Manitowiwin*

“How can you think about heritage, the relationship to spirituality, if you don’t go back to the drum?”

Being decolonised is a process in which each person has to reflect on their spiritual connection to the Creator.

When the Creator created the Anicinabek, he gave us a way to pray, he gave us the drum to honour his creations.”

◇
Jimmy Papatie

Cultural heritage is intrinsically linked to a worldview in which all living beings are interconnected by bonds of a spiritual nature.

At the heart of the Anicinabe heritage is the relationship with the Whole, with the territory, with others and with oneself.

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Rassemblement sur le patrimoine Anicinabe 3^{ème} édition



PATRIMOINE ANICINABE



This page presents an artwork by Fabienne Théoret-Jérôme, an artist from the community of Lac-Simon.

This fresco, produced live during the MIAJA gathering, summarises and illustrates the major themes set out during these two days of exchange and sharing.

It will guide us like a map unfolding, from one word to another, the vast network of meanings associated with the anicinabe cultural heritage.

9-10 sept 2021
Fabienne Théoret-Jérôme



To illustrate this holistic vision, we reproduce here the poem that Kim Chevrier shared at the MIAJA gathering.



To be human

Imagine a world that inspires peace, love and harmony

Harmony

Like music notes rising ever so gracefully

Like the sun

Hearing our voices sing in unison

Like the sometimes delicate sounds of the whispering winds

The sweet smell of roses and daffodils

Filling our bodies

Refreshing us

Each and everyday

The energy we share

So strong

That we can almost taste it

It is a soft touch of all these things combined

That embody all what we are

Creating everlasting change

For those who listen, feel and hear with their hearts.



Kim Chevrier



Cultural heritage and memory institutions

Heritage is generally conceived as the common heritage of a group that is passed on to subsequent generations. It can take many forms.

Cultural heritage is traditionally divided into two sub-concepts: tangible heritage and intangible heritage.

“Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance.

It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments.”

Definition of cultural heritage according to UNESCO



Intangible heritage relates more specifically to traditions and living expressions passed on from generation to generation.

UNESCO divides it into five main areas:

- Oral traditions and expressions
- Performing arts
- Social practices, rituals and festive events
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- Traditional craft skills: the skills and knowledge involved in the act of craft production



Mary-Jane Brazeau



The meaning of the word Kapakitinamâgonâniwak*

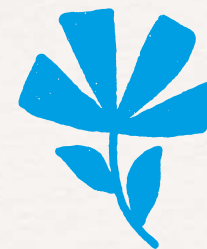
What we have left from our ancestors, every little thing they left behind or gave to us, is a witness to our thousand-year-old culture. Our heritage teaches us the ways of the Ancestors, reveals to us their imagination, their creativity and their ingenuity in facing difficulties. These are their stories, our stories.

The objects they made with their hands and the names they gave to the landscape features are our heritage. We must protect this heritage because it is the memory of our culture and history that we wish to pass on to future generations.

Excerpt from Minwashin's website

The anicinabe word Kapakitinamâgonâniwak is the closest to the word 'heritage' in Anicinabemowin. It could be translated as "all of the things left by the ancestors".

Although it refers to material objects, the word Kapakitinamâgonâniwak refers at least as much to the intangible dimension of these objects. For example, a pipe is not only a concrete object, but also a tool for connecting with the Creator. Its material reality is therefore understood in its dialogue with the intangible.



A necessary historical context

The Anicinabe culture is deeply marked by a colonial history that has disrupted for generations the way of life, cultural traditions, language, social organisation and the connection to the land.

These experiences of dispossession undermined the ties that bound the Anicinabek to the whole creation, to the territory, to others and to themselves.

The legacy of colonisation is embedded in the narratives and teachings that address notions of health and well-being in the communities.

Efforts to transmit the Anicinabe cultural heritage are thus asserted as resilience practices.

Taking care of this heritage is essential for the healing of the communities and the well-being of the next generations.

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Challenging museum and archival practices

The notion of 'patrimoine' isolates fragments of the anicinabe reality by breaking meaningful links.

Western memory institutions (museums, archives and libraries) have imposed their vocabulary and practices of preservation and interpretation on Anicinabe culture, resulting in a distorted and rigid view of an oral culture.

It is now time for community self-determination, which implies a reflection on the interpretation, conservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

This work of reappropriating cultural heritage is part of a wider process of decolonising knowledge.



A man wearing a brown hat, a red and white checkered shirt, and a brown vest is speaking into a microphone on a stage. He is looking down and to the right. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

A new ethical framework on the repatriation of Anicinabe cultural heritage:

Repair · Restore · Restitute

“What we have to do, first of all, is to accept history. Accept that it is indeed a history of colonisation. Only then can we start decolonising. We must restore the memory of our parents, our grandparents and our ancestors. This restoration will create a beautiful image of our identity. It will be MINWASHIN! And this will have to be done in three stages: repair, restoration and restitution. For each of these stages, we will need to share responsibilities, obligations and duties.”

Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish



The Anicinabe graphic heritage

The Minwashin organization, in partnership with the Corporation de la Maison Dumulon, gave historian Guillaume Marcotte the mandate of examining several ancient written sources in order to collect information on the Anicinabe graphic heritage. The texts studied were taken from archives belonging to fur trade companies or Catholic missionaries. Various travel accounts and scientific studies from the first half of the 20th century were also consulted.

The interest of the exercise is to identify, in these texts, references to the colours, ornamental motifs and symbols used by the Anicinabek. Rediscovering the ingenuity of our ancestors means reintegrating it into the transmission of knowledge and nourishing new creativity in the present. It means learning to know ourselves better. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind the intercultural filters that taint these archival texts. In many ways, it is a matter of reconstructing their reflection in a distorting mirror.

In his presentation, Guillaume Marcotte recalled that this work should be complemented by a consultation with Elders and families. In the texts studied, references to the Anicinabe graphic heritage are often fragmentary. The historian has therefore called for a participatory approach to recontextualize this information using the contribution of the oral tradition.

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Nipakanatik virtual library

Minwashin has created a virtual library that preserves, documents and shares the Anicinabe digital archives. This database, which contains all known elements of Anicinabe culture, from various public and private institutions, as well as archives collected by Minwashin.

This library makes it possible to overcome the constraints linked to the material conservation policies of museum collections. It makes available valuable information on the memory of families and communities. It also facilitates the circulation of knowledge and opens the way to a renewal of interpretations.

Moreover, the digital format brings the Anicinabe cultural heritage into the age of new technologies and ensures that this information is passed on to younger generations.

These two initiatives reflect the desire to Repair/Restore/Restitute inherent to the Anicinabe self-determination movement.

Efforts to reclaim the Anicinabe cultural heritage reflect a desire to redress the historical wrongs that have damaged the Anicinabe cultural identity. They contribute to restoring the significance of this heritage and aim to give responsibility for it back to the Anicinabe Nation.

In addition, the MIAJA gathering identified several duties that should guide the actions of the Anicinabe Nation in reclaiming its cultural heritage:

Duty of remembrance

Duty of affirmation and cooperation with non-indigenous institutions

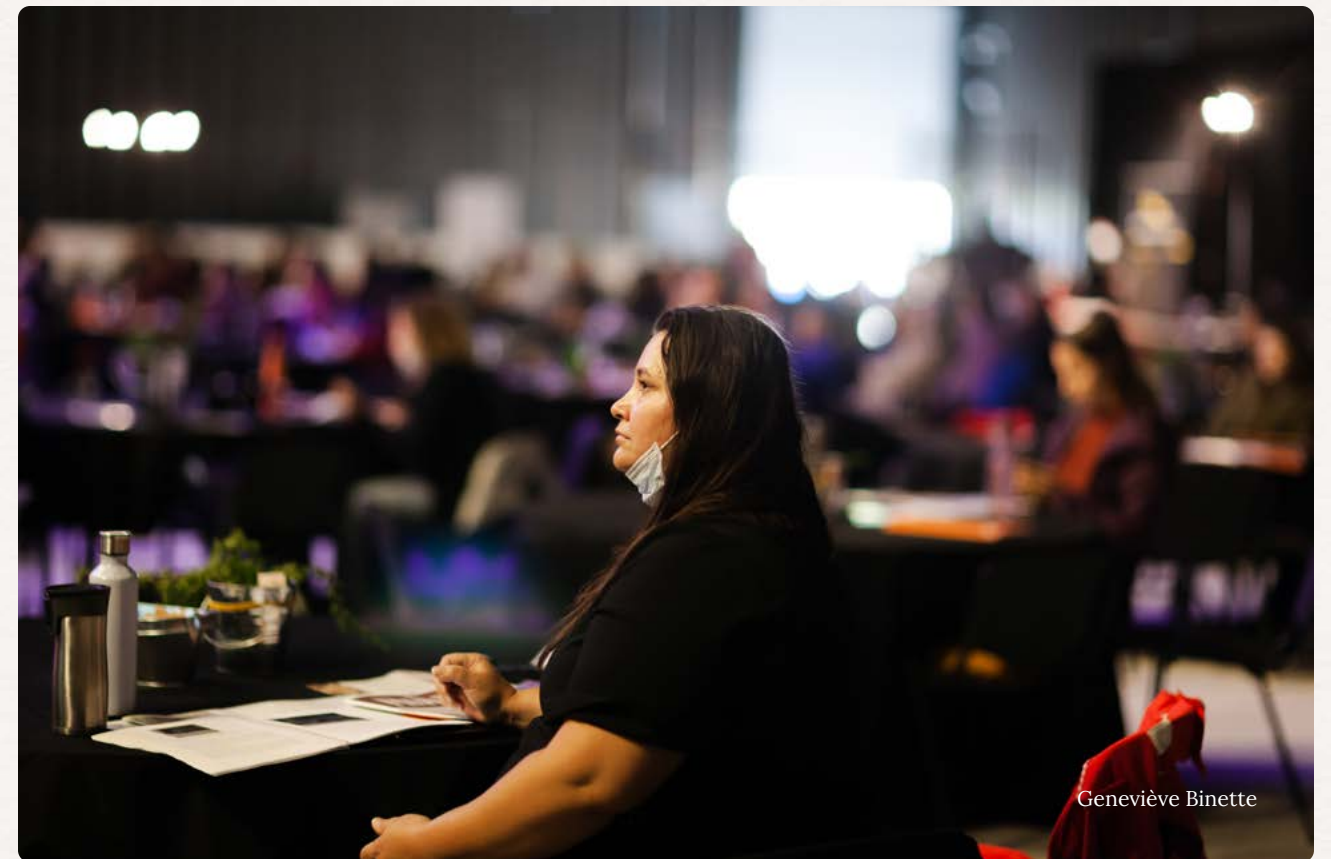
Duty to negotiate in order to re-establish an equal relationship

Duty to transmit and share knowledge





Speech by Grace Ratt at the presentation of her Master of Living Tradition award.



Geneviève Binette

PEKATC*, a shared responsibility

How can the relation to cultural heritage contribute to the self-determination of the Anicinabe Nation?

This question was addressed in a participatory workshop that brought together members of the Anicinabe Nation and allies from different backgrounds.

These discussions converged on the definition of a way of being that is conducive to the necessary dialogue between Anicinabek and non Indigenous people.

Following are the proposals formulated during these workshops, based on a powerful word: pekatch, which means “take it easy”, “let’s take the time”.

Pekatch is an invitation to adopt together a listening posture that makes possible and consolidates the process of self-determination of the Anicinabe Nation.



Time for listening

The time for listening is the time for exchange with the Elders, the time for sharing traditions within the communities. It is also the time for dialogue between the different Anicinabe communities. It is being able to immerse oneself in one's own heritage, to share it and to spread it around.

Pekatic means giving ourselves time to understand together before giving an answer. The existing consultation models are such that, sometimes, we are asked to give an answer without having had time to form a mental image of the issues. It is important to take the time to understand what we are dealing with.

Giving ourselves time together also means creating a space for cultural safety with our allies. The Anicinabek often find themselves in a situation of translating concepts and words that do not have exact equivalents in Western thinking - like the French word "patrimoine". It is important for allies to be aware of this ongoing state of translation and the effort it requires.

Time for self-determination

Giving ourselves time means giving room for creativity so that the Anicinabek can take their place. Heritage is a living example of creativity. It is a source of inspiration for building pride and dignity. It is the basis for autonomy and self-determination.

Giving ourselves time together means recognising the historical, intergenerational wound. To recognise it for oneself and with those who inflicted it. Taking one's place also means demanding the means to recover the language and the heritage, to heal the wounds inherited from colonial history.

rules and norms that carry with them a heavy colonial history. Furthermore, they prevent the manifestation of our own expression, consistent with a thousand-year-old oral culture.

The time for self-determination is the time when we are no longer satisfied with translating the concepts of others and we assert our own way of thinking. It means expressing ourselves according to our own logic, our own sensitivity and our own imagination. The Anicinabek are from an oral tradition and are too often asked to fill in bureaucratic forms to carry out their projects. These administrative practices perpetuate

The time of self-determination is the time when we construct our knowledge of the world on the basis of our own cultural references. Anicinabe pedagogical methods exist and have proved their worth. They are based on ancestral knowledge and guarantee consistency between the knowledge taught and the adopted method of transmission. These methods are suited for deconstructing pedagogical habits inherited from residential schools. In doing so, they are powerful tools for intergenerational healing.



I would like to say thank you.

What we are doing at the moment is beautiful.

But above all, we have to say it with our heart, because in anicinabemowin, we don't speak with our mouth.

In French or English, it takes place in the head, but in anicinabemowin, it's in the heart. That's where it comes from.

Minwashin: it's beautiful. That's what it means.

And Miaja: it's the time.

Miaja, it's time to work on all the things left by my mother, father and all the Elders who are not here.

We must make them live, keep them alive.

And heritage includes handicrafts, tales and stories, all the things that the Anicinabek use to move forward, to walk a good path in life, in order to pass them on to our children...

What we have been left with, "the Knowledge", is what we will leave them.

And this is what we call "heritage".



Alice Jérôme
Miaja's opening speech in anicinabemowin

Tribute to John Boudrias

The third edition of MIAJA was marked by many tributes to John Boudrias, the Grand Chief of the Anicinabe Nation, who died suddenly the day before the event, which he was scheduled to attend.

We would like to pay tribute to John Boudrias by reproducing here one of his poems, which Jimmy Papatie read during the gathering.



It was called Abitibi, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called Temiskaming, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called Outaouais, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

They are called the Laurentians, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called Ottawa, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called the Pontiac, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called Eastern Ontario, we know it as Anicinabe Aki

It was called land, we know it as Aki

We were called the Algonquins, we know ourselves as Anicinabek

The water life, the plants and the trees in our culture
are what we are made of

The lakes, rivers, streams are life, blood

One nation

Proud and ready to stand tall forever



John Boudrias



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