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Deschooling our Humanity

Everywhere not only education but also society as a whole needs "deschooling." (Illich, 1971)

To this day, despite being first written about in 1970, deschooling remains a subject unfamiliar to the common discourses of education. The common belief in the universal good of education is almost completely unchallenged and most criticisms point towards some manner of reform to the current systems, not a radical abandonment of the western education system and a return to shared knowledge within the community. Yet if we take the process of schooling to be the 300 year old project of industrialization and the increased dependence on institutionalization, then we can think of deschooling as the reverse of that project; perhaps a 300 year long project by which we dismantle our dependence on institutions and return to our interdependence on the community—the people and environment that give meaning to our lives. In this case any relationship that is built in a deep, profound manner that establishes interdependence of its members is a rejection of this professionally permeated response to living. We realize that all of us

engage in acts of deschooling, to varying degrees, every single day of our lives.

I feel there is little more I can hope to add to the discourse of the deschooling of society. Countless authors have beautifully articulated the inherent problems of schooling and its relationship to the colonization of the planet and anything that I write will only paraphrase their arguments.

This paper as it exists is imperfect since it demands an academic explanation to the academically incomprehensible. Frankly, deschooling is not school and that is almost unfathomable to the people in the state of Canada because people in the state of Canada have spent a minimum of 13 years being schooled through our school systems; being divided into our respective social classes to fulfill our respective social class roles to perpetuate a global economy for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. Every single culture's commons are threatened by this project of school. School is a process in which we replace our vernacular culture with one of pax economica and lose our heterogeneity (Gabbard, 1998).

In most of the privileged countries of the world there is little distinction made between deschooling and the alternative schooling practices of free

schools, democratic schools, alternative, independent, charter, voucher, international schools and home-learning. Deschooling evolves more deeply in the practice of communities committed to the radical reclamation of their culture. Nowhere is this reclamation more pronounced than in the mountains of Chiapas, Mexico where the Zapatistas have contested their right to autonomy and asserted their sovereignty to their traditional Mayan homelands. This is a strong example of what deschooling a society looks like.

I have included an annotated bibliography for further reading and interest on the subject of deschooling and the struggle for liberation. What becomes apparent is that the deschooling of a society cannot be isolated to the sphere of 'school'; it is a process that deconstructs the compartmentalization of society's structures and exposes them to collective change from the grassroots of the community.

To me the need for deschooling seems obvious and necessary. I have identified roughly three major reasons that scholars have given as to why society must deschool. The first is that education will never be able to meet its promise of alleviating the people of the world from poverty. Yes we are frequently reminded of the stories of those who have gone from rags to riches but this exists only in the case of individuals and not in the

case of our collective whole. In fact, the issue of poverty is non-existent to cultures that still maintain their commons. It is only through the exploitive process of imperialism and colonization in which once common resources are forcefully removed from the community, transformed into a commodity and then sold back to the people that we begin to see this staunch divide between those who prosper because of the suffering of the exploited and those who suffer so that the privileged can prosper. Education itself is a product of this commodification since the knowledge to flourish in our society was once as common as air and shared just as generously between the people of the community. Education is only valuable because it functions on a model of scarcity—that is to say it is only valuable because most are presumed not to have it. Therefore promoting universal education will never feed the 2/3rds of the world exploited through the economized system. This is exemplified in the case of the West African Country of Mauritania,

In the global race for a spot in the Global Economy, Mauritania will take 3,223 years to “catch up” with the U.S.—we have heard development experts pronounce. By dropping out of the global race for development, by being themselves, Mauritians are recovering their dignity TODAY. They do not have to wait for 3,223 years! (Prakash & Esteva, 2007)

The second argument is that the planetary crisis that is upon us, that is the widespread environmental degradation and genocide and exploitation

of peoples is a direct result of our school systems since they bolster the economist values; perpetuate the disassociation from family and environment necessary to unconscionably destroy family and environment. Education frames the discourse for economic development and the universality of industrialization. Schools trap us inside a box that assumes the necessity, value and inevitability of capitalism, that people who do not have schools or industry are destitute, that these people are uncivilized and that the western world is unquestionably providing them a great service by forcing them into schools, dispossessing them of their land, stealing their resources while degrading their environment, exploiting the poverty we impose on them and systematically dismantling that which is sacred to them.

In the sake of argument, it is important to note that not a single culture in the history of the Earth has willfully surrendered their autonomy, way of life, relationship to the land and access to their sacred homelands. In every case it is only under immense militaristic threat or extreme environmental degradation that people have abandoned their ancestral ways of being. So to state that the transition to schools and industrialization has been a free choice is a perversion of humyn dignity. Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva (2007) explain how the Zapatista's,

While affirming their dignity, their hopes of flourishing, enduring according to their own cultural patterns and their own practices of the arts of living and dying, they are joining in solidarity with other Mexicans to establish radically democratic regimes where all voices are heard and respected.

Since the culture has a clear understanding of who they are and possess the freedom to control their destiny, they adopt the elements of the 'global' world that are of value to them. In this way they uphold their own cultural traditions, including their traditions on how to challenge and change traditions.

The third argument is that education is directly and inextricably used as a tool to diminish people of their culture. We see horrendous examples of this with the combination of apartheid systems and the use of residential schools, but also in subtler ways such as policies of international development in countries like Mexico where schooling has been posed as a means to solve the "Indian Problem" by effectively indoctrinating the indigenous peoples into "Ladino's" (Prakash & Esteva, 2007). This is evident when we explore the curriculum of schools that teach about world affairs, it renders the parents knowledgeless, as they only know about their world that surrounds them. The parents then stop teaching their cultural knowledge to their children because they come to feel that it is useless and the children effectively lose the values of their

community and dive deeper into the economist mindframe. In this situation the knowledge is no longer collective or possessed by the community, it is private and possessed solely by the teacher thus rendering the students blank slates that are dependent on the economist society to receive their nourishment (Prakash & Esteva, 2007). Their autonomy is lost and their culture dwindles. Indeed less than half the languages spoken in 1949, the year United States President Truman announced the US project for the international development of the world, are spoken today and many exist solely as a means of study of doctoral thesis. This is the loss of our collective humanity (Gabbard, 1998).

However, to simply compartmentalize the argument in such a way is in fact a product of a schooled mind. The three sides of this coin are really one in the same. To argue in favour of any of them presumes there is a rational argument that can be made to apply universally that will prove the necessity of deschooling. Argumentation is itself a product of our school system—to problematize a situation, break it into its constituent parts and then assess for its validity. The truth of this situation is that it is not a matter of argument—it is one of feeling. It is a desire for thriving, flourishing, growth of our collective humanity, a humanity that is rooted in the pluriverse of our specific localities. It is not an answer; it is a unique struggle for liberation, a desire to connect with our fellow

humanity as humyn beings. Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva (2007) summarize this sentiment beautifully when they write,

We know very well that education for jobs, like the family car and flush toilet, is felt as a basic need for many millions. They cannot survive, or have the good life as they understand it, if that need is not satisfied by the Market or the State. They cannot conceive their own way of living without the consumption of goods and services now defining their survival kits. We are not arguing that they be deprived of their “rights” to satisfy their “needs.” All we are emphasizing is our solidarity with the millions saying, “No, thanks” to all those “needs” and “rights”—thus rejecting the universality of development and education. Inspired by the diversity of the lived pluriverse, we seek limits for education and respect for different ways of living, learning, and teaching, through [our own] political controls.

Thus the question of deschooling is not one of force or paternalism—a demand that everyone embrace one way of thinking. It is a question of understanding, relationship building and respect. The violent disassociation from our environment and other humyn beings is a wound in the collective heart of humanity that has brought many ideas into our collective consciousness that are themselves quite ill. To readily accept these ideas affects our very disposition towards our family of humanity, our collective health as a planet. Therefore the question of my thesis is: How do we invest in learning as collective healing?

While Illich wrote about the process of deschooling 'society', in the context of the nation states of Canada and United States, deschooling is applied as an individual process and is often co-opted by free-market rationality. In this context, people argue for a type of unschooling that removes the need for professional teachers or costly public schools. Like all free-market arguments it focuses on efficiency, using terms like 'monopoly schooling' to emphasize that if we 'deregulate' schooling we create competition and self-interest based scenarios that lead to 'free'-thinking more productive learners. Ironically, many of these learners depend on curriculum programs such as distance learning, thus effectively removing the primary means of interaction in the institutional process while still consuming an alien body of pre-prescribed knowledge.

Deschooling the individual in a society that is constantly screaming for more schooling is an imperfect process and one that has no hopes of achieving the goal of a deschooled society. That is to say if the institutions of society remain unchallenged and learners remain isolated then the hope of deschooling fails. The extent of institutionalization has so deeply permeated western culture that even the family has been impacted. At what other point in humyn history has a family consisted solely of a child and a single parent? A home life consist of completely

changing your living arrangements on a weekly basis to fit the demands of the divorced family? Or at best an isolated nuclear family which the demands of work force separation from child and parent as early as only a few months after birth?

This institutionalization has created a false dichotomy between members of a family; a separation between woman and fetus, father and home life and turned children into property. This very discourse creates the separation between life long learning and a linear progression towards credential, simultaneously leaving the question of education a discourse over what to impose on children. Learning as healing our collective consciousness rightfully brings parents, grandparents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, friends and distant relations into the equation of learning, asking how do we grow together?

These are the cracks in the wall in which individuals can coalesce together to create the pockets that spark an imperfect transition towards a society of wholeness. This is the opening to our process of healing.

Methodology

I will take methodology to mean my means of coming to know—that is to say how I have come to understand the context of deschooling. This has not been a short or simple process. It is a process I have been consciously engaged with for the last 8 years of my life and unconsciously engaged in since birth. The results of my understanding cannot be verified with tests, to do so would provide you with as much information as a description of flavour would inform a diner about the taste of food. It is something you have to actively do to understand.

My primary means of understanding deschooling has been through my involvement as a co-creator of the Underground Curriculum, my personal healing and removal from the school system, my engagement with local communities through solidarity, activism, volunteerism and an investment in generous listening. My experiences of being in school and relinquishing to passivity in the classroom and my dedication to spiritual well being also deeply inform my understanding of deschooling. Finally, I reference the Zapatista's as a case study of deschooling,

From this stance, I want to explain that while I do not profess to hold the answers, as every person and community will have their own healing process to the ills of schooling, I have stumbled across answers in my

own life context. It is through my process of healing that I will write, thus honoring the timeless traditions of the Wounded Healer and Wise Woman Healing. This means that I have understood the illness of schooling only through my own infliction of schooling and struggle to overcome it and reclaim my life. All forms of events transpiring in my life whether challenging or easy, good or bad, are nourishment for me. Some of these lessons may prove useful to the community around me; they may also be useless and patriarchal. Despite this caution I will make myself vulnerable and put myself 'out there' in hopes that my learning may be a reference point for those on a similar path.

Definitions

I have a strong resistance to writing definitions yet I realize that as I write this, the schooled mind will inevitably misconstrue what it is I am saying. I embrace the irony of attempting to guide the reader to this understanding while acknowledging the imperfection of any definition and that the act of classifying the knowledge immediately negates its true meaning. If after reading this you believe that the challenges presented can be achieved through institutional adaptation then you have

missed the key point of this essay—this is not a call to reform the goal of universality, it is an abandonment of it to embrace the pluriverse of our existence.

So what is deschooling? As Ivan Illich asserted in his paper *Deschooling society* in 1971, “the realm of schools far exceeds the confines of any singular institution and serves as a key pinnacle in the institutionalization of our lives.” This creates dependence on what Illich calls the “treatment of individuals”, which is a paradox that the more you receive a given treatment; in this case education, the more you require that treatment. In other words it is a process that replaces our vernacular culture with one of *pax economica* (Gabbard, 1998). Where we were once dependent on our shared landscape and community life, we are now dependent on an economized system thus creating, isolation, disenfranchisement, environmental degradation, exploitation, violence, and lose our heterogeneity as humyn beings. Deschooling then is an assertion of autonomy that acknowledges the sacredness of our humanity. To deschool is to realize a deep truth that has been almost entirely forgotten in the practice of the Western World: We are all connected and life is worth living, that is to say Life is worth living because we are all connected.

As Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva (2007) write in *Escaping Education*,

[Deschooling] celebrates well-being: still enjoyed in the commons and cultures of peoples living and learning at the grassroots. It celebrates the cultural richness, the prolific abundance that still exists in the many and diverse worlds of the social majorities. For they need no classrooms, no computer workshops, no laboratories nor libraries, nor even Wal-Mart's to teach and learn from each other. They have not forgotten their diverse arts of survival and flourishing "in lieu of education."... Resisting or bypassing all the institutions and practices conceived to educate them into cultural extinction, learning in freedom, they struggle against all the institutions that privatize knowledge; reduce wisdom into knowledge stock, a commodity sold and bought by those capable of paying for it. Their wisdom is a commons; neither bought nor sold. To cherish the wisdom of their elders, the people must remain dropouts or refuseniks of the educational system.

In the context of the state of Canada, deschooling is reclamation of the autonomy and interdependence we have lost through schooling. Through it we seek to become co-creators in our local worlds. In practice this has yet to create a community in the Canadian state truly committed to the practice of deschooling and the autonomy of self-governance and place. It is also a problematized act in the context of the Canadian state since roughly 96% of the population is of settler origin. The state of Canada resides on stolen indigenous land. This means that the notion of a "return to the commons" is inevitably colonial in the context of the Canadian state since the very concept of the commons is of Western European descent. At no point in time has the land occupied by the

Canadian state existed as a commons for the settler population.

In truth I do not know what this means for the relationship of settlers with the land they occupy, nor do I fully understand how the relationship between indigenous people and settlers can be addressed and honored in this paper. The answer to this question is not up to me alone—it is a problem that can only be addressed through sincere interaction and generous listening between settlers and indigenous people. As long as the exploitation of indigenous peoples and their lands goes unnoticed true reconciliation cannot begin. It is up to each of us to take responsibility for our parts in the process of colonization and seek means to disrupt it. My solidarity lies with the indigenous people whose land I write this paper on—the T'sawout, Chekonien, Esquimalt, Pasqua, Assiniboine, and Cree—whose allegiance and love still binds with the land, as well as all others who with sincerity forsake the global economy and struggle to re-embrace this place in which we walk.

I want to make it evident that, “The social majorities need no saviors, no conscientization, no empowerment. They are impressively skillful in saving their worlds...” Deschooling is not about what institutions can do for us, it is about how communities can reform, heal and create their worlds” (Prakash & Esteva, 2007). While this is exceedingly complex in

the context of the state of Canada where the majority of the population are settlers living on stolen indigenous land I believe this healing begins with the rehumanization of ourselves. Only then can we truly listen to each other and reconcile our relationships. Our allegiances must be to the humyn—that is the sentient beings of this world. We must invest in generous listening and rejoice in giving.

This type of listening is not called ‘generous’ because of a presumed philanthropy of the listener, but rather that it requires a giving of ones ‘self’—that is to say letting go of all preconceived ideas and beliefs to understand the truth in what the speaker is saying. By doing so the listener invests in the speakers story as an opportunity to breakdown existing power structures and ally with those who have been oppressed. As phrased by Kevin Kumashiro (2000),

It should not be the case that a [person] "looks for [his or her] own image in the other, and hence invests in knowledge as self-reflection and affirmation," but that, "in the process of coming to know, [the person] invests in the rethinking of the self as an effect of, and condition for, encountering the other as an equal.

As Prakash and Esteva (2007) write, “The newly minted expert as well as the established scholar have much to learn about living well from the uneducated and the illiterate—if they can give up the arrogance of their expertise.” The question of giving then is simply to ask not, “what do I get from this?” but “how can I contribute to growth of the world.” The

reality in many cases is that it is often to sit, listen and internalize information we have callously overlooked before. In the face of the domination of the World Bank, Free Trade Agreements, world power imperialism and the ongoing colonization of the peoples of the world, the question of the success of deschooling is not pedagogical nor one of knowledge, it is a political one.

There are probably as many definitions of community as their people. Unfortunately, the concept is one that has been appropriated by corporate orthodoxy and new agers longing for romanticized nostalgia. These groups focus on individuals coming together in an abstract way often based on common desires. Wendell Berry looks at community in a much broader sense and points out that historically community has a much more specific definition. The word 'commons' is imbedded in the word. Community has to mean direct connection of a culture to its common environment; it's resources and way of life. Community is a symbiosis of people interdependently connected to each other; the failure of that interdependence actually threatens their very subsistence. It is a relationship built as much out of desire to connect and create, as it is necessity. It places our dependence on each other instead of the inhuman forces of a homogenized economy that demands little more than superficial existence and in the process diminishes the world of it's

richness. To embrace community is not a regression to “the way things were,” it is honoring the traditions of how we have historically emerged and found harmony with our surrounding environment.

Only those marginal to the educational enterprise or the economy of professional careers still sense that when community falls, so must fall all the things that only community life can engender and protect: the care of the old, the care of children, family life, neighborly work, the handing down of memory . . . respect for nature and the lives of wild creatures (Berry 1990).

Humanity is our point of living. It is the deepness and richness in our lives that can only be felt not possessed. Most of us have lost our ability to be honest with ourselves about the loss of our humanity yet we try to fill that void with possessions, power, therapy and gluttony. Humanity is comprised of our sacredness and our freedom. Modern society has disconnected us from both of these. Spirituality is the reality of our existence that we are beautiful beings in a complex web of existence whose beings, while simultaneously are both individual and collective, are together greater than the sum of their parts.

To embrace humanity is to embrace life. To talk about life we have to first agree that life is something we want to live. Then we have to acknowledge life in its entirety. It is the messiness of emotions, feelings, love, connection, trust, community, respect, reliance, interdependence,

growth, change, affection, care and all the turmoil that accompany these core elements of our existence. If we truly honor life above everything else then we immediately are invested in deep concern and care for each other; we want to see each other flourish. We end the discourses generated by our economy and begin the conversations of nourishment. When we embrace life we commit to the betterment of everyone.

Freedom in the context of the Canadian state is presented primarily as choice—that is having the ability to choose from an array of options. The irony of this choice is that it is permeated solely through the regulations of the capitalist economy. This creates what's known as the Pepsi/Coke Dilemma—you can have as many soft drink choices as you wish but in the end all you have to drink is soft drinks! The same is true of capitalist society—provided you possess enough privilege you can choose between your careers but in the end you are still perpetuating an economy of exploitation and degradation. Therefore I want to look at freedom not as choice but as an act of agency. Freedom then is better understood not as a possession but as the degree to which you participate in the creation of society. This emphasizes that no one is fully enslaved, nor are they fully powerless yet clearly some people enjoy much more freedom and power than others and that this freedom and power is directly correlated to wealth and the exploitation of others. That being said power and

freedom are also created when people forsake their isolation and reunite as community. True freedom exists only in the absence of systemic hierarchical power.

Culture is our assertion to our humanity. It is our vision of how we understand the pluriverse and connect with the sentient beings of this planet. It is our direct connection to the land our subsistence depends upon. This dependence on the land is an unchanging relationship it is merely hidden and manipulated by the global economy. I understood this view of culture when sitting around a circle for settlers understanding the relationship between indigenous peoples and colonialism. Local activist, healer Rose Henry, began by asking everyone in the audience who they were. As we went around the circle a recurring theme emerged of uncertainty, people not knowing where their roots lay, what parts of the western culture they should feel proud of or what the purpose of their lives were. When Rose spoke she said clearly and without quiver that she was Nanaimo and Sliammon. This was not an identity; this was an assertion to her humanity. She knew exactly where she stood in the world. This assertion meant she came from a long line of warrior womyn whose strength was in the ability to listen and heal the wounded hearts of their community, who spoke truth against injustice and brought wisdom

into the world. She knew the land she emerged from and practiced sacred ritual to the soils from which her ancestors sprang. Most settlers cannot do this because their assertion to humanity is the culture of capitalism that by its very nature dissociates the humyn from the world around.

Finally, I do not want to use the word education. The root of the word education is one that cannot escape the confines of the economist agenda. To speak of education almost certainly denotes the presence of schools. Therefore I choose to use the clearer word of 'learning' and assert that neither knowledge nor wisdom can be educated—they are learned through experience. The experience is relational as the learner coalesces their life with the infinite lives of others around them. Through these interactions, everyone and everything involved develops an understanding of the nature of their relationship to reality—what is important, how they should act, how they affect others, how they nurture, how they destroy and so forth. In this way, we create our lives and it is the intersection of all these lives coalescing at one specific junction that creates reality. This process of learning is how we come to understand our world.

Through this process of learning we acquire our culture. Culture is our

way of life; it is what asserts us to our humanity or our humyness. Humyness is the recognition of the sacredness of the world around us; it is an embrace of an ancient truth that we are all connected—the division we perceive to exist between us is only an illusion. Humanity is enriched through the infinite expressions of it through culture. Acknowledging each other as sacred beings is our very point of living. In order to truly live we must honor each other and that requires freedom.

This is my understanding of reality. It is the reality I have come to know by following my heart and listening to the whispers of the sacred humanity around us--It is only by acknowledging this understanding of reality that what I write about deschooling will make sense. In deed, to write about a world without institutions is unfathomable to the schooled mind. In order to understand a world not reliant on institutions we must invoke the mind that has never been schooled; a mind that exists in a space or time where the concept of schooling and institutions appears equally unfathomable for it's world exists outside the 'machine', the 'box' or whatever you want to call what it is we've created.

What have we created? What do I mean when I speak of the education system? Most people think of the education system as merely public schools; however, if we consider that education is primarily concerned

with the control and transference of knowledge that is regulated by the state then we see that schools do not function in isolation. There is interchange of state, corporate and religious entities that reinforce the hegemony of the Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture. This can be easily understood when considering feminist philosophy.

“The personal is political” is a concept that originated in the second wave of the women’s rights movement of the 1960’s and 70’s. Since women were expected to be in the home and had various barriers including access to education, discriminatory laws, social stigma’s, social equity imbalances, and cultural traditions forcing them to be in the home, it was acknowledged that seemingly personal life choices, such as being a stay at home mom, are actually being impacted by large political factors. Conversely, a woman refusing to stay in the home, although an incredibly personal decision, was in fact a political statement that not only called for large-scale social change but also challenged the very constructs in which Western European society and political systems were based.

Since education is inherently a personal experience it is consequently an inherently political one. Therefore there can be no such thing as an apolitical education. Indeed everything taught has a political implication

that is being played out in the personal shaping of each humyn being (this occurs regardless of the structure through which the person is learning).

Understanding that education has a political purpose we see how the values of the church, the loyalty to the state and surrender to corporate interests are all interconnected.

Consider the relationship between the church and public schools. Historically, the state has turned to the church to create schools. The Residential Schools of Canada is one result of these joint ventures. The Canadian Government asked the church to create a school system to “kill the Indian in the child”, which would effectively remove indigenous people from their land and culture thus opening up land for corporate exploitation while creating a proletariat work force from the displaced peoples. This clearly exemplifies how the state and church worked together to create schools that served corporate interests that altered the land, family and cultural structures.

A simple glance of the school year reveals that all major holidays are organized around Christian holidays. The assertion is that Canada is a Christian country; a statement that exemplifies the tremendously colonial

history of the Canadian state which built and continues to build its wealth and power off the exploitation of First Nations land while simultaneously relegating First Nations people to reservations and enforcing colonial policies aimed at erasing indigenous people and culture from the land; a “solution” to the “Indian problem”. While there are numerous people in Canada that don’t ascribe to Christianity, almost all people in the state of Canada are forced to ascribe to Protestant Christian values such as a work ethic that is unrelenting, a legal morality that emerged through Christian belief systems and the permeated racist beliefs like manifest destiny that created the Canadian White Supremist state that held Christian values above all others largely through joint state and Christian institutions like schools. Publicly funded Catholic schools still exist in provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quesbec. In addition many social service institutions like the Mustard Seed Street Church, the Salvation Army and some orphanages are still funded and run by churches naturally embedding values of morality in Christian ideology and still assimilating people to a homogenized world of Christian superiority. The ambience of Canadian institutions is clearly one of Christian values.

If it is understood that learning is happening all of the time and that learning, being a very personal and intimate thing, is being shaped by

and for political purposes then we see that the education system is how the Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture is constructed. Ivan Illich (1971) writes,

Rich and poor alike depend on schools and hospitals which guide their lives, form their world view, and define for them what is legitimate and what is not. Both view doctoring oneself as irresponsible, learning on one's own as unreliable, and community organization, when not paid for by those in authority, as a form of aggression or subversion. For both groups the reliance on institutional treatment renders independent accomplishment suspect.

It is not one institution, but several working in unison that construct the collective Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture value system. There are 8 main components of Western education system that generate our belief structures. The 8 components of the Western education system are: 1) Governments and their affiliated institutions, 2) Corporations and their media, 3) Religious Institutions, 4) The physical environment and its manipulation by technology, 5) Schools and institutionalization of learning, 6) Family, 7) friends and community structure, and 8) personal choices.

I want to clarify that by Governments and their affiliated structures I mean both the actual structure of government and the organization of

government. I am talking about how decisions are made, the laws sanctioned by the courts and the institutions created by the government such as hospitals, prisons, grant programs, ministries, and departments. I am also referring to the emergency of more abstract ideas of government such as democracy and human rights as well as expectations placed on or created by the government such as accountability, 'best practice' and protocol.

Looking at these 8 structures of the Canadian education system, most of them are stagnant. By this I do not mean that they are unchanging, obviously decisions and laws are being made and passed all the time; however, the configuration of society is essentially static. The very discourse of society is based on reform or making amendments that enable power structures to remain intact. To abandon core structures such as the economy, hierarchical government, or imperialism are beyond what is permitted to explore or think about. Through this hegemony not only is the current system perpetuated, it forcefully dominates cultures that do not ascribe to these values. This is the process of colonization that has been escalating for the last 500 years.

The problem with reformist thinking is that it only betters society if progress is possible. In reality, progress does not happen. If we look at

the global world with the continued genocide and culturecide of indigenous peoples, the loss of sacred connection to the pluriverse, the vast environmental degradation, the isolation and feeling of solemnness in so many, the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, and the mounting nuclear or militaristic threats, can we really say the world is better today than it was 100 years ago? In deed the only standard we can go by to see if anything has gotten better is the Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture's standards. Immediately, anyone who does not subscribe to that worldview will concede that the notion of progress is imaginary—it is a myth constructed by those in power who benefit from it. Visionary feminist bell hooks (2001) called the Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture one of “death worshipping.” In deed there is a distinct difference between the dominant culture we are faced with today and every indigenous culture on earth. Indigenous cultures affirm life through their sacred relationships with the land, family and community. As countless ethnologists have pointed out, indigenous societies have found ways to live in symbiosis with the land often adapting practices that actually enhance the vitality of the landscape. In the dominant culture everything is divided into isolation and then those who have power exploit everything beneath them (the environment and people) to gain more

power. The loss of life becomes catastrophic and as a culture we idolize the stoic soldier and indulge in pornographic violence.

To me it seems essential that the Judeo-Christian, Western European, Americanized, Capitalist, Patriarchal, White Supremist culture break from its habit of forcefully replicating itself. For this reason I want to look past the stagnant structures to where the biggest windows of opportunity for radicalism rest. This is where I come back to the notion of freedom. The degree of freedom a person holds in the 8 structures of our education system are very minimal, again since freedom is a continuum there is no space where any person is entirely powerless; however, if we consider these 8 structures carefully we see that the exchange between personal choices and friendship is a realm where we have complete freedom—we construct our friendships based on our own common interests and through our expressions of love. Depending on a person's family background this may also be possible in a family context.

In both situations the individual can recognize their freedom to change those relationships or abandon them. Both family and friends are mutual relationships and it requires open willingness on all sides to make the relationship flourish. Once this is established the sharing of ideas and partnerships can begin to flourish.

In this context deschooling becomes any act that seeks to reestablish our humanity through our interdependence with each other. Put simply, schooling is anything that establishes and affirms the need of institutions; deschooling is anything that establishes and affirms our need for each and every humyn being.

A fully deschooled society is a society that is rooted in its locality. It is society where communities flourish and every person has autonomy to impact and change that community from the grassroots level, it is a society where hierarchical power is absent. Objections do not have to be validated by scientific evidence; the presence of one person's emotional pain becomes cause to change the course of action. It is a society that values life over death. This means that all the major pinnacles of society must be in the hands of the people of each community—this includes complete food sovereignty, self-governance, regulation of the local economy and control of customs and spiritual ceremony.

The shift towards a deschooled society is obviously an imperfect one. In the continuum of deschooling their may temporarily exist institutions or pseudo-institutions as long as they are self-destructing by nature—that is to say they must be established with the explicit intent of shifting

power from institutions into the hands of the people so that eventually the institution will become redundant at which point it disbands returning full knowledge and ownership to the community.

The Underground Curriculum (UC) is an example of a pseudo-institution built on self-destructing principals. The UC is both a collective aimed at establishing a parallel learning system and a not-for-credit class that explores alternatives to mainstream education pedagogies, practices and systems (Underground Curriculum, 2012).

As a parallel learning system the UC functions as a network, resource, and series of workshops, projects, field trips, discussions, meetings, social gatherings and general learning experiences. It challenges hierarchy, oppression, credentialism, professionalization of knowledge, homogenization processes, colonialism, corporatization, and capitalism, utilizing consensus based decision making processes, and being horizontally constructed by the people involved in it. There are no elected positions or external bodies to which it is accountable. In many ways it is a group of friends gathered around conceiving their own learning environments and experiences, discovering things for themselves, finding the knowledge within themselves and new ways to share that knowledge

Where conventional school imposes government curriculum on diverse populations, peoples and cultures implementing a homogenizing effect on the global world, the UC becomes a resource for students to collaborate together and create the curriculum, experiences and lessons they want to learn and ultimately actively negotiate the configuration of society. It is an open medium that is collaborative and exploratory with the wider community and exists in the belief that education IS everywhere. The UC cannot provide anything its participants don't already possess; its strength is its realization in the power of people (individuals and communities). Once you realize that power the UC is just another resource. (Underground Curriculum, 2012)

The weekly class is a place to build momentum and explore new ideas.

“The UC is free to participate in, open to EVERYONE (all ages, identities and ideas), as accessible as we can possibly make it, anti-oppressive, nonhierarchical and nondiscriminatory” (Underground Curriculum, 2012).

The people of the UC hold each other accountable to living up to these expectations. We recognize that we are imperfect and do not always succeed in our aims, but by building genuine relationships we are able to challenge each other to go deeper with our places of tension or disconnect to develop self-awareness and grow as humyn beings.

Obviously these types of initiatives happen frequently. Anytime people collaborate together to create something to benefit the whole of that group and the community provide more openings and opportunities for radical shifts in our ways of doing things.

Deschooling should not be seen though as merely the formation of relationships and interdependence. As those relationships flourish and deeper interdependencies establish there inevitably comes a point where the structures of the state, corporate and religious institutions become no longer meaningful or of use to the community. At this point in time the community must assert its autonomy much the way the Zapatista's have. It is a question of values and what we want to value most: the current paradigm of money at all costs, or a new paradigm of our own making, a pluriverse where there is space for all worlds

Deschoolers must continually look for the cracks in the education system, where they can plant the seeds for humanity to grow. Realigning with the truth of our interdependence brings vitality to our humanity as culture again begins to flourish. This is the role of learning in our collective healing of humanity—people with the freedom to learn—to coalesce as a family and engage in a life long journey of love, excitement, sadness and rebirth, reestablishing our relationships to each other and the world around us—the full breadth of our sacred humanity.

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