



Westminster
Presbyterian Church

Meisel Reflection 2021: Ethan Kim-Shinn

Hello from the Pacific Northwest, everyone! My name is Ethan Kim-Shinn, the youngest son of Rev. David Shinn. I am also a senior at Quest University Canada, located in the mountains of Squamish, British Columbia. If you have been to Whistler, you have passed through the beautiful valley that I call home.

I am currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts and Science, and over this summer I was able to expand my experience of land management in the Pacific Northwest with the help of Westminster's Meisel Scholarship program. The purpose of my project was to connect with contemporary Pacific Northwest narratives regarding soil, which were difficult to find in print. My goal was to ask the questions, "What is sacred, and what makes land sacred to people?" So my field work involved communities whose voices are not actively heard, like those of the indigenous peoples whose land we reside on.

Even the best laid plans of mice and college student were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, I planned to work closely with the Skwxwu7mesh nation, located in Squamish, British Columbia. But between lockdowns that made social gatherings illegal, federal legislation changes, constant risk of exposure, and general fear of social interaction, my well-laid plans changed.

Without a way to continue my project in BC, I turned towards my hometown of Seattle, Washington for more productive connections. Fortunately, through a BIPOC COVID popup vaccine clinic that my brother and I had volunteered for, I was able to renew a connection with James Lovell, the Director of Development at The Chief Seattle Club. The Chief Seattle club is a native-led housing and human service nonprofit organization that believes a world without homelessness is possible by leading with native values.

James comes from the Ojibwa people, commonly known as the Chippewa nation. He is a part of the Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa and hails from Belcourt North Dakota. As I am sure many of you are familiar with this denotation of nation is important as there is significant complexity in the particularity of defining the bands of people that reside within these more general terms. More on what I learned with him in a moment.

I also benefitted from a connection with Northwest Harvest, a non-profit organization that partners with 375 food banks, meal programs and schools in all 32 counties of Washington state. In the spring of 2021, they began construction on a new

food storage and distribution center that will change the infrastructure of food redistribution in the county. To do so, the nonprofit worked with the Yakama nation, not to be confused with Yakima the city, who in turn decided to recognize the use of their land. I was fortunate enough to be invited to join Northwest Harvest staff during their land blessing ceremony in July of 2021.

Over the course of my Meisel work, I received answers to my question regarding the concept of sacredness and learned more about how land management is understood.

From James, I learned that natives don't think of sacredness as a religion, but rather as spirituality. This spirituality applies not only to the physical world but to the metaphysical, and native language is sacred as words give descriptions to everything else. For example, I was told Ode'imín breaks down as "ode"="heart," and "min"= "berry," so ode'imín which translates to a "heart berry" is the word used for "strawberry." Furthermore, within the Ojibwe dialect there is deeper spiritual connection, as what goes into creating a "heart berry" involves relationships with water, land, food, and animals. This concept expands further when we put it into context with how weathering (rain snow wind and sun) affects erosion rates, which effects the flow of liquids, which affect how nutrients/minerals are fixed before these particulates are absorbed by plants. Such concepts and lessons shared by James helped illuminate how native sacredness is understood as profoundly physical, and not just metaphysical.

After graduation next summer, I hope to spend some time back in Minneapolis to see my dad and stepmom, and many of you again. Then we can talk more about the rich learning that was facilitated for me with the support of the Meisel Scholarship Program. Thank you for making such meaningful experiential learning possible for me during my undergraduate work. Stay safe and well until then.