

AGENCY, NATURE AND CULTURE: RESILIENCE TEACHINGS OF PIKANGIKUM FIRST NATION ELDERS, NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

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While social-ecological frameworks propose unity between humans and the natural world, ontologically most resilience scholars the remains based on the Cartesian dualism of mind and body that denies it. In this paper we present an example of a unified system of resilience thinking shared with us by Anishinaabe [Ojibway] elders of Pikangikum First Nation, northwestern Ontario. The elders' views of boreal forest disturbance and renewal are distinct from western scientific approaches in their attribution of agency, the ability to individually express free will, to non-human beings within their landscape including animals, plants, rocks and forest fire. The elders perceive that if relationships based on respect, reciprocity and non-interference are maintained with other agents, renewal will proceed. The people of Pikangikum desire to maintain relationships based on these principals even as they attempt to begin new economic activities, including commercial forestry. The possibility of sustainable forestry based on Anishinaabe principles of resilience is supported by their worldview.