

# Living the Indigenous Ways of Knowing: The African Self and a Holistic Way of Life

by

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## Abstract:

My aim in writing this paper is to theorize my Diasporic Indigenous African experiences in Canada, because I wish to first rupture the notion that Indigenous knowledges' have nothing to offer. Secondly, I wish to anchor my discursive authority as an author in the teachings of my forefathers. Engaging in this academic exercise I come to discuss my attachment to Somalia, since I live in Canada today, where I've grown up and spent most of my life. Through writing this paper I also wish to affirm and express my Indigenous African heritage in the academy. With an Indigenous lens I will share my personal identity struggles and explain the path that I have traveled on my journey to reclaim my Indigeneity. In this paper I stress the importance of an Indigenous social consciousness as a means of strengthen in the community, and the importance of invoking our embodied Indigeneity of our ancestral communal knowledge to resist the White supremacist society in which we live. I conclude by offering the concepts of *Aqal* Somali and *dhaqan badiyo* as a means by which members of the Somali Diaspora can establish healthy and vibrant Indigenous communities in Canada.

**Key Words:** Indigenous knowledges, Somali *dhaqan*, Indigeneity, Diaspora

## Introduction

My understanding of my Indigeneity is rooted in Somali *dhaqan* philosophies [ancestral way of life]. As an Indigenous African, I am always conscious of a holistic way of life that encompasses spirituality, social governance, and collective community memory. This holistic way of life was instilled in me by my family and community who raised me during my formative years in Somalia. In essence, this way of life stems from our African traditions. As a Somali it allows me to conceptualize my identity free from a colonial gaze and ideology. Yet it also enables me to tell a different story of my African heritage as I know it and to be grounded in my Indigenous culture. In the face of the dominant hegemonic discourse and imagery which renders my peoples as nomadic, uncivilized, and/or ungovernable, for my survival, it has been necessary for me to evoke my Somali *dhaqan* in order to resist what Wa Thiong'O (1985) calls the cultural time bomb in which he states:

The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed against collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's beliefs in their names, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievements and it makes them distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves...with all the forces that would stop their own spring of life (p.3).

In essence my embrace of Somali *dhaqan* became part of my conscious effort to subvert, resist and challenge dominant colonial ideologies and discourse.

As a graduate student at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), I have long yearned to speak about my Indigeneity. My Indigeneity is unique to my lived experiences, because it is rooted in the lands of ancestors, in Somalia and it is located in Toronto. I choose to speak about my Indigenous knowledge as part of a bigger decolonization political project for two reasons. First, I would like to debunk the myth of everlasting displacement that has been ascribed to the Somali people and utilize concepts of Indigenous Somali *dhaqan Guurau* [culture of relocation] philosophies to stress the importance of community settlement within the Diasporic context wherever Somalis reside. Secondly, I would like to plant the seeds to germinate a holistic self-concept for Somali-Canadians of future generations. My rationale for undertaking this project is shaped by my realization of the urgency of Somalis to employ our *dhaqan* to establish roots wherever we live.

I believe that we as a people cannot survive with dignity unless we collectively walk our paths to salvation by establishing our communities and by conditioning future generations of Indigenous Somali-Canadians. We must build and establish healthy vibrant communities with standing Indigenous cultural institutions in this treacherous colonial terrain; hence we cannot be displaced by civil war, piracy, and/or terrorism in Somalia. On the other hand, we must not accept being unwanted world class refugees across the globe. I strongly believe that different elements of Somali *dhaqan* can be utilized to resist and reclaim our identities with holistic voices and to collectively struggle against colonialism. In addition, Somali *dhaqan* is vital to cultivating not only local solutions for issues that the Somali Diaspora faces in Canada but to also articulate cultural consciousness to exercise true social, political, and economical self-determination.

My aim in this paper is to stress the importance of the Indigenous social consciousness as a means of strengthens in the community. I therefore stress the importance of invoking our embodied Indigeneity and our ancestral communal knowledge to resist the White supremacist society in which we live. And I conclude by offering the concepts of *Aqal Somali* and *dhaqan badiyo* as a means by which members of the Somali Diaspora can establish healthy and vibrant Indigenous communities in Canada.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

I have chosen to utilize anticolonial and Indigenous knowledges theoretical frameworks to take up issues of Somali Indigeneity within the Canadian Diasporic context. The anticolonial framework offers an understanding of how Indigenous Somali identities have been constructed as primitive, nomadic, and/or backwards. Anticolonial theory allows me to understand how the colonial gaze marginalizes Indigenous peoples. It provides room for colonized peoples to voice and theorize their oppression. Anti-colonialism is centered on taking up the struggle of any colonized peoples and reclaiming their identities after a colonial encounter. Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (1999) in *Indigenous Knowledges in a Global Context* conceptualizes anticolonial discursive framework as a discourse that:

[E]mphasizes the power held by local/social practice to survive the colonial and colonized encounters. It argues that power and discourse are not processed solely by the 'colonizer'. Discursive agency and power of resistance reside in and among colonized and marginalized groups...Anticolonialtheorizing arises out of alternative, oppositional paradigms, which are in turn based on Indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference (p. 7).

Anticolonial frameworks provides inclusive multiple readings of the de-humanizing social formative processes Indigenous Diasporic Africans go through. I believe that one of the most detrimental aspects of the Somali societal struggle is the internalization and the acceptance of the dominant discourses that place “tribalism” at the center of Somalia’s civil conflict, that paints Somalia as a “failed dysfunctional state” without any account for colonialism, and its role in the “current state of affairs” in Somalia. Accordingly, Wane (2006) points out that the processes of colonization involved “re-writing history to denying their existence, devaluating their knowledge, and debasing their cultural beliefs and practices” (87). Understanding this process is vital for any holistic struggle for self-determination for the Somali-Canadian Diaspora. To theorize my Indigenous experiences it is imperative for me to use Indigenous knowledge frameworks to transmit different principles of Somali *dhaqan* within the Canadian context as I carry out my analysis.

An Indigenous knowledges framework complements anti-colonialism theory by providing the tools to subvert and resist colonial hegemonic ideologies and discourse. As such, local Indigenous wisdom encompasses embodied experiences of colonized peoples (Semali and Kincheloe, 1999). Notions of re-discovering Indigenous identities that are lost, complete with cultural knowledge and wholesome existence, speak to the concept reclaiming Somali Indigenous identities within the Diasporic Canadian context, as a way of picking up the pieces and moving beyond fragmentation. Identity encompasses elements of ‘knowledge production’ and Indigenous cultural capital that is vital for the survival and the longevity of any Indigenous communities. Dei (2008) asserts that an Indigenous knowledge framework:

[R]oots Indigenous identity within history outside Euro-American hegemonic constructions of the Other. It empowers us to reframe our Indigenous histories as we navigate the current Diasporic context. This framework projects a cultural rebirth and revival reflecting the integrity and pride in self, culture, history and heritage, as a commitment to the collective good and well-being of all peoples. The ideas and principles of an Indigenous discursive framework are rooted and actionable in local/grassroots political organising and a form of intellectual activism. Discursively this framework affirms a local, national and international consciousness and an understating of the politics of “national cultural liberation” that is matched with political sophistication and intricacies (p.9).

In concert with Dei’s assertion, employing this theory would enable me to speak about sites of Somali *dhaqan* renaissance within Canadian context. It would also enable me to present my ancestral Indigenous world views as viable tools to cultivate both local and national consciousness to search for solutions to community issues.

## The History of Somali Peoples in the Canadian Landscape

Canada has one of the largest concentration of Somalis in the Western world with about 37,785 people, unofficial estimates place the figure as high as 200,000 Somalis (Statistics Canada, 2006). By and large, Somalis live in southern Ontario, in particular the cities of Toronto and Ottawa. The Somali community is amongst one of the newest immigrant populations, arriving in Canada from the early 1990s during the height of the civil war in Somalia. Members of the Somali community initially saw Canada as a welcoming place, where they could get a fresh start in life. Consequently, Canada became a prime destination for Somalis fleeing the war. However, members of the Somali community soon realized that Canada is an unwelcoming place. Amongst the many difficult challenges that faced the Somali community were cultural shock, family breakdowns, and social, political, and economic exclusion (Mohamed, 1999). Moreover, the Somali immigrant population was constructed as a problem through a colonial gaze and the community was racialized for the purposes of unequal treatment just like previous generations of Africans who were forced/or found their way to Canada. According to Galabuzi (2006), the process of racialization “involves the construction of racial categories as real, but also unequal, for the purposes that impact the economic, social, and political composition of a society...Racialization translates into actions and decisions within a system that lead to differential and unequal outcomes, and the entrenchment of structures of oppression”(p. 34). In agreement with Galabuzi’s ideas I contend that the process of racialization continues to marginalize the Somali community. This has resulted in high unemployment, limited access to education, and immigration law restrictions, and large scale criminalization of Somalis.

Being marked as a racialized community is most devastating for Somali-Canadian youth born in Canada and/or those who immigrated to Canada at a very young age, as they are not accepted as being Canadian and they are growing up during one of the most difficult moments of our history, with no accurate holistic images of their culture, peoples, and homeland from an African centered perspective. This peculiar social location that Somali-Canadian youth find themselves in, is dehumanizing and negatively impacts how they see themselves. As such, many of them do not have the conceptual mindset to see themselves and/or articulate their *Somalinomo* [being Somali] outside of the notions of displacement that has been ascribed to our identity. Thus, I contend that those of us that can recollect and conceptualize Somalia outside of the curves of civil war and its colonial historicization, have a great responsibility to share that knowledge with current and future generations of the Somali- Canadian community. This will enable our youth to articulate their *Somalinomo* in and through their Indigenous African ways of knowing and allow them to cultivate a positive attitude to life and being Somali, despite the contemporary challenges facing our Nation. It will encourage them to be stronger social/political actors in and for the Somali community, supporting them to assert their voices and contest their futures.

I strongly believe that a healthy holistic sense of *Somalinomo* is the key for our youth to develop a critical consciousness and an Indigenous African cultural capital and allow them to survive, but also to engage in the intergenerational anticolonial struggles of their peoples. Collectively we must work with the knowledges of our Somali *dhaqan* philosophies to build holistic communities governed by our Indigenous ways of knowing to secure our collective future wherever Somalis live.

## **Hedou & Dhaqan [Customs and the Ancestral way of life]**

There are many tales to explain the path that I have traveled on my journey to reclaim my Indigeneity. As I am writing this paper I can't help but think of a bottle that contains red sand from Somalia. This sand signifies a part of me that was taken away though I strive to reclaim it. This container of sand signifies an act of agency whereby I lay claim to my ancestral homeland though I reside in Canada. This container offers me a real sense of belonging to a history, culture, and tradition. It was given to me by a family friend named Bilan, who is close to me in kin. She had collected the sand from a dry riverbed when she travelled to Somalia back in 2002. Sand is sacred to our people. Billian and I shared some conversations about how important sand is/was to our peoples and I told her about how my great aunt, Daage, used to perform rituals with sand from our ancestral homeland and send it to our family in small bundles every summer in *Xamer* [Mogadishu] as part of a cleansing ritual. As a result of our conversations Bilan decided to share the sand with me and presented it to me in a small glass container last summer.

Although no elder has performed a ritual on this sand nor offered it in ritual ceremony, it speaks to a profound level of consciousness of our Indigenous *Dhaqan* and our ability to retain it. Malidoma Somé (1994), the author of *Of water and the Spirit*, mentions that his elders at the beginning of his decolonization process, stated:

[E]ach one of us possesses a center that they grow away from after birth. To be born is to lose contact with our center, and to grow from childhood to adulthood is to walk away from it...The center is both within and without. It is everywhere. But we must realize it exists, find it, and be with it, for without the center we cannot tell who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. No one's center is like someone else's. Find your own center, not the center of your neighbour, not the center of your mother or father or family or ancestor but that center which is yours and yours alone. When there is a center there are four live parts to the circle; the rising part in the east and its right side, the north, the setting part in the west and its right side, the south (Somé, 1994, p. 198).

The fact that we as Indigenous Somalis have come together and conversed about sand rituals and practise indicates the Indigenous paths that we have taken towards cultural recovery. Moreover, as someone who is now speaking and writing about my Indigenous Somali *dhaqan* and Indigenous Diasporic identities, this sand supplied me with an entry point to engage with my past within the Canadian context. According to Dei (2000), “Indigenous peoples must own their past culture and tradition. They must stand in their past, histories and cultures and use Indigenous knowledges as a basis for contributing to a universal knowledge system” (p.10).

In essence, by having this container of sand, I am better able to conceptualize my Somali *dhaqan* revitalization efforts and through it theorize Indigenous experiences. Yet more importantly, having it raises my level of awareness of what other elements of Somali *dhaqan* I need to search for and gather, in an effort to bring my Indigenous ancestral way into the present. I believe that it is vitally important for all members of the Somali Diaspora to begin walking our collective revitalizing paths and to institute our culture in our communities for our communal survival as a people, especially for future generations of Somali-Canadians.

Cultural revitalization would enable members of the Somali Diaspora to better articulate a sense of belonging and establish roots in Canada. Over the past two decades Somalia has been ravaged by a “*Civil War regime*” that has displaced millions of Somalis globally. For those of us fortunate enough to have physically escaped the civil war in our homeland, and settled in the West, the psychological trauma is inescapable because the darkest moments in our history are captured and interpreted by Western media. As a result of this war and its aftermath, Somalia has been branded a ‘failed stated,’ run by nomadic peoples who are unwilling to be governed by the rule of law. Moreover, mainstream media oversimplifies the conflict in Somalia as a war rooted in ‘tribalism’ without looking at the colonially imposed factors of wars as Wa Thiong’o (1985) would argue. It is crucial for us in the Somali-Canadian Diaspora to see ourselves outside the “*Civil war*” regime and colonial hegemonic discourses that have been ascribed to our identities. Permanent displacement and statelessness is detrimental to our existence as Indigenous Africans. Therefore we must cultivate a cultural awareness as a community, as a part of our communal decolonization project to challenge colonial hegemonic discourse and imagery. According to Tucker (1999):

The process of domination was economical, political, military and cultural. The cultural dimension is central to any consideration of domination. It is the sphere of production of meanings and ideas we find cogitative, normative foundations of this process. This cultural discourse provides both the motivation force for and legitimization of the relationship between those nations that saw themselves as ‘advanced,’ ‘civilized’, and ‘modern’, and others whom they labelled ‘backwards’, ‘primitive’, and traditional. The Other in each case is reduced to an object to be appropriated to the consciousness of the subjects of history...Others denied a history of their own apart from the history of ‘civilization’ (p.6).

In concert with Tucker's (1999) assertion, Eurocentric discourse has been utilized to dehumanize Somalis through a cultural domination processes that we members of the Somali-Canadian Diaspora are exposed to on a daily basis. Therefore, we must stand in opposition to this discourse and the colonial ways of knowing ourselves, our histories, and our culture. As such we must reflect on, revitalize, and re-envision our Somali *dhaqan* outside Eurocentric hegemonic processes of Othering for the survival of our communities.

Thus, our collective journey towards decolonization and cultural reclamation must begin by us (re)awakening our Indigenous social consciousness like previous generations of Indigenous peoples which have been displaced from their ancestral homelands, cultures, and knowledge. We must cultivate our Indigeneity to firmly plant our struggle on a global stage and position ourselves as agents of our own struggle. In the process we must also claim our past and assert our voices as a means of realizing self-actualization. Smith (1999) argues:

A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as Indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by Indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our ways, for our purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying (p.28).

As Indigenous Diasporic Africans narrating our own stories, it is at once a burden and a responsibility that requires courage and resourcefulness to restore what is/was lost. But we must first as a people, become aware of what is/was lost and take up collective action to restore it.

## **Somali Dhaqan Resistance**

As members of the Somali-Canadian Diaspora, to truly counter the Eurocentric discourse and colonial social formative processes, as stated above, we must collectively evoke our embodied Indigenous knowledge to find true interconnectedness between our past and present, and hence, we must take up Somali *Dhaqan* Indigenous knowledge as a means of resistance. Graveline (1998) reminds us that "for every act of authority...is resistance...in some form embodied...enacted. Our lived experience... How we resist is culture" (33). As colonized peoples, it is essential for our survival on colonial terrain to utilize our culture.

The processes of embodying culture would not only enable members of the Somali Diaspora to see ourselves outside the Eurocentric colonial discourses that have been ascribed to our identities, but utilizing Somali *dhaqan* would give the Somali community a new platform to assert our collective sentiments and tell our own stories. As such Somali *dhaqan* knowledges “encapsulate the common-good-sense ideas and cultural knowledge of local peoples concerning the everyday realities of living” (Dei, 2002, p.5). This would also equip members of the Somali community with the abilities to interpret our world and see it through an Indigenous Somali *dhaqan* lens. In addition anchoring ourselves in our Indigenous ways would permit us to articulate holistic voices in our own struggle for dignity and self-determination and communal survival. As such, “the contemporary significance of the historical roots of African culture in North America lies not only in the search for identity of the Diasporan Blacks as a form of political and cultural domination by White society, but also as a strategy for survival” (Dei, 1994, p.8). Concurring with Dei’s ideas, I believe it is essential for our survival and collective well-being that the Somali community ground ourselves in our own *dhaqan*.

Taking up Somali *dhaqan* and immersing ourselves in it enables us to unlock the historical memory of colonization and evoke those memories to gain a better understanding of the colonial construct that has been ascribed to us. It is imperative for members of the Somali-Canadian Diaspora to unlock the anticolonial knowledge that is in our blood and bones, as Wane (2006) would say, to challenge colonialism. As colonized Indigenous Africans, this knowledge would make it possible for us to respond to, and subsequently deal with the hardships of racialization, colonization, and displacement to form a historical perspective. Consequently, members of the Somali-Canadian Diaspora would be able to draw on our resilient Indigenous *dhaqan* character that previous generations of Somalis have utilized in their struggle against colonialism. This Indigenous *dhaqan* character is made up of an extraordinary desire to be free from all forms of oppression. We have struggled against both British and Italian rule using elements of our Somali *dhaqan* to resist.

Memories of those struggles are still with us today. Often the case, whenever a community elder is speaking to a group of Somali-Canadians about the community issues they will often say the Somali proverb “*Gaeel laba jir soo wada mar*” [Every camel was once two years old]. This proverb encapsulates the need for members of the Somali Diaspora to evoke our cultural memory and to bring our Indigenous culture to the forefront of our struggle. In the Somali language *gaeel* [camel] is called *nereej*; in order for *nereej* to become a camel it must survive the hardships and ragged terrain to survive. This proverb highlights intergenerational struggles, the sacrifices previous generations have made for us and the need for today’s and future generations of Somali-Canadians to understand our identity to survive. This proverb echoes Franz Fanon’s (1967) assertion that “Every generation must come out of its relative obscurity to discover its’ mission and either betray it or fulfill it” (126) and that those who are colonized must carry on their struggles to be free.

Moreover, this *dhaqan* conceptualization of community issues within the Diasporic context grounds our contemporary struggles within our social, political, and cultural ancestral milieu. It emphasizes both individual and collective responsibilities to decolonize our minds, bodies, and Indigenous souls. In a world where the Somali Indigenous national character is being fragmented, displaced, and dehumanized through a colonial gaze, a Somali *dhaqan* Indigenous world view is essentially a holistic Somali narrative. This narrative could be used as a means to exercise our self-determination but also to collectively assert our voices in anticolonial struggle. It is essential for all Indigenous peoples to tell their own stories about their orientation to the world as a means of challenging colonization and accounting for their collective experiences as colonized peoples (Smith, 1999). A Somali Indigenous narrative that is grounded in our *dhaqan* would also guide members of the Somali Diaspora towards our collective decolonization journeys. Again it is essential for our survival to totally reject colonial discourse about our identities and to plant the seeds of our struggle to ensure that future generations of Somalis can walk their paths toward freedom.

### ***Aqal* Somali as an Indigenous Pedagogy of Reclamation**

As Indigenous Africans that have been displaced from our ancestral homeland, culture, and heritage, it is imperative for our collective survival that we reconnect with our *dhaqan*, not only to gain a better understating of how our ancestors survived, but also to carry our communal *dhaqan* with us wherever we are. Reconceptualizing our *dhaqan* and Indigenous identities thus allows us to embrace our ways of knowing to deepen our understanding of who we are and how far we have travelled in hopes of a better life. As a people we must come to understand our world with a holistic sense of the colonial struggle that we all embody. Our ancestors had been displaced many times before, yet they carried on with hopes and dreams for future generations. Therefore we must continue on with our anticolonial struggle and utilize Somali *dhaqan* to survive. In essence, current and future generations of Somali Canadians within the Diaspora must travel the treacherous journey back towards their Somali selves, *dhaqan*, and take a uniform stand in our struggle and as the Somali proverb goes “*ratey walba ratega khoryah santeso yeashall*” [Every camel in a heard will resemble the camel before it]. With this in mind, I offer the concept of *Aqal* Somali and *dhaqan* within the Diasporic context as pedagogy for members of the community to carry an Indigenous *dhaqan* wherever we are.

*Dhaqn badiyo* is essentially the camel-herding lifestyle of the communal existence of my forefathers who were *reer badiyo* [people of the *badiyo*]. This Indigenous way of life has been a part of my ancestral heritage for centuries. This way of life encompasses a holistic Somali *dhaqan* by embodying tradition, community, and an intergenerational connectedness; it is a way of life that also speaks to the journeys we have travelled as a people, and must continue to travel.

*Reer badiyo* peoples are camel herding communities and they often resettle with their entire communities in search of water and a greener ecology suitable for their livestock. They also relocate with livestock when infectious insects infest their environment and/or when there are *colaad* [tensions with other communities]. What is most remarkable about these communities is that they load and travel with their *Aqal* Somali on their camels everywhere they travel.

*Aqal* Somali is a small style house in which *reer badiyo* communities live. The literary English translation of *Aqal* Somali is Somali house. *Aqal* Somali is typically made of a “semicircular support and a middle pillar (*udub-dhebaas*). The semicircular supports (*dhigo*) are made from light wood from the branches and roots of certain trees; ...consists of woven mats; for additional impermeability, a tarpaulin is draped on the top” (Abdullahi, 2001, p.105).

Before relocating these communities, the leadership send a *sham* on a journey to inspect a suitable location to move the community. The *sham* is typically a knowledgeable person in the community and trained in the techniques of *saham doon* [the relocation journey]. The *sham*'s relocation tasks include finding a suitable environment for the community with water supplies, an optimal ecological environment, and freedom from other hostile communities which would be competing for the natural resources of *badiyo*.

Pedagogically the concepts of *Aqal* speaks to the need for members of the Somali-Canadian Diaspora to collectively unlock our embodied *dhaqan*, carry it, and hold on to it as we navigate a colonial terrain. This Indigenous principle offers Somalis hope for creating holistic communities that are able to build and rebuild our worn communities as we journey in search of a better life. This concept is deeply embedded in our Indigenous histories, cultural memory, identities, and cultural capital. As such, implementing it in our communities would permit us to establish interconnected holistic communities rooted in our Indigenous ways of knowing. More importantly, this pedagogy would enable members of the community to bring their past to bear on our present, and our futures as it promotes Somali *dhaqan*, and offers new possibilities for the Diasporic communities to re-establish roots in Canada and to engage Indigenous ways of knowing.

## Conclusion

Now that I have had the chance to reflect on Somali *dhaqan* within the Diasporic Canadian context, where do I go from here? What do I do with the many lessons that I have learned? How do I re-claim my Indigeneity and how do I assist others in their re-claiming journeys? How do we as a community walk our paths in our struggle to salvation? How do we reconnect to our *dhaqan*, histories, and heritage?

How do we ensure that future generations are culturally equipped to resist colonialism in all its forms? And what are their journey's going to be like? When I began this process, I was guided by my inner voice which was yearning to ask questions about my Indigeneity. This internal voice drew me into conversations with myself about my own identity struggles and issues of my Indigenous self-love. With my own voice, I was always confident that I could find my way home to the lands of my ancestors and speak with a complete self.

Having taken the time to reflect on the question of my Indignity with the Canadian Diasporic context, I walk away with an awakened consciousness, and I feel a new sense of responsibility that will dictate how I engage with my Indigenous ways of knowing. This experience has ignited my desire to assert and express my Indigenous ways of knowing in the academy. It is with this re-awakened spirit that I strive forward to claim a space within the academy to theorize my Somali *dhaqan* with the hopes of sharing these knowledges with other learners to build a collective of Indigenous learners. Therefore, I approach this decolonizing project with a vision of hope that today's Diasporic youth will be Indigenous elders of tomorrow and that it is the collective responsibility of the Somali community to begin working with ideas that would better enable future generations to claim their Indigenous *dhaqan* and implement it in their communities. I believe that we all must work with the power of ideas to transform societies and with that convection and spirit; I will plant the seeds of Somali *dhaqan* in the academy.

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