
In Memoriam

Krystyna Z. Sieciechowicz (1948–2012)

Darrel Maniwabi *Laurentian University*

Kathryn T. Molohon *Laurentian University*



Photo 1: Krystyna Z. Sieciechowicz (1948–2012). Photo by Kai-Lii Veer.

An original thinker, community-based scholar and advocate of the rights of indigenous peoples, Krystyna Sieciechowicz, Ph.D., left us on 22 March 2012 at the age of only 63 after a long battle with cancer. In this memorial, we share insights about her life, academic contributions and collegial influences.¹

Krystyna, who was known to many as Krys, was born in London, England, in 1948. Her parents, both of whom were Polish, participated in World War II in support of their fractured homeland: her father in the French and British military; her mother in the Polish resistance. After the war, her father's employment with the British government took the family to Singapore for several years. Later, when Krys was 13, the family emigrated to Canada. She grew up in Don Mills, Ontario, where Krys earned all her academic degrees in anthropology from the University of Toronto (B.A. 1971, M.A. 1972 and Ph.D. 1982). Her first teaching appointment in anthropology, one semester during 1979–1980, was with the University of Alberta, teaching at Blue Quills First Nations College. In 1980, Krystyna accepted a position in anthropology at the University of Toronto, where she remained for the duration of her career, becoming the first tenured woman faculty member in social/cultural anthropology in the department.

Krystyna's career is best defined by three phases: land use studies for Treaty Nine in Northwestern Ontario; oral history research for First Nations land claims; and preserving land use maps. Embarking on the first phase of her career, Krystyna accepted an invitation to do research in Northwestern Ontario from her mentor, R. W. Dunning, who had been contacted by the Grand Council of Treaty Nine to conduct research in response to government and corporate interests surrounding natural resource development in negation of hunting and fishing treaty rights (Davidson 1983; Sieciechowicz 1982). This research formed the basis of her doctoral thesis on a land use case study of Wunnumin Lake (1982) and also a submission to the Royal Commission

on the Northern Environment (1983), a comprehensive land occupancy study of seven Treaty Nine First Nations, published by the University of Toronto Press in 1985, as well as other publications (1986, 1988, 2012).

Krystyna's motivations for this research and its methodology spoke to her community-based sensibilities, including her advocacy and her theoretical and applied contributions to the anthropology of Indigenous peoples. In the 1970s, far north First Nations people in Ontario faced increasing pressure to legally prove their treaty rights to hunt, fish and access their land in the face of provincially backed corporate interests (Sieczewicz 1983). Influenced by R. W. Dunning and British social anthropology (via Meyer Fortes, who supervised Dunning at Cambridge), Krys sought to demonstrate how indigenous people were connected to the land by kinship networks that informed an indigenous economy of hunting, fishing and trapping. Building on the work of Milton Freeman (1976), Krys moved beyond a fur trade-centric model of indigenous land tenure to affirm that "unless we tie land-use to its social framework, the concept of land is incomplete and correspondingly the land title argument is weak" (1982:13). This resulted in the land-use mapping of 14 Treaty Nine First Nations, from 1975 to 1981. Her research in this context involved training First Nations research assistants how to map their own communities. In turn, Krys recognized the value of community coauthorship of research findings (Kayahna Tribal Area Council 1985).² The significance of this work is a demonstration of an indigenous-centred social model of land tenure based on kinship. During this first part of her career and through her land use research, Krys undertook substantial responsibilities for advocacy for the First Nations people with whom she worked. This translated into the effective teaching and mentoring of students. A recent memorial by former students highlighted her strengths in teaching, graduate mentorship and inspiration (University of Toronto Anthropology Newsletter 2013).

In the second phase of her career, Krys continued her advocacy and applied land claims work with First Nations, including writing reports in support of litigation for the Chippewas of Sarnia (1996), First Nations of the United Anishnaabeg Council (2000–2007), Treaty One (2009) and Slate Falls (2010). In 1998, she testified in court in support of the Chippewa of Sarnia First Nation. The Sarnia First Nation, its lawyers and her oral history research faced opposition by lawyers representing the City of Sarnia, as well as from a railway line, pipeline, four banks and many businesses. In the end, the court did not rule in favour of the Chippewa of Sarnia. Krys planned her sabbaticals to coincide with

her court testimonies. During a remission in her illness in late winter 2011, she provided 18 half-days of expert testimony on behalf of the Slate Falls First Nation regarding a pending court case.

In the third phase of her career, Krys again focused on First Nations and came back full circle to the focus of her doctoral research when she began working with First Nations communities in Northern Ontario to preserve maps collected during her earlier research. Krys understood that the far north remains under the ever-watchful eye of industry and government, as evidenced by current DeBeers diamond mining and plans for development of a large chromite deposit in the Northern Ontario "Ring of Fire." Thus, First Nations must continue to assert and demonstrate their connection to their land.

Her life plan was to segue into a fourth career phase, where she could concentrate on intensive writing and publishing, but this next phase was interrupted. Krys's mark on the world of publishing, however, had already been profound. She served as a reviewer for journals and was the principal manuscript review editor for the University of Toronto Press on the subjects of anthropology, First Nations and sociology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (1997–2008). She devoted a great deal of time and energy to this responsibility, providing comprehensive comments to potential authors.

Krys undertook pioneering work in contemporary anthropology, promoting the inclusion of women and of people from diverse cultural backgrounds in the discipline and the academy. She was an advocate for those people anthropologists formerly "studied" and was convinced that work as equal partners in joint efforts would result in social justice and the betterment of people's lives. She embodied the efforts of all who strive to create a balance among research and academic writing, teaching, mentorship and family.

Krys was a private person who did not share the details of her life with many others. Perhaps her heavy workload and multidimensional responsibilities left little time for talking about herself. Perhaps she found similarities between the Polish experience during World War II and Canadian First Nations people that motivated her scholarship. She was deeply affected by the loss of her husband Jean-Louis de Lannoy, a sociology professor at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Once recovered, she found a new energy and spirit in life upon meeting and marrying Reginald Willoughby, a Toronto lawyer. She is survived by her husband Reginald, her three children and five step-children, her mother and two brothers.

The academy has not yet completely recognized the somewhat different but equally effective career paths that have been followed by women and other “minorities.” Slowly, the academy is adjusting to such alternative professional trajectories by building support for the multidimensional responsibilities of minority scholars and academic women. We are certain that, as more scholars study the impacts of relations among First Nations, corporations, and the state in northern Ontario, they will uncover the contributions and celebrate the critical importance of the scholarship of Krystyna Sieciechowicz.

*Darrel Manitowabi, School of Indigenous Relations, Laurentian University, 935 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 2C6, Canada.
E-mail: dmanitowabi@laurentian.ca.*

*Kathryn T. Molohon, Laurentian University, Department of Anthropology, 935 Ramsey Lake Road, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 2C6, Canada.
E-mail: kmolohon@laurentian.ca.*

Note

- 1 Darrel Manitowabi is a former Ph.D. student of Krystyna Sieciechowicz's and Kathryn Molohon has known Krystyna since the start of Krystyna's career. In writing this memoriam, we have benefited from information shared by Reginald Willoughby and discussions with Gavin Smith, Harvey Feit, Heather Howard, Stella Spak, Michael Asch, Michel Bisaillon and Richard Lee. Any inaccuracies are, however, those of the authors alone.
- 2 Though the Kayahna Tribal Area Council is listed as the author of this book, Krystyna wrote the entire text and coordinated its entire production (Kayahna Tribal Area Council 1985: Addenda).

References

- Davidson, Malcolm
1983 The R. W. Dunning Papers at the University of Toronto. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3(2):387–391.
- Freeman, Milton M. R., ed.
1976 *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project*, 3 vols. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada.
- Kayahna Tribal Area Council
1985 *Kayahna Land Use and Occupancy Study*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Sieciechowicz, Krystyna
1982 “We Are All Related Here:” The Social Relations of Land Utilization in Wunnumin Lake, Northwestern Ontario. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto.
1983 Appendix I Land Use and Occupancy Study. *In* Final Submission of the Kayahna Area Tribal Council to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment. Pp. 1–139. Ontario: Kayahna Area Tribal Council.
1986 Northern Ojibwa Land Tenure. *Anthropologica* 28(1/2):187–202. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25605199>.
1988 Councils and Kitchens: Political Decision Making in a North-Western Ojibwa-Cree Community. *In* La Fronteradel Estado Inca: Proceedings 45 International Congress of Americanists, Bogota, Columbia, 1985. T. Dillehay and P. Netherly, eds. Pp. 187–202. Oxford: B.A.R.
2012 Effective Politics: Elections and Decision Making in an Anishnaabek Community. *In* *Confronting Capital*. P. Barber, B. Leach, and W. Lem, eds. Pp. 53–75. London: Routledge.
- University of Toronto Anthropology Newsletter
2013 Dear Prof Krystyna. University of Toronto Anthropology Newsletter 10(8): 1, 3.