

KRISTI LEORA GANSWORTH
Starkey-Robinson Award for Graduate Research on Canada

Leora's dissertation project, "*Anguilla rostrata*, our teacher: Addressing Anishnabe epistemicide through eels," was an ambitious and important project in its content and its methodology. We need to know more about the geography of the eel to better understand its decline and how to address it. Indigenous communities who have deep connections to and knowledge of eels can provide a wealth of data, insight and leadership. Leora's research includes gathering and synthesizing such knowledge from different Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in multiple sites. She grounds this work in Indigenous law, especially Anishnaabe law, and in Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies that include eels as knowing subjects and as teachers. Geographers have theorized, through actor network theory and such, the agency of non-human or more-than-human subjects, but what Leora contributes to this discussion is much richer and more complex. Drawing on scholarship in science, social sciences, and the humanities, her work brings a more fundamental shift in political ecology and our understandings of law, not just through the incorporation of more Indigenous knowledge, but in the ways in which she contemplates how Indigenous and non-Indigenous modes of knowing might engage each other.



Leora is a skilled researcher, and she herself is a member of an eel clan, and thus brings a depth of experiential knowledge to her project which has helped with both understanding her research material and building the necessary research relationships. I might add that she does the latter with great patience and care, which is essential. Indeed, her strengths in relationship-building have opened new opportunities for her over the course of her fieldwork and she was able to successfully navigate Covid- related changes to her plans.

The resulting dissertation was an outstanding and valuable contribution to Geography, particularly legal geography and political ecology, and further related fields. Leora's dissertation weaves Anishnaabe and Western theory, method, and knowledge from her extensive field research on eel habitat and management, including the knowledge eels themselves hold and can teach humans. As an Anishaabek woman herself, Leora draws on her own knowledge of clan governance as a foundation for rethinking environmental law and management. Methodologically rich and sophisticated, the dissertation incorporates information from community teaching and legal knowledge, surveys, landscape analysis, community-based consultation (including troubleshooting around pandemic's travel restrictions), scientific data, historical material, and interpretative dreamwork. From this research, she reads a larger historical and epistemological catastrophe already underway, and argues for fundamental reworking of ecological, political and legal relationships among species as essential to a sustainable and just path forward.

The dissertation is extraordinary in its originality and span, and advances our understandings of *all of* theory, method, empirical knowledge, and policy. Moreover, scholarship was articulated in a creatively and beautifully written dissertation that was accessible to and a pleasure for all to read.

It is worthy of note that, from the dissertation research, she has published academic work, public scholarship and creative work—all directly related to her research.