

# Taking the Classroom Beyond the Building's Walls

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John Borrows, *Outsider Education: Indigenous Law and Land-Based Learning*, 32 **Windsor Yearbook on Access to Justice** (forthcoming 2016).

[John Borrows](#) is a lead actor in the cast that makes it worth being part of the play of life. He's always thoughtful and interesting; his scholarship thick with love. And I love reading his work.

In *Outsider Education* he appears as himself – teasing the reader with an introductory paragraph that leaves you wondering if he's going to make an argument for old school legal education by apprenticeship, then turning the whole thing on its head. It's not an argument for white men training white men in book-heavy chambers over sherry; it's a reminder that Indigenous legal education in North America prior to European arrival kicks it even more old school.

Borrows uses this article to remind us that our legal worlds aren't as narrow as we might have been taught to imagine them. Law can be found in "homes, businesses, hospitals, courts, cities, and rural landscapes." (P. 3.) He calls for legal education to take root in land and outside contemporary classrooms.<sup>1</sup> If you want an example of how a law professor can take learning "outdoors," you should read Borrows' recounting of Professor [Doug Harris](#)' property law class in Part 2.

Part 3 turns to how pedagogies can be developed that reflect and are attentive to Indigenous legal traditions. Perhaps most striking for those uninitiated in the scholarship of Borrows' is his claim that law is not only what can be found in positive expressions issued by legislatures or courts, but also that it is found in specific Indigenous legal systems, and I would hazard that Borrows would claim even more broadly, in our practices. Most challenging, perhaps, Borrows claims that we should work with students in learning from the earth and develop "land-based literacy" as an explicit goal of legal education.

Turning to Part 4, Borrows recounts the work of law schools like [Lakehead Law](#) to integrate law students and legal education with specific [First Nations](#) communities, at least in intensive settings if not more generally throughout their legal educations. The illustrations in this section provide an outstanding "go to" for ideas for law professors who care about connecting students with the "practice" of law, and Indigenous law more particularly.

Borrows' work in this article is emblematic of his scholarship in several ways. First, it is unerringly generous. Borrows' illustrations are often drawn from experiences outside his own. He highlights and celebrates the efforts of others to build legal education initiatives that help us learn from the land and incorporate Indigenous law into legal education. Second, I confess to being a sucker for good writing, and Borrows is a good writer. Third, the scholarship is mature – it reflects Borrows' long consideration of these matters.

Ultimately, *Outsider Education* is an article that persuades. It's hard to read it and not be convinced that you need to change your way of thinking about your own classes.

1. For a similar argument, see Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, [Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg](#)

[Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation](#) 3 **Decolonization: Indigeneity, Educ. & Soc'y** 1 (2014).

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