Proof Copy v4

3

“Take Care of ‘the Land’ and ‘the Land’will Take Care of You:” Relationship-Building through an Introduction to Indigenous Holistic Thought

Jennifer S. Dockstator & Michael D. Thrasher

Proof Copy v4

Proof Copy v4

Before All Other Words . . .

As per custom, I begin with words of gratitude – gratitude for having been given the opportunity to spend time in ceremonies and learn over many years about an Indigenous way of knowing that is grounded in a Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle.[1] I would not be in a position to even be able to share this knowledge if it had not been for the Mentor with whom I continue to learn and the long line of Elders that cared for this knowledge across millennia, entrusting it to each subsequent generation so that we may learn the depth of its ways still. Words cannot wholly express the depth of my gratitude, as a non-Indigenous woman, first to have been invited to attend ceremonies by my husband and then to be invited back and finally, after many years, be entrusted with the responsibility to share what I have learned through appropriate and acceptable platforms.

Hence, I have written this chapter with the full understanding that the knowledge I am sharing does not originate with me, but with the Old Ones who have sacrificed a great deal over millennia to learn its vast expanses. While much has been lost through deplorable acts of colonization, much remains. The Mentor with whom I have learned and continue to learn, Mooshum Michael Thrasher (Mooshum is "Grandfather" in Cree), has shouldered the responsibility to keep some of these ways alive through ceremonies, ways imparted to him by the many Elders with whom he has learned over his lifetime. So while I may have put the words on paper, Mooshum[2] has passed on the learnings associated with these words through the oral tradition and is, therefore, co-author. Mooshum in turn acknowledges, as co-author, "I am but a small child compared to those Elders who were kind, patient, committed to our culture, and generous enough to instruct me. I could not and will not claim eldership in my name and can only treat with honesty and kindness those in the community who choose to so name me. It is more than enough of an honour to be recognized as 'Mooshum.'"[3]

Acknowledging our respective positionalities is necessary to distinguish this chapter from instances of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation occurs when someone gathers information from a community or traditional person, writes about it, and fails to attribute the source of the information fully or properly. Such behaviour is disrespectful and discouraged. I have spent years

1. The term "Cree-Nishnaabe" may also be written as "Cree-Anishinaabek," "Oji-Cree," or other phrases using Indigenous and/or English words.
2. Although widely regarded as an Elder by many people, Michael Thrasher prefers the title "Mooshum." As per his request, for the remainder of the chapter, I refer to him as Mooshum.
3. Thrasher, M. personal communication, March 11, 2016.

Proof Copy v4

helping in ceremonies and learning. After twenty-four years when I began my doctorate, following traditional protocols as I had been taught, I presented Mooshum with tobacco and asked for his guidance along the journey. At every juncture of my doctoral studies, I worked closely with him and other Elders to ensure that I was following a process that followed culturally appropriate protocols. My doctorate focused just as much on the significance of process as on the content of the comprehensive and dissertation requirements in fulfillment of the degree. I contend that this approach is vital for any work that involves Indigenous peoples.[4] In other words, the application of Indigenous learnings and philosophies, through respectful adherence to traditional protocols (depending on the territory), is central to working with Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and peoples in any circumstance.

This chapter, therefore, is just as much an exploration of the importance of process as of content, the intention of which is two-fold: 1) to foster awareness and appreciation for *how* Indigenous philosophies are original to place so as to appreciate more fully *why* these philosophies continue to endure in the hearts and minds of Indigenous peoples across time, and 2) to share an Indigenous way of knowing as part of a relationship-building process where society in general, and corporations and governments in particular, recognize a two-way knowledge exchange as an imperative in resource development processes involving First Nations, contributing toward sincere reconciliation between peoples.

More specifically, First Nations peoples have learned the ways of dominant Western society. Western society in general and industry in particular, however, know little about First Nations people. Going forward, the flow of information must be a true exchange, rather than a one-way street. If Western industry hopes to be successful working in First Nations territories, industry proponents (government and corporate) need to learn more about the First Peoples of the land in which they hope to establish operations.

To build effective, mutually beneficial relationships, Western society as a

4. For the most part, this chapter uses the term "Indigenous" to refer to any peoples who are original to the lands where they live. For example, all those whose ancestry or part thereof originates on Turtle Island (North America) are Indigenous. Other Indigenous peoples are original to other lands and continents. Anyone whose ancestry originates elsewhere (i.e., whose ancestors migrated to colonize or settle in another part of the world) is not Indigenous (alternatively, non-Indigenous), even if they were born in North America. For the purposes of this chapter, "Indigenous" is inclusive of other terms, such as, Inuit, Indian, Aboriginal, Métis, First Nation, etc., without intention of homogenization and recognizing the inherent diversity and distinctness of Indigenous peoples around the world. The term "First Nations" is used in this chapter when specifically referring to "Status Indian" or reserve communities and peoples impacted by the Oil Sands.

Proof Copy v4

whole must begin learning about First Nations peoples, their ways of knowing, their cultures. This chapter opens a small window into a fundamental aspect of an Indigenous worldview – their relationship with the land. The perspective that I share is one of many ways to understand this relationship and is according to how I have learned in ceremonies with a Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle, acknowledging the many other Indigenous knowledges with distinct (and some that are similar) ways to understand this central concept of Indigenous philosophy.

Introduction

When it comes to expressing concern over the Oil Sands' environmental impacts, why are First Nations' voices amongst the loudest and why does this matter? For too long, when an industry explored an area for resource extraction, very little attention was given to the First Nations communities in whose traditional territory work was being sited. The "duty to consult" requirements established in the courts were interpreted loosely. One or two visits by industry proponents were considered sufficient to check "Consult with First Nations" off the to-do lists. Information flowed primarily one way, with corporations inundating First Nations with technical environmental assessments and engineering reports.

Today, the situation is changing. The Canadian legal system is reinforcing more robust "consult and accommodate" expectations. First Nations communities now have the legal, political, and business acumen to require, if not strongly encourage, more rigorous community engagement processes. Many have established their own requirements for industries who wish to enter their territory and access the resources within. In these changing times, two-way communication is encouraged, and in many instances considered mandatory. Negotiating Impact Benefit (or other) Agreements is becoming just one phase of a multi-level process toward more long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships.

Evolving these negotiation and consultative processes further involves expanding the nature of these two-way communications. This chapter is an initial attempt at broadening the conversation, encouraging a flow of information that up until now has been restrained. Now, in this time where truths are being told revealing the full extent of residential school impacts, Canadian society in general, and resource extractive industries in particular, have an opportunity to embrace the spirit of reconciliation and learn about the Indigenous peoples and cultures that have been repressed.

Returning to the question at the beginning of this introduction, this chapter opens a window for others to learn about the philosophical foundations grounding why First Nations people persist in their calls for environmental protections for our air, waters, lands, forests, and all that we depend upon and that depend upon us. For too long, Eurocentric views have been imposed and

Proof Copy v4

Indigenous peoples have adapted accordingly. Now the opportunity has arrived for Western society to broaden its horizons beyond the predominant worldview so as to appreciate what Indigenous peoples have known for millennia.

Philosophical Roots

All of humanity's roots are grounded, at one time or another, in being indigenous to the land – wherever that land may be. Early civilizations had an innate understanding of our individual and communal responsibilities to take care of the lands that take care of us, for our very survival depended on this reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship. With the passage of time, however, many peoples of the world have become disconnected from the places that have sustained them. Industrialization and urbanization are two movements identified as contributing to modernity's environmental alienation (reference). Another contributing factor is a predominantly linear interpretation and commodification of progress. For a vast majority, accruing material wealth has become a commonly accepted measure of one's success. Industrial and technological pursuits have certainly made many people wealthy financially. The Oil Sands industry, at the height of its development, has been a case in point when success is viewed primarily in monetary terms.

However, the portion of Canada's energy sector responsible for promoting Oil Sands development has done so with imperfect environmental protections, and lax government regulations have facilitated this enduring trend. Even though proponents may claim otherwise, care for the environment has been pursued with technologies that, although may be proven elsewhere, have fallen short in handling the coarse grade of bitumen and in effectively protecting aquatic and terrestrial habitats, including the traditional territories of the region's First Nations peoples.

Along with many non-Indigenous citizens of the world, Indigenous peoples of Canada are deeply concerned about the environmental impacts on 'the land' of the Oil Sands industry (from an Indigenous perspective, 'the land' is more than its literal definition; it is an expression used figuratively to encompass all Creation, that is, all things seen and unseen in our environment).[5] Indigenous

5. 'The land' in quotations appears in this chapter to remind the reader of the Indigenous use of this phrase. It is an abbreviation for the broader reference of all that cares for us on this earth and in this universe, inclusive of the earth, rocks, water, air, plants, animals, sun, moon and stars, and other-than-human beings – in brief, all that is seen as well as unseen. What is commonly referred to as "the environment" has often dismissed the unseen, metaphysical aspect of Creation that Indigenous peoples recognize as an important facet of reality and in their relationship with Creation. "Creation" refers to all that is seen and unseen, which includes the spirit plane and extends outward to the entire

Proof Copy v4

peoples' concerns are rooted in remembering their original relationship with 'the land.' Honouring this relationship by fulfilling their responsibilities to take care of 'the land,' 'the land,' in turn, has sustained them over millennia. Indigenous peoples' measure of success has been their very survival across generations. Pre-contact, by honouring this reciprocal relationship and striving to sustain a healthy balance with the environment, they were able to survive whether conditions were favourable or harsh. That was success, and it has been proven among Indigenous peoples around the world over time. Even when forced into a world of values alien to their cultures and traditions through colonization, Indigenous peoples have adapted and survived. In Canada, this has not been without ongoing struggle and hardships as a result of impacts from the *Indian Act*, dislocation and relocation, residential schools, and other atrocities.

Indeed, Indigenous peoples' survival may be attributable to their adaptability, a testament to their fortitude. And their adaptability may be attributed to their lasting connection with 'the land.' Why do Indigenous peoples hold "the environment" in such high regard? Why is their connection with 'the land' so strong? Why are their voices among the loudest when calling for strong, enforceable environmental regulation of the Oil Sands industry? Certainly, non-Indigenous peoples have an appreciation for nature and many are equally concerned with environmental impacts of the Oil Sands. The environmental movement, eco-feminism, deep ecology, Gaia, and other philosophical viewpoints have become well-established Western responses to the dominant, neoliberal capitalist agenda. Sustainability, Just Sustainability, and environmental justice movements are efforts to temper neoliberal capitalism with socio-ecological ethics and sensibilities. So to claim that Indigenous peoples are the only ones who care about the environment is certainly false.

What is safe to say, in my opinion, is that many Indigenous peoples have maintained their strong connection with 'the land' throughout the ages, even with the challenges they have faced and continue to endure. While the question has been framed, "Why is Indigenous peoples' connection to 'the land' so strong," the focus of this chapter is really an exploration of how they regard the environment and how their regard is grounded in time-proven philosophies that are different from the dominant Western epistemological, ontological, and axiological understandings of "the environment." Examining questions of "*how*?" will hopefully lead to a broader appreciation for "*why*" Indigenous peoples' concern for the environment is so prevalent, with many First Nations peoples unfailingly and persistently pressing for better safeguards for air, wa-

---

universe. Humans are understood as part of Creation, being the last beings created and dependent upon the rest of Creation for their existence. See also Footnote 7.

Proof Copy v4

ter, and land habitats.

Before continuing, however, some clarifications are necessary. First, many Indigenous peoples inhabit the world, and each has their own culture and knowledge system. This chapter does not intend to homogenize Indigenous peoples or their ways of knowing, as abundant differences distinguish one from another. The diversity among Indigenous peoples contributes to their inherent strength and perseverance. Underlying the diverse Indigenous knowledges are philosophies in which may be found significant commonalities. These fundamental principles and shared philosophies are the foundation upon which this chapter rests.

Second, in the spirit of full disclosure I have already noted that I, as the author, am not Indigenous. How, then, am I able to speak on the subject of Indigenous ways of knowing? To provide a bit of background, while I am not Indigenous to Turtle Island,[6] my husband and sons are Haudenosaunee. Before we were married, my husband and I began attending ceremonies in the spring and, for three decades now, I have been learning an Indigenous way of knowing according to Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle philosophies. My learning is grounded in having participated in, helping in, and fasting in ceremonies, and coming to understand how a Medicine Circle is innately rooted in Creation and provides a guide for living in respectful balance with "all our relations,"[7] human and other-than-human, seen and unseen. With permission of the Elder with whom I have learned most of these years, and continue to learn, I completed a doctoral degree, the focus of which has been an exploration of how Indigenous knowledges may inform the Western discourse of the neoliberal pursuit of sustainability (Dockstator, 2014).[8] The work that I am

6. "Turtle Island" is an Indigenous reference to North America.
7. In this chapter, the word "Creation" is interchangeable with the words "nature," "earth," and 'the land' and serves as an all-embracing term, referring to all that has been created. In an Indigenous way of seeing and knowing, Creation is inclusive of all human beings, the water and air, sun, moon and stars, animals, plants, trees, those that crawl and slither, fly and swim, as well as the soil and rocks from the smallest pebbles to the highest mountains, all that is seen and unseen (e.g., the spirit world). This understanding may be extended to include the universe or cosmos. All Creation has spirit. The word "creation" with a small 'c' refers to the formation or genesis of something. This Indigenous view of Creation is distinct from dominant Western, religious views of Creation, which may be alternatively viewed as God or Creator. Pre-contact, kihci-manitow (in Cree; in Ojibwe, the same words may appear as kitche manitou or gichi manidoo) was, and is, the Great Mystery, which was not an anthropomorphic figure, as spirit energy or life force is inherent throughout all Creation and unknowable mysteries permeate life on earth. During colonization, European missionaries appropriated the words to represent the Christian God (Allen, 1992; Deloria, 1973; Deloria and Wildcat, 2001).
8. Much of the material in this chapter first appears in Dockstator, J. (2014). *Widening the*

Proof Copy v4

doing is not intended, in any way, to appropriate Indigenous ways of knowing. Rather, my hope is to build bridges of understanding amongst peoples who live side by side and who all have great responsibilities to care for 'the land.' My opening words to this chapter are intended as a culturally appropriate way for a non-Indigenous person to engage in Indigenous-based discourse that is in accordance with Indigenous protocols and principles reflecting respectful relationships.

A third point to note is the limited understanding one may acquire from reading words on a page when the knowledge is based in an oral tradition of learning through doing. Oral traditions are much more than simply listening to an Elder or Traditional Knowledge Holder share stories and impart their wisdom. Oral traditions assume an active listener, one who not only contemplates and reflects (which are active processes in and of themselves), but also applies what one is hearing in tangible, practical experiences. The learning experience may be in ceremonies (from sun-up to sun-up, not just during the formal protocols of a ceremony), or it may be working and spending time with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders in organizations and/or communities. The experience may be in one's everyday living, by oneself, or in a group. The important message here is that reading about an Indigenous knowledge only provides a glimpse into the fullness of meaning of Indigenous ways and philosophies. Applying what one is learning in everyday living over time opens a door to deeper understanding.

Worth emphasizing, at this point, is the challenge and risk inherent in working with an oral tradition when the medium for sharing is the written word. The limitations in translating an oral tradition "to a second symbol system that relies on print material to convey meaning" (Douglas, Thrasher & Rickett, 1995, p. 2) are stressed in the following observation:

> As is the case with <u>all</u> attempts at interpretation, some concepts cannot be accurately represented and others are mere approximations of meaning. At the base of this dilemma is the philosophical concept represented by the medicine wheel and the dissonance created when an attempt is made to translate it into a linear format that conceptualizes meaning as a continuum (p. 2).

The main point here is that, as an example of Indigenous knowledge, the Med-

---

Sweetgrass Road: Re/Balancing Ways of Knowing for Sustainable Living with a Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle (Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, Canada). Dr. Michael Thrasher (LLD, honoris causa) served on both the comprehensive and dissertation committees to ensure cultural appropriateness and integrity. Jennifer also acknowledges the guidance and insights provided by Dr. Mark Dockstator.

Proof Copy v4

icine Circle represents a vast store of knowledge with both linear and circular aspects and connotations. Multiply this knowledge by the many different peoples who have Medicine Circles, the knowledge becomes exponential in terms of their meanings and purposes. Then, consider the fact that this knowledge has developed over millennia through oral tradition and the reader may begin to wonder how one is able to truly glean the fullness of its meaning with the limitations inherent in the written word.

Wheeler (2005) echoes this sentiment, quoting Maria Campbell, a Cree Elder, who describes the enormous responsibility associated with interpreting an oral tradition using the written word:

> Our new storytellers have a big job. They must understand . . . the new language and use it to express their stories without losing the thoughts and images that are culturally unique to them. This new storyteller must also be a translator of the old way, so that it will not be lost to a new generation. And all this must be done on paper, for that is the new way (pp. 204-205).

Suffice it to say, the challenges and risks associated with writing this chapter are taken seriously. Words have been chosen with care and with respect for the knowledge. Diligence and time have been taken to articulate clear, meaningful explanations. In Mooshum's words, this chapter strives to "make sure whatever gets written stays true to the oral form in its intent of spirit and intelligence."[9]

Part of this intent is to emphasize that the existence of a dualist binary stance is not substantiated within Indigenous philosophies. A dualist binary in this context is defined here as describing one knowledge system as superior, representing the only "truth," and another as inferior and to be disregarded as inconsequential. The principle of Indigenous holism establishes an understanding of all Creation as one circle. All peoples and all knowledges, therefore, exist within this one circle and all knowledges contribute to more complete knowledge, the whole of which is greater than the sum of any of its parts. As such, each knowledge system contributes to the understanding of the whole; one knowledge system does not supersede another and no knowledge systems are to be dismissed as irrelevant.

Put another way, as my husband explains, it is not an "either-or" proposition, but an acceptance of the notion of "either-and."[10] As much information from all points of view contribute toward better decision-making, especially when it comes to issues pertaining to survival. One group of people may priv-

9. Thrasher, M. personal communication, September 12, 2013.
10. Dockstator, M. personal communication, October 2013.

Proof Copy v4

ilege one way of thinking over another, but Indigenous holism acknowledges that all perspectives exist along a spectrum, a continuum situated within the one circle of Creation. All perspectives, therefore, are critical contributors to sustaining all life and all Creation over time.

A final point to note is that I am only able to share what I have learned and how I have come to understand Cree-Nishnaabe ways of knowing grounded in Medicine Circle learnings.[11] Others may have attended the same ceremonies and walked away with different understandings. Similarly, others have learned from other Elders and according to other traditions and cultures. What they have learned is just as valid, for each individual's experience and learning is according to their own needs. I can only share what I have learned, opening a window into an Indigenous way of seeing that discerns the world from a different viewpoint than does dominant Western society.

What is meant by "dominant Western society" is first clarified in order to establish a common ground of understanding. The remainder of the chapter explores an Indigenous way of knowing and how it is rooted in Creation, demonstrating how Indigenous peoples' connection with 'the land' is essential to their very existence, how the core of their being – as individuals and as nations – is dependent upon this relationship. Opening this window for non-Indigenous peoples, as well as for Indigenous peoples looking to re-connect with their ways, this chapter aims to provide an introductory awareness of foundational Indigenous wisdom to better appreciate the intensely felt connection Indigenous peoples have with 'the land.' Finally, relating the content of this chapter to the Oil Sands industry, the process of relationship-building through knowledge sharing is emphasized as an imperative for any resource development endeavour in First Nations' traditional territories.

Defining "Dominant Western Society"

Rather than use terms such as "Euro-Canadian" or "Euro-American" or "Settler," I refer to the dominant, neoliberal worldview as "Western." This dominant view is rooted in principles espoused by various philosophers and scientists of the European Renaissance (e.g., Newton, Bacon, Descartes, among others). Lorraine Code (2006) summarizes "the dominant model of knowledge and epistemology in Anglo-American philosophy" (p. 8) as:

> scientism, reductionism, and the instrumental-utilitarian moral and political theories that sustain an ethos of dominance and mastery, where a dislocated knower-as-spectator seeks to predict, manipulate, and control the behavior of the material world and of other "less enlightened" people (p. 8).

---

11. The ceremonies I attend are based in the old Midewiwin Lodge Society.

Proof Copy v4

Many Indigenous authors point to the assumptions underlying this Western "ethos of dominance and mastery" as the unfortunate rationale for colonization and the subjugation of Indigenous peoples (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Deloria, 1973; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Graveline, 1998; Smith, 1999). Battiste and Henderson (2000) trace the superiority colonizers assumed over Indigenous peoples to European constructs of civilization and progress, spurning different understandings of these concepts held by other cultures (to be discussed later in this chapter).

These European constructs, in turn, have reinforced core assumptions of universalism and diffusionism (Battiste & Henderson, 2000) or homogenization (Cajete, 1994). That is, only one "truth" exists as revealed through scientific rationality and based upon Christian dictates, and all peoples of the world are to be united under this one "truth." These assumptions have grounded the Eurocentric worldview from the time of colonization when, as Cajete (1994) describes:

> The first Europeans saw America as wilderness, an obstacle to overcome through settlement and the use of resources, living and non-living. They looked upon the land primarily as a material object, a commodity they could gain from economically. For the most part they viewed the Indians they encountered as one of those resources, which they would either use or abuse according to their agenda for material gain (p. 75).

This perspective has evolved into its present-day form, with scientific and technological advances both facilitating and reinforcing this "dominance and mastery" doctrine. As well, the field of economics has yielded a host of "intricate artificial models of 'the economy' and of 'the market'" entirely separated from nature and independent from the human relationship with nature (Winner, 1986, p. 124). As a result, neoliberal capitalism has emerged as the prevailing political orientation in the postmodern, Western world, blending liberal, market-oriented, and economic growth priorities (Code, 2006; Winner, 1986). Winner (1986) explains the resulting "penchant to define every situation according to an orthodox format of costs, benefits, supply, demand, and prices" (p. 124) where even the "value of clean air, clean water, dwindling resources, wilderness, and the like" is commodified and monetized (p. 124).

This Eurocentric worldview is the dominant Western view to which this chapter refers. Alternative Western perspectives, such as deep ecology, ecofeminism and Gaia, among others, offer counterpoints to the dominant, neoliberal discourse. Common ground exists among these other viewpoints and Indigenous worldviews, but they are not the focus of this chapter, which gives sole voice to the later.

Proof Copy v4

Respecting an Indigenous Worldview

As noted above, during the Colonial period, European constructs of civilization and progress led to the dismissal of other cultures encountered as savage and backward. Discarding these presumptuous characterizations gives way to an alternate consciousness and an appreciation for another way of being in the world. Consider, for example, an understanding of civilization and progress in pre-contact North America that varies from those of the colonizers. For Indigenous peoples, "civilization" and "progress" were grounded in and aim to perpetuate "learned means of survival in an environment, . . . [involving] such things as language, education, technology, and social organization . . ." (Mohawk in Barreiro, 2010, p. xv). In essence, progress was successfully surviving through time and passing on the knowledge of how to survive from one generation to the next. As Cajete (1994) writes: ". . . the real test of living was to establish a harmonious relationship with that perfect state that was Nature – to understand it, to see it as the source of one's life and livelihood, and the source of one's essential well-being" (p. 75).

Using these understandings as a starting point, the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to exploring this "harmonious relationship" in a more fulsome manner (Cajete, 1994, p. 75). Striving to understand "Nature" in the way Cajete (1994) describes above is what the Old Ones sought beginning millennia ago. Through lifelong study and sacrifice, they dedicated their lives to comprehending the universe, from the stars above to the earth below. The laws of nature determined their survival. The Old Ones knew that, in order to survive, they must learn these laws and live by them.

Willie Ermine (1995), in his chapter Aboriginal Epistemology, explains how Indigenous knowledges have developed over the ages:

> Those people who seek knowledge on the physical plane objectively find their answers through exploration of the outer space, solely on the corporeal level. Those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology (p. 103).

Ermine (1995) is juxtaposing Western and Indigenous peoples' generalized approaches to studying the universe through the ages. Western cultures have developed their ways of knowing primarily through scientific experimentation on all that is observable, believing that what is seen, microscopically to telescopically, represents all that exists. Indigenous peoples also practice close observation of Creation to learn about the places where they live and how to survive in them. Included in this approach, however, is the mystery of all that cannot be seen, the "incorporeal" and "metaphysical," all that transcends physical, tangible space. They acknowledge that "turning inward" reveals a great

Proof Copy v4

deal about the cosmos and the multidimensionality of Creation. Ermine (1995) explains this practice of "turning inward:"

> The plants and animals were a vital nexus in comprehending the sophisticated directional maps into the metaphysical. Only by understanding the physical world can we understand the intricacies of the inner space. Conversely, it is only through journeys into the metaphysical that we can fully understand the natural world. Those Old Ones who made countless journeys into the inner space have embedded these principles in Aboriginal education systems so that future generations can continue the research (p. 107).

One such "Aboriginal education system" is the Medicine Circle, of which there are many. Learning about a Medicine Circle gives some insight into how Indigenous ways of knowing are rooted in Creation. In addition to being the product of much study *of* Creation, Medicine Circles have guided Indigenous peoples' survival *in* Creation across the millennia. After an introduction to a Medicine Circle, core philosophies associated with the Medicine Circle are shared, shedding more light on an Indigenous way of knowing and how it is reliant on and wholly integrated with this strong connection with all Creation.

Respecting a Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle

The Medicine Circle unfolds a process whereby place and time are inextricably linked. In its simplest terms, one of the purposes of a Medicine Circle is to help one learn how to live in a particular place through time (i.e., throughout all seasons over the years). The Medicine Circle is also a process in time through space; that is, it may be applied wherever one may go, providing a means for counsel and self-reflection throughout one's life.

As background information, both time and place are central themes in the creation and migration stories of the Anishnaabe and other First Nations peoples (Benton-Banai, 1988; Blondin, 1990). These stories speak of the relationship between human beings and all of Creation. They have been handed down orally from one generation to the next to ensure that the peoples' histories are remembered and so their relationship with the land where these histories are grounded remains strong into eternity. Blondin (1990) shares stories that embody the close relationship of the Dene with their land. Stories grounded in their traditional territories have shown the Dene how to survive as a people and live in balance and harmony with their surroundings. Similarly, Benton-Banai (1988) shares Anishnaabe creation stories and relates the movement of the Anishnaabe people across Turtle Island, establishing their historical ties to place.

While all these stories are grounded in place, they emphasize the importance of time, as time is essential to developing the relationships central to

Proof Copy v4

one's survival and well-being. These relationships are with oneself, with others – human and non-human, the seen and unseen, as well as with place, with nature – all of Creation. Taking the time necessary to tend each of these relationships, by following a process manifested in nature, is a central learning of the Medicine Circle and of Indigenous knowledge.

A first question in one's mind when thinking about a Medicine Circle may be, "Why a Medicine *Circle*? Isn't it a Medicine *Wheel*?" While the latter is more commonly used in popular culture today, Indigenous peoples of this land possess no original word in their languages for "wheel." Words such as "hoop" or "circle" exist, but not "wheel." In fact, this centerpiece of their cultures is multi-dimensional, interrelating physical (i.e., spherical and tangible) as well as metaphysical (i.e., incorporeal and ponderable) aspects. However, as this chapter is written in two-dimensions, for simplicity's sake, the term "circle" is chosen for two reasons: 1) to differentiate the bona fide Medicine Circle from the Medicine Wheel found in popular culture; and 2) to honour the original languages of this land as much as possible.[12]

A second question the reader may ask is, "Why is this cultural object referred to as a Medicine *Circle*?" What does medicine have to do with this circle? Insight into the word "medicine" is gained when examining the Latin root of the word, which is mederi, "to cure" (Bohm, 1980). David Bohm, in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), notes that this Latin word is also the root for "measure." Bohm (1980) explains the original and ancient relationship between these two words – to cure and to measure – that their common basis "reflects the view that physical health is to be regarded as the outcome of a state of right inward measure in all parts and processes of the body" (p. 26). This view may be expanded to include mental and spiritual health as well as physical well-being. Bohm (1980) avers that taking an "inner measure of things" (p. 26) is essential for good health and harmonious life. The Medicine Circle, along with a myriad of other uses, provides a means for self-counsel to look inward and reflect on innermost thoughts and feelings and to take measure of one's life on many levels. Viewed as a whole and for a complete "measure of things," the Medicine Circle, as it relates to humans, is not only counsellor, but also preacher, teacher, and doctor. It is also a guide for looking outward and learning from experiences and surroundings. It can be used in any measure from the subatomic to the cosmos with an understanding that they are all made from the same thing.

Another possible explanation for the word "medicine" is its close resem-

---

12. Giving some credence to the label "Medicine Wheel" from a historical yet allegorical point of view, upon seeing a Medicine Circle for the first time, settlers may have named it a wheel because of its resemblance to the wagon wheel.

Proof Copy v4

blance to the word "bimaadiziwin" in Ojibwe and "pimatisiwin" in Cree. Other Indigenous languages may have similar sounding words. Both words refer to "the way of the good life," the "Sweetgrass Road," which is the aspiration of living with focused intention in accordance with Medicine Circle learnings.

The Medicine Circle is also a system of measurement, not coincidentally. As Mooshum explains, the Medicine Circle is a measure of the sun's location in relation to the earth. No one knows exactly when these measurements were first taken many millennia ago; however, standing in one spot, marking where the sun rises and sets each day and observing shadow lines, a circle begins to take shape. Through nighttime observations, other points around the circle mark where certain stars first rise above the horizon.[13] These circles are found across North America and around the world and have been used, among other things, to determine the summer solstice. Many North American Indigenous peoples mark the longest day of the year with Sundance ceremonies.

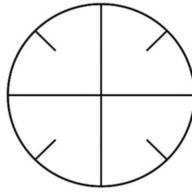
The Old Ones, through many generations, through sacrifice, through observation of their surroundings and inward reflection and contemplation, ascertained and articulated four original gifts of Creation. Somehow, they began to understand the initial moment of the creation of the universe as four gifts in the form of energy: the explosion (movement), the accompanying light (vision), the outward movement of matter (i.e., initial passage of time), and the outward force, creating a pressure wave of sensation and the development of gravitational forces (feeling). The Old Ones, by intently studying these four original gifts, began to comprehend the universe. For example, when human beings are born, these, too, are our initial gifts. We move; we begin to see; and with time, we experience different feelings (e.g., our first feelings of being cold or hungry; Thrasher, 1987).

The Old Ones organized what they had learned in a mnemonic symbol – one that could be read and understood by anyone who took the time to learn its meanings. Indeed, when Mooshum was shown a Medicine Circle for the first time, his mentor drew this symbol with a stub of a pencil on the inside of an empty cigarette pack he had torn open and said: "Everything you have and will ever want to know about the past, the present, and the future is written right here. All you have to do is learn how to read it."

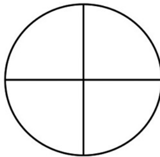
13. For more information on Medicine Circles, please see http://solar-center.stanford.edu/AO/bighorn.html

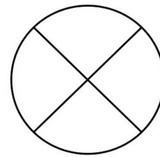
Proof Copy v4

A Medicine Circle



Most people who have seen a Medicine Circle are familiar with seeing it one of two ways, either with the four directions situated along the cardinal points of the compass (east, south, west, and north) or along diagonally-situated radii, as pictured below.





Both combined together actually reveal the complete picture, which is more than an artistic or stylistic preference. The rationale for the combined representation incorporates meanings and purposes that are grounded in Creation. For simplicity's sake, in community work and popular culture, one is often chosen over the other, depending on its purpose. However, to present as complete a picture as possible, both sets of lines are included here. This version represents the holistic nature of the Medicine Circle – that it contains two parts comprising one balanced whole.

The reason for choosing this illustration abides in nature. After all, Indigenous knowledges and Medicine Circles are understood through observing and learning the laws of nature. That is, what we see around us in Creation informs Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world. With respect to the Medicine Circle, both the sun and moon ground our learning. The sun measures time and distance according to cosmic position. Sunrise is in the east. At noon, (at least in the northern hemisphere), the sun is in the south; and sunset is in the west (i.e., the cardinal points on the circle). The moon measures time into Earth "life parts," the seasons, with the sun establishing the length of each season according to equinoxes and solstices (i.e., the diagonals of the circle). The thirteen moons that occur during one cycle of the earth around the sun are named according to the distinguishing characteristics of the season (i.e., *time*) in the *place* where one lives. Over the millennia, knowledge about natural law accrued amongst Indigenous peoples by studying Creation, inclusive of the sun, moon and stars – all to help the people sustain themselves *where* they lived over *time*.

Proof Copy v4

Grandmother Moon Teachings

Either the sun or moon may be studied to learn about the Medicine Circle. As a woman, while aware of sun teachings, I have chosen to share moon teachings because the moon is known as Grandmother Moon, which has a special relationship with women.[14] Indigenous peoples have known about and respected this relationship for millennia, and this knowledge has been passed down from one generation to the next through the oral tradition. Modern science has confirmed this relationship, showing how the moon influences the movement of the world's waters, from the ocean tides to women's monthly cycles (referred to as a woman's "moon time").

The moon has measured cyclical time over the eons with the arrival of each new crescent. As well, the moon measures time with the cycling tides. Time from a Western perspective is primarily linear in character. Standing in one moment of time, one looks behind to the past and forward to the future along a one-dimensional pathway, which may be illustrated by a straight line. From an Indigenous perspective, circular time is more prevalent.[15] Using the cycle of the seasons as a foundation for teachings about time, one observes the seasons changing from spring to summer to fall to winter and then to spring again and so on. Time is inextricably linked to place as time is manifested in the world around us through the cyclical progression of the seasons and our tangible appreciation of the ever-changing climatic and spatial conditions we experience. Likewise, place grounds time in the sense that where one is determines the patterns time manifests.

Grandmother Moon teachings are used to describe these patterns through time – the seasons,[16] helping one to begin to understand the initial layers of the Medicine Circle's four directional gifts (see Figure 1). Grandmother Moon waxes and wanes, marking each month of each season. Each season has its own essence, its root properties that may be discerned through close observation to learn about the laws of nature and gifts of Creation.

14. Likewise, the sun is referred to as Grandfather Sun and, being male, is connected with men. Having said this, both male and female are composed of elements of each other as the simple fact exists that one cannot exist without the other. Hence, considering the whole – male and female – is essential. Again, another reason why the diagram showing all the lines is chosen as it is a more complete representation of the Medicine Circle with which I am most familiar.
15. Indigenous peoples first knew time as cyclical. With the colonization of their lands and the introduction of abstract time, Indigenous peoples have adapted to understand linear time as well. Likewise, while linear time dominates Western societies, Western peoples understand the circularity of the seasons.
16. With attention to place, these teachings are learned through observing the four seasons as experienced in Cree-Nishnaabe and neighbouring territories in northern North America.

Proof Copy v4

To begin, *spring*[17] is the time of new growth. The sun warms the earth; plants germinate and emerge from the soil; leaves bud on trees. We can *see* this new growth as life is renewed once again after the cold winter. Once new growth emerges, a relationship with water and the sun becomes evident. Throughout the spring and into the summer, the rains and the sunshine together help plants grow. In the *summer*, the lengthened days and the sun's warmth and light give the plants *time* to grow, affirming the importance of the *relationship* between life on earth and the sun. By the summer solstice, the first fruits and vegetables have matured. Once the days begin shortening, a physiological timer is triggered within plants, causing them to begin preparing for the dryness and coldness of fall and winter. As *fall* arrives, plants *let go* their fruits and seeds, trees lose their leaves. Plants and trees enter a *winter* rest period but their seeds, while appearing dormant are already preparing for the spring. Perhaps they will be carried by the wind or snagged on an animal's fur or eaten so that they will *move* and be dispersed. Once the winter solstice passes, the days begin to lengthen and the earth begins to warm, causing the seeds to germinate, drawing their energy and nutrition from within and from the surrounding soil and melting ice and snow so that once again new growth emerges from the soil in the springtime.[18] Hence, *vision*, *time*, *feeling*, and *movement* are the first four gifts of Creation as shown in Figure 1 (see page 70).

These four original gifts have, in turn, been interpreted to guide human beings in their relationships, providing instructions of how to be, how to exist, in the world in balance with the laws of nature (as illustrated in Figure 2, see page 71). That is, we exist in relationship for we are all related, and we must act accordingly. With the gift of *vision*, comes *respect* for what one is able to see. With the gift of *time*, *relationships* grow. With the gift of *feeling*, *reasoning* and analysis are possible. Finally, the gift of *movement* provides the foundation for different *behaviours* according to our thoughts, feelings and reasoned analysis.

When one understands how these teachings are grounded in Creation, the foundation upon which Indigenous peoples' strong connection with 'the land' rests becomes clear. Acknowledging this interconnection between Creation and the Medicine Circle is paramount to appreciating how central 'the land' is to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This realization, in my mind, clarifies how and why Indigenous peoples hold a deeply felt responsibility to care for 'the land.'

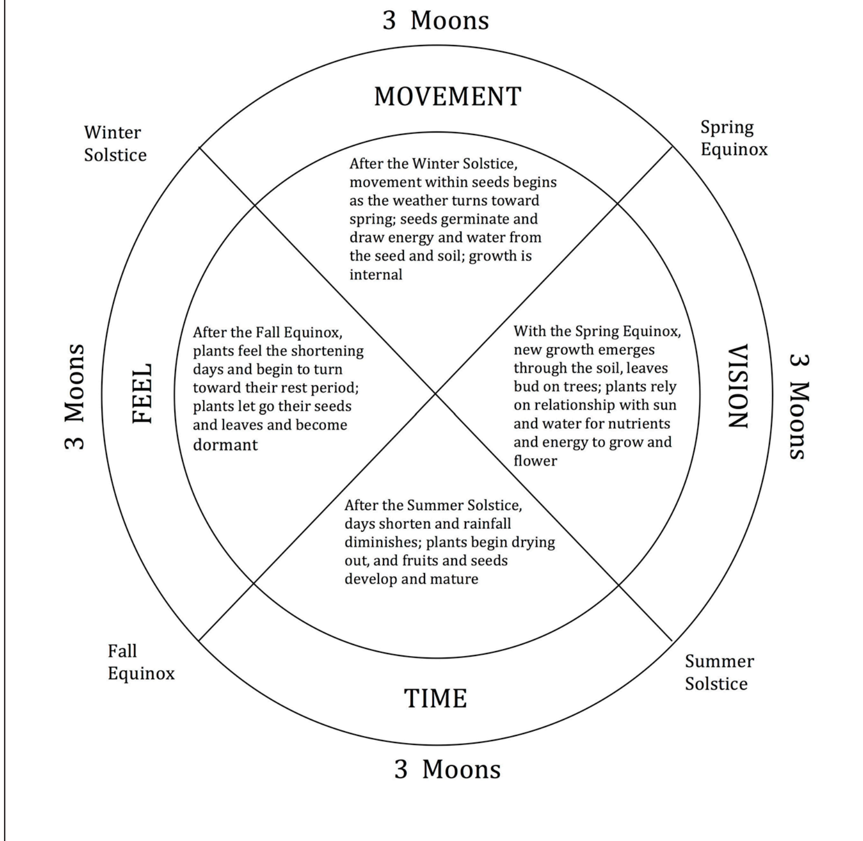
---

17. The italicized words in this section relate to the words or "gifts" that are connected with their respective season.
18. To learn about the original gifts of Creation through Grandmother Moon teachings, one may choose to frame the cycle of the seasons in terms of an animal's life cycle as well as a plant's life cycle. For space considerations, I have chosen to focus on a plant's life cycle.

Proof Copy v4

Figure 1: Grandmother Moon Teachings

Grandmother Moon Teachings explain how Cree-Nishnaabe peoples in North America measure the passage of time by the changing moons, facilitating their comprehension of life's cycles within Creation and according to the laws of nature. From the Winter Solstice to the Summer Solstice, water is more plentiful; this is Creation's growing season. With the lengthening days, the sun's warmth, and abundant water in the soils, the gravitational pull of the moon helps plants absorb more nutrients and water for growth. After the Summer Solstice with rainfall's ebb, seeds mature; plants release their seeds for self-planting and prepare for their rest period. The interrelationships and connectedness of the moon, sun, water and plant (and animal and human) life demonstrate the wholly-integrated nature of all Creation and the responsibilities within these relationships to sustain life.

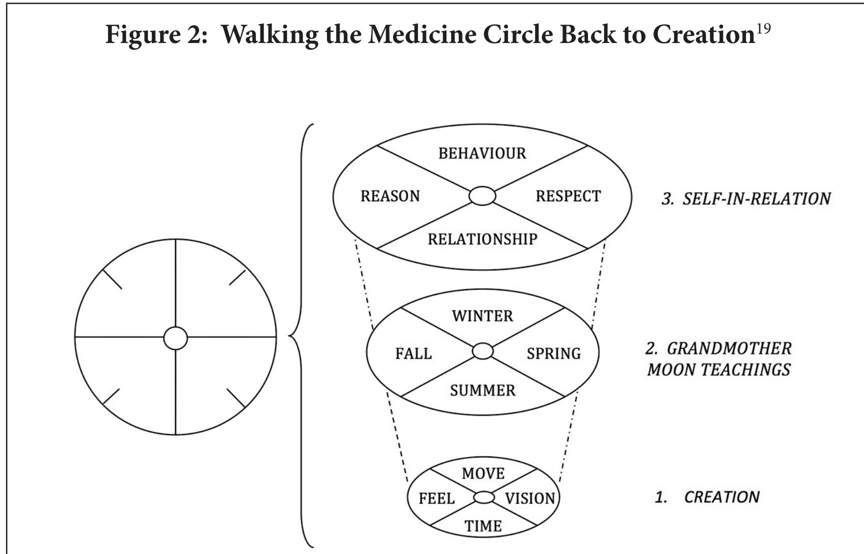


The ensuing discussion further explores how Indigenous ways of knowing are distinct from the dominant Western worldview. Medicine Circles are not only grounded in Creation, as illustrated above, they are also foundational tools to process our understandings of Creation, the application of which maybe used to guide our everyday living. First, while intending not to define Indig-

Proof Copy v4

enous ways of knowing in Western terms, I present my understanding of what is Indigenous knowledge. Then, key traits of Indigenous ways of knowing are discussed, namely, that they are holistic, they maintain respectful balance in relationships, are dynamic and adaptable, and honour "all our relations."

Figure 2: Walking the Medicine Circle Back to Creation[19]



Respecting Indigenous Ways of Knowing

The term "Indigenous knowledge" (IK) is a relatively recent moniker coined by Western academia perhaps as early as 1980 (Brokensha, Warren & Werner 1980). The phrase "Indigenous ways of knowing" is sometimes preferred by Indigenous authors to emphasize that IK is not merely a body of knowledge, but a way of living and being in the world.

Worth noting, Indigenous authors warn against articulating a concise definition of IK, seeing as Indigenous ways of knowing are ways of life, not objectified abstractions amassed as a body of knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Ellen et al, 2000; McGregor, 2004b). To define Indigenous knowledges according to a Western construct is antithetical and perpetuates a degree of Western control over Indigenous peoples. Presented here, therefore, is a description of IK

19. This diagram is based upon an illustrative approach to the Medicine Circle as originally developed by Dr. Mark S. Dockstator (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2005). See pages 7-8 and endnote 6 in the report: National Aboriginal Health Organization (2005). *First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) 2002/03: The peoples' Report*. Ottawa: First Nations Centre.

Proof Copy v4

as I have come to understand it over years of learning with Mooshum and other Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders, recognizing that Indigenous knowledges are not homogeneous or static and other individuals may have similarly valid, yet different, interpretations of IK (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; McGregor, 2009).[20]

Mohawk explains in Barreiro (2010), an Indigenous "way of being . . . is the active participation in the daily celebration of [all life and] Life-supportive processes" . . . "[Indigenous peoples] do not strive to respect the Natural World only in their minds and hearts (although they do this), but, rather they try to make their lives a celebration" (p. 10).

Cajete (1994) explains that in what he refers to as Tribal times (or pre-contact), "Living and learning were fully integrated" (p. 33). Spending time on the land, one learns a great deal about the place in which one lives and one's relationship with that place, the flora, the fauna, the weather, the natural rhythms of life. Mooshum has shared numerous stories of growing up in the Saskatchewan-Northwest Territories border region, working at his father's remote lodge, and guiding tourists who have flown in for fishing trips. Over the years, Mooshum came to know where best to find which fish – what species like muddy bottom waters, which prefer sand or gravel beds. Which fish prefer shallow or deeper waters, and which prefer slower or faster currents, the eddies, rivers, and deep lakes. He learned the best time of day to catch certain fish and in what location. Mooshum also grew to know the weather not just by sight but also by feel, feeling a change in wind or a change in humidity or barometric pressure signalling an impending storm. More than once he had to cut short a fishing trip because of this "feeling." The tourists were not pleased as the weather appeared fine and the waves were calm. However, they were soon extremely thankful when a sudden storm erupted with surprising intensity. They were safely harboured in a protected location as opposed to being exposed in open waters. This breadth of knowledge can only be acquired by spending time on the land and often determines the difference between life and death.

In addition to fishing, trapping and hunting, Mooshum also learned core principles of living on the land. While his relatives did not expressly say, "this is Indigenous knowledge," the knowledge they shared may certainly be regarded as basic principles and philosophies of Indigenous knowledge. These include, among other concepts and practices, such values as taking only what is needed

20. Other terms such as traditional knowledge, Indigenous science, "Naturalized Knowledge Systems," among others, have been used to name what I have chosen to summarize as "Indigenous knowledge," "Indigenous knowledges," and "Indigenous ways of knowing" (see for example: Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994; F. Henry Lickers, 1997).

Proof Copy v4

in the proper season, taking just enough to feed the family, providing food for those who are unable to hunt or fish for themselves, and when hunting, leaving the smaller ones to grow and the pregnant females to have their young.

While "Indigenous knowledge" was not a phrase he ever heard growing up, Mooshum describes IK as "the culture" of the people, which is made up of "land, language, and experiences."[21] He acknowledges the importance of language, sharing the story of a friend describing a particular place in the Northwest Territories. The Lake of the Blue Moon is named specifically because the nightly reflection of the moon in the lake is blue. In the Dene language, "the Lake of the Blue Moon" is a much longer, more descriptive phrase which describes not only the blue moon, but also certain geographical landmarks which help guide the individual to this place. This example illustrates language's integral role in preserving Indigenous knowledge. Without it, how might one find this lake of the blue moon?

In another example, the importance of language is illustrated in efforts to map the territory of an endangered species of tortoise in the southwestern United States, the desert tortoise. Having no clue where to begin identifying the tortoise's territory, researchers sought to consult the Indigenous peoples of the area, who without hesitation knew where to look. They spoke of a certain plant that they knew would easily assist the researchers in their work. In the Indigenous language of the people, the plant is simply named, "desert tortoise eats it." Clearly, the desert tortoise lives wherever this plant grows, facilitating the mapping of its territory. If the language is forgotten, this knowledge is lost.[22]

These two stories clearly illustrate the important connection between land and language and how language is not only descriptive of place, but also relays vital knowledge associated with that place. No one would know where the Lake of the Blue Moon is situated unless they know the language that directs them in their travels. No one would know the extent of the desert tortoise's territory if the language identifying the tortoise's food source is lost. The third aspect of "culture" or IK is spending time on the land, integrating living and learning (Cajete, 1994), and gaining the experience to learn the language of that land, in one sense, its "laws of nature."

Moving toward a holistic understanding of Indigenous "culture," at its essence, IK may be described as the entirety of living in relationship with 'the land' (i.e., with Creation), which may be thought of as having two balancing facets, depicted here with an image of a feather (see Figure 3). On the one side,

---

21. Thrasher, M., personal communication, February 9, 2012.
22. Kimmerer, Robin. Presentation at *Conversations on the Land*, Conference at SUNY-ESF, Syracuse, NY November 2008.

Proof Copy v4

as highlighted above, IK is the set of tangible skills and knowledge of how to actually live on the land, gaining sustenance from and surviving in nature – how to hunt and gather food and medicines, how to read the weather to know when to seek shelter, how to be mindful and careful of the balance of nature, etc. This is the knowledge of place for the care of one's physical self, providing the essentials of life – food, clothing, and shelter (i.e., "skill development" in Figure 3). The literature has labeled this Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which has become relevant in the contemporary arena of environmental resource planning and management (Berkes, 2008; Ellen et al, 2000; Folke, 2004; Huntington, 2000; McGregor, 2004a, 2004b, 2009).

Figure 3: The Feather as an Illustration of the Two Facets of Indigenous Knowledge[23]

Intertwined with this knowledge of place, on the other side of the feather, is knowledge of caring for spirit, knowing one's place within Creation. This involves reciprocity inherent in relationships, how to care for all our relatives and ourselves. Resonating here are words Mooshum's teacher and mentor shared with me at one of my first spring ceremonies: "Take care of 'the land' and 'the land' will take care of you."[24] This side of the feather includes the foundational values, philosophies, and spirituality inherent within IK and is knowledge for "human development," informing how to live intentionally with reciprocity – that is, consciously and conscientiously – in balanced relationship with 'the land.' Ceremonial protocols are wholly integrated with everyday routines as everyday living and ceremony are one and the same. Pre-contact, this is how

23. Adapted from: Thrasher, M. 1987. Blue Book (unpublished material for workshops).
24. Anonymous Elder, personal communication, 1987.

Proof Copy v4

life in North America was lived. This holistic philosophy to life is the Indigenous people's way of knowing and seeing the world. Both knowledge for skill development and human development are required to sustain life. Put another way, in relation to Figure 3, one cannot fly with half a feather.

What Western society has tended to do, since colonization began, is the practice of decontextualization (Ellen et al, 2000; McGregor, 2004a, 2004b, 2009). Decontextualizing Indigenous knowledge disconnects the physical from its spiritual aspects. Nadasdy (1999) labels this "distillation" (p. 7), the separation of knowledge from people and place. McGregor (2004a) explains that Indigenous knowledge is "required to fit into the existing framework designed to fulfill the needs of Western ideals" (p. 59), thus limiting the scope of a study to TEK. That is, research projects most often, if not always, have ignored the less tangible, more-than-physical aspects of IK, showing preference for empirical knowledge of plants and animals and dismissing the existence of a metaphysical[25] factor in their equations. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) speak of how dominant society has tended to treat "Indian science" separately from "Indian religion" (p. 2), failing to understand that: 1) Indigenous spirituality is not a religion but a way of living (i.e., a way of knowing and being in the world in balanced relationship); and 2) spiritual knowledge and skills knowledge are parts of one whole, neither of which ought to be dealt with separately or in isolation.

This last point harkens back to the image of the feather that illustrates the holistic, multidimensional, and relational essence contained within Indigenous knowledges. Indigenous knowledges affirm the presence of spirit throughout all Creation. Modern Western science has dismissed this understanding, which Indigenous peoples have established over millennia through experience

---

25. The word "metaphysical" is used in this chapter to mean "transcending physical matter," as defined in the Oxford Dictionary (retrieved March 23, 2014 from: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/). Hence, "metaphysical" and "spiritual" are similar in that they refer to the spirit world and things we cannot see, acknowledging the mystery within Creation. Its use here does not refer to the philosophical branch of metaphysics, which Deloria and Wildcat (2001) define as "the set of first principles we must possess in order to make sense of the world in which we live" (p. 2). Significant distinctions exist between Western and Indigenous metaphysics. Indigenous metaphysics is a holistic integration of time, place, and being, where being is understood to include the life force or spiritual power pervasive throughout Creation, and subjective experience with place through time contributes to understanding the relationality at the core of existence (Deloria and Wildcat, 2001). Western metaphysics holds separate spirit from science. More comprehensive explorations into Western and Indigenous metaphysics are found in Deloria, 1973; Deloria and Wildcat, 2001; and Dolores Calderon's dissertation (2008), *Indigenous Metaphysics: Challenging Western Knowledge Organization in Social Studies Curriculum*.

Proof Copy v4

with the world and cosmos. While beneficial contributions by modern Western science have been significant in advancing world knowledge in important ways, Indigenous ways of knowing maintain that sole adherence to reductionist and positivist thinking, devoid of spirit, has significant limitations and is an incomplete view of the world.

To reiterate the observation in the opening paragraph of this chapter, Western peoples once had a strong, spiritual connection to place and their cultures and ways of being were integrally linked to where they lived, just as with Indigenous peoples. In fact, we were all Indigenous to our places of origin at one time in history. A disconnect occurred, however, severing this integrated human-nature relationship for some of the world's peoples (Cajete, 1994). How did this occur?

Western civilization's ancient view of nature respected spiritual and reciprocal qualities of the human-nature interdependence (Glacken, 1967; Nash, 1982; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Glacken (1967) notes that the pre-Socratic Greeks, in their Classical texts, were the first to articulate in writing an acknowledgement of human-nature interdependence. Judeo-Christian constructs developed during the Middle Ages promoted people's dominion over the earth, which led to framing nature as having "no reason for existence save to serve man" (White, 1973, p. 274). An interdependent human-nature perspective was replaced with domineering philosophies regarding the utilitarian purpose of nature and of humans as separate and distinct from nature (McKibben, 2006; Suzuki and McConnell, 1997; Vining, Merrick and Price, 2008; White, 1967; Williams, 2010). White (1967), Livingston (1994), Shepard (1982), Diamond (2005) and others mark the Medieval onset of this separation and superiority of humans over nature roughly at the time when Western peoples began gathering in permanent settlements and began relying on increasingly intensive and technology-driven agriculture and animal domestication to feed their growing populations (Livingston, 1994).

Livingston (1994) refers to this alienation as humanity's domestication, a term he uses to describe the dissociation of people from place over time and loss of spiritual kinship with nature. He correlates humanity's domestication with the development of Western civilization, questioning the meaning of "civilization" when it has yielded an unhealthy, consumptive, technology-centred ideology. Dominant Western society into the twenty-first century has progressed along this disconnected vein separating spirit and place.

Indigenous knowledge, which was once dismissed out of hand, is now being recognized as having some value in government and scientific research initiatives. Conventional environmental and natural resource management processes are attempting to adapt decision-making and program implementation to incorporate Indigenous knowledges. Some examples include the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Southeast Baffin Beluga Co-Management Committee, the

Proof Copy v4

Beverly-Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, the Ruby Range Sheep Steering Committee in the Yukon, among numerous other initiatives (Nadasdy, 2005; Stevenson, 2004; Wenzel, 2004; White, 2006).

Unfortunately, however, the whole of IK (i.e., knowledge of both spirit and place) is not what interests these organizations that are rooted in scientific method and reductionist inquiry. That is, they have chosen to consider only information which they deem important, that being TEK which is "easily digested by and integrated into Western scientific thought and praxis" (Stevenson, 2004, p. 70). As Stevenson (2004) explains,

> The practice to date, with rare exception, has been to 'cherry-pick' specific elements of TEK, most notably, specific environmental knowledge, from their broader context and to merge them with Western science to inform [environmental resource management initiatives] (pp. 70-71).

White (2006) concurs with Stevenson's assessment:

> [IK] is a far broader concept than TEK . . . , encompassing as it does analyses and prescriptions for all manner of social interaction among people as well as deeply spiritual and philosophical precepts (often implicit and unspoken). . . . [W]hile significant strides have been made . . . towards giving due attention to TEK, the more fundamental aspects of [IK] collide head-on with the bureaucratic matrix . . . (p. 405).

The overriding outcome is that, through this de-coupling or decontextualization, the holistic benefits of Indigenous knowledge are lost, compromising the efficacy of the TEK that is being shared in good faith. Explaining this problem of decontextualization, Spak (2005) shares perspectives held by LaDuke (1994) and Little Bear (2000) who stress the centrality of the spiritual dimension of IK and of the "interrelationships between all entities" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 77). Spak (2005) summarizes the dominant tendency to de-couple TEK from its spiritual dimension, observing:

> From the perspective of many Western resource biologists . . . such fundamental beliefs of Indigenous Knowledge are viewed as religious beliefs that should be separated from the physically observable information they have in mind if they are to believe in the validity and importance of TEK in the first place (p. 234).

Limiting IK to what Western scientists "have in mind" underscores the ongoing dominance of Eurocentric attitudes and beliefs in dictating what is deemed useful and valuable and contributes to the assimilation of Indigenous knowledges (McGregor, 2004b). To some Indigenous authors, this smacks of

Proof Copy v4

further efforts at modern-day colonization (McGregor, 2004b; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). In fact, some authors note that it would be more efficacious to integrate Western knowledge into Indigenous knowledge systems as opposed to the conventional converse (Ellis, 2005; White, 2006). If this type of decolonization were to occur, the learning that is possible by respecting the whole of IK, keeping spirit and place interconnected, is significant. As Cajete (1994) affirms:

> For Indigenous people around the world, education in Nature is life. For Native people throughout the Americas, the paradigm of thinking, acting, and working evolved *through* their established relationships to Nature. The foundation, expression, and context of Indigenous education were environmental. . . All were inspired through an integrated relationship of living in the reality of their physical environments . . . [T]he natural world was a sacred pathway of knowledge, of learning and teaching the nature of being truly human, truly alive (pp. 87-88).

The natural world is still a pathway of knowledge, of learning and teaching. The challenge lies in "raising the consciousness" of all peoples, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, as articulated by such authors as John Mohawk (Barreiro, 2005) and Paula Gunn Allen (Allen, 1992), among others. While Indigenous peoples wish to see their knowledges respected as contributing to truth, the predominance of modern Western science holds fast to a binary dualism that decontextualizes Indigenous knowledge and separates all things from their spirit. Secularity and objectivity are endorsed as truth, as sole requirements for accessing truth at the expense of a holistic view that includes not just the physical but also the metaphysical. Failing to acknowledge the full meaning of holism, which includes spirit, renders unsustainable the dominant Western construct and dims our future prospects for environmental, social, and economic health, that is, for sustainable living.

Indigenous Holism

Up to this point, the chapter has presented an introduction to how Indigenous peoples' connection with the environment is grounded in Creation, and how their deep connection with place is rooted in an Indigenous view of time integrated with place. Many authors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, make mention of this holistic way of knowing (Allen, 1992; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Mohawk in Barreiro, 2010; Lyons in Akwesasne Notes (2005); Wilson, 2008; Weber-Pillwax, 2003; Wheeler, 2003; McGregor, 2004b; Sheridan & Longboat, 2006), and identify various attributes related to circularity, adaptability to change, balance, vitality, and relationality.

Indeed, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples appreciate these inter-relationships. An intent of this chapter is not to perpetuate a binary dual-

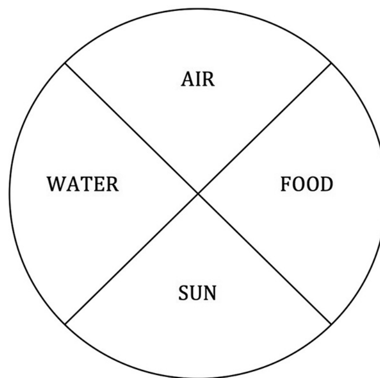
Proof Copy v4

istic ideology where Indigenous knowledge systems and Western knowledge systems are seen to hold widely disparate or even contradictory views, or where one is regarded as the "truth" and superior to another. Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges can be understood to exist along a single continuum (or in one circle) of knowledge, all-encompassing of the diverse range of knowledge that is both present and possible. Elements of Indigenous holism are found within Western and other worldviews, and vice versa. Indigenous holism maintains that contributions from all knowledge systems are vital contributors to the whole of global knowledge, and as much information as possible is crucial for better decision-making and improving chances for survival and sustainability. What follows is a summary of Indigenous holism, which is grounded in Medicine Circle learnings and highlights further how Indigenous knowledges are grounded in Creation, underscoring Indigenous peoples' integral connection with 'the land.'

We are All Part of One Circle

With its circular shape, the Medicine Circle reflects and teaches the holistic nature of all Creation. That is, we are all part of Creation and, therefore, part of one circle – all peoples, all beings, all lands and waters. We all abide and endure in this one circle, which is our home. Figure 4 illustrates how we are all part of this one whole in the sense that each of the four directions of the Medicine Circle – or put another way, another facet of a Medicine Circle – reveals the four gifts upon which our very lives depend. Without them, we do not exist; they sustain us. So, in essence, they are our relatives.

Figure 4: Facet of a Medicine Circle Showing Our Relatives: Elements for Life



All Our Relations

One view of the Medicine Circle is that all humans exist within one circle of

Proof Copy v4

being in accordance with the laws of nature. Very simply, these laws state that we would perish if we had no plants or animals to eat, no warmth, no water to drink or air to breathe. Deny us just one of these gifts, we cease to exist. Our very essence is wholly composed of and reliant upon nature. Even if we live in an urban setting, our lives are dependent upon the life-giving sustenance of these four original gifts found in nature. In this way, we are not separate from nature – nature is within us and all around us. Think about it for a moment. When we breathe the air, when does the air become our breath? The phrase "all our relations" reflects the reality that there is no separation between nature and human beings. We are one and the same, wholly integrated. We are, indeed, all related to all that gives us life, and Indigenous knowledges uphold the centrality of this fact, rooting us to the place we call home in a most corporeal sense. Relating this physical reality to temporal terms, our continued existence depends on caring for our relatives (i.e., plants, animals, earth, water, air, etc.), and living in such a manner as to sustain them; in so doing, we sustain ourselves over time. Whenever Indigenous peoples say "all my relations" or "all my relatives," they are reaffirming the relatedness of human beings with *all* of Creation and the dependence of all human beings upon maintaining these relationships.

The holism of Indigenous ways of knowing is also reflected in the reciprocity inherent in life's natural cycles. The four gifts of Creation are most generous in the life-sustaining energy and vitality they provide. In life, the Medicine Circle teaches the importance of reciprocating Creation's generosity through caring behaviour. In death, we return to the earth and replenish the soil, feeding the life that comes after us. The continuous circularity and reciprocity in life perpetuate all Creation.

Connection with Place

"Take care of 'the land' and 'the land' will take care of you." As mentioned, I first heard these words when I was visiting with the Elder leading one of the first spring ceremonies I attended, Mooshum's Elder and mentor. Since then, I have heard this said in different ways by different Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders, including Indigenous professors at various universities. This statement carries with it many meanings. First, the mutual relationality and reciprocity between human beings and 'the land' is clear. Second, by taking care of 'the land,' spending time with it, learning its ways, one is able to learn not only about the land and its cyclical rhythms, but also about oneself. Here, 'the land' is the teacher. After all, spending time with 'the land' is how Indigenous peoples developed their Medicine Circles as tools and guides in the first place.

"Being on the land" may take different forms. Living on the land is one way, gathering, hunting, trapping and fishing. Holding ceremonies is another. Pre-contact, these were one and the same, and in some places today they

Proof Copy v4

undoubtedly still are. That is, the practice of living on the land includes the conscious acknowledgement of Creation in all of life. For example, the hunt is incomplete if the life and spirit of the hunted animal go unacknowledged. Gratitude is expressed in infinite ways – for the animal sharing its life and providing sustenance to others; for the sun rising each day and providing warmth and light; for water's life force and cleansing, thirst-quenching gifts; for Creation in general for its ceaseless and unselfish giving so that we may live, to name just a few.

Separating daily routines of life from this spiritual aspect to living in conscious gratitude is not possible in a traditionally Indigenous worldview, which does not distinguish the physical from the metaphysical. Indigenous peoples do not accept that this world is devoid of spirit. Returning to the feather in Figure ¬3, a bird cannot fly with its feathers cut in half. By extension, spirit and place together constitute the whole of Creation. Granted, this connection has been frayed with the effects of colonization. European settlers brought with them not only unfamiliar diseases and a superiority complex, but also a worldview predicated upon scientific inquiry and rational thought where science is distinct from anything having to do with spirit and Creation's unseen life forces (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Orr, 1999). Through colonization and cognitive imperialism, (Battiste & Henderson, 2000), this worldview of dominant Western society has spread around the globe. In Canada, the residential school system toiled to erase Indigenous cultures and replace them with Eurocentric thought (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Dickason & McNab, 2009).

Time and Place Intertwined

One Eurocentric concept that has swept the globe is linear, progressive time. From an Indigenous perspective, time has always been connected to place, to nature. To be sure, contemporary Indigenous peoples have adapted to Western clock-time and digital time; however, the cycles of the seasons continue to inform their ways of knowing and being. For example, as discussed earlier, the Medicine Circle presents a process through time and space that may be used to guide everyday living. This process could not have been learned by the ancestors all those millennia ago without focusing and utilizing their time to pay close attention to where they lived. By studying the movement of the sun and stars, observing the changing seasons in relation to the phases of the moon, the ancestors developed a close relationship with the rhythms of their territory. Their knowledge deepened over the centuries through their ceremonial way of life as well as trial and error in their struggles to survive. Valuing how time and place are interconnected has served Indigenous peoples well, as respect for this relationship has helped sustain them over millennia.

So, just as Western society appreciates both linear and cyclical notions of time, Indigenous peoples understand linear time while maintaining the value of time's cyclical nature. Whether through ceremonies or living on the land, or

Proof Copy v4

a combination of both (as for many the two are still inseparable), Indigenous peoples have striven to keep their knowledges alive. Indeed, Indigenous knowledges have accumulated over the ages through the care and transmission from one generation to the next by Elders, sustaining their peoples and continuing their circles across the ages. Elders who dedicate their lives to sustaining their cultural and ceremonial knowledge hope the youth, as they become adults, will be ready to be entrusted with the responsibility and carry it forward to the next generation, continuing the circle.

This is not without its challenges. From being uprooted from their lands during the western migration of European settlers to the impacts of residential schools, Indigenous peoples have suffered numerous hardships and tragedies that are only now being told more forthrightly through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (2015). Second generation impacts are reverberating through communities and technological innovations' attention-grabbing devices are distracting youth from learning their traditional ways.

Even so, young and old, Indigenous peoples maintain the importance of honouring their pasts and maintaining their cultures as best as possible. Their innate connection with 'the land,' and their awareness of seven generations thinking, contribute to a general recognition to evaluate how actions today may affect generations yet to come. The IdleNoMore movement is an example of Indigenous peoples standing up to protect the land, water and air for present and future generations, knowing, as Adam (1995) has pointed out, some impacts from living in "machine time" are seemingly "irreversible" (p. 95). Future generations are subject to impacts from today's actions. Hydraulic fracturing is contaminating the air and groundwater; Oil Sands are polluting the air and waterways; and radioactive-contaminated groundwater from Fukushima continues to seep into the Pacific Ocean (not to mention the spent radioactive fuel rods accumulating from other nuclear fission plants). These are just a few present-day legacies that impact sustainability from local to global scales.

Medicine Circle learnings, according to Cree-Nishnaabe ways of knowing, discuss time in terms of relational responsibilities and reciprocity. To reiterate, if one fails to take time to be mindful and caring, any relationship is likely to suffer, including our relationship with our environment.

Other-than-human beings – the four-leggeds, the winged ones, the crawlers and swimmers, trees and plants – innately know to follow these original instructions. Similarly, having learned by observing natural law, Indigenous peoples, pre-contact, respected this reciprocal relationship. Gratitude for life was expressed in everyday living; ceremony was wholly integrated into Indigenous ways of being throughout each day. Not just words, but also attitudes and behaviours fulfill one's responsibility to live each day with respect and care, sharing with Creation and living in balance with other beings, human and non-human. Living this way, everyday living was and remains a ceremony.

Recognizing that time is clearly needed to care for relationships, our depen-

Proof Copy v4

dence on technologies has had a profound impact on healthy human-nature relationships. That is, modernity's penchant for more and more technology, rather than freeing up more of our time, actually has had quite the opposite effect for the vast majority in dominant society. With more gadgets in our homes, in our hands, our time is spent using and exploring technology, distracting us from ourselves, our families, and from the places where we live (De Graaf et al, 2005; Louv, 2008; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Rifkin, 1987; Robins & Webster, 1999; Urry, 1994). Serious issues for the health and well-being of our children, for example, are becoming apparent in what has been called a "nature deficit disorder" (Louv, 2008). Shepard (1982) labels this humanity's "arrested development." Louv (2008) warns of disturbing trends, such as obesity, attention disorders, and depression with today's "wired generation."[26] He shares research that highlights the importance of time spent in nature as essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of both children and adults. Decades earlier, Shepard (1982) comes to a similar conclusion in his book, *Nature and Madness*, asserting that time in nature is central to the maturing of the whole person.

Rifkin (1987) provides a synopsis of humanity's changing temporality through the ages:

> Our early ancestors coveted the circle, perceiving time as eternal return, a ceaseless repetition of an endless cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. Later, as ritual consciousness gave way to religious consciousness, the vertical line of spiritual ascent replaced the circle in the Western portion of the globe as men and women looked skyward for their temporal inspiration. During the short reign of historical consciousness, the horizontal line of progress ruled as the undisputed signature of the period. Now, still in the early decades of psychological consciousness, it is the spiral that commands our attention. It is the new symbol of creation captured in both the double helix and in the cybernetic vision where feedback loops simulate new worlds pulsing in the crevices of millions of silicon chips. With each new time-reckoning and time-ordering system, humanity has distanced itself farther and farther from the rhythms of nature (pp. 221-222).

The above quote emphasizes all of humanity's ancient history as hailing back to a time with a deep connection with place. Yet, as Rifkin (1987) points out, because of our changing relationship with time and place:

26. Retrieved April 22, 2014 from: http://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/.

Proof Copy v4

> . . . the distance we set between ourselves and the rest of creation has left us far removed from the rhythms of intimate temporal participation. We gained perspective, and in the process we lost touch with the ground of our temporal being. Our knowledge has been our alienation (pp. 222-223).

Does this mean we should unplug ourselves and return to life 'in the bush,' restoring our connection to the land to live once again in respectful harmony with Creation? As attractive as this may be for some, the unrealistic and impractical nature of this proposal is clear (Brennan, 2007; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Sveiby, 2009). Battiste and Henderson (2009) admit:

> Neither IK nor the Indigenous perspectives is invoking a return to the past; rather they are a challenge to sustain knowledges, renew our understanding of our relationship with the natural world, reconnect to the spiritual dimension of being, and reshape the institutions and processes that shape our lives with our renewed understandings" (p. 9).

The Western "institutions and processes that shape our lives," for the most part, have focused knowledge production on advancing technologies in the pursuit of being faster and achieving greater efficiencies, rather than fully considering implications for our survival and well-being. From an Indigenous perspective, this approach is unbalanced, for care with technology is required. Being care-full (i.e., full of care rather than care-less) in our development and application of technology, using it in a balanced way for the benefit of all Creation (rather than solely for a limited segment of humanity), is necessary in the search for a return to a respectful, sustainable relationship with nature.

Change, Adaptability, and Balance

The Medicine Circle has numerous learnings about being care-full and care-less. With respect to adapting to and adopting new technologies, Mooshum has emphasized in numerous discussions the importance of *change* in Indigenous knowledge.[27] The Medicine Circle itself is a framework for facilitating change, helping one to clarify issues, reasoning through an analysis that includes thoughts and feelings, and developing plans for modifying behaviours. If Indigenous peoples had not adapted with the times, they and their ways of knowing would have died long ago.

Allen (1992) echoes this beneficial advantage of IK's inherent adaptability when she speaks of the importance of oral tradition:

27. Thrasher, M. personal communication, February 2012.

Proof Copy v4

> . . . oral tradition is vital; it heals itself and the tribal web by adapting to the flow of the present while never relinquishing its connection to the past. Its adaptability has always been required, as many generations have experienced (p. 45).

Hunn (1993) concurs with Allen:

> . . . traditions are enduring adaptations to specific places . . . . Traditions are the products of generations of intelligent reflection tested in the rigorous laboratory of survival. That they have endured is proof of their power (p. 13).

While tradition and change may, on the surface, appear contradictory, the need to be constantly adapting to changes in the surrounding environment (including natural, social, political, and economic changes) is of central importance to anyone's survival. For Indigenous peoples and their ways of knowing, Berkes (1999) observes, ". . . traditional does not mean an inflexible adherence to the past; it simply means time-tested and wise" (p. 4). Indigenous peoples have, through time and space, survived across the millennia specifically because their ways of knowing and being dictate the central necessity of adaptability. When new technologies are developed or introduced that propose to make life and survival easier, Indigenous ways of knowing welcome the new information. Through a care-full analysis (i.e., taking time and applying the methodology of the Medicine Circle), how best to adopt the new technology and integrate it into society while maintaining a respectful balance within Creation is assessed. Because it is a circle, the Medicine Circle may be applied iteratively to review a technology's impacts and benefits, eliciting adjustments as necessary.

In fact, another facet of a Medicine Circle outlines a process for change that is grounded in the original gifts of Creation. Figure 5 illustrates how the Medicine Circle is a facilitator for change, enabling human beings to adapt to the ever-fluid circumstances around them. Beginning in the east, with vision comes respect for the many different issues that may arise when considering a change, such as adopting a new technology. "Talk About It" is the clarification of the issue at hand. "Pray About It" is unlike the Judeo-Christian understanding of prayer; it is taking the time to further reflect on the issue and uncover any hidden layers to the problem or question. "Get Organized" is the analysis - the reasoning that is pursued as one develops a plan of action. "Get Mobile" is the implementation of the plan and moving toward balance or re-balancing. Revisiting the different arcs of the circle iteratively as the plan is being mobilized enables one to review progress, identify unanticipated consequences, revise the plan, and make further changes. I first heard these four phrases - Talk About It, Pray About It, Get Organized, and Get Mobile - at my first ceremo-

Proof Copy v4

nies. The Elder (Mooshum's Mentor and Elder) repeated them over and over. Only years later did I come to understand these words as wholly connected with the Medicine Circle, the four original gifts of Creation, and the laws of nature.

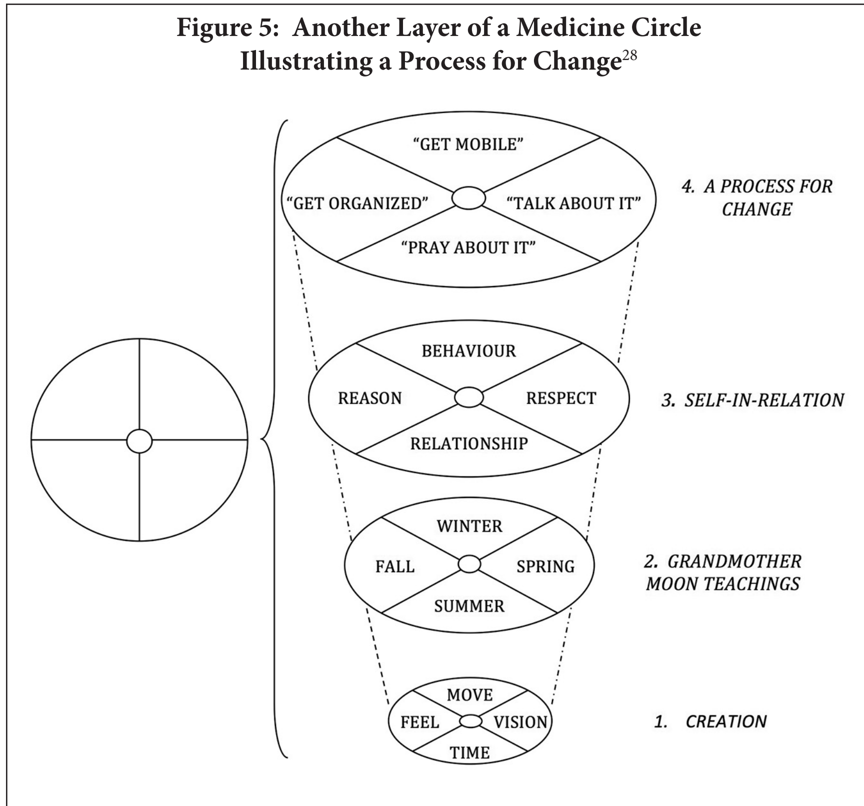


Figure 5: Another Layer of a Medicine Circle Illustrating a Process for Change[28]

To be sure, Western constructs espouse similar assessment processes, albeit using different words. The distinctness of this Indigenous process becomes evident when Medicine Circle learnings associated with each direction and gift are understood. As explained at the outset, however, only so much may be conveyed through the written word. Learning through the oral tradition has the potential to yield a depth of knowledge and wisdom that embodies the core principle of practicing deep care for "all our relations," which may be summarized with the already mentioned term "being care-full." This chapter, unfortunately, is limited in its ability to reveal the depth of holism contained

28. See Footnote 19.

Proof Copy v4

in this dynamic Indigenous model, the Medicine Circle. Still, beginning with expanding awareness, this chapter aims to establish an appreciation for the strong connection Indigenous peoples have with 'the land' and how this connection is grounded in more than what simply meets the eye at first glance.

360-Degree Vision

This chapter's aim has been to expand our appreciation for Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing so that we may discern with greater respect the strong connection Indigenous peoples have with 'the land.' James Dumont's description of Indigenous ways of knowing as "another way of 'seeing the world'" (1992, p. 75) resonates further with and provides additional insight into the notion of Indigenous holism.

James Dumont (1992) observes: "Quite simply, if we are not willing to consider another way of 'seeing the world,' and take it seriously, we limit ourselves . . ." (p. 75). Dumont shares an account given by an Elder to describe the two worldviews. The Elder talks about the "White Man's" 180-degree vision – a "linear" road that offers "knowledge and growth through accumulation and mounting of all that could be seen ahead" (p. 75). The "Red Man's" 360-degree vision, while "less attractive materially and quantitatively," is a circular vision that seeks to "perceive and understand the whole nature of an object or event – its physical reality as well as its soul" (p. 75). Dumont (1992) concludes by noting "it is the one who chose the straight-ahead-vision who must recognize the ultimate value in the all-around-vision, and, must see the necessity of returning to this . . . total way of 'seeing the world'" (pp. 75-76).

This "total way of seeing the world" may be described as having at least three dimensions, all of which have been touched upon throughout this chapter. The 'past-future' dimension recognizes the importance of traditional knowledge and strives to ensure its transmission to future generations through oral tradition. It also includes the practice of 'seven generations thinking,' where actions that are being considered are decided in such a way as to avoid impacts for seven generations into the future. The 'internal-external' dimension involves assessing an issue from as many points of view as possible, not discounting any perspective or piece of information, and requires a look inward, reflecting on intuition, reason, and feelings. Finally, the 'seen-unseen' dimension acknowledges "all our relations" and the importance of what we see around us, what is measurable, as well as what cannot be seen but is known to exist, appreciating and respecting the mysteries of Creation. This speaks to our metaphysical reality, the energy that flows through all of us and all Creation, what some regard as the "spirit energy" of Creation and is not to be confused with either religion or the paranormal and supernatural in popular culture.

Relationship-Building and the Oil Sands and Beyond

Much of this chapter has been an exploration of how Indigenous peoples' con-

Proof Copy v4

nection with their lands is grounded in not only deep knowledge of their traditional territories, but also ancestral wisdom that is itself rooted in Creation, instructing them how to live in respectful balance with 'the land.' Their care for this relationship has sustained them over millennia.

Guiding Indigenous peoples through extreme hardship across time and place, their wisdom is available for others to learn and apply in everyday living (at work and home), reinforcing the theme of Indigenous holism, which asserts that we are all part of one circle and all knowledges are meant for all peoples. In the case of the Oil Sands, the industry may well learn from an Indigenous perspective to be care-full/full of care in our relationship with the environment upon which we depend for our very lives.

Just as our human-nature interrelationship cannot be dismissed, the potential benefits from relationship-building with First Nations[29] can no longer be discounted. A purpose of this chapter has been to assert the benefits of two-way relationship-building. For effective relationships with First Nations peoples, one needs to know something about them – their communities, their knowledge systems and philosophies, 'the land' and why the environment is so important to them. First Nations peoples have already learned about Western knowledge. It is now incumbent upon Western society to reciprocate and learn about Indigenous knowledges.

Gaining a respect for Indigenous knowledges by spending time learning about them and incorporating their wisdom, rather than solely adhering to Western knowledge systems, is one avenue toward forging a more balanced relationship. Resource extractive industries, including the Oil Sands, may be able to overcome the difficulties currently being experienced by opening their eyes to another way of seeing and being in the world.

Failure to do so threatens to perpetuate the status quo, continuing to yield disheartening outcomes for the environment, First Nations communities, as well as for the Oil Sands industry in terms of its national and international respectability, or lack thereof. Greenwashed advertisements cannot fool the world and certainly do no good in protecting the environment. While local jobs have been created, corporate financial bottom lines are struggling, and their triple bottom lines are similarly duplicitous.

With these dismal results, perhaps, as the Medicine Circle teaches, change is unavoidable. No longer can "business as usual" persist. The time has come for the Oil Sands and other resource extractive industries to foster collaborative, two-way relationships with First Nations, and acknowledge that combin-

29. In reflecting on this chapter's applicability to the Oil Sands, attention is now drawn to First Nations communities (as opposed to Indigenous peoples in general) as they are most directly impacted by day-to-day industrial operations.

Proof Copy v4

ing Western and Indigenous ways strengthen the circle we share. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) concur, noting "... as we look ahead there is considerably more to be gained by combining insights than by ignoring them" (p. 65).

The southern direction of the Medicine Circle speaks of the importance of taking time to care for all our relationships, how in each relationship we have responsibilities and are accountable to "all our relations." All relationships may be regarded as two-way, reciprocal alliances. Each party is accountable to the other and shoulders responsibilities to respect and care for the other. If one side fails to fulfill their duties, the sustainability of the relationship (and in some instances life itself) is jeopardized. This is true for everyone's relationship with the environment, and it is true of the relationship between the Oil Sands industry and First Nations communities, as well as the Oil Sands industry and the air, water, and lands it impacts.

While this chapter has focused on room for improvement in relationship-building in the Oil Sands industry, the entire chapter applies to any resource extractive industry. In fact, any industry or sector of society,[30] in the spirit of reconciliation, is able to benefit from reaching out to local First Nations organizations and communities and learn about Indigenous ways of knowing. How does one go about the learning process? As Mooshum has suggested on more than one occasion,[31] anyone is able to learn on their own by spending time thinking about the Medicine Circle directions and applying the gifts in their everyday lives. While I have learned primarily through attending ceremonies, access to Indigenous knowledge is becoming more accessible through the academy, such as First Nations University of Canada and Indigenous Studies departments at many post-secondary schools (remembering that reading and talking about Indigenous knowledge raises awareness, but deeper understanding is gained by applying what is learned in everyday living).

While learning begins on an individual level, the benefits of learning move outward, like ripples in a pool of water. On an industry or sector level, this is realized by paying attention to the importance of process. Returning to the book's topic, in these changing times, the Oil Sands industry must adapt its processes to engage with First Nations in more reciprocal and inclusive ways. More time must be set aside to form stronger bonds with First Nations communities, and this requires a willingness to broaden the industry's perspective,

30. Such as, but not limited to, forestry, hydraulic fracturing, commercial fisheries, agriculture, hydroelectricity, fossil fuel and nuclear power, mining, and renewable energy, among others. In addition to the energy and resource sectors, other sectors include transportation, manufacturing, education, health and wellness, housing, construction, government, and infrastructure, among others.
31. Most recently, personal communication, September 6, 2015.

Proof Copy v4

examine Oil Sands operations from another's point of view, be open to learn from another way of knowing and adapt. This process takes time, but taking more time is obligatory in order to develop good relations with First Nations neighbours. As well, taking more time in the process of testing and implementing Oil Sands technologies is critical for operating in a care-full manner. The Oil Sands industry must live up to its responsibility to take care of 'the land,' so 'the land' may continue to take care of "all our relations."

In Closing . . .

In closing, I would like to acknowledge with deep gratitude the Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders with whom I have learned and continue to learn - for caring for this knowledge that has been passed down to them through a long line of Elders so that these ways remain alive and may be passed onto future generations. As a non-Indigenous person, I am deeply grateful for their trust and permission to share what I have come to understand, acknowledging I still have much to learn. This chapter has been a brief introduction to how Indigenous philosophies are grounded in Creation, how Indigenous peoples are connected with 'the land,' and why they hold so deeply their responsibilities of care for the environment. This new sight provides a foundation for respect. With mutual respect, relationships are strengthened.

Proof Copy v4

Bibliography

Adam, B. (1995). *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Akwesasne Notes (Ed.). (2005). *Basic Call to Consciousness*. Summertown, TN: Native Voices.

Allen, P.G. (1992). *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Barreiro, J. (2010). *Thinking in Indian: A John Mohawk Reader*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.

Battiste, M.A., & Henderson, J.Y. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich.

Battiste, M.A., & Henderson, J.Y. (2009). Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Eurocentric Education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 32*(1), 5-18.

Benton-Banai, E. (1988). T*he Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*. St. Paul, MN: Indian Country Press.

Berkes, F. (1999). *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Berkes, F. (2008). *Sacred Ecology* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Blondin, G. (1990). *When the World Was New: Stories of the Sahtu Dene*. Yellowknife, NWT: Outcrop, the Northern Publishers.

Bohm, D. (1980). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Brennan, J. (2007). Dominating Nature. *Environmental Values, 16*(4), 513-528.

Brokensha, D., Warren, D.M., & Werner, O. (1980). *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (1st ed.). Durango, CO: Kivakí Press.

Proof Copy v4

Calderon, D. (2008). *Indigenous Metaphysics: Challenging Western Knowledge Organization in Social Studies Curriculum*. (Ph.D. Dissertation). Los Angels, CA: University of California.

Code, L. (2006). *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

de Graaf, J., Wann, D., & Naylor, T. H. (2005). *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Deloria, V. (1973). *God is Red*. New York, NY: Grosset Y Dunlap.

Deloria, V., & Wildcat, D. (2001). *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Resources.

Diamond, J. (2005). *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Dickason, O. P., & McNab, D. (2009). *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (4th ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Dockstator, J.S. (2014). *Widening the Sweetgrass Road: Re/Balancing Ways of Knowing for Sustainable Living with a Cree-Nishnaabe Medicine Circle*. (Ph.D Dissertation). Toronto, ON: York University.

Douglas, V., Thrasher, M., & Rickett, K. (1995). *First Nations School of Toronto: A Culture Based Perspective on the Development of a Curriculum Framework*. Unpublished manuscript.

Dumont, J. (1992). Journey to Daylight-Land: Through Ojibwe Eyes. In D.R. Miller (Ed.), *The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies* (1st ed.) (Pp. 75-80). Craven, SK: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Press.

Ellen, R.F., Parkes, P., & Bicker, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*. Florence, KY: Gordon & Breach Publishing.

Ellis, S. (2005). Meaningful Consideration? A Review of Traditional Knowledge in Environmental Decision Making. *Arctic, 58*(1), 66-77.

Proof Copy v4

Ermine, W. (1995). Aboriginal Epistemology. In M.A. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds (Pp. 101-112). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Folke, C. (2004). Traditional Knowledge in Social-Ecological Systems. *Ecology and Society, 9*(3), 7.

Glacken, C. J. (1967). *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteeenth Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circleworks: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.

Hunn, E. (1993). What is Traditional Ecological Knowledge? In N.M. Williams & G. Baines (Eds.), *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Wisdom for Sustainable Development* (Pp. 13-15). Canberra, Australia: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University.

Huntington, H. (2000). Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Science: Methods and Applications. *Ecological Applications, 10*(5), 1270-1274.

LaDuke, W. (1994). Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Futures. Colorado *Journal of International Environmental Law and Policy, 5*(1), 127-148.

Lickers, H.F. (1997). Can't See the Forest for the Trees: A Native American's Perspective. In N. Baker (Ed.), *Biodiversity: Toward Operational Definitions: The 1995 Plum Creek Lectures* (Pp. 39-53). Missoula, MT: School of Forestry-University of Montana.

Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged Worldviews Colliding. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Pp. 77-86). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

Livingston, J. A. (1994). *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication*. Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books.

Louv, R. (2008). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Macnaghten, P., & Urry, J. (1998). In J. Urry (Ed.), *Contested Natures*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Proof Copy v4

McGregor, D. (2004a). Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sustainable Development: Towards Coexistence. In M. Blaser, H.A. Feit, G. McRae & IDRC (Eds.), *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects, and Globalization* (Pp. 72-91). New York, NY: Zed Books in association with International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, ON.

McGregor, D. (2004b). Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Our Future. *American Indian Quarterly, 28*, 385-410.

McGregor, D. (2009). Linking Traditional Knowledge and Environmental Practice in Ontario. J*ournal of Canadian Studies, 43*(3), 69-100.

McKibben, B. (2006). *The End of Nature*. New York, NY: Random House.

Nadasdy, P. (1999). The Politics of TEK: Power and the "Integration" of Knowledge. *Arctic Anthropology, 36*(1/2), 1-18.

Nadasdy, P. (2005). Transcending the Debate Over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism. *Ethnohistory, 52*, 291-331.

Nash, R. (1982). *Wilderness and the American Mind*. (3rd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Oelschlaeger, M. (1991). *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Orr, D. W. (1992). *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Post-Modern World*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Rifkin, J. (1987). *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History*. New York, NY: H. Holt.

Robins, K. and Webster, F. (1999). *Times of the Technoculture: From the Information Society to the Virtual Life*. London, UK: Routledge.

Sachs, W. (1992). *The Development Dictionary*. London, UK: Zed Books.

Shepard, P. (1982). *Nature and Madness*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Sheridan, J., &Longboat, R.D. (2006). The Haudenosaunee Imagination and the Ecology of the Sacred. *Space and Culture, 9*(4), 365-381.

Proof Copy v4

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous Peoples*. London, UK: Zed Books.

Spak, S. (2005). The position of Indigenous Knowledge in Canadian Co-Management Organizations. *Anthropologica, 47*(2), 233-246.

Stevenson, M. G. (2004). Decolonizing Co-Management in Northern Canada. *Cultural Survival Quarlerly, 28*(1), 68-74.

Suzuki, D.T., & McConnell, A. (1997). *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature*. Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books.

Sveiby, K. (2009). Aboriginal Principles for Sustainable Development as Told in Traditional Law Stories. *Sustainable Development, 17*, 341-356.

Thrasher, M. (1987). *Blue Book*. Unpublished manuscript.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Urry, J. (1994). Time, Leisure and Social Identity. *Time and Society, 3*(2), 131-149.

Vining, J., Merrick, M. S. and Price, E. A. (2008). The Distinction Between Humans and Nature: Human Perceptions of Connectedness to Nature and Elements of the Natural and Unnatural. *Human Ecology Review, 15*(1), 1-11.

Weber-Pillwax, C. (2003). I*dentity Formation and Consciousness with Reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Métis Indigenous Peoples*. (Ph.D. Dissertation). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Wenzel, G. (2004). From TEK to IQ: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit Cultural Ecology. *Arctic Anthropology, 41*(2), 238-250.

Wheeler, W. (2005). Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral Histories. In D. McNab & U. Lischke (Eds.), *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations* (Pp. 189-213). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Proof Copy v4

White, G. (2006). Cultures in Collision: Traditional Knowledge and Euro-Canadian Governance Processes in Northern Land-Claim Boards. *Arctic, 59*(4), 401-414.

White, L. (1967). The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Science, 155*(3767), 1203-1207.

Williams, J. (2010). Understanding the Place of Humans in Nature. In M. Reuss & S.H. Cutcliffe (Eds.), *The Illusory Boundary: Environment and Technology in History* (Pp. 9-25). Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Winner, L. (1986). *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press.