

# Pulling Together

## *Week 4: Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being*

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pDRpDjrBZE>

# *Check in...*

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- **Week 5: Thursday June 16<sup>th</sup> (Section 4: pg 51-61)**
  - Building an Indigenized practice through assessing your work in relation to TRC, UNDRIP, and other Indigenous policies in your PSI
  - Angie Tucker - Race and Ethnicity
- **Week 6: Thursday June 23<sup>rd</sup> (Section 5: pg 63-75)**
  - Closing with an Elder

# *Agenda for Today*

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1. Check in...
2. Special Guest: Jan Hare (Indigenous Policies, rights and land-based education and the 4 R's)
3. Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being
4. Story - "The Gambler"
5. Group Activity - Deconstructing "The Gambler"

# *Special Guest... Jan Hare!*

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*Indigenous Ways  
of Knowing*

## *Ontology/Epistemology*

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- These are Western concepts of philosophy and do not make sense within Indigenous Worldviews
- Instead of using this terminology, I suggest using:
  - Indigenous Ways of Being/Indigenous Worldviews (Ontology)
  - Indigenous Ways of Knowing/Indigenous Knowledges (Epistemology)

# *Problems with Western Thinking*

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- Patriarchal Knowledge: only white men can have objectivity
- Objectivity: based in mind/body split and logic of discovery
- Rationalism: human-centred paradigm and hierarchy of beings
- Ask only questions that support and reify these Western and settler colonial values (Moreton-Robinson)



# *Indigenous Ways of Knowing*

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- Indigenous Knowledges have at least these five characteristics (Castellano 2000)
  - Indigenous Knowledges are personal
    - There are multiple perceptions. It is an intersection of different voices and perceptions.
  - Indigenous Knowledges are orally transmitted
    - Oral Traditions ensures the collective nature of knowledge gathering. Telling stories creates complex narratives that are reflective of the context that they are told. This also connects us to the past through memory.
  - Indigenous Knowledges are experiential
    - Ex. Experiences on the Land. You cannot know without actually being there so that all senses are activated.
  - Indigenous Knowledges are holistic
    - Brings together inner and outer worlds (Physical and Spiritual)
  - Indigenous Knowledges are narrative
    - Uses metaphors to present moral choices and self-reflection

# *Sources of Indigenous Knowledges*

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Indigenous Knowledges evolve from:

1. Traditional Knowledge
  - a. A living chronicle of origins, trajectories and achievements of Indigenous Peoples
2. Empirical Knowledge
  - a. Careful observations and relationships to humans and non-humans. It is ecological and accumulated over time.
3. Revealed Knowledge
  - a. Sometimes revealed through dreams, visions, and intuition (Castellano 2000).

**Indigenous Knowledge is culture.  
Indigenous culture is knowledge.**

Indigenous Knowledges, therefore, are not exclusive to the physical world. It incorporates physical and sacred.



*Indigenous  
Ways of Being*

Indigenous Spirituality  
*Relationality*

# *Relationality*

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- *wâhkôhtowin*: the interconnectedness of our relationships
- *miyo-wîcêhtowin*: “having or possessing good relations” (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 14).
- These connections are also rooted in the concept of *pimâtisiwin*, which denotes life.
- All of these concepts inform how we relate to the Land.

# *Relationality x2*

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- Within Cree culture, the Land is wealthy but not material: it is a relation that has the “capacity to provide livelihood” (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 43). Our livelihood, then, revolves around our relations. It is a definition of family that involves “humans and non-humans, living and dead, physical and spiritual” (MacDougall 2010, 27).
- All of these aspects nurture our identity as Indigenous peoples, which makes place and land inseparable from community and family (Daschuk 2013; Innes 2013; Kermoal and Altamirano 2016; Peters and Andersen 2013; Ramirez 2007). We are all connected in this way.

# *Relationality x3*

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- To put it another way, the Land is our relation and should be treated like a brother, a sister, or an aunt. This ensures that we move forward together in a good way and protect it from being exploited.
- “If a maple is an it, we can take up the chain saw. If a maple is a her, we think twice” (Wall Kimmerer 2013, 57). How we are raised to treat each other plays into these governing structures. Generosity and reciprocity is crucial within Indigenous cultures on the Prairies (Bastien 2004; Cunsolo et al 2013; Hungry Wolf 1998; Kermoal and Altamirano 2016; Wall Kimmerer 2013).
- In Métis culture, as an example, generosity is highly valued. We were taught not to hoard. “If they have something they share all of it with each other, regardless of good or bad fortune” (Campbell 1973, 51). Likewise, I was raised on gift-giving. In fact, when my mother taught me how to cook, one of the major lessons was to always cook enough food in case someone knocked at your door. That way, you could always offer them something to eat.



# *Ceremony*

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- It is crucial to renew this relationship to ensure that we are continuing a good relationship. We do this through ceremony. Ceremonies are a way we “remember to remember” (Wall Kimmerer 2013, 5).
- For example, in harvesting Sweetgrass, by breathing in the air that surrounds us, the scent reminds us of what we may have forgotten. We are reminded that Sweetgrass is a ceremonial plant that provides us with baskets and medicine. It uplifts by filling our material and spiritual needs. In exchange, we participate in the Honorable Harvest, which dictates that we must not over pick, do not waste the harvest (use it well), be grateful, and pass these teachings on to our children so that they will learn to live in harmony with the Land (Wall Kimmerer 2013).
- Honouring these relationships ensures a reciprocal relationship that everyone will flourish in future years (Bastien 2004; Cunsolo et al 2013; Hungry Wolf 1998; Kermoal and Altamirano 2016; Wall Kimmerer 2013).

# *Ceremony x2*

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- Ceremony looks different to each Indigenous Nation. What is similar is that ceremony acts to renew and reinstate our relationship and responsibility to the Land (Bastien 2004). This governance is etched into Indigenous socio-political identities. These ceremonies act as Indigenous “collecting centers, or hubs, of urban Indian culture, community, identity, and belonging” (Ramirez 2007, 64).
- Going to a Powwow can often seem like a family reunion. It is a reason to get together, share stories, and reconnect with the Land. This reconnection takes place in a variety of ways, that I do not know enough to write about. From my minimal understanding, there are different dances that represent different stories. All dances connect individuals to the Earth with their feet contacting the Earth like a heartbeat. For the Women’s Fancy Shawl Dance, the dance is meant to symbolize a butterfly emerging into a cocoon. Powwow then is a way for us to connect with the Land, which is reinforced through visiting and stories.
- For urban Indigenous Peoples, it is the visiting that keeps them connected to the tradition, their identity, and therefore the Land (Peters and Andersen 2013, 15).

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In fact, urban Indigenous Peoples have maintained strong connections to the Land through: ceremony and Storytelling.

Perhaps more important than both of these concepts is visiting since it **overlaps everything that we do.**

# *Visiting*

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- Visiting also offers a space for intergenerational learning.
- This kind of knowledge transfer is typically the role of Indigenous women. They are stewards of the Land. They maintain the trails to specific berry patches and, through berry harvesting, they participate in Indigenous governance with the Land (Kermoal 2016, 120). Oftentimes, girls were kept at home so that the women could teach Cultural Protocol surrounding the Land and the culture
- Visiting is where we tell stories and stories have immense value in Indigenous cultures. Stories help us remember who we are and how we are related to the Land and impart philosophical tradition through the generations (Innes 2013; Wilson 2005).

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*Our parents spent a great deal of time with us, and not just our parents but the other parents in our settlement. They taught us to dance and make music on the guitars and fiddles. They cards with us, they would take us on long walks and teach us how to use the different herbs, roots and barks. We were taught to weave baskets from the red willow, and while we did these things together we were told the stories of our people-who they were, where they came from, and what they had done. (Campbell 1973, 20)*

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## **SPECIAL NOTE:**

Visiting is a crucial part of Indigenous cultures. If you are working with Indigenous communities, you must consider this as a part of relationship building.

**Get out your tea cups!**

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*“The  
Gambler”*



*What can we learn from  
“The Gambler”?*



*See you  
next week!*

**Week 5: Thursday, June 16th  
(Section 5: pg 51-61)**