

Pulling Together

Week 2- Meaningful Integration of Indigenous Epistemologies and Pedagogies



January 2023

Kenthen Thomas | kenthen_thomas@hotmail.com
Gabrielle Lamontagne | glamontagne@bccampus.ca
Tanya Ball | tcball@ualberta.ca

THE JERRY CANS



<https://youtu.be/5neft4S0nr0>

Check in...

- **Week 2: Thursday, January 19 (pg. 16-25)**
 - Meaningful Integration of Indigenous Epistemologies and Pedagogies
- **Week 3: Thursday, January 26 (pg. 27-35)**
 - Engaging with Indigenous Communities
- **Week 4: Thursday, February 2 (pg. 37-45)**
 - Incorporating Diverse Sources of Knowledge
- **Week 5: Thursday, February 9 (pg. 47-56)**
 - Developing Awareness of One's Own Role in Indigenization and Reconciliation
- **Week 6: Thursday, February 16 (pg. 58-65)**
 - Promoting Systemic Change

Agenda

- ◆ Welcome
- ◆ Check in
- ◆ Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being
- ◆ Indigenous Pedagogies
- ◆ Guest Speaker Kenthen Thomas – Educator and Storyteller
- ◆ Q & A

Ontology



Epistemology



Axiology

Ontology/Epistemology/Axiology

- 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)
 - Indigenous Axiology

Problems with Western Thinking

- 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 refit these Western and settler colonial values (Moreton-Robinson)

**Indigenous Epistemologies =
Indigenous Ways of Knowing**

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

- 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

**Indigenous Ontology =
Indigenous Ways of Being**

Indigenous ~~Spirituality~~—
Relationality

Relationality

- *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.

Reciprocity

- 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.
- 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).

Ceremony

- 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).
- 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).
- 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).

Visiting or *keeoukaywin*

- Space for intergenerational, intercultural learning
- Visiting is where we tell stories, which have immense value
 - Stories help us to remember who we are and how we are connected to our human and more than human relations

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!

**How do you incorporate Indigenous
Ways of Being and Knowing in the
classroom?**

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

- Get personal! Include pieces of yourself in your lectures.
 - Encourage students to do the same
- Include multiple Indigenous voices: this will push against the pan-Indigenous stereotype
- Tell stories: personal and traditional
- Create holistic assignments that include the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional sides of oneself
 - Create lectures that encourage students to use their body
- Self-reflection is important. This helps student to focus inward and prevent judgement/anxiety. It also helps with sensitive topics
- Include various resources as a part of your syllabus: assign podcasts, videos, Twitter threads, etc.

Relationality

- Encourage students to incorporate the Land as a part of their process
- Adapt your syllabus to include a policy on children
- Treat students how you wish to be treated. Dismantle the power dynamic in your classroom
- Create assignments with ceremony in mind. Revisit concepts multiple times over the course of the semester
- Center yourself before teaching. I do this with music!
- Be flexible with deadlines and understand that this class may not be a priority in student's minds.
- Create assignments that will assist them in their future careers and encourage them to share with each other
- Put your guard down. Have fun and laugh! The better time you are having, the students will follow suit

Visiting or keeoukaywin

- Offer space during class time for students to visit with each other. If students get off topic during group discussions -- that's okay! We are creating a safe space and a community.
- Invite students to visit guest speakers through field trips
- Take the time during one on one meetings to "catch up" and check in
- Encourage intergenerational learning with your assignments
- Bring food or have a potluck
- Bonus assignments for community engagement

Listen to the students!

They are the experts in how they learn effectively.
Adapt and change your teaching during the semester and change your syllabus afterwards.

Kenthen Thomas

Educator and Storyteller



*See you
next week!*

Week 3: Thursday, January 26
(pg. 27-35) Engaging with Indigenous
Communities