Navigating Indigenous Knowledge and Spirituality

"Indigenous Perspectives" - Monthly Broadcast on HealthyLife.Net
 # 21 –August 25, 2022
For audio podcast: http://www.ecologia.org/news/21.Navigating.mp3 (57min)

"Always Becoming featured in our Eastern meadow habitat at the National Museum of the American Indian" - Smithsonian Institution[1]

Segment One

Randy Kritkausky: Greetings, or may I say Bozho in Potawatomi, to those joining us for today's Indigenous Perspectives show. I'm Randy Kritkausky, an enrolled Potawatomi tribal member, and the co-host of Indigenous Perspectives.

Carolyn Schmidt: And I'm Carolyn Schmidt, the other co-host.

Indigenous Perspectives originates from Vermont in the United States, and is located on lands that the Abenaki people call N'dakinna. It's the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people, who for thousands of years have been stewards of the lands found here and across the border in Québec province in Canada.

[1] https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2022/08/24/five-ideas-for-celebrating-indigenous-peoples-day-2022/

Today's program is about "Navigating Indigenous Knowledge and Spirituality." Randy?

Randy: It is an understatement to say that we live in stormy times. Media stories and personal conversations routinely touch on themes of searching, dis-orientation, and anxiety about navigating daily challenges, not to mention finding a safe pathway through a foggy and uncertain future. Feeling lost in a stormy sea kind of sums up the emotional experience.

Carolyn: Many of us in mainstream culture, as well as those who are indigenous, are exploring fresh insights offered by a wide array of offerings and guidance by those who are, and some cases those who just claim to be bearers of indigenous knowledge and wisdom.

This raises intriguing and sometimes perplexing questions about who really is indigenous, who can speak with authority about indigenous wisdom, and if and how those in the mainstream can benefit from and even incorporate some of that wisdom into their own lives.

So, let's begin with an important question: who gets to be recognized as "indigenous"?

Randy: This is a really fraught topic in the indigenous community, but let me give a quick and slightly oversimplified view. Within Native American and First Nations communities in Canada, there are national legal norms governing how people can be recognized as indigenous and carry a government authorized tribal membership card. The rules are different in the two societies, and they actually have variances within those societies.

Carolyn: Yes, And Randy, I'll interject, just to clarify, as far as I know, in all these communities there's a sense that there's some physical heritage connection: either a blood quantum (a percentage of indigenous ancestry) or documented descent from an early member of the tribal group. So either way, there is some sense of heritage as a component of membership.

Randy: Right. In addition to these national legal norms, there are also tribal norms in some cases, which recognize people who don't meet national legal norms, but the tribe wants to recognize as members. And to make it even more complicated,

within these indigenous communities there is also a hierarchy. And that is a group within the community that is sometimes recognized as uniquely qualified to speak on specialized knowledge - it might be the elders, it might be a particular clan in a community, or it could be people that are referred to as members of the Longhouse, which is a very traditional component of the community. Sometimes the term Midewewin is used; that is a lodge of knowledge keepers and teachers.

So more broadly speaking, answering the question of who gets to be recognized as indigenous is an even more fraught topic of the tyranny of stereotypes. Unfortunately, a lot of what goes on in our society is that people who match stereotypes get recognized as being indigenous. In other words, you need to look like a Hollywood Indian in order to be recognized as someone indigenous! This has resulted in some really bizarre outcomes, such as the famous actor in Hollywood, "Iron Eyes" Cody, who starred in hundreds of films in Hollywood in which he was depicting Native Americans. He actually became America's image of what it means to look like an Indian. He was Italian. So, you know, needless to say, the stereotype doesn't work.

Another aspect of being recognized as authentic Native American comes from academia. More and more often now, scholars - some of whom are indigenous - write articles about who is and what is authentically indigenous. This adds another layer of complication.

And then finally we have this whole machine in our culture, which is based on marketing and social consensus and influencers, where people who may or may not be indigenous or accurately represent indigeneity, get recognized - because of their own marketing efforts - as indigenous.

Carolyn: Okay, so this broad range of defining indigeneity results in competing claims of knowledge. This is both within indigenous communities themselves and at the interface of the mainstream and indigenous communities. So first of all, there is Traditional Ecological Knowledge and its opposition or differences with Western science as a way of deciding how to know something. Randy, can you explore more about the Western science idea?

Randy: Yes, but first let me just back up and explain once again, this notion of traditional ecological knowledge, which is sometimes referred to as "tek" -T. E. K. in the abbreviation - is getting a lot of press lately. You know, it's all about indigenous people and how they know how to take care of the natural world sometimes better presumably than people in the mainstream. And it's counterposed to Western scientific knowledge, which is sometimes demonized, and the reason is that Western scientific knowledge does in fact make nature an object, an object to study, to be manipulated, to be manipulated in the marketplace.

But more importantly, in terms of the theme of this show, we *[in the dominant mainstream]* learn about nature by conducting experiments in the Western mode of thinking. We manipulate science. You know, we plant plants in one soil and plants in another soil and we compare the results and we publish it. And then we show the short term results. Very often not looking at the long term.

Carolyn: And on the other hand, the essence of Traditional Ecological Knowledge starts with the idea that the world of all the beings of nature, they're all, animate - they're not "things". So you have your on-the-ground observation and interaction with all the other beings, the plants, the animals, the insects, the ground, the birds, the rocks, and you're constantly interacting and constantly observing and constantly putting it all together. So Traditional Ecological Knowledge in this sense has a very important spiritual religious component. It's also highly localized. And it takes a very long term perspective. You have the communications and connections made directly with the natural world. Plants reveal their medicinal qualities to you as their gifts, sort of with your trial and error. And again, it links to a very strong view of the *[natural]* world as animate - not objects or "things."

Randy: And just to back up and clarify something really important, which can be confusing to our listeners because we're contrasting an indigenous worldview and a Western scientific worldview. Both views of gathering knowledge about the natural world - in fact, the human world - both respect and direct the attention of everyone to what scientists in the Western mode of thought call empirical observation. In other words, you just don't go out and jump to a conclusion. You're constantly checking what you think you know against what you can observe and other people can observe. So in some ways, despite these radical differences, what the two

modes of thinking share is a very high respect for the power of observation. And if anything, indigenous people in many ways are much keener observers of their local environment, as you were pointing out.

So this - the notion of introducing spirituality into ways of knowing something scientific - is where the two modes of thinking and knowing separate. And this can be very confusing because in the end, for indigenous people the ultimate arbiter, the ultimate source of knowledge, is Mother Earth. And as you pointed out, this sometimes means that we gain knowledge directly from communications, from engaging with the natural world. And this can boggle the minds of people who think only in a Western inanimate framework.

Carolyn: Yes. I'd point out also that just from my - my tentative understanding of this kind of communication, it's very deep and very subtle. For example, the Aborigines in Australia have a sense of communicating with the world of the Rock People, but it's not just every rock or all the time. It's the rocks that have particular power, and they kick in at particular moments of importance. So there's a lot of subtlety there that somebody who's trying to come in with an easy "Now I'll talk to the rocks" is just - just not going to do it.

Randy: So this notion of engaging with conversing, literally with an animate world, may stretch the credulity of many of our listeners. I have to say in my own life in recent decades, I've had to work through this multiple times. So the question is where - where do we begin? How do we deal with this issue of skepticism? And how do we deal with our own doubt when we hear a claim of someone saying "the Tree told me, the Brook told me, the Lake told me, the Forest informs us." ?

Well, part of the problem is that the range of doubt is grounded in our own social reality, the people around us. It's hard to even discuss this notion, if you're a scientist, with other scientists. Many of them have confidentially told me, "I don't dare discuss this openly. I don't dare write about this. I'd be driven out of the profession."

So we, we, we end up defaulting to the dominant cultural norm. So what we have in our culture right now - and I think it probably applies to many of our listeners - is a

broad continuum of people who are willing to entertain the possibility that nature communicates knowledge directly to us. At the one end of the continuum, we have people who may be somewhat overly credulous and will accept, on faith, any such claim without being skeptical. At the other end of the continuum, we have people who find it absolutely absurd; their scientific training dismisses this possibility, and they won't even count as a discussion of it. Most of us fall in the middle of this continuum with some degree of open-mindedness, but nevertheless, having some deep sense of skepticism. And that's what this show is aimed to address.

Carolyn: Yes, I can interject a, a personal experience that shows - I'm a falling-in-the-middle kind of person, but - how much social reality and a context can help us to de-gate or unlearn a lot of our hesitation when doing a connection with the natural world and the world, the world of the spirits of nature and feeling it real. In the Potawatomi naming ceremony that I had the privilege to be able to participate in, it felt very, very real. I felt a real sense of the Elder who was leading the ceremony communicating with the ancestor spirits. And I felt it was real; I didn't know ahead of time what I would feel, but it felt really real to me. So whatever enabled me to have that experience - again, I validated it just in my own, my own sense of it, if that makes any sense.

Randy: So what we're left with here is an age old problem dating back to the time of the *[ancient]* Greeks, which is, do we rely on people's passionate claims of their own subjective experience, or is there some objective way of verifying our subjective experience? Well, in most - maybe virtually all, but certainly most - spiritual or religious communities, there are specialized organizations, groups, individuals who claim to arbitrate claims of spirituality or revelations. As I mentioned earlier in indigenous communities, we have something called the Midewiwin, the elders who organize themselves to maintain traditional knowledge and who are called upon to deliberate and decide and give verdicts on what is offered as traditional, real, authentic knowledge.

In the Catholic Church, which is a big part of many indigenous communities in North America, the Catholic Church has an office called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which for hundreds of years has deliberated on, argued over, litigated: what is orthodox teaching? What is true teaching and what is error? So

someone who is suddenly a charismatic leader, who has a new take on doctrine - that person's claims are aired and skeptically scrutinized by the church.

Carolyn: So then you, then you have this whole question of an organization, with selected people who are considered the expert guardians, keeping the gates as to what's legitimate, and what's not. And this, of course, it puts down an individual experience that's taken out of the context of, of the whole group,

Randy: Unless they are recognized as a saint, which is a very difficult process and a pretty high bar to cross. And then your unorthodox new teaching is recognized. But this, as you are suggesting, is the exception and not the rule. It is generally the function of these bodies to maintain the orthodox teachings that have been around for sometimes generations and occasionally for centuries.

Carolyn: Okay. But, what about shamans? I think most people's image of a shaman is someone who's visited with extraordinary gifts of crossing over lots of barriers between different worlds. How are they - how are their claims verified or controlled? Or are they?

Randy: That's a really great question, given now the prominence of the discussion of shamanism and popular culture and academic literature. So let me give you an example. And what it basically boils down to is the role of community consensus, which is another social mechanism for resolving authenticity. And I'm going to refer here to the famous Lakota medicine man, Black Elk, about whom much has been written. When Black Elk was a child, he had an illness and during his illness, he had a vision which really just structured the rest of his life spiritually. The first thing his parents did was take him to the medicine man and say, this is what our child said happened. And what he saw. Is he crazy? Was he hallucinating? Is this real? In other words, they didn't buy it on the surface. They wanted the community to come together and to interrogate this young man. And they did. They determined that what he had had was a true revelation.

The same thing happens across the globe with shamans. They are often interrogated by their communities. A shaman may be paid to come into a family to resolve an issue they feel they have with their disgruntled ancestors who are bringing bad

health into the household. But before they believe what the shaman tells them, they will ask questions like what was Uncle so-and-so's favorite thing? They know that the answer was cigarettes. If the shaman says whiskey, they laugh and say, ah, you're not a real shaman. So we - we want to be very careful and respectful to understand that indigenous cultures have their own social mechanisms for resolving the question of what is real and what is not. They are not credulous to the point of being naive.

Carolyn: Well, Randy, that's an excellent segue into the upcoming next segment of our show, which is going to be about cultural appropriation, why it is a problem and how it can be avoided. So stay tuned; we'll be back in a minute. This is Indigenous Perspectives.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. This week's topic is "Navigating Indigenous Knowledge and Spirituality." And we're going to be talking in this segment about appropriation.

Randy: The issue of appropriation, I think, grows out of what we were discussing in the earlier segment. And it all revolves around the mainstream culture's interest in indigenous knowledge. And I have attended numerous events where someone in the audience who isn't indigenous will hear an indigenous speaker talk about their experience and their spirituality and say, "Well, gee, you know, if I talk about, if I write about, or if I participate in or recreate one of your ceremonies, is that cultural appropriation?" And that's a hot button issue for indigenous people. Let me explain what it is, so it doesn't become a barrier for people in the mainstream understanding, engaging and incorporating parts of indigenous knowledge into their lives.

Cultural appropriation is essentially cultural plagiarism. It's taking another culture's contribution and claiming it as your own without attribution of the source. It's simply theft.

Carolyn: And part of that is taking something very valuable to other - to the indigenous culture - and then taking it out of context and using it. Like an easy

example would be taking a dream catcher and hanging it on your car rear view mirror. On the one hand, there's nothing wrong with it. It's a nice gesture, makes the person feel good. But it's taking something that grew out of an indigenous culture and sort of trivializing it. And that can be highly offensive to someone for whom it has a deeper meaning.

Randy: It's particularly the case if the dream catcher is manufactured in China and sold in a souvenir shop, because that is displacing Native American people who would make and utilize these items in their own ceremonial life. So using stories, language, ceremony, so that it displaces the community that originated the practice or the knowledge, and does not allow them to benefit from that creation, that is appropriation. It's being disrespectful and not asking permission to use or quote or cite or retell a story.

Carolyn: And part of my understanding of why appropriation so can be so harmful is that it can benefit somebody who's not indigenous financially. And also by trivializing and distorting the meaning, it can really be profoundly damaging and displacing or erasing the whole - the people who developed the idea as part of their own spiritual and social world.

Randy: So to back up for a moment now, again, this notion of appropriation can be an enormous obstacle for people who are respectful of indigenous communities, and can make them either shy away from engaging in indigenous communities, attending indigenous community functions, for fear that they'll l be viewed as the settler colonist outsider who is unwelcome.

And in one of our previous shows, we actually had one of the guests who routinely attends a drumming circle and has for decades *[been]* attending drumming circles which consist primarily of indigenous people. And he was invited to attend. He does not say "Because I attend, I'm now indigenous." He doesn't pretend to take the leading role. He is a respectful, invited participant. That's the difference. If he went away and built his own drum and set it up and charged people who are not indigenous to come and join the drumming circle, that would be appropriation. But to write about, talk about, share with your friends, your neighbors and your family, the spiritual significance of having your heartbeat suddenly changed by the rhythm

of the drum - that's not appropriation. That is touching, feeling and connecting with an indigenous experience.

Carolyn: So I think also the point - general point about being respectful, giving credit to the idea this is not your own idea that you came up with - and also locating the knowledge or the action in its own context, its own time and place to have a deeper understanding of what you're trying to tap into. I think all these can be very useful guidelines.

Randy: One of the challenges, as you just mentioned, Carolyn , is to locate indigenous knowledge in its appropriate time and place. And taking it out of that time and place can mean that it just, sometimes simply doesn't work. It doesn't fit.

So we have examples to go back to this notion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, of foresters saying, "Oh gee, you know, Native Americans did burning the underbrush and the forest. That was their way of managing the forest. Gee, that's really wise, let's try it." And then we have, you know, the California and National Park Service people earlier this year, trying that experiment in California under entirely different context, 21st century climate change and, and heat and winds, and what do they do? They create forest fires instead of trying to prevent them. You know, that is the cost of misappropriating, misapplying, indigenous knowledge outside of its cultural context, outside of its time context, outside of its space context.

Carolyn: And in addition to the obvious physical harm that can happen in situations like Randy just described, there's also the - the psychic and deep wounding that can happen when, for example, anthropologists notoriously were digging up bones of Native American people, putting them in museums. Talk about taking an object, being disrespectful, taking an object out of context!

And a lot of very effective organizing for many Native American groups over the decades has been to advocate for and demonstrate for, and have direct action demanding the return of the bones of their members, so they could be respectfully buried. We're seeing this even happening today with the - the children who died at Canadian Indian residential schools. So it is a - it's a belated act of respect. But

obviously the deep problems of that kind of appropriation, I think cannot be - cannot be understated.

Randy: You're referring to literally physical acts of appropriation, which constitute theft. And that's, that's a pretty clear example and obviously needs to be avoided at all costs. But that's no reason to be intimidated when it comes to opportunities to learn from indigenous cultures.

Carolyn: Okay. On that note, we'll take a break. And then we'll be back with Segment Three.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives on the topic of "Navigating Indigenous Knowledge and Spirituality." We were just talking about all the problems that can occur when mainstream people appropriate - disrespectfully and out of context - creations by Native people or First Nations. And now we're going to look at a more positive way of outsiders respectfully understanding, and being able to access some of these, some of this wisdom.

Going to start with a quotation from noted advocate and philosopher, spokesperson for Native Americans, Vine Deloria, from his book "God is Red," originally published 1973. He's dealing with these issues very directly. And I will quote:

"….Yet in a variety of ways the American public, searching for a sense of authenticity that it cannot find in its own tradition, is turning to American Indians as it wishes to visualize them. It is not simply the nobility of the novelists or the tragic vision of the historians that America is seeking. In a very real sense, the quest is for the religious insight of American Indians and the feeling of authenticity that Indians present.

In seeking the religious reality behind the American Indian tribal existence, Americans are in fact attempting to come to grips with the land that produced the Indian cultures and their vision of community. Even if they avoid American Indians completely, those Americans seeking a more comprehensive and meaningful life are retracing the steps taken centuries before by Indian tribes as they attempted to come to grips with this land."

From pages 74 to 75 of Vine Deloria's "God is Red"[2].

Randy: These quotes magnificently emphasize the role of the land and place, which is a major theme in Vine Deloria's work. And we're going to come back to that in our final segment. But I want to digress for a moment and look at the title of the book that Carolyn quoted, which is "God is Red." Native Americans don't typically talk about God; that is a Western traditional notion of a deity. And in fact, Vine Deloria was a theologian as well as a Native American. And the beauty and the wisdom and the richness of this man was his willingness to try to straddle these two cultures. Which takes us back to the beginning theme of the program, which is when you have competing systems of belief, how do you know which one is true? When they sometimes throw accusations at one another saying the other system is false, how do you decide? This has been a difficult problem individually and communally for Native Americans since the beginning of the colonial era and attempts by colonists to Christianize - often forcibly - indigenous Americans.

Vine Deloria[3]

[2] Vine Deloria Jr. "God is Red: A Native View of Religion". 30th Anniversary Edition. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003, pp. 74-75.

[3] https://www.wrongkindofgreen.org/2020/11/22/how-science-ignores-the-living-world-an-interview-with-vine-deloria/ photo credit:

Vine Deloria struggled throughout his entire life to reconcile these two belief systems and to do so in a respectful manner, as did Black Elk whom I mentioned earlier, who was a medicine man, very traditional Lakota tribal member, who also later in his life, converted to Catholicism. Not converted in the sense of throwing overboard his traditional beliefs, but converted in the sense of incorporating Christian beliefs within his own belief system.

Now, this is an enormous controversy within his family and for many people, you know, in his tribe. But the point that I want to make here is that these two different systems need not be viewed as hostile. And as one chapter in my book, on Kateri Tekakwitha , points out, it is possible for someone - Keteri Tekakwitha is the first Native American person to become a Catholic saint. It is possible for an indigenous person to advocate and become a very prominent symbol and representative of two faiths, two personalities by walking in both of those paths simultaneously. So when we're talking about appropriation, we're talking about Native Americans having their beliefs appropriated by those who would convert them, and using Native American rituals to say, "oh, it's exactly like our ritual of communion." On the other hand, it is possible respectfully to have a mass in a Catholic church with a canoe, and the hymns sung in the indigenous language and indigenous prayers offered. So what we're trying to point out in this particular program is that it is possible to build bridges and connections.

Carolyn: I think that a number of your statements, people, other people might happily launch in to have a spirited debate! But I'll just say my understanding of attempts to merge different competing religious views that often have fraught and very, very damaging histories - that's part of - that can be seen as part of, it can be seen as a dilution of the original faiths of each side. Or it can be seen as an evolution where present day people are sort of taking charge of their own cultures and doing new things to make them truly meaningful. So I think it's a fascinating kind of evolution for sure.

Randy: To go back to this notion that Carolyn introduced with her quote from Vine Deloria of the earth being the source of knowledge. We have hanging on the wall here in our house, a little sketch that a visitor put on a napkin. The visitor is someone who comes from an intentional Christian religious community. And he

said, “You know, Randy, I have a friend who's a Jewish rabbi. And, you know, he drew this on a napkin for me once and said, you know, we can be points far separated, but if we trace everything back to the origin, to the creator or the creation, we find that the source of all knowledge comes from the same place.” And we have found enormous consistency and comfort in the relationship we have with these friends, because they recognize that when we talk about our indigenous beliefs and our Creator, that in fact, what we're talking about is the same source of knowledge that other faiths have. We just try to build bridges instead of put up barriers.

Carolyn: I think this is coming to the heart of a question that means a lot to me, which is not just what do you believe in terms of an abstract set of beliefs, but how do you act, with those beliefs, to be respectful and constructive with other people who have differing approaches ? And with obviously our kin in the whole world of nature.

That's the end of segment three,; we'll wrap it up in just a minute,

Segment Four

Carolyn: Welcome back to the final segment of this version of Indigenous Perspectives. We're talking about, on this segment, the transferability of indigenous knowledge into the mainstream: to what extent can this be done? To what extent should this be done? And what are the benefits? Randy?

Randy: So in the section previously on appropriation, we dealt with some of the caveats of not overdoing it, not appropriating indigenous knowledge, and simply claiming that it's ours and distorting it, in a sense stealing it.

I want to deal with one last obstacle briefly to transferring indigenous wisdom into the mainstream. And that is the notion of indigenous exceptionalism. It's an incredibly complicated topic; I'm still struggling with it in my own life. The notion is that somehow indigenous people have some kind of mystical, magical spiritual connection to the universe that non-indigenous people do not have and cannot have.

I'm of a slightly divided mind on this issue. I have seen with my own eyes and I've experienced because of my own ancestral connections, deep, deep, spiritual connections that I cannot explain rationally. And I do believe that indigenous people often have a depth of communication and connectivity that people in the mainstream rarely have. The word here is rarely.

Now having said that that does not mean that people in the mainstream cannot frequently, or certainly occasionally, have the same kinds of experiences, and that they cannot benefit from the wisdom derived from those experiences, even if they do not have those experiences immediately and directly themselves. So the final segment of this program is trying to put down a bridge across a chasm that has been erected, separating our two worlds.

Carolyn: Okay. I just - before you start with the bridge, I want to bring up one important topic, which quite often is viewed as a barrier. And that is the question of the indigenous languages. A lot of understanding is accessed through indigenous languages. And the common understanding is when you learn another language really well, you also have to learn the way of thinking that goes with that view of the world as exemplified in the - the names for its actions, the beliefs, the pronouns, everything else. So we know some people who say that unless you really are deeply understanding of the language, you can't really claim much access to the wisdom. Other people tend to think that this could be an artificial bar and should not be used as, as a barrier. So I just want to put that out there because for me, it's something I'm still struggling with.

Randy: Biblical scholars deal with the same issue, which is, can you read the Bible in any language other than the original Aramaic or Greek and truly understand it? The answer is both yes and no.

So what I want to say is that we have competing different systems of knowing. And that we all - humans, our other –than- human kin, and the planet - can benefit if and when we can respectfully compare and combine the strengths of Western systems of knowing with Indigenous ways of knowing. The creative tension that exists between these two systems, I think results in a kind of interrogation of one

system by the other that strengthens both ways of knowing and reduces errors that people in either system living in isolation might be predisposed to make.

Let me give you one final example, which played a big role in my life many decades ago. And that was my exposure to a very, very famous speech, which is attributed to Chief Seattle. Those who are in the environmental movement have come across this on cards, bookmark, posters on the wall, framed posters in the dentist's office. Chief Seattle's speech is omnipresent. The problem with Chief Seattle's speech is that he didn't write it! It was first written by a Protestant minister decades after the speech was supposedly given. And then it was re-engineered and rewritten for a movie in the 1970s by a filmmaker *[Ted Perry]* right here in Middlebury, Vermont who had his work appropriated, his name taken off it. And the words changed. Talk about appropriation! Nevertheless, the result of the speech is that we have a popular image and beautiful phraseology embedded now in our Western culture about the interconnection of the web of life that was the recreation inspired by indigenous ideas, even if they were filtered and somewhat distorted by various rewriters.

And the American public has found inspiration in this bizarre recombination. It's not the best example I would pick of making the crossover and transferring knowledge from one system of belief to another, but it's kind of the messy way that it actually happens. And it shouldn't intimidate us. It should let us know that we have the ability to reinvent ourselves, whether we're Native Americans living in a post-colonial world or mainstream people living in what's beginning to look like a post -industrial world.

So I want to leave our listeners with a hopeful message, which is: you should not fear to engage with indigenous knowledge. You should not fear to engage with indigenous people and ask them respectfully skeptical questions. You should not fear to involve and incorporate their knowledge into your belief system if you do it respectfully. And if you do it with attribution.

So I think at this point, we need maybe to take a deep breath and - and say that when it comes to this notion of transferability and navigating in this world of multiple cultures and the pluralistic society in which we dwell, we, we need to have courage. We need to borrow respectfully from one another.

Carolyn: And I would just say my hope is that we all can look for the best in other cultures and the best in ourselves to try to make a better world as we move forward.

Randy: So I hope this broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth and with your ancestral roots as well. Before your busy day distracts you from this moment, I encourage you to take a few minutes to reach out and feel the presence of living flora and fauna, and perhaps even that of your ancestors. Allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it. And if you will, write to me and let me know about your experience. I can be contacted through my website, at randykritkausky.com where you can also find transcripts and supplemental materials for all Indigenous Perspectives shows. Migwéch - thank you - for being a listener.

Carolyn: Migwéch.

++

"Indigenous Perspectives" monthly podcast is hosted by Randy Kritkausky and Carolyn Schmidt, and broadcast on the fourth Thursday of each month, 12 noon Eastern Time (US & Canada), on HealthyLife.net.

++