

KNOWLEDGE TENSIONS: EUROCENTRIC VS. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

DIGGING IN: FACILITATING DIALOGUE AND ACTION

KEY THEMES AND TERMS

Eurocentrism, colonization & imperialism, Indigenous knowledge, western science, possession and dispossession, globalization, modernity, reconciliation, environmentalism, cyclical ways of being, participatory ways of knowing, living knowledge, Nishnaabeg word *aki* (living land and knowledge), Mohawk word *tyonnhekhwen* (knowledge that plants are inseparable from life), convergence, Gaia hypothesis, symbiosis, interdependence, reciprocity, ecology, reductionism, epistemically revolution, spirituality.

CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description:* What are the tensions between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledges described here? How do these ideas differ?
- *Personal Connection:* Do you have personal experience working with plants and the Earth? Which ways of knowing most influences the way you think about your relationship to the Earth?
- *Common Themes:* What issues affecting the Earth are both settlers and Indigenous peoples equally at risk of suffering from?
- *Social Analysis:* Around what issues do you see Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledges most in tension? How are different people, in different contexts, with different ways of knowing, organizing around these issues?
- *Planning for Action:* What can you do in your day-to-day life to broaden your own ways of knowing beyond Eurocentrism?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- What are some features of Eurocentric knowledge? How were they introduced and maintained in North America/Turtle Island?
- What are some features of Indigenous ways of knowing? How are these being maintained or lost?
- In what ways does Eurocentric thought not acknowledge Indigenous values like reciprocity and interdependence?
- Why is it important to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing,

- values, and participation in efforts to sustain food sovereignty?
- How is spirituality central to Indigenous ways of knowing?
 - How does spirituality or storytelling help you connect to the Earth? To the food you eat?
 - How are Indigenous ways of knowing considered to be living knowledges? What is one example of this?

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

During your next meal, photograph each serving of grain, fruit, vegetable, meat, or other food that you're having. Review your photos and identify which foods you are most familiar with and which of them you are the least familiar with. Using those two foods, try to trace their origins back as far as you can. Consider how they have been processed. At what point do you consider them to have been a living thing? Or to have stopped living? How near or far is this food from you? These connections to food can be from a plant, an animal, or the Earth itself.

As an added challenge, trace your own personal history and see where you connect to these foods. If your ancestors came from a different continent or country, how accessible would these foods be? When did you first make contact with the land that your food is connected to?

INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

What traditional or cultural meals do you and your family eat together? Which parts of those meals can you find living locally to you? How does your family share (or not) knowledge about food traditions? How does this shape who you are as a person, a family, and a community?

Eurocentric knowledge has a colonial authority and power on colonized land. For settlers, this power and authority may dominate and not recognize Indigenous ways of knowing in certain institutions and situations. Where in your life can you recall seeing Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledges coexisting or working together? How about in conflict?

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Practice reciprocity with the Earth and your community by planting some of your favourite food this summer, look to see if there's a community garden you can participate in. You could donate some of your fresh produce to a food bank or share amongst the other people at the community garden. Look up what Indigenous group's land you live on and who it officially belongs to now. Research the time and circumstances under which it was first "owned".

Where in the area or close by would food have been grown? Is anything still growing now? Compare those plants and animals pre-colonization to your diet now. Look up plants local to you, food or otherwise, and research what

function they play in the environment. In looking at their impact in the greater ecosystem, where do you fit in? Investigate ways in which you are hindering this plant or its ecosystems. Investigate ways in which you can help their survival and see what you can do to reconnect with the land and life closest to you.

Write your own life story in the third person and focus on your journey connecting with the Earth. Capture the moments where you felt sustained and what those looked and felt like. Importantly, ask yourself how you have become independent from the land and the impact that has held on you.

CONNECTING TO OTHER PHOTO & VIDEO ESSAYS

- [The Thanksgiving Address](#)
- [Haudenosaunee Gifts](#)

DIGGING DEEPER: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION

VIDEOS

wc nativenews. (2014, May 7). *The Indigenous world view vs. Western world view* [Video]. Youtube.

Different Knowings. (2013, October 26). *Rick Hill: What is Indigenous knowledge?* [Video]. YouTube.

TEDx Talks. (2012, August 18). *Reclaiming the Honorable Harvest: Robin Kimmerer at TEDxSitka*. [Video]. YouTube.

HumansandNature.org. (2014, January 14). *What Does the Earth Ask of Us? Questions for a Resilient Future: Robin Wall Kimmerer*. [Video.] Youtube.

Reconciling Ways of Knowing. (2020, August 3). *Dialogue 1: Why Reconciling Ways of Knowing?* [Video] Youtube.

PODCASTS

Institute for Research on Public Policy. (Executive Producer). (2018). *PO Podcast 51- Gerald Stanley and the castle narrative*. [Audio podcast episode]. In *Policy Options Podcast*.

Yale Broadcast Studio. (Executive Producer). (2020). *Ep. 33. Valerie Courtois on Indigenous-led land and wildlife stewardship*. [Audio podcast episode]. In *When We Talk about Animals*.

BOOKS & ARTICLES

Apgar, J.M., Mustonene, T., Lovera, S., Lovera, M. (2016). *Moving Beyond Co-Construction of Knowledge to Enable Self-Determination*. Institute of Development Studies, 47:6. DOI: 10.19088/1968-2016.199

Simpson, L. (2008). *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*. Chico: AK Press.

Simpson, L. (2008). *Lighting the Eighth Fire*. Chico: AK Press.

Simpson, L. (2013). *The Gift Is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories*. Chico: AK Press.

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

- [Environment and natural resources for Indigenous peoples](#)
- [Methods for learning TEK](#)
- [Food Secure Canada.](#)
- [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)
- [Global Alliance For the Future of Food](#)
- [Seeds of Diversity](#)
- [Seed Change](#)
- [ETC Group](#)
- [La Via Campesina](#)
- [Black Food Justice Network](#)