Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Appreciation

"Indigenous Perspectives" - Monthly Broadcast on HealthyLife.Net

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Photo credit: Adrienne Keene, Native Appropriations [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 is recorded in Vermont, which is part of N'dakinna, the land that is the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people. We start each show with this Land Acknowledgement to signal our respect for the Abenaki, the Indigenous people of our region, who have survived over the centuries and are now experiencing renewal and new growth.

[1] https://nativeappropriations.com/page/2 Adrienne Keene took this photo of herself and this wall mural, and engaged in a dialogue with the owner of the establishment. The full story is in her blog. Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

On today's show Randy and I will discuss challenges, problems and opportunities that can arise when non-Indigenous people seek to borrow, adopt, and work to learn from Indigenous teachings and practices.

Randy: We have titled this show "Cultural Appropriation versus Cultural Appreciation" because borrowing and adopting aspects of Indigenous cultures raises the issue of cultural appropriation, even when non-Indigenous people are attempting to show appreciation. This is a very sensitive topic for Native Americans and Canadian First Nations peoples. And it can be intimidating and confusing for those in the mainstream.

Carolyn: Our podcasts are dedicated to the goal of bridge building between Indigenous people and those in the mainstream. In that spirit, we offer today's program with the expectation that we can leave mainstream listeners more informed about cross cultural transfers of knowledge and practices. We also give practical guidance that can be helpful to mainstream people as they show appreciation of and delve into Indigenous cultures on a personal level, or in their work, and as part of their community life. At the same time, we hope that by providing these guidelines, Indigenous listeners will understand some of the respectful options available to mainstream people, so the doors of understanding and cultural sharing can be kept open.

So, Randy, can you start us off by giving a brief – very brief – definition of cultural appropriation?

Randy: Yes. This is a little bit simplistic, but it's a starting point. Cultural appropriation is taking and using, without permission, cultural creations of a group that's not your own and attempting to use them, outside of their original context, and without fully understanding their meaning.

Carolyn: Can you give a specific real-life example?

Randy: Well, here is an astounding example. In Germany, during the summer time, hundreds of thousands of people attend re-enactments of Native American life, ceremony and pow-wows that involve no Native American participation. Those attending often dress up like "American Indians" and they do American Indian-like things which can include performing dances and trying to perform sacred ceremonies.

Carolyn: Do they think there's any problem with this, or do they believe that they are showing cultural appreciation?

Randy: Well, they actually probably most of the time feel that they're showing appreciation. Germany has a long tradition of fascination with American Indians dating back to the publication of German author Karl May's novels at the end of the 19th century. The novels, which describe totally fictitious Indians conjured from May's imagination, display German and European values as much or more than Indigenous values . These novels became and remain bestsellers in Germany and are still read in translation around the world to the tune of 200 million[2] copies. These novels and invented Indian characters inspired festivals which have become a German cultural institution. The problem is that there is little reality and little authenticity involved. It is an imaginary world and it gets in the way of understanding real Native American culture.

Imagine if large numbers of non-Catholics went off to the forest, dressed up like priests and nuns, and engaged in pretend communions, confessions, and other sacraments. It would be considered offensive and a mockery of those who are serious about their Catholic religious beliefs.

Carolyn: Well, your example of people "playing Catholic" – which doesn't happen routinely in public! - leads to the point that the Indigenous peoples of North America have been uniquely vulnerable to cultural appropriation, by a dominant society that has been fascinated by "the Indians" while at the same time feeling threatened by them, and needing to assert power over them. We'll pick up this point in our next show.

But first, let's look at an example of appreciative, positive mainstream involvement with Native American culture. If we start by defining cultural appreciation as respectful borrowing of or participation in Native American culture, that involves learning by the outsiders, and credit given and permission obtained from those whose culture is being tapped into.

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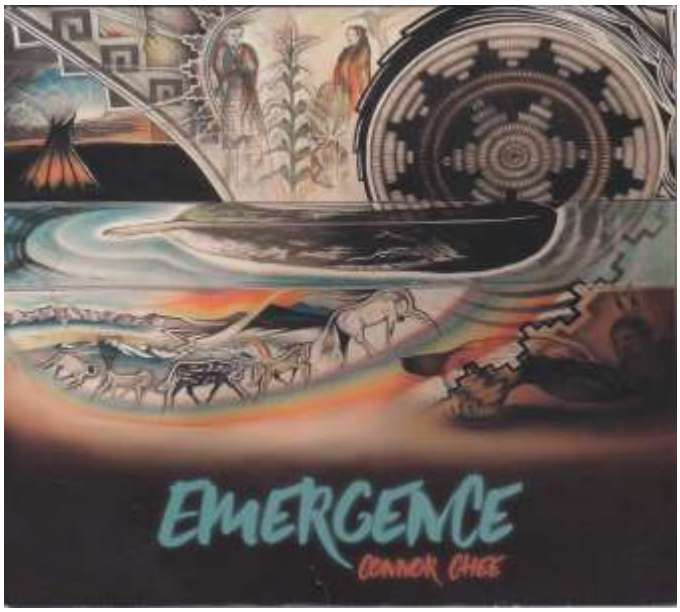
[2] Randy mis-spoke a bit here : Karl May's total sales of all novels are around 200 million worldwide, but these include all of his writings, not only his "American Indian" ones. Many of May's other travel and adventure novels are also placed in settings, such as the Ottoman Empire, far away in time and space from his native Germany. Wikipedia has a fascinating write-up on Karl May's life: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_May

So, with this as a start, can you give us an example of cultural appreciation?

Randy: -Yes, sure, a very commonly known one. Native Americans hold pow-wows which very actively invite non-Indigenous observers as visitors. These public events are designed to expand public understanding of Native American culture and to allow the public to meet Indigenous people on the terms that Indigenous people set. These events also give opportunities for the visiting public to buy the work of Indigenous artists and craftspeople, thus helping to support their skills. The events typically involve education such as explaining the history of a particular dance and what the regalia means.

Mainstream people are presently devouring books and films about anything and everything Native American. Native American writers, artists, models, and actors are increasingly visible to the mainstream. This is a positive form of appreciation, and it is actually the first step in doing it right!



An increasing number of Indigenous musicians today are recording and selling their music through Native networks. [3]
Such networks provide platforms of support for authentic Indigenous creative artists.

Carolyn: Well, why do you think that mainstream non-Indigenous peoples now are increasingly fascinated with Indigenous culture?

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[3] Navajo composer and pianist Connor Chee's work is available through Wild Saguaro Records https://www.wildsaguarorecords.com. Potawatomi multi-instrumentalist and composer Marcia Watson Bendo https://www.marciawatsonbendo.com/ has sold her work through the Citizen Potawatomi Nation website.

Randy: This reflects a growing recognition that Native Americans offer valid and hopeful alternatives to mainstream cultural practices that are increasingly recognized as harmful. Traditional Ecological Knowledge for environmental protection, which we've discussed on previous shows[4], is a good example.

It is common to find a display booth and tent of Water-Keepers at a pow-wow. Water Keepers are sometimes Indigenous youth groups involved in environmental protection efforts that grow directly out of Indigenous spirituality. That's a really important point. That connection is explained to anyone taking the time to listen.

Carolyn: And often Water Keepers are women's organizations, as water protecting is a traditional activity of women, and has become a source of empowerment for women who become politically active to protect their tribal land and its water. In any case, the public learns about Indigenous culture and current struggles, and learns *directly* from Indigenous people.

Randy: Yes. So, another reason for mainstream fascination with Indigenous culture is a deep spiritual hunger in the general public. Modern materialism and our remoteness from Nature leave many looking for something more.

Carolyn: This sounds positive. But it can become problematic - becoming cultural appropriation - when non-Native people assume that they can address their own spiritual needs and societal problems by dressing like and pretending to be Native Americans, or when they commercialize and sell products that are the intellectual and cultural property of Native peoples.

For example, it may be fun for non-Indians, such as Boy Scout groups, to play "dress-up" wearing their own version of Plains Indians feathered War Bonnets - the dramatic and distinctive feather headdresses that are part of the culture of peoples such as the Oglala Lakota Sioux.

Randy: Okay. So, tell us, and tell our listeners, what's harmful about this?

Carolyn: It can be deeply offensive to the people whose cultural items are being appropriated – because such behavior trivializes and distorts their meaning .To quote Cherokee writer Adrienne Keene: "… for the [Native] communities that wear

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[4] "Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom: The Path to Survival"
https://www.ecologia.org/news/30.IndigenousKnowledgeTEK.pdf
Also," Land Back and Rematriation" https://www.ecologia.org/news/25.LandBack.pdf

these headdresses, they represent respect, power and responsibility. The headdress has to be earned, gifted to a leader in whom the community has placed their trust. When it becomes a cheap commodity anyone can buy and wear to a party, that meaning is erased and disrespected." [5]

To go farther, when non-Indigenous people commercialize and sell items that are seen as "fun" or "fashionable" because they play on Native American themes, this is a form of taking and manipulating Indigenous cultural creations for the outsiders' own benefit. Cheaply produced mass marketed items undercut the present-day artisans – such as basket makers, jewelry makers, weavers , graphic designers - for whom this is a livelihood based on their own traditions.

In the United States, the "Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990" makes it a crime to "misrepresent Native art and craft products" in sales and marketing. This basically means selling something as Native – Indian made – when it's not. I remember that when the Vermont Abenaki bands received legal recognition by the State of Vermont, in 2011 and 2012, they celebrated the tangible benefits for Abenaki artists, who were now able to sell their own works as authentically Native American.

Randy: All right - so far we have focused on rather clear examples of cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation, using clearly distinct and almost obvious examples. But in reality there is confusion and controversy surrounding these matters because most efforts at cross-cultural exchanges and learning involve very ambiguous situations.

Carolyn: Okay, here's a common one. A school group or community organization wants to raise awareness of their local historical and ecological connections with Indigenous people who used to occupy the territory which is now literally owned and controlled by the descendants of white settlers. They have heard about and therefore plan to plant a traditional Native American garden, possibly grow sacred plants, perhaps incorporate the medicine wheel in their design. Where might boundaries between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation be crossed in this example?

Randy: Good questions, and not easy answers. First of all they should invite Native Americans and their descendants to do this and not do it "FOR" them, if at all

[5] Keene, Adrienne: "The Benefits of 'Cultural Sharing' Are Usually One-Sided." The New York Times, August 4, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/08/04/whose-culture-is-it-anyhow/the-benefits-of-cultural-sharing-are-usually-one-sided

possible. For example, the Montréal Botanical Garden has done this with its First Nations plantings and buildings. They often have Indigenous botanists on site to explain.

If local Indigenous people cannot be located or are too occupied or too busy, the project might go forward but should clearly indicate that it is under the direction of non-Indigenous teachers who are commemorating Indigenous culture as best they can by offering some educational experience.

The classic manifestation of an Indigenous garden is inter-planting of the "Three Sisters", corn, squash and beans. The display teaches how Native American agriculture functioned to encourage different plants to support each other.

Carolyn: And an important part of the Three Sisters is that the squash, corn and beans are seen as animate – having their own personhood and agency – so they are more than crops for people to harvest for their own use. There are some children's books by Native American authors out now, that tell the story from the point of view of the corn[6], for example. This is part of learning about the full context of the Three Sisters.

Randy. Okay. So, the next deeper step or progression into portraying Native American culture might be growing sweetgrass and tobacco in the public garden that we're discussing, along with the Three Sisters. Now, this is approaching and perhaps crossing the boundary between appropriation and appreciation.

Carolyn: Well, why?

Randy. These sacred herbs involve specific protocols for planting, harvesting and use. I'm going to repeat that because that really is a very important point. There are specific protocols in Indigenous communities for the planting , the harvesting, and the use of these herbs.

Carolyn: And by protocol you mean prayers, ceremonies, things - special things you do.

Randy: Yes, it's understood knowledge: this is the process that you engage in. Such knowledge is unlikely to be held, even fragmentarily, by mainstream people. And even if it is, going through the motions of laying tobacco before planting, relying on

[6] Greendeer, Danielle, Anthony Perry and Alexis Bunten: *Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun's Thanksgiving Story*. Charlesbridge: Watertown, MA, 2022.

some superficial knowledge or information gleaned from a two hour class on Native ceremonies is not the same things as Indigenous people bringing decades of training, spiritual experiences, and a very broad cultural context to these actions.

Carolyn: It seems that the principle in operation here is to avoid trying to be or act like an Indigenous person when you are not. There is a boundary between being a self-declared respectful outsider displaying something that you have general knowledge about, and acting as if you are someone steeped in and representing the culture. This boundary should be maintained out of respect for the Indigenous peoples whose complex cultures these gardens derive from.

Randy: Okay. So now to return to involving a medicine wheel design in this hypothetical public garden we're discussing. This borrowing is getting ever deeper into life-long teachings and shared community experience with the colors and directions associated with a medicine wheel. The aesthetic temptation, the beauty of this is really great. But avoid it. Think of the example of playing Catholic. The vestments and objects on a Catholic altar are considered sacred. Many years of training, and vetting by the community, precede their use. Their beauty is not a reason to imitate them and act like you thoroughly understand the rituals.

Carolyn: Okay, and this brings back us to the concept of mimicking or going through the actions, as a hallmark of cultural appropriation. Non-Natives' wearing of fake "war bonnets", or performing fake "Indian dances" cheapens and distorts the original ceremony, and really importantly it emphasizes the outsider's claimed rights and privileges to "pick and choose", while discarding the rest.

And finally, there's one more category of cultural appropriation, which is insidious and very damaging, and which we've both seen happening repeatedly and recently.

This is when non-Indigenous people take on the role of "spokesperson" for Indigenous people, as if the Indigenous people are not capable of speaking for themselves. This can occur in public settings, where mainstream people have learned to push themselves forward, to "speak up first" and are comfortable with attention focused on them. These actions displace Indigenous people, take away their own voices, and often insert an outsider's skewed perception of what is at stake.

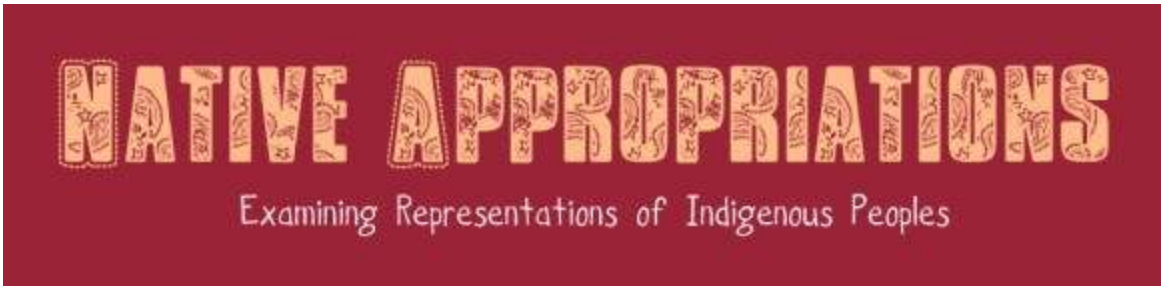

Image credit: Native Appropriations[7]

Randy: I am encountering this all too frequently and investing considerable time and energy trying to correct the damage.

Here in Vermont non-Indigenous academics have intervened in intra-tribal disputes about who can claim authentic tribal membership. These non-tribal, non-Indigenous people have introduced their own criteria for claiming tribal identity. They've introduced foreign legal concepts from Canada as well as their own pure inventions, because these academics think they understand descent within tribes better than tribal members do. These imported criteria ignore unique local Vermont history and actions of the state legislature in recognizing the Abenaki and others in Vermont. These non-Indigenous academics have created division and bitterness as well as undermining public understanding of who is an "authentic Native American". They use their academic institutions as platforms for their own interpretations.

United States Law today, along with tribal traditions, indicates that each Indigenous nation can set their own membership criteria. When non-tribal members attempt to be advocates for some abstract notion that they have imported, tribal governance is appropriated and handed back to white people, just like in colonial times.

Carolyn: So this is a powerful example of the damage done by mainstream people who decide that they know best what is best for Native people, and who have the visibility and platforms - access to the press and so forth - to appropriate Native governance issues.

And Randy, I know we've got a couple of minutes left here. You also want to talk about another form of cultural appropriation that you've encountered.

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[7] https://i1.wp.com/nativeappropriations.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/banner4.jpg?fit=579%2C141&ssl=1 Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0

Randy: Yes, I think this might be highly appropriate to our audience. One of the most common forms of borrowing that borders on cultural appropriation is the use of the title "shaman" and events that purport to present shamanistic experiences or make individuals who claim to be shamans accessible for a brief workshop experience. Let me make my best effort to be non-judgmental here, because this is really fraught territory.

The word shaman has entered the popular lexicon, since the 1960s and 1970s, to refer to someone with unusual non-mainstream spiritual sensitivities and often with some limited exposure to the work of real shamans. Strictly speaking, shamans are practitioners of rituals that open the gates to the spirit worlds and the worlds of ancestors. This cultural practice is specific to Asian cultures, such as Mongolian and Korean. These cultural shamans practice their art within a community context that carefully vets claims of connectivity with ancestors and also sets boundaries on how far such journeys can progress. We discussed this on our previous podcast about Shamanism[8].

By contrast, contemporary Western spiritualists who refer to themselves as shamans, or working in a shamanic tradition, are typically using the title loosely and with only indirect claims of power such as that exercised by Asian shamans. Cultural appropriation occurs when Westerners make ambiguous and unfounded claims to being just like or actual Asian shamanic practitioners.

Now, because of the geographic remoteness of the authentic practitioners of shamanism, the harm that we have been describing that occurs when such claims are made by non-indigenous people is unlikely to occur. The shaman would-bes here are distanced from this kind of controversy, unlike much of what we're discussing on this show. No Mongolian shaman is being displaced by the actions of people in the United States. However, the concept of respect and honesty and making representations is still present. We encourage those who associate themselves with shamanism to be clear and transparent about their implied claims. Otherwise, the entire world of spiritual exploration is tainted. We're familiar with Westerners who claim to have shamanistic powers and experiences taken from Native American sources. The ambiguity of shamanism spills over into North American Indigenous life and those who gravitate toward it, it's really treacherous territory and it's to be avoided.

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[8] "Shamanism" https://www.ecologia.org/news/8-Shamanism.pdf

Carolyn: Okay, lots to think about. We'll take a quick break. Stay tuned for the next segment of Indigenous Perspectives.

Segment Two

Randy: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. In this segment, we'll be talking about appreciative borrowing and sharing of Indigenous knowledge.

Carolyn: I'll start us off. Long-time Abenaki cultural bridge-builder Joseph Bruchac offers examples of respectful cultural borrowing in his book *Native American Games and Stories*. He provides the cultural context for traditional games such as lacrosse:

"In Native North America, playing games was an important part of everyday life for everyone. Games taught people how to cooperate. Team games were a way of bringing people together and reminding people to include each other in their activities…Whether you were male or female, young or old, you could take part in team sports in virtually every Native American tribal nation….sometimes there would be ball games that pitted all of the people of one village against all of the people in another village with the goals set miles apart! One French colonial visitor to North American described seeing the Huron people playing a game of lacrosse in which hundreds of players took part. Team sports were so important that the birds and animals, and even the thunder beings that lived in the sky, were said to enjoy playing ball games." [9]

Bruchac points to the themes of inclusiveness, community, and building physical and cooperative skills as major characteristics of Native American sports. He encourages mainstream Americans today to reconsider our cultural emphasis placed on elite sports and winning versus losing. The characteristics, and specific games and rules of Native American games are open to be shared and incorporated by others. So, games become ceremonial teaching opportunities modeling right behavior, and those behaviors are on public display because of the importance of providing for younger generations and also non-tribal members.

Randy: In the words of Lenni Lenape elder and tribal pastor John Norwood, quoted in *[an article in the online news source]* Indian Country Today:

"The best of American Indian Values can be celebrated and learned by anyone as they are part of the cultural 'fabric' of America. Developing ceremonies that may be inspired by American Indian Culture, but in no way mimic or purport to be Native,

[9] Bruchac, James and Joseph Bruchac: *Native American Games and Stories*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2000. Page 4.

can be inspiring to the non-Native participant and beneficially increase an appreciation of Native values and principles without misappropriating Native culture. Honoring and celebrating our values, and even our lifeways do not require donning our dress, portraying our ceremonies or using our sacred items. The actual history of our people can be told and the life-lessons gained without mimicking sacred rituals or 'playing Indian'."[10]

Carolyn: Well, Norwood uses the word "mimic" over and over, so this is a clear warning about how cultural appropriation happens. But John Norwood is not telling non-Indigenous people to keep their hands off of Indigenous culture. He is also pointing to ways of sharing, and inviting sharing when done properly.

Randy: A mainstream cultural parallel for this is the use of an "open source" approach for sharing electronic materials – "open source" means that information or guidance on how to do something is made available to everyone, to use and/or build upon. This models knowledge sharing as a path forward that can benefit all. For example, we make all "Indigenous Perspectives" shows into transcripts which are available through an open source Creative Commons license, bearing the words "Attribution-Non-commercial-Share alike". This means that anyone is free to download, use and pass along our materials, as long as they credit us as the source, and do not charge money.

Carolyn: Come to think of it, that's a pretty good general model for respectful use of anyone else's intellectual or cultural property!

Randy Yes. However, we need to put an important caveat here.

Carolyn: Yes, very important. Not all indigenous cultural creations are designed, or meant for, widespread public use. Every society, including First Nations / Native American ones, has practices, ceremonies and teachings that are special to those people within a clearly delimited community, and are restricted in their use to those only within the community. For example, the "winter stories" among the Aninishinaabe and Abenaki peoples are to be told only during the winter, as they involve teachings about powerful forces that need to be contained. These stories are not to be shared outside a particular tribal group. Joseph Bruchac has said that

[10] Norwood is quoted in Vincent Schilling's article "Solutions for moving beyond cultural appropriation in the 21st century. Star Wars?" Indian Country Today, September 21, 2019 https://ictnews.org/news/solutions-for-moving-beyond-appropriation-in-the-21st-century-scouts-star-wars

he has heard many "winter stories" told by elders, which he – Joseph - will never recount to outsiders. This from a man who's made a living promoting, researching, gathering and publishing books and Native American stories aimed for non-Native audiences.

Randy: So we need to bear in mind that every Indigenous society has its own unique, proprietary knowledge and ceremonies that are NOT to be shared with outsiders.

But in making that point, we don't want awareness of these cases to intimidate those in the mainstream. Native Americans are generally a sharing people. We routinely share our wealth and even give away our possessions. For example, many listeners will have heard about potlatches in the Northwest *[Pacific Northwest coast of the United States and Canada]* where the whole community gets together and there's just a display of giving, a lavish display of giving from one family to another.

Another example from American history is something that astonished the *[Christian]* missionaries, which is in the middle of winter when a hunter returned with an elk or a deer to a village that was near starvation, that person would share the food with the entire village, even if it meant that the hunter's family still remained somewhat hungry. Sharing overrode individual interest. Finally, as we've experienced in our own life at ceremonies, Indigenous ceremonies like naming ceremonies, there are giveaways. It's a part of the ritual, part of the ceremony. You put a blanket down, people bring objects to share, and people step up and take what they want. And people leave something to share with others. Now, these examples apply to sharing things. The sharing ethic applies broadly, however, to knowledge teachings in stories as well.

Carolyn: Okay. Probably the most famous example of sharing Indigenous wisdom through story telling is the Creation Story of Turtle Island and Sky Woman. This story is sometimes viewed by mainstream people as a sort of Native American myth. But it is, in fact - like the creation story acknowledged by Jewish and Christian people in the Book of Genesis - a parable containing within it the fundamental teachings and guidance for an entire culture.

Here is a brief version of the story:

"A long time ago, the Sky People lived on an island that floated in the sky. One day, Sky Woman was hungry, and started digging around a good tree, looking for roots to eat.

But that tree was the Tree of Life. The animals warned her not to dig around it, but she did not listen, being really hungry. Though she did not know it at the time, she was pregnant with twins. She kept on digging until she had dug a hole deep enough that it opened up into a large open space; as she leaned over to look through it, she fell through the hole.

"She fell down, down into another world, full of water and water dwellers. The water dwellers looked up, and saw Sky Woman falling toward them. They had a consultation to decide how to respond; the geese volunteered to catch her, and they linked up their wings and caught Sky Woman gently before she hit the water. But the water creatures knew that Sky Woman could not live in their world; she needed land and earth. So Turtle offered to be a safe place for Sky Woman to live. But nothing grew on Turtle's back. There was nothing to sustain human life. So, many small creatures tried to swim to the bottom of the water and bring up earth to be placed on Turtle's back. One after another, various creatures gave their lives trying to make Turtle Island habitable. Finally, one of the small water creatures – in many versions, it is a muskrat – succeeded in diving down to the bottom of the water and brought up some earth in her paws. This earth was placed on Turtle's back. Turtle Island grew larger and larger until it became the whole world (which for Native Americans of the northern woodlands is the North American continent)." [11]

Sky Woman's children learned this story, as did all Algonquin speaking woodlands Indians. They understood it to be more than an entertaining and dramatic story. It was a set of instructions about receiving the gift of life, about the sacrifices that other creatures make to sustain the life of humans, the two-legged, about the need to be grateful for those sacrifices. And most importantly, the Turtle Island creation story is a teaching about the need to be good stewards of that which has been created by those who came before us.

Randy: So I think the point here is that this story is a fundamental teaching. It's wisdom that is to be shared openly, like the Book of Genesis. It is a teaching that is seen as a revelation, sacred wisdom given by the Creator that should be shared as widely as possible.

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[11] There are many versions of the story of Sky Woman and Turtle Island. This version is told as part of the University of Alberta's " Indigenous Canada" online course, in the "Worldview" module. For more information about the course, see https://www.coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada

When non-Indigenous people borrow and retell this story, it is not an act of cultural appropriation. It is participation in a multi-generation transfer of wisdom upon which our survival depends. Most of our stories are actually teachings. And we share them.

Carolyn: Native American history is itself a story about sharing with the two-legged. It is a complicated story and the lessons are sometimes painful. Indigenous people shared their lands and Turtle Island's resources with the colonists from Europe. Who then appropriated them, misused them and displaced Indigenous people. That is hardly in the spirit of gratitude exemplified by the Turtle Island creation story.

Randy: That's for sure. Yes. And when we shared our stories with the colonists they gathered them up along with our tools, our fabrics, even our bones and put them in museums and books where they became "great anthropological treasures" - prized possessions and sources of wealth for those who appropriated them.

This history, this story about cultural appropriation, is why we Native Americans are so sensitive today about our cultural artifacts, our crafts, and our stories being appropriated, sold and displayed without any credit or attribution being given to us.

Carolyn: At long last this is being discussed. The injustices are being addressed, and that's one of the purposes of this show. Here we are asking how to do it right, and after the break, our next segment will talk about this in more detail. How to borrow and share Indigenous knowledge so that Turtle Island and all of the creatures living on it benefit. Stay tuned.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to the third segment of this Indigenous Perspectives show. We are going to get more specific now with some guidelines – do's and don'ts – for non-Indigenous people to consider as they engage with Indigenous beliefs, practices, artistic creations, political causes or ceremonies.

So, we'll be just discussing them, working them through. We'll start with the **"Do's".**

So first is always give credit upfront at the start, not as a footnote at the end, for anything you do publicly that is based on Indigenous beliefs or practices. That means if you're giving a speech, if you're writing a paper, you're making a film, whatever, give the credit right up front. Don't bury it in a footnote.

Randy: I think one of the key terms here, Carolyn, is doing something publicly. We're going to come back to that. Because there's a really important distinction between doing something in your private life and doing something in public.

I would like to suggest another "Do" that I think really works. And that is people who are going to, again, have a public performance or public presentation on something Indigenous should ask themselves, and as best they can honestly answer the following question: Why am I doing this? How can I do this to the mutual benefit of myself and the Indigenous people whose cultural heritage this is?

I think this kind of a question and moment of reflection will help people to hesitate and not run down the path of I'm doing this because it makes me look really cool. You know this is really soul searching in this particular question.

Carolyn: I think that's a really good point because one of the very deeply felt bones of contention for many non-mainstream, non-dominant cultural groups is when the dominant groups take items - music, designs, fashions - and put them in because they want to seem - come across as super, super cool. They're sort of riffing off, playing off , using, things that were developed, you know, by people through a lot of sufferings and hardships, and then doing it, again, trivializing it and to aggrandize themselves. So that's why "Ask why am I doing this" is really important, okay?

Next is strive to understand the context of the Indigenous item or story you're interested in and put effort into learning the bigger picture. This is where you, the non-Indigenous person, develops an understanding and realizes there's a lot more than the external.

Also, acknowledge the right of indigenous artists and writers to be paid a fair market value for their work . Another real bone of contention - that the mainstream people have the responsibility to show their respect in a tangible way.

Randy: The next "Do" is a tough one for a lot of Americans and English speakers, which is understand that Indigenous people are respecting silence and listening. And people in the mainstream, particularly those who are college educated and entering a competitive world, are told, grab the floor, speak quickly and seize the opportunity. So give the floor to Indigenous people who are present. Let them have time to reflect. Let there be a moment of silence, and then their voices can be heard.

Carolyn: And the last of the Do's that I've got: Engage Indigenous people and practices with respect, so you feel comfortable incorporating some of the beauty and

wisdom of Indigenous practices into your own private life. Planting your own Indigenous herbal garden for yourself in private would not be appropriating in any kind of negative way. It's for your own spiritual growth. It's private. That's fine.

Now we'll go to the **"Don'ts."**

Randy: So first of all, assume that your interest alone is not sufficient reason for Indigenous people to welcome your involvement. Just because you think it's important doesn't mean it's important or helpful to Indigenous people. Again, reflect, ask this question we said before, why am I doing this?

The Indigenous-led movement, "Idle No More" seeks non-Indigenous allies, and provides guidance on how non-Indigenous allies can appropriately present themselves [12]

Carolyn: Again repeating, but this is important. Don't feel entitled to speak for Indigenous people as a group if you are not one.

Randy: I don't think we can say that one too much. Another suggestion here is don't buy from non-Indigenous sources of materials that pretend to be Indigenous. In

[12] "Idle No More started in November 2012, among Treaty People in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta protesting the Canadian government's dismantling of environmental protection laws, endangering First Nations who live on the land…. Led by women, and with a call for refounded nation-to-nation relations based on mutual respect, Idle No More rapidly grew into an inclusive, continent-wide network of urban and rural Indigenous working hand in hand with non-Indigenous allies to build a movement for Indigenous rights and the protection of land, water, and sky." From the Idle No More website. https://idlenomore.ca/about-the-movement/

other words, don't buy knockoffs of traditional arts and crafts because as Carolyn explained, you're denying people their income.

Carolyn: Don't group Indigenous people together with other marginalized minority people such as African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos. These groups all have different historical experiences and may have different views of goals such as how much they want to integrate with the mainstream. Respect the distinct voices of representatives from each group while building bridges amongst those who are marginalized.

Another don't - may be obvious, but needs to be repeated because it can be really offensive. Don't through your actions or purchases contribute to stereotyping of the Indigenous peoples through patronizing representations. In other words, avoid the Pocahontas Halloween costume.

Randy: And finally, we're going to flip the meaning of "Don't" here a little bit. Don't let fear of cultural appropriation paralyze you into avoiding Indigenous people or their cultural contributions, or asking questions of Indigenous people or of displaying your own lack of knowledge.

Carolyn: Okay, I guess that's the one of the main points we want to bring to people with this whole show. So stay tuned, we'll take a quick break. Come back for the last segment.

Segment Four

Carolyn: Welcome back to the last segment of Indigenous Perspectives. And we're going to be working on the big picture now, stepping back and trying to come up with some - some thoughtful and provocative points to take away. Randy?

Randy: Yes, so we just went into the do's and the don'ts, which is getting into details. But I think it's really important for listeners to home in on a very positive message, which involves both Indigenous and mainstream people. And it's the following:

We are all at this point in our histories, seeking ways to make our cultures, our social practices and our institutions more vibrant, resilient, and appropriate to the realities of 21st century life and environmental challenges. This is really important and hugely difficult work.

Carolyn: So you're saying we all need to - we're all in this together?

Randy: Exactly. Exactly. And that's - that's the common basis upon which we ask questions about how do we share information to our mutual benefit. So this - this takes us back, in my estimation, to a previous program about Black Elk, actually several programs we did. Because Black Elk was a unique individual who believed that sharing cultural knowledge was part of his life mission. From a time he was a child and had a vision, he felt he had an obligation to not just help his own people, but all of the humans, the two-legged to improve life on the planet.

Carolyn: Well, he saw that as part of his leadership mission.

Randy: Exactly. Exactly. And as we mentioned on previous programs on Black Elk, his life actually becomes a story that we can tell ourselves about the cautionary problems and issues surrounding cultural appropriations. It's really remarkable that Black Elk opened up his house, literally adopted and brought under his roof, two *[non-Indigenous]* individuals who came because they wanted to learn from him. They wanted him to share his teachings, some of which were on that borderline that Carolyn mentioned of winter stories, insights and guidelines and practices that had not been widely shared with the world. So Black Elk spent days, and in one case actually several months, sharing this information with an author who then went away and wrote up his version of what Black Elk had said.

And much to the surprise and disappointment of Black Elk , and modern scholars and modern Indigenous people, what was represented as Black Elk Speaks in this famous book by that title isn't exactly what Black Elk said. That Mr. Neihardt who wrote that book, had actually appropriated much of what Black Elk said, added his own words, and in some cases quite radically misrepresented it.

So here's the issue: is this a cautionary tale about don't talk to the two-legged, don't talk to the whites, because they'll go away and they'll invert and misrepresent everything you say? No. I think what is the beauty of this story is that it illustrates that cultural sharing is an inherently messy process. These people came not intending to do damage to the Lakota culture or Black Elk's teachings. They came with two agendas. One is to deeply and genuinely understand what the Lakota and Black Elk had to teach. The other was to find information that was useful to their own efforts.

Carolyn: And to make money off it.

Randy: Of course, of course.

Carolyn: So you're - you're talking about a lot of real ironies here. You're talking about cultural appropriation, and despite so much going wrong, inspiration surviving the process and serving in the long run, to spread a lot of interest in Indigenous spirituality among non-Indigenous people.

Randy: Exactly. So what we have is a muddy, complicated, imperfect process of sharing information by an Indigenous community with the greater world. And here, here is the wonderful irony and the hopeful message to take away from this. As imperfect as the book that John Neihardt produced is, it became the introduction of *[North American]* Indigenous culture to the entire world. Generations of scholars who become interested in learning deeply about Indigenous culture got their start by reading a book that was not a perfect example of sharing Indigenous culture. And I think this can give us all lessons in humility about taking the first steps and also being forgiving of one another and tolerant of one another when we don't get it absolutely perfectly right.

Carolyn: I'd say also for the mainstream people today, with all the discussion going on about cultural appropriation and all the problems of it, we can hold ourselves today to a much higher standard than we'd hold people, you know, in the 19th, early 20th centuries who were not having these kinds of discussions.

Randy: So I think there's actually a lesson here for Indigenous people as well, which is don't fear, don't slam the door in the face of people like Neihardt who come and want to learn from us, Accept the fact that they may not get it absolutely right first or second time, but that their efforts will build bridges.

And most importantly, after 500 years of fighting against complete erasure of our cultures, we are on the verge of a revival of interest and an absorption of some of our culture into the mainstream. And we need to go with this. We need to take some risks and we need to be tolerant and understand that we all can benefit if that sharing takes place.

Carolyn: Okay.

So Randy and I hope that this broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth. Before your busy day distracts you from this moment, we encourage you to take a few minutes to reach out and feel the presence of living flora and fauna. Allow yourself to touch and listen to their presence. Capture that moment and hold onto it. And also, if you will -

Randy: Write to me and let me know about your experiences. I can be contacted through my website, www.randykritkausky.com where you can also find transcripts and supplemental materials for all Indigenous Perspectives shows, including today's. Migwetch for listening.

Carolyn: Migwetch.

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