

Understanding Indigenous Perspectives

Indigenous Worldviews Welcome to Understanding Indigenous Worldviews Overview

Every people has a way of knowing, seeing, explaining, and living in the world. They have distinct values and different ideas

about what is important in life.
This module will explore cultural, spiritual and philosophical themes in Indigenous worldviews.
By the end of this module you will appreciate how Indigenous worldviews can inform your professional practice.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, learners should be able to:

- Recognize your own worldview;
- Appreciate why Canadians should understand Indigenous worldviews;
- Discern Indigenous ways from Western worldviews;
- Identify commonalities in

worldviews shared among
Indigenous peoples;

Reflecting Questions

People who share a particular culture tend to see their reality as normal. There are many assumptions about life and the world that are simply viewed as common sense.

These assumptions about the nature of reality may be so taken for granted and unquestioned that they may seem to be natural and not socially constructed at all.

Reflecting Questions

What are some of the traditions, beliefs and assumptions of your culture that may seem unusual or

different to someone from outside your culture?

Have you ever thought about people being alive or imbued with a spirit? How about a deer, moose or frog? How about rocks or shoes?

Indigenous worldviews: Module topics

Understanding worldviews

Indigenous worldviews

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Example: Creation stories

Example: Indigenous languages

Indigenous ways and Western worldviews compared

Indigenous worldviews in the classroom

What is a worldview?

Laying the ground:

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=public](https://play.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?qzbj6V95pTYP&id=21609&access=public)

Understanding worldviews

Worldviews are mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlap, 1992).

Think of worldviews as maps that people use to make sense of their world.

They are developed throughout a

person's lifetime through socialization and social interaction. Worldviews are unconsciously and uncritically taken for granted as the way things are (Hart, 2010).

Understanding worldviews

In our times, many worldviews coexist in the ways we make sense of the world. As many as these may be, there is usually a dominant worldview against which others are measured up.

Example:

In advanced capitalist societies for instance, a dominant lens views **self-interest** as a motivation to make sense of human behavior.

[INSERT A CAUTION SIGN]

Simplifying worldviews

We are discussing worldviews in ways that may be oversimplified in order to illustrate key points. However, it's important to keep in mind that.

The characteristics we raise here are necessarily overstated in order to illustrate key differences in how the different cultures view reality.

That these worldviews do not simply exist in a vacuum removed from one another. Each worldview has had an impact on other worldviews to greater or lesser extents.

Coexistence has made it difficult to reconcile contradicting notions of reality and unequal power relations has often made it so one worldview tends to assert its legitimacy over another.

it is possible for individuals from a culture to

disagree with some of the assumptions and common sense views of reality from their culture. That is, even as they are immersed in that culture, they may come to see and value things in a different way.

A word of caution (continued)

While it's dangerous to assume that all Indigenous worldviews are the same there are at least two things all Indigenous peoples share in common.

Indigenous worldviews on [Turtle Island](#) share more similarities with each other than with newcomer worldviews from Europe.

Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island (and more globally) share experiences of colonialism which have a great bearing on identity.

In summing up, while it's simplistic to assume everyone within a culture fully believes the common sense taken for granted worldview

assumptions of their originating culture, there is nonetheless a worldview operating for its members and it takes great effort to live in a way that is counter to this view or that challenges the view.

[I guess I say the same thing here]

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Indigenous worldviews

There are many Indigenous peoples, and therefore many Indigenous worldviews.

They share, however, a relational worldview emphasizing spirit and spirituality and, in turn, a sense of community and respect for the individual (Hart, 2010; Weaver, 1997; Weaver, 2001, Gross, 2003).

Indigenous worldviews

Who are Indigenous peoples?

Did you know?

First Nations, Métis and Inuit are three distinct Indigenous groupings with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have their own traditional territories, histories, and languages, and thus a diverse and

rich array of cultures exists.
From these cultures, a wealth of knowledge and practices has been contributed to the world.

Indigenous worldviews

Indigenous relational worldviews can be characterized by the concept of the circle, interconnectedness, and connection to place based on Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, and Relationships.

Example

Indigenous worldviews share a belief in the power of creating positive shared mind with all of creation. This is best defined as “power with,” as opposed to

“power over” ([Methot, 2012](#)).

Why Indigenous Worldviews Matter

Check this video out: Why do
Indigenous worldviews matter:

[https://play.library.utoronto.ca/
index.php?
9vGhImIzYdfJ&id=21655&access=
public](https://play.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?9vGhImIzYdfJ&id=21655&access=public)

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

There are at least four reasons why Indigenous

worldviews should matter to Canadians right now.

Demographic reasons

For social justice

For a more complete understanding of our world

To move toward sustainability and ecological
justice

Why Indigenous Worldviews Matter

Did you know?

There are more than 630 First
Nation communities in Canada,
which represent more than 50
nations or cultural groups and
50-52 Indigenous languages.

Check out this interactive map.

[http://fnpim-cippn.aandc-
aadnc.gc.ca/index-eng.html](http://fnpim-cippn.aandc-aadnc.gc.ca/index-eng.html)

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Consider these facts and figures

More than one million people in Canada identify themselves as an Aboriginal person, 5.3% as of 2011.

Fifty-three percent First Nations are registered Indians, 30% are Métis, 11% are Non-status Indians and 4% are Inuit.

Source

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Why Indigenous Worldviews Matter

Over half (54%) of Indigenous people live in urban areas.

Aboriginal youth are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population. There are almost half a million Aboriginal people under the age of 20.

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Source

Why Indigenous Worldviews Matter

The demographic shift in Canada's

population demands we pay greater attention to the youngest and fastest growing population: children of Indigenous ancestry.

Why Indigenous Worldviews Matter

The vast majority of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students attend publicly funded provincial schools and our curriculum and pedagogy should be a window and mirror onto this reality.

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Why Indigenous worldviews matter

To uphold and enact the social justice principles Canadians

cherish, we must acknowledge and respond to the most pressing social justice issue in Canada at this time:

the conditions faced by Indigenous people.

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Canada is recognized internationally as a strong protector of human rights.

Unfortunately, our track record at home is not held to the same high standards.

See: United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2014, May 7). *Twenty-seventh session: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, James Anaya*. UN Doc A/HRC/27/52/Add.2

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

For Indigenous people in Canada, compared to the rest of the population:

Life expectancy is lower.

Illness is more common.

Social problems, from family violence to alcohol abuse, are more common too.

Suicide rates among First Nations are 5 times higher than the general population. Among Inuit, suicide rates are 11 times higher than the rest of Canadians.

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Indigenous people are overrepresented in the Canadian justice system and in the Children's welfare system.

Homes are more often flimsy,
leaky and overcrowded.
Water and sanitation systems are
more often inadequate.
There are fewer jobs.
More spend time in jails and
prisons

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<https://pixabay.com/en/child-education-fear-terror-1439468/>

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

The world is in environmental
crisis. Indigenous knowledge is
needed now more than ever
Indigenous teachings and
worldviews offer a counter-
narrative to the story that led us to
the brink of extinction. Changing

the ways we relate to our natural relations offers the kind of philosophical shift needed to get off the path of assured destruction.

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

Indigenous people have always had a broad knowledge of how to live sustainably on the earth.

Renowned Tewa educator, Gregory Cajete, asserts that one of the defining characteristics of Indigenous education is that it is inherently environmental.

Why Indigenous worldviews matter

When Canada tabled Bill C-45 removing federal protection of most of the country's waterways, First Nations people stood up in protest.

"First Nations are Canadians' last, best hope of protecting the land, water, sky and plants and animals for their future generations as well"
Dr. Pam Palmater, Idle No More

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http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/indian-sacred-grounds-violated-by-industry-and-technology_gm523825792-92060413?st=1671959

Creation Stories

Creation stories inform and

support Indigenous worldviews and provide an excellent introduction to the values and beliefs operating in Indigenous worldviews.

Themes that emerge through creation stories include life lessons, shared understandings about peoples' ancestors and landscapes, and the experience of reclaiming Indigenous culture following colonial trauma.

Creation Stories

Explore how creation stories are key to the endurance of Indigenous worldviews.

Choose one of the following creation stories.

<<tentative to copyright clearance>>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zoUwn3xeDg>

Or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etn92Ms8plo>

Or:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSzDM7Jmg94>

Suggested Activities

Learn a creation story and share it with a class mate.

In small groups dramatize a creation story and tell it using body language.

Ideally, learn a creation story from the place you reside now and from the people who are the current and traditional caretakers in the place you reside.

Find a creative way to retell a creation story that has meaning where you live or work.

Explore and discuss the themes and values embedded in the stories.

DO NOT make up your own creation stories such as how an ocelot got its spots, or why squirrel acts the way he does. Try to use primary or secondary research sources to support a re-telling.

Indigenous languages

Indigenous languages shape and are shaped by people's relationship to each other and to their land. They are the vessel of ancestral worldviews.

Indigenous languages provide a profound avenue through which to express Indigenous self-determination.

More than 60 Indigenous languages

are spoken in Canada today (Census 2011).

Indigenous languages

The intimate connection between language and worldview and also the impact of colonialism on its continuation and vitality are described well in this personal talk by Kwak'wala language teacher Joye Walkus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqleT-kB6GU>

Indigenous and western worldviews

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Indigenous and western worldviews

Western worldviews vary just as Indigenous worldviews do.

However, there are many shared values that make the modern West more similar to each other than traditional Indigenous worldviews.

For instance, Western worldviews are hierarchical rather than circular, with power concentrated at the top and distributed downwards over others.

Commonalities in Western worldviews are key to

understanding the dissonant relationships between colonizers and Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous and western worldviews

Watch this video: [https://
play.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?
OMPu7Kvi5eex&id=21658&acces
s=public](https://play.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?OMPu7Kvi5eex&id=21658&access=public) (cut at .44)

And then enjoy this article: [http://
ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/Articles/
BarnhardtKawagley/EIP.html](http://ankn.uaf.edu/Curriculum/Articles/BarnhardtKawagley/EIP.html)

Indigenous worldviews: The UNDRIP

Are you familiar with the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous

Rights? It is a strong example of an articulation of a globally shared Indigenous worldview and set of objectives.

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

Question:

How might you and your class work toward achieving an objective of the UNDRIP?

Indigenous worldviews in the classroom

Education is incomplete without Indigenous worldviews.

Geography is incomplete without foundational stories of the land.

History is incomplete without first stories.

Our making sense of the world is incomplete without Indigenous worldviews.

Holding space for Indigenous worldviews

Changing the status-quo for Indigenous peoples in Canada starts with a complete education.

Our schools are privileged spaces to provoke change through the meaningful recognition of Indigenous worldviews.

Indigenous worldviews and

education

Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, knowing and being are an invaluable resource for educators. Many of the educational innovations being touted and promoted have strong roots or counterparts in Indigenous traditions that are time-tested for millennia.

Watch the following video to get you started:

<https://play.library.utoronto.ca/index.php?qzbj6V95pTYP&id=21609&access=public>

Indigenous worldviews and

education

We encourage you to think about responsive ways of schooling that consider different measures of success inspired on Indigenous worldviews.

We recommend this article to get you inspired: [https://
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/
awp_moving_forward.pdf](https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/awp_moving_forward.pdf)

<<Use this image>>

<https://pixabay.com/en/pregnant-pregnancy-mom-child-775036/>

Activities

Find out:

On whose traditional territory is your school or home located?

What are some creation stories of the people whose land you are on?

Discuss

Narrate a creation story from the people whose land you are on to your colleagues. Discuss how Indigenous worldviews can be found in the story's themes, plots, characters or action.

Reflect on how Indigenous worldviews can be found in the story's themes, plots, characters or action.

Assessment strategies:

Check your knowledge

Multiple Choice

Indigenous people in Canada

include:

Status and non-status Indians

Métis

Inuit

All of the above

Answer: d

Assessment strategies:

Check your knowledge

Multiple Choice

Which of the following is characteristic of Indigenous worldviews?

Humans have domination over nature

Time is linear

Spirituality is embedded in all elements of the cosmos

None of the above

Answer: c

Assessment strategies:

Check your knowledge

Multiple Choice

Which of the following social conditions is/are true about Aboriginal people in Canada?

Life expectancy is lower

Fewer children graduate from high school

Water and sanitation systems in Aboriginal communities are more often inadequate

All of the above

Answer: d

Assessment strategies:

Check your knowledge

Multiple Choice

Which of the following is characteristic of Aboriginal worldviews?

Humans have dominion over nature.
Human reason transcends the natural world.
Spirituality is imbedded in all elements of the cosmos.
Time is linear.

Answer: c

Assessment strategies: Check your knowledge

Multiple Choice

One of the reasons stereotypes are so powerful is because...
those who are stereotyped never question the stereotypes.
they are almost always entirely true
they are overgeneralized but real referents can be found in everyday life that help support the stereotype.
they are almost always entirely false.

Answer: c

Assessment strategies:
Check your knowledge
True or False

1. Aboriginal people are the youngest and fastest growing segment of the Canadian population

Answer: True. Fifty per cent of Aboriginal people in Canada are under 23

Assessment strategies:
Check your knowledge
True or False

2. Aboriginal people in Canada share the same worldview

Answer: False. Although Aboriginal communities share much in common, there is a wide diversity of Nations, traditions and beliefs.

**Assessment strategies:
Check your knowledge**

True or False

3. Our worldview refers to how we consciously perceive our world

Answer: False. Worldviews often operate on a subconscious level and are embedded in our culture.

Resources and Further

Learning

Comparing worldviews: Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt Originally adapted from Knudtson and Suzuki (1992).

Leroy Little Bear. Jagged Worldviews Colliding. [http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/documents/](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/documents/fnmi_worldviews/)

[fnmi_worldviews/jagged_worldviews_colliding.pdf](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/documents/fnmi_worldviews/jagged_worldviews_colliding.pdf)

Facts about Aboriginal education in Canada (6.15 minutes). [http://](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tswVV2YkjKA)

[www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tswVV2YkjKA)

[v=tswVV2YkjKA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tswVV2YkjKA)

Aboriginal 101 (5.58 minutes) [http://](http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2012/01/Aboriginal-101.html)
[www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2012/01/](http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2012/01/Aboriginal-101.html)

[Aboriginal-101.html](http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2012/01/Aboriginal-101.html)

Enoughness: Restoring Balance to the Economy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsh-NcZyuil>

