

Introduction to Stewardship

ENS 1010

Resource Package

1. What's Your Environmental Worldview?

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We all have different belief systems when it comes to how we manage our Earth.

What is yours? Find out here!

Three Ways of Thinking

What is more important: the health of the world's ecosystems or the needs and wants of the human races? Your answer may determine your environmental worldview.

People often disagree about how serious the environmental problems facing the world and what we should do to solve them. These disagreements often cause conflicts, which arise out of our different environmental worldviews. How can we categorize the major worldviews? Read on.

1. Planetary Management

The planetary management worldview believes that humans are set apart from nature and can manage nature while adequately meeting our increasing needs and wants. Believers of planetary management believe that with the help of technology and innovative ingenuity, we can manage our resources and not run out of those that are limited. Also, economic growth is unlimited in the world and should not be restricted by worry about natural resources. The success of the human race depends on how well humans are able to use the Earth's natural resources for our advancement and benefit.

2. Stewardship

Those who have a stewardship worldview believe that we have an ethical responsibility to be caring managers, or stewards of the Earth and its finite resources. Stewards believe that with the right management strategies and mindfulness, we will not run out of resources. These strategies must encourage environmentally beneficial forms of economic growth and discourage growth that harms the environment. The success of the human race depends on how well we are able to manage the earth's life support systems for our benefit and the rest of the world's organisms and ecosystems.

3. Environmental Wisdom

Those that believe in an environmental wisdom worldview believe that we are all a part of and totally dependent on nature. Nature exists for the good of all species and we must include them as we create management plans. An environmental wisdom belief system believes that all resources are limited and should not be wasted or squandered. Environmentally friendly modes of economic growth should be employed and those economic practices that degrade the Earth should be discouraged. The success of the human race depends on learning how natural systems maintain and sustain themselves. Humans must integrate lessons of nature into the ways we think and live.

2. Exploring Examples of Indigenous Worldviews

a. CREE: The Four Directions represent the *interconnectedness* of the *universe* and all its *elements*: plants, animals, humans and the environment in which they live. The indigenous perspective views the world as a moving, changing, life force in which birth and death are natural and necessary processes. *Balance* is maintained through the *interdependency* of the life forces.

The validity of this view rests on the knowledge of the fundamental relationships and patterns at play in the world. To traditional indigenous peoples, the world is sacred. Starting with the spirit that is created at the moment of conception, the nine-month journey towards the birth of a baby marks the beginning of entry into the family unit. The journey continues with each stage of life as infant, child, adolescent, adult, and elder. Development takes place spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally throughout the life journey however once you are a parent, you are a parent for life. However just as a baby is completely dependent on adult care for its survival, adults depend on their children for the regeneration, or continuation, of the life chain. Traditionally the responsibilities associated with raising a child belonged to a larger circle of all adults in the community. Today Cree grandparents often continue to act as primary caregivers of their grandchildren once they become youth to impart knowledge and values. In this way children view those around them as extended family, creating a strong sense of belonging and kinship.

The life chain of plants and animals are similarly connected in the Four Directions and, with the elements, the planets, the seasons, and the four sacred medicines, provide the nourishment and the conditions to sustain life. Harmony exists when this spider web of interconnecting threads is respected and understood. Life begins in the spirit and returns to the spirit world following death.

Four Aspects of Self

The emotional, mental, spiritual and physical elements of ones' life are referred to as the Four Aspects of Self which, when taken together, represent the four parts of one's being. These elements are gifts from the Creator, but each aspect commands responsibility in order to maintain healthy balance of the self in all respects. Neglect of exercising any one element leads to an imbalance of the whole in the traditional indigenous view. There is a correlation between the Four Aspects of Self and the Four Directions in the Medicine Wheel. The Eastern quadrant represents the beginning of a new day - a new life - and just as the sun rotates in a clockwise direction to the south, west and north, movement on the Medicine Wheel flows in the same direction. The baby is represented by the east; youth is represented by the south; adulthood is represented by the west, and elderhood is represented by the north. Similarly, the spiritual element of self is associated with the east. The spiritual connection to the baby in the eastern quadrant of the wheel comes from its birth from spirit. The youth's association with the physical aspect of self comes from the growth that takes place during this stage and the natural physical activity of children and adolescents. Adulthood is associated with the emotional aspect of self. Maturity brings the awareness of feelings and the confidence to express emotion. Life experience gives

adults a broad perspective to better understand the world and the journey everyone walks. Adulthood provides the gift of recognizing what is important and the skill to provide what is necessary to live well and to be happy and healthy. This knowledge is what enables adults to make good parents. Elderhood is the fourth and final stage in the cycle of life and is associated with the mental aspect of self. This connection comes from the wisdom of age and experience. With less responsibility at this stage of life for looking after children and more time to reflect on life from a philosophical view, elders develop a superior mental awareness.

The energy shifts with each stage of life just as the knowledge and responsibilities change. Just as no one can stay a baby or a child forever, change is a natural process. The stages of life follow a natural flow of sequence, generation upon generation.

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b. IROQUOIS: Seven Generation Thinking

- *The words come from the Constitution of the Iroquois Nation.

The clear message of "seventh generation" living is to think seven generations ahead and act in ways that benefit, not sacrifice, the future generations, specifically the seventh generation after us. People usually associate this with ecological actions and thinking.

It is a linear idea but it is very interrelated. For example...

You are the first generation acting, making choices and leaving your legacy for the seventh generation in front of you.

But you are also...

...the seventh generation that benefits (and in some cases suffers) from the actions, sacrifices and generosity of the people that lived seven generations before you. You are also the second, third, fourth and so on.

Think about it:

- "In what ways are we/you benefiting? Suffering?"
- "How can we use this knowledge and wisdom in today's world for our benefit?"
"How can I incorporate this invaluable philosophy into my world?"
- "How will I begin to incorporate it into all areas of my life where I have not yet done so, for the benefit of the seventh generation?"
"What actions are in line with "Seven Generation Thinking?"

Adapted from <http://nativeinsight.blogspot.ca/2012/11/seventh-generation.html>