

Relationship Building & Aboriginal Adult Learning

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Objective

- **To present elements and perspectives around Canadian aboriginal culture that relates to aboriginal adult learning.**
- Why? A foundation for successful relationships between different people is having an informed **'cultural understanding'**it's also the foundation for a peaceful world.

My intro to Cultural Understanding



- Despite several hundred years of contact and relations, there remains enormous gaps in a **‘cross-cultural understanding’** between First Nations and non-aboriginal Canadians. The biggest gap is a fundamental differences in world view. In many cases, it is simply the inability to explain matters in a way that is understandable or an unwillingness to listen.

- Assembly of First Nations (2005)

World view = Perception



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- **What is culture?**



Why does culture matter?

- Largest influence on individuals and communities' identity and response to everything they do, feel, think and believe.

Aboriginal specific cultural dimensions

- Oral & listening styles over written/speaking
- Present tense communications
- Enormous patience
- Joking and laughter signs of acceptance
- Elders hold great respect
- Motivation from the group/peers
- Eye contact can be perceived as over-assertive
- Periods of silence acceptable
- Soft spoken words carry the furthest

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- To understand is to nod
 - Soft handshakes rather than firm
 - Praise/recognition valued from group
 - Decisions making after consultation with all

News Flash!!

- **ABORIGINAL
PEOPLE LEARN
DIFFERENTLY.**

...compared to current western
education academic models.

Holistic Medicine Wheel



Holistic approach embraces:

- Body – (physical skills): “I can do it”
- Mind – (mental knowledge): “ I know it”
- Heart – (emotions/perceptions): “ I feel it”
- Spirit – (intuition/faith): “I wholly believe it”

.... All constantly in flux with each other.



“Native people often say the Earth is our mother, as a scientist, I have come to know this is true. We are people made from air, water and what we eat from soil. The environment is not something separated from us, but we are the environment”.

- Dr. David Suzuki (1999)

Canadian Council on Learning

- *Aboriginal Adult Literacy, Nourishing Their Spirit*, by George Ningwakwe (2008).
- Reviewed over 80 sources of published academic information.
- **Concluded: Aboriginal people learn differently, in that they embrace a holistic approach to ‘learning’, that begins in the womb and becomes inter-generational.**

Ningwakwe's Barriers to success in learning...

- Cultural differences and misunderstandings by non-aboriginals.
- Geographical remoteness/isolation
- Individual circumstances (financial, trauma, family, social, addictions)
- Systemic racism, inequality, Indian Act policy and practice in education.



“ Everything is energy and that’s all there is to it...”

“Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form to another”.

- Albert Einstein

Is ‘energy’ spirit ?

Aboriginal learning succeeds when...

- ...it;s a holistic 'process' instead of end result of something. Not about filling the mind with facts.
- There is a sense of belonging from group/peers.
- It becomes a human development exercise.
- It is culturally relevant as much as possible.



**How people treat you
is their karma, how you
react is yours. - Buddha**