THE MINO-PIMATISIWIN APPROACH AND SUSTAINABLE WELL-BEING: FROM INWARD JOURNEYS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Acknowledgements

- The spirits and ancestors
- First Peoples of this territory
- Elders
- Participants
- Organizers
Who’s this guy?

- Ochikwi-Sipi—Fisher River Cree Nation, Treaty Five
- Keemu(t)s Notinisis, Joseph Hart, Joseph Hart, Joseph Hart, Joseph Hart, Wesley Hart, Vivian Thickfoot nee Hart
- Father of Keesyk and Nostyn
- Brother of Fjola Hart-Wasekeesikaw
- Uncle of Kimberly Hart
- Adopted brother of a large family

And so...
• Assistant Professor
• Director of Manitoba First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research
• Mental Health Therapist/supervisor
• Family Therapist
• Addiction Programming Manager
• Child and Family Services Worker
• Community Volunteer
My greatest learning has come from being an

• Oskápés--an Elder’s helper
Overview

• The Mino-pimatisiwin Approach
• An discussion on some literature related to sustainable development
• Reflection of sustainable development from a mino-pimatisiwin perspective
• Connecting to social justice
Indigenous Epistememes: The central Pillar and Framework

- **Spiritual**
  - Distinct from religion and implicit in all aspects of indigenous cultural life

- **Communalism**
  - An orientation towards sharing and doing for one another by members of a community.

- **Respectful individualism**
  - Allow much freedom and self-expression with the awareness that a person is committed to contributing to the needs of the community.
Drawing on Medicine Wheels

• Generally drawn as a circle divided into four equal shapes
• Some controversy
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Fundamental concepts

• **Wholeness**
  • the incorporation of all aspects of life and the giving of attention and energy to each aspect within ourselves and the universe around us

• **Balance**
  • where we give attention to each aspect of the whole in a manner where one aspect is not focussed upon to the detriment of other parts.

• **Relationships**
  • all aspects of the whole, including other than human beings, are in relation to one another. These relationships require attention and nurturing. When we given energy to these relationships we nurture the connections.
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Fundamental concepts

• Harmony
  • is a process involving all entities fulfilling their obligations to other another and to themselves

• Growth
  • is a daily and life long process that involves developing as aspects of oneself, such as the body, mind, heart, and spirit, in a harmonious manner

• Healing
  • Is orientated to the restoration of wholeness, balance, relationships, and harmony. It is concerned with disconnections, imbalances, and disharmony.
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Fundamental Concepts

- Mino-pimatisiwin
  - the good-life, or life in the fullest, healthiest sense
  - is the ever present goal of growth and healing and includes efforts by individuals, families, communities, people in general, and all life entities
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Key Values

• To Reflect the values of the peoples in their territory. These include

• Respect
  • is the showing of honour, esteem, deference, and courtesy to all, where we are not imposing our views onto other.
  • To look twice.
  • To Creation in all.

• Sharing
  • includes the sharing of all we can, including knowledge and life experiences, and the emphasizes that everyone is important.
  • is used to helps develop relationships.
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Perceptions of People

- Human nature is seen as good, although negative attributes can develop.
- Views people in the state of being and a state of being-in-becoming, as having a purpose and are active as they strive to grow towards mino-pimatisiwin.
- People are understood as one aspect of life that is dependent upon those who have lived before us and upon other life.
- People are social beings guided by good-conduct taught through such means as ceremonies.
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach: Helping Relationships

- Helping relationships are focused on the relationships of the people being helped.
- This focus addresses the restoration of relationships that have come out of balance.
- The people offering help are not the experts.
- The helping process is a shared experience. This experience is relevant in the helping process, to the life of the person seeking help as well as the person offering help.
- Emphasize non-interference, personal autonomy, and self-determination.
Taking an Inward Journeys

- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Physical
Taking an Inward Journeys

Elder
child
adult
youth
Taking An Inward Journey

environment

Elder
Child
adult
youth
Towards Social Justice-A Social Journey

(Four Worlds Development)
The Journey

• All parts are important-wholeness
• They are all related to one another-relationship
• One is not focus on to the detriment of the other-balance
• The centre is the optimum place-harmony all are working together
• All life is in flux, changes-- cahk
• Journey implies it is a ongoing process of “development”
  • Requires addressing that which brought us out of balance and/or harmony
  • Requires ongoing attention to the relationships to maintain balance
  • Requires working together to maintain harmony
The journey and social justice

- Justice is implied that recognition of the “gifts” of all
- Recognition of respectful individualism
- Recognition of communalism
So How Does the Literature Relate
Towards sustainable development-A literature example of Lertz and Vredenburg (2005)

- Berkes and Folk (1994)
- Sustainable development is commonly understood as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- Holistic approach-recognizes the interdependent biophysical, organizational, and philosophical systems, including natural, social and cultural capital (p. 243)
Towards Sustainable Development - The literature

Holistic View: (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005)

- Cultural Capital
- Social Capital
- Natural Capital
Natural capital

- Capital = a stock that yields a flow of income
- The natural income produced by natural capital consists of biophysical services and natural resources
- Comprises of human made and environment assets
  - Strong sustainability requires that a constant amount of natural capital must be preserved and passed on from one generation to another
  - Thus strong sustainability does not undermine the ecological and social systems upon which communities and society are dependent
Social Capital and Cultural Capital

• Social capital—a social structural resource; the organizational resource of relations, trust and institutions upon which communities are based
  • Social development must be able to maintain and cultivate the trust, relationships, and organizational resources necessary for a healthy robust society.

• Cultural capital refers to the resources of shared knowledge, beliefs, and values upon which communities are based (Lertzman, 1999, cited in Letzman & Vredenburg, 2005)
  • Cultural capital determines how a society uses natural capital and modifies it to create human capital (cited in Letzman & Vredenburg, 2005, p. 243)
  • Cultural capital is the interface between social and natural capital
  • Highlights the values and meaning of sustained development
Growth refers to physical change entailing an increase in size.

Development implies qualitative change entailing change characterized by capacity building and system enhancement (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005).

 Decreased demand on natural resources can be offset by a great supply of social and cultural capital.

A holistic approach to sustainable development must address the biophysical, organizational and cultural systems within which human life is embedded and upon which is dependent (p. 250).
• Recognizes traditional knowledge, specifically traditional environmental knowledge, rest beyond the systems of social capital, and is founded on cultural capital, and methods of oral traditions.

• From their work with Indigenous peoples they have deepened their model
• They recognize that ethics of sustainable development oblige the preservation of all these aspects of human (and non-human) life for current and future generations (p. 250)
• Thus an ethical approach is needed to connect the non-Indigenous approach to sustainable development and Indigenous practices within traditional environmental knowledge
• This ethical approach reflects concepts of social justice in that Indigenous peoples have contributions that will help all
• That respect of indigenous peoples and “traditional environmental knowledge” is needed
• Western scholars often recognize the spiritual foundation of TEK yet descriptions are often shallow and vague

• O’Brien and Wolf (2010) noted that what is still missing from economic orientated approaches are the differential subjective values of individuals, societies and cultures regarding the experience and consequences of environmental transformation. In other words, spirituality.

• De Witt (2011) note that the development of society contemporary over the past three decades is providing a potential answer to address this shallowness and vagueness
Potentials of contemporary spirituality (new age) for sustainable development (de Witt, 2011)

Rehabilitation of nature: an overall greening of (individual) lifestyle

Sense of interconnectedness: responsibility and empowerment of the individual

Embedded individuality; vocation, self-work-ethic, service through self-actualization

Sense of urgency and crisis; willingness or change, little attachment ot the status quo

Focus on inner fulfillment; alleviate consumerism and support (transition to) green economy

Individual conscious development; higher level of functioning, creativity, and efficacy

Cultural experimentation and renewal

Subtle activism; support for change through meditation, prayer, and positive intentions
Pitfalls of Contemporary spirituality for Sustainable development (de Witt, 2011)

- Pitfalls
- Narcissism
- Instrumentalizing and commercializing, e.g. “the secret”
- An exclusive focus on the inner work at the cost of addressing the affairs and injustices in the world
- Regression to or ramanticizing of mythical, pre-rational consciousness (and society), no adequate integration of modern achievements
- Experienced as “too many socially deviant”/too socially deviant by society, marginalizes its impact
Contemporary spirituality (de Witt, 2011)

- Understood as a response to the ills of modernity
- Two paths evident
  1) attempting to go back to a society before modernity, hence, romanticizing of Indigenous peoples and “a oneness with nature”; elevation of myth, feelings, and intuition over sources of knowledge above reason, logic and analysis; fusion of science and metaphysics = premodern = monism = regressive
  2) A worldcentric orientation and postconventional morality; it is progressive socially/politically; it attempts to overcome dichotomies and synthesize the best of both worlds = postmodern = integrative = progressive

Contemporary spirituality that is progressive provides the potential for sustainable development
Combining Letzman and Vredenburg (2005) and de Witt
Pitfall

- Disrespect and appropriation of Indigenous knowledge
Comparing the Literature with a Mino-pimatisiwin Approach

• I would suggest that the “romanticizing” of Indigenous and (other spiritualities) a the key disconnection

• There is a compressive lack of understanding of spirituality, and the relationship between spirituality and the other concepts
Towards Social Justice-A Cree Spiritual Journey
Manito (N); manitowan (VII)

- The great positive good force in the universe
- The basic mysterious quality in the universe.
- The Creator, God
- spirit, spirit being; God

- it is the expression of spirit power
- it is of spirit nature, it is spiritual
  (www.creedictionary.com/search/index.php?q=manitowan&scope=1)

- In Algonquian religious belief, a supernatural power that permeates the world, possessed in varying degrees by both spiritual and human beings. (The Free Dictionary, http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Manito)
mowin

• "to take care never to mistreat any form of life" (Brass, 1999)
Pastahowin and w

- transgression, breach of the natural order; use of bad medicine; sin, evil doings

(www.creedictionary.com/search/?q=transgression&scope=0&submitButton.x=45&submitButton.y=21)

- S/he suffers in retribution for something

(http://www.creedictionary.com/search/?q=retribution&scope=0)

- w is tied to mowin. If you do any wrong to another life, recalling that life is understood more broadly than the English implies or what non-Indigenous people generally accept, then some form of retribution will come upon you and/or those close to you or your decedents (Hart, 2007).
mamatowisowin

• “a capacity to tap the creative life forces of the inner space by the use of all the faculties that constitute our being—it is to exercise inwardness” (Ermine, 1995, p. 104)

• Requires the central pillar and framework of Indigenous epistememes in Central Ininiwi-Ministik
  • Spiritual
  • Communalism
  • Respectful individualism
Mino-pimatisiwin Approach and Social Justice

• Centralizes spirituality
• Based in relationship that are balanced and working together
• Mino-pimatisiwin is about a journey, not an arrival
• Social justice is a on-going process with relationships between, people, peoples, and peoples and non-people life entities
• We cannot have social justice without recognition of all life
Summary

• Indigenous peoples have our own ways of understanding, such as the mino-pimatisiwin approach
• Contemporary spirituality does not well reflect Indigenous worldviews and means of living in a sustaining manner
• Indigenous knowledge remains misunderstood, and misapplied
• Indigenous knowledge can support an individual to live consistently within, and how the concepts can also support an individual to live in a sustainable, manner that is socially just
• Justice relates to the “spirit” that runs through all
I leave you with:

The words many Elders share, which goes to the heart of our ways of being as Indigenous peoples.

Take what will help you go forward in a good way. Please, leave the rest.

kinanaskomitininowow nitotemak

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