

Decolonization Learning Journey

A four-part Learning Journey with Mi'kmaw Elders and knowledge sharers.

Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia

Decolonization Learning Journey – Resource document

Webinar #2- June 9, 2020

Hosting team:

- Elder Jane Meader, Elder, BACS & MEd
- Mary Beth Doucette, Assistant Professor and Purdy Crawford Chair in CBU's Shannon School of Business
- Nicole Cammaert, Associate Executive Director, CSCNS

Guest speaker:

Clifford Paul, Moose Management Coordinator, Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR)

Topic:

Netukulimk, Harvesting, Sustainable Ways of Living, and Seven Generations

Highlights

What does it mean to be a good ally?

As Canadians learn about and acknowledge efforts towards reconciliation with the Indigenous people of this land, we more and more hear the term “ally.” Being an ally can take many forms, and in some ways is defined by each individual and their actions. However, there are some standard guidelines which individuals are encouraged to adopt in their approach to reconciliation: https://segalcentre.org/common/sitemedia/201819_Shows/ENG_AllyToolkit.pdf

What's a smudge?

Smudging is a cultural ceremony practiced by a wide variety of Indigenous peoples in Canada and other parts of the world. Smudging is typically used for medicinal and practical purposes, as well as for spiritual ceremonies. The practice generally involves prayer and the burning of sacred medicines, such as sweetgrass, cedar, sage and tobacco.¹

¹ Watch Stephen Augustine perform and explain the smudging ceremony:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueJA_539mVg&t=143s

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What is the importance of the eagle feather?

The Eagle is a symbol of many things including: respect, honour, humbleness, truth, love, natural power, strength, courage, wisdom and Freedom, everything that is positive. Receiving an eagle feather is one of the highest honors in Mi'kmaw culture. The reason the eagle feather is held in such high regard is because it's believed that when the eagle is flying high in the sky, high enough that it can no longer be seen, the eagle has gone to see and speak with the Creator. In this way, the eagle is the communicator between the Creator and people. So, when an individual sees the eagle, it is believed to be a message from the Creator, and as such cause for reflection on one's actions and intentions.²

What is the significance of tobacco?

The Mi'kmaq traditionally offered tobacco for many reasons: when a tree was cut down, when an animal was killed, when rocks were taken for the Sweat Lodge, or to make a medicine wheel. It was done as a way of showing appreciation for that which was taken. Tobacco offerings taught the people from early childhood to always be respectful and to always show their gratitude to the Creator, to the spirit of the animal, to the spirit of the tree, to the spirit of the rock.³

As defined by Clifford and UINR, netukulimk is the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the community. Netukulimk is achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of our environment. The Mi'kmaq have an inherent right to access and use natural resources and they have a responsibility to use those resources in a sustainable way. The Mi'kmaq way of resource management includes a spiritual element that ties together people, plants, animals, and the environment. UINR's strength is in our ability to integrate scientific research with Mi'kmaq knowledge acquisition, utilization, and storage.^{4 5}

² Clifford Paul goes into detail about the significance of the eagle feather:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8gYQmA-9hl>

³ Read more about tobacco offerings: <http://www.sgibnl.ca/mide-wiigwas-tobacco-tobacco-ties/>

⁴ More information can be found at: <https://www.uinr.ca/programs/netukulimk/>

⁵ Watch Mi'kmaw Elder Kerry Propser explore traditional laws that govern fishing in the Mi'kmaq world, and some of the political battles that have been fought to defend them: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrk3Zl_2Dd0

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What is UINR?

UINR (Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources) has been Cape Breton's Mi'kmaw voice on natural resources and environmental concerns since 1999. UINR represents the five Mi'kmaw communities of Unama'ki – Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q – and was formed to address concerns regarding natural resources and their sustainability.⁶ “Msit No'Kmaq” is a Mi'kmaw phrase meaning “All My Relations.” It expresses the concept of respecting all things in your environment.

What is “Etuaptmumk” (Two-Eyed Seeing)?

Etuaptmumk - Two-Eyed Seeing is a principle brought forward by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall. The concept asks us to learn to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.⁷

What is the significance of seven generations?

The Mi'kmaq look 7 generations ahead to sustain natural resources for future generations, while also considering the ancestors from 7 generations ago. It is believed that what we do now is witnessed by the ancestors; so, we must think about our decisions and how they will be viewed by the ancestors.



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⁶ Visit their website: <https://www.uinr.ca/about/>

⁷ More information about Etuaptmumk - Two-Eyed Seeing can be found here: <http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/>