

## **Wolokokiapia: An Antidote to Neo-liberalism's Influence on War and Peace.**

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### **Introduction**

Under a global paradigm of neoliberalism, with its emphasis on “free enterprise” and consumerism and a “pick yourself up by your bootstraps” approach to community, social/ecological justice, and the public good, our world is suffering. Humankind is at war with nature and itself, poisoning everything with the neoliberal rationale for greed. We need an antidote before it is too late. I suggest that Indigenous wisdom, as understood in the Lakota word for “peace within and without,” wolokokiapia, offers such a cure.

Wolokokiapia, let's refer to it generally as “Indigenous wisdom,” is ultimately about a sacred realization that all is interconnected. Through the denial of the Western ego of its relationship with Nature, the natural world has been objectified so it might be controlled and subsequently exploited for economic gain or glory. Indigenous means being so completely identified with place that you reflect its soul. Maybe it is not possible for a population that is so separated from place and Nature to ever replicate the Indigenous sense of place and the importance of being in harmony with it, but I propose it is our only chance for survival, health and happiness.

In the eyes of Tribal people, Nature and spirit are essentially the same. This is why Indigenous tracking is so intimately involved in coming to the source of spirit. I would love to see an MRI scan of a traditional, trained tracker's brain while he was tracking an animal. In the process of tracking, actions and relationships are reflected in the patterns that reoccur in all of Nature. Tracking connects people to their own spirits, the spirits of the land, the animals, plants and other entities.

Indian People's see the animals as teachers of such virtues as patience, courage, fortitude, humility, honesty, etc. When hunters came into direct contact with the life and death of fellow creatures, right relationships was a matter of survival. All teaching based on hunting was predicated on the principle of abiding respect and relationship with the animals hunted. Individuals learned that we have within us an animal spirit and understanding that spirit was and is an important lesson in self-knowledge. "The concepts of sharing, connecting, and relating one's life to animals formed a basic premise of Indigenous education. Of course, the animal world was not the only focus of reverence. Plants, stars and the celestial bodies of the cosmos provided an equal opportunity for establishing and understanding our place in the world (Cajete, 2010, p 92)."

### **The CAT-FAWN Connection**

If Indigenous wisdom, accessible to all from the teachings of those who still live against all odds according to its precepts, and an inherent part of all of our cultural backgrounds, is a "solution" for our ecological calamity, how exactly might we proceed toward transformational learning? An important option is to stop ignoring the Indigenous perspective and learn more facts from Indigenous writings. Another is a specific process of self-reflection that came to me in a vision after a near death experience in Mexico's Copper Canyon, where a nearly drowned during an attempt to be the first person to successfully kayak the Rio Urique. In my book, *Primal Awareness: A True Story of Survival, Awakening and Transformation with the Raramuri Shamans of Mexico*, I describe in detail what I refer to as the "CAT-FAWN Connection, but here I will briefly explain how it works (Jacobs, 1998).

CAT-FAWN is a mnemonic for helping to remember that transformational learning is ultimately connected to a processing of information that, referring back to neuroscience, represents collaboration between right and left-brain hemispheres. This means that different brain wave lengths known to be involved during predominantly right-brained hypnotic states of consciousness interact with brain activity relating to left-brain cognitive reasoning. CAT describes this process as "Concentration Activated Transformation," i.e., transformative learning that stems from a balanced integration of both hypnotically acquired ideas and rationally considered ones. Thus, any ecological literacy program that does not find ways to incorporate some sort of trance phenomenon will not be effective. Indigenous Peoples have understood this phenomenon of learning without the need for functional MRI machines. Their stories, use of images and art, experiences in Nature, ceremonies, rights of passage, etc., are intentionally used to help direct deep learning. Such activities would thus be important for environmental education if we want to reprogram the hypnosis of Western hegemony. Hegemony, with all its sources in media, folklore and education, works because of its repetitive influence during spontaneous states of trance we all experience regularly, but especially during times of stress or fear.

The second part of the mnemonic describes four major forces that play upon these spontaneous states of hypnosis. They include Fear, as mentioned, Authority, Words and Nature. Depending on whether a dominant Western cultural worldview informs how we think about these four forces or whether an Indigenous perspective does, determines whether transformative learning in a positive direction occurs.

For example, in Western culture teaches us that we should avoid fear and when it comes, make it go away as quickly as possible. We do not realize that when we are afraid we become hyper suggestible to the signals or words of a perceived, trusted authority figure. We allow others to hypnotize us into believing things that are not true and that are not useful or healthful. Indigenous wisdom, however, understands this particular power of fear and intentionally employs it for positive learning opportunities. We see fear as a catalyst for deeply learning, for example, a virtue. If we are trying to become more generous, or more courageous, or more patient, and a fearful situation occurs, once we use the emotion to do our best to assure personality safety, if the situation persists, we embrace it as a gift. “Grandmother Bear, I cannot believe I did not realize this was your territory in which I was seeking berries. I see I have no escape from you, so I will take this opportunity to practice my generosity. Look, if you need my flesh more than I want these berries, I offer both to you.” Of course, the bear then moves on. You get the idea, though it is probably a very foreign one to you if you are a typical Western reader.

The second force that interacts with CAT is the concept of Authority. In Western tradition, authority stems generally from external sources. We listen to the authority of our books, our teachers, our preachers, our parents, our leaders, etc. Such authority, especially when coupled with fear or stress, literally hypnotizes us to believe the messages of the authority figure, no matter how incorrect. To the contrary, Indigenous wisdom teaches that the only true source of authority is personal reflection, honest reflection, on lived experience in light of the spiritual understanding that everything is connected. If education is to change the way people relate to Nature, even the neuroscience reveals that if we reflected honestly on how Nature makes us feel, we would realize its importance to us in a deeper way than any ecological literacy course not accomplishes.

The third force is Words. Western culture seems to be famous for its deceptive use of words. Social neuroscience even wants us to believe that it is key aspect of human existence. These studies, as summarized in my book (2010) seem to reveal that deception is a higher order brain function that evolved to help humans survive. The back cover, for example, of David Livingstone Smith’s text, *Why We Lie: the Evolutionary Roots of Deception and the Unconscious Mind*, says, “Deceit, lying and falsehoods lie at the very heart of our cultural heritage.” He tells us “Mother Nature has seen to it that the conscious mind is relatively blind to the nuances of social behavior (p. 146).”

In Indigenous ways of thinking, we learn to observe and listen carefully to understand physical reality and experience, not to find ways to misrepresent it! There can be little doubt that deception has “evolved” to play a large role in the

world today, but this says something different. Indigenous Peoples have always believed that it is important to see what is real about a situation, a thing or an entity. If something did not occur in the physical plane, it did not occur. Our languages help in such understanding because they are rich with descriptive terms and action verbs that minimize reductionism and abstract generalizing.

Although each of the forces in the CAT-FAWN concept are vital, I want to elaborate here on this one because our denial about the state of ecological affairs in the world is funded by our use of deception, one way or the other and we have much to learn from Indigenous wisdom about changing this.

Indigenous thinking honors the reality that there are always two sides to the two sides, that there are realities and there are realities. Learning how they interact is real understanding. Our knowledge comes from our stories, stories that mirror the way the human mind works. They echo a truth lived and remembered because their roots go beyond the context processes of the brain. They stem from the heart of the human psyche. Thus understanding what is true is a matter of heart and mind and this also helps one know what cannot be comprehended or articulated. If it were otherwise, if deception, not right thinking and remembering were tools for social cohesions, as these studies seem to conclude, it seems that survival would be compromised, not enhanced. Moreover, Nature is the first and foremost teacher of how things are in the world. This is why we believe that the animals and plants are our teachers. Neither Nature nor animals lie about reality. Animals may have instinctive ways of hiding food or playing dead or stalking prey, but these are not examples of misrepresenting reality in the ways human deception does. I think deception is not a cultural adaptation for survival and social cohesion but rather a moral failing.

In the development of early human societies, a single isolated individual had no chance at long-term survival. Of course, this perspective, as we have seen, stands in opposition to many Western academics view on the value of deception in survival. Still, it was the “group mind” that developed first among human beings. This “group mind” was rooted in the interdependence and mutual reciprocal behavior, which paralleled the symbiotic relationships found in natural communities. The dynamic process of human adaptation to ever changing environmental conditions that is so much a part of the “genius” of human evolution is based on our singular ability to evolve social environments conducive to the needs of our group. Honesty is both a value and a way of behavior that is required for the development of “trust” within a group. Honesty reinforces “trust” between members of a community that in turn fosters the cooperation necessary to sustain the group. Human adaptive values are those that encourage individual and family relationship, love, honesty, cooperation, collaboration, compassion, generosity and selflessness. These are the values that keep a group working and living together for mutual benefit. Pre-agricultural humans cultivated these values of group cohesion because the survival of the group was the first and foremost priority. For our pre-agricultural ancestors belonging to a group mattered and belonging to a place mattered. Values that

reinforced belonging to a group form a deep part of human consciousness. Psychologically, pre-agricultural people did not see themselves as separate from their group or the natural place in which they lived. The community or group mind and its affective orientations of belonging, interdependence, mutual - reciprocal behavior characterize all tribal societies. Some socio-biologists would refer to this deeply embedded sense for belong as an expression of our human instinct for “biophilia,” the predisposition to relate or affiliate with other living things particularly other humans. This instinct might be said to be the biological basis for socialability, relationally and community

In his wonderful book, *A Time Before Deception: Truth in Communication, Culture and Ethics*, Cooper writes about how Native peoples’ first reactions to European peoples’ habitual lying was believing that the invaders must be insane because in their cultures only insane people who had lost touch with reality spoke in ways that misrepresented it. His research also shows that lying can become a deviant strategy. The strategy may, like the use of weapons of mass destruction, lead to some temporary benefits for a small number of individuals, but in the long run, they are not an evolutionary boon to humankind at all.

Cooper also details a research project where when Indigenous individuals and Western individuals suggested and ranked various aspects of cultural values that might have an impact on integrity, Native peoples ranked “respect” above all else but it did not even make the Western list. He shows how the concept of appreciation for life and the recognition of spirit in all things pervades traditional Indigenous thinking and that such perception informed all communication in ways that are incompatible with deception. In reading his book I was reminded of Vine Deloria, Jr.’s famous book, *Red Earth, White Lies: The Myth of Scientific Fact* (1995) and how it might shed light on the implausibility of I think it is vital for neurophilosophers to consider Indigenous ways of knowing and the histories of Indigenous Peoples before drawing conclusions too quickly from the kinds of studies and scientific conclusions that have been reported in neuroscientific research.

The fourth concept in the mnemonic is Nature. Here I have little more to say about the difference between Western and Indigenous views that has not already been stated. The basic usefulness of CAT-FAWN is as an educational tool for self-reflection. Whenever a teacher or student can take any idea, experience, problem or belief and walk it through the analysis of FAWN, determining whether an Indigenous or non-Indigenous view operates and connecting to hypnotically derived determinations or actions, an opportunity for transformative learning arises. To consider such an activity, one that makes the Indigenous view have such a value for learning, we must first awaken to the anti-Indianism most of us encounter in culture, media and education.

## Suppression of Indigenous Wisdom

As I mentioned, Indigenous wisdom belongs to all of us. It is in our DNA. This does not mean that the holders of this wisdom who are alive today throughout the world do not have a special role in serving as our teachers. To the contrary, it is time for us to wake up to the oppression of these cultures practiced via our educational hegemony. Indigenous Peoples who still live according to the old ways know best how to employ Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Sadly, such oppression continues and is even growing. Using post 9/11 anti-terrorist laws, governments around the world, generally supported by U.S. corporate interests and government policies, are literally killing Indigenous Peoples who are attempting to protect their land, water, and natural resources from the onslaught of multi-national land acquisition in the face of diminishing oil and other resources for corporate profit. (For more details on this, see my chapter, "Forced Hegemony" in Gabbard and Saltman's second edition of *Education as Enforcement: The Militarization and Corporatization of Schooling* (in press at time of writing).)

More significantly, as relates to education, is the continual anti-Indianism that leads to ridicule, dismissal or misinterpretation of the Indigenous perspective. (See *Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Expose Anti-Indianism in America*, published by the University of Texas Press (Four Arrows, 2006). Indigenous Wisdom is not mere folk psychology, although intuition, self-reflection (especially as relates to experience with both the visible and invisible worlds), meta-cognition, and observation of human nature have certainly contributed to it. It is the product of careful and methodologically sound observations of the natural world (which includes humans) that have been tested and re-tested for thousands of years in the most rigorous real-life laboratories of survival and well-being. Indigenous Peoples, meaning those cultures who have by inhabiting a location for thousands of years and retaining ancient ways of understanding it, have produced a "theory of mind" that is every bit as scientific as modern ideas that relate to predicting outcomes, perhaps more so. This is not only true as relates to the many inventions and contributions that relate to food development, storage and preparation; herbal-based medicines; forms of clothing and transportation; astronomy; sustainable practices, etc., but also relates to contributions to democratic government concepts; child discipline; and inter-personal relationship psychology.

Many scholars and philosophers have noted the tragedy of dismissing Indigenous wisdom and Indigenous science as it relates to contemporary affairs. For example, Niaz Ahmed Khan, a professor at Dhaka University in Bangladesh and an honorary research fellow at the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Wales, UK recently compiled and collated academic studies on indigenous knowledge known as "traditional ecological knowledge" and was able to identify and record only seventy-seven peer-reviewed articles/book chapters. In an editorial, he refers to this figure and laments that such wisdom remains a generally ignored subject

(2008). Edgar Mitchel, Apollo astronaut and found of the Institute of Noetic Sciences has said that “only a handful of visionaries have recognized that indigenous wisdom can aid the transition to a sustainable world.” (amazon.com reviews at <http://www.amazon.com/Shapeshifting-Techniques-Global-Personal-Transformation/dp/0892816635>).

Support for traditional Indigenous wisdom challenges the conclusions of such popular books as *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful Noble Savage*, written by Professors Steven LaBlank and Kathryn Register or *Wild in the Woods: The Myth of the Peaceful Eco-Savage* by Robert Whelan, with its chapter titles like “Dances with Garbage.” All one needs to do is study Yale’s Human Resource Area Files, an internationally recognized organization in the field of cultural anthropology founded in 1949 to facilitate worldwide comparative studies of human behavior, to see that most human societies prior to the rise of monarchies in the West were relatively peaceful and did not practice war as we understand it today. The remarkable research of Johan M.G. van der Dennen, published in her doctoral thesis and subsequent book, *The Origin of War: The Evolution of a Male-Coalitional Reproductive Strategy* (1995) also supports the idea that Indigenous Wisdom can help re-member ways of living in harmony that can lead to peaceful co-existence, perhaps a pre-requisite for ecological sustainability. She writes:

Peaceable preindustrial (preliterate, primitive, etc.) societies constitute a nuisance to most theories of warfare and they are, with few exceptions, either denied or ‘explained away.’ In this contribution I shall argue that the claim of universal human belligerence is grossly exaggerated; and that those students who have been developing theories of war, proceeding from the premise that peace is the ‘normal’ situation, have not been starry-eyed utopians...(p.2).

Although I have been talking about reclaiming our Indigenous Science and remaining critical of an over-reliance on Western Science, I do believe collaboration between Western science and Indigenous wisdom is essential if we are to survive the current environmental crises. Many Indigenous stories talk about such a partnership between the red and white brothers. Perhaps the time for it is now if we let go of the negative stereotypes about Indians that many academics continue to support, like James Clifton does in his 1990 book, *The Invented Indian*, where he says “acknowledging anything positive in the native past is an entirely wrongheaded proposition because no genuine Indian accomplishments have ever really been substantiated (p.36),”

In my book, *Primal Awareness*, I say, “the primal awareness of Indigenous Peoples about Nature puts us back in touch with the origins of love. We are naturally attracted to the sights, sounds, aromas and sensations in Nature. We spontaneously love the colors, the energy and the beauty that fills our senses. Our senses are made whole in Nature, but our dominant culture has rationalized our separation from

Nature and has presented Nature as a dangerous place (except for distant landscapes it seems)” (p. 231). So I end this chapter with a D.H. Lawrence poem that beautifully expresses the connection between Nature and love that Indigenous understands.

Oh, what a catastrophe, what a maiming of love when it was made personal, merely personal feeling. This is what is the matter with us: we are bleeding at the roots because we are cut off from the earth and sun and stars. Love has become a grinning mockery because, poor blossom, we plucked it from its stem on the Tree of Life and expected it to keep on blooming in our civilized vase on the table. (IBID, p. 231)

Neoliberalism will continue to sustain war rather than peace because it has replaced Nature and love with greed and personal power. If we can be return to our member of what our ancestors understood about peace, we may have a chance.

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