

Analyzing Audience, Purpose, and Tone (APT): Ologies Podcast

Ologies is a comedic science podcast hosted by Alie Ward, a well-known and distinguished science correspondent and educator. Ologies explores a different “ology” in every episode, ranging from scientific disciplines like ecology to pop culture such as “tiktokology”. Each episode is an interview of a guest expert on the episode’s topic. Here, I analyze the audience, purpose, and tone of an episode titled “Indigenous Fire Ecology (GOOD FIRE) with Amy Christianson”.

Audience

Since there are so many topics in the podcast that all address different disciplines, no one episode is intended for any group beyond a lay audience. There is also a separate podcast linked to this one (“Smologies”) that is specifically for children. This episode on indigenous fire ecology is therefore intended for a lay audience consisting of high schoolers to young adults. At the beginning of the episode, Ward is careful to define both the words “indigenous” and “ecology” in simple language. Specifically, Ward uses the etymology of the words to define them; indigenous is defined as “native” and ecology is defined as “the place we live”. Simple, clear language is used throughout the episode to aid the audience in understanding the topic, as it is assumed that the audience has little background on indigenous fire ecology. Based on clues from reviews of the podcast, the audience generally consists of listeners from the United States between the ages of 20-40 with a relatively equal split of male and female listeners. The typical podcast listener is young, educated in a western society, and relatively affluent (Land, 2021). Therefore, the majority of listeners for this episode are not indigenous and will not be well versed in indigenous fire ecology, regardless of their previous knowledge on ecology.

Purpose

The purpose of this episode is to entertain, educate and inform the audience not only about fire ecology, but the experiences of an indigenous individual. It is made obvious in this episode that an incredible amount of indigenous knowledge has been lost due to colonization, and indigenous knowledge is lumped into a part of history that is viewed as non-applicable to today's society. However, indigenous knowledge is not only adaptable to current scientific practices, but highly beneficial to the health of the natural land we occupy. Christianson, the guest speaker in this episode and indigenous fire ecologist, says in the second half of the episode that we all need to engage in "two-eyed seeing", where one eye is analogous to the indigenous perspective, and the other to the western perspective. She employs this metaphor to aid the audience in understanding the difference and connection between western knowledge and indigenous knowledge. She also brands indigenous fire practices as "good fire", as opposed to the western perspective of out of control fire as "bad fire". I believe that this podcast episode, as well as all episodes of "Ologies", has fully realized its purpose to entertain and educate the audience on an indigenous perspective of science and natural practices.

Tone

Primarily, the tone of this episode is very sincere and earnest. The conversation between Ward and Christianson is colloquial, animated, and personal. It is obvious that Christianson wants to share her story and the story of her community with the world, and she does a fantastic job of personalizing her story. Throughout the episode, the conversation is mainly serious, but Ward interrupts occasionally with comedic inserts. Since this is a comedic science podcast, I expected there to be more humor throughout the episode than I observed. The section with the

most humor is actually near the end, where Ward plays excerpts from Christianson's own podcast, "Good Fire". Since the purpose of this episode is more focused on education on a subject from a very personal perspective, the more sincere and less humorous tone worked well in delivering the intended message.

References

Ward, A. (Host). (2021, August 17). Indigenous Fire Ecology (GOOD FIRE) with Amy

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