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English 112

13 May 2021

### The Importance of Ancient Traditions

Our world is broken, corrupt, and slowly deteriorating physically and communally. There is a great divide right now whether it be politics, pandemics, or a power war. It is deeply depressing and saddening to see our world falling apart, when it was once so beautiful, luscious, and thriving. So now the question is, how can we restore our world to its original state where the land and the people living on it were in a prosperous relationship and took care of each other. What did indigenous people do to make our world thrive? Why are these practices not incorporated in our world today? Is there a way to begin reincorporating these practices to solve the issues in our world?

As more and more generations are created on earth, there has been a loss of our ancestors' practices and a movement toward more modern practices because indigenous practices were viewed as antiquated. People sometimes blame the crumbling of these traditions on the advancement of technology, while others believe it is innate for humans to always move on from old ways and look toward the future. While neither of these theories are completely true or false, both arguments are valid as there is no one specific "right" answer. It is apparent that lots of practices that were common practices years ago are now regarded as "old fashioned" and rarely ever used. One of the main ways people today are connected to indigenous people and our ancestors is through the culture and languages that they left behind. As for the other things left

behind by our ancestors, such as the structure of the government, entertainment, clothing, etc. are very minor and barely influence our “modernized” lifestyle. Since language and culture have more of a direct connection to our ancestors, how are they vital to our daily lifestyle?

Unfortunately, there is no direct or clear-cut answer because of how big of an impact language and culture have on our society. Culture and language have the ultimate power to heal the past, present, and future damage in our world. The Earth is experiencing more and more problems as new generations arise; thus, each generation inherits the problems that superseded their predecessors. Nevertheless, one vital tool to identifying these generational problems is with science, while indigenous practices are the solutions to these problems.

As the world keeps progressing technologically, one would expect for people to live in a better and healthier planet compared to when the indigenous people lived on earth, but it is the opposite. Humans are living in an even more damaged society in which the health of our planet is continuously deteriorating at an almost uncontrollable rate. One of the main causes of the Earth’s deterioration is due to a lack of a relationship with the people living here. Our connection with our planet is fading away just as a fake dye would on cheap fabric. Indigenous people used to have a tremendously deep connection and appreciation for the Earth, but as technology has become much more widespread, people spend more time online than nurturing the planet. When our ancestors were living, they had less distractions, meaning they had the opportunity to focus on their relationships with others and the Earth. They lived with love and treated the planet with extreme care. In an article on The Hill’s website, it was mentioned that many generations of indigenous communities referred to Earth as, “our mother” since it nurtures life. The indigenous people lived based on this principle, “if you take care of the Earth, the Earth will take care of you” (Simon, 2020). The Hill’s elaborates the widespread beliefs in which indigenous people

had in terms of their connection with this planet and how much of a heartfelt connection they had to the planet. The indigenous believed in taking care of and nurturing the Earth and its resources like they would take care of their biological mother in her late years. By referring to the earth as their “mother,” they treat it with respect and love.

But it was not only one or two indigenous tribes that had this type of connection with the planet. There were many other indigenous tribes across the globe with distinct languages and cultural beliefs that shared almost the same connection with “mother earth.” So, what makes the indigenous tribes able to have this connection? It is seen in the way that they address the earth and every element in it to characterize the earth on a more personal level which instills compassion and love for the earth in them. They believe that they are individually rewarded by how well they treat the earth, thus they see it as their duty to always respect and protect it. According to The Hill, “the Kogi tribe from the Sierra Nevada region in Colombia refers to humankind as ‘the younger brothers’ and they say that “the younger brothers are abusing Mother.” (Simon, 2020). This shows an example of a particular tribe using its vocabulary to humanize the planet which directly makes it seem more personal and relatable to them. What was previously a reciprocal relationship enjoyed by all Indigenous people, it has now turned into a one-sided relationship, leaving Earth unloved and unsupported which is why it is declining so rapidly.

How did we lose our connection to the planet? Well one of the main reasons is from the forceful retirement of our old traditions and beliefs. As the indigenous cultures experienced extinction, so did their languages. As new languages were brought about for instance, English, people started to disregard indigenous languages all over the world. This almost forceful switch was primarily due to the eventual widespread colonization of the British hundreds of years ago.

During colonization, indigenous tribes were stripped off their lands, resources, culture, and languages, leaving them no choice but to adapt. According to an article posted on WorldAtlas' website on colonialism, "a large motivator behind colonization was the desire to spread Christianity throughout the world. Much like what occurred in North and South America, European colonizers brought the Christian faith to Africa through missionaries" (WorldAtlas). Thus, suggesting that one key driving force of colonization was due to bringing religion into indigenous lands. Unsurprisingly, religion still plays a vital role in the world.

Although, there are obvious advantages of colonialism regarding the vast spread of education and the advancement of technology, there are also many disadvantages. While colonization may have helped those doing the colonizing, it harmed those who were being colonized. According to WorldAtlas, "it has been argued that the poverty that is still experienced today in many African countries is a lasting effect of colonialism. The fact that many countries in Africa still experience high levels of poverty today, often despite the country's natural riches, is used as proof by many that the colonialization of Africa did more harm than good" (WorldAtlas). Furthermore, colonization caused an even greater loss in connection that humans once inherently had with the planet. More recently, the pandemic has been a prime example of the disastrous shift in our connection with the planet. Since humans today lack a deep connection to the Earth, following the beliefs of indigenous people, the coronavirus could be one way Mother Earth is punishing her children. The emersion and vast spread of the coronavirus has shown us how lost we are on this planet and that we should be more grateful for the world we live in.

Another way we can grow our connection to the earth is by addressing other living and nonliving things properly when we speak, since the relationship between humans and their immediate environment is so important. The only way to achieve this is by implementing the

“Grammar of Animacy” in our everyday vernacular. That is the reason why this advancing while at the same time loosing connection to the planet. According to “Learning the Grammar of Animacy” an article by Robin Wall Kimmerer, “to be considered a native to this place we must “learn to speak the grammar of animacy so we can truly be at home” (Kimmerer, 2017). Due to Kimmerer’s indigenous roots, she started using her ancestry in order to educate others about how vital indigenous practices are to our planet’s healing process. Especially since she is a botanist and an ecology teacher, her passion is to help restore the earth and educate others to do the same in an impartial way. According to Kimmerer, the major difference between the English Language and Indigenous languages, such as Potawatomi, is the presence of Grammar of Animacy. English is a noun-based language, in which only thirty percent of its words are verbs, unlike most indigenous languages where seventy percent of the words were verbs. However, this is not the only difference between languages today and native languages. Today’s “modern” languages often assign gender to nouns, so people must learn in terms of gender like “he/she” or “el/la.” Unlike in indigenous languages, where nouns and verbs are classified as “animate” or “inanimate.”

Furthermore, Robin Wall Kimmerer argues that one of the reasons why animacy is so important in language is because it does not only respect humans through the way we speak, but it also respects plants and animals as equals to humans. Certain nonliving elements, categorized by an objects biological structure, such as rocks, stones, water and fire, and places are addressed as animate also. Mostly, objects that are manmade are often in the inanimate category. She argues that “language reminds us, in every sentence, of our kinship with all of the animate world” (Kimmerer, 2017). While it is not necessary to speak indigenous languages, it is important and wise to reconstruct the languages we speak to properly achieve this level of

animacy and respect for all things. Kimmerer later states, “I remember the words of Bill Tall Bull, a Cheyenne elder. As a young person, I spoke to him with a heavy heart, lamenting that I had no native language with which to speak to the plants and the places that I love. ‘They love to hear the old language,’ he said, ‘it’s true.’ With fingers on his lips, he added, ‘You don’t have to speak it here,’ then patting his chest, ‘if you speak it here. They will hear you.’” Bill Tall Bull reminds Kimmerer that she can feel connected with the Earth in any language she speaks, the language itself doesn’t matter, but what does matter is that it comes from the heart.

This leads to the question of how can society begin to incorporate the practices of our ancestors in the world today? Well, there several potential starting points but arguably the most important step to begin integrating indigenous practices in today’s world is through acknowledgement. By acknowledging the struggles that the indigenes and natives had, it allows for our generations to be able to learn from their struggles. One major part of the process of acknowledging our ancestors is through “land acknowledgement” which involves inhabitants of a particular geographic area coming together to pay respect to the ancestors who once lived on and owned those lands. During an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement event hosted by the Native Governance Center this comment was made, “It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation.” (NGC 2019). When we neglect to acknowledge the past, we tend to appear lost just like a map without directions. Using our ancestor’s history to help better dictate our future and be more knowledgeable about previous civilizations will not only benefits us directly, but this also impacts the rest of our civilization as well.

By learning the history of our current surrounding geographic location allows us to not only appreciate it more, but also cherish it more. With a newfound appreciation of the land we reside on, it will continuously increase our appreciation and respect for our world as a whole, living or nonliving. When treating animate or inanimate things with love and care, and they will reciprocate our love and take care of us. For example, if a child is handed fresh fish every day for lunch without knowing the preparation process in order for them to consume the fish, then the child will value the fish less. However, if the child was aware of how much patience and dedication is involved in fishing as well as the preparation after the fish is caught, then they would be more appreciative when they receive the fish for lunch. So therefore, learning the ways indigenous people lived before, during, and after colonization, we are given a greater appreciation for the way we live today.

While there are still indigenous populations today, the effects of colonization have made their populations reduce drastically. For example, in America, most indigenous people are isolated, discriminated against, and looked down upon in the society. Instead of secluding the indigenous populations in certain geographical areas, our society should rather at least attempt to incorporate and include the indigenous populations into society more. While acknowledging their lands is a good starting point, it is not the only thing that needs to be done. We need to take initiative to attempt to view the world from their perspective, create a relationship with them, and show that we respect them. To achieve this goal of creating a more unified society, we could try to learn their languages, offer our support to their civilizations, and while also trying to incorporate their ancient practices into our more modern society. We must realize that the indigenes were once the “guardians” of our planet and during their reign, the world was in a much healthier and more beautiful condition than it is today. While beginning to make this

change, it can be kind of discouraging considering most humans do not like change, but we must remember that “Starting somewhere is better than not trying at all. We need to share in Indigenous peoples’ discomfort. They’ve been uncomfortable for a long time. Dr. Kate Beane (Flandreau Santee Dakota and Muskogee Creek) says, “We have to try. Starting out with good intentions and a good heart is what matters most” (NGC 2019). The indigenous had to face lots of changes and challenges to shape the way that our culture functions, so our society should be able to compromise and try to change in order to incorporate them and their culture as well.

Although, the presence of technology in today’s world is very extensive compared to the ancient times, that should still not be used as an excuse to completely disregard ancient practices. Due to the improvement of technology, our lives as humans have been seen as “easier” and “better” compared to the way our ancestors once lived. While some people have the view that technology has impacted our society to the point where it is the primary way of life and there is no need to essentially “move backwards” and only look toward the future. There are some people that believe as new generations arises, that new practices, languages, and cultures should too; however, if our indigenous ancestors survived by using these practices for years and it worked perfectly for them, then there should be no reason for us to deviate and abandon those cultures. As seen in an article in The Guardian, which highlights the importance of indigenous tribes and their cultures, “For thousands of years, Indigenous communities have been caretakers of the environment, protecting their lands, respecting wildlife and utilizing traditional knowledge passed down through generations.” (The Guardian, 2020). Indigenous people have lived successfully in great harmony with the earth for thousands of years by adhering to their culture until the invasion of colonizers who successfully annihilated their cultural practices. While



imitating the cultural practices of our ancestors sounds like a good idea and relatively simple, would today's advanced technology make that transition more difficult?

The advancement of technology has made transportation and communication significantly easier and more effective as well as many other benefits that have stemmed from the advancement of technology. For example, thousands of years ago, for people to be able to travel from one place to another, they either had to walk or sail—which could take days, months, or sometimes even years before they would arrive at their desired destination. But with modern day technology, cars, planes, and trains make trips much faster and easier. Furthermore, our ability to communicate with people across long the world has continuously expanded due to the expansion of technology. Now we are able to communicate with people in continents all over the world through a simple text, call, and we can even broadcast messages to large audiences in different locations through posting on social media or television networks. The entertainment industry has made tremendous growth for the access to information whether that is through streaming channels or search engines, like Google. Nevertheless, while these changes in technology have already had a lot of positive outcomes, there are still obviously negative outcomes which we must consider. First and foremost, through the modernization of transportation, such as cars, aircrafts, and trains emit hazardous gasses, like carbon dioxide, which are released into the atmosphere, thus endangering the health of humans, animals, and the planet as a whole. Today there are already many deadly ailments—like cancer—that are harmful to society, that the emission rate of carbon dioxide is growing tremendously which adds to the list of toxins which humans are inhaling. Not only has the increase in carbon dioxide in our atmosphere impacted humans, but also the decline of biodiversity is a major concern today with places such as the Amazon--which has been inhabited and protected by indigenous tribes for

years--being in a critical condition. The main factor contributing to the loss of biodiversity is all thanks to combustion from factories and our ever-populated roads. Included with the shrinking biodiversity, global warming is another major concern in our world today. Due to the excessive rate of carbon emissions, which are causing the planet to not only heat up but also cause weather and climate imbalances, creating more natural disasters.

But our relationship with the planet is not the only concern when discussing how technology has impacted our world, but also the connections we have amongst ourselves also. Since the introduction of social media, we have gradually lost our ability to create relationships with each other in person, as well as our relationship to the planet. Some people think that social media has done more harm than good considering we went from living life for what we believe in to living life in order to impress others and comply with social norms. People have started posting pictures of their loved ones on social media during special occasions, like Mother's Day, birthdays, or commemorations for the deceased—even though their loved one might not be able to see the post—instead of actually talking to them in person. As previously mentioned, social media has brought people from across the world together, but social media has also ended up tearing us apart based on our beliefs, what we post online, and our freedom of speech. Just to list a few of the factors which have divided us even more are our political and religious beliefs, our racial identities, our sports teams, etc. Due to the widespread use of social media, the rate of suicides is increasing every day primarily due to cyberbullying online. Another factor to consider is also the impact that social media has on the younger generation's "beauty standard," since they see people online looking "perfect" they then believe that is how they should look too. Overall, this has made younger generations more insecure, more likely to have eating disorders, and more likely to be depressed.

So, when trying to understand how much technology has impacted our society and if it will be difficult for our society to incorporate the indigenous practices, the answer is yes. Since considering that technology makes everything easier—or is supposed to—it would be quite difficult for us to limit our use of technology or even to try and go ‘cold turkey.’ For example, it would be nearly impossible to transition backwards in terms of transportation, such as going from the widespread use of cars and then going completely back to walking. Also, with the structure of our society in the present day, it would be near impossible to have a sudden transition from having the ability to text our loved ones a quick message rather than sending them an actual handwritten letter. Nevertheless, there are certain steps we could introduce in our current society that imitates and mimics the lives our ancestors lived, which helped them survive here on Earth. One of the first steps to take is to strengthen our relationship with “mother earth” and every element that inhabits it—living and nonliving things. By strengthening our relationships, our actions tend to illuminate and exude love and care for mother earth and in return, the earth heals and blesses us with peace and harmony.

At the rate of which our planet is declining regarding vegetation, weather regulation, and global warming, the earth needs immediate attention and care. We need to care for the earth’s wellbeing as if it affects us directly, because it does. But most people will not care until they find out that the health of the planet directly affects their life as well as their loved ones. By building a loving and peaceful relationship with the earth and the elements within, we are not only benefitting our life and well-being, but also our loved ones. Compassion and love—which appears to be a little sparse in this generation—are critical to our survival on this planet and our ability to call earth our home!

## Annotated Bibliography

“A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgment.” *Native Governance Center*, 22 Oct. 2019, [nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/](https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/).

This article was posted on Native Governance website. It was an educative seminar conducted by them about the importance of land acknowledgement, especially in the USA. During this seminal, the highlighted ways in which people can carefully pay respect to the indigenous tribes that once occupied their immediate environment.

Chronicle, The. “Indigenous Knowledge Systems Can Provide Solutions to Environmental Problems.” *The Chronicle*, 5 Mar. 2021, [www.chronicle.co.zw/indigenous-knowledge-systems-can-provide-solutions-to-environmental-problems/](http://www.chronicle.co.zw/indigenous-knowledge-systems-can-provide-solutions-to-environmental-problems/). Accessed 25 Apr. 2021.

This is an article posted on Zimbabwean website that illustrates the importance of preserving their indigenous practices. This is an example that the USA is not the only country that is facing “indigenous tribes extinction problems.” In fact, the whole world is!

“Indigenous Medicine for Today’s Modern Times.” *McCaffrey Health*, 17 Sept. 2018, [www.mccaffreyhealth.com/indigenous-medicine-todays-modern-times/](http://www.mccaffreyhealth.com/indigenous-medicine-todays-modern-times/).

This article gives a different perspective on why indigenous practices will always remain relevant in our world. The medicine we use today is basically a processed version of what indigenous tribes used back in the days. The treatments that are rendered for healing processes also dates back to the ancient times.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. “Learning the Grammar of Animacy.” *Anthropology of Consciousness*, vol. 28, no. 2, Sept. 2017, pp. 128–134, 10.1111/anoc.12081. Accessed 16 Dec. 2019.

Robin Wall Kimmerer is notable for some of her works about the importance of indigenous practices. In this article, she highlighted the importance of “grammar of animacy” when we speak. According to her, the indigenous languages respected and observed grammar of animacy, but modern languages such as English language disregards the presence of animacy in its language.

Mankiller, Wilma. “Being Indigenous in the 21st Century.” *Culturalsurvival.org*, 2009, [www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-indigenous-21st-century](http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-indigenous-21st-century).

This online article compares the way people who have connections/ties with indigenous tribes live in the modern society compared to people without such ties. This book argues that not only indigenous people have that connection to the earth, but some people who belong to certain ethnic groups also. These people care deeply about the wellbeing of the planet also. The difference is that it is a responsibility to the indigenous people!

Simon, Madeleine. “Indigenous Wisdom Can Heal the Planet.” *TheHill*, 14 May 2020, [thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/497849-indigenous-wisdom-can-heal-the-planet](http://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/497849-indigenous-wisdom-can-heal-the-planet). Accessed 18 Apr. 2021.

This nonfictional article illustrates how studying the ways of indigenous people can lead to the discovery of solutions to the problems our planet is facing today. This article argues that science is nothing but a tool in identifying these problems, while indigenous practices is the tool to solving them.

“Why Protecting Indigenous Communities Can Also Help Save the Earth.” *The Guardian*, 12 Oct. 2020, [www.theguardian.com/climate-academy/2020/oct/12/indigenous-communities-protect-biodiversity-curb-climate-crisis](http://www.theguardian.com/climate-academy/2020/oct/12/indigenous-communities-protect-biodiversity-curb-climate-crisis).

This online article by The Guardian illustrates the necessity of protecting indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are often faced with several threats nowadays and protecting them from extinction is very vital. An example of such community is the Amazon. One cannot stress enough how important the Amazon is to our level of oxygen in this planet.

WorldAtlas. “Colonialism in Africa.” *WorldAtlas*, 31 May 2018, [www.worldatlas.com/articles/colonialism-in-africa.html](http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/colonialism-in-africa.html).

This online article was posted on WorldAtlas’ website on how and why colonialism in Africa happened. They also hinted that the colonialism in Africa is still ongoing and that it is all for selfish reasons. Just like in every other indigenous land, colonialism brings about massive industrialization of their space which equals to the massive extinction of their tribe.