

9507: Indigenous Research Reflection

Rishika Sharma

251008648

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Dr. Melissa Schnarr & Dr. Katelyn Wood

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Western University

Assignment Acknowledgement

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Hailing from a clinical research background, I have had the privilege to work alongside Indigenous communities and elders from these communities. However, during my interactions, I lacked a basic understanding of their way of life and how everything connects in synchronicity in holistic care. Such synchronicities are present in my Sanatani way of life; however, I could not grasp that there is a way of life outside the eastern hemisphere that is rooted in spirituality and connectedness. This lecture was powerful as it allowed me to truly analyze the similarities and differences between my way of life and that of Indigenous communities and compare it to that of the Western world. A primary difference observed is the Indigenous way of knowledge and of knowing. The Western approach to seeking knowledge is static with knowledge confined to the results of pursuit that is temporary and restricted. Whereas the Indigenous way to knowledge is dynamic, fluid and animate. The Indigenous way to knowledge calls me to draw parallels with the line “beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” but with knowledge. Through my understanding of the lecture, knowledge exists everywhere, in every tree, animal, flow of water, absolutely everything – it is upon one who is seeking to look. This abstract concept of knowledge and seeking is like Sanatana Dharma where we are encouraged to keep a seeker mindset, to question what is around, and to understand through the tales of our surroundings. Another primary difference noted is Indigenous communities are rooted in collectivism, whereas Western cultures are individualistic. I believe that it is this difference in culture that gives rise to holistic care, as in my perspective of collectivism various aspects come together to form a whole and every aspect is of equal value, which then translates to all different factors of well-being engaged in a delicate interplay leading to good health. Through my understanding of the lecture, I learned that when approaching Indigenous research, it is important to critically reflect on my positionality, intentions and assumptions. I need to understand how my own identity intersects with the research process to ensure meaningful and respectful engagement. Additionally, a researcher needs to respect the traditions and cultures of Indigenous communities. Respect involved intentional introductions, understanding relational contexts, and showing humility. Sanatana Dharma has taught me the importance of humility and being void of ego, pride and ignorance, which I believe is key to establishing meaningful connections with Indigenous communities. Moreover, understanding that respect means humility and coming from a place of pure intention is critical, however, also taking proactive measures to understand how to be respectful is important. For example, knowing what is very important for initial meetings, like introductions, and bonding over food. Lastly, the research must benefit the community involved. This lecture taught me that research is not extractive but is rooted in reciprocity and mutual contribution. This notion of mutualism resonated with me because it connects to collectivism while challenging the transactional nature of Western research. Mutual contribution and reciprocity underscores two very important pillars of respectful and ethical partnerships, as it highlights the need for balanced, two-way exchanges. These principles embody aspects of collectivism as they prioritize the well-being of the community over individual gains which fosters a shared sense of responsibility. This ensures that the research serves the community and strengthens relationships by respecting their values. Through integration of reciprocity and mutual contributions, researchers honor and respect the interconnected nature of connections, which is a hallmark of ethical and community-centered practices. Indigenous research deeply resonates with me, as I find higher-level synchronicities with the Indigenous way of life and Sanatana Dharma. Such synchronicities involve a deep-rooted sense of spirituality, the fluid and dynamic process of seeking knowledge, passing on knowledge through oral narrations, and more. This lecture prompted me to reflect on my own values and look at not only the similarities but the differences as well. A similarity and example were at the Wampum Learning Lodge, the Smudging ceremony, a similar ceremony is done in Sanatana Dharma to cleanse the environment and being of ill intentions and energy, however a brass container is used. This lecture encouraged me to critically reflect on the importance of

humility, accountability and the role of nature, knowledge, spirituality and collectivism in grounding us not only as researchers but individuals.