



Indigenous Masculinity Follow up questions

Questions from chat that was missed on our session date:

What role does shame play in our men and what can we do about it?

I believe that feelings of shame or anger can help us find motivation for change in our behaviour; it lets you know when you're not living up to what you feel might be something better. Eventually you will ask yourself, how long you will continue along that path, and how many people you will affect, before you change?

There are a couple of things I used to get all mixed up as if they were the same: guilt, shame, judgement, anger — all just some undefined feeling that something was wrong with me that I wanted to be better.

Do you know when the Vancouver missing and murdered men's March will be? How will the evolving masculinity help our people heal? Many of our men suppress the emotions and this needs to change.

I don't think I've even gotten around to thinking about how masculinity will evolve, as I've spent so much of my time thinking about how to recapture our old culture before it slips further away; our old time Native men were flesh and blood, and of course had their human flaws, but I remember their strong ethics and discipline, their kindness and playfulness, and remember that there was more of a culture of balance and mutual respect. I'd like to recapture, for myself, my emotional well-being, and to balance it with constantly seeking new teachings, and also to cultivate the ability of our old traditional men to take action to make our families and communities better.

Can you speak to the importance of shame and grief work? What happens when our educators do not address this in the classroom?

Between about four Native people in a classroom a couple years ago, we had about 30 deaths of people in our communities, and it had an impact on us every day. We had many other moments of loss also, such as having to miss fishing season, or berry picking, or cedar bark-pulling time, all of which is a weight our students carry every single day to succeed in a Canadian education — it is hard for our students not to feel guilt, and shame, and loss with all of that going on. It is hard to say at this point that school is some sort of level playing field, or that all students are treated the same.

And many of the teachers and administrators I work with carry some poorly explored grief and shame and often want to skip the Truth part, and move on to the Reconciliation part. If the adults in the room struggle to face this, then the students land up shouldering that also.

What are you doing or what can be done to bring the men back to the circle without bringing the colonial mindset that we as men often try to show each other which is false sense of strength?

I think one of the main ideas of colonization is that we give up our power to someone else: someone else knows better, someone else should change, someone else has will do something about it. The practice of doing a solo, or fasting, can help us hear our own thoughts, our own feelings, and our own connection to the world and that can be a good place to start. Also, we have had some simple breakfasts with a few men, and just kind of look after each other and support each other. We start with an intent and expectation that we behave in a good way, and support each other in a good way.

How can men step into a space of protection with trust of the women within to ensure one does not cause a trigger upon the space?

I don't even think we should put the expectation on women not to feel triggered by men, because men as a group have earned the wariness and even fear from women in today's society. Perhaps it isn't any particular thing that men need to do, but rather an attitude of humility and respect. I think men need to cultivate the courage to face our own truth and reconciliation in this, and to cultivate our own spaces to deal with whatever gets in the way of bringing our strength to our families and communities. It will take some time, but there are many good men who are up for it.

What does gender inclusion and respect look like as we look at gender on a continuum rather than a colonial binary?

There have been a lot of colonizing institutions which have taught Native peoples to devalue ourselves, and discriminate against each other; we can be very hard on ourselves and each other which is useful to the government, I think, more than of service to us. I have faith that we will get back towards acceptance and mutual respect for each other, but it will take perseverance and focus. I see a lot of respect in our traditional behaviours and beliefs, more than the prejudice and devaluing of people from the colonizer.

