



## 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?**

Gerry: I believe that shame is one of the core issues that Indigenous males are facing today. Shame is one sees themselves in a negative light and when one feels this they can withdraw from family, community, and society. Another feeling is that they feel exposed, like everyone is talking about them in a negative way. When one is feeling shame, they feel worthless, powerless and mistrust those that try to help them.

Because many males are victims of abuse that has never been treated, they live in a spectrum of post stress disorder and run into trouble when they are triggered. Because they have been traumatized by racist oppression, violence, addicted people, poverty, etc. they can be triggered on a daily basis. When they are triggered is when violence, addictions, mental health issues, physical health go by the wayside. If they do not receive healing/treatment they live miserable lives.

What to do? First off, we must connect with the men by having a clear understanding of how the colonial experience has impacted all Indigenous Peoples. All Indigenous peoples have lived an abnormal history and there is no one immune to the impacts of this abnormal history of reservations, residential school, 60's Scoop and the loss of lands and resources. Also, because of the nature of shame we must be patient and kind at all times.

**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.**

Gerry: I do not know then the Men's March will be. When the men recognize that "We are all one" then they will become active participants in their families and communities. To achieve this there is a need for "Family Reconciliation". The mistakes from anger, fear, and depression and addictions must be made right or reconciled so that the family will be in circle again.

When anyone of us suppress our emotions, we are often left with unfinished business and we live with haunted memories and fear of the future. We have a voice and must use it in constructive ways and we also must free ourselves from negativity that is in our mind, body, and spirit.

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

Gerry: Shame and grief come from events from the past, shame is the unpleasant emotion that comes from a negative self-talk and grief of course is when we are carrying heaviness from loss. I do believe that many First Nations are carrying shame from the negative messages and treatment from the colonial governments and then from Canadian governments. Many are grieving the loss of identity and culture and family as well as loss of loved ones. In my work I have met survivors of the residential school experience grieve that they had not reached their potential, that they basically wasted their life in addictions, depression, anger and feel shame and guilt from how this impacted their families.

When educators do not address social issues of the minority groups (indigenous, people of color, gays, trans, etc.) a message of supporting the status quo is given. In the world of Human Rights which Canada has signed onto one of the tenants is that there is a duty to accommodate. I believe that educators have a duty to accommodate and when this is done there is potential for social justice.

**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?**

Gerry: The first step for every human service worker is to make a connection with the one that they are working with, if that connection is not made the session become a waste of time. Remember that many men feel shame because of unemployment or a lack of employment where they live, in these instances the men are not contributing to the household and there pride is taking a beating. At every circle the protocols of respect, patience, and the way that the circle will be conducted must be made clear to the participants. All circles must give an energy of change and growth and the intention of healing. In some cases circles that do not have protocols become complaining circles.

**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?**

Gerry: I suggest that the space that is being created follow the traditional protocols of the area. For example, have everyone follow the same guidelines: 1. Thank the hosts of the space. 2. State intentions of coming into the space. 3. Make a statement of agreeing to follow the protocols of the group. 4. Thank the hosts at end of session.



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

Gerry: It would look like an Indigenous community before contact. Of course, I am totally biased and a supporter of Indigenous ways and civilization.

One of my teachers and I were standing at the edge of a cedar forest and he asked me what I saw and I told him cedar trees. He asked me, Are they all the same? I said no, some are taller, some are bent, some are thin and some are chunky. He said exactly and followed up with the statement “that is the way it is with human beings as well”.

Part of our way was to be respectful and not to question why a person was the way they were. So, with one word I say it was “acceptance without question”. No othering.

