

MindFIT Podcast – Decolonizing Wellness Approaches by Being Mindful Transcript

Lauren Brown:

Hi and welcome to the University of Toronto's MindFIT lecture series. My name is Lauren Brown and I'm the Mindfulness, Meditation, and Yoga Program Coordinator for the Division of Student Life. Thank you for listening.

Carol Duchame:

We're just going to start first with some wellness thought starters. So if I could just ask you to think about what wellness means to you and what image comes to mind that describes wellness. And finally, what informs you knowing of what wellness looks like. I'm just going to give you a moment to think about these things. Okay. So I just wanted to plant these thoughts to activate your mind about what wellness is and encourage reflection on learning after the workshop. Perhaps it could be a way to relate and recognize any shifts in thinking. So we're going to start by identifying some worldview comparisons. The Western worldview views land as resources. What can be extracted from it is more compartmentalized, scientific, fact-based. It's more linear and to be comfortable is measured by success. Humans are the most important and it is more individualistic. An indigenous worldview views land as sacred. Everything is related.

It is spiritual, cyclical, and to be comfortable means it's in regards to your relationships. Humans are not the most important and is community-oriented oriented. The most significant differences are that everything and every one is related in creation. Land is viewed as sacred and provides all that we need to survive. The earth is our mother. Humans are not considered the most important, and in fact, all the things on Mother Earth do not need humans to survive however we need them in order to survive. How long do you think humans could survive without water or food? Western productivity culture. Do you often feel guilty or uncomfortable when you are doing activities that are for yourself or for fun? Most of us have learned that we need to produce something in order to feel valued. The western view manifests as bigger, higher, faster, which is preferred over smaller, lower, older, or slower. We can also be very hard on ourselves or we can put unrealistic expectations on ourselves because we think or we feel that this is how we will be respected, appreciated, or valued by others.

For my most of my life as an indigenous person, I myself adopted many aspects of this worldview. I pushed myself to conform to what I imagined was a good whatever, a good mother, a good wife, a good student. Sometimes people called me superwoman and they prided me for all that I did or I do. But ultimately in my reflection I wondered what did I sacrifice to gain this honor or this title? Often I sacrificed my wellbeing, which then impacts my family and my loved ones. It is all relational. I just want to plant this concept as we move forward and explore wellness further. So I have a metaphors of some pictures here of some simplistic ways of looking at some terms. So colonization, you could see the perfect vanilla cone and decolonization is everything is broken down in that ice cream and indigenization is the even vanilla and the chocolate. It's quite simplistic, but I really do like ice cream too.

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

So the terms defined colonization involves one group taking control of lands, resources, languages, cultures, and relationships of another group.

Decolonization is about cultural, psychological, and economic freedom for indigenous peoples with the goal of achieving indigenous sovereignty, the right inability of indigenous peoples to practice self-determination over their land, cultures and political and economic systems. Indigenization is a collaborative process naturalizing indigenous intent, interactions, and processes to transform spaces, places, and hearts. In education, it is including indigenous perspectives and approaches. So colonization is basically about power and control superiority one way and one truth. Decolonization is removing the colonial elements. If you're interested in exploring decolonization further, there is a TEDTalk video called Decolonization is for Everyone, and it's by Nikki Sanchez and it's quite excellent if you're interested in exploring this further.

So how do we decolonize wellness? We need to learn and understand the roots of wellness practices, learn and understand how they have been culturally appropriated, learn and understand how they have been suppressed historically and still today, learn and understand how they've been modified to align with mainstream culture. Through assimilation processes there is often a disregard for the roots of the practices. So the great Alanis Obomsawin shares a story of decolonization. She's a filmmaker about the Nishiyuu walkers. It's called Keep Calm and Decolonize Walking is Medicine. So in a few moments it's going to be popped up, but in that, when you're watching the film, it's about five minutes. If you could just please consider these two questions. How is walking medicine for the Nishiyuu walkers and what connections do you recognize as acts of decolonizing wellness? So I'm just-

Alanis Obomsawin:

All the way from James Bay on the Quebec side from the Whapmagoostui, the Nishiyuu walkers made it 1,600 kilometers to Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Years from now, people will tell the story of your journey. They will say once long ago, six young people and their guide came on foot from afar during the coldest time of the year carrying a message of a new beginning where families are united, where there is love and respect, where no one is afraid.

Speaker 4:

I wanted to go with something grassroots from the Cree people, and I remembered stories of our ancestors went on journeys that lasted for months to trade with fellow First Nations across Canada. They walked with snow shoes because that was the best time to travel because the lakes and rivers are frozen so they can just walk over. So that's pretty much how the idea came to me, the journey.

Speaker 5:

They got a really, really good reception in every community that they passed. The people were so touched by the words that they used to describe what it is that they want to show the world and their message. And this journey has rekindled the spirit of our people. We had a value system of respect, of honor, not only among ourselves, but also to honor and respect the land. And we connected with the

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

land through studying to understand more of the legends, more of the stories. For us, the storytelling is our Bible, love, respect, honor, that's our value system was structured.

Speaker 6:

What we're doing, and not just us, but the previous walkers, Nishiyuu and walkers with Fordham and the ones behind us. You know, it's all collaboration of unity. We're going to secure our futures, not just for this generation, but for generations to come.

Speaker 7:

Walking is medicine. You get to feel the land and that's how our ancestors are speaking through us is through the land. Feel myself now very close to my ancestors. I feel it inside me sometimes when I'm speaking, like somebody's beside me, even makes me proud of who I am. And as we keep walking through the land, our ancestors will rise through us and we will be together once again.

Speaker 8:

(singing)

Carol Duchame:

Okay. So any thoughts on how walking is medicine and basically how is medicine to the Nishiyuu walkers? Anybody have anything to share? Any thoughts on in what ways was the walking an act of decolonizing wellness? I see a hand. Genesis.

Genesis:

Hi. Thank you so much for your time and energy and sharing the film and the story through the film. I found it so profound how the walking was not just walking, it was all within the context of relations and not just current relations with other people that they encountered, but also the ancestors, the land. And it was beautiful how it was one that not only connected their bodies but their spirits, their minds. There was such a holistic approach to it and one that wasn't just about self walking, just me taking steps, but like me in community with those similar to me and not similar to me, and that's okay too. And that was very powerful. So thank you.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you for sharing that. Yes. It's a short film, but very, very packed with many, many holistic messages and thank you for sharing that. Anyone else have any comments? What comes to mind to me is the indigenous people, the history, and their continued resilience against erasure, extraction, and oppression. And it's reclaiming what the ancestors did and being part of it, especially the youth, it just makes you hopeful that the youth are coming back and they're learning and they're connecting and it means to me that it's revitalizing and the youth are the future. So it's a really impactful film.

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

Hela Kalicharran:

I can share some of what was mentioned in the chat.

Carol Duchame:

Okay.

Hela Kalicharran:

One person says walking is medicine through connecting to their ancestors. Walking the same land they once walked on and are still part of was very beautiful. Another person has shared the connection to the nature land, other indigenous communities and the powerful notion of ancestors and what they represent.

Carol Duchame:

Yes. Thank you. All wonderful. Thank you. Was there a hand up there?

Hela Kalicharran:

There is one more comment in the chat saying connecting to the land and through its ancestors land imparting wisdom and sense of interconnection. And thank you for sharing this film.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you. Thank you, everyone. Okay. So we're going to move on to the Medicine Wheel model and achieving wellbeing holistically. Holistically looking at the four aspects of ourselves, the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional realms. Looking at wholeness perspective, which is greater than four separate parts, the Medicine Wheel can be used as a guide of the relationships with oneself. So elder Jim Dumont defines wellness as wellness from an indigenous perspective as a whole and healthy person expressed through a sense of balance of spirit, emotion, mind, and body. Central to wellness is belief in one's connection to language, land, beings of creation, and ancestry supported by a caring family and environment. So it's asking yourself, what do these realms of wellness mean to you on their own and collectively?

So looking at physical wellbeing, a way of behaving and doing that actualizes the intention and the desire of the spirit in the world, being part of something greater. Our bodies are gifts and provides us protection for our spirits. We must be mindful on how we use our bodies to be at our best in our lives. To remain healthy and strong, our bodies require consistent and positive sources of movement, nutrition, stimulation, and rest, so being mindful of our physical health. Food is medicine. I've heard elders say that it is a relationship connection to the land because this is where our food and our nourishment comes from. Being mindful of what we are consuming, substances that cause harm to our bodies. Traditional indigenous people cannot be around sacred items or can they handle medicines if

they are under the influence of substances. Sleep is important. What routines do we have? It is generally recommended six to eight hours and at night to settle down in a good way, so to decrease your stimulation before bed, so screen time and being on the phone and having regular exercise and activity in several different forms.

So having a good sleep, it protects our brains and we are better able to process information. It improves concentration, problem solving, creativity, memory, and decision making skills. Emotional health, nurtured by belonging within interdependent relationships with others and living in relation to creation, including beings in creation. Traditionally in indigenous communities, the family structures and community provided emotional support which resulted in a strong sense of belonging. Learning traditional values of love, humility, truth, honesty, bravery, respect, and wisdom as well as learning the history, teachings, songs, and ceremonies of the culture is helping communities find inner peace and understanding. Being mindful of your emotional health, enjoy yourself, have fun, engage in things that you like to do, relax, and go for walks and be on the land. Being in nature is medicine. Reduce your stress. Recognize the internal and external influences contributing to stress. Dedicate time every day to reflect, write, or draw. To be creative is important.

Journal or try Morning Pages by Julia Cameron. It's six minutes of dedicated write time and be kind to yourself. We are often our worst critics, so it's really important to be kind to ourselves. Mental wellbeing, the conscious and intelligent drive to know and activate one's being and becoming. Our minds and thoughts have power with both positive and negative thoughts. Our minds are always working and looking for stimulation and possibilities to learn. We can choose how to fulfill that need to learn and expand our thoughts. We can look to one another and all of creation for teachings. Learning is an ongoing process. Every experience has a learning opportunity in it, even the negative ones.

Sometimes it can be challenging to understand that learning, but moving through it, and reflecting on the learning brings it to the surface and we can learn so much from people and through observation. Being mindful of mental wellbeing, what are your thoughts? Question them. Negative thoughts can influence our feelings and our behaviors. Are they helpful? Are you curious and open to new learning? Do you take time for mindfulness? Practicing mindfulness means maintaining moment by moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, and your surrounding environment without judgment. Change your whys to what's. Instead of saying why can't I do something? Ask what can I do to make this better for me? This approach to thinking opens up opportunities for thinking, for creativity, and forward thinking, and getting us unstuck.

Spiritual health, the quality of being alive in a qualitative way and essential to the primary vision of life and worldview. Spirituality is connection with your inner self and all that is. It is an individual's lifelong journey and a way to move and live in the world. Understanding that we are all an integral part of the universe's natural design. It never goes away and it at times it will remind us of its existence, such as when we hear traditional songs, see something amazing in creation, or have a remarkable experience that truly touches our soul. It is not religion or church. It is different from how the dominant culture views it. It is about personal relationship with yourself in creation and with nature. Whatever resonates with you, it's not rigid. It could be being at the water, watching birds, writing poetry, singing, or praying, being on the land. I heard a person once share that she identified it as the higher power. So she created

an account on her phone called HP and she sends texts to the HP when she needs help or when she wants to be accountable for something.

So spirit can be a challenging thing to explain because its energy and connection is different for everyone. I mentioned about experiences that are amazing in creation and I believe there's no better way than to share a personal story of an incredible experience that was so profound to me and others that I shared it with, particularly my son. This image is a drum that my son recently gifted me. The drum itself is an integral part to lives indigenous people and the drum is the heartbeat of Mother Earth. The story of this drum occurred a few years back when I was going through a very challenging time and I was home sitting on the couch having a moment and feeling very alone in silence. All of a sudden I heard a sound. I looked up and I looked over at the patio and about 15 feet away from me on the couch there sitting on the stoop was a cardinal tapping on the window with her beak.

I sat there in awe and was so afraid to get up. I didn't want to frighten her off. She flew up, came back down, and started tapping on the window again. Then two weeks later she came back and she started tapping on my window again. I looked up later what the meaning for seeing cardinals was, and it says that they're messengers from the spirit world that you are loved. My mother passed away when I was a teenager and I quickly related it to this experience. I felt a sense of protection. From then I felt like all the cardinals that I saw were my spirit guides. Sharing this story with my son connected him to it as well and he worked with an indigenous artist, Kevin Robbins, to design this drum of that experience. In this image, it is my son and me as the baby chicks. The nest is Mother Earth and the cardinal is my mother from the spirit world protecting us. It was a very special moment and it moved others and my family and others who I shared it with.

I wanted to share this story with you today because all of you can see the connections of how spirit fits into our lives. So this is an indigenous framework outlining each of the four realms and how it connects to identity and for behaviors of expression of each. It is a way of knowing and being from an indigenous perspective. Spiritual wellness creates hope. Spiritual behavior is expressed through belief, identity, and values. Emotional wellness creates belonging and emotional behavior is expressed through relationship, family, community, and attitude. Mental wellness creates meaning. Mental behavior is expressed through intuition, understanding, and relationships. Physical wellness creates purpose. Physical behavior is expressed through wholeness, way of being, and way of doing. So this model here is a way to really connect with identity and the teachings that fit into the Medicine Wheel. So with that note, Helia is going to post in the chat that this is a Medicine Wheel that you can access yourself and it's a opportunity for you to do your own wellness wheel in your independent time. Okay. So while we're getting that up, we're going to just take a bit of a break.

That was a lot of material that we covered and this is just a really quick moment to ground ourselves for a moment before we move on to the next part. So I'm going to stop sharing my screen. So we're going to move on to traditional healing. Traditional healing has been defined as practices designed to promote mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing that are based on beliefs which go back to the time before the spread of western scientific biomedicine. When aboriginal people in Canada talk about traditional healing, they include a wide range of activities from physical cures using herbal medicines and other remedies to the promotion of psychological and spiritual wellbeing using ceremony, counseling, and the

accumulated wisdom of elders. So we have here the traditional sacred medicines, sage, sweet grass, cedar, and tobacco. Tobacco is the first set plant given by creator to indigenous people and used as an offering in ceremony. It is a way for communicating to spirit, the spirit world of thoughts, feelings, and prayers. Tobacco is offered when picking medicines.

It is used when seeking advice from elders, healers, or medicine persons. Cedar is used to purify the home and restorative medicinal uses such as the cedar bath. It is used in fasting and sweat lodge ceremonies as a form of protection and branches are used to cover the floor of the sweat lodge. Sage is used to prepare people for ceremonies and teachings and sage is used for releasing what is troubling to the mind. It is used for removing negative energy, cleansing homes and sacred items, as well as other medicinal uses. Sweet grass is thought of as the sacred hair of Mother Earth. It has a very sweet aroma and it reminds people of the gentleness, the love, and the kindness she has for the people. It has a calming effect when used in a healing circle, also used for smudging and purification. Indigenous ceremonies were banned from 1884 to 1951. The Indian Act banned ceremonies such as potlatch, ghosts, dance, and sun dance. People were arrested for performing them and their ceremony materials were taken away by the government. The effects of this prohibition are still felt today.

The ceremonies were suppressed because they were considered primitive and part of superstitions, myth, and magic. The Indian Act of 1867 was designed to assimilate indigenous people and remove expressions of indigenous identity, the banning of ceremonies and the impact to indigenous people. The legislation made it criminal offense for anyone to participate in the potlatch, which I mentioned. The potlatch is a gift giving feast that is traditionally used to mark a variety of important milestones and occasions such as a way of celebrating life, milestone events such as marriages, naming of children, coming of age for young people, which are all very important and reason to celebrate. The ceremonies were done in secret however, and it was the resilience of indigenous people that they are and continue to be revitalized in communities now. These are images of my first healing retreat. This was in 2021 and it was the first time that I ever participated in a sweat lodge or practiced some traditional ceremonies. I picked medicines and I learned the protocols. I received gifts and teachings by a knowledge keeper and I participated in sharing circle ceremonies and I had one-on-one consultation with a knowledge keeper.

We slept and ate as a community all weekend and this teepee is where I actually slept and was the first time I ever did that. It was a transformational experience for me as part of this was connecting to my culture and my identity. This is an image of the sweat lodge where we participated in the, there was about 10 of us and this is at a First Nation sacred ground and the sweat lodge is a purification ceremony. And the process for this is that there is a fire pit in the middle of the lodge and that rocks are heated. The rocks are about 25 centimeters to 50, which can hold heat for a long time. The builder of the lodge gathers saplings and bends them to form a dome. And for many First Nations, this dome represents the womb of mother earth. The lodge is then covered with layers of blankets and a tarp, and the opening of the lodge faces east. Once the ceremony is ready to begin, a fire keeper stays outside and he tends to the heated rocks and the fire.

It was very dark in there and very, very hot. And afterwards there is a celebration of a feast. When I came out of the sweat lodge, I felt very light. I felt some, it was a very, very interesting experience for me and I felt like so much weight had been lifted from me. It was a really incredible experience. So we're

going to move on to cultural appropriation. So defining cultural appropriation is taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else's culture without their permission. This can include unauthorized use of another culture's dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, and traditional medicine, religious symbols. It's most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive. Example is sacred objects. More terms, appropriation is the act of taking something for one's own use typically without the owner's permission. Exploitation is the action of making use and benefiting from those sources. So how do you appreciate a culture that you are not part of?

Appreciation comes from a sincere understanding and to understand means going beyond just reading about it in books. It is possible to explore and to be fascinated by a culture and not appropriate it. It becomes appropriation when you change a part of your personal identity to match or claim that culture, like in a Halloween costume. Just because a person understands a culture, it still does not give them the right to claim it as their own. So be a smart shopper and ask yourself if this item is tied to a culture, is it accurately representing that culture or is it contributing to harmful stereotypes? I have seen dream catchers sold in Dollarama, which were made in China. So that's cultural appropriation. So indigenous spiritual practices, traditional indigenous spiritual practices and beliefs have not been discarded by those outside of indigenous cultures, but actively frowned upon, made fun of, and suppressed. Many indigenous people did not learn about their culture or spirituality or they faced barriers when attempting to practice them.

There are protocols for harvesting, picking, and using medicines as well in the participating in handling sacred items and ceremony. There's a current trend called saging on TV. The Kardashians is an example. They used smudging and saging and they were rubbing their butt in it and using it to cleanse space. So it was really offensive. And social media is also very commonly disregarded there as well. They're misappropriating the sacred medicine and the traditional practice of indigenous people. This can lead to exploiting, stereotyping, and mistreating ancestors. So this is just a final slide by Dan Siegel, and this is another framework to share wellbeing in relation to our brain health and wellbeing. Focus time, focusing closely on tasks, however, balancing our time, how much time are we spending on social media or screen time? Connection, time, connection with people and taking time to appreciate the connections to the natural world, this activates the brain relational currency. Playtime, this is the time for allowing us to be spontaneous, creative, and enjoying activities to make new connections in the brain. Downtime is that unproductive time just about being and recharging your brain.

Time in, reflect internally, engage with sensations, feelings, and thoughts. What's going on with us? What is our body's telling us? It's time to listen to it. Sleep time, we touched on sleep earlier. When we give the body the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and the heal from the many experiences of the day. Physical time, moving our bodies to strengthen the brain power. With all of these categories, we need to take time to realize how much time are we spending on social media, TV, screen time in each of all the categories. We are being overstimulated and our brains cannot process the influx of constant stimulation. It can be also incredibly addictive and it is causing a global issue because of its negative impacts on our lives in so many ways. There are definitely advantages, but there are also disadvantages and we need to try to keep that balance if we can. So to sum up our learning today, we learned that

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

western and indigenous worldview have several general differences, but the major differences are in their relatedness to everything. This includes all creatures and the sacredness of the land.

Indigenization is a transformative process which involves an inclusion of both western and indigenous perspectives. To decolonize wellness, we need to learn and understand the roots of wellness practices and how they are altered to fit into the mainstream culture. Wellness from an indigenous perspective includes the relationships of our four aspects of ourselves. There are four traditional medicines, sage, tobacco, sweet grass, and cedar, which were banned from in people from the years of 1884 to 1951. Appropriation of something is when it is used for a person's own use and exploitation is using and benefiting from that source. It is possible to explore and be fascinated by a culture and not appropriate it by respecting and understanding the history, the culture, and by not making claim to it.

So now we can have question time and I'd like to apologize. I'm sorry for the glitch and the technology and it's always the worst part about doing technology presentations and my apologies for that. I'm just going to stop the share so I can see people. Hi, Lauren. I have in my hand, in my left hand I have a tobacco tie and this tobacco tie is so that today I could speak in a good way, feel in a good way, hear in a good way, and speak in a good way. And I smudged just before today, so I was able to use the medicines for today and Miigwech (thank you) for inviting me here. And I'm totally open for questions or comments or anything. Thank you, Julie.

Lauren Brown:

I see a couple of hands up. Genesis?

Genesis:

Thank you. And once again, thank you so much, Carol, for your wisdom and for sharing parts of your story as well.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you. Thank you.

Genesis:

So it was, oh. Sorry. Oh. Okay. Good. I'm not muted. It was very meaningful and I was, yeah, going to say technology is so mercurial and you handled it with grace. So all good. Thank you so much.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you.

Genesis:

And I wanted to ask a bit about, because I'm grateful really to learn that there, I mean there always has been these frameworks of indigenous wellness, but to see it articulated in this way, in this context it's also very profound and meaningful, I think, just to see this knowledge come here to these spaces and I feel like it's really important, especially for me as a student who is learning psychotherapy and spiritual care to have these lenses of decolonization and indigenization. So thank you for that. And with that I wanted to add and ask if you have any information on this concept of neuro-decolonization. I've been looking into it. I just learned about it today and I'm curious, a lot of what you've spoken about kind of resonates with some of the work around that concept. So I'm curious if you've heard of it and if you have more information for me to follow up on.

Carol Duchame:

Unfortunately I don't, but I could look it up for you and see if I can find anything, but I think it sounds pretty interesting.

Genesis:

Yeah. I was quite surprised myself when I heard the term. I was like, wow, this looks really promising. So thank you. I appreciate.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you so much for your comments. I really appreciate it and thank you. I'm glad that you found it really helpful and you can make the connections to your own work of what you're studying, so thank you for that.

Lauren Brown:

I see Victoria's hands up.

Victoria:

Yeah. Hi, Carol.

Carol Duchame:

Hi Victoria.

Victoria:

I made it. I wanted to say thank you so much for today. This has been such an incredible experience with you to see you in a different way, it's just really beautiful and thank you for sharing your experience and a little bit of your story. It's just very profound and I was feeling that today when you're talking about walking is medicine and it for sure is. And so I was feeling that today. I'm like, I don't need to take the

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

DTC. I can just walk to school. Why me not do that? Right? So I just wanted to say thank you for that. That means a lot and it's so awesome to see you.

Carol Duchame:

Thank you so much, Victoria. Thank you for your comments.

Hela Kalicharran:

There's just one comment in the chat asking if all the links and resources will be shared. And, yes, I will send out an email to everyone with all the links that were attached into the chat.

Lauren Brown:

Carol, I have a question. What advice or insight would you be able to share for folks who are in situations where we're observing some of those things like the cultural appropriation happening. As somebody who's been in yoga studios who will do saging and things like that, I'm always looking for some insights, I think, on how to deal with those and how to help guide people.

Carol Duchame:

Well, that's a really good conversation to have with an elder. From my teaching, what I learned with the elder is for personal use, if you wanted to, he would teach someone how to, all the teachings that went with smudging and it's okay to smudge, but I don't know in that kind of environment whether it would be, I would be uncomfortable if I was in the audience to be honest with you. But if for an individual use, as long as they are given the protocols and the teachings by someone, then it is okay to do it in individual use. But I would feel, it could be mean, somebody in the audience could be very easily offended.

I get this question a lot around Medicine Wheels and Medicine Wheel itself is a framework and it's indigenous knowledge and it's a framework for learning. It's like unless you're going to go into and describe all the teachings that are in the Medicine Wheel, I wouldn't even do that. There's so many teachings that an elder would do it. But to use the framework of mental, spiritual, emotional, and spiritual, that's a model and that's a framework and that is not a cultural appropriation. The only thing I would say is if you are using the Medicine Wheel is to acknowledge where it came from. So that's Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel. Not all indigenous people, they have the same concepts, but they don't necessarily use the Medicine Wheel, so it's just to acknowledge where it came from

Lauren Brown:

To cite your sources, yeah.

Carol Duchame:

Yeah.

Lauren Brown:

Sophia, I see your hand up.

Sophia:

Hi. I first want to thank you for this really wonderful and informative lecture. I really am grateful for this. Just to add on to the topic of saging and cultural appropriation, when you mentioned how it's become quite the trend, something that came to mind and what I noticed is very trendy right now that I've seen in grocery stores and I don't know, retail stores at the mall, lots of incense and people burn incense such as sage. However, even though it's not specifically smudging, I see that it's become very common for people to burn sage incense. I was wondering if that's still considered the cultural appropriation because I've noticed that it seems like the West has tried to make lots of modifications and changes into traditional indigenous practices to try to make it more personal to themselves. So I was just wondering your thoughts on that.

Carol Duchame:

Well, first I was wondering who is selling this sage? Because when you pick these medicines, it doesn't just happen from when it reaches the consumer. It has to be, when we take it from, like when I went on that retreat, I learned how to access the medicine. So you have to offer tobacco and there's protocols. So this medicine, now that you have this knowledge, it's like once you know you can't unknow. Right? So it's just asking those questions. Where did this come from? Is it Joe down the street who is trying to profit from this? And it's not being respectfully respected because it is a sacred medicine. So if I was ever going to engage with something like that, I would want to know where this came from and where it was sourced from. So I would do a bit of homework.

Sophia:

That's interesting because I actually seen it sold at Whole Foods like pure sage as well as incense. I've never picked it up myself and I never read the packaging. I always just kind of walked past it. But, yeah, it definitely made me think where is it coming from.

Carol Duchame:

Exactly. And this is what we need to do for any kind of critical thinking about cultural appropriation. Even hairstyles, I just came across something, Katy Perry is one of the first offenders, one of the biggest offenders in pop music for culturally appropriating different cultures in her videos. You know? Like hair, if you're profiting and making videos and it's not being respectfully done in a right, it's enhancing stereotypes and it's harmful. It's always what's the end result of who is this going to harm? Right? Yeah. And also too, the other thing about ceremonies, whenever you're doing a ceremony, it's never videotaped. So if you see somebody selling something that's an experience or they're videotaping

This transcript was exported on Aug 04, 2023 - [view latest version](#).

themselves on Facebook or whatever, that's a ceremony and it's not supposed to be videotaped. So that would be a red flag for me right away.

Sophia:

Thank you for that insight.

Hela Kalicharran:

Okay. So that brings us to the end of our session today. Thank you all for your wonderful questions and thank you so much to Carol for sharing your depth of knowledge and insight on this topic. I hope everyone has an amazing rest of your night and I will be sure to link and email all the resources that were shared tonight's session. Thank you.

Carol Duchame:

Thanks, everyone.

Lauren Brown:

On behalf of MindFIT, the Multifaith Center, and the Division of Student Life at the University of Toronto, thank you for listening.