INDIGENOUS & MODERN

Collaborating For Systems Change

Practical Guide for Combining Indigenous and Modern Practices

In Recent Years...

there is a growing interest in finding ways to combine indigenous knowledge systems with modern knowledge to drive transformative change.

This requires a shift in perspective, moving away from the traditional Western model of expertise and towards more holistic and integrated approaches.

This Guide Offers You...

practical tools to help you integrate indigenous wisdom and modern knowledge in your work, and create systems change in your personal and professional life.

Like a tree, this guide provides a stable and strong framework to create thriving ecosystems of collaboration that benefit both ourselves and the earth.

The deep roots of indigenous wisdom represent the rich traditions that have been passed down through generations. The fresh leaves are new, emergent approaches to foster whole-systems innovation.

This guide supports you in co-creating a future that is just and regenerative for all:

- Combine ancient wisdom and modern approaches in an actionable way.
- Connect with the natural world and diverse ways of knowing.
- Explore ideas of being in the right relationship, equity, and systems thinking.
- Adopt practical tools to help help you build powerful community-led initiatives.

Authors

Indigenous & Modern was founded in 2020 with a singular mission: to create more regeneration and equity through the integration of indigenous wisdom and modern strategies.

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We have composed this free guide to serve changemakers across the world.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems
are often characterized by a deep sense of interdependence, which reflects the belief that all natural systems are sacred.

Modern Systems Thinking
states that interconnected parts interact with one another in complex and dynamic ways, which has impacts on the overall system.

Both Approaches

- Consider all interactions that impact a system.
- Emphasize a holistic rather than an isolated approach.
- Consider the long-term well-being of future generations.

I. Being in Right Relationship

Being in right relationship is about cultivating the inner qualities and outer behaviors that support trust, reciprocity, and harmony in our relationships with ourselves, each other, and the Earth.

This requires us to develop a deep sense of respect and reverence for the interconnected web of life, as well as a willingness to learn from and work with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Practices

Living in Harmony with the Earth

Indigenous peoples understand that the well-being of the planet is intimately connected to our own. Modern approaches include new, regenerative agriculture, energy production, and resource management practices.

Prioritizing Trust and Reciprocity

Indigenous practices emphasize the importance of building and maintaining strong, mutually beneficial relationships. Modern practices include techniques such as active listening, conflict resolution, and restorative justice.

Cultivating Inner Development

Indigenous practices often prioritize inner awareness through rites of passage, ritual, and ceremony. Modern practices include mindfulness, which cultivate greater self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Exercise: Cultivating Right Relationship

In this exercise, you will have the opportunity to cultivate a sense of right relationship with all of life.

1. **Find a quiet, natural setting** where you feel comfortable and safe like a park, a forest, a beach, or any other place.
2. **Take a few moments** to center yourself and feel your feet on the ground and your body supported by the earth.
3. **Begin to notice** the natural world around you. Take some time to observe and appreciate the beauty of the natural world.
4. **Reflect on the idea** that you are part of this ecosystem, and that all of life is interconnected. Consider how you might cultivate a sense of right relationship with all of life as one, coherent living system.
    - What are some practical ways you can cultivate a sense of right relationship with all of life in your daily life and work?
    - How might this perspective influence your decisions and actions in your community or organization?
5. **Take a few deep breaths** and offer gratitude for the natural world and your place within it.

II. Recognizing and Honoring Diversity in Living Systems

Creating equity in communities and networks requires critical reflection on past and present colonialization and systemic oppression to shift power dynamics.

By merging Indigenous and modern approaches
we can tend to individual and collective trauma and
to create healing, reconciliation, and decolonization.

Practices

Shifting Power Dynamics

Indigenous practices such as talking circles, consensus decision-making, and seeking guidance from ancestors can be combined with modern, inclusive decision-making processes, active listening, and anti-oppression training.

Creating Community Agreements

Indigenous practices such as protocols for living and working together in a community can be combined with modern practices such as creating codes of conduct and accountability processes to establish equitable and inclusive environments.

Prioritizing Education and Healing

Indigenous practices such as storytelling and ceremonies can be combined with modern practices such as restorative justice, trauma-informed care, and cultural competency training to support reconciliation.

Exercise: The Beauty of Diversity

Now, let's take this learning into the natural world and explore how inclusion plays out in living systems.

1. **Find a natural space** where you can be surrounded by the diversity of life. Take a few deep breaths.
2. **Appreciate the diversity** of life around you. Notice how each plant and animal has its unique characteristics and how they all contribute to the ecosystem in their own way.
    - How is this diversity a strength and how does it bring balance to the ecosystem?
    - How does the ecosystem as a whole naturally include all of life forms present?
3. **Reflect on** the diversity that exists within human communities and how to create more equity in the world.
4. **Think about** how this diversity can be a strength in the work you are doing.
5. **Brainstorm ways** in which you can incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into your work.
6. **Consider** how you can bring the lessons from this exercise to your interactions with others.

III. Systems Thinking and Its Role in Transformative Change

Innovation for long-term well-being can be driven by collaborative networks and communities. Indigenous approaches prioritize the natural world and ancestral wisdom, while modern approaches focus on technology and systems thinking.

By combining these, we can create inclusive, regenerative innovations that account for social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors.

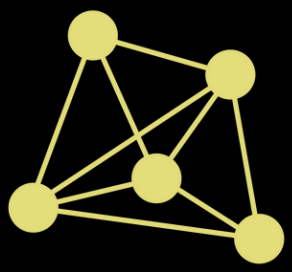
Practices

Regenerative Resource Stewardship

Combine indigenous practices of reciprocity and gift-giving with modern practices of sustainable resource management to ensure the responsible use and renewal of resources. This involves implementig practices that replenish and restore natural systems.

Draw on Multiple Ways of Knowing

Indigenous communities often have unique knowledge that can be valuable in the innovation process. Integrating this knowledge with modern scientific and technological knowledge can lead to more innovative and effective solutions.



Weaving People For Collective Action

Modern practices such as setting clear objectives and timelines, and using project management tools to coordinate activities. Indigenous practices such as storytelling and ceremony can help to create a sense of shared purpose, while also grounding the project in the values and needs of the community.

Exercise: Observing Nature's Innovation

In this exercise, we will take inspiration from nature to observe and embody its innovation in our own work.

1. **Find a quiet and natural space** where you can sit and observe nature around you. Take a few deep breaths and relax.
2. **Simply observe** the natural systems around you. Pay attention to patterns, flows, and connections between elements.
   - What patterns can you identify?
   - How does nature solve problems?
   - How does it adapt to changing circumstances?
3. **Reflect on what you have seen** and think about how these observations could be applied to your collaborations. Consider how the patterns you observed could inspire new ideas, improve existing systems, or help you solve problems.
4. **Work together** with your team to identify opportunities for whole systems innovation in your work.
   - How can you apply the patterns and principles you observed in nature to your projects and initiatives?
5. **Brainstorm new ideas and approaches** that are rooted in the understanding that everything is interconnected and that all parts of a system influence and depend on each other.

Key Take-Aways

- **Drawing from both indigenous and modern** approaches to innovation to create breakthrough solutions that are holistic, regenerative, and inclusive.

- **Collaborating across diverse sectors** and communities allows us to design solutions that are resilient, adaptive, and grounded in local knowledge and wisdom.

- **Embracing experimentation and iteration** allows us to create solutions that are better adapted to changing conditions and evolving needs.

- **Engaging in deep listening and observation**, and drawing on multiple ways of knowing, helps us to develop a more holistic understanding of complex problems.

- **Embodying a deep sense of responsibility** to one another, the land, and future generations helps us to create a shared purpose.

Weaving The Threads...

of our diverse cultures, perspectives, and approaches creates a tapestry of infinite possibility. By embracing our differences and drawing from both indigenous and modern approaches to innovation, we can create solutions that are holistic, regenerative, and inclusive.

The world and our communities are greater than the sum of its parts. Through embodying a deep sense of connection and responsibility to one another, the land, and future generations, we can create a shared purpose that is grounded in a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives and approaches, and forge a future that is both beautiful and functional.

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We weave the ancient and emergent to co-create systems change

Over the years, we have had the honor of serving many remarkable changemakers. Through our work together, we have helped to implement innovative projects that address a wide range of issues, from environmental sustainability to social justice.

Learn More at:

www.indigenousandmodern.com