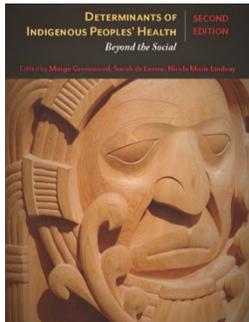




Beyond the Social: Author Interviews



Welcome to [Beyond the Social: Author Interviews](#), a video series produced by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. The NCCIH focuses on innovative research and community-based initiatives promoting the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. All of the contributors interviewed in this video series, from the highly-acclaimed book [Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social](#), share a common concern with improving the health of Indigenous peoples in Canada and beyond. In sharing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditional knowledge alongside Western academic and medical knowledge, the authors demonstrate the potential gains of walking in two worlds, integrating the best of both Indigenous and Western knowledge, and honouring and respecting the diverse healing and medical practices available to us today.

Video - Chapter 7: Being at the Interface: Early Childhood as a Determinant of Health, with Margo Greenwood



In her interview, Dr. Greenwood, the Academic Lead of the NCCAH, reflects upon the intergenerational teachings and stories that are the supports, strengths, and values that drive Indigenous peoples forward in negotiating current realities. In one example, she shares how her grandfather was able to be a devout Catholic despite his residential school

experience. This “code shifting” – or moving back and forth respectfully between different worlds – happens when one has a solid grounding in identity, or in the words of her grandfather, “...take what is good and...leave the rest behind.”

Transcript

My name is Margo Greenwood. I'm the Academic Lead for the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. It is the collaborating centre that supported the development of this new book and we're really excited to do that. A lot of my teachers, my Elder teachers, have often talked about “know where you've been, Margo. Know where your family has been, so you can learn from that and move forward into the future”. It's not only learning that but you take the

strengths of those teachings because a lot of the teachings are threaded through time. They're anchored in your family and your kinship relationships, but they're threaded through time. Each generation learns those; each generation teaches those, and so they really are your strengths. So, I look back at what I was taught. What are those values that I've been taught that will allow me to live in harmony and balance So that I'm not just not looking forward in the world with nothing, with no supports behind me or knowledge behind me, but I have a whole wealth of history and knowledge and family behind me that I take with me and bring to the future? Now I live that reality, so it may not look like my mother lived it or my grandmother lived it, but the fundamental teachings of that are there, but they will look different in contemporary reality. So, I reach my hand back for those teachings and learnings and bring them forward because they are going to help me negotiate my current realities and live that in a good way. That's what I mean by that.

My grandfather and I – though I wrote about it in the chapter – he used to always say to me, because I would ask him – he went to residential schools and you know, all of the stories that you hear about residential schools, he experienced – and I'd say, “how can you be today so devout of a Catholic? How is that possible when you were over 10 years in residential schools without ever going home?” And that's when he'd say to me, “Margo, I take what's good and I leave the rest behind”. So, he took what was good in those days, took what was good in his own world, his culture, and the way he was raised and his knowledge, and he put the two together. I would be surprised if a lot of people aren't doing that code shifting all the time because we don't live in the past like we used to. It looks different, but what are those values that we carry with us and how do we express these things in these different worlds, and how do we be mindful and self-reflective? And that means that we need to be really solid about who we are so that we can move back and forth and just flow easily back and forth without losing either of the richness of those environments. That's what I think about.

I remember once, one of my teachers, early childhood teachers, said ... she told me this story once and she said, there was a little boy and he was about four and a half, maybe five, and every time his grandma came to the preschool – and they would be having lunch or special events – and grandma would come. And every time grandma came, she would feed him, literally feed him the food. Always the caregivers would say like, “why is he doing that?” “Oh, he's just being lazy” or this and that. And then finally she said... one of the caregivers said, “How come you do that when Grandma is around? Why do you let her do that? You know how to use a knife and a fork and a spoon.” Because he was, you know, just about kindergarten age. He said, “I do it because it makes my grandma happy”. I think that's a powerful story. When I reflect on that, the absolute thoughtfulness and brilliance of that child. He knew exactly what he was doing. He knew exactly why he was doing it. I think we need to allow children to do things, to code switch, to be who they are and not judge them and give them opportunities because then we learn from them. I mean what a beautiful value of love for his grandmother, just amazing. As an adult I would have thought, “don't do that”, and yet it pleased her heart. That's really important, I think.

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