The Seven Storywork Principles

from Jo-Ann Archibald’s Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit

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Respect

• When writing a story the writer needs to be respectful of the culture that they are working with.
• To show respect for the elder’s information must be recorded correctly.
• Respect must also be given to the people who own and tell the stories.
• Respect also involves trust.
Responsibility

• The researcher/writer must take ownership for any errors that they record.

• “Each person who sits with the Elders in this circle of learning assumes a responsibility to either listen, to share, to teach, or to learn” (Archibald 63).
Reciprocity

• “The form and content of verbal and visual art are congruent with each other and with social structure” (28).
• Reciprocity is balance (28).
• When people work together they must listen carefully and contemplate what they are hearing (50).
Reverence

- Reverence for speech and its deep connection to truth.
- “Reverence toward the spiritual are important dynamics of storywork” (48).
- “Storytellers showed reverence through prayer, songs, and the ethical ways that they approached the work” (126).
Holism

• “The interrelatedness between the intellectual, spiritual, . . . emotional, and physical . . . realms to form a whole healthy person” (11).

• “The development of holism extends to and is mutually influenced by one’s family, community, band, and nation” (11).
Interrelatedness

- Know the story intimately.
- Know its content - don’t just memorize it.
- Know what it means.
Synergy

• Works with holism and interrelatedness “to create powerful storywork understandings that have the power to help with emotional health and wellness” (x).

• “The power of storywork to make meaning derives from a synergy between the story, the context in which the story is used, the way that story is told, and how one listens to the story” (84).
Thoughts to Ponder . . .

Why is indigenous storywork an important tool for teaching and learning?

• Indigenous storywork allows listeners and readers to experience another culture.
• Indigenous storywork unveils cultural values and beliefs.

How could you use it in your practice?

• I would invite an Elder to come to my class to share some stories and to tell us what they mean to them and their community.