

The Three Principles and Native Spirituality

The wise medicine men in the Native North American culture
spoke of the world as *one spirit*,
referring to the creator of all things
as the “*Great Spirit*”.

This was their way of explaining the oneness of life.

Sydney Banks – The Missing Link

1. Introduction, and The Spirit

This collaborative effort by three writers attempts to demonstrate how the Three Principles as uncovered by Sydney Banks alleviates the suffering of all mankind, whether Native or Non-Native. The paper hopes to assist Native people in understanding the wisdom of the 3 Principles, as well as to assist 3 Principle Practitioners in understanding the uniqueness and wisdom of the Native world and how the Principles may best be shared with this population. Lastly, it serves as a foundation for each population to understand what might be learned from each other. This paper hints at development of relationship between Native communities and 3 Principles communities to effectively move towards a healing process for all.

Jonathan: “I will refer to my clan, the Paskwáwimostos (Buffalo) people, or the plains people, as—Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), and the Oyate (Dakota). The teachings I am sharing with you come from my Grandfathers and Grandmothers, who, for aeons, roamed this great land now known as North America. In this writing, I will refer to my Ancestors as—The Peoples Indigenous to Turtle Island, in order to assist you, the reader, in navigating through the understanding of the spiritual teachings that are being shared with you, and my comprehension of the *Three Principles—Spirit (Mind), Thought, and Consciousness*, in an Indigenous perspective. Kinanâskomitin (Thank-you).”

Harry: “When I first began talking to Sydney Banks about the Native World and the sharing of the Three Principles, the enlightened man suggested using Spirit instead of Mind. Because of my extensive experience with Native ceremony in the Sweat lodge, Long House, Pipe, Uwipi, Shake tent, Sundance, PowWow and learning from Elders, I recognize that the Shaman and the People are introduced to Spirit and spiritual experience from birth, and that Spirit is part of their Indigenous nature. The wise Native experiences spirit in everything, with every thought and action being *sacred*.”

Melinda: “My father, Goodlow Eagle, was a full-blood Cherokee Indian, who told stories of all our ancestors and relatives who walked the Trail of Tears and thrived in the face of adversity. He was proud of his heritage but also proud of his ability to be a part of the white community. I have learned from other native teachers and friends but mainly through ceremony or quiet spaces (journeys) and have experienced a knowing that passes words of explanation. I speak not for the culture or for others but as myself, a spiritual being who is currently having a human experience.

The Creator gave each culture a path to God. To the Indian people, he revealed that the Creator is in everything. Everything is alive with the Spirit of God. The water is alive. The trees are alive. The woods are alive. The mountains are alive. The wind is alive. The Great Spirit's breath is in everything and that's why it's alive. All of nature is our church, we eat with our families in church, and we go to sleep in church.

When I think of this 'aliveness' that is in everything and between everything—this great mystery—I believe Sydney Banks called it Mind. It is a Oneness. Words can't do it justice. Words are merely an 'echo of the truth'. Native people know about perspective and teaching through metaphors. My ancestors were well aware of the deception of thought (both our own and others). They also knew that the further an individual becomes steeped in believing their personal thoughts—the further from our source they go. We know about insult to our spirit and the relationship between mental health and physical health. We know that healing is also in relationship with others, but also with the Great Spirit who resides as wisdom within each of us.”

Observation: The Spiritual Nature of the Principles is not a confusing concept to Indigenous Peoples. For some 3P Practitioners, this may change the dynamics of how to share because both point to the same Silence and Beauty that resides within all human beings.

2. Sydney Banks, The Three Principles and The Spirit

In Sydney Banks, **The Great Spirit**, the CD opens with Native Indian drum music. He begins his sharing with the topic of Spirit, and then uses his very limited knowledge of the teachings of the Medicine Wheel to describe his enlightenment experience. He also uses this ancient teaching tool to describe The Great Spirit, the Oneness of life, and how sicknesses and distress are caused. From the Medicine Wheel Perspective, they are caused by being out of harmony with the Great Spirit, or vice versa, human beings experience love, goodness and positive spiritual feelings by being in harmony with the Great Spirit. He did not mention The Three Principles until near the end of this talk and his last sentence is, “*My advice is to use these three principles wisely and you will never go wrong.*”

How could anyone, who had just learned about the Medicine Wheel minutes before the creation of this CD, talk so knowingly? It may be a bold statement to suggest Sydney Banks duplicated his experience of talking with leading physicists in USA. He knew almost nothing about physics, yet he understood that Einstein's formula $E=Mc^2$ was incorrect because it did not absolutely illustrate formlessness. He intuitively understood that the speed of light squared is still a number in the material world, and the world of spirit or formlessness is not of this material world, and is before and beyond time, space and matter. *Similarly*, it appears he understood the essence and simplicity of Ancient Indian Teachings, and that it is this wisdom of the ages that points to the spiritual energy of form, that which the Indigenous call Mother Earth or Nature. This wisdom is available to any human being who has the courage and patience to *See* it.

Melinda: “Mother Earth and Nature are very much a part of the spiritual energy (Mind) but neither sum up the whole of the Great Mystery or Great Spirit. They are just a part—the same as we are.”

The following is an extract from *Jonathan’s E’kosi*. “Where is the pipe you gave me Grandpa, what happened to that? Who has it now?” The anxiety in my voice moved Grandpa, and he repositioned himself in the chair as he fumbled with the blanket to cover himself. “Stop worrying about the pipe Grandson, you are the pipe! You concern yourself too much with ‘things’, this has always been the problem with this place. Grandson, you are the pipe. Do not forget this!”

Puzzled with what he had just shared I asked, “What do you mean Grandpa?” With a stern voice Grandpa said, “Listen to me Grandson, don’t get lost in the rituals, don’t get lost in the ceremonies, you are the pipe.”

The spirit of this message is filled with an omnipresence—a great spirit of love which was needed to heal my wounded and broken spirit. I do comprehend the essence of his words today, and would like to share this feeling of spirit with you as well.

I am Jonathan, endowed with the masculine and feminine spirit. *I honor the great spirit of love that is within me, and I am the pipe, as are you.*”

3. The World of Suffering

Humans are *spiritual beings who think*. We create our perceptions of life and human experience via the use of these Three Spiritual Principles. The 3 Principles are a *Spiritual Psychology*.

Mind, Consciousness and Thought
are the psychological trinity of all human experience on earth.

They are the hidden pearls that lead us to our true identity.

Sydney Banks—Missing Link

Harry: “As I travelled in the Native world, I became aware, not only of the beauty of their world, but of the trauma the People experienced. I wrote previously, ‘I am proud of my Native name—Standing Elk. I have been privileged to work and be involved with numerous Native organizations, ceremonies and communities in the past twenty years. However, I was not born as a Native, and do not pretend to fully understand what it is to think or live in this world, as an Indigenous person. Obviously, I have heard the stories and observed the travesties of justice regarding colonization, residential schools, being classified as ‘savage’, and ‘white people’ pretending they know what is best for the Native People. (Melinda and a shaman additionally cited the perversion of traditional native gift giving with small pox blankets, the introduction of alcohol, the removal of Native people from their land, the removal of their children and marginalization). Whenever I hear these stories, it touches my heart, evokes my compassion and makes me aware that I have not lived these stories; that I have simply heard the ‘crying and prayers of a nation’ as an outsider.’ The Canadian

government is acknowledging some of these atrocities by paying \$10,000 to \$350,000 per person for the traumatic experiences of residential school victims, depending on whether sexual violation was involved.”

The Three Principles uncovered by Sydney Banks embrace the spiritual nature of life, and reveal the illusionary nature of personal thought, and how we, as thinking human beings, create personal trauma and addictions with wrongful thinking. Practitioners of the Three Principles agree that 3P teaching promotes healing and provides freedom from past traumatic experiences. However, when the stories are heard, it is easy to come to the conclusion that it would have been challenging and tricky to have survived from the massive injustice, persecution and onslaught of personal insults perpetrated by the ‘white people’ of our fine land. Without their spiritual wisdom that is indigenous in all human beings, the Native people would have been assimilated into the majority culture and forgotten.

An essential question remains to be asked: If the Indigenous are spiritually gifted, why have so many experienced so much suffering and dysfunction in their lives? They might say *they lost their identity or sense of belonging*. At the same time, however, the writers have noticed that in recent history no culture has grown faster individually and as a community. More Natives are attaining degrees from recognized universities including post graduate degrees. Natives are now contributing positive changes to the school and prison systems and institutions that once oppressed them.

The number of American Indian/Alaska Native students enrolled in colleges and universities more than doubled in the past 30 years, along with the number of associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees conferred to Natives over the past 25 years. Yet American Indian/Alaska Natives were less likely to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher than their non-Native peers, accounting for less than one percent of those who have earned a bachelor’s degree, compared to 71.8% of whites, 9.8% of African Americans, 7.9% of Hispanics, and 7.0% of Asian and Pacific Islanders. Native Americans have the highest suicide rates and dropout rates.¹

4. Do Native People and Native Ceremony approach Healing from a different perspective than the 3P Community?

The answer is yes and no. While Native Spirituality does place a degree of emphasis on protocol, ceremony and ritual, its chief emphasis is on the spiritual experience of the human being. The formless nature of the Great Spirit and seeing spirit in everything is congruous with 3P teachings. The internal nature of the Spirit is an understood wisdom. Both point an individual in the right direction (inward). Talking, teaching and counseling via one’s connection to the Spirit, rather than the intellect, are also agreeable to both communities. Both communities have access to the Wisdom of the Ages—the 3P community through the wisdom of Sydney Banks and the Native community through the teachings and interpretations of the Elders, Shaman and ceremonies.

It is the writers’ understandings that we create all our beliefs via the 3 Principles. In the Lakota way, they talk about First Cause. If First Cause is the Spirit deep within the

consciousness of every human being which is released via Thought, it follows that the 3 Principles are not only Indigenous teachings, but teaching for all People on this earth. It also follows that the 3 Principles point to the Oneness of life.

For example, in a sweatlodge ceremony, many of the People are troubled or in low moods when the sweat begins. Healing takes place via the power of the Spirit in action, and many come out of the sweat looking years younger and experience a positive and fresh perspective to their life. They often have entered ceremony at a low level of consciousness, and as their level of consciousness rises, they naturally experience and feel the spirit. Similarly, as their personal or ego thoughts quiet down in the sweat, they open up and experience Original Thought or Creator, which is the Original Psychology that the world is so desperately looking to rediscover. Many Native people have mentioned that they do not like the word psychology, but The Three Principles are spiritual in nature, and psychological in its logic.

Some Definitions

- Mind = Spirit = Source = Great Mystery
- Consciousness = what we use to be *aware* of in our Visions and reality. Intent is its cousin.
- Thought = Creative force. Sydney Banks sometimes illustrated Thought as a paintbrush; whatever we paint, that is the color we see
- Internal nature of Spirit --in 3P, it is called innate wisdom within all human beings. That which we are born with and never lose. It is part of Mind.
- 3 Principles = It is a Spiritual World. It is a World of Thought. All 3 Principles are neutral, spiritual and exist within us whether we are aware of them or not. The 3 Gifts from Creator to create our magical reality here on earth.
- Mind, Consciousness and Thought are universal Principles, and a Principle means it cannot be broken down any further and is a fact. Beliefs are not Principles.

In practice, Native Spirituality has impressive results! So does the 3P community! Both see physical, mental and spiritual healings. Cancer has been healed in ceremony, and via insight in the 3P, cancer has left the body of some. Ceremony and Native teachings of the Elders has taken some of the worst drug addicts off the streets, and five years later they have earned their Masters degree in Social Work, are leaders in the community and working for the government—and remain drug free. The impressive results of 3P as in the prisons, low income communities, business, education, sport, mental health and personal lives is inspirational and growing. The writers encourage the two communities to blend together for even better results.

In the Native world, much of therapy is done by ceremony rather than counseling, and worship and healing practices are often entered into in solitude. These may be complemented by guidance and interpretation from wise Elders which is often considered necessary for one's growth. For instance, in the sweat lodge the person comes to pray about what they want changed in their life. As they describe their personal suffering, whether it be

their relationship with their child or mother or that they are having trouble with drugs or that they are experiencing physical pain, the spirit may speak through the Shaman wisely or a spirit like the Black Horse enters the lodge and heals the addiction. Healing is done both in silence and with words. The feeling is similar to a 3P gathering; it is noticeable that the quality of the spiritual feeling has risen and it is not uncommon for someone to come out changed. This type of relationship or feeling of the unseen and the formless may be described as ‘bambeday’ (meaning mysterious feeling), and has been interpreted as Divine Consciousness.

Unfortunately, some of these same people in ceremony return to the depths of their sorrows within a short time due to thought. If they experienced an insight about the Power of Thought, and if they did not think and talk about their old problems and old complaints about life, they would not re-create the same sad feelings with which they entered the sweat lodge. Potential freedom from re-creating past problems is one of the benefits of understanding the Principles of Thought and Consciousness powered by Spirit. Some Shaman believe in the White Man’s psychology; they believe in analyzing thought patterns and behaviour, and many do not believe that true change can come from one realization, that it must take many years of dedication. Of course, other Shaman know better.

In regards to the nature of humans, Melinda and Harry have always loved the story of the Two Wolves. *Melinda*: “I love how this story illustrates our ability to create our own suffering (or well-being) with thought.” *Harry*: “and whatever we play with in our mind, we must live.”

An Elder Cherokee Native American was teaching his grandchildren about life, He said to them, “A fight is going on inside all humans, it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self pity, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too.”

They thought about it for a minute and then one child asked her grandfather, “Grandpa, which wolf will win?”

*The old Cherokee simply replied, “**The one you feed.**”*

Dr. Bill Pettit, a leading psychiatrist in the 3Principles community for over 30 years said at a breakout session at the 2014 3P Global Community Conference—“All mental illness is the innocent misuse of Universal Thought which manifests in the physiological and psychological world as chronic stress and inflammation.” If mental illness is chronic stress, it follows that if one does not feed the black wolf, there will be no stress. He also said at the recent Three Principles School on Salt Spring Island that *there is a cure for mental illness*, and it is peace of mind resulting from the right use of the Three Principles.

Unfortunately, many Natives and non-Natives do not understand the distinction between the brain and Mind; many even suggesting the brain as the Source of experience.

The brain and the mind are two entirely different things.

The brain is *biological*.

The mind is *spiritual*.

Sydney Banks—Missing Link

And perhaps one of the strangest twists for 3P Practitioners is the ‘going into the past’ in Native ceremony, wailing and lamenting and being guided by the spirit to a clear heart and clear mind.

Melinda: “Regarding ‘going into the past’, a friend once told me, and I use this a lot in therapy, if there is a big bag of garbage in your living room, you know you need to take it out. You don’t need to dig through it, tear it all apart and figure out which piece is the smelliest. You just bag it up and take it out. Time is not linear though. It is helpful to call in the wisdom and energy of the Grandfathers, of the 4 directions, of all the helping energies and call them into the present moment. This can create healing for you in the present moment and healing for past and present generations, but it occurs in the present moment.”

Harry: “One time, I was confused about going into the past to solve psychological problems with Native people. It was asked to Sydney Banks and he adamantly stated, ‘do not go into the past’. Then I mentioned that is how the Natives do their ceremony, and to paraphrase, he quickly restated, ‘Oh, if that is their way and their religion, then we must listen and respect this. That is their way.’”

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt that understanding the 3 Principles as uncovered by Sydney Banks has changed the lives of the three writers. All three have seen their lives change for the better, leaving behind suffering, busy minds, and trauma. In truth, the balance of life has been restored. We live amazing lives, and we want others who are suffering to see the simplicity of truth, by allowing them to access their own inner wisdom and to experience the healing from within their own insights.

Harry: “I am certainly no expert in the Native world, except to say I have been accepted by some and criticized by others. I can say that some Shaman are wiser than others, and I have enjoyed several whom I consider to be colleagues and friends. Recently, I asked what the Native word was for ‘common sense’. Chief Thunderbird Child answered in Cree and translated it to ‘good mind and good thoughts’. It seems to me that any approach to life that includes a good mind and good thoughts as the Red Road to success, and that is spiritually rooted, must be an impressive guide on how to live a happy and content life. Many years ago, I said, “It takes a lot of courage to live the life of Truth”, and Sydney Banks responded, “No, it takes a lot of common sense.” It has taken me a lifetime to see a little of what he was suggesting.

Before the creation of sacred ceremony, there was formless Spirit; that is what the Three Principles are pointing toward. The Three Principles operate through human beings whether we are aware of this fact or not, and they create all of our beliefs and understandings in this reality we live in. In my observations, catching a glimpse of these three spiritual principles *enhances* ones appreciation and understanding of spiritual essence and its connection to the formless nature of Great Spirit—and to the Mystery and Oneness of Life.”

Melinda: “Before there were big fancy cathedrals and structures and organized religions, Spirit (Mind) existed. Innocently, these structures were created and separated mankind from nature—from Mother Earth, from the trees, the rocks, the sky, the moon and the sun—all of nature. In the past and even today many ceremonies take place on the earth, outside, where the sun or moon shines, near water. The ceremony is an ‘excuse’ for partaking in the real healing element—solitude or observance of the beauty of life. This inner experience can lead one to *return* to their true essence.

Sacred medicine, intuition, source energy (whatever words are used to describe it) is available at all times in the center of the Sacred Wheel, in balance. In the center (within) is your own best spiritual medicine. This is not something we need to seek or go after, we merely have to allow. Allowing is opening up to the energy in the universe. It means feeling the energy of life in us and all around us. I believe Sydney Banks called this Mind.”

Jonathan: “The mere thought of creation is brilliant and magnificent, as are the mysteries of life, but if I settled with trying to dominate my environment rather than be the environment in which I wish to see, I would never have achieved a sense of the teachings of the 3 Principles that have been so kindly shared with me.

Many organized religions begin with intent to share good words, but what I found, with the 3 Principles, is we have the tendency to share good thoughts, and explore the good feelings that comes from sharing the process of attaining them. The sharing of one’s own personal experiences begins to lessen our burdens of having lost our way into the exteriors of our own being. If there was more of an emphasis on honoring the spirit within, and not concentrating on the validation of the exteriors, I believe we could begin to enjoy life more freely.

In the beginning of discovering the 3 Principles I would get fleeting moments of conscious awareness, but I struggled with maintaining the clarity of the 3 Principles. I would like to share that the journey in self-development should be met with kindness, compassion and a nurturing strength. Understanding the 3 Principles—becoming aware of how I am interpreting my own life mysteries—these things are being revealed to me sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly. I am developing patience and gratitude because of this process of self-development, and I did this by asking myself honestly, and keeping the mind-set that I was going to be healed.

Harry and I continue to enjoy this Blue Road, this road of becoming self-aware of our own magnificence. It’s a journey for all people. As I write this I can hear Harry say with a genuine smile, “All the goodies are in there, deep within” as he points to his heart and it’s

this beautiful jewel of truth that has allowed us to continue sharing our understanding of the 3 Principles and evolution of Mind (Spirit), Thought, and Consciousness.”

Final Words

The Indigenous People of North America are continuing to evolve into a powerful nation of organizations, communities and people. In our opinion, **it is our destiny**. If it is a positive evolution, their emancipation will include *love and forgiveness* rather than *anger and distrust*, as they become economic and political giants in this world. The importance of embracing the Three Principles of Divine Mind, Divine Thought and Divine Consciousness is key. The common sense (or lack of) applied in today’s world creates a foundation of loving and sharing for the **Native children (and all children) of tomorrow**. Spiritual wisdom must include love and forgiveness, to help our world recognize that we are all on this planet together. It is clear that the Insight that Sydney Banks shared, with all his breath, with the world significantly accelerates the Indigenous people of Turtle Island in creating a SECURE world for their children as they become prosperous and powerful. **The answer** lies in an understanding of their Spirituality with the building blocks of creation—The Three Spiritual Principles.

Sydney Banks wrote in his book ‘Second Chance’

“Purer thoughts are the rungs of the ladder to success.”

He defined success as—***happiness and contentment***.

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1. Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, “Status and Trends in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives, 2008;” National Congress of American Indians, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, and 2005 National Indian Education Study.

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