
LUKANKA

Lukanka is a Miskito word for “thoughts”

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Three years ago I wrote in this space: “Fourth World scientific scholarship has entered into a new and exciting phase. No longer merely local knowledge (though it can be), and no longer considered primitive and backward as so often described by the learned exponents of the Enlightenment ...” with a considerable sense of celebration” [FWJ 142, 2016). The Center for World Indigenous Studies and, therefore, the Fourth World Journal, have been committed to applying traditional knowledge systems to current problems in the Fourth World through education, research and public policy. Since 1979 we have seen some success with this mission; and that the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples in its 18th Session (April 2019) is focusing its agenda on “Traditional knowledge: Generation, transmission and protection” raises the visibility of traditional knowledge as a serious the topic. Recognizing “traditional knowledge” is one thing, but applying different traditional knowledge systems to actual problems moves the discussion toward solving problems using the most appropriate knowledge system. A problem of immense importance to Fourth World peoples is the value of foods and medicines to daily and generational security. It is for this reason that this issue of Fourth World Journal is dedicated to the



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A handwritten signature of Rudolph C. Rysler in black ink, written in a cursive style.

application of knowledge systems to ensuring the benefits of traditional foods and medicines on which 80% of indigenous peoples worldwide depend.

This Special Issue on Traditional Foods and Medicines

draws on the research conducted by scholars at the Center for World Indigenous Studies. The articles in this issue constitute our contribution to the global dialogue on the application of traditional knowledge systems focused on a critical problem affecting the lives of Fourth World peoples. It is our view that unless there is recognition of the many differ-

ent traditional knowledge systems and systematic application of anyone of these systems to Fourth World social, economic, political, cultural and strategic problems, the popular recognition of traditional knowledge generally will be meaningless. We seek to find and implement traditional knowledge system-based study, research and analysis to the critical concerns of Fourth World peoples. Examples of study, research and analysis based in Fourth World Research Theory are included in this Special Issue of Fourth World Journal. As Activist Scholars we take seriously the need to conduct research and analysis that has near-term benefits for Fourth World peoples. This Special Issue is dedicated to this commitment.

The Center for World Indigenous Studies was gifted in 2017 with a significant grant from the Elina Vesara Ostern Fund administered by the California Community Foundation to conduct research on the medicinal/pharmacological uses of wildlife products for small communities. The Ostern Fund became a multi-year study entitled “Indigenous Peoples’ Health: Effects of Elevated Atmospheric CO₂ on Plant and Animal based Foods and Medicines” that has the goal of determining the extent and degree that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere due to human activity affects traditional foods and medicine nutritional and health benefits. As the Principal Investigator for this study I have written **Traditional Foods and Medicines and Mounting Chronic Disease for Indigenous Peoples Worldwide**. This essay discusses how the research is being conducted applying Fourth World Research Theory. I discuss how the “relational investigative approach” is being applied that reflects the multi-dimensional research approach of the Purépeche knowledge system. I explain how the research approach is being applied to five Fourth World communities or nations that are experiencing increased incidents of Type 2 Diabetes even as they rely on traditional foods. The essay is published in both the English language and in the Spanish language so as to provide a wider understanding of the approach being applied.

In **“Salish Medicinal Plants for the Prevention and Treatment of Diabetes Type 2”** Dr. Leslie Korn, Director of the Center for Traditional Medicine examines the plants that nature has provided that actually can serve as medicine to prevent and treat diabetes. Dr. Korn’s research over the past forty years has been deeply influenced by the traditional knowledge system of the Cora in Central-Western México. Here work has been published in seven books and numerous articles with

one distinct characteristic: application of the results of research to provide health and healing to Fourth World peoples. Dr. Korn’s article applies Cora research approaches to the identification and description of plants typically found in the forest of Salish peoples living in southwestern Canada and northwestern United States plants taken from forests in countries around the world. The singular message of this important essay is that there are plants that can prevent diabetes, and even reverse this chronic disease that affects so many Fourth World peoples. Dr. Korn prefers to use the term “nutritional trauma” to describe the growing chronic health problems in the Fourth World largely created by growing reliance of Fourth World peoples on commercially produced and marketed foods rapidly introduced into Fourth World communities. Her article can help restore the nutritional and medicinal needs that increasingly plague indigenous peoples.

The Center for World Indigenous Studies research team conformed by Rudolph Ryser, Heidi G. Bruce, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, and Dr. Leslie E Korn conducted a year-long mixed-methods study that identified thirteen key policy recommendations for a tribal council to establish control over food access and regulation for tribal members. In **“Tribal Food Sovereignty Assessment – Toward Control of Food”** the authors detail the results of a detailed home survey, and economic assessment of tribal potential for economic benefits of food access and regulatory measures, and evidence that tribal health depends on restoring access to traditional plant-based and animal-based foods. The significance of this study is that it was conducted based in a theoretical framework that required employment of the tribal knowledge system, and the active involvement of major parts of the tribal community and tribal decision-makers. The study approach relied on a historical assessment of the

tribal community's food and cultural organization, a household survey that focused on food uses, extent of population chronic disease exposure, as well as preferences for commercial versus traditional foods, and finally, Talking Circles involving some participants in the household survey, general community and tribal government to focus on policy options. In addition, a Food Policy Council made up of five six tribal youth, a field coordinator, and elder mentor actively engaged in the study and formulation of outcome recommendations.

Center for World Indigenous Studies Herbal Medicine Intern **Ms. Naneh Israelyan** connects Armenian history, geography, plants and animals as significant factors in the types of herbal therapies available to Armenians in "**Fecund Earth: Plant Medicine Traditions in Armenia.**" Israelyan is an active horticulturalist that cultivates a medicinal garden crafting medicinal teas and tinctures. This article documents numerous flowers, roots, trees and other plants native to Armenia, but increasingly available worldwide. Israelyan demonstrates the relevance of traditional knowledge about herbal medicines reflecting an intimate connection to the plant and medicines of her home country.

When Dream Bear Sings

Bertha Miller returns to the Fourth World Journal in this Special Issue on Traditional Medicines by reviewing "**When Dream Bear Sings, Native Literature of the Southern Plains**" and anthology of original stories (histories) edited the Gus Palmer. Miller echoes the importance of the selections in this work urging readers to understand different knowledge systems by recognizing the "theatric" importance of indigenous languages from the great lakes in North America to the lands to the west and south. As the editor points out "word-for-word" translations of indigenous languages tends to

produce a form of "pidgin English." Recognizing the theatre or ceremonial accompaniments to speeches along with facial expressions, hand and body gestures, Miller asserts is critical to truly understanding the meaning intended by the indigenous speaker. This observation is critical to understanding traditional medicine since the mere extraction of medicinal compounds from plants as is the tendency of conventional sciences results in missing the true knowledge conveyed by healers and herbalists in indigenous communities.

In this Special Issue on Traditional Medicine we bring together the key elements for more fully appreciating herbal medicines, traditional foods, language, research and their significance in Fourth World Communities through the application of traditional knowledge. We are especially pleased to devote Center efforts in this Special Issue to elaborate Traditional Medicine in a different light.

