

Lukanka

Lukanka is a Miskito word for “thoughts”



RUDOLPH C. RÝSER
Editor in Chief
Fourth World Journal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rudolph C. Rýser'.

Our long-term commitment to revealing the contours, content, structure and efficacy of peoples' ancient knowledge systems has given exposure to ways of knowing and understanding of our material and immaterial realities with an emphasis on contemporary applications for explaining phenomena and solving problems. We are recognizing more and more how what has long been known and understood by the original peoples of the Americas and other lands becomes increasingly relevant to contemporary challenges. There are many knowledge systems such as Cartesian Rationalism, the Vedas in India, Toltecatoytl in Mexico and Central America and Hammurabi rooted in ancient Persia. Reclaiming such knowledge systems to the world may produce new and useful ways of meeting the social, economic, political, cultural problems of the 21st century and beyond.

From time-to-time the Fourth World Journal features a Special Issue spotlighting a topic that demands attention, but without the special focus would probably not receive a great deal of notice. More than two years ago, Dr. Teshia Solomon and I began a colloquy about the possibility of publishing papers produced from the Native Research Network's annual sessions. This US-based network was founded as an informal group of American Indian researchers (mainly concerned with health matters) in 1997, and has become a non-profit organization located in the State of Oklahoma that now includes American Indians, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and Aboriginal researchers in Canada. After some discussion, Dr. Solomon and I came to realize that much of the research being conducted by indigenous researchers in North America tended to rely heavily on conventional research methodologies that emphasized reductionism—condensing complicated research questions to rather limited aspects of much broader problems. Learning that Dr. Solomon heads the Native American Research and Training Center at the University of Arizona raised the possibility that a collaborative effort between the Center for World Indigenous Studies and the Native American Research and Training Center could create an opportunity for native researchers to publish the results of their work that relied on methodologies that depend on scientific approaches grounded in ancient knowledge systems predating the conventional sciences. Accordingly we agreed on the following: “This issue [of the Fourth World Journal] shall focus on indigenous health and healing research that points to effective approaches for applying traditional knowledge treating and reversing the adverse effects of chronic disease. We are hopeful



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that researchers will have employed indigenous or “traditional knowledge inspired” research methods and will point their outcomes to the application of traditional healing techniques or methods to the prevention and treatment of chronic disease.” We were pleased to find such studies among the NARTC researchers did exist, and now after a few years we are ready to release the results of our efforts.

All of the articles generated by researchers at the NARTC for this issue have been peer reviewed. We have been scrupulous in our efforts to thoroughly vet these studies and our editors find them to be significant in their outcomes. As Editor in Chief of the Fourth World Journal I am proud to be able to point to the high quality of these studies and their important results.

In *Health as a Proxy for Living the Good Life* **Dr. Gail Dana-Sacco** considers the meaning of “health” as understood in the language of the Wabanaki of Northeastern North America. Noting that expressions of health in the English language can be quite different than the meaning of health from the cultural and language perspective of non-English speakers Dr. Dana-Sacco examines the process of expanding the space for intercultural dialogue “returns indigenous health beliefs and practices from the margins to the center” so as to reveal the underlying causes of illness or injury. Though this study begins in the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, it reveals pathways that have deep significance for cross cultural health and healing between all cultures.

Dr. Patricia Gonzales writes in *Calling Our Spirits Back: Indigenous ways of diagnosis and treating soul sickness* that the ancient teaching in Mayan medicine hold the secrets of treating personal and community trauma—unresolved trauma. She notes with eloquent writing style, “Ancient Mayan symbols depict the gourd that retrieves the soul from *susto* in a pre-Columbian vase. Symbols, enlivened by ceremony, prayers and respectful acts, become medicine. They reflect memory, accumulated acts, and knowledge.” Dr. Gonzales’ narrative shows the reader how chronic disease can and does arise from *susto* or “soul loss” and that the methods of ancient teachings restore the balance from the state of imbalance resulting from the “loss.”

Storytelling is the “literature” of the ages extending as a cultural practice into the depths of human knowledge. **Dr. Janelle Palacios** examines in her essay *Traditional Storytelling in the digital Era* the use of contemporary digital techniques to record 3 to 5 minute visual narratives as vehicles for transmitting stories in the treatment of patients as a therapeutic tool. Considering that storytelling long played a role in health and healing, Dr. Palacios and her colleagues have opened a chapter in this ancient practice with the prospect of projecting its utility far into the future.

Dr. Priscilla Sanderson offers in her essay, *A Perspective of Diabetes from Indigenous Views* insights into how elders from different indigenous cultures understand the chronic disease of diabetes. Sanderson and her research colleagues consider storytelling as providing the complex tapestry that reveals cultural relevant understandings of health and healing that can prove to be useful for care providers serving indigenous people.

Dr. Rodney Haring and his research team write in *Increasing the Knowledge Base: Utilizing the GAIN in Culturally Sensitive Landscapes* about their findings introducing an indigenous perspective to the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) bio-psychosocial assessment instrument in an effort to demonstrate its usefulness in connection with indigenous populations. Probing the perspectives of indigenous peoples for themes, experiences and perceptions in different workgroups, Haring and his team find that storytelling helps improve understanding and communication in evaluations.

Dr. Paulette Baukol and her research team consider the relationship between activity levels among American Indian youth living in urban settings and those living on a Reservation and causal factors influence the onset of obesity and overweight. In their article, *Community Specific Daily Activity in Northern Plains American Indian Youth* Boukol examines the relative levels of physical activity as documented using the International Physical Activity Questionnaire. The Study evaluated 689 children in urban and reservation settings.

It is with pleasure and satisfaction that I extend to Dr. Teshia Solomon, Director of the Native American Research and Training Center at the University of Arizona my appreciation for her single-minded support of the collaboration between the Center for World Indigenous Studies – Fourth World Journal and her Center to produce this important Special Issue. Our editors and the many peer reviewers worked for more than a year to produce this issue and Dr. Solomon’s cooperation and contributions played a large part in our success.