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**Jeffrey Paul Ansloos. *The Medicine of Peace: Indigenous Youth Decolonizing Healing and Resisting Violence*. Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2017. 128 pp. ISBN: 9781552669556.**

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/the-medicine-of-peace>

*The Medicine of Peace* asserts that the impacts of complex historical trauma are tied to the cycles of violence facing Indigenous youth in Canada, with the Western criminal justice and mental health systems being complicit in perpetuating further violence. Ansloos (Fisher River Cree Nation) advocates for a holistic, culturally relevant, and relational approach, versus the current standard procedures in settler nations such as Canada. Ansloos argues that youth are “shaped and situated” within the intergenerational violence of colonialism. Highlighting the disproportionate incarceration rate, growing gang involvement, and internalized violence (including suicide) it is argued that cycles of violence are exacerbated by a punitive criminal justice system and culturally disengaged interventions. A critical reflection on the Canadian psychology field/mental health system is put forth to foreground recommendations for holistic Indigenous approaches that would better address differing notions of self and well-being.

Using a Foucauldian discursive analysis through a postcolonial lens, and drawing upon scholars such as Fanon, Ansloos provides an overview of how colonial processes have caused Indigenous youth to feel culturally inferior and powerless, namely the politicization of language and binary internalized and externalized processes of identity whereby Indigeneity is weakness/bad and settler identity is powerful/good. Ansloos asserts that youth feel dependent and inferior in Canadian society leading to shame being the dominant framework from which they view, and ultimately distance themselves from, their Indigenous culture. He asserts that Indigenous youth are in desperate need of reconnection and cultural and communal revitalization. The colonial history of Canada plays out in the justice system, rehabilitation, interventions, and research that fail to take historic trauma and Indigenous worldviews into account, ultimately harming Indigenous youth. Additionally, youth are at an intersection of unhelpful psychosocial interventions based upon an assumed superiority and universality of Western methods (“cultural imperialism”).

Ansloos calls for the field of psychology to critically reflect on the past and present impacts of colonization and the need for more communal and restorative practices versus individualistic and retributive practices. Potential action steps would include a more relational and contextual approach and the holistic Indigenous concept of *well-being* would replace the prevalent and often overly simplistic, Western views on identity and cultural factors. Ansloos uses theoretical arguments by multiple scholars to tie individual psychological health to community well-being. The sentiment aligns well with many past research studies such as a 2007 study claiming “youth suicide as [being] a ‘coalminer’s canary’ of cultural distress” (Hallett, Chandler et al., 394). The findings of the Hallett, Chandler et al. study indicate cultural continuity factors have a clear

correlation to youth suicide, especially related to language continuance. Specifically, First Nations communities with a higher degree of native language knowledge had fewer suicides and communities with a low degree had a higher suicide rate.

The author advocates for a “critical-Indigenous peace psychology” to be realized through raising the critical consciousness of settler and Indigenous identities to the devastating impacts of colonization and reconnecting youth to “reconstruct a postcolonial identity that is shaped by their own Indigenous conceptions of a non-violent future” (54). *The Medicine of Peace* asserts if youth embody their Indigenous identity, an identity that is “principally opposed to violence”, it will promote an ethical foundation able to resist colonization (85). Keeping in mind diverse audiences, a deeper explanation of this statement is needed to combat prevalent romanticized notions.

In the final chapter, some “pathways forward” are offered using a Medicine Wheel model; however, the suggested model is highly theoretical and not overly grounded in a relational Indigenous cultural context. The suggested strategies would benefit from consultation from youth, elders, or a more localized community-based approach with an analysis of past studies/projects that have used a similar approach. There have been multiple research studies and health initiatives focused on First Nations communities/youth using various “culturally appropriate” methods, with the Medicine Wheel being a popular aspect of many (e.g. Kirmayer, Laurence, et al.; Sasakamoose, JoLee, et al.; Lavallée; Stewart, and others). Examining existing scholarship would have provided an opportunity to compare the approaches and findings across the fields of criminal justice, mental health/psychology, and health and wellness related to potential lessons that could be used for future Indigenous youth programs. In her 1995 article *Peacekeeping Actions At Home: A Medicine Wheel Model for Peacekeeping Pedagogy*, Calliou offers a peacekeeping pedagogy model using the Medicine Wheel, encompassing racism, multiculturalism, anti-racism, and peacekeeping. As an example of health-related research done alongside community and youth, the 2016 study “*Because we have really unique art*”: *Decolonizing Research with Indigenous Youth Using the Arts* took similar theoretical arguments to the ones presented in *The Medicine of Peace* and engaged with Indigenous youth in Canada on their perspectives of how to do the work of decolonization.

Although the book puts forth a thorough theoretical foundation, it lacks a research component or Indigenous concepts that would ground the work in specific Indigenous epistemologies and/or knowledges (e.g. concepts of *well-being*). Indigenous methodologies are mentioned as being salient guiding frameworks to engage in research with Indigenous communities yet there was no engagement or accountability to any community. Working in an Indigenous community would have allowed youth and community members to share their voices and visions of violence prevention and treatment. Since there was no engagement with First Nation communities and/or

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youth, the research would benefit from additional context on the author's decisions to remain solely theoretical and how this decision influenced and shaped the work.

Indigenous-led research in this area is sorely needed. I commend the author for laying bare such deeply personal feelings and insecurities surrounding his identity. The complexities of his personal identity struggle open many of the chapters where the author relives experiences of his adolescence “wrestle with the layers of colonial shame that entangle me” (64). The author has obviously thought deeply about his positionality and provides an honest account of how he, as an Indigenous author estranged from his Cree culture and trained in Western methods, can unknowingly objectify Indigenous teachings. This book would be beneficial to audiences looking for an in-depth theoretical analysis related to the need for youth to reconnect with Indigenous cultural identity that could serve as a foundation for further research and application.

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