

# Review of: "In the Spirit of Dr. Betty Bastien: Conceptualizing Ontological Responsibilities through the lens of Blackfoot Resilience"

Kimberley Holmes<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Calgary

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear Gabrielle and Robert,

I am honored to review your work "In the Spirit of Dr. Betty Bastien: Conceptualizing Ontological Responsibilities through the lens of Blackfoot Resilience". I too have written in honor of my teacher Dr. Carl Leggo who taught me to "tell the truth critically and creatively" and to honor the importance of words, language, culture, the significance of place and story. It is in his spirit that I reflect on your work.

Ontology is a difficult concept for graduate students to understand and I appreciate your grounding framework. Our ways of Being in the world are significant to everything we do. WE must understand where we come from and the interconnected complexities that impact both our ontology and our epistemology. We must understand our selves and the complex systems that we are a part of. This requires deep reflection on the whole with regard to the interconnectivity of the pieces. I concur full heartedly that balance in teaching and learning is indeed possible and required. We walk together in our vision.

Your introduction and exploration of the power of name brings me into your personal story. I appreciate this as I understand who you are. I think this has valuable implications for the explorations of ontological ways of knowing and being as we locate and position ourselves. We must being with our own heart and being. I still have much to learn and understand about the Blackfoot cultural paradigm. I appreciate your exploration of autoethnography and collective. Again, it aligns with my own teaching around Life writing as explored in A Heart of Wisdom (Chambers, Hasbe-Ludt, Leggo and Sinner, 2012). I would be honored to explore duo-ethnographic work with you in the future as we contemplate the possibilities for authentic incorporation of these leanings.

I appreciate your focus on self-location and believe this piece offers great value to our understanding of the significance of place. Your reference to Betty's assertion spoke deeply to my heart as we seek the possibilities of balance.

Your explorations of what is an Indigenous epistemology, and the importance of relationality is critical to rehumanizing our educational institutions. Embodied ways of knowing and being that address the whole of our being is essential. Again, your work speaks deeply to my own ontology and epistemology.

As you move towards conceptualizing ontological responsibilities you provide me with a solid framework leading into the

juxtaposition between First Nations and Western ontology. Our western ontology is broken. I am hopefully we can learn from other ways of knowing how to heal. Your work is critical to this. The reference to “human development based on a framework of moral and ethical relationships (Bastein, 2004, pg. 84) is essential to our process of learning, being and becoming. You connect well to the existing literature providing a strong foundation for your paper. You then come back to your own story weaving the professional and the personal in embodied and wise ways of knowing and being. The line “The potential for continuous transformative growth- life long learning- is realized through my ontological responsibilities” is cathartic. We must become who we are called to contrast with a standardized system that dictates our identity. Again, the concepts of wholeness and benefits to all humanity speak deeply to me and my work with both personally and professionally.

I appreciate your reflections on the TQS and the need to actualize authentically this work. Far too often it is an “add on” instead of being deeply embedded in the process. The call to meaningfully incorporate the work is highly significant. Your line “it is difficult to imagine the strengths of Indigenous culture when one has only learned the perceived inherent deficiencies of these cultures” is one worthy of deep contemplation. We need to unlearn many things before we can move forward.

Your exploration of spirituality, language and self-determination is powerful and speaks strongly to the power of resilience. Perhaps if we can embed Blackfoot ways of knowing we can create cultures of wellbeing and strength in contrast to our current crisis in mental health and anxiety. I dream with you the possibilities for a better way of knowing and being.

Overall, this is a beautifully written piece that weaves together personal voice and story with the deep academic work we need to do. I do not have a great deal to offer you in terms of suggestions for improvement as this work spoke deeply to me and my own Ontology. I am not Blackfoot but a third-generation Italian immigrant. My grandfather were coal miners and provided me with the opportunity to learn, to grow and to advocate responsibility to seek wellness and balance in our systems. I was the first of my family to attend post secondary and have always intuitively challenged the neoliberalism capitalist view of school. It is broken and your reflections offer a way to healing. I walk beside you in hope of “infusing our education institutes with a more balanced approach to teaching and learning.” I shall close this reflection in the spirit of Dr. Leggo. I apologize for the irritating marketing that is in sharp juxtaposition to Carl’s words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLCx6BFUxpY>

We are resilient, interconnected and in relation with one another. I wish you all the best as you go forth with this beautiful work as this is “the teacher’s way” . It was an honor to reflect on your words and your work.

With gratitude and grace,

Kimberley

