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# CROSS CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASUBPEECHOSEEWAGONG

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Partnerships across cultures, such as the relationship between CPT and the Asubpeeschoseewagong community, require sensitivity and good listening skills. Some factors: structural racism, long history of power imbalance between indigenous and settler societies, the role of religion in the interaction between cultures, different values around silence and assertiveness, different communal decision making structures, etc.

In general, the Anishinaabe culture is more quiet and subtle than dominant white culture. Although this has many ramifications that are hard to quantify, it is still important to keep this in the forefront of your mind. There are no rules for cross-cultural interactions, but it is helpful to be aware of the following dynamics in this community:

1. Most cultures (including dominant white culture) are more talkative than the native culture at ANA. **CPTers need to be cautious of “out-talking” our hosts.** It’s important to leave a lot of conversational space to really hear our partners here – jumping in on their comments with our own opinions as soon as they finish speaking does not leave enough space. It’s ok to offer our perspective, but only after hearing theirs. People here rarely raise their voices or speak loudly (rather than call out to someone across a room, they get up to go speak quietly side-by-side).
2. Tobacco – pipe tobacco is offered to elders as a sign of respect, tobacco is burnt in the sacred fire as a prayer. No one burns garbage in the sacred fire.
3. Eye contact – direct sustained eye contact can be seen as threatening. Watch what the people here do with their eyes to gauge the situation.
4. Listening – interrupting another person while s/he is speaking is considered disrespectful, as it is in many cultures, but interruptions are a bigger deal here.
5. Evangelism – CPT does not evangelize people into the Christian church. Our job is to reduce violence and create space for the local community to act as it sees fit.
6. Photography and quoting people – it is necessary to ask before taking pictures and check if someone is willing to be quoted in a newspaper or CPTnet article.
7. Handshake – a firm grip can be interpreted as aggression. Follow the lead of the person whose hand you are shaking. Some handshakes feel like a limp fish. That’s ok.
8. People here rarely swear or use harsh language with each other, even in joking. Their sense of humour is teasing and gentle.
9. Sometimes delicate issues are hinted at indirectly rather than addressed directly. Small talk is also important, especially before bringing up negative or difficult issues.
10. Greetings - Greetings are less common than dominant white culture, and in fact there are few Anishinaabe words for them. People will often just leave without saying anything; they are not insulted by what you just said. Hellos are more common than goodbyes.
11. Gender dynamics – People rarely display affection publicly. Men and women at the blockade cook and clean up. Men and women are leaders with the blockade. Gender issues are subtle. There are frequent sexual jokes, shared by both women and men. Men from the community are often more comfortable interacting with CPT men.

## Alcohol

- It is expected that no one bring drugs or alcohol into camp; intoxicated persons are not welcome at camp
- ANA residents suffer from a lot of substance abuse and social brokenness
- ANA is officially a “dry reserve” – liquor is not to be bought or sold here
- Several of our closest contacts in the community are very strong in their opposition to drinking because of addictions in their own or family history

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# Deep Thoughts

by CPT Asubpeeschoseewagong; May 22, 2003

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Dear folks,

This morning's worship gave birth to some Deep Thoughts which we Deep People wish to share with the Rest of the World. Sometimes you start to capitalize things when you never leave the bush. Loons played and leeches swam as we stirred our Minds, perched on a rock that crops out into Slant Lake . . .

Matt: I keep getting glimpses of Stuff that show me I don't really get what's going on here. Grassy people understand our presence better than we do. Got to trust their invitation. Their lives function on a level that's invisible to me – it can look like nothing's happening, but suddenly a roadblock leaps into being in the space of an hour or two.

Then we start talking:

- CPT's role in Grassy: Shut up and listen.
- We are the only Christian group entrusted with a very close relationship to the blockaders.
- If CPT leaves Asubpeeschoseewagong because there is no action or immediate crisis we will have failed to understand the nature of the violence here.
- Living here is teaching us how to respond to the violence of clear cutting and present day colonial oppression.
- It is long term, slow, patient work.
- Often CPTers arrive to this project and begin to feel useless, heavy, sad, bored, restless.
- We are faced with the historical and present fact that our actions caused this tragedy; we need to be choosy about what actions we take and not act for actions sake.
- Sometimes CPTers try to push projects the community doesn't want. This happens when we need to feel busy or useful and don't know how to listen to the local peoples soft cues.
- We're not used to waiting. We're often work-aholics. The Protestant work ethic plays a role in racism against indigenous people (why are they so lazy, we need to show them how to work, etc.).
- This is a personal, at-home problem-- it hurts us, threatens us.
- Our busyness usually covers up our demons, but it's tough to be always busy in the bush and peoples baggage appears!
- This accompaniment touches the roots of life in N. America (Turtle Island) – it's OUR wounds, but also our collective healing that we (native and non-native) are working out here.
- It's important for CPTers to really live this project because its about fixing ourselves as well as external causes. The (sometimes) slow pace balances the hectic craziness of Colombia and Hebron.
- It's sometimes about getting out of the way.

What is the real issue at Asubpeeschoseewagong (hint: its NOT logging)?

The blockade camp is an expression of resistance to centuries of violence, peace treaties signed in bad faith, residential schools, kidnapping of aboriginal children, poisoning the water and food, broken promises.

The blockade/healing camp works to restore the balance between the people that have always been here and us (the newcomers). CPT's accompaniment and relationship to the community here is the flesh and blood, real live experience of dissolving generations of violence.