

Sherri Mitchell - Women, Water, and Healing

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

waters, elders, life, indigenous women, people, writing, living, relation, communities, ceremonies, understand, future generations, indigenous elders, cultivation, strength

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Well, I don't think that it's a new thing. I think that indigenous women have always been active in their communities, they've always been on the frontlines of the issues that we're facing. I think what's, what's changing is that the harms that Indigenous Aboriginal peoples have been facing, are now leaking out into the comments. So other people are being impacted by those things. So they're starting to pay attention to what Native people are doing, because Native people have been, you know, on the frontlines of this for a long time. So they're looking to your native people for guidance, and how to manage the harms that are rolling out into the public. Well, I think that every individual has their own strength. But I think that, you know, the primary strength that I see in relation to Indigenous women is that were raised with this understanding of cultivating life for future generations. And so we're not just looking at the moment in front of us, we're not just looking at our own children, and grandchildren, we're looking at what are what is the legacy that we're leaving for future generations. And so when we engage a problem, we're looking at it with a long view. Also, we've been subjected to so much trauma, that we're resilient, we've developed a sense of resiliency that is far greater than many other populations on the planet. Because we have suffered so much, you know, we've been attacked, we've been stolen and sold, we've had our children taken from us been ripped away from our families are subjected to vital, violent sexual assault on a fairly regular basis. And so having to have suffered so much trauma over the years, we have this inner strength that allows us to continue to function in the midst of crisis. And so it's a terrible strength to have, but we have that. And we've had to develop that as a matter of necessity to survive. And so the other thing that I think is remarkable about that is that so many of us have survived that with our hearts intact. And so we're still coming from this place of love, coming from this place of caring, coming from a place of compassionate understanding that our wounds have given us compassionate understanding to the plight of others. And so we bring all of those things to the table when we show up. Well, the role of women and water is really one that begins in utero, you know, we have a relationship with the water from our first moment entering into the sphere of existence. And so the women are the water bearers of the universe. And I talk about that a lot in my book, and, you know, we carry the waters of life within us. So we have a responsibility, you know, one of the roles of the women is to, to cultivate, nurture, protect and sustain life. And so, just as we hold life below our heart in the wombs waters, we also need to hold the waters of life outside of our bodies in that same loving embrace. And we recognize that the water is essential to the cultivation, protection, nourishing of life. And so, you know, we have an obligation to maintain those waters so that we can continue to act in our role as protectors of life. And we also acknowledge with our monthly movements, ceremonies are connection to the waters of life that flow through our bodies were comprised mostly of water. And so we recognize the correlation the dance between the universe and the waters within our body, the waters on the earth on Mother Earth and Mother Earth body. And so we're deeply connected to water from the time that were in the womb, until our last days, and we have that sense of responsible ability towards

carrying for the waters because of its vital role in the cultivation and sustaining of life. The motivation for writing my book is not necessarily what, what people would think I have been a writer for a long time, I've written a lot of articles on different indigenous rights, activities, you know, a number of different social and environmental justice issues. But very rarely did I write about our cultural traditions. And I've always been raised to believe that those things should not be written down, because we translate our stories through oral tradition, because we understand that there's, you know, there's a vibration in the spoken word. And that that actually, the telling of those stories creates a vibration that connects to the other person's energy field, and instructs them in a way that's much deeper than having words on a page. And so I, you know, I held back on those kinds of teachings for that reason. And then one of the elders that I had been working with I've had the incredible honor of working with elders all across North America, and have been an advisor to and a helper to the Indigenous elders and medicine Peoples Council of North and South America for about 15 years and have been connected to the American Indian Institutes traditional circle of Indian elders and youth for over 20 years. And so I've had contact with some of the most beautiful elders, spiritual elders, the ones whose voices often don't get heard, and have had opportunities to sit with them and to be with them and to help them promote these messages about our role in creation really, for a very long time. And I have been ghostwriting things for them, for the UN and for other other things that we have been working on over the years. And one of those elders, Bennett Lyons, who's from Hilo River, he sat with me, we sat in ceremony together for about eight hours, shortly before he passed away. Before I, I left Arizona, and he told me that it was my responsibility to do so he said that, you know, this, this is your gift. And if you don't bring forth what's inside of you, in the way that crater had meant for it to happen, then that, all that energy of that's gonna stay inside you and make you sick. He said, so you need to start writing what you know, and sharing it with the world. And he said, Just go gently at first, you know, just give them a little. And, you know, help them to see he said, and then if they want more, they can come back and you can share a little bit more. And so I really, you know, was nervous about it, because a lot of other people, I felt, were gonna have resistance to it. And so I talked to some other elders here. I talked to a lot of the clan mothers, I talked to my own family members. And they all said, Oh, absolutely, you need to do this. And so I tried to do it in a way that didn't, didn't violate the trust of anybody that I've been working with or learning from that didn't violate the trust of those who are keeping our ceremonies. But that just framed a basic worldview and way of being in the world and in relation to one another as human beings. And in relation with the rest of creation. That might be a guidepost for people who are kind of lost and trying to find their way. And also to help people understand how our 17th centuries of colonial history and conquest has framed our way of thinking, and has created this illusion that we've been operating under has shaded the way that we see one another. So that you know, people can start to understand that they've been indoctrinated that, you know, they've been brainwashed in essence and can find their way out of that illusion, and start seeing one another again, as pure spiritual beings, regardless of where they come from. The title of the book is sacred instructions, indigenous wisdom for living, spirit-based change. And it has some pretty practical ideas about how we can begin to make changes in the societies that we're living in, in the communities that we're living in how we can start ending our childlike dependence on the systems and structures that have been holding us hostage. For so long and really become sovereign as individuals as communities as nations and taking back our power.

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