

AN INTRODUCTION TO TWO-EYED SEEING (ETUAPTUMK)



NOSM U CEPD
TIP SHEET

There are many ways of understanding and perceiving the world. Within educational and healthcare institutions, beliefs and practices are often understood and shaped by Western perspectives and science which tend to exclude or devalue Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems.

Two-Eyed Seeing (Etuaptumk in the Mi'kmaq language) is a concept that brings together Indigenous and Western worldviews to consider issues from multiple viewpoints. This framework was developed by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall of the Eskasoni First Nation who describes Two-Eyed Seeing as "to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together" (1).

Embracing a Two-Eyed Seeing approach can result in new approaches that provide "key insights into the health and well-being of populations" (2). If we learn to see through both (or multiple) perspectives, we can draw from what is useful and relevant from both without one perspective dominating the other.

Lessons of the Two-Eyed Seeing Approach³

Interdependence and Co-Learning

We acknowledge that we need one another and diverse perspectives to address complex challenges in health care, education, and beyond.

Respect Indigenous Traditional Knowledge

Indigenous Traditional Knowledge is a distinct and whole system that can exist alongside Western scientific approaches. Indigenous Traditional Knowledge has often been devalued or appropriated by Western knowledge without consent and acknowledgement.

Weaving Between Perspectives

Acknowledge that as we weave together different approaches for a set of circumstances, one approach may have more applicable strengths than another.

Knowledge is Context- Specific

Our worldviews are affected by social, political, economic, and environmental contexts. Be open to change by considering different perspectives and ways of knowing when required by the situation.

Seek Out Indigenous Voices

- When working with Indigenous communities, reach out to Elders or Knowledge Keepers to guide engagement with Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and ensure cultural protocols are followed.
- Focus on building trusting, equitable relationships.
- Prioritize the needs and goals of the community and involve them in all stages of the project.

Guiding Principles of Two-Eyed Seeing: The Four Rs⁴

Responsibility

Privilege Indigenous values and voices. Support Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination.

Reciprocity

Respect

Create an environment that is empowering of Indigenous perspectives. Promote cultural safety.

Relevance



Applications of Two-Eyed Seeing vary across groups and are not generalizable. Approaches will be unique to the Indigenous community.

Interested in learning more? A Resource to Extend Your Learning: [Two-Eyed Seeing: Current Approaches, and Discussion of Medical Applications by Jeffery, T., Kurz, D.L.M., & Jones, C.A., published in BC Medical Journal 68\(8\), 2021.](#)

1 & 3. Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together Indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2, 331-340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-012-0086-8>

2. Martin, D.H. (2012). Two-Eyed Seeing: A framework for understanding Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to Indigenous health research. *CJNR*, 44(2), 20-42.

4. Jeffery, Kurz, & Jones, 2021 (see above).

