

From Ethical Codes to Ethics as Praxis: An Invitation

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Abstract Ethical guidance for research involving Indigenous and traditional communities, cultural knowledge, and associated biological resources has evolved significantly over recent decades. Formal guidance for ethnobiological research has been thoughtfully articulated and codified in many helpful ways, including but by no means limited to the Code of Ethics of the International Society of Ethnobiology. We have witnessed a successful and necessary era of “research ethics codification” with ethical awareness raised, fora established for debate and policy development, and new tools evolving to assist us in treating one another as we agree we ought to within the research endeavor. Yet most of us still struggle with ethical dilemmas, conflicts, and differences that arise as part of the inevitable uncertainties and lived realities of our cross-cultural work. Is it time to ask what more (or what else) might we do, to lift the words on a page that describe how we should conduct ourselves, to connecting with the relational intention of those ethical principles and practices in concrete, meaningful ways? How might we discover ethics as relationship and practice while we necessarily aspire to follow adopted ethical codes as prescription? This paper brings together Willie Ermine’s concept of “ethical space” and Darrell Posey’s recognition of the spiritual values of biodiversity with a unique selection of insights from other fields of practice, such as intercultural communication, conflict resolution and martial arts, to invite a new conceptualization of research ethics in ethnobiology as ethical praxis.

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“As we learn together, the journey offers the sacred gift of humility.” (Iwama et al. 2009:7)

Ethics is an important element of ethnobiology, and ethnobiology is an important learning space for understanding cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research ethics. Indeed, ethnobiologists have collectively influenced ethical thought, policy and practice from local to international levels since at least the late 1980s, with the founding of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) in 1988. At the close of the first ISE congress (Belém, Brazil) involving hundreds of delegates from 35 countries, founding members created the Declaration of Belém, a statement of guiding principles that represented “the goals and ideals of ethnobiologists and ethnobiology in an international context” (Berlin 1990 as quoted in International Society of Ethnobiology, nd). Darrell Posey called the Declaration of Belém “nothing short of an urgent call for [a] new ethic.” He proclaimed it as “a challenge to ethnobiologists to lead the way in a

new form of responsible science that works *with* native peoples for a better future, and not just treats them as *subjects* for the advancement of White Man’s science” (Posey 1990 as reprinted in Posey 2004:5, emphasis in original).

From those origins in Belém, largely through Posey’s bold conviction and dedication, an ongoing commitment by ethnobiologists from around the world was set in motion to bring global attention to Indigenous issues related to biocultural diversity and to work towards creative solutions for their redress. One of the most notable of these achievements was development of a code of ethics by the ISE, which remains a foundational reference point in biocultural ethics¹ to this day.

Since those beginnings, global public awareness and ethical guidance for research involving Indigenous and local communities, cultural knowledge and associated biodiversity has evolved significantly. For example, within ethnobiology and in

many fields, the language of research “subjects” has been superseded with “participants,” new standards for what constitutes “consent” have been established, due acknowledgement of knowledge holders and equitable benefit-sharing have become expectations, and intentional efforts have been made in methodology to evolve research in participatory, collaborative and Indigenous-led directions. Formal guidance for ethnobiological research has been thoughtfully articulated in helpful ways, including but not limited to the ISE Code of Ethics (2006). Many ethnobiologists have been involved in these necessary exercises of codifying ethical expectations, raising ethical awareness and creating new tools to assist in understanding how we ought to treat one another within the research endeavor. These are important accomplishments within ethnobiology and more broadly.

Yet many of us, perhaps especially those situated within a university, still struggle with ethical dilemmas, conflicts, and differences that arise as part of our “humanness”—those inevitable uncertainties and lived realities of our cross-cultural work involving people and the natural world. Austin (2008:749) underscores the important role of ethical guidelines in health research to minimize risks, maximize benefits and uphold crucial principles such as free, prior and informed consent, but she expresses a vital insight: “From a relational ethics perspective, ... although these guidelines are necessary, they are insufficient.” Similarly, Gavazzi (2012)’s work in clinical psychology recognizes that ethics are not equal to ethical codes. He promotes a “positive” rather than “remedial” approach to ethics, advocating ethics as more than just a set of rules and codes that need to be memorized.” Gavazzi (2011) describes ethics as “alive every day in our professional lives.” Likewise, Bergum and Dossetor (2005) underscore a set of ethical principles as necessary, objective, general structures that are inadequate on their own, but needed to support us in the primary goal of fully attending to ethics within specific relationships.

Holding in mind the duality of ‘achievement’ and ‘insufficiency’ within a relational ethics framework, I posed the following questions in a presentation at the 39th Annual Conference of the Society of Ethnobiology entitled “Reimagining Research Ethics: A Relational Approach to Codes of Ethics for Ethnobiologists” (Bannister 2016):

- Is it time to ask what *more*—or what *else*—might we do?
- How do we lift the words on a page that describe how we *ought* to conduct ourselves, to connect more directly with the intention of those ethical principles and practices in concrete, meaningful ways?
- How do we discover *ethics as relationship* while we necessarily aspire to follow agreed ethical codes as prescription?

In this paper, I explore the question of “what else,” motivated by a sense of convergence in the concept of “ethical space” as articulated by Cree philosopher and educator Willie Ermine (Ermine 2000, 2015) and Darrell Posey’s recognition of the spiritual values of biodiversity. After providing a brief history of ethical codification in ethnobiology, I explore ethical space in more depth from a relational ethics perspective (Austin 2008; Bergum and Dossetor 2005; Haslebo and Haslebo 2008) and draw parallels from a unique combination of other fields of practice, such as intercultural communication, conflict resolution and martial arts. I offer initial ideas and an invitation to reimagine research ethics in ethnobiology as not just compliance with ethical practices, but as an art and practice that could lead us to articulating a new ethical praxis.

Ethics is commonly understood to refer to the values and principles that guide behaviors towards others. However, ethics has many meanings in society today and may be interpreted differently by each of us. In this paper, I draw upon multiple understandings. One is ethics as a formal branch of western philosophy that seeks to resolve questions of human morality and involves concepts of right and wrong, or just and unjust. In this regard, my particular focus is applied ethics, specifically research ethics policy and practice. I also call on understandings of ethics at a more fundamental level as our capacity to know what harms or enhances the wellbeing of sentient creatures, which manifests in how we choose to relate to one another and the natural world². This understanding has been shaped through exchanges with Indigenous colleagues and mentors, as well as my exposure to eastern philosophical traditions. It is through our potential to experience and hold multiple perspectives on ethics in a biocultural context that I see ethnobiologists as well-placed, even obliged, to continue to meet Posey’s 30-year-old challenge to lead the way in responsible science that works with

Indigenous peoples for a better future. This paper is an attempt to share some emerging thoughts and ideas, and encourage further thoughtful reflection and exchanges, to assist in the goal of continuing to expand our perspectives and understandings of ethics.

Research Ethics Codification in Ethnobiology

Research ethics commonly involves codification of agreed rules of conduct intended to guide the research endeavor through difficult moral questions. Research ethics codification over the last few decades has led to the development of ethical guidelines and codes of ethics within many disciplines and professions. In some countries (e.g., Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia), adherence to national ethics standards for research involving humans is a formal requirement of university research (see Hardison and Bannister 2011 for a historical overview of research ethics as related to ethnobiology).

As noted, ethics codification in ethnobiology took root in 1988 with the Declaration of Belém at the ISE's first congress and aspirations to create an ethics committee. A priority issue raised by Posey was intellectual property rights (IPR). Posey expressed his hope that the 1990 ISE congress would be "the next step toward the development of a position of ethnobiologists toward IPR and the 'just compensation' of native peoples for their knowledge," and that "both the Society of Ethnobiology and the International Society of Ethnobiology will take the intellectual lead—as well as appropriate actions—toward the development of a new ethic that serves as a model for other disciplines" (Posey 1990:97–98).

ISE members agreed to develop the first ever code of ethics for ethnobiologists at the fourth congress in 1994 (Lucknow, India). Under Posey's direction, it was anticipated that the code of ethics would be completed within a year. Significant progress was made in developing drafts at the 1996 and 1998 congresses. However, despite best efforts of the ISE ethics committee, challenging circumstances delayed the process, including a need to reconcile controversies among ISE members related to claims of bioprospecting and biopiracy in the late 1990s and early 2000s (for example, see Shebitz and Oviedo 2018, this volume).

Posey's untimely death in 2001 was a setback in many ways, putting completion of the ISE Code of Ethics on hold until the process was revived in 2004 at the 9th ISE congress in Canterbury, Kent, UK. A

special session was held to formally reaffirm the commitment of ISE members (Bannister, 2004). After a 10-year process of development involving hundreds of individuals from many different cultures and backgrounds, from all regions of the world, the ISE Code of Ethics was unanimously adopted by members in 2006 (Chiang Rai, Thailand) with minor additions made in 2008³.

The ISE Code of Ethics (2006) remains in place to this day with goals "to facilitate ethical conduct and equitable relationships, and foster a commitment to meaningful collaboration and reciprocal responsibility by all parties." It offers 17 principles and 12 practical guidelines, and emphasizes the underlying value of *mindfulness*, described as "an obligation to be fully aware of one's knowing and unknowing, doing and undoing, action and inaction."

The adoption process for the ICE Code of Ethics included an ongoing commitment to continual review and affirmation. Extensive discussion about revising the ISE Code of Ethics took place leading up to and during the 2010 congress in Tofino, British Columbia, Canada. However, for a number of practical and principled reasons, members at the 2010 congress decided that, despite evolving language and terminology, the ISE Code of Ethics represented a robust aspirational document and should remain intact with only non-substantive minor updates. An online ratification process is currently open to all ISE members with an invitation to endorse an updated version with minor changes⁴.

Much volunteer effort to date has gone into sharing the ISE Code of Ethics and making it accessible in eight languages. The Society of Ethnobiology, the Society for Economic Botany, and the Latin American Society of Ethnobiology (among other societies and organizations) have also dedicated attention to discussing and developing ethical guidance and resources. Each of these groups adopted the ISE Code of Ethics (in current or modified form), creating a sense of collective ethical aspiration among ethnobiologists and a shared platform for future ethics innovation.

Beyond Codification, Towards Ethical Space

In recent years, the ISE Ethics program has endeavored to ground its work in the concept of "ethical space" (Bannister and Solomon 2009; Bannister and Wyndham 2014) as articulated by Cree philosopher and educator, Willie Ermine (Ermine

2000, 2007; Ermine et al. 2004). Ermine introduced this concept to the realm of research ethics through his Master of Education thesis “A Critical Examination of the Ethics in Research Involving Indigenous Peoples” (Ermine 2000).

Ermine borrowed the term “ethical space” from Roger Poole (1972) and applied it to the “intersection where the two worlds of Indigenous and Western Peoples meet” (Ermine 2000:8). Ermine (2000:9) explains his original inspiration as follows:

Poole (1972) has remarked in his book *Towards Deep Subjectivity* that there exists an ‘ethical space’ when two sorts of space interact. Ethical space is created when the intentions of two entities structure space between them in two different ways, and when the sets of intentions confront each other then ‘ethical space is set up instantaneously’ (Poole 1972:5).

Ermine (2000:27) draws a parallel with Poole’s idea of ethical space and applies it to “...the confluence of the two societies and the critical juncture where the Indigenous mind meets with Western thought.” He suggests: “This ‘ethical space’ is potentially a productive and appropriate position from which to express and negotiate an ethical order in research that crosses cultural borders” (Ermine 2000:9).

Ermine (2000:18–19) refers to ethical space, not as common ground but as a place *between* worldviews, an “abstract space” created when the intentions of two entities “confront each other.” These different intentions are “guided by a past that includes memory, values, interests, and the actions validated by our communities.” Thus, this space

affords the opportunity to be reflective about personal convictions and how these formed perceptions influence our intentions about the ‘other’. This confrontation of worldviews sets up the conditions by which negotiation is necessary in order to arrive at ethical interaction.

He goes on to propose that ethical space offers possibilities for new models of research and knowledge production that are co-developed through respectful negotiation in this cross-cultural interaction.

The contribution of Ermine to research ethics has not remained abstract in Canada. An unprecedented

shift was catalyzed when ethical space was formally incorporated into national research ethics policy in 2007 for health research involving Indigenous peoples, referred to as the *CIHR Guidelines* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2007). Moreover, in 2010, ethical space was included as an underlying concept within a new chapter (*Chapter 9*) on research involving Indigenous peoples in Canada, as part of comprehensive national ethics guidelines for all university research, called the *Tri-council Policy Statement: Research Involving Humans, Version 2 (TCPS2)* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2014)⁵.

According to the *CIHR Guidelines*, ethical space should frame the entire research endeavor through “a series of stages of dialogue beginning with the conversations prior to the design of the research, through to the dissemination of results and perhaps even afterward.” The *CIHR Guidelines* encourage a continual questioning of “is this ethical?” requiring “a dialogue about intentions, values and assumptions throughout the research process” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2007:17). Alongside national ethics guidelines, it has become increasingly common in Canada for Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations to develop and articulate their own standards for ethical research based on their own principles, values and beliefs (for some Canadian examples see Assembly of First Nations 2009 and Bannister 2009). As in the ISE Code of Ethics, both the *CIHR Guidelines* and *TCPS2 Chapter 9* underscore the importance of understanding and following Indigenous community research guidelines and protocols as an integral part of ethical practice.

Regarding the co-creation of ethical space by communities and researchers that is promoted in both the *CIHR Guidelines* and *TCPS2 Chapter 9*, Brant Castellano and Reading (2010) note that challenges are inevitable when meeting across differences in worldviews, needs, and expectations. They encourage embracing this tension through “dialogue undertaken with an ethical commitment to mutual benefit and good relations” calling such a commitment “a powerful instrument to prevent violations of human dignity” (Brant Castellano and Reading 2010:14).

These descriptions of ethical space strongly resonate with Bergum and Dossetor’s (2005) perspective from a relational ethics approach. They

describe the relational space as a nourishing dwelling place for self and other, a space that enables us to be together in our difference and diversity, with an irreducible respect for one another. They recognize a need to *nurture* the relational space to make ethical practice possible. They acknowledge the value and necessity of ethical principles as the means to come to know ethical practice, but view the nature and significance of *relationship* as fundamental to enacting ethical practice as an art, moment by moment.

Inspired by all of the above, I was curious to explore ethical space more fully and more tangibly, beyond inspirational academic articles and the negotiated words of policy documents. In 2015, I had the privilege to organize a national policy conference as part of the *Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project*⁶, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The *Working Better Together Conference on Indigenous Research Ethics*⁷ strategically brought together 80 Canadian Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic and community researchers, educators, practitioners, policy analysts and administrators (including Willie Ermine, Marlene Brant Castellano and several ethnobiologists) to explore what it really means—and what it takes—to work collaboratively in Indigenous research, using ethical space as a foundational concept.

The next section provides selected verbatim highlights from Ermine's keynote presentation on ethical space at the conference. Such contributions of Ermine and others (discussed subsequently) have deeply inspired and informed my thoughts on connecting with the relational intention of our ethical principles and practices. My choice to quote Ermine rather than briefly paraphrase is intentional; his unique articulations have been key to shifting my understanding of ethical space from aspiration and reified notion to practice. My goal here is for readers to have an opportunity to experience Ermine's words for themselves.

Dancing Particles – Ethical Space Revisited

In his keynote address entitled “Dancing Particles,” Ermine (2015) offered a provocative elaboration of ethical space as an encounter of *energetic* or *spiritual* dimensions.

A mouse loves another mouse, a grass loves a grass, a tree loves a tree, that mountain has ethics to love the other mountain. And us humans, we really have to love each other. So

the ethical space is connected to these ideas ... how we treat each other as human beings. This is the very basis of ethics. So when we talk about ethics, then we have to go into the moral arena where we start talking about our values, where we start talking about our spirituality. The task today is to link up this idea of ethics and turn it into a sort of energy that we [feel] ... as we [encounter] each other. ... The ethical space is about the encounter of strangers. ... What is the response when we meet this other? What we call ‘other’ as has been written about in academia, when we see other races, other genders perhaps, other classes of people, other nationalities, other people with different bodies, and all these differences that come into play.

Ermine (2015) identified different levels and types of encounters—exchanging names or following social prescriptions—as examples of superficial encounters, compared with meeting one another at a more conscious level of awareness. He pointed to an all too common “incompetence” in our intercultural encounters that creates an obstacle in our ability to relate to one another. He asked us to consider how we work through these obstacles across our differences – or if we do?

How do we link the ideas of ethics and moralities when there's these boundaries that we carry? One of the questions ... [about ethical space] ... is ‘What do we do with ‘it’?’ It's not an ‘it’. What we're trying to do is center and focus this idea of ethics, as it lies within each and every one of us—within our spirit, within our inwardness. That's where it needs to be powerful, that's where it becomes powerful. We cannot ‘use’ ethics, it's not a noun. It's in here somewhere [referring to inside oneself].

Ermine (2015) continued:

Linking up this idea of ethics is something that each one of us has and is responsible for. We go through these ideas that ethics has to do with the human spirit—which is unseen, and the unseen is the unknown. We cannot work with something we can't see; we can't manipulate it, so we have a hard time working with it. Nevertheless, when we look at the spiritual level, a spirit inside each and every one of you can see the spirit of another

person. These are the teachings that we go through with our old people, our spiritualists. That the spirit can, in fact, see the other spirit. ... if we can [relate to one another] to that level, then we have a different paradigm or a different formulation that we can work with.

Ermine included a novel interactive component as part of his conference presentation, inspired by a combination of Cree understandings of “health” with theory from particle physics. His demonstration enabled participants to experience firsthand what he referred to as “dancing particles” or a sense of animation of one another’s spirit.

So dancing particles—this is the central point when talking about ethics; we have to keep exploring this whole field. It takes a discussion of ethics as an ‘it,’ as a noun, and turning it more into an energy, like in the exercise we did this morning. And start connecting it to a spirituality that everybody has. Then we’re talking about ethics. ... And we know that the universe operates on those principles. ...when we’re talking about the ethics, it’s at this level that things really start to happen, that the critical mass of energies, of spiritual people working together can produce profound results.

Spiritual Values of Biocultural Ethics

Ermine’s message on the fundamental nature of ethics brings to mind Posey’s writings on the cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity, which I believe partly motivated Posey’s sense of need to establish a new ethic in ethnobiology. Posey (1999: 4, emphasis in original) states:

Although conservation and management practices are highly pragmatic, indigenous and traditional peoples generally view this knowledge as emanating from a *spiritual* base. All creation is sacred and the sacred and secular are inseparable. Spirituality is the highest form of consciousness, and spiritual consciousness is the highest form of awareness. In this sense, a dimension of traditional knowledge is not *local* knowledge but knowledge of the *universal* as expressed in the local. In indigenous and local cultures, experts exist who are peculiarly aware of nature’s organizing principles, sometimes

described as entities, spirits or natural law. Thus, knowledge of the environment depends not only on the relationship between humans and nature, but also between the visible world and the invisible spirit world.

Since Posey’s time, within and beyond ethnobiology, I have experienced in myself and observed in others a greater awareness of and respect for spiritual dimensions of biocultural knowledge and knowledge systems. These understandings, as Posey notes, are linked with a universality emanating from the ‘laws of nature,’ and worldviews based in the interconnection of the natural world and all sentient beings across spatial and temporal scales. For example, Anishnabe Elder and spiritual leader, Dave Courchene of the Sagkeeng First Nation (Manitoba, Canada) teaches that “natural law is the first rule of spirituality,” and that spirituality and ceremony are a fundamental part of the principles and values that need to underlie our biocultural activities (Courchene as quoted in Bannister 2017:22–23). Dr. Leroy Little Bear (2000:77–78) explains that there is no animate/inanimate dichotomy in Aboriginal languages; all things are animate and imbued with spirit in Aboriginal philosophy. “If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations.”

To some extent, this awareness is reflected in the ISE Code of Ethics. For example:

- *The Principle of Traditional Guardianship* recognizes “the obligation and responsibility of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to preserve and maintain their role as traditional guardians of these ecosystems through the maintenance of their cultures, identities, languages, mythologies, spiritual beliefs and customary laws and practices”;
- *The Principle of Confidentiality* includes “a responsibility to be aware of and comply with local systems for management of knowledge and local innovation, especially as related to sacred and secret knowledge”; and
- *The Principle of Respect* “recognizes the necessity for researchers to respect the integrity, morality and spirituality of the culture, traditions and relationships of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities with their worlds.”

Yet compared to Ermine's (2015) view of cross-cultural ethics as fundamentally an encounter at the energetic level and a relationship of spiritual dimensions, the treatment of spirituality⁸ within the ISE Code Ethics is relatively passive and prescriptive, one might say 'two-dimensional'.

As I asked at the onset, is it time to ask *what more*, or *what else*? Is there an opportunity within ethnobiology today to lift those two-dimensional words of the ISE Code of Ethics off the page in a three-dimensional way so that they come alive—even animate one another's spirits? In addition to adhering to our agreed formulas for how to be ethical, can we discover together, and intentionally practice, *ethics as relationship*? Maybe some of us already are? If so, can we (the broader ethnobiology community) gather these ways of being with one another to articulate and share more widely a new *ethical praxis* for our biocultural research and education?

From Ethical Prescription to Ethical Praxis

My suggestion to cooperatively articulate an ethical praxis in ethnobiology is inspired by Sorrells' (2015) intriguing model of "intercultural praxis," which is based in a critical social justice approach to intercultural communication⁹. Sorrells (2015:48) defines intercultural praxis as "a process of critical reflective thinking and acting ... that enables us to navigate the complex and challenging intercultural spaces we inhabit interpersonally, communally, and globally." Sorrells (2015:48) does not seek to just teach an understanding of intercultural communication but to also support us in *practicing* "a way of being, thinking, analyzing, reflecting, and acting in the world in regard to cultural differences." She recognizes that differences are *real* and that they are inevitably *situated within relations of power*. The key intention of her model is to "understand and address the intersection of cultural differences and hierarchies of power in intercultural interactions."

Sorrells' model is designed as a circular or spiral process (rather than linear) with six interrelated ports of entry (Sorrells 2015:49–58):

- **Inquiry** (curiosity; willingness to learn without judgment; openness to allow our way of viewing and being in the world to be challenged);
- **Framing** (awareness of the limiting frames of reference from which we view and experience the world; intentional

development of our perspective-taking capacity);

- **Positioning** (understanding the locations from which we speak, listen, act, think, and make sense of the world relative to others; questioning whose knowledge is privileged; understanding knowledge as socially and historically constructed and produced in relation to power);
- **Dialogue** (understood as a relationship of exchange that embraces a tension inherent in reaching across difference; holds the potential to be changed by one another; requires a quality of communication and connection between parties; allows for the possibility of new meaning and understanding);
- **Reflection** (intentional introspection and observing oneself in relation to others; the capacity for these to alter our perspectives and actions);
- **Action** (joining our increased understanding with responsible action, through a range of simple or complex creative and transformational forms or tactics).

These six entry ports offer direction to

our ways of thinking, reflecting, and acting in relation to our intercultural experiences, allowing us to attend to the complex, relational, interconnected, and often ambiguous nature of our experiences (Sorrells 2015:49).

I find Sorrells's insights from intercultural communication highly relevant to ethics in ethnobiology, but I do not naively promote an outright adoption of Sorrells's model by ethnobiologists. Rather, I suggest the model is one compelling and timely example to stimulate a discussion within our field of how we envision our ethical aspirations *today*, and what we might create through a concerted effort to articulate a biocultural ethical praxis building on ethical space and informed by relational ethics and intercultural praxis.

Barriers to Ethical Praxis

I acknowledge the complexity of my suggestion situated within the academic system or other institutional hierarchies of power, since the researcher-community relationship itself is but one of the dimensions at play. Moreover, I recognize that the

ethical space concept may be far less familiar, let alone a referential concept within ethics policy, outside of Canada.

The *institutionalization* of research ethics may inadvertently be an impediment given ethics is largely siloed within universities. For example, human research ethics review systems are an *administrative* aspect of university research, with their own policies, processes, and checkbox-like requirements typically fulfilled by researchers in advance, and removed from the people and places that they are meant to protect. Ethical theory and education are often communicated separately from research ethics review through courses. Ethical principles may be given extensive consideration in research design, but (outside of ethics review) are often met in real time with real consequences *ad hoc* if they arise. Research ethics offices and ethics review boards at any given institution may or may not be viewed as facilitative bodies for ethical research. If not, we might ask *why not*, and consider what role we might have in informing, encouraging and evolving the ethics review process within our institutions. The opportunity to serve on an institutional Research Ethics Review Board may be one such possibility. Ethical challenges to a project may arise from other administrative units (e.g., Research Services, Finance, Legal Counsel, Technology Transfer) related to contract development, financial transfers, risk management and intellectual property for a given project.

While there is a wide spectrum of research ethics administration, implementation and regulation across institutions and across countries, the typical siloed approach to ethics contributes to a disconnect that impedes translating ethical theory and principles into thriving practices. By ‘thriving practices,’ I am not referring to doing everything morally right or just, according to a western philosophical framework-; I generally assume we do our humanly best to understand and behave according to appropriate ethical expectations and that most of our shortcomings are unintentional or uniformed. Rather, I invoke an understanding of ethics along the perspectives shared by Ermine and Courchene – which I understand at a profoundly fundamental level as a way of *being*, and a way of *being with* others.

Another institutionalized hurdle is a tendency towards over emphasis on “remedial ethics.” A bias in western ethics is the focus on minimum standards to prevent harm, intended to protect people, as well as

to limit risk and liability for associated institutions. Within a ‘though shalt not orientation,’ Gavazzi (2012) questions whether our fear of doing something wrong limits our opportunities to do good. An example might be focusing on dutiful design of consent forms that meet institutional criteria with hopes for an efficient research ethics review approval, rather than sufficient attention to maximizing participation and striving to enhance conditions that support trust and quality of relationships with research collaborators. This includes coming to an understanding of what is the most fitting way to provide the opportunity for, and evidence of, ongoing consent throughout the project. Gavazzi (2012) points out that focusing on ethical standards alone is based on an incomplete view of ethics. In contrast (but not dismissing ethical standards), the “positive ethics” approach that he promotes moves away from “the punishing and anxiety-producing components of ethics.” It aims for the ceiling rather than the floor, and explicitly recognizes the value of our self-awareness, self-care and emotional competence as having important roles in relational ethics.

Thus, expression of a new ethical praxis in our biocultural research may require us to educate about, advocate for, and support creation of ethical space in the systems within which our research is embedded. Identifying hurdles and creating navigational aids through them is also part of the collaborative ethics work ahead. Concrete examples of facilitating ethical space at an organizational level are emerging in Canada. One compelling story is that of the Alberta Energy Regulator, a government organization that sought the leadership of Dr. Reg Crowshoe (Piikani Nation), a well-known Blackfoot ceremonialist and proponent of ethical space (AER 2017). Elder Crowshoe’s organizational approach supports linking worldviews but strives to avoid simply incorporating and integrating Indigenous processes with those of mainstream institutions. Systems remain parallel to retain their integrity and ways are sought to authentically link these parallel systems through “cultural translation” and “cultural interpretation” (AER 2017:14). The AER process had a transformative effect at individual and organizational levels—making real an understanding that in ethical space, learning how to *be* together precedes deciding what to *do* together.

Further insights are found in the organizational ethics approach taken by Haslebo and Haslebo (2012)

who apply relational ethics to institutional change using a social constructionist and appreciative perspective. The organizational change frameworks and methods shared by Elder Crowshoe and Haslebo and Haslebo (2012) may serve as helpful resources to deepen a 'how to' understanding within our affiliated institutions.

Opportunities in Ethical Praxis—Getting Personal

As Ermine (2015) and Sorrells (2015) have pointed out, and as discussed in this paper, ethics is not just 'out there' codified in our research and professional worlds. Ethics is also personal, within each one of us—animating one another, inviting us to develop and practice more awareness and competencies in the every day. But competencies in what, specifically? What are we missing?

I have been particularly struck with the realization that much ethnobiological research, by its nature, involves explicit or implicit intercultural conflict and negotiation, yet this is not something most researchers receive training in, or professional support to work through. Ermine (2015) underscored a type of "incompetence" in the encounter of strangers that is exacerbated within intercultural spaces, forming a barrier in our potential to relate to one another. Sorrells's intercultural praxis model emerges from explicit recognition of this 'barrier' and the need for awareness and competencies in embracing it. I believe understanding and embracing this phenomenon is an integral part of ethics. The question of *how* is personal and may be different for each of us. My own pursuits are informed by writings, conversations and experiences with Indigenous colleagues and elders over many years. They are also profoundly influenced by training in Zen-based conflict resolution (e.g., Hamilton 2013, 2017; Lenski 2014) and the martial art of aikido¹⁰. My study of aikido is not only technical (i.e., physical techniques for self-defense), but includes exploring the underlying philosophical and spiritual principles of aikido as an art and as an embodied practice of conflict resolution. I offer some personal observations from my own exploration of 'how' that are part of a larger work in progress on ethics as an art and practice—what I have coined "embodied ethics" (Bannister and Goreas 2014).

Related to the interpersonal barriers and incompetencies that Ermine (2015) pointed out in encounters with strangers, Diane Hamilton's (2013) work in Zen-based conflict resolution affirms and acknowledges that our human ego-based sense of

identify strives to maintain a separation between self and other. Along the lines of Sorrells's (2015) entry port of "framing," Hamilton's methods support and encourage developing the capacity to relax our egoic boundaries of identity enough to fully accept the tensions inherent in holding multiple perspectives with more grace and ease. Developing this fundamental capacity is the basis for *being with* the other and deepening our skills in listening and communicating. However, listening itself is an uncommon art that requires learning and practice.

Drawing on his mastery of aikido, Richard Moon's (fifth degree black belt) work on "extraordinary listening" is premised on the principle that "listening is an act of intent" (Moon 2000:23)¹¹. Moon (2000:20) challenges us and offers training to "become a student of listening," claiming that "the world changes when we change the way we listen." His methods are based in listening beyond words and hearing another beyond the limits of our cognitive interpretation.

Beyond listening, Darnell (1991) underscores the misunderstood role of silence within intercultural encounters. Darnell (1991:89) describes the bias of "the loud-mouthed whiteman" within conversation, and shares helpful insights or "postulates" from implicit Cree communicative systems. For example, "co-presence" defines social occasions; talking is a side-effect rather than the focus, and silence is considered respectful under many conditions.

Everyday interaction (in the secular domain) is structured around people being co-present; co-presence may involve talk, but its presence or absence does not change the nature of what is felt to be going on (Darnell 1991:91).

She goes on to explain (Darnell 1991:92):

Respect for another human person is often expressed by silence. ... Silence is understood to be full (not needing to be filled up by talk or even activity) and complete in itself.

Sorrells (2015) explicitly recognizes intercultural communication as an embodied experience, acknowledging that our misunderstanding, misconceptions and biases about others are exchanged and expressed through our physical bodies. Paul Linden's (sixth degree blackbelt) aikido-based somatic methods for "embodied peacemaking" reveal the role of our limbic response to distress at the physiological level, which influences our degree of

competence at the interpersonal and intercultural scales. Simply put, anxiety reduces our capacity to listen and learn. Linden's (2007) work focuses on understanding and developing the ability to consciously override the innate stress response of flight/fight/freeze, using physical practices to create a body state of calm alertness. In essence, Linden's approach enables one to become aware of, and choose not to be controlled by, the normal physical and emotional distress elicited during encounters with others.

Daniel Siegel's (2011, 2016) pioneering work in the field of interpersonal neurobiology offers an intriguing lens to situate ourselves within intercultural encounters as "me," "we," and "m/we" at the level of energy and information flow through our nervous systems. He claims that an understanding of the 'self' as separate is a form of impaired integration because we are all differentiated as a 'me' but we are all linked as a 'we'. He describes the 'self' as an interconnected system and the body as one node. He explores how to honor individuated differences while acknowledging our interconnectedness to everyone and everything else, suggesting our existence is better conceptualized as 'm/we'. The parallels in Siegel's concepts and terminology with ethical space and ethics as an expression of energetic or spiritual dimensions are particularly intriguing.

Many other concepts and fields of inquiry and practice are also relevant but not discussed here due to space limitations: nonviolent communication (e.g., Rosenberg 2012, 2015), emotional intelligence (e.g., Goleman 2011; Salavoy and Mayer 1990), Indigenous healing (e.g., Ross 2014), cultural humility and safety (e.g., FNHA, nd; Gallardo 2013), healing justice and emotional justice (e.g., Walia 2013), intercultural hospitality (Esteva and Prakash 1998; Kuokkanen 2013). Building and sharing a wider body of references and practical resources seems a helpful step in continuing to evolve our understanding of biocultural ethics and ethical praxis.

An Invitation to Ethical Praxis

Almost thirty years ago, after the Declaration of Belém, Darrell Posey voiced his passionate conviction that ethnobiologists were well placed to "take the intellectual lead, as well as the appropriate actions, towards the development of a new ethic that serves as a model for other disciplines" (Posey 1990 as reprinted in Posey 2004:6). At the time, he claimed that

now more than ever, dialogue must take place between disciplines and peoples. It will take our best minds from all fields and cultures to find socially and ecologically viable options for the survival of the planet. One might ask if ethnobiology is capable of such miraculous tasks. The only response can be: if we do not try, who will?

Today, developing a model of ethical praxis applied to ethnobiological research has the potential to offer a concrete methodological and self-reflective tool for deepening critical reflection and navigating through our intercultural complexities and incompetencies at a deeper level that is not overtly recognized in most of our biocultural research approaches. The perspective shared in this paper can be taken as a *new* invitation to ethnobiologists for another round of innovation in ethics. The invitation is not to develop more ethical guidance, but to make more of the guidance already shared with us, from within and outside our discipline as well as our cultural and spiritual traditions—and to draw on the "sacred gift of humility" (Iwama et al. 2009:7) in sincerely considering how to co-develop our biocultural ethics as praxis.

Notes

¹I respectfully acknowledge the treatment and definition of biocultural ethics published by Rozzi (2012, 2013) and Rozzi and Massardo (2011). In this article, I use the term in a way that is largely consistent, but is more generalized and flexible.

²My use of "sentient" in this paper is intended to be consistent with Indigenous authors such as Ermine (2015) and others in referring to sentient beings as extending beyond just humans and other creatures that are shown to have the capacity to "feel" based on western science. While important to the topic of biocultural ethics, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss different notions and cultural assumptions of sentience. For an example of such a discussion, see Natcher et al. (2007).

³For a brief history of the ISE Code of Ethics, see <http://www.ethnobiology.net/what-we-do/core-programs/ise-ethics-program/code-of-ethics/brief-history/>.

⁴For information and to access the ISE Code of Ethics ratification, see: <http://www.ethnobiology.net/code-ethics-ratification/#!form/CoERatification>.

⁵For transparency, the *CIHR Guidelines* and *TCPS2*

Chapter 9 indirectly influenced, and were indirectly influenced by, the concurrent international process to develop a code of ethics in ethnobiology, led by the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE). The connection between these three policy initiatives is through participation of the author as a member of the respective working groups and advisory committees for each process. Namely, I have been a member of the Aboriginal Ethics Working Group (AEWG) from 2004–2007 which developed the *CIHR guidelines*; a member of the Panel on Research Ethics-Technical Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Research (PRE-TACAR) from 2005–2008 which advised on *TCPS2 Chapter 9* (2008); the Chair of the ISE Ethics Program from 2004–present; and the facilitator of the ISE Code of Ethics development process.

⁶For information about the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project, see <http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/>.

⁷For information about the Working Better Together Conference on Indigenous Research Ethics, see indigenousresearchethics2015.wordpress.com or <http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/events/ipinch-events/working-better-together-conference-indigenous-research-ethics/>.

⁸I acknowledge the terms “spiritual” and “spirituality” have diverse meanings and may be confusing or uncomfortable for some readers due to religious or other connotations. My intention is to be true to the voices of Posey and Ermine in their use of these terms as a way to encourage thoughtful reflection and discussion within the biocultural ethics discourse.

⁹Sorrells’s (2015) model of intercultural praxis is accessible online via google play <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=eapiCgAAQBAJ&source=ge-web-app>.

¹⁰Aikido is typically described as a peace-based Japanese martial art founded by Morihei Ueshiba with a dual practical goal of self-defense and protecting an attacker and oneself from injury. The emphasis on technique, philosophy, and spirituality varies greatly among the many different styles of Aikido worldwide. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aikido>.

¹¹Moon describes “extraordinary listening” as an inquiry into effectively transforming communication, thinking, and the way we create our world. See www.extraordinarylistening.com.

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