

Sacred activism



Four Arrows aka Don Trent Jacobs Faculty member in the School of Educational Leadership for Change at Fielding Graduate University.

Four Arrows shared Indigenous perspectives on what he refers to as **'sacred activism'**, that includes an understanding and a practice of empathy, compassion, courage, complementarity and, ultimately, fearless engagement. He shared his ideas on why this understanding and practice are vital for achieving the kinds of transformation needed in the world today. Four Arrows said that, without knowing the history of a person - walking in another person's moccasins, it is hard to find empathy. Even if I disagree with someone, I can still have empathy, if I know their background.

I don't have that angst that urges me to take sides and react. Once I co-authored a book with someone with whom I profoundly disagreed. We became friends and found a place where we could argue co-operatively, without violence. The respect was reflected in the book and even the comments from the readers, both from left wingers or right wingers, were very respectful. Knowing the background was an essential part in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa when Mandela came to power. It is an unbelievable effort for someone to confess and then for the relatives to forgive them. This is only possible when you know something about their history.

I am writing a book for UNESCO about diversity and inclusion programmes in higher education and business. It goes deeper into story-telling as it has to be in the fabric of our work in education. Character education is one day a week in US schools. In the indigenous way, character is primary, before learning a skill. To learn the skill to create a bow, I first need to understand the generous gift the skill would achieve by killing a deer for the tribe and the gratitude they would feel, as this gives me motivation to learn to create a bow with great care and skill. Generosity is the foundation for learning the skill to make a good bow. If we can make virtue a core concept of everything we do (job, play etc.), we would do better. Until we can address a natural resource as a relative (a member of our own family), we will continue to suffer mass extinctions, so the idea of understanding that we are an intrinsic part of the fabric of life is vital.

There is a natural guilt and a religious guilt. A mouse crosses the path of a lion after it has just had big meal and is not hungry, but the lion is tempted and eats the mouse unnecessarily. If the lion suffers from religious guilt, the guilt remains life-long. If it has natural guilt, it learns, moves on and next time it lets the mouse go.

What keeps us from practising the things that we know and give great reference to? The reason we keep having problems in being empathetic is because we do not understand trance-based learning. Our ancestors understood nature from watching nature. During times of fear, all creatures become hyper-suggestive to the communication of a perceived trusted authority. The more we see the leaders of the world creating fear, we see how suggestible we are. We need an inner attitude that allows us to create the dynamics of a better world.

Fear is a catalyst for practising a virtue. We have to move away from fear by recognising its source, then have the courage to change it, to stand up and do what is right. Then it has to change into fearlessness and trusting the universe; I make a commitment, I let the fear go, I jump and enjoy the ride.

Four Arrows refers to a book by Dr Fisher, who does extensive work on the subject of Fearology: [Fearless Engagement by Four Arrows](#)