

DIALOGUES OF
KNOWLEDGE
(DOFK)

DIALOGOS DEL
SABER



DEMOCRACY + MEDIA LAB

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Felipe Can | B'eleje' Kan (our Co-Lead) and Javier Mateos-Campos (our Graduate Fellow) for their incredible work regarding the Dialogues of Knowledge. The following images, framework, and materials were all conceptualized and curated by them.

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KEY WORDS: (K'AMOLTAQB'E)

Indigenous Worldview:

Embedded
Relationship
Gifts
Daily
Dependent
Dynamic
Holistic
Circular
Mysteries
Inextricable
Participate
Compassion
Empathy
Two-way dialogue

Adapted from Kundtson and Suzuki,
1992 P. 13-15 by Kawagley and
Barnhardt, 1998 p. 4-5

Western Worldview:

Centered
Dominion
Exploitation
Intermittent
Transcends
Static
Compartmentalized
Linear
Decipherable
Apart
Analyze
Achievement
Separateness
One-way imperative

Adapted from Kundtson and Suzuki,
1992 P. 13-15 by Kawagley and
Barnhardt, 1998 p. 4-5

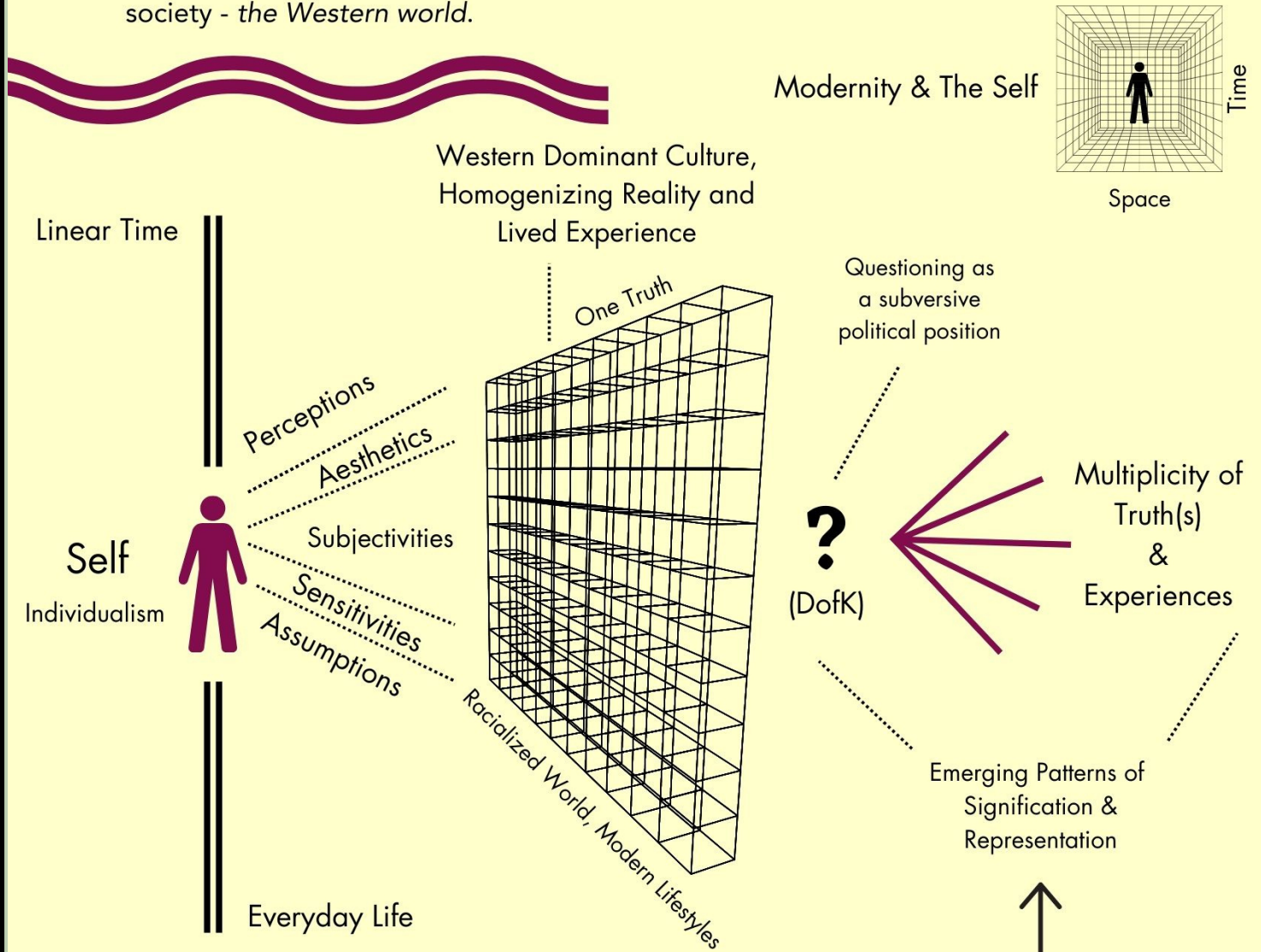


Kan, 2023.

? (DofK)

Questions in the Dialogues (DofK) represent subversive political actions and positions. The art of *Questioning* as an integral part of a living praxis is dead in the West. Modern truth(s) demand discipline and obedience; its implementation requires the intellectual abandonment of any (self)criticism in our everyday impressions and interactions. In its illusory form, our sense of normality emanates from the profound absence of critical questioning.

Humans have become too uncomfortable and too unconcerned with questioning anything genuinely. We have grabbed the *question* as a book to smack the grip of Western logic on truth(s) by asking humans to wake up to the multiplicity of realities and experiences the dominant culture falsely (re)creates as one. The universalization of modern lifestyles has put humans in pathways of linear thinking, believing that there is *only* one civilized reality and advanced society - *the Western world*.

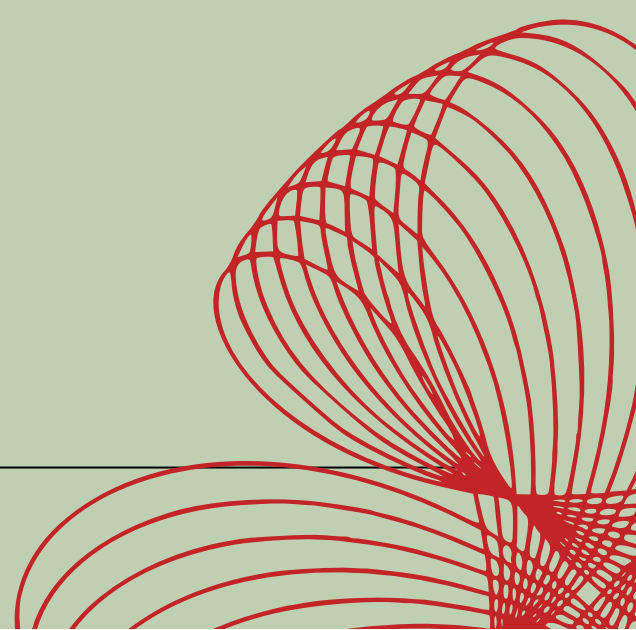
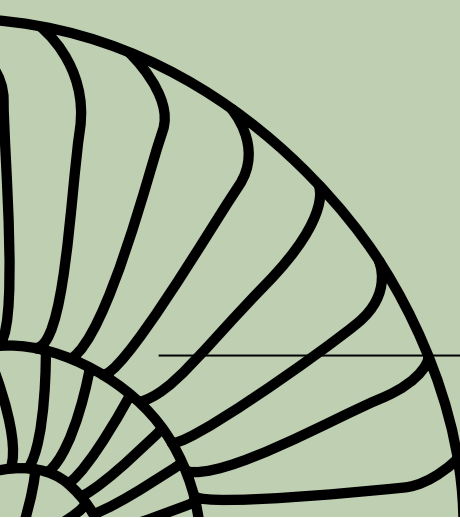

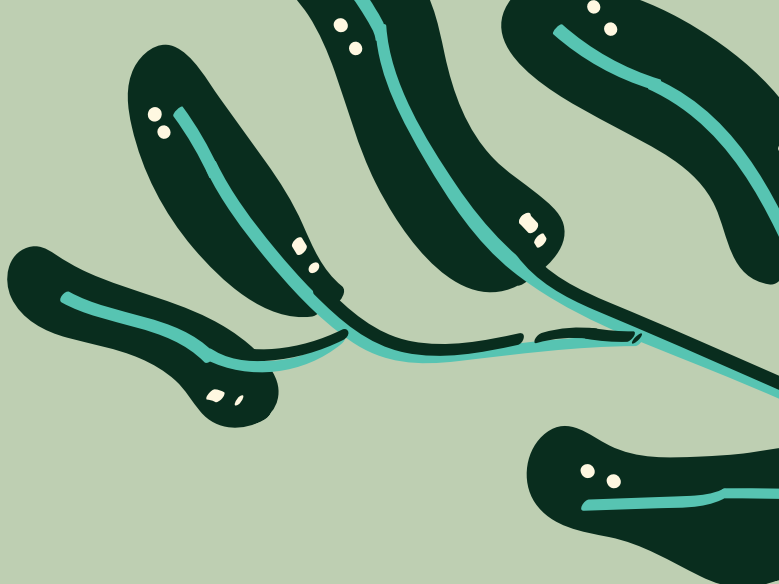


Spiral of Wisdom (SofW)* (DofK)

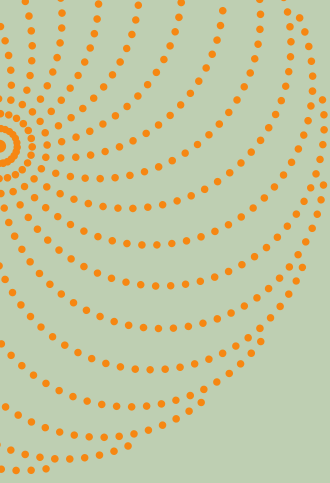
Mateos-Campos & Kan, 2023.

At the end-beginning of our time, the Eurocentric colonization of space, life, and knowledge marked the horizon of modernity, which dismissed all Indigenous knowledges as backward ideas tied to the past, incapable of meeting capitalist models of productivity and extraction (Brayboy, 2005). The Dialogues of Knowledge (DofK) enact a form of decolonial resistance and (re)existence (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) rooted in the oral tradition of the Mayan Mam peoples living in northern California through individual acts of knowledge and disobedience that reject Western rationality as the single generator of universal truth(s). Accounting for the long night of racialized cultural history in the West, the dialogues (DofK) position language skills, story-telling, and its transformational abilities to convey human experience (Yosso, 2005) as a meaning-making amalgamation between personal and communal realities. Group thinking precedes individual prosperity as a living praxis (Brant, 1982). The Dialogues (DofK) emerge as generators of ideas in the decolonial struggle for tribal sovereignty and self-determination (Brayboy, 2005) by reaffirming ancestral principles of harmony and reciprocity where thoughts, feelings, and words are inextricably bound to the individual, the community, and the natural cycles that sustain life (Kawagley & Bernhardt, 1998). The Dialogues (DofK) take on the centrality of language, which underpins all constructions of reality and the Self, as a starting point for emerging ideas and subjectivities that refuse the Western hegemonic grip in aesthetics, common sense, and its unidimensional construction of reality to instead move us toward a pluriverse of multiple coexisting truth(s).





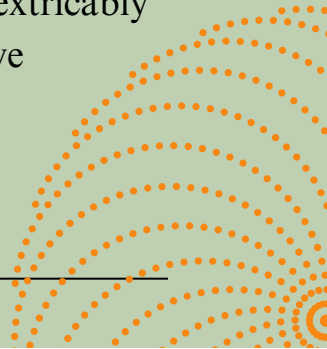
Modern academic research has a long history of complicity with European imperialism and colonialism. The word research itself is one of the dirtiest words in the vocabulary of the world's indigenous people, which “provokes silence and brings back bad memories” (Smith, 1999, p.1). Mayan Kosmovision proposes community work instead of research because community service is a core obligation for the Mayan peoples. According to Alvarado (2002), a person does not come into this world in vain since before birth, the person already has a destiny of service outlined, and to the extent that the person qualifies in their activity towards that service, the person gains recognition. With this recognition, their authority within the community grows. There is no authority without a recognized spirit of work toward the common good. The Dialogues (DofK) mark a departure from illusory Western democratic and representative models where political authority is gained and upheld by individual ambition, money, and state power. Done in a circle, the Dialogues (DofK) constitute a decolonial praxis that proposes a time and space for critical radical democracy to emerge. An insurgent community learning model that represents the best expression of indigenous collectivism where its participants' challenge and disrupt Western dominance in systems of power, knowledge, and representation (F. Gomez, personal communication, March 6, 2022)



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Mayan Kosmovision situates its world axis at the intersection of the underworld with the overworld in direct juxtaposition with our nuanced understandings of the Self in the past, present, and its potential alter ego(s) into the future. With its four elements and colors, the Mayan Medicine Wheel dismisses Western linear interpretations of time and instead builds on the notion of cyclical time represented in a circle or moving spiral. The spiral of wisdom (SofW) builds on the Mayan Medicine Wheel, borrowing its colors and visual elements to illustrate the dynamic theoretical space and temporal dimension of the dialogues (DofK) where culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning(s) in the decolonial resistance for self-determination (Brayboy, 2005). Ancestral notions of equality and democracy (Brant, 1982) decree that in the dialogues (DofK), no individual truth is privileged over another but interwoven in emerging patterns of meaning and representation. Interknitting individual thoughts and experiences democratize the collective consciousness in a thread of knowledge characterized by a renewed sense of kinship with nature and others (Kawagley & Bernhardt, 1998).

Following the rich Mayan Mam linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) and their vast textile tradition, we venture to disrupt Western academic norms of form, consumption, and visualization of scholarship by translating written and spoken words into colors, patterns, and motifs interwoven in beautiful handmade textiles. The extension of scholarship into textile art purposely defies conventional limits set by capitalist academia on the modalities of distribution, consumption, and restricting ways of experiencing intellectual work. Instead, we argue for a multi-modal decolonial scholarship inextricably bound to a transformative praxis and an alternative form of collective learning.



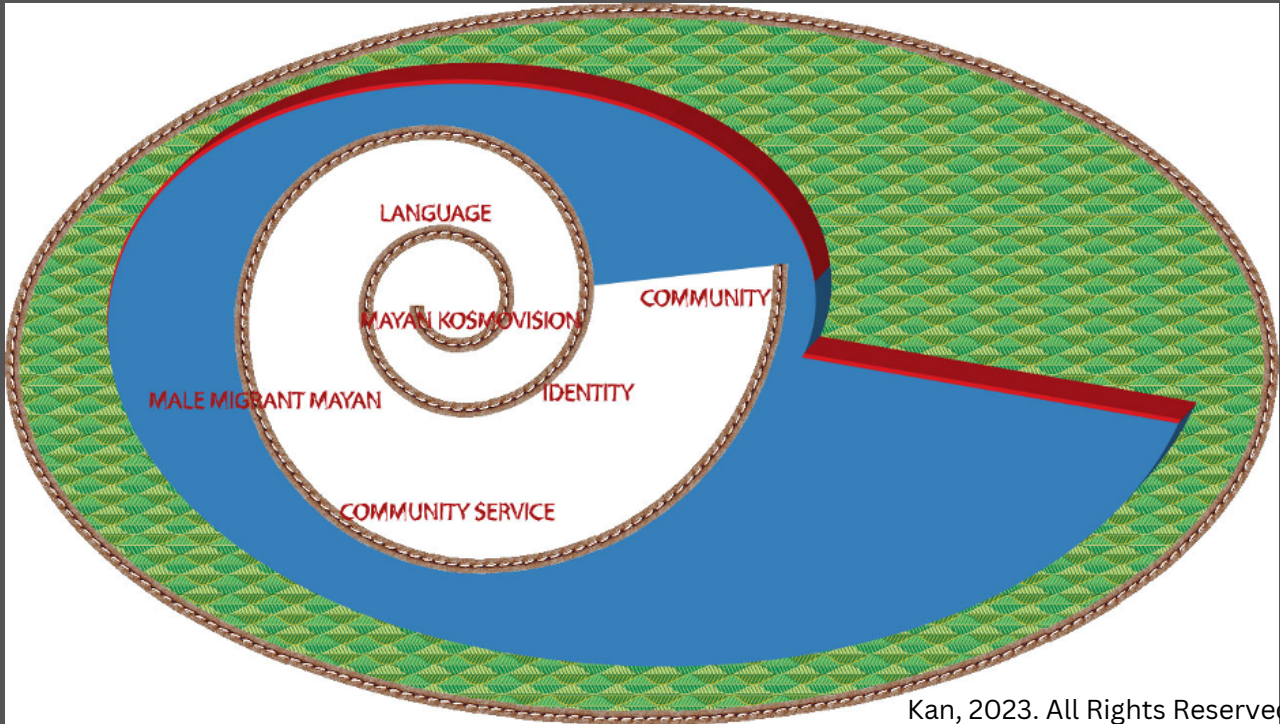
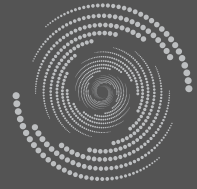


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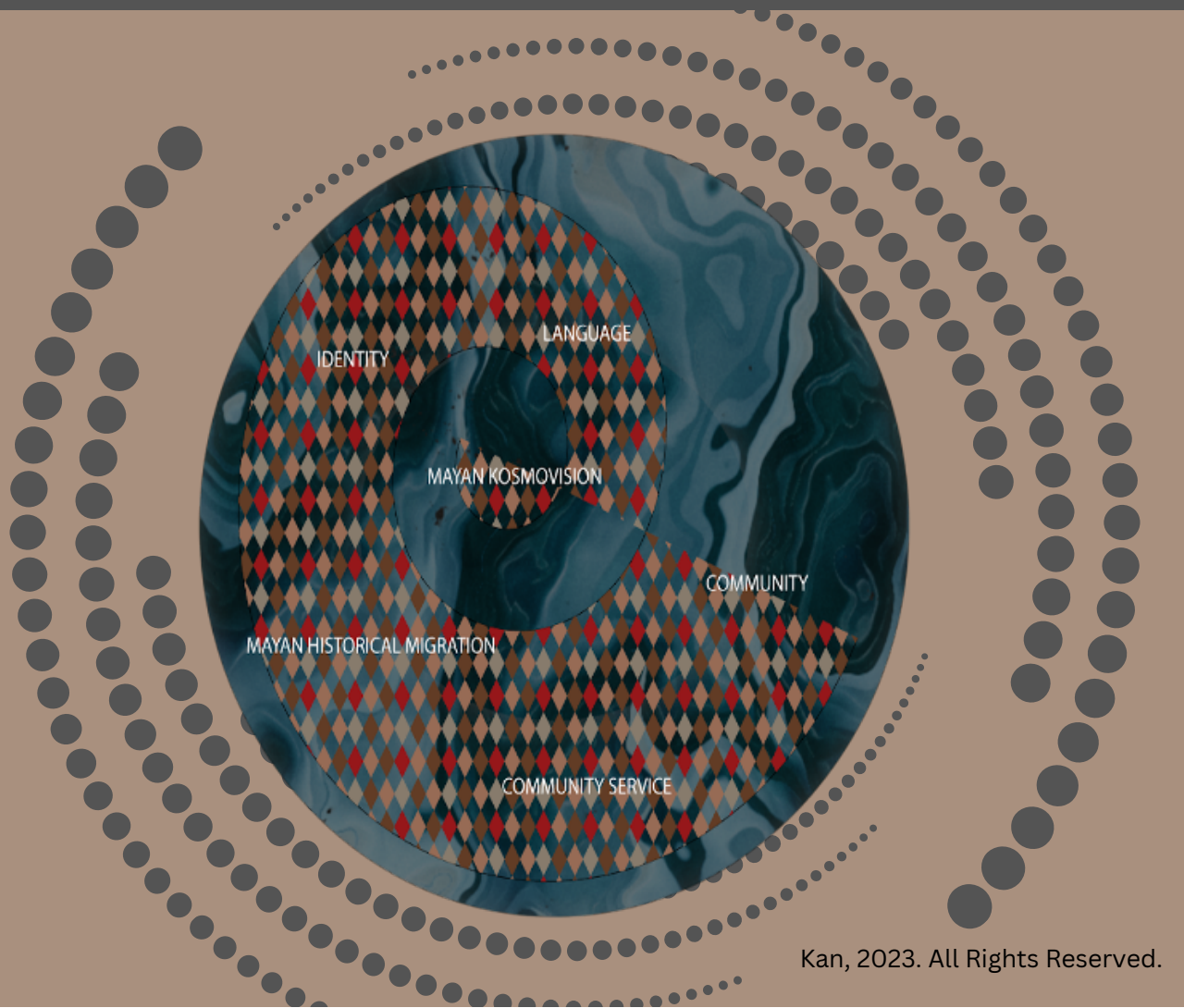
Mayan Kosmovision situates its world axis at the intersection of the underworld with the overworld in direct juxtaposition with our nuanced understandings of the Self in the past, present, and its potential alter ego(s) into the future. With its four elements and colors, the Mayan Medicine Wheel dismisses Western linear interpretations of time and instead builds on the notion of cyclical time represented in a circle or moving spiral. The spiral of wisdom (SofW) builds on the Mayan Medicine Wheel, borrowing its colors and visual elements to illustrate the dynamic theoretical space and temporal dimension of the dialogues (DofK) where culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning(s) in the decolonial resistance for self-determination (Brayboy, 2005). Ancestral notions of equality and democracy (Brant, 1982) decree that in the dialogues (DofK), no individual truth is privileged over another but interwoven in emerging patterns of meaning and representation. Interknitting individual thoughts and experiences democratize the collective consciousness in a thread of knowledge characterized by a renewed sense of kinship with nature and others (Kawagley & Bernhardt, 1998).

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Day & Night, Spiral of Wisdom for Dialogos among Mayan Men

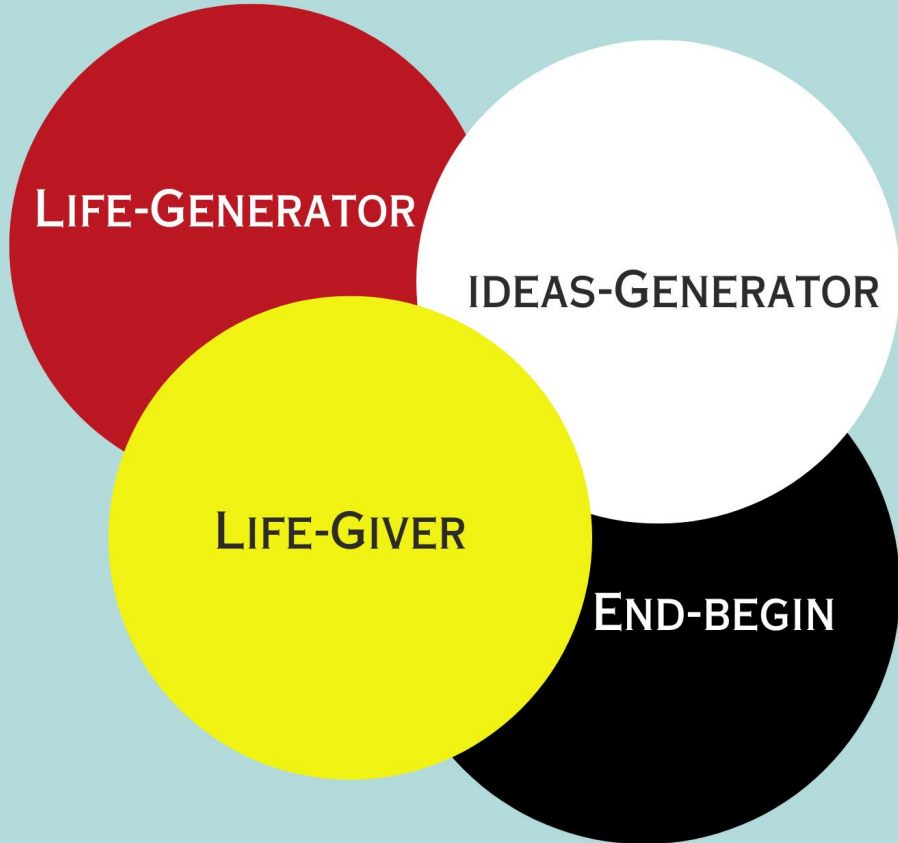


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MAYAN MEDICINE WHEEL



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MAYAN MEDICINE WHEEL



B'alam Ki'tze

Light & Fire, Ancestral Wisdom, represents the East

Majuk'utaj B'alam

Subtlety, air, the breath of life, represents the North

Ik'i B'alam

Water, nature, life giver, represents the South

B'alam Aq'ab'

Terra, introspection, the night, represents the West

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NATIVE / WESTERN ETHICS & PRINCIPLES



Native Ethics & Principles:

- Ethic of non-interference
- The Anger Must Not Be Shown Principle
- The Indian concept of time. Time is related to seasons and daylight
- The principle that Everything Is Shared
- The Attitude to Gratitude
- The Sixth Principle Is Protocol
- Now the Teaching: Modeling: how the Native American taught her kid to dress, she said, “I didn’t, he just did it.”
- The Conservation/Withdrawal Reaction: When Indian People are placed in an anxiety-provoking situation. They become less talkative. This has resulted in an enormous number of misdiagnoses among Indian people as far as psychiatric disorder is concerned.
- The Dependence-Independence Ethic: Native people are the most independent-minded people I’ve ever seen. One is expected to look after oneself, take one’s own counsel and not be told what to do by other people; make up your own mind about everything, listen to advice but not follow it very precisely, incorporate it into what you know is right, and go on from there.

Brant, C. (1982). Natives Ethics & Principles. Ethics & Principles. <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaq-resource-guide/essays/native-ethics-principles/>

Western Ethics & Principles:

- Interference
- It is ok to show anger (it is a white privilege to show anger towards other cultures)
- Time is money (capitalist perspective)
- Nothing is shared–All is private property
- There is no attitude of gratitude. Humans are the center. Nature exists to serve humans (Socrates)
- Only the West has protocols
- Now the Teaching: Shaping works similarly to the B.F. Skinner’s ‘Operant Conditioning’
- The Conservation/Withdrawal Reaction: white people are placed in an anxiety-provoking situation, They are taught to react in an anxiety-provoking situation with a great deal of activity and that is usually talking – talk the head off
- Deficit perspective. All Indigenous Peoples are dependent (Reservation syndrome). Because the Indian people live on welfare, they are very dependent people.

Brant, C. (1982). Natives Ethics & Principles. Ethics & Principles. <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-affairs/mikmaq-resource-centre/mikmaq-resource-guide/essays/native-ethics-principles/>



Day and Night, The Contrast Between Tribal Critical Race Theory and the Western Perspective

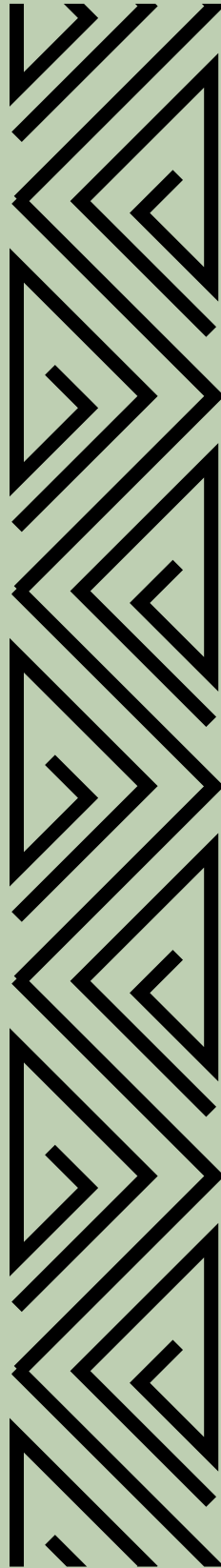
Tribal Critical Race Theory

Colonization is endemic to society.

U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.

Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities

Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.



Continuation of colonization.

Continuation of imperialism, white supremacy and desire for material gain.

Upholding the perpetuation of Indigenous liminal space to avoid recognizing tribal sovereignty.

Continuation of the dismissal of tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.

Western Perspective

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Indigenous Peoples know that culture, knowledge and power take a new meaning when seeing through Indigenous lenses.

Indigenous Peoples point out that the US governmental and educational policies promote assimilation

Indigenous People know that tribal philosophies are central to understanding the realities but they also illustrate the adaptability among individuals

Stories are not separated from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being



Western lenses continue to be used when examining indigenous cultures, knowledge and power.

Government and educational policies do not change to continue with the process of assimilation

Imperialism and white supremacy works in a way that ignores, excludes, suppresses, invisibilized tribal philosophies through epistemicide and Mayanicide

Only quantitative data is valid, numbers dictate common-sense.

Western Perspective

Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005)

Dominant Culture Upper-"Middle Class" Knowledge & "Common Sense"

- Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.

- The dominant culture put obstacles for low-income people to attain goals.

- Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.

- The dominant culture uses a deficit perspective that students of color arrive at school with no linguistic capital and multiple language and communication deficiencies.

- Familial capital refers to the cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition

- The dominant culture does not recognize aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends as part of the nuclear family.

- Social capital can be understood as networks of people and communities.

- Historically, navigational capital infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind

- Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality

The dominant culture barrage of societal messages devaluing Blackness and belittling within structures of inequality such as racism, capitalism, and patriarchy.

Spiral of Wisdom (SoFW)

Dialogues of Knowledge

(DofK)

Language's hidden discourses underpin constructions of reality and the Self. Multiplicity and plurality as an inherent human condition

Linguistic Capital

WEST

(Yosso, 2005)

Racialized cultural history & language
Intellectual - Language skills. Story-telling, cultural ability to communicate via visual art, poetry, music, and spoken/written word.

Resistance &

(Re)Existance

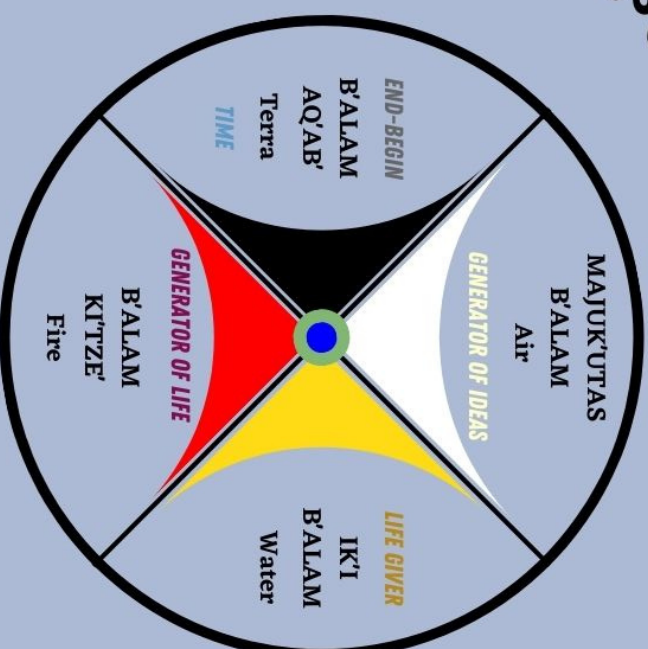
NORTH

Tribal CRIT

*New Possibilities, Truth(s)

(Broyboy, 2005)

Self-determination - Tribal Sovereignty
Self-Identification- Tribal-Autonomy
Subtlety, the breath of life



Water
Life
Change

Mayan Kosmivision

The universe, nature, and humanity are interconnected with harmony where each one has its reason for being and no one person is more valuable than the rest of the elements.

Wisdom, Ethics Derived from the Natural World

EAST

(Kawogley & Barnhardt, 1998)

Need for reciprocity between humans and the natural worlds, resources are viewed as a gift. Time is circular, with natural cycles that sustain life. Human thought, feelings, and words are inextricably bound to all other aspects of the universe.

World Axis

Underworld- Overworld

Self /& Alter Ego

Light & Clarity, Ancestral Wisdom & Knowledge

Expansion of consciousness, moving towards group/community thinking while rejecting Western individualism. NOT a political ideology but a way of life. Equality, democracy, & principle of all socialism in PRAXIS.

Principle that Everything Is Shared

SOUTH

(Brant, 1982)

Kan & Mateos-Campos. 2023



(DofK) Themes Reference Flow

Space

Life

Time



Knowledge

Resistance & (Re)existence

Language * Story-Telling * Transformation



Individual
&
Collective

} Dimensions

Western
Individualism

Pluriverse of
Co-existing
Truth(s)



"Research"

Community Work

Political Authority

Community
Recognition

Self-Determination
Sovereignty

Culture

Power

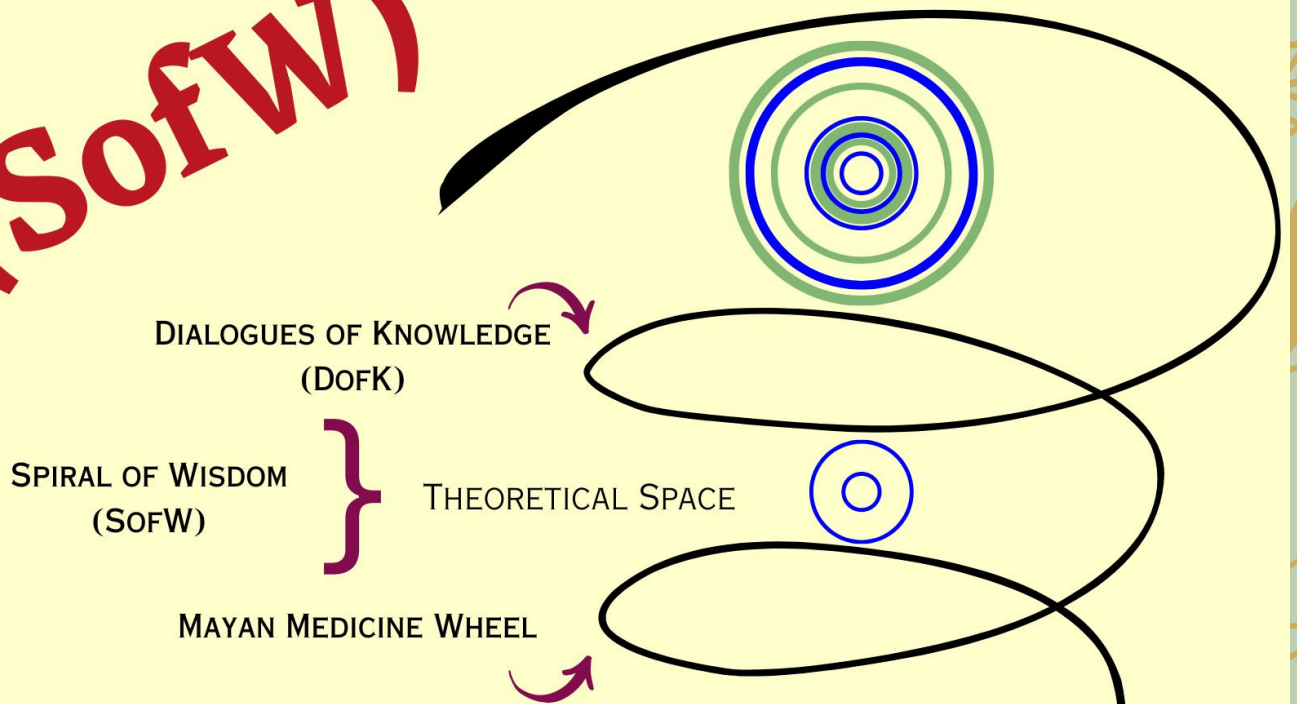
Knowledge

Interwoven
Themes



Representation of the “circle within a circle” that the Mayan Medicine Wheel creates when in juxtaposition with the Dialogues of Knowledge (DofK). With its four elements and colors, the Mayan Medicine Wheel dismisses Western linear interpretations of time and instead builds on the notion of cyclical time represented in a circle or moving spiral. The Spiral of Wisdom (SofW) builds on the Mayan Medicine Wheel, borrowing its colors and visual elements to illustrate the dynamic theoretical space and temporal dimension of the dialogues (DofK) where culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning(s) in the decolonial resistance for tribal sovereignty self-determination.

(SOFW)

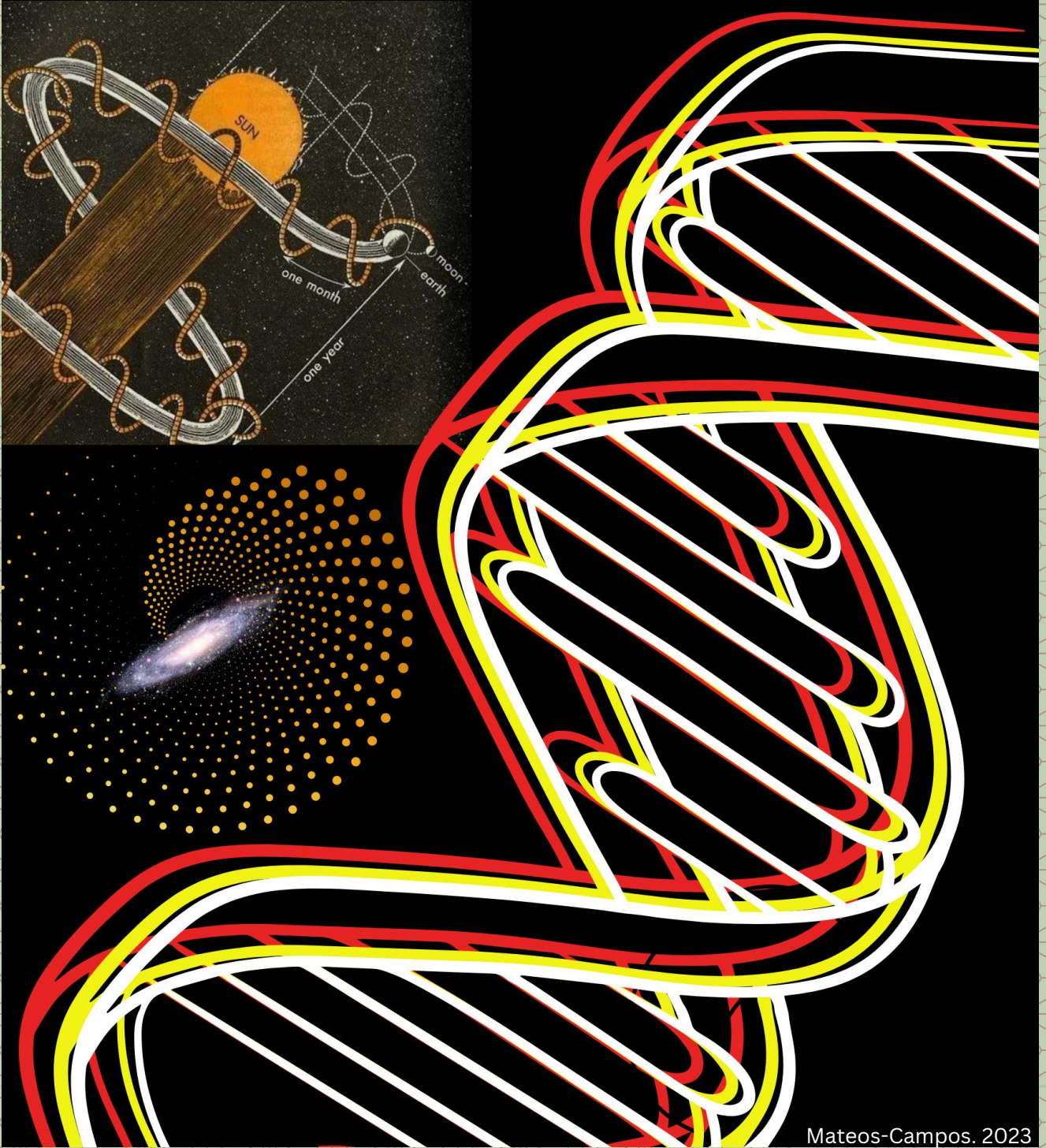
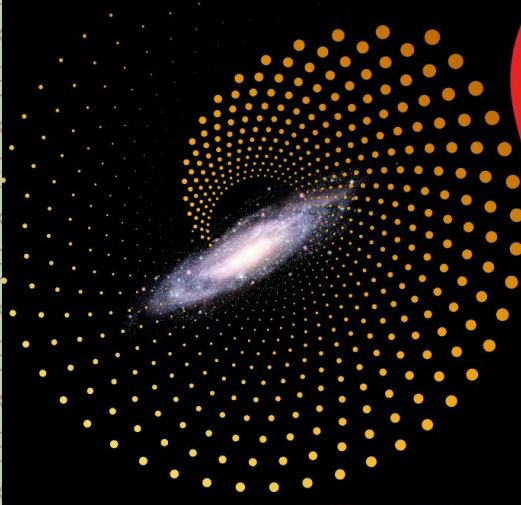
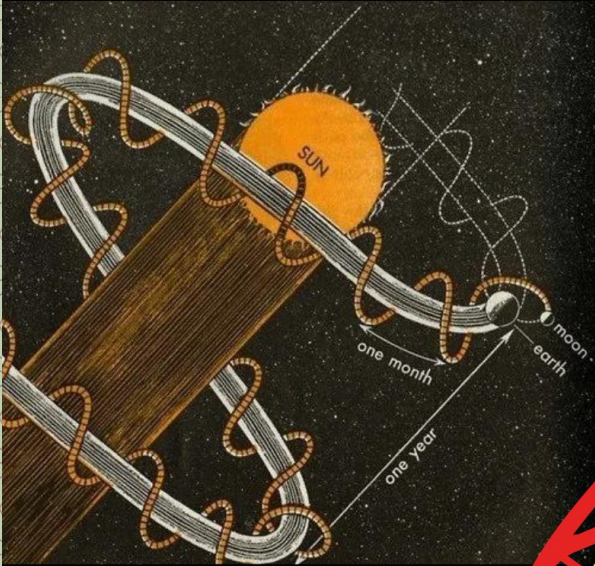


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MOTHER EARTH



The evolution of Mother Earth moves in a spiral form. DNA interknits time as living consciousness, a historical recipient of the past for the present, and toward the future.



[Explicado el misterio del oxígeno en la Tierra: la Luna propició días más largos y la eclosión de la vida • Tendencias71 \(hevante-emv.com\)](#)

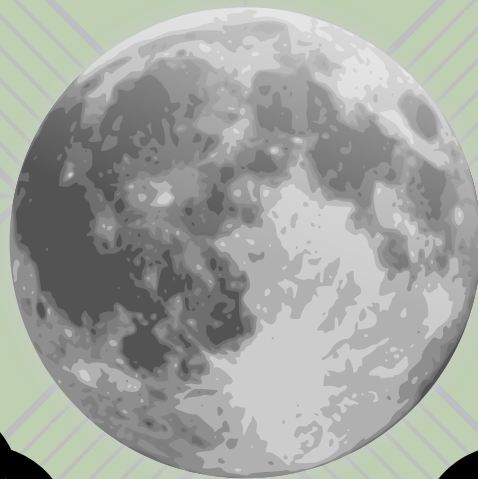


University Maya Kaqchikel, 2023

THE MOON

Natural Cycles and The Dialogues (DofK)

The lunar cycles, like the dialogues of knowledge, modify the dynamic of human consciousness. It also demonstrate the dynamic between the water and fluids such as blood and plasma in our bodies



THE MAYAN BALL GAME & THE DIALOGUES OF KNOWLEDGE (DOFK)

The ball game represents the discovery of the consciousness of the universe and the natural cycles of the Sun and the Moon. The red road provides the realization and materialization of everyday life, its action, vitality, leadership, and guidance. The white road represents the spiritual aspect of knowledge, of understanding among people, it symbolizes the path of the time keepers, which are gifted through our ancestors. The yellow road renders spiritual and material realities. The *hyper-materialization* of modern life unbalances us, pulling us toward the black road. In the Mayan Kosmvision, we reject the notion of *poverty* as an individual problem, which we consider part of the predominant socio-cultural unbalance in capitalistic societies. The black road delineates internal reflexion, rethinking of our lives and the space where we exist, represents physical and mental rest to takes us through different roads. The black road was illuminated by the Mayan twins.



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THANK YOU FOR VIEWING!

