

Epistemic injustice: Why it's hard to include the sacred in fisheries management

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ABSTRACT

Aboriginal art, dance and myth show a seamless flow of spirit between humans, animals, plants, lands and waters. 'First' or creation stories tell how spiritual beings taught the first people the gifts of other lifeforms and the dire consequences of greed, waste and disrespect. People 'became indigenous' through thousands of years of learning to live within limits. Knowledge derived from the lands and waters is encoded in laws and ceremonies of respect and renewal—a concept of the sacred which contributed to thousands of years of sustainability. Our recent encounter with planetary limits gives us only a short time to 'become indigenous' to the Earth. Without the sacred, our attempt will fail. But leaders cannot utilize the necessary concept of the sacred because, as Einstein put it, science can tell you a lot about what *is* but nothing about what *should* be. We identify forms of "Epistemic Injustice" which prevent the expression of sacred values in the natural science and economics of fisheries and terrestrial ecosystems and outline a concept of the sacred which contributes to flourishing of people and other lifeforms. This concept must include the liberating and empowering aspects of technology without which neither this paper, nor the conference from which it came, would have been possible.

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