AH Artists note on two-eyed seeing of the world by Adam Hicks

Elder Dr. Albert Marshall from the Mi'kmaw first nation developed the concept of the "Etuaptmumk," or "two-eyed seeing," in Fall 2004 (Ermine, 2004). This new principle was created to take the western scientific approach and the indigenous approach and combine them for new integrated science. According to Elder Dr. Albert Marshall, two-eyed seeing is: "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" (Bartlett et al., 2012).

This approach has been strengthened for marine conservation by Dr. Andrea Reid of the Nisga'a nation with her new paper "Two‐Eyed Seeing": An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management (Reid et al., 2021). This paper outlines examples of the two-eyed seeing approach being used in Canada. The two-eyed seeing approach achieves a mutual coming together of western and indigenous knowledge (IK) systems; to reduce colonialism, white privilege, and western scientific bias here in Canada while achieving conservation goals.

When I think about my lived experience and how my attitudes surrounding conservation have been shaped from different backgrounds, it made me wonder how the two-eyed seeing approach could be used in places I have experienced. This approach made me think about how it could be used in Southeast Asia and Central America (all the places I have lived and worked) while acknowledging my previous mistakes, white privilege, and bias. One cultural group that I reflected on was the Bajau Laut of the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. This cultural group, which I have seen first-hand in Sabah Malaysia, is often characterized as sea gypsies who live off the ocean and travel in small rafts made from wood. Many of these groups, such as the Bajau Lau, often don't fit governmental ideas of national identity and live in poor living conditions and less than one dollar a day.

By combining the two-eyed seeing approach with my own lived experience, I wanted to create this painting as a testament to the many indigenous groups and knowledge holders and suggest that two-eyed seeing should be used in developing countries and developed ones. Using this framework and engaging with Western and indigenous knowledge systems could provide benefits, including more effective community buy-in, reduction in western bias and white privilege, and more significant outputs of marine conservation. These ideas of what two-eyed seeing could be are reflected in the painting as the two eyes of the earth represent the western and indigenous approaches and the eyes being at peace with the earth. Overall, I hope this painting reflects my passion for shared knowledge pathways, cultural buy-in, and the respect I try to offer all indigenous and cultural groups. And I hope that the new indigenous fisheries center at the University of British Columbia can deliver real change and provide a two-eyed seeing approach to marine conservation.

References

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