



BOOK REVIEWS

Rupert Ross. (2003). *Dancing with a Ghost*. Penguin Canada. 216 pp
CAD\$22.00

Rupert Ross, a Crown Attorney in Ontario, Canada, brings us a magnificent book that explains Indigenous culture in communities in Northern Ontario like no other book I have ever read. Ross brilliantly details the personal and societal attitudes of Native people who were raised in the traditional hunter-gatherer societies of North America – making them different in deeply instructive and inspiring ways from the Europeans who displaced them and who continue to oppress them.

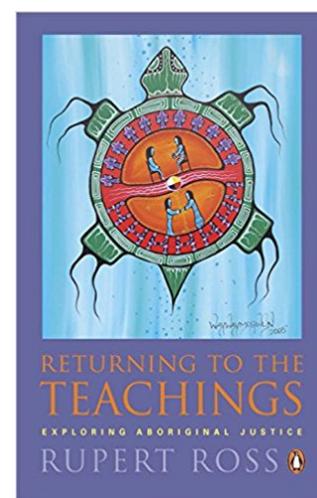
Ross explains the basis of Indigenous culture in the context of an awareness that includes the interrelationships of people with each other, with all aspects of nature and with spirit.

Education in the essence of their culture begins in their early years. Their children are told what to do or not do only when what they are facing is an unfamiliar, life-threatening danger. Otherwise, they are very strictly left to learn from their experiences of making wise and unwise choices.

Similarly, it is virtually unheard of for one Native person to tell another what to do, or to criticize what they have done, or even to suggest ways they might have done better. This applies even to situations of violence and abuse between people. Even in discussing the most negative behaviors, their focus is on very gently suggesting how a person who got drunk, beat up or even raped, injured or killed another person can do better.

Ross cogently argues that the attitudes evolving from these Native ways have profoundly deep effects on shaping the lives of their people. First and foremost, people are left from childhood to rely largely on their feelings and their intuitive and personal spiritual senses of rightness and wrongness in any and all aspects of their lives – and particularly in new and unknown situations. As hunter gatherers, foraging in new territories and in ever-changing situations, having their wholistic awarenesses of body, mind, relationships with each other and spirit very keenly tuned – from their lifetimes of always having to rely on themselves to decide what to do – was a tremendous advantage.

Ross came to understand the survival value of these approaches through his own experiences of working for over ten years as a guide for sports fishermen in the lakes of Northern Ontario. Ross consulted local Native fishermen regarding the best locations for fishing in the local lakes. While they offered advice from general, long-term experiences of local fishing, on any given day they indicated that it was up to each individual guide to intuitively sense which spots were best for that day and times of the day. To his great surprise, he found himself gradually acquiring these sorts of awarenesses. On one dramatic occasion, he probably saved the lives of the people he was guiding, as well as his own life, by using these skills. This experience helped convince him of the validity and value of Native wisdom.



The same Native principles applied to human relationships. The guiding principles of Native society "...include respect for the natural sphere, an emphasis upon careful and sensitive consensus-building, a focus upon a rehabilitative and preventative response to social turmoil and an insistence upon family and community responsibility for the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health of each member...."

"... their lives did not centre on building things but upon discerning things. Life's challenge lay in observing and understanding the workings of the dynamic equilibrium of which they were a part, then acting so as to sustain a harmony within it rather than a mastery over it. One aspired to wisdom in accommodating oneself to that equilibrium, and that pursuit quite clearly promised unlimited scope for exploration and self-development." (p. 105-6)

Within Indigenous culture, misbehaviors and acts of poor judgment represent a lack of full and proper focus on the issues at hand. Problems that arise are not seen as willful errors or misdeeds, but as neglecting to maintain one's connection with all aspects of creation, particularly the guidance of spirit. Therefore, it is a return to the full flow of consciousness that determines the path to follow that is best for all. The spirit world is the ultimate guide for all that happens and is experienced. It is the challenge of all people to discern the most healing path that is promoted by the spiritual world.

Basic Native ethics include:

1. Non-interference in any other individual's personal path of learning (a deeply ingrained attitude that is absolutely adhered to, even under great stress and duress)
2. Anger must not be shown
3. Praise and gratitude are respected
4. Carefully considering all aspects of action before responding to challenges
5. Choosing the right time to speak and act

These are in stark contrast to white man's rules.

"... The white man is torn between two ideals. On the one hand, he believes in freedom, in minding his own business and in the right of people to make up their minds for themselves. On the other hand, he believes he should be his brother's keeper and not abstain from giving advice or even taking actions when he perceives his brother making an error." (Brant, 1982, quoted in Ross, 2003, p. 14.)

The white man emphasizes parental responsibility and control over his children, under rigid commandments that are to be obeyed throughout life without question. Punitive punishments are set in place for serious misbehaviors, which are seen as sinful – both during life and in the hereafter. The white man sees himself as his brother's keeper and feels responsible for recommending better actions and correcting transgressions against social rules. Misbehaviors deserve punishment, and the courts are set up to determine whether lack of adherence to the rules of society merit the meting out of civil or criminal sanctions or punishments.

The forced placement of Native children in residential schools was particularly destructive to Native culture. The Natives had to choose between living near their children or continuing their hunter-gatherer existence. In choosing the former, they ended up in small towns, with no means for earning their living, on the dole. Alcoholism and drug abuse led to further crumbling of their social structure. Violence and rapes have become epidemics.

Despite these attacks on their traditional lifestyles, and social pressures to conform to the white man's ways of dominating the world, Ross clearly and poignantly describes how the Native people have remained faithful to their own traditions. Ever so slowly and gradually, the Native peoples have been working on dealing with all of these problems.

Ross has wonderful gifts of open-minded perceptions of behavioral patterns that arise from cultural differences in individual and societal understandings of the world that differ between Native and white cultures. Working as he did within the white man's court system, and being charged with addressing misbehaviors and criminal acts, as well as with recommending punishments that are seen by the white man as appropriate to the crimes, he was still able to see the personal and societal rules of Native society and to question how appropriate it is for the rules of white society to be enforced

upon Native people who have very different worldviews and norms for relating to their own and other people's behaviors.

Ross charitably attributes the oppressions of Indigenous people by white to cultural differences, with gross lack of understanding on the part of the European settlers, continuing into modern times. I believe that in addition to the cultural factors he so brilliantly explains, major portions of the brutal displacements of these people have been and continue to be motivated by greedy and callous people who exercised their greater gunpower, heartless avarice and familiarity with white man's laws to acquire farmlands and other resources for their own benefits.

Ross brilliantly details the incredible fortitude and persistence of Native people in adhering to their cultural traditions. The Indigenous people have remained steadfast in their worldviews and attitudes towards a life including the guidance of spirit, choosing to explain their views and positions to the best of their abilities to their oppressors, despite many generations in which their oppressors have not understood or learned from them as Ross has so wonderfully described and illustrated doing himself.

Again and again, the incredibly patient attitudes of the Indigenous people put them at devastating disadvantages and in repeated perils and horrendous persecutions during their many dealings with white invaders of their lands. We need more people like Rupert Ross in this world that is increasingly moving towards being a global community, to help us all move into more healing approaches to co-existence with people of all cultures who differ from our own.

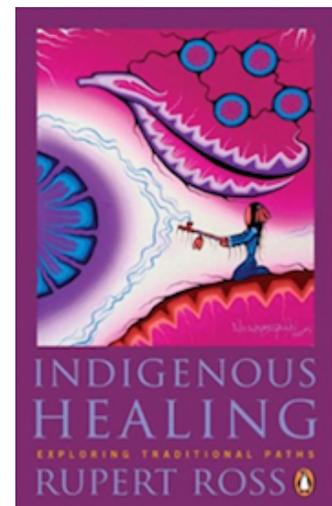
My own perspectives as a psychotherapist are based on wholistic understandings of the world, which have considerable overlaps with those of Ross that are so beautifully detailed and explained in this book. I find that people do best when they acknowledge and connect solidly with body, emotions, mind, relationships and spirit. Each of these aspects of life are vital to our health and healing – both individually and collectively. Each is intimately interlinked with all of the others. Much of what I offer people are ways to build, strengthen and reintegrate their reconnections with each of these parts of themselves.

This is a book worthy of serious literary prizes for its timely and perceptive observations that are presented in a compelling manner, inviting readers to consider how we perceive ourselves in the world today and how we might do better in relating with ourselves, each other and with the world at large. The greatest challenges I see for humanity today are in harmonizing all of these awarenesses, both individually and collectively. This book should be essential reading for any serious seeker of healing in our world today.

Book Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
Editor-in-Chief, International J of Healing and Caring

Rupert Ross. (2014). *Indigenous Healing: Exploring traditional paths*. Penguin Canada. 322 pp . CAD\$24.00. 14 pp. Notes & references, Index for anecdotes

Rupert Ross, now a retired Crown Attorney in Ontario, Canada, brings us another masterful review and discussion on psychological problems in the Canadian Indigenous peoples. This one goes much deeper into the major cultural and personal traumas experienced by individuals, families and communities, from their children being forcibly removed to residential schools over four generations between the 1880s and 1960s. This disrupted the Indigenous cultural continuity, depriving children of learning their cultural heritages and exposing them in many cases to brutal physical, emotional and sexual abuse in the residential schools – from teachers, clergy and other children.



This was followed in the 1960s by systematic, forceful removal of children from their family homes for

placement in foster care. The focus was particularly on the severe problems the children experienced in families where alcoholism, violence and sexual abuse were found. For the most part, children were placed with non-indigenous families, thereby continuing the cultural genocide and perpetuating and worsening the family, personal and interpersonal challenges resulting from these traumas. This is an ongoing problem, with much higher rates of placements of Indigenous children in foster care than among the non-Indigenous population.

Rupert Ross continues to demonstrate in this book his masterful abilities to document the legal issues involved, through his career spanning over 30 years in the Ontario courts serving Indigenous communities.

More importantly, Rupert Ross explains the severe effects of complex post traumatic stress on the Indigenous people. There have been four generations of residential school dislocations of children from their families and communities. In many cases, children were kept year-round for the duration of their 10 years of education in schools that were hundreds of miles away from their families. They were forbidden to speak their tribal languages and were deliberately restrained from contact with their siblings, even when they were in the same school. They were given non-Indigenous names or just numbers and forbidden to use their personal or family birth names. Families were often not informed of their children's illnesses, nor even, in some cases, of their deaths.

Punishments for breaking school rules were severe, often including brutal corporal punishments. Complaints to staff about sexual abuse perpetrated by other staff, by clergy, or by other students were ignored, dismissed, or sometimes met with further punishments.

When the children returned home at age 15, they had lost much of their cultural connections with their families and communities. Indigenous elders, who had been the bearers and instructors of Indigenous culture, had had no inputs into these children's education during their formative years. Thus, they were not sought out for advice or help in dealing with these family, community and cultural disruptions.

People who experience a single episode of severe trauma often develop a post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This can be severe enough to cause chronic depression, addictions, violent temper outbursts and suicide. The Indigenous children and their families experienced multiple, repeated, traumas over the years of their residential schooling, and again on their reservations through chronic conflicts with family and others in their community. Those who grew up as children to traumatized adults experienced the outbursts of the adults in their family and community, in addition to the traumas of the residential schools. People alive today may have had four generations of traumatized people in their families, plus many others in their communities. When there are multiple, ongoing traumas like these, they are labeled as complex PTSD.

Western medicine prescribes medications for PTSD symptoms, and Western psychotherapy offers support and various forms of trauma release. In addition, family or group therapy can be helpful. Rupert Ross saw many severely traumatized indigenous people in court on charges of violence, assaults and sexual abuse, with numerous murders as well. The remedy he provided in his court was incarceration and/or probation. This kept people safe from harming and abusing each other – but often this was effective only for the duration of the jail sentence. Worse yet, the prison experience was often seriously traumatizing and further served to increase the prisoners' traumas and PTSD symptoms.

Rupert Ross points out that the White man's focus on the problems of the traumatized individual is alien to Indigenous culture. Living as they do in a culture where wholistic relationships with other people and with the entire world are understood and taken for granted, the narrowness of the White

man's focus is so incomplete as to be experienced by Indigenous people as alien, uncomfortable and inappropriate for addressing their life issues.

And here is where Rupert Ross's wisdom and familiarity with Indigenous people and culture make this book so unusually helpful – even way beyond the brilliant observations and suggestions he has for addressing Indigenous complex PTSD through the approaches developed within their own culture. Indigenous people in Canada have traditions of listening to all of the parties involved in these sorts of violent and abusive behaviors, which often are associated with alcohol and drug use as well. They seek to help these people feel better about themselves, and to restore their connections not only with their own mind and emotions, but also with their relationships with other individuals and with their community at large. Also important are the restoration of harmony between the individual and the environment, and, most importantly, their reconnection with spirit.

He wisely observes that with this more holistic approach, the offenders will be less likely to continue their problem behaviors. White people's ways of dealing with these problems are often punitive, with very little healing resulting from fines and incarcerations. Indigenous approaches are restorative. They help people with trauma histories to feel understood and accepted, so that they can speak about their problems and heal on all levels of their being: body, mind, relationships and spirit. This is why group therapy appears particularly helpful in Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, groups that include therapists and participants who have all experienced the traumas addressed by the individual participants in the group are particularly helpful.

When the therapist is not a single person but a circle of people sharing similar experiences and never assuming superior status or power, I have to wonder whether the issue of transference is simply avoided. When I spent time in healing circles, I never had the impression that one person was directing the show. The circle leader merely set out the themes and then let everyone speak to them as they wished. Nor did the circle leader ever try to sum up what had been said; everyone's words stood on their own... (p. 253)

Rupert Ross also shares details of particularly helpful Indigenous therapeutic and restorative programs for dealing with these serious problems. Group therapy has been especially effective, especially when led by professionals who have experienced severe trauma themselves.

I find it most heartening and encouraging to see these deep levels of awareness, understanding and acceptance of wholistic approaches, featured by a brilliant Crown attorney who has not just learned from the people who came before him in court, but has sought out Indigenous people from whom he could learn more about their ways of dealing with severe problems that White men's courts were only worsening. I wish there were more lawyers like Rupert Ross, who would seek out the wise, healing members of the Aboriginal communities – to learn from them and support their more healing ways of dealing with severe human traumas and suffering that lead to abusive and violent behaviors.

If you are a therapist or a person seeking help for yourself for severe traumas, this book will bring you many insights and suggestions for ways you can explore for your healing and for the healings of others struggling with the memories and scars of overwhelming stresses and traumas.

I am also bemused by the similarities and overlaps of the wholistic healing approaches I've developed with the Indigenous approaches so well described and explained by Rupert Ross. See my views on these at <http://www.ijhc.org/variations-on-the-theme-of-healing/>.

I believe, however, that there may still be some new and innovative Western approaches that could be adapted to wholistic healing programs in Indigenous communities. In particular:

1. Energy Psychology (EP) methods such as TWR/WHEE offer individuals the tools for systematic trauma releases of memories and feelings that plague people suffering with PTSD (Feinstein, 2012).
2. Once learned, people can use these practices anywhere, at any time they are stressed and need them.
3. These methods can be adapted to the group experiences, practices and rituals of Indigenous communities. The experiences of Rwandans using EP methods to clear their PTSDs from the 1994 genocide are particularly relevant (Edwards, 2016; Hamne & Sandström. (2017).
4. These methods are simple enough that those who have learned them can 'pay them forward' to others, teaching them how to do this de-stressing (Edwards, 2016).
5. These methods are helpful in treatment of addictions, both directly for reducing the cravings and for reducing the symptoms of PTSD that fuel the addictions.
6. Once negativity has been released, EP can be used to install and restore positivity (Benor, 2010).
7. The spiritual practice of sending prayers, requests and intentions for sharing the healings of individuals can be adapted to group clearings of collective PTSDs (Benor, 2016).

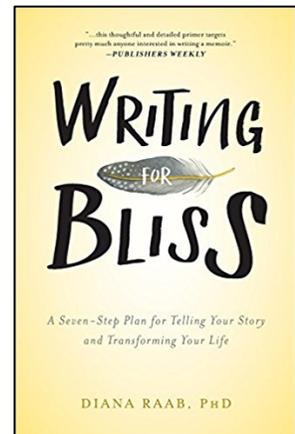
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Book Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
Editor-in-Chief, International J of Healing and Caring

Diana Raab. *Writing for Bliss: A Seven Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Loving Healing Press. 209 pages.

This is an excellent book that is very readable, instructive, inspiring and healing. The author Diana Raab, PhD has vast experience writing and teaching others how to write memoirs, journals, books and poems. She has a Masters degree in Arts and a PhD in Transpersonal Psychology. The book is easy to read and can be enjoyed by lay and professional audiences alike. Raab has the rare ability to alternate comfortably between personal sharing, educational instruction and scholarly references and quotes in a way that can catalyze healing, wholeness, growth, insight, well-being and potentially life transformation.



Throughout the book Raab shares intimate stories of her life, challenges from the age of 10 in 1964 when she found her grandmother, Regina, who had committed suicide in her bedroom in Brooklyn, New York. It was then that her mother gave her a journal of Kahlil Gibran and told her to write in it to help with the healing of her grief. (She later found out her grandmother also kept a journal.) Unknown to Raab, her writing and journaling career had begun. She later writes about her father surviving the holocaust, (his parents didn't); her mother's self-centeredness, lack of attention and often strong

verbal criticism throughout her life; her turbulent adolescence; her daughter's drug addiction and especially her 2 cancer and bone marrow diagnoses in 2001 and 2010. In some ways the book is about her personal and spiritual journey and transformation from loss, grief, pain and hurt to joy, happiness, compassion, purpose, meaning, love and bliss.

The core of *Writing for Bliss*, however, centers around the 7 step plan:

1. Preparing to Write focuses on creating a sacred space, calming the mind, grounding yourself, feeling gratitude, being courageous and nurturing creativity, inspiration and flow.

2. Cultivating Self-Awareness focuses on using techniques and approaches drawn from transpersonal psychology and related disciplines such as setting intentions; mindfulness meditation, lovingkindness meditation, guided creative visualization, hypnosis, breath work, recalling dreams and working with your shadow. Raab quotes freely from Maslow, Jung, Frankl, Thich Naht Hahn and Anais Nin (her favorite writing mentor) and many others in her journalistic field. The quotes alone are powerful, informative, educational and uplifting.

3. Speaking Your Truth focuses on the art and power of storytelling; writing your emotional truth; finding your authentic voice; embodied and reflective writing and memory and imagination. Throughout this and all chapters Raab invites the reader to use her numerous writing prompts which cover a wide range of emotions, meanings and basically the challenges and struggles experienced during one's whole life span. The prompts alone are probably worth the price of the book. By using the prompts, one's life begins to unfold in a new and transformative way filled with higher perspectives, clarified purpose and reframed meanings.

4. Examine Your Life focuses on life purpose and themes; the meaning of experiences; the patterns in our lives; writing about difficult times; wounded healers and storytellers; healing stories; mortality as a teacher and inner child healing. Just reading the dialogue and stories in the book encourages the reader to reflect on all aspects of his/her life. This includes experiences from childhood to the present. In the process the reader has the opportunity to create and stimulate personal, relationship and spiritual growth, balance, emotional stability, joy, purpose, and wholeness, from periods of turmoil, trauma and crises.

5. Finding Your Form focuses on different tools for journal writing such as notebooks, letters, essays, blogs and journals of various kinds. Raab discusses in particular dream journals, gratitude journals and travel journals as well as memoirs (her personal favorite), biographies and autobiographies and writing fiction. In the process she discusses how to make a memoir compelling (more stories and less telling) and some essential writing tips.

6. Unleashing With Poetry (she is also a poet) focuses on types of poetry; poetry as inspiration; poetry as healing and therapy; reading poetry; the courage to write poetry; writing compelling poetry and the role and use of metaphor.

7. Sharing Your Writing focuses on writing about others and what to include and leave out; writing about family secrets; about sex and intimacy; writing love letters; revising and editing; showing drafts to others for feedback and encouragement; publishing basics and where to submit your work for publication.

Writing for Bliss is very comprehensive. If you follow Raab's instructions and use the prompts it might just change your life in very positive and uplifting ways. It can be used to facilitate healing from all kinds of emotional pain: grief, loss, anxiety, guilt, anger, rage, betrayal, fear, shame, frustration, disappointment and confusion and bring the reader to greater levels of peace, love, happiness, joy, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, insight, blessings and perhaps even grace and bliss. It has the

possibility as well of healing relationships of all kinds. In addition, the writing prompts and ideas in the book can be used by many different therapists and healers as a tool to accompany the many techniques they already use to facilitate change.

Diana Raab is clearly a very talented writer and healer. She has brought together a lifetime of knowledge, tools, approaches, wisdom, scholarship, life experience and creativity in this, her latest, very integrative and uplifting book. It can bring you from darkness to light. I am grateful I had the opportunity to read it. *Writing for Bliss* is highly recommended. It might just help change your or your client's life.

Book review by Philip Friedman, PhD
Director: Foundation for Well-Being
Plymouth Meeting, Pa.

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