Chapter 12
Cathedrals of the Spirit: Indigenous Relational Cultural Identity and Social and Emotional Well-Being

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Introduction

Cultural survival, reclamation, and identity have become a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This chapter traces how Aboriginal culture and identity have survived and indeed are becoming strengthened throughout Australia. First, the repercussions of racist policies and practices on the identity construction of Aboriginal Peoples and their struggles to assert cultural recognition are addressed. Informed partly by racist, pseudoscientific ideas of eugenics and alongside the practices of genocide, government policies enforced assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples into mainstream society as second-class citizens. They sought to decimate Aboriginal culture and identity through colonization. Second, the cultural renaissance experience over the last few decades is discussed. Reclamation of culture and the construction of identity are a vital part of Indigenous well-being and extend beyond claiming equal rights. Relationality is then discussed as critical to understanding Indigenous worldviews and cultural identity. We propose that the concept of social and emotional well-being (SEWB) is a valuable framework that includes the holistic domains essential in Indigenous identity. This framework is not considered as a lay theory of well-being; it is considered a reconnection with Indigenous Ways of Knowing that existed before colonization. It is acknowledged that there is an ongoing struggle to be recognized as culturally diverse within a system and country that still reflect colonial power. Yet the cultural strengthening discussed here is reflected globally, where Indigenous Peoples are reclaiming and redefining their cultural identity despite oppressive surroundings.

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Cultural Genocide

It is widely recognized that Indigenous Australians are the custodians of one of the earth's oldest continuing cultures, estimated at over 55,000 years old (Nagle et al., 2017). Prior to the 1788 invasion of the country now known as Australia, there were roughly 250 Indigenous languages spoken across the nation (Walsh, 1991). These diverse Indigenous cultures practiced sophisticated, sustainable, life-affirming knowledge systems regarding, for example, astronomy, medicine, geography, history, law, philosophy, and ecology. Communities were governed by complex ecocentric kinship laws, which delimitated social and spiritual obligations to family, community, and the Country (used interchangeably with "the land"). These laws were relational and holistic, encompassing knowledge systems that were founded on a dynamic kinship with the land.

Within this context, identity was understood to be an expression of the land, which, according to Indigenous knowledge systems, is a conscious being with a past, a present, and a future. The ecocentric relational dynamics of Indigenous identity describe what might be understood to be a culturally distinctive identity. As Moreton-Robinson (2003) writes, Indigenous people have an "ontological relationship" (p. 31) with Country in that it forms an inherent part of people. It is this inseparable relationship between people and land that is possibly the greatest, most profound difference between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous and therefore cannot be measured against the same standards (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). Indigenous identity, as understood within Indigenous knowledge systems, is constituted, organized, and created through a shared ontology with Country. The distinctions between identity formation within individualistic and collectivist cultures that have dominated social psychology over the past few decades (Becker et al., 2012; Hofstede, 2001; Smith, 2011; Tajfel, 1974) cannot be easily mapped onto Indigenous concepts of identity. Although Indigenous identity can be understood to be collectivist, the concept of Indigenous collectivity also encompasses an ontological, epistemological, and axiological relationship to a nonhuman collectivity—Country. As will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, the ecocentric relationality that forms Australian Indigenous cultural identity is shared by other Indigenous peoples (those from the countries now known as New Zealand, Canada, and the United States of America; McClintock et al., in press).

For all Indigenous peoples, the identity wounds inflicted by colonization have resulted in culturally unique psychosocial threats to well-being. Colonization involved the calculated and systemic destruction of the physical and psychosocial integrity of Australia's Indigenous People, a comprehensive process of land theft, mass violence, and cultural destruction called assimilation by the colonizers and genocide by the Indigenous Peoples (National Tribal Council, 1969). Indigenous People are aware that colonization and settler nationhood have historically sought the elimination of Indigenous Peoples and their identities. Indeed, the profoundly deleterious intergenerational psychosocial consequences of the attempted

destruction of Indigenous cultural identity are recognized across the literature (George et al., 2019).

Moreover, Indigenous leaders and their communities have long sought to resist the genocidal targeting of cultural identity. For example, William Cooper, a Yorta Yorta Elder and statesman, submitted a petition to the Victorian Board of Protection of Aborigines in 1935 protesting against the extinction of Indigenous Australians through assimilation policies that were directed at destroying cultural identity. In the 1969 Policy Manifesto of the National Tribal Council, assimilation was dubbed "cultural genocide" (National Tribal Council, 1969, p. 13). In 1970, the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) submitted a petition to the United Nations ("UN Petitions Allege Genocide in Australia,", 1970, p. 8) protesting the "systematic obliteration of our people[s]" (Mackay, 2015, p. 64).

As well as drawing attention to the ways in which enforced poverty, social marginalization, and exclusion from education contributed to the slow genocide of Indigenous People, the VAAL petition also identified the psychological dimension as "the most insidious of the weapons of genocide." This understanding was echoed in the following year by Indigenous activist Bobby Sykes. Writing for the historically important Indigenous magazine *Identity* (published between 1971 and 1982), Sykes (1996/1971) described genocide as "a very delicate process of demeaning and soul-destroying tactics" (p. 130) in which Indigenous peoples are ignored or their very existence denied. Indigenous psychiatrist Milroy (2006) also described this radical exclusion from humanity as a form of psychological genocide. Also writing for *Identity*, Aboriginal intellectual Kevin Gilbert (1971) describes an enforced sense of shame: the "interiorised racial-cultural image with which Aboriginal people[s] have been forcibly indoctrinated" (p. 23). He further notes that the problem chiefly involves the attrition of a valued identity (Gilbert, 1971).

It is remembered that Australia was declared *terra nullius* (unoccupied land) by the invading culture, with the human inhabitants categorized as flora and fauna and subjected to profound de-humanization. As the vast literature on ethnic and racial identity has shown us, psychological well-being is intimately tied to a secure sense of positive ingroup identity, a sociocognitive empowerment which acts as a buffer against external discrimination and negative stereotyping (Adams et al., 2016; Phinney, 1992). By forcing Indigenous Peoples off the lands they belonged to and subjecting them to racist assimilation policies that included the forced removal of children across generations, the invading culture broke deep and protective kinship bonds with Country, family, and community, while also subjecting them to a multitude of human rights abuses.

Gilbert's description of the impact of colonization on Indigenous identity is pertinent. He stated that as invasion occurred, Indigenous Australians began to sicken physically and psychologically:

> They were hit by the full blight of an alien way of thinking. They were hit by the intolerance and uncomprehending barbarism of a people intent only on progress in material terms, a people who never credited that there could be cathedrals of the spirit as well as stone. Their view of Aborigines as the most miserable people on earth was seared into Aboriginal thinking because they now controlled the provisions that allowed blacks to continue to exist at

> all. Independence from them was not possible. … It is my thesis that Aboriginal Australia underwent a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the minds of most blacks today. It is this psychological blight, more than anything else, that causes the conditions that we see on the reserves and missions. And it is repeated down the generations. (Gilbert, 1977, pp. 2–3)

This "psychological blight" has been identified as "historical trauma" by Indigenous psychologists (Hartman et al., 2019). Historical trauma has four components: colonial injury, collective experience, cumulative effects, and cross-generational impacts (Gone, 2013; Hartman & Gone, 2014). Healing from historical trauma is a complex process requiring the reinstatement of Indigenous self-determination across the social determinants of everyday life—education, employment, housing, the health sector, and governance (Marmot, 2011)—and the strengthening of the cultural determinants of well-being, or social and emotional well-being (SEWB). As will be discussed later, SEWB encompasses the seven well-being domains of spirituality, culture, Country, family and kinship, community, mind and emotions, and body (Gee et al., 2014). Harmonious relations between these interconnected domains strengthen identity and build resilience (Salmon et al., 2018).

Indigenous health experts recognize that robust individual and collective identities are often the result of stronger ties to culture and country (Brown, 2013). Indeed, across the literature, the development of a strong cultural identity has been identified as protective (Chandler & Dunlop, 2018; Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012; Marmion et al., 2014; SNAICC, 2012; Usborne & Taylor, 2010). The relationship between strong cultural identity and well-being is not only supported by the scientific literature in the field, but is broadly recognized by Indigenous people across Australia. For example, a common belief of all participants in the National Empowerment Project (NEP), an Indigenous-designed and Indigenous-implemented suicide prevention program covering 11 communities across Australia, was that a positive cultural identity was a powerful advantage and that a connection to culture was important if their community, family, and individual lives were to improve (Dudgeon et al., 2014a). Qualitative evidence gathered by NEP also found that the restoration of SEWB is tied to a "secure sense of cultural identity and cultural values, and to participation in cultural practices that enable people to exercise and experience their cultural rights and responsibilities" (Dudgeon et al., 2014c, p. 14).

The importance of cultural identity is also repeatedly stressed as central to both SEWB and suicide prevention in the *The Elders' Report into Preventing Indigenous Self-harm and Youth Suicide* (People Culture Environment, 2014), which contains transcribed interviews with 31 Elders and community leaders from more than 17 communities across Australia. Reinforced therein, for example, are the assertions that Aboriginal identity originates in the land, and no matter one's material (Western) wealth or view thereof, a strong cultural identity is paramount to Aboriginal peoples' physical and spiritual well-being. *The Elders Report* shows that restoring and strengthening cultural identity is a vital part of many Indigenous healing programs across the country and is a foundational protective factor for SEWB. Qualitative evidence gathered from participants of six regional roundtables across Australia by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project

(ATSISPEP) also found that that a strong cultural identity was recognized to be essential to the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Milroy et al., 2017).

Building a strong cultural identity is connected to strengthening harmonious relationships between each of the domains of SEWB (Dudgeon et al., 2017; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015). The formation of strong cultural identity gives life meaning and reduces the risk of psychological distress (Milroy et al., 2017). Since the 1970s in particular, the Indigenous self-determination movement (of which Indigenous psychology is an integral part) has reclaimed cultural identity despite the continuation of colonial attitudes and behavior.

Reclaiming Cultural Identity

Dodson (1994) states that the recognition of people's fundamental right to self-determination must include the right to determine their identities—

> to inherit the collective identity of one's people, and to transform that identity creatively according to the self-defined aspirations of one's people and one's own generation. It must include the freedom to live outside the cage created by other people's images and projections. (p. 5)

Contemporary Indigenous Australians have contested dominant deficit narratives about Indigenous identity across a number of platforms and continue to challenge racist misrepresentations. Change is not characterized by clean leaps into other social spaces; colonial perceptions of Aboriginal identity are contested and are in the process of reconstruction. These complex contestations are sometimes evident in the perceptions of Aboriginal People. Langton (1993) notes that Aboriginality is continuously being recast through processes of dialogue, imagination, representation, and interpretation.

For Australian Indigenous People, cultural survival, reclamation, and identity have become a priority. This is a both a cultural renaissance and a process of decolonization. The term "cultural renaissance" has been used in many discussions of Indigenous cultural identity, for example, in Oxenham et al. (1999) and Sissons (2005). It refers to a period of time in the Indigenous political and social movement, commencing around the 1970s to 1980s, when concerns were not only about claiming equal rights, but also refers to reclaiming culture difference, and having that acknowledged and respected in mainstream society. Cultural identity itself became significant.

Distinguished anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, from their long and extensive study of and involvement with Indigenous People, also described the direction of rapid social and political change in Indigenous Australia as a renaissance:

> That renaissance is not necessarily to be found in a revival of traditional life, although it is sometimes. Rather, it is a renaissance that concerns the Aboriginal heritage, a broad heritage which is continuing to be responsive to change. Educational and economic imperatives

> alone can stimulate considerable changes in all aspects of social living and thinking. The hope is, the necessity is, to safeguard the quality and substance of that heritage. One thing that will serve to buttress surviving traditional views and values is pride in having an Aboriginal identity. That social identity is no longer simply an aspiration; it is now a reality (Berndt & Berndt, 1992, p. 531).

In exploring the historical constructions of Indigenous identity, it is apparent that over the last 50 years, a remarkable change has come about in public representations of Aboriginality. Geoffrey Stokes (1997) reviewed how Aboriginal people deployed political ideas and arguments in the face of state oppression. He conceptualized the history of Aboriginal identity from a political perspective and suggested that there are two broad ideas in the development of Indigenous identity. The first, predicated on the desire for equality, was a quest for citizenship and human rights by Aboriginal People that stressed the sameness of Aborigines to White people. This was evident in the earlier to mid-part of the twentieth century. The later conception retained the first notion and presented a different assertion: an identity based on cultural difference to White people.

The twenty-first century social reality for Indigenous People depicts a markedly different picture from their reality in the 1970s. Over the decades, the political focus has changed to an emphasis on cultural identity. In contemporary times, Aboriginal People describe the following as their identity: being descended from Aboriginal groups, becoming aware of being different to (White) others, being grounded in family connections, being part of the local Aboriginal community, and having cultural ways such as values, principles, morals, and spirituality (Oxenham et al., 1999).

Sissons (2005) observed from a global perspective that Indigenous cultures are not disappearing as predicted, nor have they been assimilated into a new international order. Their diversity has not reduced. Indigenous peoples have become stronger, are envisaging alternative futures, and have appropriated global resources for their own cultural specific ends. It could be said that Indigenous peoples are in the process of reclaiming their cultures, not as they were traditionally in a purist manner, but based on a renewal of those traditional ways. Cultural renaissance is about resurgence, reclaiming, and taking pride in previously denigrated and repressed subjectivities. This process is continuing and evolving. In Oxenham et al. (1999), Indigenous authors discuss how some Aboriginal groups drew upon the cultural practices from other geographical areas to reinstate some of their own local ceremonial practices and concluded that this was appropriate as part of the process of reclaiming culture.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been an unprecedented change in Aboriginal perceptions of Aboriginal identity. Now, for the first time, there is an element of pride in being an Indigenous Person despite the continued racist views held by society. Indeed, reclaiming cultural identity may have been essential for the survival of oppressed peoples, particularly those from minority groups in settler nations. However, the White gaze described by Kevin Gilbert (1977), which demanded fossilized, preserved, exotic images of Aboriginal culture, yet denied people's heritage if they caused political discomfort, still persists. With the renaissance or cultural reclamation of recent years, strengthening Indigenous

identity has become a priority for Indigenous People, and the cultural elements of identity have become increasingly important and enacted.

Cultural Identity as Relational

Indigenous cultural identity may be described as an identity formed through and expressing *relationality*; the idea of a dynamic interconnectivity is a concept foundational to many Indigenous worldviews that opposes the dominant Western philosophy of dualism. First Nations critical psychologist Ansloos (2017) emphasized the need to "acknowledge the complexity of identity in a relational worldview … Indigenous approaches extend relationality into complex and dynamic spheres that go beyond the confines of an enlightenment notion of identity or self-hood" (p. 11). This concept is gaining prominence within Indigenous scholarship across the disciplines as a way of describing the holistic complexity of Indigenous knowledge systems (Blaser et al., 2011; Kovach, 2009; Loppie, 2007; Mertens et al., 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2017; Romm, 2015). A primary purpose of such scholarship is the revitalization of relational life-affirming Indigenous knowledge systems, which are understood to be healing not only for individuals, families, and communities but also the environment.

In brief, Indigenous relationality can be understood to have ontological, axiological, and epistemological dimensions, or interconnected ways of being, doing, and knowing. Relational ontology describes a form of dynamic becoming that is based on a complex form of ethical reciprocity. Kinship is central in this context. Numerous Indigenous cultures have kinship systems that situate identity within elaborate ethical relations not only with family and community but to the wider community of animals, plants, sky, waters, and land. Axiological relationality is pivotal to such knowledge systems; indeed, the very purpose of such systems is a praxis that is guided by an ethical commitment toward the guarding and nurturing of all life forms. Significantly, cultural identity is based on axiological relationality, on cultural principles of reciprocity, obligation, and caring (Dudgeon et al., 2014a, p. 14). As such, Indigenous rationality can be understood as a form of lore or law, a system of being, doing, and knowing, guided by a drive toward ecocentric justice.

These axiological relational lores are often argued to be an expression of the earth—the land is "the logos of the law" (Black, 2016, p. 165)—as is the overriding principle of justice served by such lores (Cajete, 1994; Daigle, 2016; Oscar, 2017; Todd, 2016; Watson, 2016; Watts, a2013). The justice project of decolonization can be situated within this system of relationality. Harris and Wasilewski (2004), for example, argued for the revival of a Comanche relationality axiology, composed of the four principles of relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution, in order to challenge the destructive colonial fetishization of profit and power. The will toward a life-affirming harmony can be said to direct Indigenous axiological relationality: Strong cultural identity and well-being depend on the collective practice of an ethical connection with life, with the process of living.

Watts (2013) discussed how Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe relationality are centered in a custodial relationship with the earth: to lose a relational connection to the earth is to risk the destruction of Indigenous cultural identity and dishonor the sovereign agency of the earth. The Cree people's knowledge system of *Miyupimaatisiiun* (being alive well) is another Indigenous form of axiological relationality that serves a twofold purpose: organizing social life and establishing a sense of collective identity (Adelson, 2000; Kirmayer et al., 2000). For the Maori people, *Whakapapa* is a relational well-being lore that is based on the principles of continuity, unity, harmony, connection, and life meaning, which place cultural identity within a framework of holistic connections (Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010; Te Rito, 2007). Indigenous Australians have resonant systems of relationality. Similar (but distinct) Indigenous knowledge systems exist across Australia (Lloyd et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2003; Watson, 2016; Yap & Yu, 2016). Within Australian Indigenous psychology, the multidimensional concept of SEWB has emerged as a description of relational well-being and cultural identity.

Cultural Identity and Social and Emotional Well-being

As Swan and Raphael (1995) state in the *Ways Forward* report—a report that is broadly recognized to be foundational to contemporary Australian Indigenous psychology—relational well-being is:

> holistic, encompassing mental health and physical, cultural and spiritual health. Land is central to well-being. This holistic concept does not merely refer to the "whole body" but in fact is steeped in the harmonised inter-relations which constitute cultural well-being. These inter-relating factors can be categorised as largely spiritual, environmental, ideological, political, social, economic, mental and physical. Crucially, it must be understood that when the harmony of these interrelations is disrupted, Aboriginal ill health will persist. (p. 19)

This definition of health also informs the first of the nine guiding principles for working with Aboriginal people developed by the landmark *National Aboriginal Health Strategy* (NAHSWP, 1989) and now used across a broad raft of policy frameworks. This complex concept of relational well-being, refined and practiced over many centuries prior to colonization, enabled Indigenous people to flourish in harmony with each other and the land (Queensland Mental Health Commission, 2016). Reclaiming and revitalizing relational well-being is central to self-determination and the decolonization of psychology.

Along with the 1995 *Ways Forward* report, the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2004–2009* was pivotal in decolonizing Western psy-complex discourses about Indigenous mental health, which has frequently pathologized cultural identity and difference (Dudgeon et al., 2014b). Indeed, SEWB, represented by the diagram in Fig. 12.1, developed by Gee et al. (2014) on behalf of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association (AIPA), can be understood to be a

Fig. 12.1 Determinants of social and emotional well-being. (Gee et al., 2014 on behalf of the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association)

decolonized model of Indigenous well-being and identity that acknowledges that a strengths-based approach to the determinants of SEWB is pivotal in overcoming the deleterious impact of colonization.

As this diagram makes clear, the Indigenous Australian "conception of self is grounded within a collectivist perspective that views the self as inseparable from, and embedded within, family and community" (Gee et al., 2014 p. 57). Furthermore, this concept of relational identity encompasses complex relationships with spirituality and Country; indeed, all seven domains of well-being are interrelated.

An important point here is that this model of SEWB and Indigenous cultural identity has been developed through extensive Aboriginal participatory action research with Aboriginal communities across Australia (Brockman & Dudgeon, 2020). It should be noted that SEWB can be understood to be a psychological discourse that has been facilitated by and for Indigenous people using Indigenous research methods. Moreover, while a psychological discourse of SEWB has emerged from Indigenous communities, the discourse of SEWB cannot be collapsed with dominant hierarchical distinctions within Western psychology between lay and

expert mental health knowledges (Jorm et al., 1997). SEWB can be understood as an expression of the continuation of an Indigenous relational psychology that existed prior to colonization and not a lay theory of well-being.

As the diagram illustrates, self or identity is composed of dynamic relationships to seven interconnected domains. Each of these domains has complex cultural meanings that are specific either to a place or the specific Indigenous culture to which someone belongs, and SEWB needs will vary across the life course (Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council, 2017). Harmonious relations between these interconnected domains strengthen cultural identity across the lifespan (Salmon et al., 2018). As stated in the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017–2023*,

> seven social and emotional well-being domains are optimal sources of well-being and connection that support a strong and positive Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity grounded within a collectivist perspective. Culture and cultural identity is critical to social and emotional well-being. Practising culture can involve a living relationship with ancestors, the spiritual dimension of existence, and connection to country and language, (Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council, 2017, p. 6)

It is clear, then, that a strong healthy cultural identity is tied to the seven domains of SEWB. Moreover, in terms of clinical practice, the domains of SEWB have distinct motivational qualities, which can be integrated "as goals, values or needs, across therapy models, and provide a relevant culturally appropriate content for psychological intervention" (Brockman & Dudgeon, 2020, p. 89). Significantly, "the seven domains of well-being can be viewed as fundamental needs or nutriments, more or less required to experience well-being, and are unique from, but analogous to, Western notions of core emotional needs" (Brockman & Dudgeon, 2020, p. 87). There is now substantial evidence that healthy connections to these domains strengthen cultural identity and SEWB. For example, strengthened cultural connections to Country (Berry et al., 2010; Biddle, 2011; Biddle & Swee, 2012; Burgess et al., 2008, 2009) and spirituality (Grieves, 2009; Yap & Yu, 2016; Ypinazar et al., 2007) have been found to increase SEWB.

These culturally unique fundamental needs have been impacted by the colonial social determinants of health that subjected Indigenous Peoples to profound forms of racist exclusion from employment, education, health, and housing, as well as forms of intergenerational trauma caused by the forced removal of children from families and communities, violence, systemic discrimination, and cultural dislocation. These sociopolitical and historical contexts can be understood as the SEWB determinants of health and well-being. Indeed, social and historical influences are core to our understanding of well-being (Brockman & Dudgeon, 2020).

Healing from the sociocognitive assault of colonization, as Indigenous health experts have made clear for many decades, requires the comprehensive restoration of self-determination. The relationship between self-determination, a strong and healthy cultural identity, and well-being has long been recognized by Aboriginal People. The 1989 National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party states that, to Aboriginal peoples, health entails being able to regulate all aspects of their lives,

including physical environment, dignity, community, self-esteem, and justice. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2013) suggests that Indigenous Australians may not be able to fully overcome the legacy of colonization and dispossession were it not for their right to self-determination.

The social or cultural determinants of health—namely, Indigenous self-determination or Indigenous control over the conditions of everyday life—enable what Chandler and Lalonde (1998) describe as cultural continuity, which fosters a strong sense of cultural self-continuity (Becker et al., 2012; Sedikides et al., 2015) or cultural identity. In short, research on resilient identities has found that strong affective connections between the past and the present provide the necessary stability required for creating a positive future. Research into First Nation bands in Canada discovered that self-governing communities which are engaged in cultural practices have few or no youth suicide rates (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). Similar findings about self-determination in other Indigenous communities have also drawn attention to positive correlations between well-being and cultural identity (Newell et al., 2020).

Conclusion: Cultural Identity and Self-Determination

The colonizing White gaze, as so eloquently argued by Gilbert (1977), could not comprehend that there could be "cathedrals of the spirit as well as stone" (p. 2). Nor could they comprehend that within these cathedrals of the spirit, encompassing a Country twice the size of Europe, flourished a complex knowledge system that supported a harmonious democracy that saw no wars, and had intricate laws for resolving conflicts, bringing up children, and caring for each sex and the old. In addition, it had a loving and sustainable kinship with the earth and prioritized the holistic well-being of individuals, families, and communities over property and division. This complex knowledge system could be termed social and emotional well-being, so in profound ways, Indigenous relational identity is social and emotional well-being. Strengthening cultural identity strengthens social and emotional well-being.

Future research directions might entail a deeper analysis of the relationship between cultural identity and the domains of SEWB, how to strengthen protective factors, and how to overcome the barriers that communities face in strengthening cultural identity within all settings—remote, rural, and urban. Further research is required into the specific domains of SEWB from an Indigenous standpoint, using Indigenous-designed methodologies and measures. For practitioners and counselors, the protective role of strong cultural identity should be recognized as the foundation of well-being. If positive self-identity depends on a strengths-based narrative (Fogarty et al., 2018) about the past self, how might the SEWB domains of Indigenous cultural identity be approached—not only as domains necessary to well-being in the present but also as domains which express the potential to hold strengths-based cultural narratives of the past self? The ongoing process of reclaiming a positive cultural identity (which is occurring in the public sphere across many

sectors including the creative industries, politics, and academia) can be understood as a form of collective sociocognitive resilience building. Strengths-based narratives about the past, which emphasize resistance, survival, flourishing, and cultural dignity, enable a collective positive attachment to the past that can support cultural self-continuity and SEWB.

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