

Deep Listening

3.0 Exploration: Deep Listening, Right Relations, and Worldview

Key Points

- Listening is a critical leadership practice, particularly when leading in environments characterized by conflict, uncertainty, or change.
- Leaders need to cultivate skills in listening to communities, to the inner self, to the natural world, and for the emergent future.
- One way of characterizing such listening is the indigenous practice of Deep Listening, which dovetails with another indigenous wise practice called Right Relations--or responsible, values-based action in relationship to all living entities.
- Experiencing two indigenous practices in their contexts gives us the opportunity to consider worldview and how it relates to leadership.
- The concept of Deep Listening is also embraced by some artists, Buddhist philosophers, and systems transformation action researcher Otto Scharmer, best known for the concept of presencing and his framework called Theory U.

Deep Listening, Right Relations, and Worldview

We begin with an exploration of two indigenous wise practices I encountered when I began working with indigenous colleagues and communities at the Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity: Deep Listening and Right Relations. Laura Brearley (author of your first assigned reading) describes Deep Listening within an indigenous community leadership context as follows –

The Indigenous concept of Deep Listening describes a way of learning, working, and togetherness that is informed by the concepts of community and reciprocity. Leadership underpinned by Deep Listening involves listening respectfully, which can help build community. It draws on every sense and every part of our being.

Deep Listening in community leadership involves taking the time to develop relationships and to listen respectfully and responsibly. It also means listening to and observing oneself. ¹

from "[Deep Listening and Leadership: An Indigenous Model of Leadership and Community Development in Australia](#)" by Laura Bearly

Bearly structures her chapter around 7 dimensions of community leaders (as collaborators, learners, facilitators, artists, storytellers, custodians, and messengers) and grounds the practices of community leadership in five tenets: Respect for people and land, Time for relationships / trust building, Ways of Knowing expanded and deepened, Creativity as a key aspect of learning, and Care infused into relationships and processes (p. 94). Bearly also draws connections to the work of organizational theorists Karl Weick, best known for his work on sense-making, and C. Otto Scharmer, best known for his concept of presencing and Theory U model of change management.

If you are familiar with Buddhist philosophy you may also have encountered the concept of deep listening in that context. [Here is a blog post reflecting on writings by the late, great Zen master and activist, Thich Nhat Hahn](#) that discusses the importance of deep listening in relationship to "right speech." You can experience the presence of Thich Nhat Hahn in this brief 3-minute video in which he explains deep listening within the Buddhist worldview of Monism.

[Compassionate Listening](#) with Thich Nhat Hahn and Oprah Winfrey on..

Deep Listening is also a practice advanced by composer and musician [Pauline Oliveros](#), who described it as "listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing." She elaborated:

Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, or one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds. Deep Listening represents a heightened state of awareness and connects to all that there is. As a composer, I make my music through Deep Listening.

Oliveros was a Professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic and you can read more about her work and conceptualization of Deep Listening in [this Rensselaer News article](#). She also wrote a book, Deep Listening; And You and has a [TED Talk](#) in which she discusses the difference between hearing and listening. here is [The Deep Listening Issue of Sound American](#) in which three musicians influenced by Oliveros reflect on the concept in their own work.

Listening was critical to the work of Oliveros as the scores she composed were instructions to the musicians that required them to listen deeply to perform the piece. An example of this is this 11-minute performance of [Sonic Mediation - Teach Yourself to Fly](#) performed by [Fifth House Ensemble and Alash](#). Before viewing the recording, read the instructions from Oliveros to the musicians that result in this version of the Sonic Meditation which is composed live. Tune in to the ways that the musicians listen and sense one another and how the piece emerges organically.

Teach Yourself to Fly

Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the center. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be on observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.

Variation: Translate voice to an instrument.

From [Sonic Mediation - Teach Yourself to Fly](#) performed by [Fifth House Ensemble and Alash](#)

Likewise, action researcher Otto Scharmer advances a model of transformative change he calls Theory U, which calls upon leaders to cultivate listening capacities at four levels: downloading, factual listening, empathic listening, and generative listening. We will explore this a bit later in the course, but for now I have assigned a short video in which Scharmer explains the importance of listening for leaders and the different types of listening that leaders need to cultivate. In her chapter, Bearly draws analogies between Scharmer's "generative listening" and the Indigenous practice of "Deep Listening." [The Four Levels of Listening](#) from Otto Sharmer.

Deep Listening, in many indigenous communities, is tied to the related concept of Right Relations, described in one of the articles provided as "teachings [that] state that human beings are responsible to act with wisdom, respect, love, honesty, humility, bravery, and truth toward each other and all creation." The authors of "Decolonizing Transformations through Right Relations," describe the practice within the context of their inquiry as, "an obligation to live up to the responsibilities involved when taking part in a relationship—be it to other humans, other species, the land or the climate." The Quaker

religion also works with the concept of Right Relations--essentially a calling to adapt individual behavior and social structures to protect and honor all creation. And there are many other faiths, philosophies, religions, and cultures that uphold a quite similar list of values.

By examining these concepts from an indigenous perspective, in this module, we are exercising the capacity to reflect on our own worldviews and to see from the perspective of alternative worldviews. Worldview is a complex and multifaceted subject and one we will return to throughout the program. The capacity to reflect on one's own worldview, as well as consciously expand or shift it as one encounters others' worldviews, is an indicator of one of the highest stages of adult development. It is also, arguably, critical in leaders. [The chapter from Indigenomics](#), as well as [the chapter from The Truth About Stories](#), assigned for this week, explicate the origins and manifestations of an Indigenous vs a Western worldview. We assign these texts not only because it is important to understand the two practices with which we are engaging this week within an Indigenous worldview but also because it is critical as leaders to be aware of how your worldview shapes and influences your leadership practices, philosophy, models, and values.

[Here is an Integral Leadership Review article that provides highlights from a major literature review on the concept of worldview](#). It gives you a sense of the dimensions of worldview, how worldview manifests itself, and its relationship to values and other aspects of self/life. I encourage you to briefly scan this article (alongside a closer read of the chapters from Indigenomics and The Truth About Stories) in advance of contemplating this week's discussion question (see the In Community section of this module).

In the coming weeks we will continue to work with Deep Listening and Right Relations (with ourselves, others, and nature) and we will continue to explore world-view as well as world-making.

Next Steps

Before our Google Meet Up session on Tuesday with Alexia (Lexi) McKinnon, aim to review the following required texts and watch the Scharmer video.

- [Deep Listening in Leadership in Restorying Indigenous Leadership](#)
- [Download Deep Listening in Leadership in Restorying Indigenous Leadership](#) by Laura Brearley (38pgs)

- [A Native American Relational Ethic: An Indigenous Perspective on Teaching Human Responsibility](#)
- [Download A Native American Relational Ethic: An Indigenous Perspective on Teaching Human Responsibility](#) by Verbos & Humphries (8pgs)
- [Four Levels of Listening](#) by Otto Scharmer (YouTube, 8:26 min)
- [Chapter 1: Through the Lens of Worldview](#)
- [Download Chapter 1: Through the Lens of Worldview](#) from Indigenomics: Taking a Seat at the Economic Table by Carol Anne Hilton (20pgs)
- ["You'll Never Believe What Happened" Is Always a Great Way to Start](#) [Download "You'll Never Believe What Happened" Is Always a Great Way to Start](#) from The Truth About Stories by Thomas King (29pgs)

Then, before writing your reflection on worldview and leadership (see the Creative Exchange section of this module), be sure to contemplate the article below and watch the video performance by Fifth House Ensemble:

- [Leadership and Worldview: What in the World is a Worldview](#)
- [Download Leadership and Worldview: What in the World is a Worldview?](#) (4pgs)
- [Teach Yourself to Fly](#) by Pauline Oliveros (Vimeo, 10:50min)

3.1 In Community: Indigenous Wisdom & Circle Process with Alexia McKinnon

Circle Process with Lexi McKinnon

Building on our introductions during orientation week we will start the session by briefly checking in and saying hello. Lexi will then introduce us to circle process. She will open the session by telling a story and we will then share reflections using a circle process. Your Portfolio and In Community assignments this week should be completed after engaging in this Google Meetup session.

Beyond reading the assigned texts (see the Exploration section of this module) there is no other preparation for this session. However, there will be an assignment to complete after the session; moreover, if you wish to read more about the use of talking circles in indigenous communities, [here is a good place to start](#).

Preparing for our Session

- Spend some time with the assigned texts in advance of the session to familiarize yourself with the concepts of Deep Listening, Right Relations, and Worldview. What grabs your attention? What draws you in? What pokes at you? What sticks / raises questions?
- Have a notebook and pen or pencil on hand to jot down any reflections during the session.
- If possible, make sure you are in a quiet space where you will not be interrupted.
- You are welcome to have water, tea, or other non-alcoholic beverages on hand.

About our Speaker

Guest Alexia McKinnon will join us this week. I worked with Lexi at the Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity, where she was the Associate Director for Indigenous Leadership and where we were co-lead faculty for the Cultural Leadership Program. Here is her full bio –

Alexia (Lexi) is the Director of the Indigenous Business Programs at the Beedie School of Business, at Simon Fraser University. Alexia joins the school from the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, where she was Associate Director, Indigenous leadership and management. Her prior roles include: cultural center coordinator with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation, where she raised funds and built partnerships to build a cultural center; special assistant to the Premier and executive assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Culture and Justice of the Yukon Government. She is also a board member of The Circle on Philanthropy and The Energy Futures Lab.

Lexi is passionate about systems change and design thinking from the teachings learned through an Indigenous worldview. During her time at the Banff Centre, Lexi led the institution's Truth and Reconciliation Framework. In 2016, she curated a regional Truth and Reconciliation Summit asking the question of what would it look like if we could inspire a community to advance the action of Truth and Reconciliation in their lives, organizations and communities. From that summit she co-edited the Truth and Reconciliation Summit report which provided a human centered approach to advancing Truth and Reconciliation. This report was then utilized to design Banff Centre's Truth and Reconciliation through Right Relations program.

Lexi received her Bachelor of Arts in Canadian Studies from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick and completed her MBA in Aboriginal Business and Leadership at the Beedie School of Business. This fall she will begin a doctoral program at SFU.

3.2 Portfolio: Deep Listening in Practice

In the book [Journey to Mount Tamalpais](#)

poet, painter, and philosopher Etel Adnan seeks to evoke the way in which artists have the capacity to sense and bring forth a deep connection with the world (including nature), writing –

Painters have a knowledge which goes beyond words. They are where musicians are. When someone blows the saxophone the sky is made of copper. When you make a watercolor you know how it feels to be the sea lying early in the day in the proximity of light.

Painters have always experienced the oneness of things. They are aware that there is interference and intervention between the world and ourselves.

[...]

I write what I see, paint what I am.

This is an invitation to spend some time in nature, reflect on the session with Lexi McKinnon, and process the implication of some of the readings this week for you and the work you are doing in the world. The primary goal of Part I of this assignment is to encourage you to engage in a bit of deep listening (within and in nature) while sitting with a decision you are trying to take or a present dilemma / area of struggle. The second part of the assignment is an invitation to reflect on (a) your listening skills and sources of wisdom through listening that you tend to tap on a regular basis (and additional sources you might tap in the future) and (b) the Right Relations Agreement and areas of strength and areas for development.

On Your Own...

The instructions for this assignment are provided below this image. It is an invitation to an experience that I first underwent in late fall 2020 when I was working (remotely from the Netherlands) with Lexi McKinnon at the Banff Center; and the image and reflection below is my offering from that experience. You will ultimately be sharing your work in two places (Part I to our LinkedIn Community and Part II as an upload here in Canvas). Please contact me with questions as they come up.

Step 1

Deep Listening in Nature (Image and Reflection shared in LinkedIn)

Go to a place where you feel connected to nature and where you can sit quietly for 30 minutes (longer if you feel inspired) and reflect. Bring your phone (to take a photo or video) and bring something with which to jot down thoughts as they arise.

- As you make your way to the place you have selected, articulate a question, decision, present dilemma, or area of struggle with which you want to sit.
- Sit quietly in this place for at least 30 minutes but if you can and want to stay longer, please do so.
- Attend to the place around you with all of your senses. What do you notice?
- What surfaces for you as you sit with your question / decision / dilemma / struggle in this place?
- As you notice elements in nature and thoughts arising jot them down. Allow this to be a kind of stream of consciousness poem captured in the moment.
- Take one or more photos of this place to document elements in your surroundings that captured your attention, or when you felt connection or even insight.
- Try to capture the essence of at least one insight that arose and share it with a photo of the place - with no need to reference any particular decision or dilemma. The image above is an example of what I created the first time I did this exercise in late 2020.

Step 2

Reflect & Shape (Text, Audio, or Video file uploaded to Canvas). When you get home, reflect on the following:

- When you need to make decisions in life, what is your process? To whom or what do you tend to listen / tune in / learn? Self more than others?
- Are there practices or perspectives on listening that you have found to be valuable? If so, describe them.
- How was the experience of listening in nature? Were you able to gather any insights by being fully present to your surroundings? If not, what might deepen your connection to nature and capacity for deep listening to nature?
- Who is someone that you admire for their listening capacities? What do you notice about them?
- Where would you like to expand, deepen, or stretch your listening capacities?

- As you consider the Right Relations Agreement values (Love, Respect, Humility, Courage, Honesty, Truth, and Wisdom) , which of these is most natural for you (or alive in you) when you think of your interactions with others? Which is most difficult or challenging to practice? Try to commit to living into that value for a month.

After considering these questions, shape your reflection:

- What do your Part II reflections want to be? A short essay? A poem? A dialogue? Something else? Written, audio, or video?
- Choose a form and capture your reflections in a way that will be meaningful and memorable to you and also enable you to communicate your experience / reflections with others.

Response

A Trip to the Top of Eisenhower Park



Wednesday Jun 15, 2022

This morning I drove 20 miles to Eisenhower park, located at the foothills of the central Texas hill country. Mascogo and Jumanos land. Going up and down hills has always been soothing. After applying my flip flops, I meandered up the 1.5 mile path to the hill lookout, plopped down on a bench and noticed my delayed perspiration setting in due to effort and heat. Breezy, the sky was pillow-y, hazy and gray, and I could see, way off in the distance, the large phallic Tower of Americas that marked my home area. A useful icon for lost cyclists in need of a way home. I then observed, touched and smelled the familiar central Texas drought resistant Cedars, Sotols and prickly pears intermixed among black dirt and sharp rocks. All covered in pokey things that announce - look but don't touch.

From the onset I sensed people. Lots of people. Their smells, noises and weirdness encroached on my hour of chill. Quite a few had pretty manicured dogs and the latest in day hiking gear or LuLuLemon stretchy wear. I

encountered multiple perfumes and a hint of cigarettes that pulled me away from the musky cedars. Pop music doppled up and down the hill. And weirdest of all, a half naked woman involved in a photoshoot with an outcrop of shrubbery. What the...noticing my internal agitation, I advised myself to chill and not be so judgy. They're here, the same as me, to enjoy and experience the little bit of nature within arms reach. I listened to myself and vowed to be less judgmental and more like my favorite listener Dr. Katherine Troyer. Katy runs our Collaborative for Learning and Teaching. She's exceptionally empathetic, non judgmental ,and provides wise feedback from multiple perspectives with an inclusivity focus. She would have been impressed by their willingness to take off time and realize their call to nature.

Typically, my decision and de-stressing routine has always involved solitude and movement. These days it's running at 4am. Prior to having a family it involved getting away to Ruidoso, New Mexico for a bit of down hill. Owned and operated by the Mescalero Apache tribe, the mountain lacks prestige and is considered a newby hill. However, you won't find a ski resort run by a friendlier group of people. I'd get up there, find a campsite, unfurl my down bag and bivy and sleep under the stars. Waking up I'd make my way to ski apache for a long day of slowly riding up the lift and quickly bombing down. Always met with a big bonus smile, high five and compliment from the lift operator. "Rowdy lines Bro!". Up and down hills. That's my chill.

The privilege of time that I have is not lost on me. Having time allows me to regroup and recharge in my own way. It permits me to participate fully. Looking out over the city I thought about how time has always been a commodity in our society. Doled out and controlled by the haves. "We don't value what you value" festers in my mind. A non-song earworm. I'm left with more questions than answers. How much more interesting would our world be if the majority were allowed to slow down, participate, and be what they value? I don't know how that works, but I'd like to try and get there.

3.3 — Creative Exchange — How Does Your Worldview Shape Your Leadership?

In the article "Worldviews in Leadership: Thinking and Acting the Bigger Pictures" (2011), Valk et al write –

Leadership is about ideas and actions. Put simply, it is about implementing new ideas into creative actions to achieve desired results. Doing so, however, is far from simple. We know leadership requires considerable skills and abilities. It requires knowledge and insight—about one's organization or entity, its people, goals, strengths and market niche. Yet, something more is needed. Leadership also requires a kind of awareness beyond the immediate, an awareness of the larger pictures—of paradigms that direct us, beliefs that sustain us, values that guide us and principles that motivate us, our worldviews.

To cap off this module we will share reflections on worldview as it relates to your role as a leader. If you have not already done so, make sure you have read [Chapter 1: Through the Lens of Worldview](#) from Indigenomics, the literature review summary, [Leadership and Worldview: What in the World is a Worldview](#), and the chapter "[You'll never believe what happened' is always a great way to start](#)" from the Thomas King book, [The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative](#).

All three of these texts illustrate and frame (in different ways) the influence of worldview on how we make meaning, organize time and space, and live our lives. In particular, they are aimed at drawing out the distinctions and repercussions of holding an indigenous versus non-indigenous worldview. There are, of course, many other worldviews and distinctions we could name.

Questions to Address

If you can carve out the time, I would encourage you to have a conversation with someone in your cohort as a way of priming yourself to write this reflection. You could even record the session so it is documented, thereby giving you some key ideas to bring forward in your essay. At our Tuesday Google Meet Up session with Lexi we can do a quick poll to see who would be interested to pair up with someone and make sure everyone who wants a partner, has one. Here are the questions to address in your essay (and also in your conversation if you have one):

1. Who is someone you have long seen (since you were a young adult or perhaps even a child) as an exemplar of great leadership?
2. Which of your core values have had the greatest influence on the kind of leader you aspire to be today?

3. In what ways have your life experiences (growing up and more recently) shaped those core values?
4. What impact, if any, do you think your religious or spiritual background has played in the shaping of your core values?
5. How do you determine right from wrong?
6. How do you navigate ethical dilemmas or difficult decisions?
7. How would you describe the worldview that shapes your values, judgments, concept of leadership, and processes for taking decisions?

Write a reflection in the form of a personal essay (i.e. with a clear animating question or thesis and supporting story or argument) of ~850 (+/- 150) words responding to these questions. Use story and description to engage the reader--avoid an abstract analysis of self and lean in the direction of a story you might tell around the campfire or over a meal with colleagues/friends. Submit your essay to the Discussion thread by Saturday EOD. Read others' reflections by EOD Sunday and provide comments / reflections if you feel inspired / motivated / compelled to do so.

Response

Resubmission w/ additions

At age 9 my grandfather Brad started taking me hunting a couple of times a year. We'd rise early and head up Highway 281 to the hill country. Cold. It was always much colder outside the city. On my first outing, he made sure I knew how to operate the rifle, gave me 2 bullets and informed me it would work better if I sat still. One shot and 3 hours later he came and got me. He showed me how to sharpen a knife, where and how to cut, what each organ was and what it did. Steam leaked out. The soul leaving the body. He sensed my resignation and informed me that it's not for everyone, but what's done is done and we can't take it back. We pushed on and finished. We ate the gizzards that night, kept the backstrap and some hind meat for sausage and gave the rest to a butcher that would donate to the local food bank.

That was the first and last deer that I shot. I continued to go for the stories. I'd been told he was an important person and bumped elbows with important people. Mikhail Gorbachev and Princess Diana are a couple of namedrops. Returning from a meeting in Paris on the feasibility of universal health he showed me a picture of a humble, simple home with an old Honda Civic out front. The surgeon general of France's house. "He

doesn't take more than he needs. Good man." He expressed concern with the growing trend for doctors to specialize and go into private practice. Maximizing their earning potential rather than contributing to advising medicine through research.

Brad got his feet wet in a Korean war M.A.S.H unit at age 20. Rushed through medical school he was sent out with a tool pouch and a how to book on surgery. He and his fellows would operate for days at a time, iterating, practicing and learning surgery on the fly. They made and changed the rules as they went. From there he was fortunate to land at the University of Minnesota under the tutelage of an open and forward thinking surgeon, Dr. Owen Wangensteen. Dr. Wangensteen recruited a diverse pool of surgeons (diverse for the times) that shared an interest in research and bucked the top down hierarchical approach to training dominantly used at the time. They relied on weekly forums to discuss and argue their research and cases, allowing all to be heard and exposing each to a broader array of possibilities. Dr. Wangensteen's program produced countless firsts and over 30 surgical department chairs.

For me, Brad was an example of a person reaching one percent status without the need to take more than their share. He led from the middle and encouraged those around him to thrive. He was a unique and quirky doer that hacked his way into something as complex as surgery. He showed me that great leaders are open, accepting and collaborate with teams and communities. He would carry these ideals with him through his 40 year post as surgical department chair at UTSA Health Science Center.

I would like to think that I embody a few of Brad's ideals. Rather than maximize my earning potential and perceived status through a solitary engineering desk job, I took a chance on an ambiguous project with an opportunity to sew a unique culture and perspective through the lens of doing and making. Ignoring the typical money pursuits and constraints of my peers, frees me to listen, observe and hack my way into a new maker culture and possibly more. My only option here is to lead from the middle. Lead by encouraging and fostering a communal approach to our space. I've since found immense joy and value advancing others' views of themselves, their environments, and their communities through making.

Switching gears a bit. The person that had the most influence on me was my childhood friend Zac. He introduced me to a number of firsts. First person I saw recycle, first thrift store, and first bike race. He came over after the bus ride home from school our freshman year in high school and saw my old pink steel Tomassini in the corner and asked "dude, do you ride?" "Sure, down the block to get a soda." He'd just purchased his first road bike

for \$300 with money he'd saved working as a tour guide on the Riverwalk. He needed a riding partner and I had time to spare. Two tears in a bucket.

As a child, Zac couldn't stay inside. He rode his BMX as far as his legs would take him. Over time he discovered routes to the open country and came across people on road bikes. Mind blown. He'd found his jam.

Our first ride, I went out hard from the start and faded quickly. Zac advised "Dude, we have 30 more miles. Don't blow your wad." Too late. Cycling is a weird and intense sport. Grown, skinny men in spandex and shaved legs riding bicycles for hours at a time. We were not in it for the ladies. Overtime, mostly due to our lack of funds, we succumbed to the weirdness. First with a pair of spandex shorts. Chafing hurts. Then a jersey. The pockets in the back allow you to bring food. And finally the shaved legs. Crashes happen and when they do, hair fuses with skin.

I got blown out the back in my first race. Zac held on and finished with the pack. "How'd you do it?" He said he was a floater. Every time the pack flushed he'd hold his breath and bob back up. I would learn to float. As we rode more and got more fit, we played more, and rides felt more like races. We'd listen and observe each other. Attacking when the other was weak, or fake weakness and counter attacking when attacked. We were teaching ourselves how to race on the fly.

We rode and raced and floated our way through high school and college, befriended many crazy cycling characters, and developed an insatiable hunger for food and life. It was common knowledge on campus that the cycling team could out eat the football on any given day. Closing out college life, I decided I finally needed to grow up and get a real job. Zac doubled down on adventure. Accepting an invite to the tour of Brazil. He got blown out the back every day but loved it and made friends with a few local racers. For the next six months they took him on a real tour of Brazil. No cars, just bikes. Zac valued a simple life and the adventures and comradery a bike could provide. He's still racing and floating to this day.

At a young age I decided that the man made edicts of organized religion did not work for me. Sitting in Lutheran Sunday school class, upright, hands in my lap, and listening to the lesson, I raised my hand and timidly asked "Does that mean my Jewish cousins are going to hell?" An emphatic "Yes" was their response. I got up, left, and have never gone back to religion for guidance. I didn't believe in fear or hate at age 8 and I still don't.

Cyclists are odd birds that covet both solitary time and communal gathering. To go fast and far requires long, consistent, and slow hours on the bike and away from society. It becomes a daily ritual of being in your own head for hours. You make up stories, rehash old stories, observe the world, reflect on life decisions, and resolve conflicts every day for hours. Then, you come together for a group ride or a race and you share all the weird things that have been bouncing around in your head. The vibe feels akin to some indigenous stories I've come across. Before contributing to the community they immerse in nature, and use the solitary time to reflect, collect, and compose their perspective.

Cycling, and the cycling community, provided me with my framework for navigating life. When life goes pear shaped, off kilter, challenging, or requires a big decision, I do like the Rarámuri of northern Mexico and run away in solitude, to find myself, and return ready to debate, decide, lead, collaborate or move on.