Reconsidering Maslow and the hierarchy of needs from a First Nations' perspective

Elder Roy Bear Chief – Oom Kapisi (Big Coyote), Peter W. Choate, Gabrielle Lindstrom, Tsa'pinaki,
Mount Royal University, Canada

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Abraham Maslow created one of the most enduring psychological constructs, the hierarchy of needs. Maslow, himself, did not create the oft-shown pyramid but it is the image that comes to mind when the construct is mentioned. There have also been reports that Maslow's work fails to give due credit to the Blackfoot peoples of Southern Alberta for their seminal contribution to the hierarchy. There is a vibrant debate in the literature and in public spaces regarding this. Such a debate may not matter as Maslow's construct does not represent Blackfoot philosophy. Hierarchical needs of understanding are not representative of their world view and the place of self-actualisation is very contrary to Maslow's understanding. Maslow's own writings do not support the notion that Blackfoot knowledge influenced him greatly in respect of the construct. In concert with the Elder knowledge keeper in the project, we explore the history of Maslow and the Blackfoot people along with knowledge held by Elder wisdom.

APPROACH: The article concludes by suggesting that Blackfoot ways of knowing represent their own views and that Maslow's hierarchy has never been their understanding.

IMPLICATIONS: Social workers are, thus, invited to critically assess the theories used in practice and their relevance and validity for the populations engaged in their work.

KEYWORDS: Blackfoot; Abraham Maslow; hierarchy of needs; Blackfoot ways of knowing

Virtually any student in social sciences or human resources will have been introduced to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It has come to represent the basic understanding of how humans can move from meeting basic needs on up to achieving self-actualisation or, as Maslow would later phrase it, "peak experiences". It has had an immense influence on the field of psychology (Kenrick et al., 2010), business (Lussier, 2019) as well as sociology, health care and education (Benson & Dundis, 2003; Fallatah & Syed, 2018; Hale et al., 2019; Kiel, 1999). There is social work literature that frames Maslow as a tool to be used in practice (Levenson, 2017; Nesmith & Smyth, 2015) which we suggest may not be appropriate across populations.

In this article we seek to deconstruct the notion that the hierarchy of needs is based upon Blackfoot knowledge. There are those that suggest such a link is there and that the Blackfoot people have not been properly credited for the shared knowledge (Brown, 2014; Coon, 2006). While we concur that Maslow did visit the Blackfoot people of Southern Alberta for about 6 weeks in 1938, deep analysis of his notes and other writings from that period suggest that he neither

accurately nor authentically understood their ways of knowing, how such knowledge applies to their culture and the ways in which needs are met within that culture. It is perhaps fair, however, to note that his time with the Blackfoot shifted his thinking to a more humanistic perspective that likely influenced his later connections to such ideas as "the peak experience" (Koptie, 2010). This matters, as this article does not seek to discredit Maslow but, rather, to position Maslow's work as perhaps having been influenced by his time with the Blackfoot while not being substantively based upon their world views. We also invite social workers to consider how theories are applied without question but need to be critically assessed for relevance to the peoples with whom the profession intersects.

Locating the authors

Roy Bear Chief describes himself as a Siksika Elder, and has the name Oom Kapis, which, translated to English is Big Coyote. He states that "my footprints were planted on this traditional territory of my Blackfoot people about 73 winters ago. I was brought into this land as a Siksikawa with a language and a culture intact. I am Siksika through and through deeply connected within the land. I am part of the landscape."

Peter Choate is a settler whose family links in this country go back to the movement of United Empire Loyalists from what is now the United States to the east coast of Canada. He grew up on the traditional lands of the Musqueum, Squamish and Tslei-Waututh First Nations. He is a Professor of Social Work at Mount Royal University.

Gabrielle Lindstrom, Tsa'pinaki, is a Blackfoot scholar and a member of the Kainai First Nation of southern Alberta, part of Blackfoot Confederacy. Born, raised and educated in Kainai, Gabrielle offers both a lived-experience and scholarly perspective with regard to the issues of concern in this article. She is an Assistant Professor

of Indigenous Studies at Mount Royal University and has worked extensively as a researcher on several Indigenous community research projects.

Hearing the Blackfoot View

Brown (2014) framed the question of Maslow by noting from her visit to the Siksika nation in 2002, stating, "[Maslow] got it wrong, he didn't share it the way we wanted, he didn't give the Elders credit for his teachings, and they want the record set straight" (p. 1). In this work, we sought clarity regarding how Maslow and his hierarchy of needs is understood within the Blackfoot people of the Siksika First Nation. Following the traditions of oral history, we interviewed two Blackfoot elders from the Siksika nation and one historian specialising in Indigenous histories who has worked on the story of Maslow with the Blackfoot people. Elder Roy Bear Chief also included his knowledge.

Archival material was drawn from the Abraham Maslow papers at the Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron, Ohio as well as at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. Ethics approval for the interviews was received from the Human Research Ethics Board of Mount Royal University.

The basic theory of the hierarchy of needs

The outline of Maslow's theory can be found widely throughout the internet in addition to introductory texts in social sciences and human relations. The five basic needs identified on the hierarchy which Maslow described include physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). The hierarchy is fundamentally focused on the question of what motivates human behaviours with the notion that survival needs are at the bottom of the hierarchy working upwards towards self-actualisation. Maslow saw self-actualisation as including an increased

acceptance of the self and others along with a sense of autonomy, spontaneity and aesthetic sensitivity (Maslow, 1943). Hoffman (1988) goes on to add to the ingredients of Maslow's theory stating, "frequent mystic like or transcendent experiences, a democratic rather than authoritarian outlook, and involvement in a cause or mission outside of oneself" (p. 187). Hoffman (1996) summed up self-actualisation as:

> The apex of personal growth in which we become freed from basic needs and deficiency motivation; not an endpoint in most people but a drive or yearning to fully develop. Also, a process of fulfilling our latent talents, capacities, and potentialities at any time, in any amount. Although we all have this drive, we also possess a fear of growth. (p. 206)

Maslow would ultimately add the notion of peak experiences to the theory (1962/1998). In his book on religious values and peak experiences, Maslow (1970/1994) laid out a series of possible ways in which these experiences might mirror, for example, religious experiences. He described having an experience of the "whole universe as an integrated and unified whole" (p. 59). He further described a series of cognitive experiences such as being exclusively and fully attending to the experiences while also "perceiving external objects, the world and individual people as more detached from human concerns" (p. 61). As can be seen from these two examples, Maslow is describing something that is perhaps mystical or what he termed "unitive consciousness" (p. 68). This later formulation is quite different from the basic theory that is most known (see also Maslow, 1964/1994; 1971).

Maslow's 1943 work titled "A theory of human motivation" saw the hierarchy of needs as part of his larger theory on what motivates human behaviour. He states, "Human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of pre-potency. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually

rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need" (p. 370). He was universalistic about the existence of the needs but not how a person works through the hierarchies in that he saw "various cultural paths to the same goal" (p. 370). On the same page he adds, "[w]hile behavior is almost always motivated it is also almost always biologically, culturally and situationally determined". As evidence of his universalistic approach, Maslow stated, "it is the common experience of anthropologists that people, even in different societies, are much more alike than we would think from our first contact with them, and that as we know them better we seem to find more and more of this commonness" (1943, p. 389). Koltko-Rivera (2006) indicated that Maslow saw that fulfilling the basic needs was necessary for achieving self-actualisation. D'Souza and Gurin (2016) believed Maslow felt the "drive toward self-actualization as beneficial to society because it would lead to more solidarity, compassion, care, problem solving and altruism" (p. 210). However, the theory also postulates that self-actualisation was not probable in the absence of fulfilling the more basic needs.

As noted above, Maslow would describe a level above self-actualisation which he labelled "peak experiences" (Maslow, 1970/1994). This sustained the hierarchical nature of this thinking. He would also separate the basic needs by labelling the self-actualisation and peak experiences as "being needs" which are high-level needs (Neher, 1991). In a review of studies up to the mid 1970s, Wahba and Bridwell (1976) found a lack of studies that showed the five basic needs as independent, but, instead, as overlapping. While we have not undertaken a systematic review, we found nothing in our search of the literature since then which would contradict their conclusion. The theory is now typically represented in a pyramid with basic needs moving on up towards self-actualisation. It is worth noting that Maslow did not draw the pyramid but it was likely created around 1960 by a

consulting psychologist, Charles McDermid (Bridgman et al., 2019). Bridgman et al. (2019) felt Maslow has been misrepresented through the pyramid depiction but also through the idea that a need must be fully satisfied before a person can begin growing within the need next up on the pyramid. Maslow never did challenge the pyramid representation of his theory which may have been related to his growing despondency about the general direction of the field of psychology (Kaufman, 2019).

Critical viewpoints on the theory

Perhaps the main criticism of the hierarchy is its lack of empirical validation. Bridgman et al., (2019) raised questions about the lack of validation of the work which echoes earlier critics such as Soper et al. (1995) who stated that the work is often uncritically appraised but that evidence has not validated the theory. Mishra (1985) has shown that the theory is highly ethnocentric, although could be adapted to cross-cultural revisions. Kaufman (2018) noted it is possible that there are certain attributes of self-actualisation that may be found across age, education, race, ethnicity, college GPA, or childhood income.

Wahba and Birdwell (1976) concluded there was a "lack of clear and consistent empirical evidence to support it" (Maslow's hierarchical theory) (p. 212). These authors noted that Maslow felt the needs he identified were "more universal" for all cultures than other superficial desires or behaviors (at p. 213 quoting Maslow, 1970, p. 54). Maslow's theory is also a theory of individual need which may more closely reflect the situation in individualistic versus collective societies, which, as we shall discuss later, reflects the nature of the Blackfoot societal systems.

Siksika First Nation connection

It is very clear that Maslow did visit the Siksika peoples in the summer of 1938 and, that he found much to admire. He seemed to

have developed strong, positive views of the place of Indigenous peoples, their heritage and world views. Indeed, Maslow shifted his view significantly in his brief time with the Siksika people, quoted in Hoffman (1998):

I came into the reservation with the notion that the Indians are over there on a shelf, like a butterfly collection or something like that. And then slowly I shifted and changed my mind. Those Indians on the reservation were decent people; and the more I got to know the whites in the village, who were the worst bunch of creeps and bastards I've ever run across in my life, the more it got paradoxical. Which was the asylum? Who are the keepers and who the inmates? Everything got mixed up. (p. 119)

One reading of this is not so much that he experienced the life and beliefs of the Blackfoot people, but rather that he saw the racial divide between the white people who still controlled access and egress to the reservation as well as many activities that required approval of the Indian agent. Seeing the Blackfoot people as "decent" is a behavioural observation as opposed to real insight into the spiritual, structural, cultural or familial beliefs and world views of the people. At the same time, Maslow felt that he had achieved insights into the universality of self-actualisation. In one of his unpublished papers, "Critique of self-actualization theory", Maslow wrote:

My response has been that the model of self-actualization so far seems not only cross-cultural but even cross-historical as well. In cultures as diverse as the Japanese and the Blackfoot Native American, I have found significant similarities in how the saint or sage is depicted. (as cited in Hoffman, 1996, p. 28)

Hoffman (1996) wrote that Maslow's experience with the Blackfoot people convinced Maslow that "humane

alternatives to mainstream Western society could actually exist" (p. 9). Valiunas (2011) opined that Siksika influenced Maslow as he came away with a belief that the culture did not erode their fundamental humanity (p. 98). Neher (1991) stated that Maslow felt imposition of culture is "unnecessary at best, and, at worst destructive of our unique potential as individuals" (p. 94). This meant that Maslow was more individualistic in his views as opposed to collectivistic but nevertheless, he sought entry into Siksika, a collectivistic culture, all the while applying a Eurocentric, individualistic lens to his interpretations and analyses—a lens he seemed rather oblivious to. Taken together, Maslow's interpretations do not mean that the hierarchy of needs should be seen as reflective of the Siksika peoples (Bridgman et al., 2019)

Blood and Heavy Head (2007) report that Maslow was very impressed with the Blackfoot society. In an unpublished manuscript in 1939 (n.p.), Maslow stated:

> With respect to dominant feeling a completely different quality of dominant feeling was found in 80-90% of the Blackfoot tribe, a quality that is only found in about 5-10% of our (underlining in original) population, and that it is fair to say that there is a qualitative difference between their group and ours, and that it is impossible to rate members of both groups on the same continuum.

Later he states,

> With reference to ego-security, the situation was entirely different. My general finding was that about 70-80% of the Blackfoot are more secure than the most secure 5% of our population and that it is possible to rate people in both societies on the same continuum and that ego-security is quite definitely a cross-cultural concept, at least for these two groups (n.p.).

Yet he also acknowledges that "a paper and pencil test for ego security constructed for use with my college students seemed to give fairly valid results with my Blackfoot subjects, and [unreadable word] fair, with necessary revision, to be useful as a truly cross-cultural research instrument" (n.p.). Despite his conclusion regarding dominant feeling, Maslow appears to argue that cross-cultural comparisons are possible with constructs drawn from one culture to be used with another one.

Maslow, in this same presentation, went on to offer observations of the Blackfoot people that appear in other of his writings. In particular, he notes that they are "a very generous people." He uses the qualifier "our population" in reference to white society as a basis for comparison, seeing the Blackfoot people as "unusual". Maslow further described the Blackfoot peoples: "They seem definitely not to have any major anxieties, or repressed aggression, or castration complexities…" Maslow is applying psychoanalytic theory to make these judgments, although we argue that no such valid basis for this comparison would exist, if only because, as he acknowledges, such research had not been done. He cautions, however, in his 1939 unpublished manuscript that, "As soon as we find ourselves able to make cross-cultural studies and generalizations, we must realize that everything may not be relative to a particular culture." He asserts that "I found almost the same range in whatever aspect of personality I worked with (in the Blackfoot population) as I do in our society." For Maslow, he seems to draw the conclusion that there are "fundamental or natural 'tendenc[ies]-to-have-a-certain-type-of-personality' with which each human that comes into society, and which society will have to take as a fundamental datum, perhaps to build upon, perhaps to repress, or warp or reshape."

Maslow is thought to have also developed an appreciation of the ways in which the white, dominant society used segregation to marginalize and downplay the Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Hoffman (1998)

reports that Maslow came to understand that the white population saw the land as a source of wealth (in essence the riches of oil) and that Indigenous needs and ways of life were to be crushed so as not to stand in the way of resource development (see also Koptie, 2010).

In another of his unpublished papers, Maslow observed that he experienced the Blackfoot culture, stating that he lived in the culture and experienced it from that view (Hoffman, 1996, p. 139). Thus, in hindsight he seemed to value what he observed and was taught, despite his reluctance to be in the Siksika Blackfoot Nation that year. Indeed, he went at the urging of his mentor at the time, Ruth Benedict who, in a letter dated February 5, 1940 states, "I was disappointed in your project for the SSRC. Why didn't you spend more time on it and say what you'd do in a second summer?"

Heavy Head and Narcisse Blood

Some of the major work on Maslow relative to the Blackfoot people has been conducted by Ryan Heavy Head and the late Narcisse Blood (known in Blackfoot as Ki'nakssapo'p. He was also the Director of Kainai Studies at Red Crow College). They have never published their work, although their work is somewhat preserved via *YouTube* and other videos of their presentations (see for example Blood & Heavy Head, 2007, 2011a and Heavy Head, 2018). The majority of the prime materials they reviewed were lost in a fire at the Red Crow Community College on the Kainai First Nation. Fortunately, we were able to interview Heavy Head who had read those materials. Heavy Head states that Maslow was impacted by his time with the Blackfoot people.

> His focus during that period was on trying to prove this idea about a universal among primates that he can construct these social hierarchies that we put in place and maintain through relationships of dominance and submission. And he

believed he had observed that in all different species of primates in Harry Harlow's lab, and then he believed that he had tested it in New York with humans through his social personality index, and that he thought he was onto something. He went into Benedict's colloquia, and at the time she was challenging this idea that there had to be so much competition in Western society, and he was like no, no, that's just inherently genetic with us, and this is why. She sent him to the Siksika. She was sending a whole bunch of students up at that time for different reasons, but she figured that Maslow should go there because he had some good ideas, but his perspectives were narrow because he had never had any cross-cultural experience. (Personal communication, March 9, 2020)

Heavy Head also describes that self-actualisation was not the primary reason that Maslow came to Siksika. Rather, he was testing out his social–personality tool, although this was badly received in the Siksika nation. As per Heavy Head's views,

> He's a scientific method guy, so he's testing his social personality index in another culture to see if it shows the same thing as what he saw testing it with students at Columbia. Students at Columbia, people that seemed to have the greatest ego security also had very experimental sexual lives and those that seemed very shy and ego insecure had very modest sex lives. So, you know, he was going back to his time with primates. And so Lucian (Hanks) wrote home to his parents that the translator, Earl Calf Robe, came to them and told them that if they continued to ask the questions that they were asking, that 'come join us,' that they would be asked to leave the reserves. They were being threatened to stop asking the questions that were on his questionnaire. And in the only little bit of field notes that we do have at the Glenbow (Museum in Calgary),

it's pretty clear he was asking about the sexual experiences of the students at the residential schools. So, he was probably asking them questions related to the second half of the personality index where he gets into that stuff. But the community wasn't happy at all. (Personal communication March 9, 2020)

Heavy Head notes that Maslow did not understand the Blackfoot culture that he was trying to study. Elder Melting Tallow felt that Maslow understood all that was being told to him through his western way of knowing, which he did not put aside.

In a presentation by Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavy Head in 2011, Blood describes that Maslow could not understand the language. As Blood states in the presentation, "How can you know something when you don't speak the language?" He was framing the challenge of being able to articulate a concept that has its meaning within language concepts that are not translatable. They indicate that even basic concepts such as time, do not mean the same in Blackfoot as in English. More nuanced concepts such as the self, relationship, and emotional development suffer in translation. Their suggestion is that Maslow took an interpretation by a translator of what a meaning might be in English and then tried to apply it through his Eurocentric lens.

Heavy Head posited that Maslow was influenced by his time with the Siksika people. Feigenbaum and Smith (2019) feel that Heavy Head and Blood have overstated the influence and that they "overcompensated for the lack of credit the Siksika people have been given for their contribution to Maslow's thinking" (p. 3). Heavy Head disagrees, stating in our interview:

> …that he completely overlooked the context of living in an Indigenous community where you know everybody,

and you're going to know everybody forever, your whole life. All the people in the community are the people you're going to know, and all of your ancestors that lived there, all your descendants are going to live there.

Heavy Head further adds:

> We never presented an alternative Blackfoot model. We said that he missed the connection that people have to places, Indigenous people, and the social reality of what that means. If you realize what that means, and if you sit still in a community for thousands of years, you're not going to—the institutionalized way of the ethos is such that you don't, you're not grooming that competitiveness. You're cooperative as a unit, as a tribe. (Personal Communication, March 9, 2020)

Where Heavy Head does think that Maslow was influenced was around the notion that a culture and its people could be "socio-centric than egocentric":

> …but what I do know is that his understanding of what it is to be a self-actualized, fully-developed human being was strongly influenced by Siksika. He realized that you can have a whole community of people where 80 to 90% of them have this quality of ego security that's very rare, you know. He never thought that you could have that before he went to Siksika. (Personal Communication, March 9, 2020)

However, Heavy Head also notes that Maslow remained individualistic with the hierarchy, which is reflective of Elder Melting Tallow's assessment that Maslow failed to challenge or put aside the Eurocentric perspective. In an interview between Blood and Elder Pete Standing Alone, the Elder noted that the Indian could never fit into the white man's world but that the Indian can get along in that society (Blood & Cardinal, 2010). As will be seen with Elder's knowledge, that divide between

the Indian knowledge and ways of knowing and the white world from which Maslow came is one that acted as a barrier for Maslow that he was unable to overcome.

Elders' knowledge

In an interview with Elder Hayden Melting Tallow of the Siksika First Nation, he reports that his father told him that Maslow was asking ladies about connections to society and people in the community that were not welcome (personal communication, January 15, 2020). He added that the people in Siksika were not pleased about Maslow's behaviour and would have liked him to leave. Hayden further added that Maslow was "very intrusive" and was asking personal information as well as the protocols of the women's societies in the community. Such questioning was unwelcomed and reflected how poorly Maslow understood Blackfoot social norms. Elder Stewart Breaker, also of the Siksika First Nation, reinforced that Maslow was not welcomed with his original research goal. He was told to stop and was then tolerated, looked upon with amusement but not integrated into Siksika society or knowledge. The elders all noted that oral history has it that Maslow did not understand, was not welcomed into the community but rather was tolerated due to his connection with his academic mentor Ruth Benedict. It was she who brought Maslow in. In addition, Maslow was seen as impolite, lacking respect and inquiring about very personal topics that were inappropriate for him as a white male to ask about. Elder Bear Chief believes that, had Maslow been there by himself, he would have been told to leave.

Elder Melting Tallow went on to add that the triangle (or pyramid) does not reflect Siksika knowledge as the nation sees not a hierarchy but rather a circle that surrounds the person, family, community and which is rooted in cultural beliefs (personal communication, January 25, 2020). Elder Roy Bear Chief notes that Elder Melting Tallow's

views are consistent with how the needs are understood within the Siksika First Nation emphasizing the circle as opposed to a hierarchy wherein the child is in the centre of the community.

Maslow relied on translation which, as one of the authors, Elder Bear Chief (who is fluent in Blackfoot) notes, translation is incomplete as constructs around relationships do not have equal or parallel meaning in English and Blackfoot. Heavy Head raises questions about the willingness of the translators or the Chiefs who met with Maslow to offer either a fulsome story of the culture or a deep sharing of Blackfoot world views.

> …what he misses hugely is because of his cultural blinders. When we look at the ideas that he eventually formulated after this experience, you can see because of who he is and where he's from, and where he's lived and the cultural context he's been in, that he completely overlooked the context of living in an Indigenous community…If you're okay with creating social tensions, you might have the same types of relationships that Maslow witnessed in New York, you know? So, he found answers, not complete answers, but he found clues to that in child rearing, he found clues to that in some [inaudible] of spirituality a little bit, he found clues to that in the altruism observations that he had. But, ultimately, he took what he had from there and he went home and started keeping these notebooks and researching the biographies of people in Western society that he thought had similar attributes in terms of their psychological character to the norm in Siksika, and then he was comparing what they have in common and this kind of thing. That was 10 years of that work before he published the hierarchy of needs. (Personal communication, March 9, 2020)

Based on Heavy Head's description of Maslow's own limited cultural frame

of reference, and the perspectives of the Siksika elders regarding Blackfoot ontological orientation, the question of a pyramid or hierarchical understanding of the human condition and trajectory is not sequential in Siksika ways of knowing. All three elders speak of life as a circle. Elder Hayden Melting Tallow emphasises the importance of this because it highlights how the Blackfoot culture is not sequential but radiates out through relationships which then goes through the circle. As Elder Roy Bear Chief describes, all lives in the community are interrelated and interconnected much like the spider web (known as Ani to Pisi). When one part of the web is disturbed, then the whole of the web is vibrating.

Narcisse Blood, in his recordings, as well as the elders interviewed for this work, suggested that Maslow did not understand the non-egoic nature of relationship in which actions are solely undertaken to enhance the collective. Elder Melting Tallow described that the oral history of Maslow was that he was unwelcome and sought to exploit rather than understand the way of life. In western ways, relationships are entered into on the basis of how they can benefit an individual, which was, and still is, contrary to the Siksika beliefs.

An example of this is Maslow observing that Teddy Yellow Fly, who assisted Maslow, would loan his car without question as to need, motive or purpose. Maslow struggled to understand this generosity. Those interviewed here, however, state it was not about generosity as it was more about the nature of the relationships of support. Getting something back is not an essential component to relationships as the Siksika understand the western nature to be. This is also reflective of how a child is seen in Siksika. The child is meant to learn how to be self-independent while also interconnected so that each would contribute as able. Elder Breaker stated:

We believe in reciprocity, and that's what I teach. And I've always known that. I've always known that growing up, you give, you don't hoard, you try to give whatever you can. They talk about the leaders of the day were the ones that gave up everything, horses…they gave up even their children to their clan to raise. That's why when parents, their first born, if it's a male, they'll give it to the grandparents. That's a sign of reciprocity. That's not in Maslow's work.

If we are looking at the hierarchy of needs from a Blackfoot perspective, it is not so much that Maslow got the hierarchy wrong, but rather, he had no understanding of the complexities of Blackfoot culture, so what he later theorised as a hierarchy of needs could not have reflected the Blackfoot paradigm. Maslow attempted to construct a theory of human need from a western lens, one that emerges from an individualistic paradigm, leaving him unable to meaningfully and critically acknowledge his own cultural blind spots, let alone fathom the ontological responsibilities of the Blackfoot peoples.

Self-actualisation

Returning to this theme, in the hierarchy, self-actualisation is presented as the pinnacle, although Maslow would go further, as noted previously. He saw self-actualisation as something to be sought through one's lifetime which is inconsistent with how the Siksika people view human development. Instead, the Elders we spoke with described the child as being self-actualised in the womb and is thus, born into the clan as a whole person. This is a different world-view than what Maslow articulated. It is a point of significant difference between Maslow and the Siksika people. For Maslow, the person seeks self-actualisation by working through the hierarchy, whereas for the Siksika it is granted with life. Essential to this view, is the notion that the clan and entire community are the caregiver, nurturer and supplier of the needs of the child. As

Elder Stuart Breaker describes, if we were to place the newborn child in accordance with the hierarchy, the child would already be at the top of the hierarchy at birth as a self-actualised human-being. This is part of the Blackfoot belief system.

Further to this, and as noted earlier, the child is at the centre of the circle of relationships (Lindstrom et al., 2016). Thus, the notion of "all my relations" is fixed within patterns of inter-connectedness. The child is brought into the "we" knowing that they are not separate beings but are part of belonging and place. This connects very closely to the Siksika notion of collectivity which is quite different from the hierarchy of needs which is based upon the development of the person as a unique individual. This helps to illustrate the fundamental flaw that Siksika people see with the hierarchy, which is that building a child, a whole person, is seen as a circle of care in which all needs must be met simultaneously. The circle is a core descriptor in Siksika ontological responsibilities. The elders in this project focused upon the surrounding of the child with culture, spiritualty and ceremony, traditions and teachings, caregiving and community along with attachment not to a sole, primary caregiver but to the group as opposed to western notions of biological parentage. Elder Melting Tallow further notes that the culture is not built upon "me" or "mine" or "my" but on "us, we". Brown (2014), reflecting on her interview with Clement Bear Chief (an older brother to Roy Bear Chief), noted Maslow would have learned about the Blackfoot worldview of purpose and meaning of life but missed the essential elements related to the worldview of caring and protecting within the circle as opposed to a hierarchy. The self is not the focus, but the grouping.

The elders in this project all spoke of the child as sacred and being seen as such from conception. Elder Melting Tallow, for example, noted that children were treated and cared for right in the womb. Likely due to his own limitations, Maslow left that out. Children growing up are taught to do things for themselves not as an egoic thing but rather as a result of already knowing the self. The child then needs to know their place in society and to be able to meaningfully contribute. The parents are already raising a self-actualised being. Both Elders Breaker and Bear Chief noted that Maslow did not understand this. This is partially because "he didn't live it. He was only observing" (Elder Breaker). Elder Breaker went on to say, "we're born of Mother Earth, so it goes through the body, and that baby [Blackfoot word/phrase], that's part of you. It's a gift from Mother Earth because we all come from the earth and leave back into the earth, everything."

At the core is an inter-relatedness to the natural world that is connected from the land through earth and the celestial. As Elder Melting Tallow added, "The western way of life is not the only way." Maslow is described as also having missed that. Elder Bear Chief contextualises another key feature that Maslow missed, which is connection to land which is essential to being.

> Sometimes we take land for granted. Without land we are rootless. With land we have a place to set roots. The Blackfoot traditional territory has been trodden upon by many footprints from our ancestors, even the children, too. Many claw and hoof prints have drawn impressions on this land, too. The birds that fly in the air have left their talon impressions, too. The plants and trees have set out their roots deep in the ground to claim as home. We do not own the land, the land owns us.

Maslow was unable to theorise, let alone identify, the significance of relationships in nurturing a self-actualised human-being within a Blackfoot cosmology. He missed key concepts such as the role of the child in the community and the connections to land both of which set the Blackfoot paradigm apart from western cultural perspectives.

Conclusion

The goal of this article was not to discredit Maslow and his theoretical work regarding the needs of humans. Rather, it was to show that Maslow did not understand the Siksika way of knowing. It is not that Maslow got the hierarchy wrong or upside down, it is rather that he did not understand the circular nature in which all beings in Siksika society are interconnected and integrated. They surround each other and needs are met through these connections.

In our view, perhaps most importantly, Maslow missed the place of the child who enters life at the centre as a self-actualised being. This blind spot is likely the result of his own deeply embedded Euro-centric perspective which he left critically unexamined. In Siksika, and other Blackfoot nations, as seen in the Nistawatsiman project which looked at parenting in the Blackfoot culture (Lindstrom et al., 2016), the child is fully interwoven within the society. This means that the caring for and developing of a child is done in accordance with the process of self-actualisation and the repeating circle of life. The child, and all other Blackfoot people, are not thought of as a singular individual independent of the community. Rather, people exist within a web of relational alliances wherein one's actions reverberate to cause a reaction amongst these alliances. The notion of relational accountabilities supersedes aspirations for individual greatness.

While we attempted to gather as much information on Maslow's time in Siksika as was available, a limitation of this work arises from the loss of records through the fire at Red Crow Community College. Fortunately, we were able to read original archival material as well as other sources such as Hoffman, who worked directly with Maslow. That the hierarchy of needs does represent a world view that is appropriate in some cultures may well be true, particularly regarding western Eurocentric cultures. However, it is our hope that equating the hierarchy of needs with Blackfoot beliefs might be discontinued because it is not simply about Maslow getting it wrong. We wish to advance the notion that the hierarchy of needs represents an interpretive model of human developmental needs based on a Eurocentric paradigm upon which the needs of the individual hold precedence over collective well-being. Thus, it is a developmental framework/model that is insufficient when attempting to understand Blackfoot culture, as well as other Indigenous cultures. The Blackfoot nations already have culturally appropriate models to draw upon such as Ani to Pisi that are consistent with their cultural paradigm.

There are implications for social work practice. The profession is invited to think critically about how theory is applied in practice. Questioning of the validity of it to the population with which we are engaged is crucial to bringing in the world views of the very people we work with. By doing this, the profession recognises that there are multiple valid world views. By not being critical, Eurocentric understandings become the norm against which value judgments are made in practice. This work on Maslow helps illustrate the point.

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