

Dancing with a Ghost Response Questions

Chapter 1: Seeing Through the Rules

1.1. Ross talks about how the Mohawk host a dinner for some Cree guests. Based on this situation, and your own thinking and experience, what is the author ultimately saying when he observes "each group could only see the other through its own rules, could only interpret the behavior of others from within their own perspective? (p. 2-3)"

1.2. The Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing observed that, "Until you can see through the rules, you can only see through the rules." What is Laing saying here exactly (p. 4)? Note that Ross actually unpacks and explores this question. Feel free to borrow from Ross' thinking when necessary.

1.3. On **page 5** Ross makes the following observation: I suspect that it is commonplace for signals to be misread when Native and non-Native people meet, commonplace for each of us to hear things which the other never intended, and to go away with entirely mistaken impressions. Why does this happen?

1.4. Respond to the following quotation from **page 5**: "I believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

Chapter 2: Signals of Difference

2.1. On **page 10**, Ross describes how a First Nations approach to justice compared to a Western one. The Western system is adversarial where there's a defense and a prosecution. There's fact finding. There's responsibility; and there's consequences. Explain how Charlie Fisher's Indigenous model of justice differs from a Western one.

2.2. Compensation or restitution are not part of an Indigenous-inspired justice system. The idea someone can destroy the property of another or otherwise hurt someone, and not be expected to compensate the victim, feels strange to most non-Indigenous persons. What Western culture-specific value do you hold that's responsible for this strange feeling (**critical thinking**)?

Chapter 3: The Rules of Traditional Times

3.1. Rupert Ross, on **page 14**, explains that the Ethic of Non-Interference is the oldest ethic practiced by Indigenous societies. This ethic essentially means that an Indigenous person never interferes in any way with the rights, privileges and activities of another person. This ethic is also present in the West's parent culture, e.g. Westerners value minding one's own business and in the right of others to make up their own minds. However, Westerners also believe they sometimes need to take action if and when their neighbor is in error. Create a chart like the one below and explore the pros and cons of the Indigenous and Western approaches to the ethic of non-interference.

	Pros	Cons
Indigenous		
Western		

- a. Is one approach—Indigenous or Western—wiser to follow or does it depend more on the circumstances (**critical thinking**)?
- b. At the bottom of **page 15**, Ross describes a situation where Indigenous people are traveling in a car together. No one gives the driver instructions or advice unless asked. How frequently do you receive unsolicited advice from friends and family and how do these kinds of experiences make you feel (critical thinking)?
- 3.2. Ross goes to great lengths exploring Indigenous views around avoiding criticizing people publicly, always speaking the truth, and the importance of healing and bringing everyone back to the community. At the bottom of **page 17** and at the top of **page 18**, Ross describes how Westerners differ from Indigenous peoples on some of these issues. List four of these differences.
- 3.3. The ethic of non-interference carries over into parenting styles for Indigenous people. What are some things Indigenous parents avoid doing that white parents typically would do (**p. 18-19**)?
- 3.4. Ross observes on **page 20** that he assumed that all people who loved their children would take it upon themselves to tell them what to do and how to do it throughout their earliest years, granting freedom of choice gradually as skills and wisdom developed over time. He assumed that anyone who did not treat their children in this way did not care about them as they should. Obviously, Indigenous parents are neither indifferent nor unaware to the risks posed to their children by letting them make all of their own decisions. What ultimately are Indigenous parents trying to achieve by letting their children make sense of the world for themselves (**critical thinking**)?
- 3.5. No ethic or value or worldview is perfect or without its problems. The ethic of non-interference evolved alongside Indigenous societies for thousands of years. These societies were hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies. These societies were considerably less populous, less obsessed with speed, and didn't place such a priority on instant-gratification. Are there any disadvantages to the Indigenous approach to non-interference when it comes to living in a modern industrialized, fast-paced and urban society (**critical thinking**)?
- 3.6. According to Dr. Brant, at the top of page 22, he observes giving children "immense autonomy" may ultimately bring about an opposite result once adulthood is reached. Specifically, through their experiences the child who becomes an adult develops a desire *not* to lead an autonomous life. Why does the ethic of non-interference promote a sense of *dependence* and *loyalty* to one's extended family (**p. 20**)?
- 3.7. **Pages 24 through to 27** discuss how Indigenous peoples prefer not to give *direct* advice but prefer to speak either hypothetically or *around* the topic under discussion. Ross uses the term "distillation" to refer to the product of this process. Provide a definition for distillation below (**p. 26**).
- 3.8. On **page 32** Ross introduces readers to the process of "self-fulfillment and self-realization." According to Ross what is the duty of all people when it comes to this process?

3.9. On **page 33** the Ross explains that another ethic many Indigenous societies follow is the notion anger must not be shown. This ethic evolved in societies where families, extended families, and kin groups, etc. lived in close quarters and depended heavily upon one another for survival; it was believed showing personal hostility was self-indulgent and threatened group unity. How do Western and Indigenous peoples differ when it comes to displaying anger publicly?

3.10. Contrast how Westerners and Indigenous peoples respond to grief like the passing of a loved one (**p. 34-37**).

3.11. People from one culture frequently draw negative conclusions about people from other cultures (**p. 39**). Why?

3.12. Explain the context in which, and why, these Indigenous ethics developed (**p.40**).

3.13. If people from different cultures hope to communicate with and understand one another they need to be aware of the cross-cultural significance of their interactions. What is cross-cultural awareness and why is it important to effective and meaningful communication (**p.43**)?

3.14. Explain what Ross meant when he observed on **page 46** that Indigenous peoples saw their own importance only in terms of the group's welfare and security.

3.15. According to traditional Native teachings nothing can be achieved unless each person's mental or spiritual state is acknowledged. Minds preoccupied with other issues or full of negative feelings carried over from other contexts will contaminate the proceedings. Those who come to the meeting focused upon individual agendas as opposed to common, larger goals will, consciously or not, put up roadblocks (if only by sending signals of antagonism and defensiveness). By contrast, the simple reminder of the good that is in each of us, of the good that we can each contribute and of the good fortune that surrounds, prompts real efforts at patience, understanding and cooperation (**p.46-47**).

Chapter 4: Looking for a Synthesis

4.1. Rupert Ross warns us of the problems and risks of judging the actions of peoples from other cultures than our own. He goes on to say we are not seeing, despite what we *seem* to be seeing, reality. So when an Indigenous family gets rid of all pictures of a dead loved one and removes all memory of them from the home, we might jump to the conclusion they do not care. The reality is care or love or concern is shown in a multitude of ways. What are two ways Indigenous peoples show they care which fundamentally differs from White people (**p.48-49**)?

4.2. Until we realize that Native people have a highly developed, formal, but radically different set of cultural imperatives, we are likely to continue misinterpreting their acts, misperceiving the real problems they face and imposing, through government policies, potentially harmful "remedies" (**p.49**).

4.3. Why is it problematic to judge people from another culture using the cultural standards we've learned (**critical thinking and p.50**)?

4.4. Respond to the following quote from **page 52**:

Native people who still follow those commandments [e.g. an ethic of non-interference] deserve our respect as moral, well-intentioned and ethical agents loyal to community-sanctioned precepts. This remains true whether or not their communities decide over time to modify or discard some of those precepts as they take stock of new realities. It is also important to note that, until fairly recently, Native people across this country have kept a respectful silence about *our* cultural ways, despite the fact that they must have viewed them with considerable alarm, especially when those ways were regularly forced upon them against their will.

Chapter 5: Natural Science versus Supernatural Belief

5.1. Provide a brief description of the White (science) and Indigenous (supernatural) dichotomy (**p.59**).