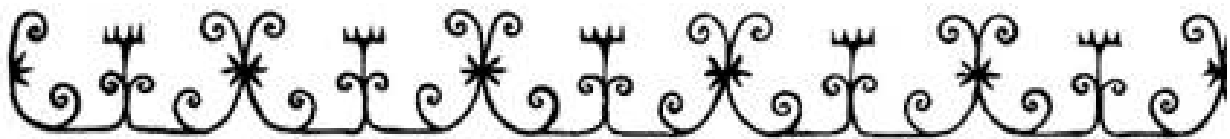


MI'KMAW COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS – Teachings of Elder Murdena Marshall

- mid 2000s
 - educational outreach
-

Mi'kmaw Elder Murdena Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation indicates that the Mi'kmaw people have “collective consciousness” and she is frequently asked to explain what she means in this regard. Murdena thought it would be useful to have a visual to assist her, one that would be especially helpful for scientists. Thus, she and Cheryl Bartlett created the model of collective consciousness depicted on the last page of this document – an organic model that uses the analogy of the biological cell (eukaryotic organism). We find the model works well with audiences wherein people do, indeed, have training in the biological sciences. And, we find that, as when using any analogy or metaphor as part of an explanation for something unknown, it requires considerable explanation when audiences lack understanding of modern understandings in cellular biology.



Murdena further indicates that, in reference to René Descartes’ statement “I think, therefore I am”, that the appropriate understanding for the Mi'kmaw people is “We are, therefore I am”. Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science Dr. Cheryl Bartlett has asked Murdena if it would also be appropriate to say, with respect to Mi'kmaw collective consciousness, “I participate, therefore we are”. Murdena has sanctioned Cheryl’s suggestion.

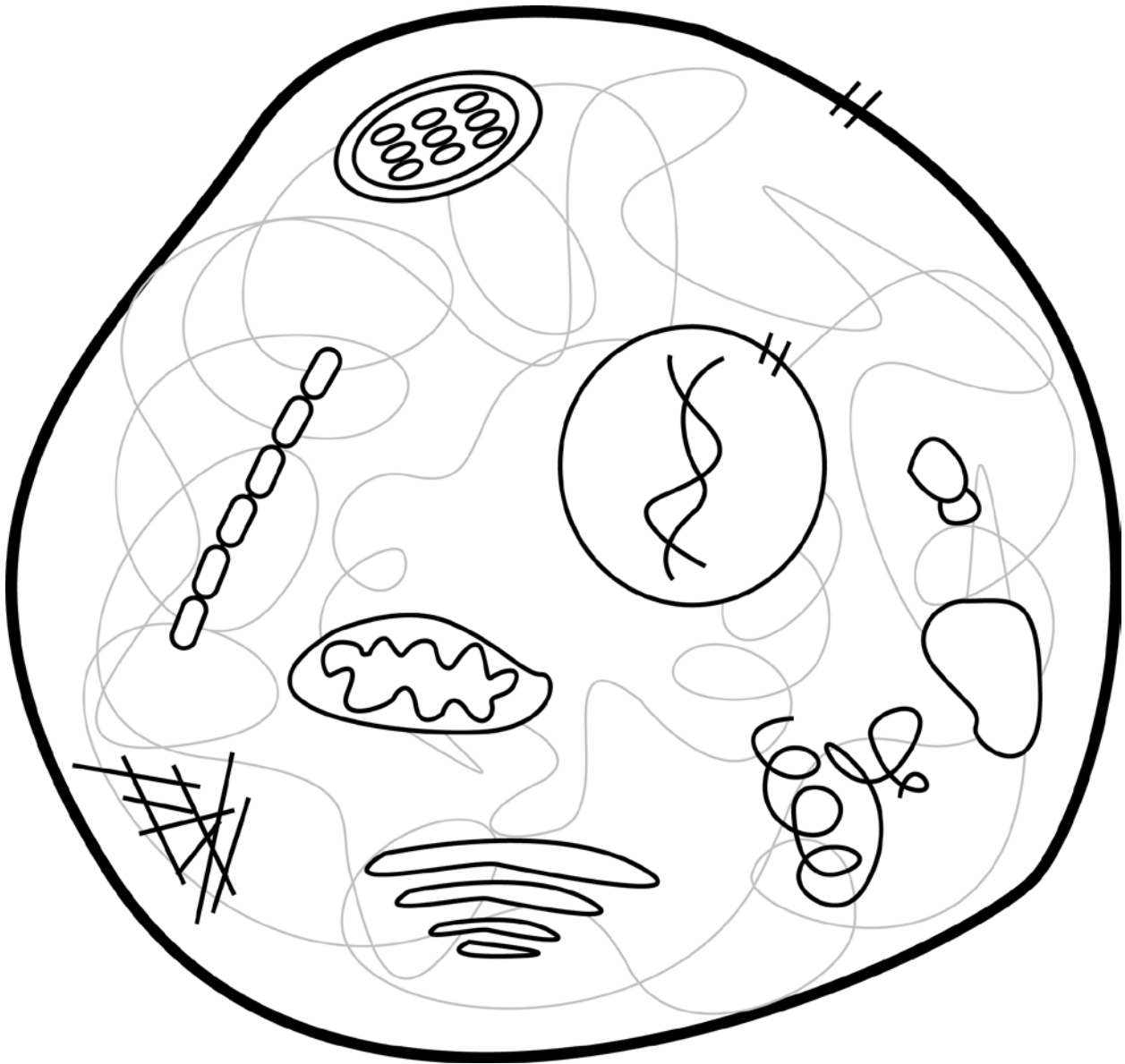
The brief explanations above can help the interested person to understand why, with respect to the Integrative Science academic program, we decided to use “Sense of Place, Emergence, and Participation” as the label for one of the newly created first year MS&T course pairs. The first year courses were designed to provide students with foundational understandings in the Indigenous and Western sciences and ways of knowing.

This work was funded by a SSHRC award to Cheryl Bartlett for a research project entitled “Pattern recognition: enriching the ‘common ground’ of bringing Aboriginal and Western scientific knowledges together”.



biological cell (eukaryotic organism):

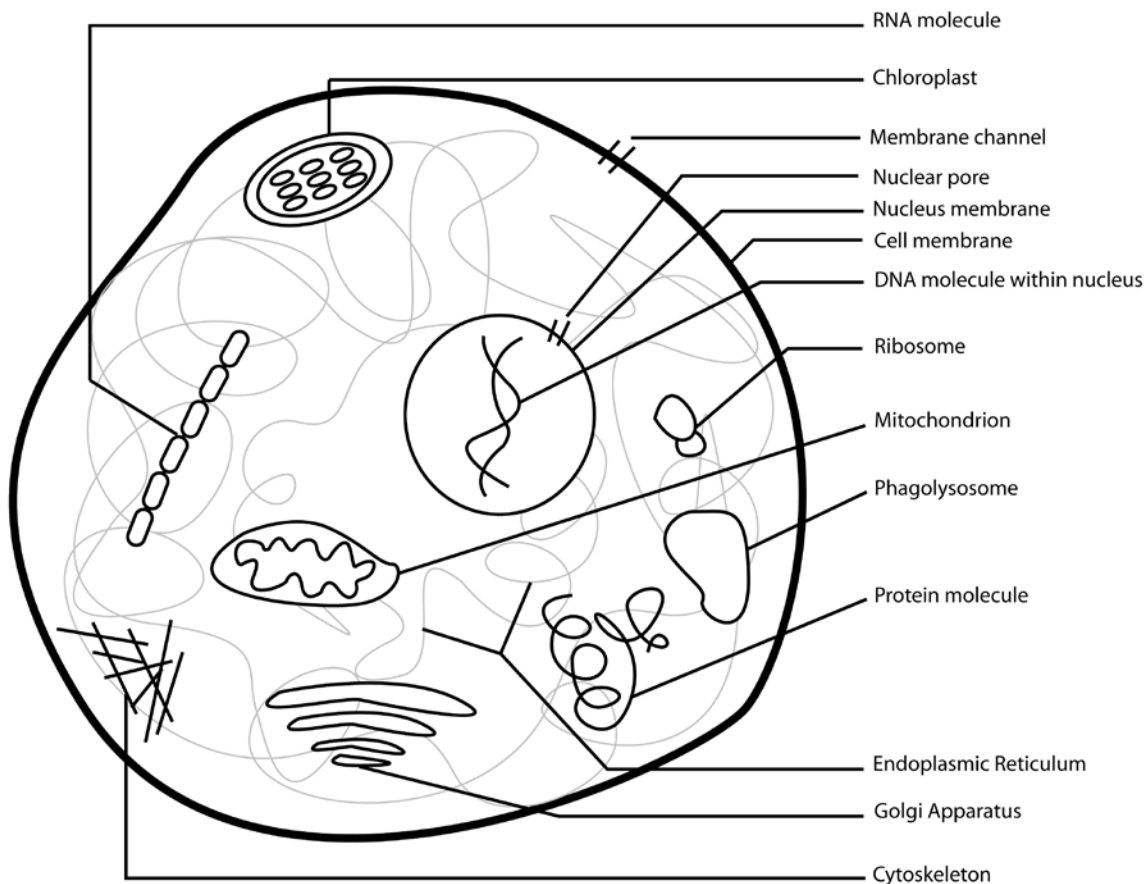
- schematic of the whole •



biological cell (eukaryotic organism):

- schematic to show and label “parts” within the collective •

The Collective: Its Parts (example = the living cell)



Teachings of Mi'kmaw Elder Murdena Marshall: Mi'kmaw Collective Consciousness

... a visual, organic model based on the eukaryotic cell
• schematic to indicate “functions” within the collective •

The Collective: Its Functions

