



# RESEARCH2REALITY

Shining a light on research & innovation.

## How to Unmake Indigenous Stereotypes

An interview with Professor Daniel Justice  
Indigenous Author, University of British Columbia

### How is indigenous culture important?

Indigenous people matter. Indigenous peoples are a significant part of this country, of this world. I think our future depends a lot on indigenous peoples' knowledge and capacity to survive. The understandings of indigenous experience will go a long way, not just for indigenous people, but for others in learning new and better ways of engaging with the world. And I think for indigenous peoples, ourselves, we need to know that we do have literatures and histories, and really, really rich depths of intellectual and artistic expression.

Then you start to understand that, it's not that we are somehow basically flawed people, but that we are actually survivors. The settler-colonial reality that we're in today is not a natural consequence of anything, it was human made and it can be human unmade.

### How can we imagine a better future??

The existing state of things is just not working. It's not working for indigenous peoples, it's not working for others. And we know the reasons why. We know that the existing state is an oppressive one. We know that the existing reality is one that's based on misrepresentation and falsehood. And I think we're not looking for uniformly positive stories, we're looking for more complicated, realistic stories. That isn't something a lot of people see in mainstream representations in the media. Way too often the representations of indigenous peoples are very simplistic: savage or civilized, ignoble savage or a noble savage. But rarely are we seen as fully-fleshed, complicated, interesting, funny, and loving human beings. We're denied that in the popular representations and I think our literatures and our other artistic productions give us that back. We can't have a different future unless we can imagine a different future. And so I think the more we can do to expand and enrich our imaginative potential, the better for all of us.