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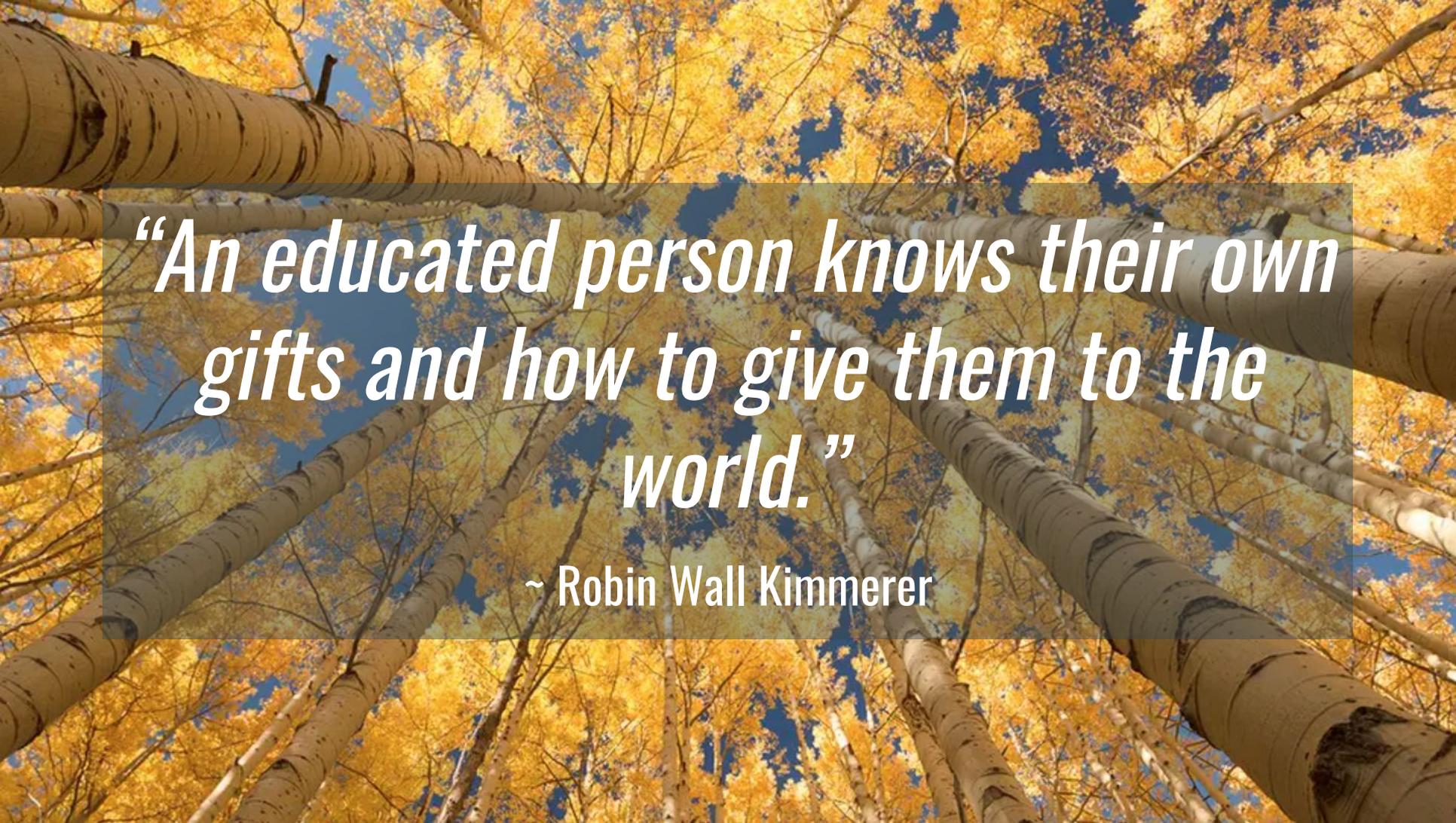
Blackfeet Nation - Browning, MT

Introduction: Blackfeet Reservation

- 18,000 enrolled members
- Browning Public schools serve 2,000 students K-12
- Reservation is approximately one million acres
- Isolation
- High Socioeconomic Risk Factors



— Welcome to the —
BLACKFEET NATION



“An educated person knows their own gifts and how to give them to the world.”

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer

Issue #1: Relationships

How do we create a culture of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility in our students?

Status Quo

- Lacking reciprocity
- Hierarchical
- Punitive approach to discipline and student discipline
- Parents/Caregivers are treated as obstacles as opposed to resources



Ideal Scenario

- Foundation of *ALL* education
- Restorative approach
- Oral culture practice listening
- Unconditional positive regard
- High expectations/High support



Roadmap

- Trauma engaged
- *NO* violence
- Cultural Values

Issue #2: Academics

How do we repair the damage from western education and begin to re-Indigenize learning?

Status Quo “Western Ed”

- Control and Compliance
- Memorization and discrete skills
- Our community’s culture is not reflected in the curriculum
- “Industrial” model of education
- Standardized assessment is prioritized over student safety and building relationships
- Rewards test-taking skills as opposed to teamwork, problem solving and social emotional intelligence



Ideal Scenario

- Community-led
- Tribal perspective
- Inspire and Heal
- Critical Thinking



Roadmap

- **EDUCATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY!**
- Support from local leaders in the development of pedagogy and curriculum

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS

Thousands of Indigenous worldviews exist. Each is unique. These ways of knowing and being in the world are often connected to particular languages and cultural practices and are rooted in specific places. The principles here are some that many Indigenous Peoples have in common.

RELATIONSHIPS
An understanding that humans are in interdependent relationships with plants, animals, land, water, other natural elements, and people (past, present, and future).

Deep and wide systems of relationality are at the center of Indigenous existence and are at the heart of Indigenous understandings of how to live in connected, ethical, loving, and sustainable ways.

RECIPROcity
A practice that asks humans in relationship with one another and with any more-than-human beings (e.g. plants, land, animals) to learn ways to gift the person or being they are in relationship with something that illustrates your respect, care, and responsibility to the relationship.

Reciprocity demonstrates active participation in the relationship that includes giving and not just taking/receiving (e.g. expressing gratitude toward plants for food that comes from them).

RESPONSIBILITY
As humans, what are our relational responsibilities? For what purpose? Being aware of these questions prioritizes relationships and reciprocity. Assuming that humans have responsibilities to one another as well as to more-than-human beings (e.g. water, moon, plants) ensures that many interconnected relationships between plants, animals, land, water, other natural elements, and people (past, present, and future), thrive in relation to one another.

PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE
An Indigenous approach that understands everything in the present is connected to what has happened in the past, which also informs what is to come in the future.

*Armed with spirit and the teachings of our ancestors, all our relations behind us, we are living the Indigenous world. We are the descendants of a future imaginary that has already passed: the outcome of the intentions, resistance, and survivance of our ancestors."
(Anishinaabe/Nehiyaw)

HOLISTIC + CYCLIC
Indigenous worldviews often see the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual) as interconnected to land and in non-linear, non-hierarchical relationships to other beings.

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SO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT... Settler Colonialism

Event **Structure**

Settler colonialism began as an event in history when settler colonists arrived to a place with the intent of staying there.

Settler colonialism is now a current social structure that shapes and impacts every part of mainstream society from education to medicine to law to food to media and more!

Cornerstones of Settler Colonialism

- Eliminate** Indigenous Peoples so settlers have space to live and create their own society in place of Indigenous societies.
- Attempted** elimination of Indigenous Peoples can be physical genocide (massacres), cultural genocide (assimilation), political erasure (racialization), knowledge erasure (epistemocidal), spatial removal (removal policies), and others.
- Impose** colonial understandings of property. Laws, policies, and values that transform land, water, plants, animals, humans, ideas, and materials into possessions that can be owned.
- Limit** options for how to be in the world. This limiting makes it seem natural that there are only certain (colonially-approved) ways of being in relationships, of learning, creating families, participating in economies, eating, governing, attending to health, generating/sharing knowledge, and so much more!
- Produce** anti-relationality by erasing, damaging, ignoring, and targeting responsible, reciprocal relationships between people, land, ideas, cultures, and more-than-human relatives in service of prioritizing principles of ownership and possession over meaningful relationships.
- Settler Colonialism wants land, seeks to control the narrative, targets Indigenous Peoples, and it harms and limits EVERYONE.**

Examples of current settler colonial nation states:

- United States
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Iraq
- Canada
- Australia
- South Africa
- Northern Ireland

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Understanding Intergenerational Historical Trauma (IHT)*

*Specific to Indigenous Peoples in the United States

HISTORICAL TRAUMA: A complex form of trauma that consists of cumulative emotional, psychological, physical, social, and cultural wounds caused by settler colonialism (which Native Peoples have been targeted by). Historical trauma originates from **genocide** and **cultural loss**, including decline over time in population, and disconnection from land, family, and cultural practices.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA: Sometimes referred to as trans- or multi-generational trauma, intergenerational trauma is defined as trauma that gets passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations who did not experience trauma themselves. Intergenerational trauma may begin with ONE traumatic event affecting an individual, traumatic events affecting multiple family members over time, and/or collective trauma affecting larger community, cultural, racial, ethnic, or other groups/populations (historical trauma).

SETTLER COLONIALISM

Intergenerational Historical Trauma **Collective Loss and Grief**

HISTORICAL TRAUMA RESPONSES

- Anxiety & Depression
- Domestic Violence
- Suicidal Ideation
- Cardiometabolic Disease
- Alcoholism/Addiction
- Chronic Illness

Settler Colonial Actions That Cause IHT for Native Peoples:

Massacres, Boarding schools, Past and present land seizures, Economic disruption, Forced assimilation, Removal and Relocation programs, Food source interruption, Ongoing racism, Lack of accurate social representation

Photo Illustration by Dung Hsing from "Healing Historical Trauma" by Jackie Powder

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What We Talk About When We Talk About... Extractive Colonialism

Within this kind of colonialism, colonial countries usually do not intend to live in the territories and places they extract resources from. They make decisions from their home countries, disconnected from the place they are colonizing.

This kind of colonialism transforms lands, waters, minerals, humans, animals, and more into **resources** that can be taken and sold for the benefit of the colonizing nation. These profits do not benefit the local place or people.

Rather than eliminate Indigenous Peoples in these places of extraction, colonizing nations will exploit Indigenous Peoples for cheap or free labor (e.g. enslavement), and rely on Indigenous knowledge of and relationships with the place to better extract materials for profit.

The places and Indigenous Peoples targeted by **exploitive** and **extractive** colonialism often remain in political upheaval and economic distress for years. Some of these countries are poor, have **totalitarian governments** and seem 'undeveloped,' all as a result of being subjected to extractive colonialism.

COMMON EXTRACTIONS:

- Rubber
- Sugar
- Humans
- Minerals for technology (ex. cell phones)
- Metals/Gems
- Oils
- Animals
- Furs
- Lumber

Lands and Places Changed and Impacted by Extractive Colonialism:

- Angola
- Barbados
- Solomon Islands
- Democratic Republic of Congo

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RECLAMATION Indigenous Resurgence and Revitalization

RECONNECTION

"There is no concise neat model of resurgence in the way of approaching decolonization and the regeneration of our peoples" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005:612).

Land
Indigenous Peoples (re)connecting with the landscape and geography of their homelands can support the (re)connection to Indigenous teachings, foods, lifeways, and values. Specific Indigenous lands are linked with Indigenous worldviews that are independent of colonial thinking and being.

Language
In order to recover Indigenous worldviews, (re)learning Indigenous languages can support Indigenous Peoples by (re)orienting them to knowing and being in Indigenous ways rather than colonial knowing carried within colonial languages.

Heal
Processing underlying trauma, pain and grief with support is one of the most important moves Indigenous Peoples can make as we navigate the contemporary world. Connecting with other beings (human and more-than-human) can support the process of healing while also embodying Indigenous worldviews.

Relationships > Ownership
Centering meaningful relationships with people (past, present, and future), with ideas, plants, animals, land, water, and other natural elements helps counter the damage colonialism has created. Indigenous relationality is anti-colonial since it values caring, interconnected relationships over ideas of ownership, property, and possession (of land, medicine, people, and other items).

Ongoing Entanglement
Since settler and extractive colonialism still exist today, it's important to note that the current worldwide colonialism, resurgence, and revitalization of Indigenous worldviews is happening while colonialism continues to try to erase them.

"This is a manifesto to create networks of reciprocal resurgent movements with other humans and nonhumans radically imagining their ways out of domination, who are not afraid to let those 'imagings' destroy the pillars of settler colonialism" (Simpson 2017:10).

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Issue #3: Community

How do we foster community actualization within our students?

Status Quo

- Power/transactional relationships = anti-relational
- Our communities have not healed from cultural/historical trauma
- Schools take a “fortress” approach to community engagement.
- Interactions are often infrequent and adversarial
- Frequent suspensions and expulsions as opposed to restorative practices



Ideal Scenario

- Community Actualization
- Community capacity
- Responsibility of Individual in community
- Diversity and gifts of community are seen as an asset
- Attend to colonial power dynamics



Roadmap

- Relationships First
- Unconditional Positive Regard
- Strength Based/ Responsibility Based Approach
- Repositioning... students, caregivers, and educators