

## **An Anglo-American Rethinks Native American Education: Can We Avoid Yesterday's Tragedies?**

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### **Abstract**

“It’s ironic that Indian people are not allowed to be experts in themselves—it’s usually someone else ‘defining’ the Indian” (Pewewardy, 1992, p.5). Tragically, this is an accurate representation of much of the history of Native American education. Major changes have taken place in the last thirty years to correct this tragedy and to return the education of Native Americans to Native Americans. Progress, however has been slow; years of cultural, geographic and educational genocide by Europeans and Non-Indigenous governments have been difficult to overcome. To understand the historical underpinnings of the modern Native American education movement, three general eras of Native American education—the Pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Post-Colonial Eras (Appendix A)—are discussed, and a brief historical overview of these first two eras is provided. Changes that occurred in, and injustices incurred on, Native American education during these periods are described. The main focuses of this examination, current trends in Native American education shaping the Post-Colonial Era, are examined. The relevance of these changes for cultural recuperation and tribal and individual education and learning are enumerated.

### **Introduction**

I would venture to guess that for the majority of Americans, primarily Anglo-Americans but even perhaps non-Anglos, the superiority, appropriateness, and utility of mainstream American (Anglo) education systems and models for people of all cultures is never questioned. To most Americans “offering” our educational systems, values, and beliefs is not “ic” (i.e., egocentric, ethnocentric, phobic, dogmatic) or “ist” (i.e., racist, sexist, and so forth) but is simply pragmatic. After all, it is not practical or efficient to have but one dominant language (English), system of beliefs (Western), and set of values (democratic). Education, therefore—whether for children, adults, or seniors—becomes a primary instrument for indoctrinating, enculturating, and assimilating people into the “mainstream.” I suspect this is not viewed by the dominant culture as imposing, manipulating, or influencing, but as assisting. When non-Anglos question, resist, or reject these overtures, Anglos are often confused and angered by what they perceive as the non-Anglos’ ungrateful, unreasonable, and entitled attitudes. The response typically is a “Well, to Hell with them” reaction, followed by forced assimilation (Native American historical experience), outright rejection (African American historical experience), or some other spiteful response. Ignoring can often be as damaging and effective as forcing.

Western educational history and thought is often framed within the pre-modern (i.e., romantic, enlightened, and so forth), modern, or post-modern eras. This does not reciprocally describe the history of Native American education. This paper briefly explores aspects of the Native American educational experience prior to colonization, throughout colonization, and into the post-colonization period. The purpose of education, from a traditional Native American perspective, is to transmit culture to new generations (Battiste, 2000). However, for 400 or more years of our nation's history (Appendix B), Native American education was a coercive, colonial tool used to forcibly impose European culture on Indigenous peoples, and to indoctrinate future generations of Native Americans into Western, Euro-American (Anglo) culture, values and lifestyle (Tsianina Lomawaima, K. 1999; Skinner, L., 1999). Beginning in approximately 1961, through Federal legislation, Federal court judgments, and cultural/societal upheaval that stirred America's conscience, the tide began to turn, priorities began to shift, hopeful has returned, and Native Americans are once again defining education for themselves. "Education is an art of processes, participation, and making connections. Learning is a growth and life process; and Life and Nature are always relationships in process!" (Cajete, 1994, p. 24).

## **Pre-Colonial Era**

### Origins of Native American Education

Cajete (1994, p. 34) states, "The ideal purpose of education is to attain knowledge, seek truth, wisdom, completeness, and life as perceived by traditional philosophies and cultures around the world." He indicates:

As a whole, traditional Tribal education revolved around experiential learning (learning by doing and seeing), storytelling (learning by listening and imagining), ritual/ceremony (learning through imitation), dreaming (learning through unconscious imagery), tutoring (learning through apprenticeship), and artistic reflection learning through creative synthesis. Through these methods the integration of inner and outer realities of learners and teachers was fully honored, and the complimentary educational processes of both realities were fully engaged (Cajete, 1994, p. 34).

According to Reagan (2000), Carol Locust identified ten core beliefs historically common to most Native American tribes: (1) Belief in Supreme Creator; (2) Humans are three-fold: spirit, mind and body; (3) Plants, animals and humans are all part of the spirit world, and the physical/spiritual worlds exist side-by-side and intermingled; (4) Spirit existed before the physical body and will exist after; (5) Illness affects mind and spirit as well as body; (6) Wellness is harmony in spirit, mind and body; (7) Unwellness is disharmony in spirit, mind and body; (8) Natural unwellness is caused by the violation of a sacred or tribal taboo; (9) Unnatural unwellness is caused by "witchcraft;" (10) Each of us is responsible for his or her own wellness (Locust, in Reagan, 2000, pp.85-86). The value ends that resulted from traditional Native American educational practices were three-fold: harmony with *self* (mind, body, spirit), *others* (tribe/clan communities, animal communities, plant communities, spirit communities), and the *Creator* (Reagan, 2000). The process of education was a less formal education that occurred throughout one's lifespan regarding the person's relationship with self, others, and the Creator. "School of Life" education, typically through hands-on and oratory modes of instruction were

prevalent, although some written forms of communication were commonly used, such as petroglyphs, paintings, and other art forms.

Oration was a valued skill and tradition, which included speeches, myths, legends, folktales, and so forth, and was valued in almost all aspects of social and ceremonial life. Elders of the clan or community educated the young, and the reverence for one's elders was universal. Another universal mode of education was the use of play and games (e.g., LaCrosse), or creative game activities, whether they imitated survival (hunting and war), community (cooperative team sports), learning to use tools (carving, archery, beadwork), or religious ceremony (naming games; and an ancient Lakota game called for young women called "throwing the ball", which was a female indoctrination rite).

### Substructures of Native American Education

As previously expressed, the purpose of education, from a traditional Native American perspective, is to transmit culture to new generations (Battiste, 2000). Societal aspects of education included both tribal/clan indoctrination and promulgation, and individual productivity and survival. Individual subjected him/herself to the clan ("We" versus "I"). For instance, a goal of Western educational tradition is to control or triumph over, such as to control forces of nature (Modern Western Science) or the triumph of the individual over or alongside society, which ensures survival and fulfillment of the individual. In traditional North American indigenous society, the individual subverted his or her needs, rights, desires, and aspirations to those of the clan or tribe—survival and promulgation of the tribe (in Lakota, the Oyate—the people). Other prevailing (non-exclusive) themes include: (1) Life is circular, not linear. There exists wholeness, an interconnectedness of parts, and the individual cannot be understood apart from the whole of life. (2) Cooperation & team sports, and the role of teams sports in education. Most modern Western sports, especially in the U.S., were developed after the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (3) Oral tradition. (4) Each person is his or her own teacher, and each person is every other person's teacher—learning is connected to each individual's life process. (5) Other beings as teachers—animal peoples, plant peoples, rock peoples (*Inyan* in Lakota), and so forth; (6) Respect for elders and wisdom; (7) Community education—the education of the whole community throughout the lifespan; (8) Participatory democracy—independence and freedom, balanced by courage and responsibility; (9) Indirect communication and noninterference; (10) Silence, reflection and spirit; (11) Other levels of knowing and learning, such as through dreams and visions; and (12) Generosity and giving; (13) Spirit forces—overriding forces who governed the universe, and from these spirits the people learned (Cajete, 2000; Little Bear, 2000; Marashio, 1982; Reagan, 2000; Skinner, 1999; Wetsit, 1999). These tenets of Native American education, despite hundreds of years of colonization and suppression by Euro-Americans, continue to characterize many of the essential values of Native American education values, philosophy, and methodology to this day.

Cajete (2000, p. 184) described five major foundations that underlie Indigenous education from a traditional Pueblo perspective:

The first one, of course, is the community. The next foundation has to do with technical environmental knowledge or making a living in a place by understanding and interacting

with it... The third foundation is the visionary or dream tradition based on an understanding that one learns through visions and dreams. The fourth foundation could best be termed the mythic foundation. It reflects how we view the world through our mythic traditions. And finally there is a tradition that we can call spiritual ecology. It underlies the variety of expressions of Indigenous religion that we find around the world. It is the intimate relationship that people establish with place and with the environment and with all of the things that make them or give them life.

## **Colonial Era**

### Colonization, Eurocentrism, and Diffusionism

With the arrival of Europeans to the American continent (this body of land being generally described as Turtle Island by Indigenous peoples), the long and devastating road to conquest and colonization began. The colonizing Anglos redefined Native American education. The ethnocentric perspective of Native American education—the education of Indigenous peoples by Anglos for purpose of assimilation—sounds almost too sanitized. The reality was much more scandalous—“education,” whether presented and justified as a means of providing the noble savage salvation (“Christianization”), humanization (civilization), or any other malicious, treacherous theme—in actuality became a means of cultural genocide.

Among colonized peoples, the cognitive legacy of colonization is labeled “Eurocentrism,” a dominant intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans (Henderson, 2000; Henderson, 2000). Eurocentrism refers to the idea that people, places, and events of Western European cultures are superior and a standard against which other cultures should be judged. Conversely, non-Western cultures are inferior, and relevant only when they have a relationship to Western culture (Lewis & Aikenhead, 2000). Henderson (2000, p. 58), in describing the phenomenon of Eurocentrism, states: “As an institutional and imaginative context, it includes a set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality. Habitually educated and usually unprejudiced Europeans accept the assumptions and beliefs as true, as propositions support by ‘the facts’.” Unlike other forms of prejudice, Eurocentrism not simply a matter of attitudes and values. It has been the dominant artificial context for the last five centuries, has been the colonizers’ model of the world in a literal sense, and is an integral part of all scholarship, opinion, and law, and includes a set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality (Henderson, 2000; Yazzie, T., 2000). Eurocentrism has evolved, through time, into what Henderson (2000) terms an “ultra-theory”—a general framework for many other theories: historical, geographical, psychological, sociological, economical, and philosophical. An outgrowth of this ultra-theory is diffusionism.

Diffusionism’s nineteenth century epistemological framework has remained basically unchanged. It is based on two axioms: most human communities are uninventive, and a few human communities (or places or cultures) are inventive and thus remain permanent centers of cultural change and progress (Henderson, J.S., 2000). In this worldview, Western cultures represent the global center, and the rest of the world the surrounding periphery. In this context, Western cultures are viewed as historical, progressive and inventive, and the rest of the world as ahistorical, uninventive, stagnant, and unchanging. This difference is seen to be due, in part, by

intellectual and spiritual characteristics possessed only by the people of the progressive cultures—a spiritual and intellectual superiority, innovation and rationality—that reflect European values and set them apart from non-Westerners. From this perspective, the reason for the non-Western countries’ lack of progress is because they lack these characteristics. This proposition asserts that non-European people are empty, or without rationality, ideas, and spiritual (Christian) values.

Based on Western standards, this emptiness of familiar cultural institutions proves an emptiness that justifies the movement of Europeans into non-European regions, displacing or eliminating native inhabitants. According to Henderson (2000), it works something like this: (1) a non-European region is empty or nearly empty of people, so settlement by Europeans does not displace any native peoples. 2) The region is empty of settled populations as the inhabitants are mobile, nomadic, wanderers; so European settlement violates no political sovereignty since wanderers make no claim to territory. (3) The cultures of this region do not possess an understanding of private property, so the region is empty of property rights and claims, so colonial occupiers can freely give land to settlers since no one owns it. (4) All of these “outside” areas are empty of intellectual creativity and of spiritual (Christian) values, described as an absence of “rationality.” These regions appear to Europeans as wild, natural, uncivilized, and uninhabited lands. The normal and natural way the non-European world progresses is by the diffusion of progressive Western ideals and values, which is compensated for by the confiscation of material (mineral, etc.) wealth by the Europeans. Colonization is justifiable as it brings civilization and progress to savage, uncivilized peoples, and Europeans view this as a typical relationship between Europeans and Indigenous peoples (Table 1). They created self-legitimizing world-views (Henderson, 2000, pp. 60-62).

Table 1  
*Western, Eurocentric Worldview Comparing Themselves to Non-Westerners*

<b>Western</b>	<b>Non-Western</b>
Inventive	Imitative
Rational, intellectual	Irrational, emotional, instinctual
Abstract thinking	Concrete thinking
Theoretical reasoning	Empirical, practical reasoning
Mind	Body, matter
Discipline	Spontaneity
Adulthood	Childhood
Sanity	Insanity
Science	Sorcery
Progressive	Stagnation

(Adapted from Henderson, 2000, p.62)

## Divergent Views of American Indian Education as a Result of Colonization

During the pre-colonization period, *American Indian education* referred to the education of American Indian people by their parents, extended families, and communities. This is vastly different than how the term was used during the colonization period. During this period, the term *American Indian education* would best be termed *colonial education* because it referred to the education of American Indian children, teenagers, adults, and communities by colonial authorities, particularly European American institutions, to transform Indian peoples and societies and to eradicate self-government, self-determination, and self-education (Tsianina Lomawaima, K. 1999; Skinner, L., 1999). From the Indigenous perspective, the tenets of “colonial” (European American) education were based on the precepts: (1) that Native Americans were savages and had to be civilized; (2) that civilization required Christian conversion; (3) that civilization required subordination of Native communities, frequently achieved through resettlement efforts; and (4) that native people had mental, moral, physical, and cultural deficiencies that made certain pedagogical methods necessary for their education. “These tenets were not based on natural truths but were culturally constructed and served specific agendas of the colonizing nations” (Tsianina Lomawaima, K. 1999, p. 3). It meant the education of Indians by non-Indians. Indian self-education survived despite considerable trauma. These tenets of civility and conversion to Christianity were achieved through force, by relocation and resettlement, and integrated into new communities under the colonizers’ control. Submission to authority and domination was achieved and sustained through military, political, economic, and social power.

Seen another way, European Americans, viewing Indians from a Eurocentric perspective, viewed traditional American Indian tribal life as constraining. They believed that individuals were hindered by tribal/clan bonds that restricted individuation. The desire was to detribalize Indians and integrate them into the lower class echelons—as self-supporting rural farmers, or as ranch hands, agriculture workers, manual laborers, or low-skilled tradesmen—by alienating them (divide and conquer) from their larger communal and bases (Appendix B). Several methods were utilized to achieve this end. Land strategies, such as the breaking up of reservations into individual family allotments, and assimilation strategies, such as off-site education of American Indian children, were common techniques of cultural genocide.

Pedagogical methods of discipline, surveillance, time scheduling, and physical and psychological control were implemented in missions, school, and reservations. The military model of mass regimentation, authoritarian discipline, strict gender segregation, an emphasis on manual labor, avoidance of higher academic or professional training, rote memorization, and drill in physical and emotional habits was effectively used. In boarding schools, American Indian children were alienated from their families, forced to adapt to the dress and language of the colonizers, and corporal punishment was utilized. The goal was to strip them of their “Indianness.” Students were immersed in a life of labor, but their training was carefully designed not to create laborers who would compete economically against the privileged classes (Tsianina Lomawaima, 1999; Skinner, 1999). Boarding and residential schools elevated manual and hard labor to a pedestal as effective civilizing practices; cleanliness and orderliness, uniforms,

regimentation, and regulation haircuts were essential components of the transformation process. The stoic and silent Indian, an enduring stereotype, was a direct result of this process. As depicted by Stein (1999, p. 261), “American Indian education, like so much of the Indian world, had been destroyed by the time for the twentieth century and replaced with an educational system designed and managed by European Americans to convert Indians into pale-brown imitations of themselves.”

### **Post-Colonial Era**

Warner (1999) divides Indian education into two broad historical periods: the missionary period (1568 – 1870), which he described as the colonial education of Indians by religious denominations, and the federal period (1870 - 1968), which he described as the colonial education of Indians as a government-imposed function. Warner summarizes 19 federal laws during this second period that have provided the legislative foundation of American Indian education: Snyder Act (1921); Johnson O’Malley Act (1934); Impact Aid; Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965); Indian Elementary and Secondary School Assistance Act (1965); Indian Education Act (1972); Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972); Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975); Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts, as amended; Education Amendments (1978); Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act (1978); Indian Child Welfare Act (1978); Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments (1988); Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (1990); Native American Languages Act (1990); Goals 2000: Educate America Act; and Title IX of the Improving America’s Schools Act (1994). The result these federal laws and a plethora of sociopolitical factors is a new period in the history of Native American education—the Post-colonial era—characterized by self-determination.

### Current Trends Toward Self-Determination

Previous educational methods based on assimilation and the cultural genocide through the destruction of Indigenous languages and cultures in schools have not worked. In a study done by the Navajo (Dine’) Nation in 1950’s, Navajo students attending off reservation colleges experienced an attrition rate of 90% or more (Stein, 1999). A movement toward self-determination has been growing since approximately 1960, and a system of education controlled by Indian tribes is developing that emphasize Indigenous knowledge and “Native ways of knowing” (Tippeconnic, 1999; Stein, 1999). This new movement has stemmed from the Great Society programs of the 1960s (Appendix C) that focused on local community development and action in education and is the most significant education system for Indians today (Tippeconnic, J.W., 1999). In the 1960’s community colleges played a major role in expanding Tribal higher education. Currently, the focus of tribal colleges is to expand to four-year colleges and universities (Stein, 1999). To further demonstrate this need, consider that 56% of the American Indian population is age 24 or younger, compared with 36% of the general Education (Stein, 1999). Funding has been provided through a variety of sources, such as: the Tribally Controlled Community College Act of 1978; reauthorization of the Tribal College Act of 1983 that allotted \$5,280 per American Indian full-time equivalent (FTE) student, which unfortunately was reduced to \$2,900 per FTE in the 1996 federal budget; Kellogg Foundation’s

\$22 million tribal college initiative program, Capturing the Dream; the Equity in Education Land-Grant Status Act of 1994; and other private grants, such as a \$12 million grant recently awarded by the National Science Foundation to Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska University for a five-year period (Stein, 1999).

Tribal control (where the actual tribal government is in control), and local or community control, mean that the school boards are comprised of Indian community members, and this movement has been progressing through the sanctioning or chartering of schools by the tribal governments. Benefits include the increasing presence of Indigenous languages and cultures in education, including bilingual and bicultural education. I will use the term *Indian controlled school* to describe this movement and the conglomeration of schools that have been created and operated primarily by and for Native Americans, whether they are operated by the tribe or an affiliation of Native Americans apart from the tribe, regardless of whether they are situated on tribally-controlled lands (i.e., in a reservation-type setting) or within the larger community.

The importance of Indian controlled schools, colleges, and universities are many. Yellow Bird and Chenault (1999, p. 201), describing barriers to empowerment, indicate “a major barrier to empowerment for Indigenous peoples is their history of intellectual and cultural oppression in European American schools, which have generally approached the education of Indigenous peoples from a deficit model” (i.e., by what they lack). Battiste (2000) reveals that the systematic nature of colonization creates cognitive imperialism, or a cognitive prison. The effect of cognitive imperialism is that someone else defines Native Americans—the dominant culture—and they start to believe that the others’ perceptions of her or him are accurate, while simultaneously doubting her or his self-perceptions and worldview. A notion arising from post-modern Western philosophy is that language exists prior to thought, that thought and language are interdependent, and that the self is “created” by language (Linn, 1996). Denying Indigenous people their native language exacerbates cognitive imperialism. Indian controlled schools, which portray Native American cultural values and practices, such as the use of both Indigenous and dominant-culture languages, can limit the student’s exposure to, and combat the effects of, cognitive imperialism.

Western schools tend to be age-linear and hierarchical in the structure of education. Schools, classrooms, instructional methodologies, and so forth are developed along a linear continuum from childhood into adulthood. Native Americans view the world as a circular flux of related entities. From this circular perspective of viewing the beginning and end of the life journey, an elder might be seen as closer in age proximity to a child than an adult, and thus a more relevant and effective teacher. From both a psychological and practical perspective, Indian controlled schools are freer to use elders, relatives, and such “non-traditional”, non-degreed, and unlicensed “paraprofessionals” than may be acceptable for or permitted in public universities.

According to Cajete (2000, p. 66), “Elders provide guidance and facilitate learning, often through story along with artifacts and manifestations of traditions.” Culturally-relevant stories shared by elders, an age-old and necessary educational practice in Indigenous culture, are more readily available in Indian controlled schools. Cajete (2000, p. 183), in describing traditional Indigenous education, states:

There is a shared body of understanding among many Indigenous peoples that education is really about helping an individual find his or her face, which means finding out who you are, where you come from, and your unique character. That education should also help you to find your heart, which is that passionate sense of self that motivates you and moves you along in life. In addition, education should help you to find a foundation on which you may most completely develop and express both your heart and your face. That foundation is your vocation, the work that you do, whether it is as an artist, lawyer, or teacher. This, then, is the intent of Indigenous education. It is finding that special kind of work that most fully allows you to express your true self—‘Your heart and your face’.... Indigenous education is, in its truest form, about learning relationships in context. This context begins with family. It extends to the clan, to the community and tribe, and to all of the world. The purpose of Indigenous education is to help the individual become a complete man or woman. The goal is completeness.

Part of developing into a complete person through understanding and utilizing what Cajete describes as reflective metaphoric understandings—the images of the Native Americans’ life, family, and tribal background (i.e., corn, buffalo, salmon, eagle, bear, and so forth). These understandings are probably not available in public colleges and universities.

Battiste (2000, p. 197) challenges many Western assumptions taught as facts in public schools. She states:

What is apparent is the need for a serious and far-reaching examination of assumptions inherent in modern educational theory. How these assumptions create moral and intellectual foundations of modern society and culture has to be studied and written by Aboriginal people to allow space for Aboriginal consciousness, language, and identity to flourish without ethnocentric or racist interpretation.

To give clarity to this proposition, I once had a conversation with an Ojibwa who, reflecting on Anglo evolutionary thought, stated that white people might believe they evolved from apes (a view he found quite humorous), but the Anishanabe (Ojibwa) evolved from the bear clan. Again, this understanding would not be available in public schools. Many learning methodologies utilized in non-Indian schools contradict Indigenous philosophy. For instance, dividing objects or concepts into individual parts and studying them deductively would be foreign to traditional Indigenous learning. Holistic processes cannot be explained by their segmented parts (Henderson, 2000; Swisher & Tuppenconnic, 1999). Other mainstream educational values or mores prominent in colleges and universities that may be unfamiliar to or contradicting of American Indian culture are such concepts as: competitive versus cooperative, materialism versus sharing, doing versus being, mastery over nature versus harmony with nature, tradition versus technology and progress, arrogance versus humility and doing, devaluing versus revering elders (Wetsit, 1999).

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) in their article *First Nations and Higher Education: The Four Rs—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility*, from the May 1991, *Journal of American Indian Education*, discuss standards for Native American education of Native American educator Eber Hampton.

Eber Hampton (1988), a Chickasaw originally from Oklahoma and now in Alaska, has made an effort to identify some of the qualities that he considers important in the move to construct an "Indian theory of education." He lists the following as twelve "standards" on which to judge any such effort:

*Spirituality* - an appreciation for spiritual relationships.

*Service* - the purpose of education is to contribute to the people.

*Diversity* - Indian education must meet the standards of diverse tribes and communities.

*Culture* - the importance of culturally determined ways of thinking, communicating and living.

*Tradition* - continuity with tradition.

*Respect* - the relationship between the individual and the group recognized as mutually empowering.

*History* - appreciation of the facts of Indian history, including the loss of the continent and continuing racial and political oppression.

*Relentlessness* - commitment to the struggle for good schools for Indian children.

*Vitality* - recognition of the strength of Indian people and culture.

*Conflict* - understanding the dynamics and consequences of oppression.

*Place* - the importance of sense of place, land and territory.

*Transformation* - commitment to personal and societal change.

The Post-colonial era has witnessed a proliferation of Native American institutions of advanced learning developed to help Native Americans receive culturally appropriate, relevant higher education (Appendix D). Most of these are tribally owned and operated, such as: United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND, founded in 1969; Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation, founded in 1973; and Oglala Lakota College, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, founded in 1971. Currently, tribes and schools are increasingly engaged in conducting their own research, and the number of American Indian research journals has increased, to include: The Journal of American Indian Education, Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education, and American Indian Culture and Research Journal are publications that disseminate Indian education research (Tippeconnic, J.W., 1999). Hopefully, tribal control of education will promulgate Indian leadership and greater tribal self-sufficiency to help ascertain cultural and language survival and growth into the future.

## Towards a Post-Colonial Educational Paradigm

“Knowing is said to be the result of learning, which comes about as a type of transfer of information from the outside world of nature to the individual self” (Yazzie, T., 1999, p.84). Every person’s culture shapes their worldview so that culture cannot be separated from everyday experiences. Education is a major representation of a culture and its people’s way of life, not just a preparatory function from the culture. When Western subjectivity is imposed on colonized peoples, not only will the phenomenon under scrutiny evade the lens of positivism, but further hegemony will also be imposed (Duran, B. & Duran, E., 2000). In fact, in Indigenous (Native American) languages there are no words for science, philosophy, psychology, or any other foundational way of coming to know and understand the nature of life and our relationships within (Cajete, 2000). A true post-colonial educational paradigm must accept knowledge from differing cultures as valid in their own right, without having to be legitimized through Western or knowledge.

No recognizable contemporary theory of Indian education exists to guide the implementation or direction of educational curriculum development. Instead what is called “Indian education” today is a “compendium of models, methodologies and techniques gleaned from various sources in mainstream American education and adapted to American Indian circumstances, usually with the underlying aim of cultural assimilation (Cajete, 1994, p. 28).

The vision of an independent, post-colonial Native American educational paradigm remains elusive. Indian controlled schools are currently illegitimized in their own right. In order to be deemed credible, they continue to require external validation from the dominant culture. Indian controlled schools must seek and receive accreditation by standards and values imposed on them by the dominant culture’s higher education paradigm. The development of Indigenous validation and accreditation methodologies for Indian controlled schools, curriculum development based on culturally-derived and relevant theories, funding streams and partnerships outside of the realm of the federal government, and continued development and expansion of four-year and postgraduate universities are but a few of the main aspects to be included in the foundation of a culturally-relevant post-colonial Native American educational paradigm.

### **Epilogue**

The terms Post-colonial and post-colonization, as used in this paper, are academically accepted words utilized by Native American and other Indigenous scholars to represent the current period of Native American and Indigenous education in Western democracies such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan, and perhaps others (i.e., such as other Pacific Island nations). It would not properly reflect the current state of affairs in many other countries with large Indigenous populations, such as in many Latin American countries (e.g., Mexico and Guatemala), where Indigenous peoples continue to directly experience colonization and subjugation. Post-Colonization may not even be the best term to describe the current period, as it tends to assume that colonization in and by Western countries has ended. I suggest that far from ending, the means of colonization have simply changed or shifted, but many of the

debilitating effects remain the same—subjugation, disenfranchisement, poverty, war, and so forth.

The events of and since September 11, 2001, to the present may compel many of “us Westerners” to question our assumptions regarding colonization. This will hopefully lead us to expand and redefine concepts and terminologies such as colonialism in the face of Western, capitalistic/materialistic globalization. Words like force and imperialism, often connotating a direct, physical action or presence, are being redefined in the e-age and re-experienced on the global stage. Thus, the concept post-colonial is quite relative and possibly non-existent. Either way, its meaning certainly is limited. In the Post-colonial Era Native Americans may have more freedoms and choices, especially in the education realm although maybe not in the economic domain, but these recently bestowed (versus fully restored) freedoms and choices are still contingent on the good wishes, sympathy, collective guilt, and/or desires of the dominant culture. They are accompanied with minimal power, which has been bequeathed by the Anglo’s government and legal system. In other words, these new freedoms are being granted to the Indigenous peoples, but as something less than an “unalienable right” with, without, or above U.S. Constitutional (i.e., Anglo) domain or protection.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) does not play an ombudsman-type role for Native Americans. It is simply a federal agency within the Department of the Interior that dispenses the collective will of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. In recent years, the federal courts have demonstrated some willingness to play a guardian role for Native American sovereignty in education and other matters. In fact, it is only because of the federal courts’ recent willingness to advocate (e.g., interpret treaty rights fairly for Native Americans) on Native Americans’ behalf that we can today discuss an alleged Post-colonial Era. Much of the previously mentioned legislation passed throughout the last three decades has greatly benefited American Indian education. Far from altruistic overtures from a benevolent federal government, this legislation represents hard fought concessions that might be better characterized as an attempt by the government to slowly extricate itself from the centuries old entanglement they have created while appearing gracious and enlightened in the process. Let us hope we are learning lessons from history. Recent legislation and the resulting programs, for the first time in our country’s history, sought and received Native American input, and they have been designed to empower Native American tribes and peoples rather than control and direct them. The Post-colonial era might truly be at hand, but vigilance remains necessary. Warner (1999) warns:

The right to an education is not a federal right; no references to education are found in the U.S. Constitution. As a result, education is considered a state responsibility. The federal government assumes responsibility for education of American Indian/Alaska Native students through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and through education legislation that targets federally recognized tribes.... Currently, there is no Supreme Court education case law applicable specifically to American Indian students (Warner, 1999, p. 53).

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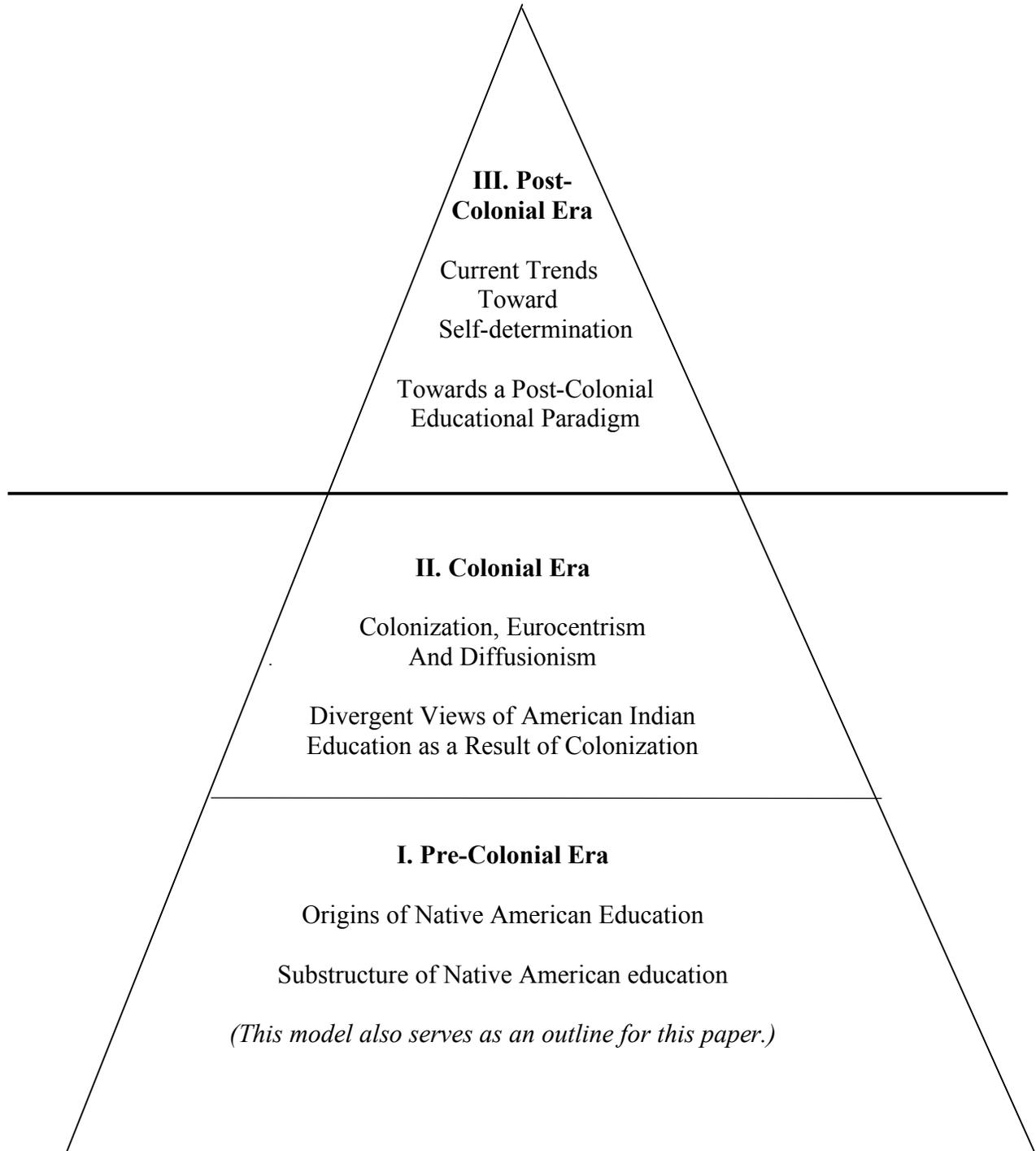
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## Appendix A

Three General Historical Eras of Native American Education.

*“The right to an education is not a federal right; no references to education are found in the U.S. Constitution” (Warner, L.S., 1999, p. 53).*



## Appendix B

### Six Periods of American Indian Legal History

- 1532 –1828 *Discovery, Conquest, and Treaty Making*
- 1828 –1887 *Removal and Relocation*
- 1830, Indian Removal Act; 1830
  - 1879, first Indian boarding school opened, Carlisle, PA
  - 1880, establishment of reservations, suppression of religion, and Missionaries sent to reservations
  - 1885, Major Crimes Act (Federalizing crimes in Indian country)
  - 1886, several government, missionary, and Catholic boarding schools opened
- 1887 –1928 *Allotment and Assimilation*
- 1887, General Allotment (Dawes) Act, granted Citizenship after land developed over 25 year period; U.S. Supreme Court “plenary powers doctrine” allowing Congress to override treaties
  - 1890, U.S. Government ban on Indigenous religious practices
  - 1898, Assimilation Act (U.S. Government jurisdiction in Indian country)
  - 1919, U.S. Citizenship Act (for those who served in WWI)
  - 1924, U.S. Citizenship Act (all Indians within U.S. territory)
- 1928 –1945 *Reorganization and Self-Government*
- 1934, Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act)
- 1945 –1961 *Termination*
- 1950, Alcohol legalized on reservations
  - BIA relocation; VT programs; attempts to eliminate reservations
  - 1960, beginning of Indian activism
- 1961 –Present *Self-Determination*
- 1964, Civil Rights Act
  - 1968, Indian Civil Rights Act; American Indian Movement
  - 1971-1975, Occupation of Alcatraz , Wounded Knee, and others; Pine Ridge Incident
  - 1972, Indian Education Act, funding to tribally controlled schools that emphasized Indigenous knowledge and Native ways of knowing
  - 1975, Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act
  - 1978, Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act provided financial support to tribal colleges; American Indian Religious Freedom Act; Education Amendments (PL 95-561): Indian Child Welfare Act
  - 1980’s – 1990’s, Treaty Rights Issues
  - 1988, Tribally Controlled School Act (PL 100-297) allowed for direct granting of funds to school boards to operate tribal schools
  - 1990, Native American Languages Act, which also encouraged incorporating native ways of knowing into school (i.e., science) curriculum

- 1993, Religious Freedom Restoration Act

## Appendix C

### Modern Aspects of Traditional Native American Philosophy

- (1) Wholeness—the interrelatedness of all things. All things and beings are related. Everything in the universe is part of a single whole. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. It is only possible to understand something if we understand how it is connected to everything else.
- (1) Change—everything is in a state of constant change, or flux. One season falls upon the other. People are born, live, and die. All things change. There are two kinds of change—the coming together of things and the coming apart of things. Both kinds of change are necessary and are always connected to each other.
- (2) Change occurs on cycles and patterns—they are not random or accidental. There are regular patterns and recurrences, such as the seasons and migration of animals, which emphasizes process over product (Little Bear, L. 2000). If we cannot see how a particular change is connected, it usually means that our standpoint is affecting our perception. The earth is where the continuous, repetitive process of creation occurs and cannot be separated from the actual being of Native Americans. Creation is a continuity.
- (3) The Physical world is real, the spiritual world is real—they are two aspects of the same reality. There are separate laws that govern each. The breaking of a spiritual principle will affect the physical world, and visa versa. A balanced life is one that honors both. People are physical and spiritual beings. All things are animate, imbued with spirit, and in constant motion.
- (4) Language embodies the way a society thinks (little Bear, l., 2000). A person absorbs the collective thought process of a people through language. Indigenous languages tend to be action-oriented, verb-based languages focusing on processes and occurrences rather than objects.
- (5) People can acquire new gifts, but they must struggle to do so. The process of developing new personal qualities may be called “true learning.”
- (6) There are four dimensions of true learning. A person learns in a whole and balanced manner when the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions are involved in the process.
- (7) The spiritual dimensions of human development has four related capacities:
  - the capacity to have and to respond to dreams, visions, ideals, spiritual teachings, goals, and theories;
  - the capacity to accept these as a reflection of our unknown or unrealized potential;
  - the capacity to express these using symbols in speech, art, or symbols (e.g., mathematics); and
  - the capacity to use these symbolic expressions towards action directed at making the possible a reality.

- (8) People must actively participate in the development of their own potential. A person must decide to develop his or her own potential. The path will always be there for those who decide to travel it. Any person who sets out on a journey of self-development will be aided. Guides, teachers, and protectors will assist the traveler. The only source of failure is a person's failure to follow the teachings.
- (9) Equality and diversity pervade American Indian society, and since diversity is the norm, deviation from acceptable behavior is minimized. The philosophy, values, and customs are also the laws. Law is not something separate—law is the culture and culture is the law (Little Bear, 2000).

According to Little Bear (2000), Indigenous philosophy can be summed up as being holistic and cyclical or repetitive, generalist, process-oriented, and firmly grounded in a particular place (i.e., the land).

## **Appendix D**

### Tribally Owned and Operated Colleges in the United States as of 1998

Bay Mills Community College, Brimley, MI  
 Blackfeet Community College, Browning, MT  
 Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Fort Totten, ND  
 Cheyenne River Community College, Eagle Butte, SD  
 College of the Menominee Nation, Keshena, WI  
 Crownpoint Institute of Technology, Crownpoint, NM  
 Dine' College, Tsaile, AZ  
 D-Q University, Davis, CA  
 Dull Knife Memorial College, Lame Deer, MT  
 Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet, MN  
 Fort Belknap College, Harlem, MT  
 Fort Berthold Community College, New Town, ND  
 Fort Peck Community College, Poplar, MT  
 Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, KS  
 Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, NM  
 Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, Hayward, WI  
 Leech Lake Tribal College, Cass Lake, MN  
 Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, MT  
 Little Priest Tribal College, Winnebago, NE  
 Nebraska Indian Community College, Macy, NE  
 Northwest Indian College, Bellingham, WA  
 Oglala Lakota College, Kyle, SD  
 Salish Kootenai College, Pablo, MT  
 Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud, SD  
 Sisseton Wahpeton Community College, Sisseton, SD  
 Sitting Bull College, Fort Yates, ND  
 Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque, NM  
 Stone Child Community College, Box Elder, MT  
 Turtle Mountain Community College, Belcourt, ND

United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, NB