UNITING OUR MEMBERS AND THE NATION
Empowering leaders, educating students, strengthening communities

Decolonizing the Classroom: Creating a Welcoming Environment for American Indian Students

Tucker Quetone
Citizen of the Cherokee and Kiowa Nations

&

Guthrie Capossela
Citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation
NEA Leadership Competency: ADVOCACY

• NEA Leadership Competency progression level(s).
  – Level 1: Foundational
  – Level 2: Mobilizing & Power Building

• Advocacy Themes.
  • Interprets and acts on social justice initiatives
• NEA Strategic Goal
  – Strategic Goal: Empowered Educators for Successful Students

• NEA Organizational Priority
  – Racial Justice in Education
Session Overview

• The Indian In Your Classroom
• 21st Century Native American Colonizing Representation
• Classroom Images Have Impact
• Historical Trauma – US policy
• Boarding School – the Lasting Legacy of Failed Assimilation
• Resources
American Indians Today

5.2 Million (1.7%): Population of American Indian/Alaska Natives in the U.S.
21%: Number of American Indian/Alaska Natives who speak a language other than English at home
26: The median age for American Indians and Alaska Natives on reservations, compared to 37 for the entire nation.

Indian youth have the highest rate of suicide among all ethnic groups in the US. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Native youth aged 15-24.

1 out of 10: American Indians (12 and older) become victims of violent crime annually, two-thirds of them female.
Educational Snapshot

• **607,000 (1.2%)**: Number of American Indian students in Public Schools

• **64.2%**: High School Graduation Rate for American Indians

• **38.3%**: Graduating with a BS degree within 6 years

• **5%**: American Indians and Alaska Natives who have received graduate or professional degrees, compared to 10 percent for the total population
% of 4th Graders Proficient on NAEP 2009

Source: US Education Dashboard
% of 8th Graders Proficient on NAEP 2009

Source: US Education Dashboard
Knowledge of Indian Culture % of AI/AN Students

Source: National Indian Education Study 2015
Attended AI/AN Ceremonies & Gatherings

Source: National Indian Education Study 2015

- Never
- Every Few Years
- Once a Year
- Several per Year

4th Graders

8th Graders

Source: National Indian Education Study 2015
What do you notice in the graphs?

What can you infer from this information?
Indians in the Media
Images Matter

Smoke Signals
I'm Native But...
My Wish Is
What Does it Mean to Appropriate Another’s Culture?

Is Appropriation Acceptable?

If so, Under What Circumstances is it?

Native Appropriations
Mascot Culture

@Earl_Gobble @kawisahawii sweet my pic everywhere

@Brick @Brock_Fenn5

@BaileeScott23 @Earl_Gobble @kawisahawii Why these fucking red skins complaining they get free college.
6/7/17, 10:28 PM
Starting Young
How does this appear in the classrooms?
Classroom Do’s and Don’ts
Classroom Do’s and Don’ts
Inclusion

- Include Indigenous People in both the contemporary and historic conversations
- “Move around the lantern” to see multiple perspectives. Incorporate or think about a Native American perspective.
- Include Native American lists in biography projects both historic 19th & 20th century, and also 21st century
- Ask your school district for professional development on focusing on American Indians in education and to properly integrate Native American topics into the curriculum. Many states have K-12 standards related to American Indians
Classroom Do’s and Don’ts

Respect

- Never use terms such as: all, most, were, and usually
- Recognize individual tribes & individuals, identify situations or events
- Identify tribal nations in present tense
- Do not portray Native Americans as primitive or savage
Classroom Do’s and Don’ts

Teaching Practices

• When teaching about Native Americans always bring it home. Tribes in your state/region.
• The same principles of culturally responsive teaching apply
• Contact local experts for Native American resources. Organizations such as American Indian studies program, local tribal nations’ education or Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, State history museums, your school district’s Indian Education staff, American Indian Alaska Native Caucus
• Stop the pilgrim myth – (Rethinking Columbus and 1621 A New Look at Thanksgiving)
• Have difficult conversations. Ex. Thanksgiving and Indigenous People’s Day (Columbus Day)
• Recognize Sacagawea’s contributions are due to her life among civilized people
• Some American Indian students value community 1st
• Never single out a Native American student as authority to speak for all: be mindful of body language and eye contact
• Don’t assume anything about your native student – build a relationship and learn
Classroom Do’s and Don’ts

Environment

• Classroom images and discussion leaves a lasting impact. Be mindful
• Set the stage for respect of Native people when starting a lesson or unit
• Identify unacceptable behavior and correct it. Mocking sounds and gestures aren’t acceptable
• Buy Native authored books, follow Native Americans on twitter (create individuals and organizations list)
Must Have Resources for Curriculum
Resource List

Rochester Public Schools American Indian Education Program Resource List

Guthrie Capossela – gucapossela@rochester.k12.mn.us
Tucker Quetone – tucker.quetone@gmail.com
Including Indigenous People in Curriculum

At least 69 K-12 State Curriculum Standards in Art, Science, ELA, and Social Studies.
How Did We Get Here?

Credit @xodanix3 on twitter
Colonialism

1. control or governing influence of a nation over a dependent country, territory, or people.
2. system or policy by which a nation maintains or advocates such control or influence.
3. state or condition of being colonial.
4. an idea, custom, or practice peculiar to a colony.

Settler Colonialism

1. Taking land for occupying settlement
2. Destroying the existing society to completely replace it
3. It continues to exist as a structure and not an event or time period. Many subsequent structures support this ongoing settler colonial ideal.

Neo Colonialism

1. The dominance of strong nations over weak nations, not by direct political control (as in traditional colonialism), but by economic and cultural influence.
2. In the modern world, political control by an outside power of a country that is in theory sovereign and independent, esp. through the domination of its economy.
What is Historical or Intergenerational Trauma

• The dominant culture perpetuates mass trauma on a population (colonialism, slavery, war, or genocide).

• The affected population shows physical and psychological symptoms in response to the trauma.

• The initial population passes these responses to trauma to subsequent generations, who in turn display similar symptoms.

— Michelle M. Sotero, University of Nevada
Federal Policies Impacting American Indians and Education

- Treaty Era.............................................1778-1871
- Dawes Act..............................................1887
- Boarding Schools.................................1860-1978
- Indian Reorganization Act.............1934
- Indian Self-Determination &
  Education Assistance Act..........1975
- Indian Child Welfare Act.............1978
- Indian Religious Freedom Act...1978, 1994
Guthrie’s Family
Stephan Catholic Indian Boarding School
Carlisle Indian School

“Kill the Indian, save the man”
Richard Henry Pratt, founder of Carlisle Indian School.
Useful Skills
Cultural Genocide
Freedom of Religion

Along with their classroom and vocational work, students were taught Christianity. NATIONAL ARCHIVES.
Generations Lost
Genocide

Most B1A schools had their own cemeteries because so many students died. This is the cemetery at Carlisle.
One Hundred Years of Boarding School Acculturation

What is the impact on Native students and their families today?
Resilience - *The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; Toughness.*

- Resilience is usually seen as an individual trait or characteristic. In Indigenous culture, resilience includes the impact of collective history, language and traditions, collective agency, and activism.

- We must recreate the representations of Native people in the larger society in ways that can foster resilience through recognition, respect, and reconciliation.
Quoetone Family
Quoetone and Sixkiller
Quetone Family
Fighting for Sovereignty in 21st Century

Contact for Resources or continue the discussion

Guthrie Capossela – gucapossela@rochester.k12.mn.us
Tucker Quetone – tucker.quetone@gmail.com

Walking Music
Session Outcomes

• Participants will be able to:
  – understand the impact of Federal Education Policies on American Indian students
  – understand tribal sovereignty
  – understand historical trauma/distrust among American Indian students
  – understand differences between reservation and urban American Indian students
  – understand the impact of media stereotypes on American Indian students
  – understand cultural appropriation
  – identify ways to have a culturally responsive classroom
Closing

• Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session by using the **NEA Summit Mobile APP!** – *Please remember to build in 5 minutes at the end of your session to allow time for the attendees to complete the evaluation for your session.*

• Please visit the Leadership Development Resources website at [www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment](http://www.nea.org/leadershipdevelopment)