

INDIGENIZE VERSUS DECOLONIZE

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MARIO MOLINA, PH.D.

- Indian Education Specialist
- Currently provide consultation services
- Past work: TED Director, Principal, Teacher, Behavior Specialist.
- My work and research has focused on the development of programming to improve and increase academic achievement in schools that serve tribal students while retaining tribal culture, language and heritage of my people – other tribes.



“The child cannot evade the educational system. It is illegal not to go to school. He is told he is going to learn; he is not told that much of learning consists of **proselytizing**, or social conditioning for another form of social and cultural community than his own. If he has enlightened parents, they can assist the child in making sense of what he is taught at school.” *V. F. Cordova*

WHAT EDUCATION MEANS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

- Tribal Communities desire the following:
 - **Tribal Sovereignty**
- How is this accomplished?
 - Reversal of **cultural hegemonic** thinking by means of educating their tribal members/citizens for the purpose of....
 - Promoting **tribal self-determination**, tribal identity and language revitalization so that tribal nations can
 - Pursue and enact the **vision** of their elders

For some: Education is considered the ultimate equalizer, and it needs support

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY SUPPORT

- Tribal Education Department Grant Program
 - *Development and enforcement of tribal education codes*
 - *Facilitate tribal control in all matters to the education of Indian children on reservations*
 - *Provide development of coordinated educational programs (PK-Higher Ed./Adult) on reservations*
 - *Funding to provide technical assistance to TEDs to help them improve their planning and strengthen their school processes.*

INTENT

- The grant helps promote two things
 - Indigenize
 - Decolonialize
- But what is the difference?

THREE LEVELS OF INDIGENIZATION

- ***Indigenous inclusion:*** Inviting Indigenous people, but expecting them to assimilate to the dominant social norms/constructs
- ***Reconciliation indigenization:*** Includes epistemological shifts, using IKS when discussing dominant theories.
- ***Decolonial indigenization:*** Indigenous peoples and IKS thrive in the school/tribal community.

(Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. Gaudry and Lorenz. 2018)

INCLUSION LEVEL

- How it looks
 - Development and inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to fit within the pre-existing structures, *culturally relevant*
 - Teacher training, *culturally sensitivity/awareness*
 - Acknowledgement of Indigenous people, *Land acknowledgments*
- Pros and Cons of this approach?

CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION

- Lack of Indigenous teachers
- Limited resources and experience
- Fitting IKS within the dominant education systems
- Superficial inclusion of IKS – Compliance vs. Excellence
- Prioritizing Indigenous voices
- Validity of knowledge

TEK

Oral tradition -----
Holistic approach -----
Learned from observation -----
and experience -----
Environment: part of -----
social, spiritual relationships -----
Based on cumulative, -----
collective experience -----
Mainly qualitative -----
Data generated by -----
resource users -----
Long time within -----
one location -----
Integrated and applied to -----
daily living and traditional -----
subsistence practices -----

Western science

Written tradition -----
Reductionist -----
Taught and learned -----
mostly analytically -----
Hierarchical and -----
compartmentalized -----
Based on laws -----
and theories -----
Mainly quantitative -----
Data collected by -----
specialists or experts -----
Short time-series -----
over large areas -----
Hypothesis testing -----
and -----
model building -----

HOW WE
PROCESS

Barnhardt. R., et. al (March 2005)

RECONCILIATION LEVEL

- How it looks
 - *Find common ground between IKS and Non-IKS (Yield space)*
 - *Attempt to alter/beef up structures (Act, think about Indigenous people)*
 - *Compare and contrast, Ontological and Epistemological – Validity*
 - *Axiology- Value and Value Judgements*
 - Pros and Cons of this approach?

DECOLONIZING LEVEL

- How it looks
 - Reshape, recreate education systems and structures
 - *Nation Re-Building*
 - *Reversal of Cultural Hegemonic Thinking*
 - I believe this is where we are today as Indigenous people
 - IKS is the center of knowing while challenging Non-IKS

TRIBAL EDUCATION CODES

- Codes can include expectations and requirements assists tribal communities to exercise sovereignty
 - Tribal and Non-Tribal Schools
 - Tribal programs and departments
 - Strategic plan development



“Even the most severely eroded Indian community today still has a substantial fragment of the old ways left, and these ways are to be found in the Indian family.”

Vine Deloria, Knowing and Understanding.

CLOSING

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