Weaving Worlds: Enhancing the Learning of Aboriginal Students

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Minerva Lecture Series CCL CCA
k’é (Diné)

- understanding interdependent, compassionate relationships as they manifest in life
  - earth - sky
  - self - family - community - nation
  - animals
  - plants
  - ancestors - descendents
Yalomatua  (Fiji)

- a state of being which is said to reflect maturity of spirit and sacredness of being
Poto (Tongan)

• one who is clear or skillful

• knowing what to do, when to do it and doing it well
ELTLNIWT (Sencoten)

• To be a whole human being
Teaching/Learning

• hard work
• persistence
• self discipline
• consistent effort
• responsibility
• cooperation
• commitment
• mutual respect
• tolerance
Teaching/Learning

• spiritual dimensions of life
• conformity and uniqueness
• kinship and interpersonal relationships
• restraint behaviour
• compassion
• generosity
• fairness
Indigenous

- deep observation
- gaining knowledge by active participation in family ceremonies, social life, land, economic activities
- multi-age, multiple mentors, peer learning

EuroWestern

- instruction didactic
- emphasis on passive knowledge acquisition
- attempts to create homogeneous settings
- single, expert, specialist knowledge
Indigenous

- listening, indirect
- learn by being actively involved, holistic
- self generated
- self regulatory
- self motivated learning
- enabling conditions to move a child to more mature roles
- foster responsibility for learning

Euro

Western

- focus on mental activities in formal settings
- age segregated
- separate children from adults
- distance children from realities of life
- social pressures to contend for power, prestige, wealth
- social stratification
- social inequity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Euro Western</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate and value individual differences in understandings, performance, abilities, and levels. and areas of competence</td>
<td>• strive for uniformity</td>
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<td>• value every person’s contribution</td>
<td>• performance is calibrated to a normed standard</td>
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<td>• sets up classes of failures, middle performers and high achievers</td>
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Lil’wat stages of maturity

- ka tselha
- celhcelh
- emhaka7
- selselpus
- kwez’an’tsut
- a7xa7
Aboriginal learners in the literature

- low achievers, lack of retention
- lack of motivation
- passive learners
- low literacy and numeracy
- early school leavers
- violent, silent
- hungry, tired, ill, aggressive,
- high representation in foster care, incarceration, learning disabilities, homeless,
- loss
Enhancing the learning of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners

restoration

collaboration

visibility and acknowledgement

positive force
Create opportunities and tools for inclusion and understanding building

Introducing one world to the other

Indigenous - Euro western youth - adult

land - virtual abstract reality
Create processes of celebrating strengths, resilience, giftedness, sense of selfhood, feelings of competence, community, belonging, relationships.
Learning Through Service
Learning Through Reflection
Learning Through Ceremony
Create, maintain support networks

• peers, friends, class mates, cohorts
• mentorship and apprenticeship learning
• teachers - “He believed in my potential and was always encouraging me”. “She inspired me to work harder”.
• parents - active in education life
• parents - create a network of support amongst themselves
• intergenerational relationships fostered, nurtured, supported
Transitions

• moving - housing, schools, communities
• primary, elem., middle, high school, pse.

What helps?
• making friends
• talking with parents, family members, siblings
• teachers
• counsellors, support staff
• community leaders, elders, mentors
Attitudes

• positive attitudes - parents, school staff, community members, leaders, students

• High Expectations + Support from parents, educators - EXPLICITLY COMMUNICATED TO STUDENTS
Identity and Learning from the Land
Knowledge Keepers
Identity

- Pride of heritage, value heritage ("I am proud of who I am")
- Knowledge of who I am (from parents, elders, community members)
- Acceptance (It’s ok to be Aboriginal here.”)
- “Initially people are racist, but they realize that we have a story to tell.”
Generations
Goal setting

- education seen as meaningful, purposeful
- optimistic and hopeful about future
- clear definite goals for the future
- connect school learning to personal, family, community vision
Kamucwkalha
Community

- provide opportunities to be active in community affairs, work alongside
- leadership roles
- support community learning activities
- cultural, land based, language learning
- collaborate with the school
- understand colonization and decolonization
Extra-curricular activities

• school and community support for involvement

• active school life

• active community life

• social justice, arts, sports
Institutions

• “...the school has a positive energy”

• “...every time I step in I feel welcome”

• “...sometimes I prefer to be there, even more than home”

• “...I feel safe there”

• “...they build on my strengths”
Sharing Our Ways of Knowing
Schools for Restoration

- nurture Indigenous values
- a safe haven for learning
- culturally based teaching and learning
- connect curriculum content to culture and identity
- understand and help to heal the pain, trauma, consequences of colonial practices and policies
- acceptance and respect