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John P. Hopkins

Conversations That Matter: Decolonizing the
Inclusive Discourse of American Indian Education Reform

John P. Hopkins

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Reading Committee:

Deborah Kerdeman, Chair
James A. Banks
Lynn Hankinson-Nelson

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Abstract

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John P. Hopkins

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor Deborah Kerdeman
College of Education

This dissertation examines a recent law in the state of Montana that seeks to reform American Indian education. Entitled *Indian Education For All* (IEFA), the Montana law mandates that educators must include American Indian culture and history into the mainstream curriculum, requiring all students to learn that curriculum in a culturally responsive manner. It also requires mainstream educators to work cooperatively with tribal communities and Native educators in the design and implementation of that curriculum. IEFA promotes what I call an *inclusive conversation*, which brings whites and Natives into dialogue for the purpose of finding common ground on a shared topic. The scholarship on IEFA praises the law as an innovative multicultural education strategy that can sufficiently reform American Indian education. But this dissertation argues that inclusion is not sufficient to reform education for Native students in the context of public schools. Using recent theory in multicultural education, postcolonial and Indigenous studies, and political theory, I analyze and critique the concept of inclusion that pervades IEFA. Rather than an inclusive conversation, I argue that white and Native groups need to engage in *decolonizing conversations* that directly and explicitly address colonization and its enduring effects on tribal communities. A decolonizing conversation recognizes and is

informed by what Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor calls survivance. It is only when white and Native groups and educators engage in decolonizing conversations centered on survivance that these groups can engage in conversations that will transform American Indian education.

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DEDICATION

To Regina, Zachary, Tristan, and Abigail.

All that I am is because of you, all that I do is for you.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A New Conversation in American Indian Education Reform

Introduction

Early in my professional career I worked as an educator for a tribal community and witnessed firsthand the strained relationship between public education and Indigenous peoples. The tribal community expressed concern over the academic problems facing their children. Graduation and retention rates among Native students fell far below their peers. Many Native students would drop out of school by their sophomore and junior years, resulting in far too few tribal members with high school diplomas. Several of us working for the tribe's education division needed to understand these issues more clearly, so we ventured into the public schools to converse with principals and teachers. But these conversations would usually end in frustration. Teachers and principals spoke about the disinterest among Native students to be in school and the challenges of working with the tribe. As Native educators, we spoke about the disconnection between public education and Indigenous worldviews.

These conversations revealed a shared concern to educate Native students effectively in public schools. None of us from the tribe doubted the sincerity of the teachers and principals to educate Native students equitably. They expressed genuine concern to increase the academic achievement of Native students and to produce educated human beings. In turn, the teachers and principals praised our willingness to engage the school district on these issues. From their perspective, Native educators from the tribal community rarely engaged public schools. But it became clear from our conversations that we understood American Indian education from different cultural and philosophical perspectives.

As Native educators, we could not adequately explain to mainstream educators that the education system's exclusion of Indigenous worldviews marginalized Native students in public schools. We were calling for what Daniel Wildcat describes as the *indigenization* of the education system, which he defines as "the act of making our educational philosophy, pedagogy, and system our own [built upon Indigenous] ways of knowing."¹ For Wildcat, Native students did not learn through lectures but through *experience*. The purpose of Indigenous education is to teach children how to be good relatives. Writes Wildcat, "the primary lesson learned is and was that knowledge and understanding come from our relatives, the other 'persons' or 'beings' we have relationships with and depend in order to live."² We proposed that mainstream educators needed to reform the ways in which public schools educated Native students. Reform needed to create spaces in public schools that educated Native students in their Indigenous worldviews.

The teachers and principals were equally frustrated in the conversation. From their perspective, all of their students needed to meet the academic standards established by the district and state. As much as they would have liked to reform the public schools to reflect Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, mainstream educators felt they had to meet those district and state standards. Reforming public schools to reflect an indigenized approach to education potentially distracted from those aims. Thus, our conversations with teachers and principals proved unproductive. Lasting, systemic educational reform seemed elusive.

My story inspires the central question of this dissertation: *Insofar as Indigenous peoples and mainstream educators engage in conversation together about American Indian education reform, what is required to engage in an authentic conversation that improves educational experience for Native children and enriches educational experience for both Native and white*

¹ Vine Deloria, Jr., and Daniel Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 2001), v.

² Ibid., 33.

students? To examine this question, I want to describe a recent educational reform effort that is underway in the state of Montana. This reform effort has inspired hope that mainstream and Native educators can come together in conversations to collaboratively reform American Indian education in public schools. I begin with a basic description of this reform effort in Montana and utilize it as an opportunity to consider what an authentic conversation between Indigenous peoples and mainstream educators requires.

IEFA: An Inclusive Educational Reform

Indigenous peoples have endured a contentious history of education reform. Since the late nineteenth century the federal government has utilized education as a strategy to colonize Indigenous minds and bodies. These colonizing strategies have compelled Indigenous peoples to assert their status as sovereign nations in an effort to revitalize their cultures and languages within both public and tribal schools. The state of Montana is attempting to address this contentious history by passing legislation that has the potential to transform the relationship between Indigenous peoples and educational institutions and practices. Entitled *Indian Education For All* (IEFA), the Montana law mandates that educators must include American Indian culture and history into the mainstream curriculum, requiring all students to learn this curriculum in a culturally responsive manner.³ Other states have recognized IEFA's impact on American Indian education reform and have proposed similar legislations.⁴

³ Montana Constitution Article X, Section 1(2) is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

⁴ In 2005, Washington State passed HB1495, entitled *Since Time Immemorial*, which brought together the Office of Indian Education and tribal and educational representatives to develop a state-wide curriculum inclusive of American Indian culture and history. Unlike IEFA, which requires schools to instruct all students about the state's Indigenous inhabitants, *Since Time Immemorial* only encourages public schools to work collaboratively with tribal groups in instructing that curriculum. Washington State has recently passed a new law that follows IEFA's mandate by requiring schools to teach the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum. For more details, see Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Indian Education," <http://www.k12.wa.us/IndianEd/default.aspx>. *Indian*

Both Native and non-Native scholars and educators herald IEFA as an important reform strategy in American Indian education. As Jioanna Carjuzaa *et al.* state, IEFA represents a “model for all educators dedicated to embracing American ideals of social justice and educational equity.”⁵ Donna Deyhle and Karen Comeau describe IEFA as “a bold, promising practice...[that] speaks to what American Indian people have also been saying for hundreds of years—non-Native people need to learn about American Indians to become educated citizens.”⁶ Native American educator, Earl Barlow, states that “the Indian Education for All Act is a positive step. The Montana Supreme Court Decision to fund the clause in the constitution is just.”⁷ For these individuals, the inclusion of American Indian history and culture into the mainstream curriculum has the potential to transform public education across the state of Montana for both white and Native students. A curriculum that includes American Indian histories and cultures changes the perceptions of white students about the tribal groups in Montana. An inclusive curriculum also allows Native students to see their own cultures and traditions reflected in the mainstream curriculum and school culture.

But IEFA requires more than curricular additions. The law mandates that mainstream educators must work cooperatively with tribal groups and Native educators to design and implement an inclusive curriculum with respect to American Indian histories and cultures. States a component of IEFA, the “education system should work cooperatively with Montana tribes

Country Today reports that South Dakota “created its own Indian Education Act in 2007” and that the Wisconsin Indian Education Association has been “working to strengthen the 1989 Act 31, which aims to educate residents about the state’s indigenous inhabitants.” See: Adrian Jawort, “Montana Schools Try to Keep Indian Students Engaged by Teaching Indian Cultural to All,” *Indian Country Today*. Retrieved July 17, 2014, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/print/2012/04/12/montana-schools-try-keep-indian-students-engaged-teaching-indian-cultural-all-107543>

⁵ Jioanna Carjuzaa, Mike Jetty, Michael Munson, and Teresa Veltkamp, “Montana’s Indian Education For All: Applying Multicultural Education Theory,” *Multicultural Perspectives* 12, 4 (2010), 192.

⁶ Donna Deyhle and Karen Gayton Comeau, “Connecting the Circle in American Indian Education,” in *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*, ed. James A Banks (Hoboken, NJ: Routledge, 2009), 271.

⁷ Earl Barlow, “Indian Education: State and Federal,” in *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, eds. G.H. Capture, D. Champagne, & C.C. Jackson (New York: Altamira Press, 2007), 92.

when providing instruction and implementing any educational goals.”⁸ By virtue of this mandate, IEFA brings mainstream policy-makers and educators together with representatives from the state’s tribal communities into political interactions. Tribal elders, community leaders, and cultural experts representing the twelve tribal communities thus have become educational partners in designing IEFA’s inclusive curricular content. These collaborations require whites and Natives to cross cultural, political, and geographical borders into locations that have historically excluded Indigenous peoples from the political and educational conversation.

The inclusive strategies of IEFA have pushed the conversation forward in American Indian education reform in significant ways. Considering the fact that the historical aims of American Indian education were to “eradicate Indian self-government, self-determination, and self-education,”⁹ in order to transform and assimilate Native children into acceptable forms of citizenship for mainstream society, IEFA has shifted the ways that mainstream educators now include American Indian perspectives and voices in the educational reform process. The inclusion of American Indian culture and history on all levels of public education signals that a new and much needed conversation is emerging between Native peoples and mainstream educators. IEFA introduces a new conversation of American Indian education reform in which Native groups can contribute to the educational experiences of all Montana students.

IEFA’s emphasis on inclusion promotes what I call an *inclusive conversation* between tribal communities and mainstream educators and policy-makers. By inclusion, I mean that we are open to another person and take seriously what the other has to say to us. As Sara Shady and Marion Larson describe, “inclusion seeks to break down boundaries and develop deep relations

⁸ Denise Juneau and Mandy Smoker Broadus, “And Still the Waters Flow: The Legacy of Indian Education in Montana,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, 3 (2006), 194. IEFA includes three mandated objectives; this is the third objective.

⁹ Tsianina Lomawaima, “The Unnatural History of American Indian Education,” in *Next Steps: Research and Practice to Advance Indian Education*, eds. Karen Swisher and John Tippeconnic (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1999), 5.

with other people and with things others have created, such as texts and works of art.”¹⁰ An inclusive conversation happens when different persons or groups deliberate over a mutual concern or shared goal. In inclusive conversations, different persons or groups break down the barriers that divide them. The aim of these conversations is to find common ground between conversers, such that they are able to make space for the other’s perspective, even when it differs significantly from their own. Inclusive conversations happen when different groups “explore together the various implications of individual perspectives and of various traditions.”¹¹ Our differences and uniqueness are not barriers but rather bridges to mutual understanding.

In Chapter Two, I explain what an inclusive conversation means for IEFA. Here I only want to identify the unexamined assumptions about inclusive conversation that currently inform IEFA. These assumptions include *equality*, *trust*, and *agreement*. Specifically, to engage in inclusive conversations between persons or groups assumes that parties in the conversation stand as equals, that trust exists between them to lift the conversation off the ground, and that conversers can reach agreement on a mutual concern or shared goal. I explain each of these assumptions in reference to the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Considered a prominent philosopher in the twentieth century, Gadamer develops a philosophical account of understanding. Understanding is not a special mental operation we have to know the world, according to Gadamer. Rather, understanding is a fundamental way of our being in the world. Writes Gadamer: “*Understanding* is not a resigned ideal of human experience...Understanding is the original characteristic of the being of human life itself.”¹² For Gadamer, understanding is pre-reflective. Pre-reflective understanding means that we engage

¹⁰ Sara Shady and Marion Larson, “Tolerance, Empathy, or Inclusion? Insights from Martin Buber,” *Educational Theory*, vol. 60, no. 1 (2010), 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition, Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 205.

our social, historical, and linguistic contexts in practical ways, such that we are deeply familiar with the behaviors, rituals, and expectations within our culture and society. Deborah Kerdeman's description of pre-reflective understanding is helpful: "Understanding thus is a way of being involved with the world and is realized pre-reflectively in the form of moods, concerns, and unconscious practical engagements with people and things."¹³

According to Gadamer, conversation plays an important role in understanding. In conversation, we bring our pre-reflective understanding—our assumptions, prejudices, and pre-conceptions—to the dialogical encounter with another person. In a dialogical encounter, the other person offers new perspectives and insights that we have not previously considered. The other person pushes back on us and disrupts our pre-reflective understanding. We are forced to reexamine what we understand about ourselves and the world. Explains Kerdeman: "the central idea of Gadamer's hermeneutics...[is] the need to participate in conversations with those whose horizons challenge one's own."¹⁴

New understandings thus become possible when we engage in conversation with persons who differ from us. The encounter with another person helps us understand ourselves and the world in new ways. In a conversational encounter, we are transformed. Andrzej Wiercinski describes this conversational encounter as *conversion*. "Conversion," he writes, "is a process...in the sense of coming forth, which leads to understanding that we are never a completed project, but in a constant need of learning to see ourselves differently."¹⁵

I want to use Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to describe the meaning of an inclusive conversation. First, an inclusive conversation assumes that conversers stand as equals

¹³ Deborah Kerdeman, "Book Review." Review of *Education, Dialogue, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Paul Fairfield. *Educational Theory* 65, no. 1 (2015), 88.

¹⁴ Ibid., 91.

¹⁵ Andrzej Wiercinski, "Introduction: The Primacy of Conversation in Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 17.

in the conversational encounter. In an inclusive conversation, each converser comes to the topic and puts his/her pre-reflective understandings of the subject matter into play. An inclusive conversation can have no domination of one person over the other. No one controls the path a conversation might take. This requires skilled communicators to withstand the tendencies to dominate the conversation. Gadamer explains it this way: “A person skilled in the ‘art’ of questioning is a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion.”¹⁶ This is only possible when we see the other person as an equal partner in the conversational encounter. To stand as equals in an inclusive conversation means that all parties have a right to speak their opinions and offer their perspectives. The Gadamerian assumption of equality resonates with a democratic spirit. On this account, equality entails that each converser comes to the conversation as a viable contributor to the discussion, whose perspective helps move the conversation along.

Second, an inclusive conversation assumes that conversers come to the dialogical encounter with trust. This means that conversers encounter the other person in a manner that John Caputo describes as *structural friendship*. Structural friendship is not based on having good personal feelings towards the other. It is based on the “implicit vocative or invocation... ‘O my friends, listen to what is said, read what is written’.”¹⁷ When we trust another person, we approach the other in a *spirit of goodwill*, saying to the other that our words are truthful and that we seek to be understood by the other person. Explains Caputo: “In order to understand each other, we must ask each other to listen and we must try to understand.”¹⁸ In the spirit of

¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), 367.

¹⁷ John D. Caputo, “Good Will and the Hermeneutics of Friendship: Gadamer, Derrida, and Madison,” *Symposium* 8, 2 (2004), 215.

¹⁸ Ibid.

goodwill, we trust that what the other says to us is true, without hidden agendas or ulterior motives to manipulate us towards a particular goal or perspective.

The idea of trust presupposes that conversers are willing to approach each other with the best of intentions. Specifically, we trust that our conversation partner is not there to tear us down in the interaction. Rather, our partner is there to build up our perspective and draw out our strengths rather than illuminate our weaknesses. Writes Gadamer:

To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other person's opinion...[dialectic] consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength.¹⁹

Trust implies that we come to the conversation in humility and modesty towards the other person. Rather than believing we possess the definitive answers to the subject matter, we take seriously the claim that the other has something significant to say to us. We trust that what we each bring to the subject matter comes from a willingness to pursue the truth, wherever the conversation may take us. Speaking of Gadamer's view of dialogue, Fred Dallmayr states: "Dialogue demands a certain modesty and nonaggressiveness, willingness to listen and a refusal to try to 'overpower the other partner'."²⁰

Third, the aim of an inclusive conversation is to reach agreement on a mutual concern or shared goal. "[Each] person," writes Gadamer, "opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says."²¹ For Gadamer, we do not grasp the other's particularity in conversation. Rather, we come to accept the other's perspective on the subject

¹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 367.

²⁰ Fred Dallmayr, *Integral Pluralism: Beyond Culture Wars* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 108.

²¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 385.

matter. This does not mean that conversers reach perfect agreement. Writes Wiercinski, “the partners of the conversation are not requested to give up their diverging points of view to reach perfect agreement...[but] to try to understand their personal standpoints.”²² To engage in an inclusive conversation is to grasp “the rightness of [the other’s] opinion, so that we can be at one with each other on the subject.”²³ For Gadamer, we are able to reach agreement on the subject matter by “overcoming barriers, achieving agreement, commonality, and reconciliation,”²⁴ even in cases where seemingly unbridgeable difference exist between us.

These assumptions about inclusive conversations inform the conversation that is currently underway in IEFA. IEFA makes several assumptions about inclusion. IEFA assumes that stakeholders will approach one another as trusting equals, united in a spirit of goodwill in search of common ground. IEFA also assumes that educators from different cultures and backgrounds can overcome their differences and reach a shared understanding on curricular matters. Lastly, IEFA assumes that inclusion can realize American Indian education reform. On this account, inclusion furthers conversation because it brings multiple voices and perspectives together to determine what American Indian education reform will be for the state of Montana.

On the surface, it might appear that an inclusive conversation would help to realize reform for IEFA stakeholders and Indigenous peoples. After all, inclusion brings historically excluded groups to the table of conversation. As I will show in Chapter Three, however, Indigenous peoples historically have been *systematically excluded* from conversations about American Indian education. Indigenous peoples instead have been recipients of a colonizing agenda. The IEFA scholarship assumes that inclusive conversations can remedy exclusionary

²² Wiercinski, “Introduction,” 17.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Richard Bernstein, “The Conversation That Never Happened: (Gadamer/Derrida),” *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 61 (2008), 588.

practices by bringing Indigenous groups into the conversation of educational reform. Specifically, inclusion helps to ensure that mainstream educators and tribal communities break down barriers and find common ground over curricular matters. Through inclusion, mainstream educators would take seriously the perspectives and concerns of Indigenous peoples that have historically been marginalized from the educational discourse. In turn, Indigenous peoples would be able to voice their perspectives and concerns in welcoming and open spaces. Both groups come to the conversation as equals.

But my analysis in Chapter Three will show that an inclusive conversation is problematic. Conversations between mainstream educators and tribal communities that neither take the history of and ongoing effects of colonization into account and that do not incorporate decolonization as a viable political strategy for Indigenous peoples cannot adequately reform American Indian education in public schools. Insofar as IEFA uncritically conceptualizes conversation on the basis of inclusion, the law essentially promotes a colonizing agenda that effectively undermines its own good intentions. An inclusive conversation, in other words, is not sufficient to reform American Indian education.

In Chapter Four, I argue that IEFA stakeholders must critically analyze colonization and promote decolonization for the conversation in American Indian education reform to lift off the ground. This is not to say that inclusion is not an important goal for Indigenous peoples or IEFA. However, before engaging in inclusive conversations, mainstream educators and policy-makers need to engage tribal communities in conversations that foreground their colonizing experiences and histories *and* further the aims of decolonization in public schools. I thus will argue for what I call a *decolonizing conversation* for IEFA. Unlike inclusive conversations, which bring different groups together to find common ground on a mutual concern or shared

goal, a decolonizing conversation recognizes and is informed by what Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor calls *survivance*. It is only when tribal groups and mainstream educators engage in decolonizing conversations centered on survivance that both these groups can engage in conversations that will truly reform American Indian education.

Overview of Chapters

My analysis utilizes a broad range of philosophical traditions and theories. First, I use theories of multicultural education and also political theory to analyze the underlying assumptions of IEFA. These theoretical approaches help me examine and critique the specific meaning of inclusion that informs the type of conversation IEFA seeks to promote. Second, I consider the scholarship in Indigenous education to help frame the historical background of IEFA. This scholarship illuminates the colonizing history between Indigenous peoples and the federal government. It also establishes the basis to articulate what I call the *Indigenous voice of survivance*. Third, I examine recent social and political theory, specifically the politics of reconciliation and deliberative democracy, to analyze the relationship between Indigenous peoples and democratic nation-states. These political frameworks help us understand how nation-states can accommodate the unique demands of justice voiced by Indigenous peoples and how these demands can lead to more authentic conversations. Fourth, I use recent scholarship in postcolonial and Indigenous studies to define the meaning of decolonization and to show how decolonization reframes the conversation in IEFA to reflect Indigenous reform strategies.

On first appearance, these theoretical and philosophical approaches seem to have little relationship to one another. Established by strict, disciplinary borders and embedded in different philosophical assumptions, the various traditions in western philosophy and the relatively recent

discipline of Indigenous studies have at times been in tension.²⁵ However, an integrated approach becomes critical for my study. My approach is inspired in large part by Henry Giroux's concept of *border crossing*. Criticizing modern philosophy's hegemonic tendency to frame human experience in universal terms and strict boundaries, Giroux states that the postmodern challenge is to "transgress the borders sealed by modernism...[and] to proclaim the arbitrariness of all boundaries."²⁶ The boundaries between western and Indigenous philosophies usually marked by strict cultural and disciplinary borders become transgressed in this dissertation in order to explicate the kind of conversation that I propose for IEFA.

The following chapters bring these various traditions and approaches together to critically examine the conversation of IEFA. In Chapter Two, "*Indian Education For All: A Philosophical Problem*," I consider more specifically the educational reform strategies of IEFA. I ask: *What is the explicit and implicit meaning of conversation that currently informs IEFA?* This chapter analyzes IEFA in depth. It surfaces and challenges the law's underlying assumption that conversation is based on inclusion and that Indigenous peoples and mainstream educators stand as equals in conversation. The law further assumes that these groups are able and willing to engage in conversation over curricular matters. These assumptions presuppose a Gadamerian meaning of conversation. But this meaning of conversation, I argue, misses an important philosophical problem. The problem is that trust does not exist between white and Native groups. To address why trust does not exist between white and Native groups, IEFA stakeholders must turn towards colonizing history.

²⁵ For a detailed description of these tensions from an Indigenous perspective, see the classic text by Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Pub, 1994); for more specific analysis of the relationship between western philosophy and Indigenous education, see Vine Deloria and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Pub, 2001).

²⁶ Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55.

In Chapter Three, “*Framing the Conversation of American Indian Education Reform*,” I offer an historical analysis of US-Indigenous relations. I ask: *How do we account for the fact that a conversation about American Indian education reform has historically been underway between Indigenous peoples and the federal government but has failed to realize any satisfactory solutions?* In light of this history, it becomes apparent that IEFA is not a new conversation at all. Rather, it is caught up within a *colonizing history* and it must be understood against that background, which reflects what I call a *deep insidious agenda* to colonize Indigenous peoples. I will show how this deep insidious agenda operates in US-Indigenous relations, even in federal policy eras that seem to favor Indigenous peoples.

I propose three perspectives to interpret US-Indigenous relations. The first perspective offers a mainstream account of federal Indian policy. The second perspective extends this account by proposing a theory of colonization. The third perspective offers what I call the *Indigenous voice of survivance*. Survivance illuminates the different ways that Indigenous peoples have understood and interpreted their colonizing experiences. As a counter-voice to the insidious agenda of colonization, survivance stands in opposition to the dominant group.

In Chapter Four, “*Reconciliation & the Indigenous Voice of Survivance*,” I articulate what a decolonizing conversation would mean for IEFA. I ask: *How can IEFA stakeholders initiate and sustain decolonizing conversations between Indigenous peoples and white educators that address longstanding problems in American Indian education reform?* I show that IEFA’s emphasis on political inclusion fails to account adequately for the fact that mainstream educators and Indigenous peoples need to engage in conversations that explicitly and directly confront colonization and its enduring effects. Drawing from the recent scholarship in the politics of reconciliation, I argue that reconciliation makes the political conversation in IEFA more

authentic. The authentic conversation I propose requires dominant groups to acknowledge, repair, and take responsibility for the oppressed experiences of Indigenous peoples. I propose a meaning of decolonization and argue that reconciliation can facilitate decolonizing conversations that are centered on survivance. A decolonizing conversation rather than an inclusive conversation is in a better position to facilitate the necessary reforms of IEFA. This analysis leads to the conclusion that reconciliation and survivance serve as a framework in which white and Native groups can come into an equal partnership that serves Indigenous interests.

Chapter Five, “*Conclusion: Reframing the Conversation of IEFA*,” brings the preceding chapters together. I ask: *What would IEFA look like and require if it adopted a model of decolonizing conversation that genuinely recognizes and is affected by the Indigenous voice of survivance?* This chapter applies the insights of reconciliation and survivance to the context of IEFA. I argue that IEFA stakeholders need to reframe the conversation of IEFA to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance. Applying the concepts of reconciliation and survivance to one aspect of the IEFA curriculum, I show how white and Native educators can work collaboratively to transform the curricular content to reflect survivance, which benefits both white and Native students. The implications from my analysis show that decolonizing the conversation in IEFA requires that Indigenous peoples need to become educators in public schools.

Philosophical Inquiry & IEFA

To date, the current IEFA scholarship utilizes empirical methodologies to examine and analyze IEFA. Jioanna Carjuzaa, for example, examines IEFA as a multicultural strategy and

reports the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the law's curricular proposals.²⁷ Mike Magone and Tammy Elser examine IEFA's progress within public schools and consider the challenges to furthering its programs.²⁸ Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn measure the effectiveness of IEFA's inclusive curriculum and programs within public schools.²⁹ These empirical methodologies are important for examining IEFA and its impact on student learning. They can tell us whether a curricular proposal is effective or ineffective or how Indigenous and white educators and groups feel about IEFA's mandates and proposals. Through data collection, empirical observation, or qualitative analysis, empirical methodologies can help us derive a clear picture of how IEFA is reforming education and where more research is needed.

But this study offers a missing philosophical lens to analyze and critique the inclusive educational reform strategies of IEFA. Analyzing IEFA through a philosophical lens raises two questions: First, *what precisely is philosophical inquiry* and, second, *why is philosophical inquiry pertinent to helping IEFA stakeholders understand the conversation of IEFA?* I begin with the first question about philosophical inquiry.

Philosophical inquiry examines the world from a different vantage point than empirical methodologies do. Empirical methodologies examine the world of experience, or *phenomena*, including physical entities and objects of scientific investigation, by utilizing data collection, observation, and analysis. Rather than examining the concrete phenomena of experience, philosophical inquiry takes a broader and more abstract look at a given issue or topic. As S. Morris Engel *et al.* state, "Philosophy tries to see things whole, not only by asking questions that

²⁷ Jioanna Carjuzaa, "Montana's Indian Education For All: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Embrace Culturally Responsive Teaching," in *Innovative Voices in Education: Engaging Diverse Communities*, ed. Eileen Gale Kugler (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012): 43-62.

²⁸ Mike Magone and Tammy Elser, "Indian Education for All: A Change of Heart and Mind," *International Journal of Educational Management* 23, 4 (2009): 314-325.

²⁹ Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn, "Indigenous Education for Critical Democracy: Teacher Approaches and Learning Outcomes in a K-5 Indian Education For All Program," *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 44, 2 (2011): 249-269.

are more general and fundamental than those asked by science but also by asking questions that are concerned not so much with facts as with how different bodies of facts are related.”³⁰ On this account, philosophical inquiry examines fundamental questions about the world and human existence. In doing so, it considers questions that are more fundamental than those considered by empirical methodologies. For example, empirical methodologies might ask: *What is the cause of X?* Philosophical inquiry might ask: *Is it the case that everything in the world has a cause?*³¹

This basic distinction between philosophical inquiry and empirical methodologies shows what can be distinctive about philosophical inquiry in IEFA. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, the IEFA scholarship examines how the law’s mandate to include American Indian history and culture in the mainstream curriculum makes a positive contribution to educational reform across Montana. Carjuzaa, for example, shows how the attitudes of teacher candidates improve when they begin to understand American Indian culture and history in their own education preparation. But whereas empirical methodologies inquire into teacher attitudes about inclusion, philosophical inquiry raises questions about the underlying assumptions of inclusion. Philosophical inquiry detaches from the actual practice of educational reform in IEFA and considers the background assumptions and concepts that inform the law.

While the primary aim of philosophical inquiry is to consider basic questions that underlie education, philosophy of education extends philosophical inquiry to human experience more broadly. As Nicholas Burbules and Bryan Warnick state:

Philosophical inquiry into education is one of the oldest of the educational disciplines in the Western tradition, going back at least to the ideas of Socrates and Plato. For these

³⁰ S. Morris Engel, Angelika Soldan, and Kevin Durand, *The Study of Philosophy*, sixth edition (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 6.

³¹ Ibid. Engel *et al.* use this example to explain the basic distinction between philosophical and scientific questions. I use this example to describe the distinction between philosophical inquiry and empirical methodology.

thinkers, reflection on the purposes and methods of education was inseparable from reflection on morality, knowledge, and the nature of the just society: The question of how to foster the desirable qualities of a good person, a good thinker, or a good citizen were part and parcel of thinking about what those qualities should be—and these qualities of the good person, good thinker, and good citizen were also closely tied with each other.³²

Burbules and Warnick call the deeper questions of human existence with which philosophy is concerned *normative* questions. Normative questions emphasize the ethical domain of human experience, including questions such as: *What is the best way human beings should live? What are the ethical norms that should guide human behavior and affairs? What are ethical norms?* William Frankena captures the character of normative questions: “philosophers have sought to afford some wisdom in the conduct of human affairs...[and] they have tried to provide...a guide to action.”³³ We might say that normative questions are the most practical questions, because they propose what human beings should do or how society should be arranged.

Philosophical inquiry also is concerned with *analytic* questions. As Nel Noddings states, “Traditionally, philosophical methods have consisted of analysis and clarification of concepts, arguments, theories, and language. Philosophers, as philosophers, have not usually created theories of education...instead, they have analyzed theories and arguments.”³⁴ Raising analytic questions, philosophers of education evaluate the reasons, explanations, and warrants that practitioners of education presuppose in their practical engagement with phenomena. These presuppositions may be inconsistent, incoherent, or contradictory, in which case the philosopher of education offers conceptual clarification and logical analysis that may seem self-evident to the practitioner of education.

³² Nicholas Burbules and Bryan Warnick, “Philosophical Inquiry,” In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, eds. Judith Green, Gregory Camilli, Patricia Elmore, Audra Skkukauskaitė, and Elizabeth Grace (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2006), 326.

³³ Quoted in: D.C. Phillips, “What is Philosophy of Education?,” in *The Sage Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, eds. Richard Bailey, Robin Barrow, David Carr, and Christine McCarthy (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publishing, 2010), 14.

³⁴ Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 1.

For example, in Chapter Four I take up the question of whether inclusion is sufficient to overcome the historical legacies of colonization with respect to Indigenous peoples and the nation-state. A philosophical perspective raises the analytic question of whether inclusion can adequately address the unique demands of justice articulated by Indigenous peoples, whose histories have been caught up within a history of colonizing practices and policies. Thus, philosophical inquiry interrogates and examines the underlying assumption of IEFA scholarship, which presumes that inclusive conversations can adequately reform American Indian education. This analytic questioning leads to the normative claim that IEFA stakeholders should explicitly and directly address colonization in their interactions. A philosophical analysis envisions the kind of conversation that whites and Natives need to engage in order to sufficiently reform American Indian education.

We now can consider the second question as to why philosophical inquiry is pertinent to helping IEFA stakeholders understand the conversation of IEFA. Three reasons become apparent. First, philosophical inquiry is pertinent for IEFA because it illuminates issues and problems that the IEFA scholarship may not have considered. I stated previously that the current research in IEFA presupposes that an inclusive conversation is sufficient to reform American Indian education in public schools. But there is little examination concerning what an inclusive conversation means or the problems it presents for Indigenous peoples. Missing from the current IEFA research is a philosophical analysis that examines and critiques more fully the meaning of inclusion that pervades IEFA. A philosophical inquiry of IEFA provides a broader and more abstract analysis of inclusion by surfacing and examining the meaning of inclusion itself. Philosophical inquiry detaches from the concrete phenomena of IEFA and examines the concept of inclusion that practitioners of IEFA presume to be the case.

Second, philosophical inquiry questions whether certain aims are worth pursuing in IEFA. For example, in Chapter Three, I examine the colonizing history of US-Indigenous relations. In light of this analysis, I present the Indigenous voice of survivance as a counter-narrative to the federal government's colonizing agenda. The Indigenous voice of survivance asserts that the struggle of Indigenous peoples within any federal policy era is to remain sovereign. This has implications for IEFA. Given the fact that IEFA emphasizes the inclusion of tribal voices, philosophical inquiry considers whether inclusion should be pursued in American Indian education reform. It challenges the assumption in the IEFA scholarship that Indigenous peoples would want to be included in the way that IEFA expects.

Third, philosophical inquiry proposes a normative claim regarding what American Indian education reform should be for the state of Montana. Specifically, I propose that IEFA stakeholders should engage in decolonizing conversations. While my normative claim is based on an abstract analysis and criticism, my proposal suggests specific programs and projects that IEFA stakeholders should employ when working with American Indian students within public education. My normative claim is closely tied to my analytic question. It is not based on whim but rather on reasons for how IEFA stakeholders should reform American Indian education in public education. I will clarify and support the strategies that I believe will be most effective to decolonize conversation about IEFA.

Concluding Remarks

I hope that my dissertation can contribute to the field of the philosophy of education and American Indian education reform. By bringing the most recent research in Indigenous philosophy and Indigenous education together with insights in western philosophy, I hope to

develop a partnership between Indigenous and western philosophical approaches. This partnership will help educators concerned with IEFA consider basic issues and questions in American Indian education in Montana. These include the meaning of conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, the most adequate framework of justice to help guide the conversation between white and Native groups, and the importance of decolonizing the conversation to help make the relationship between whites and Natives more relevant for tribal communities in Montana. But this dissertation also contributes to broader issues regarding American Indian education. While this study examines IEFA within the context of Montana, my hope is that this dissertation will provide strategies to address longstanding issues in American Indian education more broadly. As other states follow Montana's lead, my dissertation suggests how we might engage in conversations about American Indian education reform on a national level.

CHAPTER TWO

Indian Education For All: A Philosophical Problem

Introduction

In Chapter One, I introduce *Indian Education For All* (IEFA) as a new educational reform strategy in the state of Montana. We saw that IEFA is leading the way in American Indian education reform. What makes IEFA distinctive from previous reform efforts is that it promotes what I call an *inclusive conversation*. An inclusive conversation brings different persons or groups together in dialogue for the purpose of finding common ground on a shared goal or issue. IEFA mandates that mainstream educators work cooperatively with tribal groups and Native educators to design and implement an inclusive curriculum with respect to American Indian histories and cultures. My aim in this chapter is to analyze IEFA in depth. Specifically, I want to surface and challenge the law's underlying assumption that the conversation between mainstream educators and Indigenous peoples is based on inclusion.

The current scholarship on IEFA characterizes the law as a multicultural education strategy that seeks to include American Indian perspectives into the curriculum and decision-making process.¹ Write Jioanna Carjuzaa *et al.*: "IEFA exemplifies the shared tenets of multicultural education theorists...inspiring educators across the U.S. and around the world to become more culturally inclusive in their classrooms and communities."² Others believe that IEFA's multicultural education strategies can improve white and Native group relations across the state. Bobby Ann Starnes states that being inclusive of American Indians will help us

¹ Throughout this chapter, I refer to the scholarship in IEFA, or more simply the *scholarship*. While scholars in IEFA vary in their understanding of the law, by and large most commenting on IEFA interpret the law as a positive step forward in American Indian education reform.

² Jioanna Carjuzaa, Mike Jetty, Michael Munson, Teresa Veltkamp, "Montana's Indian Education For All: Applying Multicultural Education Theory," *Multicultural Perspectives*, vol. 12, 4 (2010), 192.

recognize that “in our best moments as a nation and a people we reject the notion that there is an us and a them. The America we see in our best dreams has only *we*—we the people.”³ For these educators, IEFA offers a positive step forward in American Indian education reform, helping to create a more just society within Montana’s borders.

This characterization of IEFA as an inclusive multicultural educational strategy raises the following questions: *What is the implicit and explicit meaning of conversation that currently informs IEFA? What is the philosophical problem with this meaning of conversation?*

I consider these questions by critically examining the underlying assumptions about conversation that currently inform IEFA. The IEFA scholarship contends that the more mainstream education includes Indigenous perspectives in the mainstream curriculum the more Native students can experience fewer stereotypes and achieve educational equity. It further contends that including Indigenous voices in the political process can help white and Native groups attain civic unity. However, I challenge the idea that American Indian education can be significantly reformed through an inclusive multicultural educational strategy in public schools. As we saw in Chapter One, inclusion requires mainstream educators to work cooperatively with tribal communities. This requirement for cooperation assumes that whites and Natives stand as equals and that they are able and willing to trust each other and find agreement.

But IEFA’s inclusion strategies miss a critical philosophical problem. An inclusive conversation fails to account for how white and Native groups already stand in unequal relations within public education. Nor does it account for the fact that these groups may not have the skills or willingness to engage in conversation. These issues indicate a climate of distrust between white and Native groups. This suggests that we cannot presume that white and Native groups have trust between them in order to engage in authentic conversation.

³ Bobby Ann Starnes, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” *Phi Delta Kappa*, 88, 3 (2006), 190.

The basic philosophical problem is that IEFA sidesteps the issue of distrust that exists between white and Native groups. On some level, IEFA recognizes that trust has not existed between white and Native groups in Montana. This is evident by the fact that its inclusive strategies seek to overcome longstanding exclusionary practices. If trust already exists, then it can be promoted. But if trust does not already exist, then it cannot be promoted without addressing the reasons why it does not exist. The problem is that IEFA brings whites and Natives together in conversation without directly and explicitly addressing why trust does not exist between them. This problem makes the conversation in IEFA more complex than the current IEFA scholarship suggests. In order to engage in authentic conversations, my contention is that whites and Natives need to turn towards history to examine the reasons why distrust exists between whites and Natives.

The chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I provide an historical background of IEFA and present the entirety of the law together with its central components. In the second section, I undertake a philosophical analysis of the current scholarship on IEFA and show how it characterizes IEFA as a multicultural education strategy centered on inclusion. This characterization is rooted in two meanings of inclusion, *curricular inclusion* and *structural and political inclusion*. I focus on how the current scholarship understands IEFA as reducing negative stereotypes towards Indigenous peoples in order to improve educational equity of Native students and improve civic unity between white and Native groups. In the third section, I defend the claim that IEFA's emphasis on inclusion misses a philosophical problem. Here I question the assumptions about the inclusive conversation that currently inform IEFA.

IEFA: Background & Description

The story of IEFA began during the 1972 Montana State Constitutional Convention when one hundred delegates from across the state drafted what would become one of the more progressive state constitutions with respect to Indigenous peoples. At the center of the Montana State Constitution was visionary language that required all Montanans to learn about the state's Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures. Article X, Section 1(2) of the constitution reads as follows: "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage."⁴ The article established what scholars describe as a *constitutional mandate*. The mandate requires that "the public education system...provide culturally appropriate and accurate information to all students in Montana, both Indian and non-Indian."⁵ Public education would become the site to help realize the state's commitment to recognize and preserve American Indian histories and cultures. Unlike previous strategies in American Indian education reform, which centered exclusively on the education of Native students, this mandate requires that *all* students benefit from these educational strategies.

Several delegates during the convention showed their commitment to recognize the state's Indigenous peoples and cultures. Dorothy Eck claimed that Article X, Section 1(2) ensured that all students "would recognize the importance and the real dignity of American Indians in the life of Montana."⁶ Chet Blaylock remarked that because American Indians "were here first, and we took [the land] from them, this is the least we could do."⁷ Perhaps Richard Champoux's comments best summarize the reasoning for Article X, Section 1(2):

⁴ Montana Constitution Article X, Section 1(2) is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

⁵ Carol Juneau and Denise Juneau, "Indian Education For All: Montana's Constitution at Work in Our Schools," *Montana Law Review* 72, 1 (2011), 114.

⁶ Denise Juneau and Mandy Smoker Broaddus, "And Still the Waters Flow: The Legacy of Indian Education in Montana," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 88, 3 (2006), 193.

⁷ Juneau and Juneau, "Indian Education For All," 113.

If there is ever to be a solution to the Indian problem in this country, it will come about when our educational system provides the knowledge which is needed to understand and respect the cultural differences between us and protect their cultural integrity.⁸

Inspiration for Article X, Section 1(2) would come from two American Indian students from the Fort Peck Reservation, Lynn Leuppe and Mavis Scott. Their pleas to the delegates—none of whom identified as American Indian—were direct and honest: “We would like, very simply, our history, our culture, and our identity.”⁹ The delegates responded to their pleas and made the decision to include Article X, Section 1(2), which would become the basis for IEFA.

Despite the delegates’ commitment to recognize the state’s Indigenous peoples, little was accomplished to meet the mandate between the 1972 convention and the passing of IEFA in 1999 and the funding of the legislation in 2005. As Denise Juneau and Mandy Smoker Broaddus describe, “For 34 years, this promise [the constitutional mandate] was shelved in cupboards across Montana’s educational landscape.”¹⁰ Several legislative attempts and court decisions to implement the mandate followed the passage of Article X, Section 1(2). Delays included the following:

- In 1974, the Montana Legislature passed the Indian Studies Law, which “required that all teachers in public schools on or near Indian reservations receive instruction in American Indian studies.”¹¹ However, teachers sought to repeal of the law “because of the delay in its implementation, confusion over whom it applied, lack of funding, failure to involve teacher organization, and lack of administrative support.”¹² The Indian Studies Law became optional and few districts required its implementation.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁰ Juneau and Broaddus, “And Still the Waters Flow,” 193.

¹¹ Ibid., 194.

¹² Ibid.

- In 1985, a coalition of parents and districts filed a lawsuit against Montana State for failing to provide equitable funding to meet Article X, Section 1(2). In *Helena School District No. 1 v. State*, the Montana Supreme Court “declared the State’s education finance system unconstitutional and held that [Article X, Section 1(2)] established a ‘special burden’ for the education of Indian children which must be addressed as a part of the school funding issues.”¹³ However, the legislature provided no funding to meet the article despite the court’s ruling.
- In the 1997, educators developed a state plan that “outlined action steps for all the major stakeholders in Indian education.”¹⁴ State Representative George Heavy Runner sponsored a bill that “created an American Indian Heritage Day to be celebrated on the fourth Friday of each September.”¹⁵ Despite the good intentions to meet the mandate, the American Indian Heritage Day Bill only encouraged schools “to recognize and celebrate American Indian culture and history.”¹⁶

Attempts to realize the mandate proved ineffective primarily due to the unwillingness of subsequent legislatures to allocate funding for IEFA. This led individual districts and schools to determine the extent to which American Indian education would be enacted in the classroom. But without state funding or clarification on how to implement IEFA, few districts were able to meet the mandate. In the words of Juneau and Broaddus, these failed attempts suggested that “Article X was simply becoming one more broken promise to the Indians.”¹⁷

¹³ Juneau and Juneau, “Indian Education For All,” 118.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Juneau and Broaddus, “And Still the Waters Flow,” 194.

¹⁶ Juneau and Juneau, “Indian Education For All,” 116.

¹⁷ Juneau and Broaddus, “And Still the Waters Flow,” 194.

The political climate began to change by the late 1990's. In 1996, a legislative committee on Indian Affairs determined that districts had no policy or curriculum to recognize the histories and cultures of Montana's tribes and had thus failed to meet the mandate. To ensure that schools and districts would be able to implement the mandate, State Representative Carol Juneau introduced a bill in 1999 that would become *Indian Education For All*.

IEFA contains three main components. I quote directly from HB528, which is now state law MCA 20-1-501:

1. It is the constitutionally declared policy of this state to recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and to be committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.
2. It is the intent of the legislature that in accordance with Article X, Section 1(2), of the Montana constitution:
 - (a) Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner; and
 - (b) Every educational agency and educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include information specific to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.
3. It is also the intent of this part, predicated on the belief that all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate

effectively with Indian students and parents, that educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people.¹⁸

In short, IEFA required the state to meet its original commitment to the Indigenous peoples of Montana. Proponents of IEFA expressed high expectations. IEFA not only satisfied the intention of Article X, Section 1(2), but it also signaled that a new chapter in intergroup relations between whites and Native was in fact possible. Commenting on the importance of this new chapter, Linda McCulloch wrote: “When members of this generation of students become state and tribal leaders, they will have a better understanding of one another and forge better relations to bring Montana to its next stage of development.”¹⁹

Collaborations between mainstream educators and tribal communities ensued with the passing of IEFA. In 1999, Montana’s Office of Public Instruction (OPI) invited representatives from the state’s Indigenous communities to help design the curriculum standards for all grade levels. These standards were called the *Seven Essential Understandings*. The *Seven Essential Understandings* establish distinct learning outcomes that all students should know and be able to do with respect to Indigenous groups in Montana. Carjuzaa *et al.* describe these collaborations well: “Tribally designated representatives invited by OPI came together in 1999 and agreed upon core knowledge that holds true for each of the distinct cultures which would counteract stereotypes and generalizations.”²⁰

The *Seven Essential Understandings* were drafted by collaborations between mainstream educators and tribal leaders, which I quote directly from the OPI website:

¹⁸ Indian Education For All MCA 20-1-501 is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

¹⁹ Linda McCulloch, “The First Best Place,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88, 3 (2006), 195.

²⁰ Carjuzaa *et al.*, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 194.

- Essential Understanding 1: There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.
- Essential Understanding 2: There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, organizations and people. A continuum of Indian identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional. There is no generic American Indian.
- Essential Understanding 3: The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.
- Essential Understanding 4: Reservations are lands that have been reserved by the tribes for their own use through treaties, statutes, and executive orders and were not “given” to them. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involves three assumptions: (1) Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers; (2) Indian tribes had some form of transferrable title to the land; and (3) Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a governmental matter not to be left to individual colonists.
- Essential Understanding 5: Federal policies, put into place throughout American history, have affected Indian people and still shape who they are today. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

Colonization Period, 1492 – [present]; Treaty Period, 1789 – 1871; Allotment Period, 1887 – 1934; Boarding School Period, 1879 – [present]; Tribal Reorganizational Period, 1934 – 1958; Termination Period, 1953 – 1988; Self-Determination, 1975 – current.

- Essential Understanding 6: History is told most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from the Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.
- Essential Understanding 7: Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, the extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is not the same for each tribe.²¹

The *Seven Essential Understandings* serve two roles in the implementation of IEFA’s curricular proposals. First, they are designed to guide districts, schools, and teachers in determining what should be taught in the classroom. IEFA requires educators “to integrate IEFA in all areas,” including curriculum content, learning assessments, and professional development; however, few educators understood what exactly to include in these areas.²² These *Seven Essential Understandings* addressed this problem by helping educators determine what content to include in their curriculum and what all students are expected to know with respect to Indigenous peoples.

²¹ Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

²² Jioanna Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Embrace Culturally Responsive Teaching,” in *Innovative Voices in Education: Engaging Diverse Communities*, ed. Eileen Gale Kugler (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 50.

Second, the *Seven Essential Understandings* address the misinformation and gaps in knowledge about Native peoples within the mainstream curriculum. As Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn state, these *Seven Essential Understandings* center on “correcting misunderstandings, removing malignant stereotypes, instilling respect, and reinforcing sovereignty.”²³ They provide a general “framework that will help teachers enrich their instruction and add a wider range of perspectives and experiences to bring Native peoples alive in the classroom.”²⁴

Despite IEFA’s passage in 1999, the state legislature failed once more to allocate funding for the law’s implementation. In 2004, the political climate began to shift yet again, when the Montana Quality Education Coalition sued the state for failing to fund the law. All eight tribal nations in Montana drafted an amicus brief supporting the lawsuit. In *Columbia Falls Elementary School District No. 6 v. State*, the Montana Supreme Court determined that the state legislature had failed to define the meaning of a ‘quality education’.²⁵ The court concluded that the “funding system established by the state Legislature was unconstitutional because it was not based on funding a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.”²⁶ *Columbia Falls* required the state legislature to define a quality education before it could construct a funding system for public education. In Senate Bill 152, the state legislature defined a quality education as follows:

[E]ducational programs [that] implement the provisions of Article X, Section 1(2), of the Montana constitution...through development of curricula designed to integrate the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians into the curricula, with particular emphasis on Montana Indians.²⁷

²³ Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn, “Indigenous Education for Critical Democracy: Teacher Approaches and Learning Outcomes in a K-5 Indian Education For All Program,” *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 44, 2 (2011), 251.

²⁴ Starnes, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 188.

²⁵ Juneau and Juneau, “Indian Education For All,” 118.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 119.

Essentially, Senate Bill 152 included IEFA “in the Legislature’s definition of a ‘quality education’.”²⁸ This meant that IEFA would finally receive funding. In 2005, with the support of newly elected governor, Brian Schweitzer, the state legislature approved “\$4.3 million for [OPI] to develop curriculum, provide training, and distribute grants.”²⁹ As of 2005, educators, schools, and tribes were required, empowered, and equipped to implement IEFA’s curricular proposals.

In summary, the Montana State Constitution includes language committed to recognizing and preserving the cultures and histories of the state’s Indigenous populations. This language is found in Article X, Section 1(2) of the constitution, referred to as a constitutional mandate. Due to inadequate funding and neglect on the part of the state legislature, it took more than three decades to fulfill the constitutional mandate. This only happened with the passing and funding of IEFA in 1999 and a lawsuit, which resulted in funding IEFA in 2005. In fact, IEFA may not have been possible without the persistent efforts of dedicated policy-makers, mainstream educators, and tribal communities. The law creates new pathways in American Indian education reform across the state of Montana. It requires all students to learn about American Indian history and culture in a culturally responsive manner, and it requires educators and tribal groups to work collaboratively to design and implement an inclusive curriculum. Collaborations between mainstream educators and Indigenous communities immediately ensued with the passing of IEFA. These collaborations led to the design of the *Seven Essential Understandings*.

IEFA & the Meaning of Inclusion

The current scholarship characterizes IEFA as a multicultural education strategy that seeks to include Indigenous perspectives and voices in the mainstream curriculum and political

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

process. As Carjuzaa *et al.* state, IEFA as “an unprecedented reform effort” and “audacious legislation” that “serves as a model for all educators dedicated to embracing American ideals of social justice and educational equity.”³⁰ At the center of IEFA is the concept of *inclusion*. My aim in this section is to describe the meaning of inclusion that currently informs IEFA. I want to consider inclusion in two ways. The first is *curricular inclusion*, which focuses on IEFA’s utilization of multicultural education as the means to include American Indian cultures and histories in the mainstream curriculum and public schools. The second considers the meaning of inclusion from a political perspective. This political meaning of inclusion focuses on IEFA as a multicultural policy and strategy that seeks the *structural and political inclusion* of Indigenous peoples into the decision-making process.

Curricular Inclusion

IEFA advocates for two strategies for including American Indian histories and cultures in the mainstream curriculum and public schools. The first strategy is *content integration*, i.e., designing of curriculum that is authentically inclusive of American Indian perspectives. The second strategy is *culturally responsive teaching*, i.e., utilizing the cultural background of students in instruction. I begin with a description of content integration.

James A. Banks defines content integration as “the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline.”³¹ Content integration challenges strategies that only seek to include minority voices as additional components to the existing curriculum, what is called the *additive model*. The additive model maintains the existing

³⁰ Carjuzaa *et al.*, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 192.

³¹ James A. Banks, “Multicultural Education: Dimensions and Paradigms,” in *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*, ed. James A. Banks (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), 15-16.

curriculum but does not significantly change it. Instead, it finds strategic places to insert ethnic and cultural perspectives. Some examples include an ‘American Indian Day’ or the ‘Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration’. In contrast to the additive model, content integration genuinely incorporates minority perspectives within the existing curriculum and places them on the same level as mainstream perspectives. Content integration departs from merely adding ethnic and cultural content to the curriculum in superficial or marginal ways. Instead, it includes them as legitimate lenses through which students can learn about specific subjects.

Phyllis Ngai and Karen Allen utilize Banks’ concept of content integration to design strategies for IEFA that help teachers achieve inclusion in their classrooms and curricula. In contrast to the additive model in curriculum design, which translates “into continuous marginalization of American Indian cultures and histories in the curriculum,”³² Ngai and Allen contend that teachers should “include selected tribal perspectives, along with other cultural perspectives if possible, when studying various topics, issues, concepts, and events throughout the school year.”³³ The authors offer the following example: Students would learn about Christopher Columbus from the traditional, mainstream perspective alongside Indigenous perspectives, representing both viewpoints as equally valid lenses within the curriculum. “This approach,” state the authors, “deepens students’ learning of subjects required by the curriculum and allows them to appreciate the wisdom of different worldviews, alternative solutions to problems, the power of synergy, and unity within diversity.”³⁴

Content integration does accomplish more than legitimize Indigenous perspectives in the mainstream curriculum. It fulfills an important aim of the *Seven Essential Understandings* to

³² Phyllis Ngai and Karen Allen. *A Process Guide for Realizing Indian Education For All: Lessons Learned From Lewis and Clark Elementary School*. (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2007), 13. This resource is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Ibid.

teach students how to value and respect cultural differences. Valuing and respecting cultural differences refers to the ways in which members in society benefit from being open to different cultural experiences, beliefs, and values. It expands perspectives, fosters tolerance, and instills acceptance among citizens towards different cultural groups. Michael Murphy's description is helpful:

Exposure to the beliefs, values and practices of other cultures not only expands and enriches our knowledge of the human condition, it offers us fresh perspectives from which to question and possibly revise our own established cultural practices and preconceptions...[cultural diversity] encourages us to step outside the confines of our own cultural structures, to see their limitations and their contingency, and to explore alternative ways of living and of giving meaning to our lives.³⁵

Valuing and respecting cultural differences is not merely an appreciation and celebration of cultural differences as sources of entertainment or aesthetics. It does the serious work, contends Murphy, of allowing us to see, in the encounter with different cultures, the “the strange and unfamiliar” aspects in our own cultures, so we can transform our cultures in new ways.³⁶

The content integration of American Indian culture and history into the mainstream curriculum resonates with Murphy's description of valuing and respecting cultural differences between citizens. Through an inclusive curriculum that teaches American Indian culture and history, all students can learn to value different cultural groups within Montana's borders and learn to respect different cultural groups with whom they may have little familiarity. One of IEFA's central aims, in fact, is to expose non-Native students to Indigenous cultures so they can learn to value the unique contributions of Indigenous peoples' histories and cultures. In so doing, non-Native students can learn to appreciate the social and cultural contexts in which Indigenous peoples live. Starnes states that being more inclusive of Indigenous peoples increases awareness among non-Native students and educators about Native ways of being. She

³⁵ Michael Murphy, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 71.

³⁶ Ibid.

writes: “Becoming more inclusive, more aware, and more prepared to live our lives well within the social, cultural and political arenas, then, means becoming less ‘stupid’ [about Indigenous cultures]. IEFA is not the only answer to life...but it is an important beginning.”³⁷

The research on IEFA has begun to demonstrate how including American Indian perspectives into the mainstream curriculum has helped promote respect for cultural difference among students. Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn’s study compares the ways in which teachers utilized various instructional methods to promote what the authors call *critical democracy preparation*.³⁸ The authors analyzed schools with IEFA programs that allowed students to reach “beyond the classroom to encounter the place of diversity where Natives reside and connected face-to-face with people of different backgrounds.”³⁹ Those classrooms that emphasized place-based interaction, where students learned within the tribal communities under the instruction of tribal elders and cultural experts, demonstrated greater empathy and knowledge towards Indigenous peoples and issues than those classrooms that emphasized more traditional pedagogical approaches. State Ngai and Koehn: “Instructional comparisons showed that combining place-based instruction with guided reflection on personal connections with American Indian people through ‘boundary-breaking’ approaches that aimed to bring about critical consciousness ignited the most impressive changes.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Starnes, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 188.

³⁸ The authors offer a definition of critical democracy. It is not simply the recognition of cultural differences, but the ability to perceive inequalities, question and unlearn assumptions, and accept social responsibility to effect change. Quoting Geneva Gay’s work on multicultural education: “Students must learn ‘to become change agents committed to promoting greater equality, justice, and power balances among ethnic groups’.” (Quoted in Phyllis Ngai and Peter Koehn, “Indigenous Education for Critical Democracy,” 250).

³⁹ Ngai and Koehn, “Indigenous Education for Critical Democracy,” 251.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 267.

IEFA advocates for *culturally responsive teaching* as the second multicultural education strategy to include American Indian history and culture in curricula and schools.⁴¹ Rejecting traditional teaching methods that seek to assimilate students into the dominant culture, culturally responsive teaching seeks to include the cultural experiences and perspectives of students in curriculum and instructional practices. Michael Vavrus defines culturally responsive teaching as an “educational reform that strives to increase the engagement and motivation of students of color who historically have been unsuccessful academically or socially alienated from their public schools.”⁴² Recognizing that traditional curricula and pedagogical methods have been largely ineffective for minority students, educators who practice culturally responsive teaching include the cultural backgrounds of students in the learning process. States Vavrus: “the purpose is to make learning more relevant and effective...to validate and affirm the cultural frames of reference of all students.”⁴³ Through culturally responsive teaching, teachers connect the home culture of their students more closely with the broader educational culture of schools.

Carjuzaa describes culturally responsive teaching in IEFA as a multicultural education strategy that “builds meaningful bridges between the home culture and school context...[and] values students’ cultural heritage and validates their life experience.”⁴⁴ For Carjuzaa, educators who embrace culturally responsive teaching must become culturally competent with respect to their students’ backgrounds in order to include cultural references in the curriculum. This call for cultural competency meets IEFA’s requirements that “all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students

⁴¹ The IEFA scholarship bases the idea of culturally responsive teaching on Geneva Gay’s research. See: Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2000).

⁴² Michael Vavrus, “Culturally Responsive Teaching,” in *Twenty-First Century Education: A Reference Handbook*, ed. Thomas L. Good (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publishing, 2008), 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁴ Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 47.

and parents.”⁴⁵ In order for teachers to instruct students in a culturally responsive manner and help Native students succeed academically, the law requires teachers to step outside of their comfort zones and incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their instruction. When white educators become culturally competent, writes Carjuzaa, they are better able to “uncover their own biases, become reflective practitioners, and create an inclusive, respectful classroom environment...with positive results for American Indian students.”⁴⁶

However, Carjuzaa observes that many white educators remain largely uninformed about American Indian histories and cultures. To become more informed about American Indian cultures and histories, Carjuzaa suggests that educators work collaboratively with local tribal communities in classroom instruction. Native educators and tribal representatives can then assist non-Native teachers in the instruction of specific aspects in the curriculum. Speaking about one example of professional development for teachers, Carjuzaa writes: “Inviting American Indian guest speakers to visit schools provided valuable learning for non-Indian educators and their students alike. It led them to acknowledge that there are multiple perspectives on all issues and topics...[that have] been ignored in school curriculum.”⁴⁷ On Carjuzaa’s account, Indigenous speakers help to minimize the distance between the cultural background of Native students and mainstream curriculum and instruction, ensuring that culturally responsive teaching is being achieved in public schools.

Carjuzaa contends that culturally responsive teaching does accomplish more than minimize the distance between the student’s culture and mainstream curriculum. It helps Native students feel a sense of belonging within their broader school culture. Through culturally

⁴⁵ Indian Education For All MCA 20-1-501 is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

⁴⁶ Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 47.

⁴⁷ Jioanna Carjuzaa, “The Positive Impact of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Montana’s Indian Education For All,” *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2012), 11.

responsive teaching, Native students are able to express their cultures in public education spaces that are welcoming and affirming. Describes Carjuzaa:

American Indian students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and all students, Indian and non-Indian students alike, have their cultural heritages valued and their life experiences validated on their educational journeys. Students are learning a comprehensive Montana history, appreciating American Indian perspectives and recognizing their contributions to core curricular areas, past and present.⁴⁸

Culturally responsive teaching reduces the alienation and isolation that Indigenous students feel within public schools, which had historically excluded their cultures and values in favor of dominant cultures and values. Such transformations in public schools send a powerful message to tribal communities that Indigenous ways of being are equally valued and represented in education. States one Native parent: “I think [IEFA]...will help our children understand who they are, take pride in their identity...When I was in school, we didn’t talk about being Indian. If we could, we kept it secret....[but with IEFA] they will see themselves in school.”⁴⁹

IEFA’s curricular inclusion strategies help to fulfill two important outcomes in American Indian education reform across Montana. First, curricular inclusion reduces negative stereotypes about Indigenous peoples within the mainstream curriculum and public schools. The scholarship recognizes that prior to the incorporation of the constitutional mandate and passing of IEFA American Indian histories and cultures, at best, occupied a marginal space within the curriculum. This lack of representation contributed to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in the curriculum and schools, impacting how non-Native students understood Indigenous experiences. Negative stereotypes even impacted the ways teachers understood Indigenous groups. Wendy Warren writes about her own experience as a white teacher and the impact of IEFA in her own understanding. “‘Native Americans,’” she writes, “are a part of ‘us.’”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 48.

I have just been blind to their presence. But I've finally learned enough to decide to take off the blinders."⁵⁰ IEFA ensures that both white students and teachers are able to develop new understandings about Indigenous communities and thus reduce these negative stereotypes. Through curricular inclusion strategies, American Indian cultures and histories are now authentically and accurately represented and appropriately taught within public schools.

The second outcome concerns achieving greater educational equity for Native students. Educational equity refers to the ways in which "teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse groups."⁵¹ When curriculum reflects authentic cultural content and teachers practice culturally responsive teaching, new opportunities emerge for Native students to explore their cultures in meaningful ways, in certain cases instructed by members of their own communities. These curricular inclusion strategies help to close the persistent achievement gap between white and Native students in public education. As Carjuzaa states: "American Indian inclusive content stands to reduce the cultural dissonance Indian students feel between home and school environments, easing their alienation and encouraging staying in as opposed to dropping out, and, in this way, affecting what has been a persistent achievement gap."⁵² Because of IEFA, educators expect to see higher retention and graduation rates in contexts with historically lower numbers.

Structural and Political Inclusion

Thus far, I have described IEFA as promoting the inclusion of American Indian history and culture into mainstream curricula and schools. When mainstream curriculum is more

⁵⁰ Wendy Warren, "One Teacher's Story: Creating a New Future of Living Up to Our Own History?," *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, 3 (2006), 201.

⁵¹ Banks, "Multicultural Education," 16.

⁵² Carjuzaa, "The Positive Impact of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy," 6.

inclusive, it can transform how Indigenous cultures and histories are authentically represented and taught. But IEFA's meaning of inclusion extends beyond curricular inclusions. According to the scholarship, the law also holds the potential to break down barriers between Native and non-Native groups, engendering civic unity within Montana's borders. As Carjuzaa *et al.* state, IEFA creates "a space for an inclusive 'we'," such that "educators effect social change by making curriculum more inclusive of all groups."⁵³ The scholarship contends that IEFA can effect social change by including Indigenous communities into the broader political and decision-making process. Essentially, what IEFA advocates for is the *structural and political inclusion* of Indigenous peoples, a multicultural policy and strategy that promotes minority rights and voices in the broader political context. To explain the idea of structural and political inclusion, it is important to provide some contextual background.

Banks explains that in an effort to build one national common culture modern democracies historically compelled minority groups to "forsake their original cultures and languages in order to become effective citizens of their nation-states."⁵⁴ This assimilationist ideology assumed that in order for individual citizens to be successful within society they had to adopt the dominant culture and language, which in turn required them to eschew their own cultures and languages. Underlying this assimilationist ideology was a political liberal framework of justice. As rational agents, individuals in political liberalism pursue their own particular vision of the good with limited interference from the state. In political liberalism, the state must remain neutral to questions of the good life to ensure fairness and equality among citizens. A basic assumption within political liberalism is that social justice primarily refers to

⁵³ Carjuzaa *et al.*, "Montana's Indian Education For All," 194.

⁵⁴ Banks, "Multicultural Education," 11.

individuals rather than to groups. In political liberalism, an individual's ethnic and linguistic identity becomes irrelevant for determining principles of social justice.

However, the liberal-assimilationist ideology fails to accommodate those minority groups whose racial, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics prevent them from fully participating in the dominant society. Regardless of the extent to which certain racial minority groups attempted to dissolve their cultural and linguistic differences, they continually faced discrimination within broader social, economic, and political structures. As Banks explains, "Although African Americans and the Indigenous groups in the United States...were expected to assimilate culturally, they were frequently denied the opportunity to attain a quality education, to vote, and to participate in the political process."⁵⁵ In short, these and other minority groups were structurally *excluded* from full participation in the nation-state.

To remedy structural exclusion, some minority groups collectively organized against political liberalism's assimilationist ideology. This entailed turning towards their cultures as sources of strength and empowerment. Rather than assimilating into the dominant society, these minority groups demanded "structural inclusion and the right to retain important aspects of their cultures, such as their languages, religions, and other important ethnic characteristics and symbols."⁵⁶ Structural inclusion thus rejects the assimilationist ideology by helping "individual members of ethnic groups to acquire a sense of community, moral authority, and meaning in life that highly modernized societies often leave unfulfilled."⁵⁷

IEFA challenges the assimilationist ideology pervasive within modern democracies by intentionally promoting the structural inclusion of Indigenous peoples. By recognizing the ways that Indigenous peoples in Montana have struggled for citizenship rights and cultural recognition

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

within the broader society, the law seeks to close the gap between the democratic ideals of American society—rights, equality, and respect—and the “societal realities and the existence of discrimination and racism.”⁵⁸ It accomplishes this by recognizing and preserving Indigenous culture in public schools rather than minimizing it. The law reads as a multicultural policy and strategy that seeks to intentionally promote the rights and voices of Indigenous peoples. As the law states: “It is the constitutionally declared policy of this state to recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and to be committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.”⁵⁹ IEFA supports the claim that social justice cannot be fully realized unless the state promotes the rights and voices of Indigenous groups within public education. Only then can the dominant society live up to its democratic ideals of equality and respect for Indigenous peoples across Montana State.

IEFA’s commitment to structural inclusion builds upon two ideas within multicultural political theory. First, IEFA challenges political liberalism’s emphasis on state neutrality by promoting Indigenous rights. Minority groups within modern democracies have been part of a socializing process constructed by the nation-state, what Will Kymlicka refers to as a *societal culture*. Kymlicka states that societal culture is organized around a common national language for the purposes of nation-building and social cohesion, such that minority groups are expected to participate in the broader societal culture. Rather than being neutral, Kymlicka contends that the state “has deliberately created such a societal culture, and promoted the integration of its citizens into it.”⁶⁰ As a result minority groups lack access to their own societal culture, which in turn has affected their ability to be truly autonomous agents capable of choosing their life plans.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Indian Education For All MCA 20-1-501.

⁶⁰ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.

For individuals to be autonomous, the minority groups “to which they belong [should] be granted collective rights.”⁶¹ Kymlicka thus extends political liberalism beyond the scope of individual rights to the recognition that the *state* should promote the rights of cultural groups so that individuals can pursue their own life plans.

IEFA illuminates the fact that the educational system has not been neutral in its education of Native students, but instead has utilized education as an assimilation strategy to bring Indigenous peoples into dominant cultures. The state has compelled Native students to learn and adopt dominant perspectives within public education. It compels them to speak the dominant language and adopt mainstream values and cultures. Thus, IEFA’s promotion of Indigenous cultures within public schools and the practice of culturally responsive teaching ensure that Native students have access to learning about their cultures and histories in public education. This means that Native students are in a better position to make autonomous decisions concerning their life choices. As Carjuzaa contends, it is through IEFA’s multicultural education strategies that American Indians students can “see themselves reflected and valued within that culture...[and feel] included in our national identity.”⁶² To use Kymlicka’s words, IEFA ensures that Native students have access to their societal culture, such that they can make more autonomous decisions about their life plans.

Second, the structural inclusion of Indigenous peoples ensures that tribal communities are brought into the political decision-making process over curricular matters. This resonates with the aim in multicultural political theory to include minority *voices* in the broader political process. Murphy defines voice as “[the inclusion of] minorities in key decision-making

⁶¹ Dennis Weinstock, “Citizenship and Pluralism,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Social and Political Philosophy*, ed. R. Simon. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 246.

⁶² Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 53.

processes that have a direct or indirect impact on their status and interests.”⁶³ Including minority voices recognizes that a “representative from the [minority] group is simply more likely to be acquainted with the group’s priorities, but also more motivated to promote those priorities than would a representative outside the group.”⁶⁴ Building on the deliberative approach of Iris Marion Young, Murphy argues that granting political voice to historically excluded minority groups “is consistent with the principle of democratic consent: the idea that all citizens should have an effective voice in debating and determining policies that have an impact on their interests and well-being.”⁶⁵ For Young, including minority voices fulfills a principle of justice. In order for a political norm to be just “everyone who follows it must in principle have an effective voice in its consideration and be able to agree to it without coercion.”⁶⁶

IEFA’s emphasis on structural and political inclusion seeks to include the voices of both white educators and Indigenous communities. Both groups share their perspectives in the design and instruction of an inclusive curriculum for all Montana students. As Jioanna Carjuzaa *et al.* state: “Successful relationships between public schools and tribes depend on individuals’ willingness to share information and make sometimes uncomfortable forays into unfamiliar territory.”⁶⁷ The inclusion of tribal voices accomplishes two outcomes: First, it equalizes white and Native representation regarding educational policy and practice, such that both receive equal representation in the decision-making process over curricular matters. Second, it establishes the tone throughout the entire state that both tribal communities and mainstream education can work

⁶³ Murphy observes that *voice* manifests in several ways. It includes “measures to increase the presence of ethnic minorities in national and regional legislatures; guaranteed representation for indigenous peoples on land and resource co-management boards; or a process of consulting with racial minority leaders on the content of proposed government anti-discrimination legislation.” See: Michael Murphy, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 31.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 34.

⁶⁷ Carjuzaa *et al.*, “Montana’s Indian Education for All,” 196.

together for the public good. Structural and political inclusion ensures that Indigenous voices are taken-seriously as viable contributors in the design and implementation of an inclusive curriculum that has the potential to affect all Montanan students.

In summary, this section has analyzed the way the scholarship characterizes IEFA as a multicultural education strategy that seeks to include Indigenous peoples in the mainstream curriculum and political process. At the center of IEFA is a concept of inclusion, which I have considered in two ways. *Curricular inclusion* seeks to include American Indian histories and cultures in the mainstream curriculum and school culture; *structural and political inclusion* seeks to include Indigenous peoples in the decision-making process. IEFA's meaning of inclusion leads to a new political relationship between tribal communities and public education. A new relationship is realized when all students learn to value and respect American Indian culture and history in public schools, when the minority rights of Indigenous peoples are promoted in the broader social and political discourse, and when Indigenous voices are taken seriously on matters that affect and shape public life for all Montanan students.

A Philosophical Problem

The requirement of IEFA to include tribal communities in the decision-making process is central to its success. As we have seen, IEFA requires mainstream educators to partner with Native groups in the design and implementation of a curriculum that is inclusive of American Indian history and culture. This requirement is stated in the second component of the law:

[Every] educational agency and all educational personnel will *work cooperatively* [emphasis added] with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include information specific to the

cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.⁶⁸

The reasoning behind this requirement seems clear. Mainstream curriculum that authentically represents American Indian history and culture depends on the inclusion of tribal perspectives and expertise in developing that curriculum. As the “best interpreters of their own histories and cultures,” tribal communities provide an insider’s perspective on their own cultures to which white educators have limited access and minimal familiarity.⁶⁹

Including tribal communities in the decision-making process on curricular matters conjures up the image that persons or groups come together to collaborate in order to achieve a shared goal. Doing so requires each person or group to bring an important perspective or skill into the collaboration. In the context of IEFA, collaboration means that both white and Native groups—school personnel, university programs, tribal colleges, and Native educators—work together on the shared goal of developing and implementing an inclusive curriculum. Both groups bring their insights, experiences, and skills to meet this shared goal for the good of all Montanan students. White educators, for example, bring their expertise in classroom instruction and curriculum design required in public schools, while Native educators bring their expertise in Indigenous culture and heritage to these schools. This meaning of collaboration sends a powerful message about American Indian education reform. It says that white and Native groups have become partners in implementing IEFA’s multicultural education strategies. Because of IEFA, both white and Native groups stand within a reciprocal relationship, possessing equal status and influence in the design and implementation of an inclusive curriculum.

⁶⁸ The Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>.

⁶⁹ Mike Magone and Tammy Elser, “Indian Education for All: A Change of Heart and Mind,” *International Journal of Educational Management* 23, 4 (2009), 321.

Collaborations between white and Native groups became immediately apparent upon IEFA's passing. In order to help teachers meet the requirement to instruct students in a culturally responsive manner, we saw how Montana's Office of Public Instruction "worked collaboratively with tribal representatives to develop a set of guidelines to support IEFA's implementation,"⁷⁰ referred to as the *Seven Essential Understandings*. In other examples, Lynn Kelting-Gibson describes her personal experience in developing an on-line course for teacher preparation programs. Given her unfamiliarity as a white educator with developing curriculum emphasizing American Indian culture and history, she recognized that working collaboratively with Native educators "every step of the way would be crucial."⁷¹ Linwood Tall Bull, leader for the Dog Soldiers, a tribal group responsible for preserving and teaching Native cultures and traditions, recognized the importance of working with Montana's schools so "non-Indian and Indian children to learn to live together well."⁷² These examples demonstrate how both the spirit and practice of collaboration among white and Native groups have become acceptable strategies to ensure IEFA's successful implementation across Montana.

The meaning of collaboration in IEFA centers on the inclusion of tribal communities in curricular design and implementation. But collaboration suggests something more basic. Specifically, collaboration means that Native and white groups stand within a *reciprocal* relationship, partnering on an inclusive curriculum. It means that *conversations* emerge between them about an inclusive curriculum. Collaboration is only possible when Native and white groups come together to communicate their ideas about how an inclusive curriculum should be designed and implemented. IEFA's requirement for collaboration entails that Native and white

⁷⁰ Starnes, "Indian Education For All," 187.

⁷¹ Lynn Kelting-Gibson, "Preparing Educators to Meet the Challenge of Indian Education for All," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 205.

⁷² Linwood Tall Bull, "Indian Education For All: Through Our Own Eyes," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 192.

educators talk to and deliberate with each other. It requires these groups to come together and share ideas, propose arguments, resolve disagreements, and make decisions over curricular matters. Thus, the requirement in IEFA to include Montana's tribal communities in curricular design and implementation necessarily means that both white and Native educators and groups engage in conversation. *To be in collaboration in IEFA, essentially, is to be in conversation with different individuals and groups.*

However, scholars recognize that conversations between whites and Natives present certain challenges. Starnes describes this situation well: "IEFA's success relies on the collaboration between people who have not worked together in the past, who do not know one another well, and who come from widely different cultures."⁷³ Starnes creates the image that these groups stand at a distance from each other socially and culturally *prior* to their conversations. Tribal communities embody cultures particular to Indigenous experience, whereas white educators and school personnel embody cultures particular to mainstream American society. For Starnes, successful collaborations depend on persons and groups engaging in conversation with others who do not share the same experiences, cultures, traditions, and epistemologies. On Starnes' account, these groups must cross historically situated and politically maintained places to engage in conversation—reservation systems, public schools, tribal colleges, and state agencies. In these conversations, writes Starnes, "there will be serious disagreements, hurt feelings, and moments of frustration."⁷⁴

Despite these difficult conversations, the second component of IEFA seeks to close the distance between whites and Natives by bringing groups together in collaboration. Through collaboration, IEFA entails an important expectation. By being more inclusive of tribal

⁷³ Starnes, "Montana's Indian Education," 192.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

communities in the decision-making process over curriculum matters, the law expects both white and Native groups to travel between historically situated and political maintained places. It expects these groups to traverse the boundaries that historically and currently separate them. Scholars agree with this expectation. These groups can and will be inclusive of each other, engaging in conversations over curricular matters, regardless of their cultural differences, past experiences, or historical relationships. Starnes describes this expectation well: “Our commitment must be to say uncomfortable things, to explore new ways of thinking and doing, and to rise above the things that separate us.”⁷⁵ Kelting-Gibson writes: “To meet the high standards for accuracy and inclusion, it is essential for our teacher preparation programs to collaborate with American Indian people...I’m confident that we can work together.”⁷⁶ Richard Littlebear comments from the tribal perspective: “Native American people have to step forward and help implement this [IEFA] academically revolutionary initiative so that we can show mainstream people that we can take advantage of these kinds of wonderful opportunities.”⁷⁷

The expectation of white and Native groups to overcome their cultural differences by being more inclusive is reasonable. We should expect these groups to transcend their cultural differences and engage in conversations for the good of all students. However, emphasizing the structural and political inclusion of tribal communities fails to consider the complexity surrounding the conversation between white and Native groups. IEFA’s requirement for collaboration presupposes three basic assumptions about conversation. First, IEFA assumes that these groups *stand as equals* in the conversation about an inclusive curriculum. Second, it assumes that these groups *can* have conversations that lead to understanding on an inclusive

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kelting-Gibson, “Preparing Educators,” 207.

⁷⁷ Everall Fox, “Indian Education For All: A Tribal College Perspective,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, 3 (2006), 212.

curriculum. Third, it assumes that white and Native groups are *willing* to work collaboratively on an inclusive curriculum. While the structural and political inclusion of tribal peoples in conversation represents an important shift in American Indian education reform, I challenge these assumptions by questioning the equality between whites and Natives and whether these groups are able and willing to enter into conversation with each other.

In response to the first assumption, I question whether white and Native groups in fact *stand as equals*. To stand as equals in a conversation means that both white and Native groups possess equal voice in the decision-making process. It means that the perspectives of both groups are valued and seen as critical contributors in policy design and implementation. As we have seen, this assumption resonates with deliberative democracy.⁷⁸ Deliberative democracy advocates for a collaborative decision-making model, wherein both majority and minority groups have equal voice in political structures and processes. Including minority voices within the political decision-making process “equalizes the capacity for self-determination” between groups and ensures that minority voices play a role in constructing the “laws, policies and programs that govern and shape their lives.”⁷⁹ Collaborations have symbolic power over the broader society as a whole, signaling “to the majority that minority representatives are fellow citizens with an equal right and capacity in deliberations over the public good.”⁸⁰ IEFA assumes that the moment white and Native educators engage in conversation both groups will stand as equals in the design and implementation over curricular matters. It assumes that the conversation between whites and Natives takes place on an equal playing field, where Indigenous groups count as much as whites in the political and educational decision-making process.

⁷⁸ I reference deliberative democracy on page 14 of this chapter.

⁷⁹ Murphy, *Multiculturalism*, 73.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Yet conversation in IEFA entails challenges with respect to structural and political inclusion. Challenges arise precisely because inequality exists between mainstream and Native cultures within public schools. Inequality between white and Native groups in Montana is not new—it has existed for years. Montana’s public schools reflect what Ellen Swaney describes as a “culture of the American school system.”⁸¹ This American school system embodies and promotes a mainstream dominant culture that is built on Euro-American values, beliefs, and epistemologies. The culture of the American school system creates the context in which schools privilege mainstream, dominant cultures and values at the expense of Native cultures and values. “Our [Native] views,” writes Swaney, “tend to be on the opposite end of the spectrum from the values of mainstream American culture, and unfamiliarity sometimes breeds contempt.”⁸²

The contempt Swaney refers to is the tendency in public schools to interpret Native cultures as deficient. Even with the passing of IEFA, Swaney worries that Native students will enter classrooms with these cultural inequalities in place. Despite these inequalities, Native students are expected to assimilate into the mainstream culture to succeed academically. Writes Swaney: “We...need to recognize that, as long as we teach within that mainstream cultural system, we may, in turn, be damaging our Indian students.”⁸³

In response to the second assumption, I question whether white and Native groups *can* converse with each other. Conversation between whites and Natives presupposes that all conversers have the competencies to engage different cultural groups effectively. Competent conversers, for example, know to some extent the subtle nuances and expectations in different communication styles, such as making eye-contact or standing at an appropriate distance when communicating with persons from different cultures. According to Denise Solomon and Jennifer

⁸¹ Ellen Swaney, “The Challenge of IEFA,” *Phi Delta Kappan* vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 191.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Theiss, intercultural communication “occurs when interaction is guided by the participants’ membership in different social groups” and when we “adjust [our] messages based on a partner’s gender, age...and political views.”⁸⁴ Intercultural communication places culture at the center of the conversation, where conversers have sufficient knowledge of each other’s cultural backgrounds and behaviors so they can engage another perspective appropriately.⁸⁵ The conversation in IEFA assumes that both white and Native educators know each other’s cultures sufficiently, such that they can navigate the subtle nuances and expectations in one another’s culture to facilitate successful conversations. It assumes a degree of cultural familiarity and competency for conversation to lift off the ground.

Evidence within the IEFA scholarship, however, suggests that white educators may not have enough familiarity with tribal communities to communicate effectively. Mike Magone and Tammy Elser describe how teachers need to become more culturally sensitive when speaking with tribal elders. When educators expect tribal elders to share their knowledge and experiences within the education system, the conversation between them could “unearth painful memories and emotions.”⁸⁶ The authors recommend that white educators receive “assistance in understanding the sensitivity of the information” to develop the necessary skills to recognize their own abilities (or inabilities) for navigating delicate cultural nuances and behaviors.⁸⁷

In another example, Carjuzaa documents the need for white educators to become more familiar with American Indian history and culture in order to teach IEFA’s curriculum. Writes

⁸⁴ Denise Solomon and Jennifer Theiss, *Interpersonal Communication: Putting Theory into Practice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 55.

⁸⁵ Solomon and Theiss describe the concept of adjustment further: “intercultural communication occurs when you adjust your word choice and nonverbal behaviors because you are talking to a person who doesn’t share the same meaning for words and actions.” Being able to adjust one’s word choice and nonverbal behaviors implies a skill set, an ability to speak with another person from a different culture in ways they can understand; and it also implies knowledge of the other culture.

⁸⁶ Magones and Elser, “Indian Education For All,” 321.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Carjuzaa: “We need to heighten our awareness, avoid assumptions, ask questions, and model cultural sensitivity.”⁸⁸ For Carjuzaa, IEFA needs to require teacher education programs to extend beyond lesson plan development. These programs need to improve the cultural competencies of teacher candidates, most of whom identify as white, in order to become effective communicators with Native students and communities. Successful conversation in IEFA thus requires teacher candidates to increase their knowledge and competencies about the cultural practices, behaviors, and values of tribal communities prior to entering the classroom.

In response to the third assumption, I question whether white and Native groups are *willing* to come together in conversation at all. Being willing to come together in conversation means that conversers are willing to put aside their differences, including animosities, uncertainties, and anxieties, for the sake of conversation. To be willing to come together for the sake of conversation means that white and Native groups engage each other with openness and receptivity to what the other says. This suggests that conversers are willing to break down barriers and engage in deep relationships for new understandings to emerge. Utilizing Martin Buber’s meaning of dialogue, Sara Shady and Marion Larson state that a genuine dialogue between persons requires a meeting between an I and Thou. Each person comes to the other as a ‘receptive beholder,’ approaching others with an attitude of ‘mutuality, openness, [and] listening...[a] ‘sense of wonder’ and ‘astonishment’.”⁸⁹ In these encounters, state the authors, “one must be willing to let the other change one’s perspective rather than seeking to oppose one’s own views.”⁹⁰ IEFA assumes that white and Native educators and groups are willing to minimize their differences, animosities, and uncertainties and strive to be open and receptive to

⁸⁸ Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All,” 54.

⁸⁹ Sara Shady and Marion Larson, “Tolerance, Empathy, or Inclusion? Insights of Martin Buber.” *Educational Theory* vol. 60, no. 1 (2010), 88.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

the other for the sake of conversation. It expects both groups to receive the other and be open to their perspectives, regardless of past experiences or cultural differences.

However, several examples within the IEFA scholarship show that Native groups may in fact be unwilling to put their differences, uncertainties, and anxieties aside for the sake of conversation. Magone and Elser caution mainstream educators to respect the hesitancy that many tribal communities may have towards outsiders. Write the authors:

A consequence of generations of suppression of tribal heritage, cultures and languages through boarding schools and overall dominance by mainstream society, tribal knowledge has been carefully protected, to the degree that it has not always been shared, even with American Indian youth.⁹¹

With the passing of IEFA, tribal communities are expected to share their cultures and traditions with white educators. But these communities may be hesitant to do so in light of the history of American Indian education. As Carjuzaa *et al.* state: “the seemingly sudden expectation of cooperation between tribes and non-tribal educators overlooked centuries of public schooling that excluded, marginalized, and at times abused American Indian students.”⁹²

There may be other situations in which tribal communities may not want outsiders to have access to their cultures. Native educator Everall Fox explains this situation well: “How much each tribal group is willing to share is a question that remains to be answered...[given that] issues of religion and spirituality may be considered too sacred to be shared publicly.”⁹³ In this example, the caution that tribal communities show in sharing their cultures has to do with what is considered appropriate or not appropriate to share with outsiders. Certain Indigenous practices and beliefs may be considered too sacred.

⁹¹ Magone and Elser, “Indian Education for All,” 321.

⁹² Carjuzaa *et al.*, “Montana’s Indian Education for All,” 194.

⁹³ Everall Fox, “Indian Education For All: A Tribal College Perspective,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, 3 (2006), 212.

These three assumptions presumed by IEFA suggest that conversations between white and Native groups are not as simple as including tribal communities in the decision-making process over curricular matters. My challenge to these assumptions indicates that a climate of distrust exists between whites and Natives. As the IEFA scholarship indicates, some scholars point to the structural inequality between white and Native cultures within public schools,⁹⁴ the low cultural competency skills among white educators to engage tribal communities effectively,⁹⁵ and the hesitancy among tribal groups to share their cultures with outsiders.⁹⁶ This evidence suggests that Native groups can neither trust educational institutions that perpetuate inequality within classrooms and schools, nor can they trust white educators to have the necessary cultural competency skills to engage in productive conversations. Native groups also cannot trust outsiders to adequately teach their cultures and traditions. Thus, to address the problem of distrust, I contend that conversers in IEFA must address the issues of inequality in public schools and ask whether white and Native groups can and will engage each other. In short, whites and Natives must address the issue of distrust.

Yet IEFA's emphasis on inclusion contends that the more mainstream educators include American Indian cultures and voices into the mainstream curriculum and political process the more Native students can achieve educational equity and lead white and Native groups to a more just society. On this account, inclusion becomes the solution to remedy the problems these assumptions raise about distrust between white and Native groups.

However, my argument has demonstrated that we need to view IEFA as an opportunity to engage mainstream educators and Native peoples in a conversation about the negative

⁹⁴ See: Ellen Swaney. "The Challenge of IEFA," *Phi Delta Kappan* vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 190-191.

⁹⁵ See: Jioanna Carjuzaa, "Montana's Indian Education For All: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Embrace Culturally Responsive Teaching," in *Innovative Voices in Education: Engaging Diverse Communities*, ed. Eileen Gale Kugler (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 43-63.

⁹⁶ See: Mike Magone and Tammy Elser, "Indian Education for All: A Change of Heart and Mind," *International Journal of Educational Management* 23, 4 (2009), 314-325.

consequences of American Indian education “reform” in the service of public education. Because the public education system is built on Euro-American perspectives and values, its primary purpose has been and continues to be the education of American Indians for mainstream citizenship. Although IEFA’s *Seven Essential Understandings* challenge the dominant cultural system of American schools by correcting misunderstandings about Montana’s tribal communities, I remain suspicious of the claim that inclusion can sufficiently achieve educational equity of Native students and lead whites and Natives to greater civic unity.

This dissertation proposes that we center American Indian education reform on *decolonization* in order to realize educational equity and social justice. I stated in Chapter One that I intend to propose a meaning of decolonization in Chapter Four. Here I only want to introduce the claim that decolonization can transform the dominant cultural system of American schools. It does so by placing Indigenous cultures, values, and epistemologies at the center of the educational system for Native students. IEFA provides an opportunity to realize these decolonizing strategies. But its sole emphasis on inclusion prevents it from fully realizing these decolonizing aims. Prior to seeking inclusion, mainstream educators should partner with tribal communities to decolonize public education. Decolonization engenders an educational system that is by and for Indigenous peoples. This requires a turn towards history.

The turn towards history is important for two reasons. First, turning towards history foregrounds the significance of colonization in US-Indigenous relations and shows what has been central to the political struggles of Indigenous peoples. As this chapter has shown, the IEFA scholarship recognizes the history of colonization in the *Seven Essential Understandings*. But it neither offers an adequate account of colonization nor understands its significance on the current conversation of IEFA. The IEFA scholarship minimizes the significance of colonization

in white and Native relations. A turn towards history is important because white and Native groups will not be able to propose decolonizing strategies for IEFA unless they have a prior understanding of colonization and its impact on tribal communities.

Second, turning towards history allows white and Native groups to examine why trust historically has not existed between them. Earlier in this chapter I claimed that if trust does not already exist between white and Native groups then it cannot be promoted without addressing the reasons why it does not exist. I identified this as a philosophical problem. The problem is that IEFA brings white and Native groups together in conversation without directly and explicitly addressing why trust does not exist between them. Turning towards history allows these groups to directly and explicitly address the factors and causes that have engendered distrust. This turn towards history becomes significant for IEFA stakeholders, who seek to build partnerships between education and tribal communities. It suggests that a turn towards history becomes the means by which these groups can build the necessary trust between them. In short, to build trust these groups must understand historically why trust does not exist.

To summarize, the requirement of IEFA for white educators to work cooperatively with tribal communities necessarily brings these groups into a conversation about curriculum matters. As I have shown, the conversation between these groups is more complicated than simply including tribal communities in the curriculum and decision-making process. Its complication lies in the fact that IEFA assumes equality between white and Native conversers and their ability and willingness to engage in conversation. The complication from these assumptions surfaces a philosophical problem. For conversations between white and Native groups to emerge, I have argued that conversers must deal directly with historical inequality and question whether these groups are able and willing to engage each other. In short, conversers must address the reasons

why trust does not exist between white and Native groups. My argument establishes the claim that IEFA stakeholders need to turn towards history for the conversation to matter. This means that white and Native educators need to analyze IEFA from a historical perspective to understand how it is already part of an ongoing conversation in American Indian education reform.

Concluding Remarks

Some Indigenous scholars agree with the scholarship that IEFA leads the way in addressing longstanding educational issues facing Native students and tribal communities across Montana State. Indigenous scholars Donna Deyhle and Karen Comeau state that the law offers a “promising practice...[that] should provide greater understanding about the state’s tribal citizens to all of its citizens, and should serve as a model for other states.”⁹⁷ For these scholars, IEFA holds promise for American Indian education reform by being more inclusive of Indigenous cultures and histories in public education. By establishing a new and bold conversation between mainstream educators and tribal communities, IEFA shows how white and Native educators and groups can enter dialogue on the ways in which American Indian cultures and histories should be included within public education. In short, it shows how reform in American Indian education might be possible.

As much as IEFA moves the conversation forward in American Indian education reform, I contend that we need to engage in a critical analysis over what the conversation between white and Native groups and educators should actually entail. I intend to demonstrate throughout the remainder of the dissertation that IEFA is more complex than the IEFA scholarship suggests. It is not my intention to advise white and Native educators on how to engage in conversation.

⁹⁷ Donna Deyhle and Karen Gayton Comeau, “Connecting the Circle in American Indian Education,” in *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*, ed. James A Banks (Hoboken, NJ: Routledge, 2009), 271.

Rather, my intention is to provide some insights into understanding the assumptions about conversation that inform IEFA and the implications that follow from them. Doing so helps to make the conversation about American Indian education reform matter.

CHAPTER THREE

Framing the Conversation of American Indian Education Reform

Introduction

Indian Education For All has helped push the conversation forward in the state of Montana in significant ways. In Chapter Two, we saw that mainstream curriculum includes American Indian history and culture; teachers instruct Native students in a culturally responsive manner; and white educators collaborate with tribal communities and tribal colleges over curricular matters. These are innovative reform strategies in American Indian education and should not be minimized. However, from a historical perspective IEFA is not a new conversation at all. Rather, it is part of an ongoing conversation about American Indian education reform that has been underway since the late nineteenth century. In this chapter, I want to frame the conversation of American Indian education reform in Montana. This analysis helps us examine the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples and the impact of this relationship on the conversation currently underway in IEFA.

This chapter raises the following question: *How do we account for the fact that a conversation about American Indian education reform has historically been underway between Indigenous peoples and the federal government but has failed to realize any lasting solutions?* I consider this question by examining the history of US-Indigenous relations. Since the late nineteenth century federal Indian policy has been caught up in a cycle of reform strategies to address the so-called Indian problem. One federal Indian policy era's solution is another federal Indian policy era's problem and is seen as improving on the previous era's "failed" reforms. But I argue that the history of US-Indigenous relations actually reflects and perpetuates a deep

insidious agenda to define and control Indigenous peoples, even in federal Indian policy eras that seem to genuinely favor Native communities. This deep insidious agenda, I argue, entails a broader pattern at work in US-Indigenous relations. In the background of each federal Indian policy lies a set of negative ideological assumptions about Indigenous peoples. These negative ideological assumptions are part of a colonizing agenda that has influenced how reformers enacted educational policies and practices. Thus, the history of US-Indigenous relations is not neutral. Insofar as scholars characterize IEFA as a multicultural education strategy centered on inclusion, they fail to recognize how the law remains caught up in a colonizing agenda. IEFA's curricular proposals and policy reforms must be understood against the background of colonization that characterizes US-Indigenous relations.

I propose three interpretations to describe US-Indigenous relations. The first interpretation offers a mainstream account of three federal Indian policy eras since the late nineteenth century—the *Allotment and Assimilation* era, the *Indian New Deal* era, and *Self-Determination* era. I describe how the mainstream account is a cycle of problem and solution and sees that federal Indian policy has progressed in its reforms towards Indigenous peoples. The second interpretation challenges the mainstream account by offering a colonizing lens to interpret US-Indigenous relations. Utilizing the safety zone theory in recent Indigenous education scholarship, I articulate a theory of colonization to explain how the federal government has intentionally and coherently sought to control tribal sovereignty to define Indigenous identity. But missing from this second interpretation is what I call the *Indigenous voice of survivance*. Using Gerald Vizenor's concept of *survivance*, I offer a third interpretation to illuminate how Indigenous peoples have understood the meaning of Native identity and tribal

sovereignty in light of colonization. I show that survivance stands in opposition to and isolation from whites by promoting the right of Indigenous peoples to exist as sovereigns.

A Mainstream Account of US-Indigenous Relations

The *Allotment and Assimilation* era (1880's – 1920's) ushered in important reforms for Native peoples. Many Indigenous peoples since the early nineteenth century had been relocated onto reservations or Indian territories, in some cases far away from their ancestral homelands. Reservations were understood to be the principal sites where Native peoples would become civilized into mainstream society. The reservation system fell under the auspices of the Office of Indian Affairs, placing the administration of reservations in the hands of federal superintendents who oversaw “the necessities of life, such as food and shelter...the allocation of land use rights and the organization of agriculture.”¹ But reformers questioned whether reservations could effectively help Native peoples adopt mainstream American values. Whereas reservations once were regarded as the most effective sites for assimilation, reformers believed that reservations posed “the most serious hindrances to the advancement of the Indian toward civilization.”²

The Dawes Act of 1887, also known as the General Allotment Act, became the most influential legislation during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era. Reformers believed that the concept of property ownership would help bring Native peoples into the fold of civilization. Dawes sought to abolish reservations by allotting communally held lands into privately owned individual parcels. These parcels “were to be held in trust (protected from being taxed or sold) by the federal government for a brief period of time, after which they were to be freely owned by

¹ Carol Goldberg-Ambrose, “Law and Legislation,” in *Reference Library of Native North America Volume II* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1997), 452.

² Ibid.

the individual Indian.”³ The law entailed several components. It authorized “the President to assign allotments of 160 acres to heads of families”; it required “Indians to select their own lands, but if they failed to do so, agents would make the selection for them”; it granted “all allottees and all Indians who abandoned their tribal ways and become ‘civilized’ ...[to attain] citizenship”; and it allowed “‘surplus’ reservation lands [to be] sold” to non-Natives.⁴ Once given private property, reformers believed that Indigenous peoples would or want to become farmers, even though much of the land was considered unsuitable for farming.⁵ Through the Dawes Act, the *Allotment and Assimilation* era diminished tribal sovereignty in order to assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream American values and culture.

The *Indian New Deal* era (1930’s – 1940’s) charted a new direction in federal Indian policy by promoting the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 – 1945, instituted the *Indian New Deal* in an attempt to preserve Native cultures and maintain Indian rights. Whereas reformers during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era regarded private property as the pathway towards civilization, reformers in this era recognized the need to promote Native cultures to secure their survival. Reformers in this era saw injustices resulting from the Dawes Act. They embraced the belief that the federal government should preserve Native cultures *rather than* assimilate them into American culture.

The Meriam Report of 1928 became an important document that inspired *Indian New Deal* reforms. Considered a “stinging reproach to [an] exploiting government,” the report criticized the ineffectiveness of the government’s assimilationist mission of the *Allotment and*

³ Ibid., 253.

⁴ Ibid., 341.

⁵ An estimated 86 million acres (sixty percent of the Indian reservation land base) were lost to surplus lands being sold to non-Indians over a forty year period.

Assimilation era, particularly the loss of Indian lands resulting from the Dawes Act and the forced policy to make American Indians farmers and landowners.⁶ The report states:

The work of the government directed toward the education and advancement of the Indian himself, as distinguished from the control and conservation of his property, is largely ineffective...[the government] assumed that some magic in individual ownership of property would in itself prove an educational civilizing factor, but unfortunately this policy has for the most part operated in the opposite direction.⁷

Increased poverty within tribal communities, low educational attainment among students, and underfunding in health and social services to families—these were regarded as the ‘opposite direction’ reformers wanted Indigenous peoples to take. Inspired by the report, reformers changed their thinking during the *Indian New Deal* to more progressive reforms about American Indians and enacted new legislation under the guiding principles of democracy.

The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 became the centerpiece legislation during the *Indian New Deal* era. Aiming “at both the economic and the spiritual rehabilitation of the Indian race,”⁸ the IRA empowered tribal communities “to make the important decisions regarding their affairs.”⁹ Specifically, the IRA granted tribes the right to establish local government and corporations, giving them greater responsibility over their own political and economic decisions. These measures effectively terminated the Dawes Act. More importantly, the IRA authorized tribes to exercise more sovereignty over their own economic and educational affairs, but only insofar as “they would organize themselves under constitutions modeled after

⁶ Margaret Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 16.

⁷ Lewis Meriam, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928) 7.

⁸ Colin Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2nd edition (Boston: St. Martin/Bedford Press, 2004), 400.

⁹ Kevin Gover, “Federal Indian Policy in the Twenty-First Century,” in *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, eds. George Horse Capture, Duane Champagne, and Chandler Jackson (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 190.

the U.S. Constitution.”¹⁰ Collier believed that the IRA would bring tribal communities and the federal government into a closer relationship. Writes Collier: “Considering the long history of broken treaties, pledges, and promises, the fact that 172 tribes...accepted the word of the Government that the fundamental reorganization of their lives would not harm them is evidence of a new, more satisfactory relationship.”¹¹ Through the IRA, the *Indian New Deal* era challenged the reforms of the *Allotment and Assimilation* era. It sought to improve the economic, political, and education conditions of Indigenous peoples by promoting rather than diminishing tribal sovereignty.

The *Self-Determination* era (1960’s – 1980’s) witnessed a number of key legislations that supported the sovereign status of tribal peoples. Like reformers during the *Indian New Deal* era, reformers during this era believed that tribal communities were capable of governing their own affairs apart from the federal government’s interference. President Nixon’s special message to Congress on Indian Affairs captures the government’s attitude:

It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. Both as a matter of justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past.¹²

American Indian activism would help propel landmark legislation during the 1960’s and 1970’s that influenced the Nixon Administration to enact self-determination legislation. The *Self-Determination* era sought to include American Indians into the broader discourse concerning civil rights alongside other minority groups. Write Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford Lytle: “With

¹⁰ Goldberg-Ambrose, “Law and Legislation,” 454.

¹¹ Ibid., 431. Among the 172 tribes who accepted the IRA, 135 drafted constitutions to participate in Collier’s democratization project. To Collier’s disappointment, 78 tribes rejected the legislation outright because they believed it minimized tribal sovereignty.

¹² Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 254.

the passage of more socially orientated legislation, Indians became an integral part of the expanding human concern of the New Frontier and Great Society programs.”¹³

The Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA) of 1968 came at a time when Native peoples began to reassert their status as sovereign peoples. ICRA attempted to hold together the two concepts of tribal sovereignty and individual rights. On the one hand, the law attempted to maintain the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and tribes by prohibiting “states from assuming jurisdiction over Indian Country...without first securing tribal consent.”¹⁴ The law also promoted tribal sovereignty by denying certain protections of individual rights that were outlined in the U.S. Constitution. For example, ICRA ensured that tribal governments were “not subject to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment...[and] do not have to provide a trial by jury in civil cases or provide grand jury indictments in criminal cases.”¹⁵ Congress determined that these protections of individual rights posed “potential threat to political stability within tribal governments.”¹⁶ ICRA excluded these protections of individual Indian rights in the interest of promoting tribal sovereignty.

On the other hand, the law sought to secure the rights of individual American Indians that in some cases could trump tribal law and complicate the tribe’s legal system. States ICRA: “Such code shall include provisions which will...assure that any individual being tried for an offense by a court of Indian offenses shall have the same rights, privileges, and immunities under the United States Constitution.”¹⁷ By elevating individual rights on tribal lands, ICRA “limits the punishments that tribal courts may impose [on individual Indians]...and requires that tribal

¹³ Vine Deloria, Jr, and Clifford Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (Austin, TX: University of Austin Press, 1983), 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “American Civil Rights Act (Overview).” *The American Mosaic: The American Indian Experience*. ABC-CLIO, 2014. Web. 13 Feb. 2014

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Indian Civil Rights Act (1968).” *The American Mosaic: The American Indian Experience*. ABC-CLIO, 2014. Web. 13 Feb. 2014.

legal institutions comply with some, but not all, of the provisions of the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution.”¹⁸ Collisions between tribal sovereignty and individual rights emerge when the protection of individual rights become “more important than the survival of the tribe itself.”¹⁹ Through ICRA, the *Self-Determination* era challenged the reforms of the *Indian New Deal* era by not going far enough. It proposed that reforms needed to promote the rights of individual Native peoples alongside the promotion of tribal sovereignty.

To summarize, this first interpretation of federal Indian policy is a mainstream account of US-Indigenous relations. It traces the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous peoples in three federal Indian policy eras. The *Allotment and Assimilation* era minimized tribal sovereignty by breaking up tribal lands and transforming Natives into farmers. It sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into mainstream American society. The *Indian New Deal* era challenged assimilationist policies and practices and sought to solve the problems of *Allotment and Assimilation* by preserving Native cultures and promoting sovereignty. But the *Self-Determination* era reforms challenged *Indian New Deal* reforms for not going far enough. This era promoted individual rights *and* tribal sovereignty. What becomes evident from this analysis is that the subsequent federal Indian policy era perceives problems in the former policy era and offers progressive solutions to address those problems. This first interpretation contends that later federal Indian policies improve the conditions of Indigenous peoples.

The Safety Zone Theory: A Lens of Colonization

I want to challenge the mainstream account by offering a colonizing lens to interpret US-Indigenous relations. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty propose what they term the

¹⁸ Goldberg-Ambrose, “Law and Legislation,” 454.

¹⁹ “American Civil Rights Act (Overview).”

safety zone theory to explain federal Indian policy. According to Lomawaima and McCarty, the safety zone theory “traces the swings of policy to the ongoing struggle of cultural difference and its perceived threat or benefit.”²⁰ The federal government has not progressively moved forward in its reforms to improve the conditions of Indigenous peoples. Rather, it has intentionally and systematically created laws and policies to distinguish between ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ forms of cultural expression. On this account, federal Indian policies have sought to limit tribal sovereignty in order to control the meaning of Native identity. In each federal Indian policy era the U.S. government determined which Native identity expressions were acceptable for American society and which were not.

The history of American Indian education illustrates the safety zone theory. The boarding school system that prevailed during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era sought to eradicate Indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions in favor of a new ‘Americanized’ identity. However, Lomawaima and McCarty point out that in certain cases Native students were allowed to act out their ‘uncivilized’ cultures within these assimilative schools. Evidence shows boarding school photographs with visibly Native cultural expressions being played out by Native children. One example shows students attending the Ogalalla Boarding School with small tepees and Indian dolls spread throughout the school playground. Describes one teacher:

[The schoolgirls] would set up camps in the several corners of the playground, complete with tepees made of unbleached muslin, about two feet high for the families of Indian dolls...one could see as many as fifty tepees at one time...[frequently], there could be seen a dozen or more braves squatting on the high ground looking upon these miniature camps with nostalgic interest.²¹

²⁰ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain An Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 2006), 6. Lomawaima and McCarty specifically challenge what they identify as the pendulum theory of US-Indigenous relations, the idea that the federal government has swung back and forth between pro and anti-tribal sovereignty policies. Rather than challenging the pendulum theory, I want to use their argument to challenge of the mainstream account as I have described it, namely that federal Indian policy has progressed from less just reforms (assimilationist) to more just reforms (sovereignty and self-determination).

²¹ Ibid., 1.

Thus, in an era that significantly limited tribal sovereignty through the Dawes Act, Indigenous children could reminisce about their tribal communities and play out their Native cultural expressions. This occurred under the close surveillance and control of teachers and schools. However, in an era of assimilative boarding schools we would expect that the expression of Native culture would be *eradicated rather than promoted*.

Educational practices within an assimilation era should *not* contain evidence of Native children holding onto their cultures and identities under the supervision of teachers. According to the safety zone theory, the *Allotment and Assimilation* era was not about the eradication of Native culture and identity. The *Allotment and Assimilation* era, rather, reveals that the U.S. government sought to control tribal sovereignty to make Native identity ‘safe’. For Lomawaima and McCarty, the expression of Native identity can be explained as a deliberate attempt by the federal government to create “its national self-image as an exceptional, divinely ordained democracy by juxtaposing its ‘civilization’ against its assumptions of an Indigenous ‘primitive’.”²² Boarding schools neutralized those Native identities that were deemed too threatening for white, mainstream culture, controlling which Native identity expressions “might be considered benign enough to be allowed, even welcomed, within American life.”²³ Showing Native girls playing with Indian dolls or referring to young braves gazing at tepees with nostalgia portrays a domesticated Indian to an American public, one whose ‘savagery’ and ‘paganism’ has not been eradicated but whose identity and culture had been and could be controlled.

Thus, according to Lomawaima and McCarty’s safety zone theory, allowing Native children to play out their cultural expressions even within assimilative boarding schools presupposes that these practices fit into a larger pattern of US-Indigenous relations. According

²² Ibid., 4.

²³ Ibid., 6.

to Lomawaima and McCarty, each policy era intentionally and systematically sought to control tribal sovereignty, which in turn established the extent to which Native identity was defined. The federal government did allow for the expression of Native identity. However, it permitted only those Native identities that were deemed safe and acceptable for mainstream American society. The safety zone theory demonstrates control by the federal government over Indigenous peoples, even in policy eras that seem to favor American Indian culture and identity.

I want to use the insights from the safety zone theory to help reframe our understanding of all the federal policy eras. In each policy era the federal government reflects and perpetuates a larger pattern to determine safe and unsafe cultural expressions of Native identity. The larger pattern at work thus suggests a *colonizing lens* to interpret US-Indigenous relations, what I call a deep insidious colonizing agenda. In short, the safety zone theory helps us articulate a *theory of colonization*. To explain a theory of colonization, it is important to discuss the relationship between colonization and assimilation with respect to Indigenous peoples.

Colonization is the domination and control of one group over another group. As Pramod Nayar states, colonization is the “violent appropriation and sustained exploitation of native races and spaces by European cultures.”²⁴ It is marked, writes Nayar, “by a discourse of territorial discovery, exploration, and conquest.”²⁵ Historically, colonization began when western European powers spread throughout the globe, claiming territories for crown and country. In the minds of European powers and nations, these territories were considered *terra nullius*, or empty land, because they appeared to be free from human cultivation or civilization. *Terra nullius* legitimated in the minds of European powers the ‘right’ to control new territories and utilize them for their own economic, religious, and political purposes.

²⁴ Pramod Nayar, *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 1-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

In the United States, the federal government exerted domination and control over Indigenous peoples. It did so initially through invasion and settlement of Indigenous territories. After invasion and settlement, the federal government established institutions to maintain domination and control of Indigenous lands and peoples. State Michael Yellow Bird and Waziyatawin: “[Colonization is] the formal and informal methods (behavioral, ideological, institutional, political, and economical) that maintain the subjection and/or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources.”²⁶ The reservation system serves as an example. Being forcibly removed onto reservations meant that tribal groups became *domestically dependent nations*.²⁷ Within the reservation system, Indigenous peoples became entangled in the political, cultural, and economic structures of a colonizing federal government. All aspects of Indigenous life fell under the control of the federal government. “The lives of American Indians,” state Deloria and Lytle, “are interwoven with the federal government...[and] as a general rule much of Indian life falls under the federal umbrella and is subject to its changes.”²⁸

Assimilation is a strategy for colonization. Scott DeMuth defines assimilation as “the process of dismantling and erasing Indigenous society and culture, and replacing it through religious, political, and economic conversion.”²⁹ Assimilation is about the federal government’s

²⁶ Michael Yellow Bird and Waziyatawin, “Introduction: Decolonizing Our Minds,” in *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, eds. Michael Yellow Bird and Waziyatawin (Santa Fe, NM: School For Advanced Research Press, 2012), 2.

²⁷ The concept *domestically dependent nations* derives from the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, commonly known as the Marshall Trilogy. Justice John Marshall led the court in three landmark decisions: *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823); *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831); and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832). The second decision is where we see this concept utilized to describe the sovereign status of Indian nations. The Court decided that Indians were neither US citizens nor independent nations. They were “domestic dependent nations” whose relationship to the US “resembles that of a ward to his guardian.” This decision limited the meaning of sovereignty usually associated with nations; but tribes still maintained some measure of control. Although each of these cases related to the Cherokee Nation specifically, ultimately leading to their removal from their homelands, they continue to affect sovereignty of Indian nations into the present.

²⁸ Deloria, Jr and Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice*, 25.

²⁹ Scott DeMuth, “Colonization Is Always War,” in *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, eds. Michael Yellow Bird and Waziyatawin (Santa Fe, NM: School For Advanced Research Press, 2012), 102.

transformation of Indigenous peoples into the likeness of the dominant group. On DeMuth's account, assimilation helps to achieve a specific goal of colonization, which is to gain "control and...access to territory and resources—including humans."³⁰ Thus, when Indigenous peoples take up the dominant society's ideology and ways of life, the federal government no longer needs direct colonization practices to exert domination and control of Indigenous peoples. Military conquests and forced relocations become outmoded strategies of colonization. Through assimilation tactics, Indigenous peoples internalize the colonizer's ideology and enforce the colonizing structure on themselves. These assimilation tactics, explains DeMuth, "temper resistance and control the Indigenous population."³¹

The safety zone theory helps to describe the colonization of Indigenous peoples more specifically. Colonization is an ongoing, intentional, and systematic process to dominate and control Indigenous peoples. The federal government accomplishes this domination and control through assimilation practices, such as the schooling of Indigenous children. What the safety zone theory reveals, however, is that this process of colonization is not meant to erase Indigenous peoples and cultures, only to dominate and control them. This specifically entails the federal government's attempt to determine 'safe' and 'unsafe' cultural expressions of Native identity. Thus, the colonization of Indigenous peoples is not about the federal government's eradication of Indigenous peoples. Rather, it is about the domination and control of Indigenous peoples in each federal Indian policy era, even in those eras that promote sovereignty.

The Dominant Colonizing Voice

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Having clarified the concepts of colonization and assimilation, I look more closely at the three federal Indian policy eras described in the mainstream account. My aim is to analyze these eras through the lens of colonization. Specifically, I use the safety zone theory to explain the problems of the mainstream account and introduce a second interpretation of US-Indigenous relations. I call this second interpretation the *dominant colonizing voice*. The dominant colonizing voice refers to the federal government's efforts to colonize Indigenous minds, bodies, and communities, what David Wallace Adams describes as "the assault on otherness."³² This voice reflects and perpetuates a deep insidious agenda to control Indigenous peoples within each federal policy era. Implicit in each federal policy era are negative ideological assumptions about Indigenous peoples. These negative ideological assumptions about Indigenous peoples informed the way that reformers enacted policies and practices within educational contexts. The dominant colonizing voice regards political and educational strategies as good faith efforts to reform American Indian education. From the perspective of the federal government, these efforts were considered to be much needed reform strategies *rather than* colonizing strategies.

The meaning of Native identity during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era (1880's – 1920's) was rooted in nineteenth century scientific understandings of race. Racial measurement systems were utilized to implement the Dawes Act, allowing the federal government to legally distinguish between mixed and full-blood Indians. Federal superintendents used the blood quantum criterion as the standard to determine Native identity prior to dispersing acreage to individuals or heads of household. The blood quantum criterion measures "the amount of Indian

³² David Wallace Adams, "Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880 – 1900," in *Indigenous Knowledge and Education: Sites of Struggle, Strength, and Survivance*, eds. Malia Villegas, Sabina Nuegebauer, and Kerry Venegas (Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, 2008), 10.

blood possessed by an individual,” which is “inferred from the racial backgrounds of parents.”³³ If parents of a child were considered to have pure Indian blood, the child would be considered 100 percent Indian; but if parents were considered to have mixed Indian blood, the child would be considered a fractioned amount Indian. The blood quantum criterion introduced and perpetuated a racist ideology to determine Indianness. It “presumed that full-bloods were racially incompetent to manage their own affairs...[and] mixed-bloods, by virtue of their white heritage, were deemed to be more competent.”³⁴ The more whiteness an Indian person had, reformers believed, the more likely the person was to rise out of a so-called primitive existence.

Two outcomes emerged from the blood quantum criterion. First, the blood quantum criterion established legal distinctions between full and mixed-blood Indians, on the one hand, from those with no legally identifiable blood quantum, on the other. Those deemed full or mixed-bloods were “issued trust patents for their allotments.”³⁵ Trust patents held the land for a twenty-five year period by the federal government, after which the person could own his/her property outright. But those who were deemed to have no blood quantum were essentially disenfranchised from land ownership completely. Blood quantum distinctions created, maintained, and determined who could be legally defined as an Indian from those who could not.

Second, tribal communities could no longer define Native identity according to their own values, cultures, and traditions. State Gregory Campbell and S. Neyooxet Greymorning:

By the turn of the twentieth century, virtually every indigenous society had, by way of a substitution of federal definitions for their own, been stripped of the ability to determine for themselves the internal composition of their constituencies.³⁶

³³ David Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, third edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 24.

³⁴ Gregory Campbell & S. Neyooxet Greymorning, “What’s in a Label? Native American Identity and the Rise of a Tradition of Racism,” In *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, eds. George Horse Capture, Duane Champagne, and Chandler C. Jackson (New York, NY: Altamira Press, 2007), 24.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

The legal status of American Indians now depended on the federal government's blood quantum criterion, which in turn diminished the capacity and authority—tribal sovereignty—among American Indians to define their own identities and membership.

These ideological assumptions about American Indians influenced reformers who believed that Indigenous peoples, if placed in the right conditions, could and even would want to become assimilated into American society. Reformers during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era firmly believed that they were responding “to a national outcry against publicized incidents of white injustice,” incidents that sought to relegate American Indians to reservation existence or eradicate them through military conquest or genocide.³⁷ In the minds of these reformers, total assimilation represented an adequate solution to address the so-called Indian problem because a *civilizing* mission rather than total *annihilation* proved to be the only rational course of action.

David Wallace Adams examines how at the close of the nineteenth century the underlying ideology of American nation-building motivated educational reformers in a push for civilization. At the core of these reformers' policies were various ideological assumptions: The Protestant value of self-reliance had to replace the “Indians' longstanding adherence to communal values”³⁸; Native peoples could best be described as evolving from savagery to civilization, as “culturally worthless” beings facing the either-or choice of “civilization or extinction”³⁹; and once Native peoples were civilized the vast amounts of land formerly held in common on reservations “would free up more land” for white settlement.⁴⁰ According to Adams, these ideological assumptions substantiated educational policies that justified placing children within boarding schools. Honestly believing in the rightness of their cause, reformers

³⁷ Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 9.

³⁸ Adams, “Fundamental Considerations,” 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

argued that education would not only save American Indians from certain extinction, but the most effective means to ensure their salvation was the off-reservation boarding school.

The first off-reservation boarding school, Carlisle Indian School, opened in 1879, under the leadership of Captain Richard Pratt. Carlisle embodied distinctively western Euro-American values. English-only policies were strictly enforced in the curriculum and school culture; the day revolved around strict time schedules, usually modeled after military standards; and Indian students were trained for gender-specific labor tasks, girls for domestic labor and boys for non-domestic labor. Perhaps the most devastating outcome attending off-reservation boarding schools entailed the separation of children from their families and communities. Luther Standing Bear reflects on this experiences at Carlisle: “How lonesome I felt for my father and mother!...[and all] I could think of was my free life at home. How long would these people keep us here? When were we going home?”⁴¹ Standing Bear’s more traumatic memories entailed losing signs of his Lakota culture: “when my hair was cut short, it hurt my feelings to such an extent that the tears came to my eyes.”⁴² Civilizing Indian children meant obviating the vestiges of their indigeneity in favor of an American culture and values.

Captain Pratt’s philosophical approach to education manifested the ideological assumptions promoted during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era. Similar to the reformers in his day, Pratt understood American Indians to be primitive human beings in need of civilization. He argued that displacing the Indian child from his/her surrounding tribal cultures became the first step towards the fully civilized American Indian adult. “Transfer the savage-born infant,” declared Pratt, “to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized

⁴¹ Luther Standing Bear, *My People, The Sioux* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 139.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 141.

language and habit.”⁴³ Breaking up the reservation system and allotting land parcels to individual Indians resonated with breaking up the tribal community and removing Native children into education contexts in order to become civilized. Carlisle shows how education was informed by the ideological assumption that the best way to civilize Indian children was through full assimilation into mainstream culture and values.

The boarding school system had deleterious effects on Native identity. The separation of Indian children from the broader influences and care of tribal communities not only engendered untold emotional damage: it also fragmented the coherence of Native communities and diminished the self-concept of Indian children. Resistance from families towards boarding schools was common due to “the significant body of tribal opinion [who] saw white education for what it was: an invitation to cultural suicide.”⁴⁴ Upon returning to their home communities, students were unfamiliar with their community’s cultures and languages. But neither could they embrace mainstream American society. States Adams:

Reformers could not anticipate that many students, caught between the contesting claims of native and white outlooks, were not prepared to abandon one in the process of acquiring the other, that just as an assimilationist education might win converts to white civilization, so it was just as likely to produce the bicultural personality.⁴⁵

The *Assimilation and Allotment* era constructed a meaning of Native identity in which Indian students, now adults, were unable to reconcile Native and white cultures. Adam’s reference to ‘bicultural personality’ meant existing in both white and Native cultures, but not completely in either. As George Tinker describes, boarding schools served as a colonizing mechanism that “[rendered] us perpetually partial and incomplete.”⁴⁶

⁴³ David Wallace Adams, *Education For Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875 - 1928* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 52.

⁴⁴ Ward Churchill, *Kill The Indian, Save The Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2004), 18.

⁴⁵ Adams, *Education For Extinction*, 301.

⁴⁶ Churchill, *Kill The Indian*, xxx.

It was during the *Indian New Deal* era (1930's – 1940's) that reformers began to interpret Native identity as the solution to the rampant materialism they believed pervaded American society. John Collier captures this belief in his memoirs: “If our modern world should be able to recapture [this power for living], the earth's natural resources and web of life would not be irrevocably wasted within the twentieth century which is the prospect now.”⁴⁷ For Collier, modern culture had lost its connection to the earth, and people had lost their connection to each another. He believed that “Indians might be the only people in the western hemisphere who still possessed ‘the fundamental secret of human life’.”⁴⁸ Collier's conception of American Indians informed the IRA. The IRA not only sought to overturn the failed policies resulting from the Dawes Act. It also promoted the idea that tribal peoples possessed the capacity to govern their own internal affairs with relative freedom from bureaucratic control. It also sought to preserve and protect tribal cultures, languages, and traditions from cultural annihilation, in order to save the vanishing Indian race from inevitable extinction.

The *Indian New Deal* era's policy of preserving and protecting tribal cultures introduced new meanings of Native identity. Two meanings of Native identity resulted from the IRA. First, distinctions emerged between ‘traditional Indians’ and ‘assimilated Indians’. Traditional Indians within tribal communities interpreted the IRA as another example of “imposing white institutions on the tribes.”⁴⁹ They saw the *Indian New Deal* as imposing democracy on tribal governments. By contrast, those who sought to adopt the IRA were considered *assimilated* Indians, in the sense that they regarded the IRA as “the best vehicle for change available at the time.”⁵⁰ They saw the

⁴⁷ Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 206.

⁴⁸ Colin Calloway, *First Peoples*, 398. Collier's beliefs towards Native peoples began with his work as a social worker among the Pueblo in the 1920's.

⁴⁹ Deloria Jr., and Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice*, 15.

⁵⁰ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 401.

Indian New Deal as a means to further their own aims and “to construct an American community of their own design.”⁵¹

Second, Rebecca Robbins describes how the IRA required those tribal communities who adopted the IRA’s reforms to construct governing tribal councils and draft constitutions facilitated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. States Robbins, “all decisions of any consequences...rendered by these ‘tribal councils’ were made ‘subject to the approval of the Secretary of Interior or his delegate,’ the commissioner of Indian affairs.”⁵² Transforming tribal governments to reflect democratic structures required them to “supplant traditional forms of indigenous governance in favor of a tribal council structure modeled after corporate boards.”⁵³ Such impositions had a negative effect on the meaning of Native identity. Distinctions now existed throughout Indian Country between those tribal communities that reflected more progressive, democratic governing structures modeled after the federal and state governments and those that held onto more traditional governing structures. These distinctions demarcated federally recognized tribal governments from those who were not so recognized. Federally recognized tribal governments were considered ‘legal’ Indians by meeting the “criteria of tribal membership...[according to the] federal standard of quarter-blood minimum.”⁵⁴

The education policies and practices during the *Indian New Deal* era reflected these ideological assumptions of Native identity in curriculum and pedagogy. Collier appointed progressive educator Willard Beatty as education director of Indian Affairs. Together they implemented sweeping education policy changes. Under Collier and Beatty’s direction

⁵¹ Ibid., 401-402.

⁵² Rebecca Robbins, “Self-Determination and Subordination,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. by M. Annette Jaimes (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 95.

⁵³ Ward Churchill and Glenn Morris, “Key Indian Laws and Cases,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 15.

⁵⁴ Ward Churchill, “The Crucible of American Indian Identity: Native Traditions Versus Colonial Imposition in Postconquest North America,” in *Native American Voices: A Reader*, eds. Susan Lobo and Steve Talbot (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Press, 2001), 43.

educators instituted culturally based curricula that centered on the child's experience and background. Some changes included the use of anthropologists and other experts as educational consultants to teach Indigenous languages to beginning teachers, and the selection of Indian educators to receive teacher training so they could teach on reservations.⁵⁵ One change in Indian education involved the construction of reservation day schools for children so that they could be close to home and remain in their communities. Between 1933 and 1941 nearly "one hundred day schools" were constructed on numerous reservations.⁵⁶ These changes allowed some Native communities to have more influence over their educational affairs, enabling them to emphasize the positive influence of their communities on the lives of Indian children. During this era, Native communities were not considered obstacles but instruments to their children's education.

Progressive education during the *India New Deal* era sought to transform boarding schools to reflect Native cultures and traditions. Whereas in the *Assimilation and Allotment* era curricula within boarding schools utilized the broader society's cultures and values, now under Collier and Beatty's leadership some schools began to offer instruction on Indian lore and other traditional practices. Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder state that "for the first time a few Native-language textbooks were written, and there was more emphasis on teaching Indian cultures and languages in Indian schools."⁵⁷ The authors describe how Hopi educator Polingaysi Qoyawayma utilized traditional Hopi stories and legends in lieu of standard curricular content. Her teaching method reflected progressive education's philosophy—to begin with the child's experience and interest—and taught Indian students "from what they already [knew], not from a totally new, strange field of experience."⁵⁸ These examples reflect the ideological shifts during

⁵⁵ Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 216-222.

⁵⁶ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 399.

⁵⁷ Reyhner and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 216.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

the *Indian New Deal* era. Native cultures and languages, once considered obstacles towards civilization, now were to be included in the boarding schools for the benefit of Indian children. Despite the fact that reforms during the *Indian New Deal* era charted a new direction in U.S.-Indigenous relations, the federal government remained in control over tribal affairs. Progressive educators and policy-makers remained the arbiters of acceptable forms of Native identity and culture for American society. Those tribal communities that embraced democratic governance became acceptable Indians by virtue of the fact that they took up American values and governing structures.

Control over schools, too, persisted. While some boarding schools provided culturally relevant curricula and pedagogies, Native students became “the lucky recipients of federal guidance defining what was ‘worthy’ in their heritage.”⁵⁹ Much of what was considered culturally acceptable was based on romanticized and imagined assumptions and beliefs about Native cultures and peoples. Lomawaima and McCarty document how the instruction of Indian lore at Haskell centered on “Native origins in North America; the early locales of tribes...religion, social customs; mythology; games; music; and arts and crafts.”⁶⁰ Those Native cultural expressions relegated to the past were deemed safe, while those Native issues in the present—such as treaty rights or US policy towards Indigenous peoples—were deemed unsafe. The meaning of Native identity during this era remained caught up within the dominant colonizing agenda. Only those ‘imagined’ and ‘romanticized’ cultural Native expressions in the eyes of reformers were acceptable topics in American Indian education.

The *Self-Determination* era (1960’s – 1980’s) introduced new meanings of Native identity that in many ways resonated with the discourse about rights that was articulated during

⁵⁹ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain An Indian*, 75.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the 1960's and 1970's. To understand these meanings of Native identity, it is important to describe the federal government's termination and relocation policies during the 1950's prior to the *Self-Determination* era.

In an effort to assimilate American Indians into mainstream society, Congress passed the Termination Act of 1953 and the Relocation Act of 1956. These laws sought to "subject [American Indians] to the same laws and entitled [them] to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States," in effect relinquishing the government's fiduciary responsibility to Indian tribes.⁶¹ These laws also sought to relocate Native peoples into metropolitan areas. To entice Native peoples into these areas, the government promised adequate housing, jobs, and services needed for city dwelling. However, many promises failed to materialize. Those entering urban life faced the same high rates of unemployment and poverty as they had experienced on reservations. Relocated Natives found themselves in similar conditions as other disenfranchised groups, living in similar neighborhoods and taking on jobs designated for racial minorities. Wilma Mankiller recalls her own family's relocation experience: "Besides the poverty and prejudice we encountered, I was continually struggling with the adjustments to a big city that seemed so foreign and cold to me."⁶²

Relocation and termination policies established a meaning of Native identity that became pervasive during the *Self-Determination* era. As more Native peoples moved into the cities, differences between *urban* and *reservation* Indians became more significant. Urban Indians established broader meanings of Native identity beyond reservation experiences, which "fostered a growing pan-Indian identity and a determination to preserve Indian community and heritage

⁶¹ Gover, "Federal Indian Policy in the Twenty-First Century," 193.

⁶² Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, *Mankiller: A Chief of Her People* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 102.

(exactly the opposite of what the government relocation program intended to achieve).”⁶³ Far removed from their home communities, urban Indians created a shared sense of being ‘Indian’—or an urban pan-Indianism—that cut across tribal lines and affiliations. Ignatia Broker, a Native woman who writes about her urban experiences, describes pan-Indian phenomena: “[Those] born and raised in the cities...do not make any distinctions as to their tribes. They do not say, ‘I am Ojibway,’ or I am Dakota,” or ‘I am Arapaho,’ but they say, ‘I am Indian’.”⁶⁴

In order to help fill the void of being disconnected from their reservations, urban Indians created and gathered in specific American Indian community spaces. Wilma Mankiller describes her experience at the San Francisco Indian Center: “[Everything] seemed brighter at the Indian Center. For me, it became an oasis where I could share my feelings and frustrations with kids from similar backgrounds.”⁶⁵ These spaces not only engendered a sense of community among urban Indians. They also engendered political advocacy to support Indian issues both on and off reservations. Pan-Indianism, in effect, led to more political organization, creating American Indian activist movements—the American Indian Movement (AIM), National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), and Indian of All Tribes (IAT)—drawn primarily from urban Indian experiences. Housing and employment discrimination, high poverty and low education rates, and police harassment and brutality led many urban Indian youth to question and challenge their conditions. Describing Clyde Warrior’s influence, a founding member and the president of the NIYC, Calloway writes: “Like Malcom X in the Black Panther movement, Warrior was eloquent and militant in his prophecies and prescription for revolution, and like Malcolm X he alarmed white America and discomforted many of his own people.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 414.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁶⁵ Mankiller and Wallis, *Mankiller*, 111.

⁶⁶ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 448.

ICRA impacted the meaning of Native identity in significant ways. Coming off the heels of broader civil rights legislation—the Civil Rights and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which provided “legal protection from racial discrimination”⁶⁷—ICRA’s primary aim sought to balance the concepts of individual rights and tribal sovereignty. Reformers based the law on certain complaints by Native peoples who criticized some “tribal officials...[for being] abusive and tyrannical.”⁶⁸ Reformers argued that American Indians “needed some guaranteed form of civil rights against the actions of their own government.”⁶⁹ Like other racial minorities who required protection from discrimination, reformers viewed the law as an umbrella legislation that secured protections for individual Indians who lived on tribal lands. The law ensured that “the American Indian is afforded the same Constitutional rights secured to other Americans...[in order to] protect individual Indians from arbitrary and unjust actions of tribal governments.”⁷⁰ Under ICRA, Native identity was folded into the broader discourse of individual rights that other racial minorities also were struggling to achieve.

Although ICRA expanded the acceptable boundaries of Native identity, critics interpreted the law as another imposition on tribal sovereignty. The political activism among urban Indians compelled Congress to respond to their concerns. However, the rights discourse during this era shaped ICRA’s language in ways that resembled the language of the Bill of Rights. ICRA states: “No Indian tribe exercising powers of self-government shall...make or enforce law prohibiting the free exercise of religion, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”⁷¹ In the minds of reformers, creating laws that included Indian people within a broad discourse of rights seemed

⁶⁷ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain and Indian*, 116.

⁶⁸ “American Indian Civil Rights Act (Overview).”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Indian Civil Rights Act (1968).”

reasonable. After all, Indian activists were making claims about justice and freedom that resonated with other minority groups during the Civil Rights era.

But ICRA imposed standards on tribal governments. With its aim “to protect individual rights of all persons on reservations,” ICRA ultimately posed a “serious infringement on the internal sovereignty of native nations.”⁷² The meaning of Native identity broadened during *Self-Determination*, but the scope of tribal sovereignty narrowed.

Education during the *Self-Determination* era expanded the safe and acceptable boundaries of Native identity within all levels of American Indian education. Two examples are evident. First, growing numbers of urban Indians engendered greater interest in American Indian issues among urban Indian youth attending predominately white colleges. The first American Indian Studies (AIS) programs emerged resulting from urban Indian students demanding more Indigenous representations in their classes. University administrators misunderstood these demands, however. As AIS programs forged new pathways into higher education, administrators viewed them as another ethnic studies program. Describes Duane Champagne: “These programs reflected the social movement and social change trends of the 1960’s and 1970’s by efforts to bring more inclusion to members of historically excluded and disadvantaged groups.”⁷³ AIS programs were not satisfied being included with other ethnic studies programs. Rather than presenting themselves as ‘another minority group,’ they vied to be seen as a “movement toward self-determination...assertion of political and cultural autonomy...[and] greater community control and decision-making.”⁷⁴

⁷² Wilkins and Stark, *American Indian Politics*, 67.

⁷³ Duane Champagne, “The Rise and Fall of Native American Studies,” in *Native American Voices: A Reader*, edited by Susan Lobo, Steve Talbot, Traci Morris, third edition (Prentice Hall, 2010), 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

Second, Indigenous languages that were so vehemently prohibited in boarding schools now were considered safe expressions of Native identity during the *Self-Determination* era. Bilingual legislation in the 1960's and 1970's convinced reformers that Native language instruction presented "the most promising approaches for educating Native students."⁷⁵ Unlike boarding schools, which sought to eradicate Native languages, reformers now advocated that Indian schools should become the principal sites for Native language instruction under the increased control of tribal schools and communities.

However, these language policies remained part of the broader civil rights reform. Native language programs fell under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, with the latter law "calling for 'new and imaginative programs' that used children's native language while they learned English."⁷⁶ Reformers understood these strategies to be similar to other bilingual programs, which were "plunged into the treacherous waters of English only standards, accreditation, and high-stakes testing."⁷⁷ Thus, including Indigenous languages as a bilingual program becomes another way to treat Native peoples in ways similar to minority groups.

To summarize, this section offers a colonizing lens to interpret the mainstream account of US-Indigenous relations, what I call the dominant colonizing voice. The dominant colonizing voice reflects a larger pattern in the colonization of Indigenous peoples. Rather than interpreting US-Indigenous relations as progressive movement from less just reforms to more just reforms, I have shown that the federal government has perpetuated the same colonizing agenda within each federal Indian policy era, even in those eras that seem to favor Indigenous peoples. It seeks to control tribal sovereignty in order to define Native identity. Implicit in the background of each

⁷⁵ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian*, 116.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 133.

era is a set of negative ideological assumptions about Indigenous peoples, which influenced reformers and manifested in education.

The Indigenous Voice of Survivance

The dominant colonizing voice is not the only voice in US-Indigenous relations. It has been countered by what I call the *Indigenous voice of survivance*. I introduce the Indigenous voice of survivance as the third interpretation of US-Indigenous relations. The survivance voice introduces a missing perspective that the colonizing lens cannot explain. The colonizing lens cannot account for the fact that Indigenous peoples have *both* resisted *and also* survived the impact of colonization. Survivance speaks to the ongoing attempt by Indigenous peoples to remain sovereign peoples within their homelands and reservation borders. Within each policy era Indigenous peoples have actively responded to the federal government's attempt to control them. Lomawaima and McCarty's description is helpful: "Native communities have persistently and courageously fought for their continued existence as *peoples*, defined politically by their government-to-government relationship with the United States."⁷⁸

The concept of survivance brings together two terms, *survival* and *resistance*, to describe Indigenous responses to colonization. "Survivance," writes Gerald Vizenor, "means a native presence, the notion of sovereignty and the will to resist domination."⁷⁹ To be present means to persist through cultural and political domination and control during any policy era and through any colonizing experience. The fact that Indigenous peoples have endured centuries of colonization is a testament to their enduring presence, particularly in eras when their existence was in question. But presence refers specifically to a tribal experience, one that is distinctively

⁷⁸ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain and Indian*, 7.

⁷⁹ Gerald Vizenor and Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 93.

Indigenous in relationship to land, culture, and tradition. Brian Brayboy explains Vizenor's definition more specifically. "Vizenor," writes Brayboy, "leads us to a place where Indigenous peoples act in ways that are directly linked to the ways they have always engaged with the world; with dignity and a belief in their inherent rights to be who they have always been."⁸⁰

Survivance means the continual realization by Indigenous peoples to assert their sovereign right to remain Indigenous, as the original inhabitants of *this* land and of *these* places. Vizenor's link between survival and resistance is critical. He writes: "Survivance is not just survival but also resistance, not heroic or tragic, but the tease of tradition, and my sense of survivance outwits dominance and victimry."⁸¹ Survivance becomes possible through deliberate acts of resistance towards colonization. It illuminates the fact that Native peoples have always resisted the colonizing forces that would seek to limit tribal sovereignty and transform indigeneity through various assimilation strategies. Springing from an Indigenous "standpoint, a worldview, and a presence," survivance can be understood as a decolonizing strategy to "live, write, and think" from specific Indigenous positions, places, and traditions.⁸² In Chapter Four, I define decolonization more thoroughly. Here I only want to indicate that survivance is a decolonization strategy that interrogates and challenges the federal government's colonizing agenda. Survivance realizes decolonization by standing in opposition and isolation from the federal government that seeks to colonize Indigenous peoples. It recognizes that to outwit dominance and victimhood is to refuse to be colonized and do so without the aid of the dominant group. Put differently, the survivance voice creates pathways through colonizing structures and practices in the effort to remain Indigenous.

⁸⁰ Brian Brayboy, "'Yakkity Yak' and 'Talking Back'": An Examination of Sites of Survivance in Indigenous Knowledge," in *Indigenous Knowledge and Education: Sites of Struggle, Strength, and Survivance*, eds. Malia Villegas, Sabina Neugebauer, and Kerry Venegas (Harvard Educational Review, 2008), 341.

⁸¹ Vizenor and Lee, *Postindian Conversations*, 93.

⁸² Brayboy, 'Yakkity Yak' and 'Talking Back', 341.

The means by which Indigenous peoples outwit dominance and victimhood is neither through heroic nor tragic strategies. Since the *Allotment and Assimilation* era the federal government and Indigenous peoples have been caught up within a history of colonization. In this history, the dominant colonizing voice seeks to define Native identity and control tribal sovereignty. But Indigenous peoples have resisted colonization in various ways, manners, and contexts. Resistance depends on the immediate needs and concerns of the tribal community in response to the particular reforms initiated by the federal government. Survivance is not heroic in the sense that certain figures rise up to confront dominant forces, nor is it tragic in the sense that tribal peoples speak from a position of victimhood. Survivance emerges through the utilization of personal narratives and lived experiences, drawn from Indigenous cultures, epistemologies, and traditions. It is expressed in subtle and overt ways to empower Indigenous peoples to challenge their colonizing experiences. Thus, survivance acknowledges colonizing history but does not allow this history to dominate the humanity of Indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous voice of survivance becomes critical in supplying a missing perspective within a history of colonization. From the dominant colonizing voice perspective, Indigenous peoples are passive recipients of colonization. But rather than connoting passivity, the survivance voice introduces *active* responses by Indigenous peoples towards their colonizing experiences. These voices become critical in two ways. First, they expand the meanings of Native identity that have been shaped and constructed within colonizing history. Second, they challenge the control over tribal sovereignty that the federal government tried to assert over Indigenous peoples. These survivance voices accomplish this by articulating ideas about what tribal sovereignty means according to the traditions and needs of Indigenous peoples.

Survivance voices are critical because they ‘talk back’ in opposition to the colonizer. In this section, I describe three survivance voices in each federal Indian policy era.

Charles Eastman: The Allotment and Assimilation Era (1880’s – 1920’s)

The survivance voice of Charles Eastman weaves Euro-American and Indigenous experiences together into a complex personal narrative of Native identity. Eastman was raised in traditional Santee Dakota culture by his paternal grandmother until the age of fifteen, after which he attended Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska. He recalls the difficult transition he experienced during his early boarding schooling years: “I hardly think I was ever tired in my life until those first days of boarding school...all day things seemed to come and pass with a wearisome regularity.”⁸³ These difficulties produced a strong attachment to his Dakota culture and identity. “At times,” he writes, “I felt something of the fascination of the new life, and again there would arise in me a dogged resistance, and a voice seemed to be saying, ‘It is cowardly to depart from the old things’.”⁸⁴ Eastman’s survivance voice reveals the constant struggle inherent in the boarding school experiences for many Indian students: the desire to maintain one’s cultural identity against the pulverizing force of assimilating education policies and practices.

In the mind of many reformers Eastman served as the paramount example of the self-made Indian. Earning his diploma at Dartmouth College and medical degree from Boston College, Eastman “praised Christianity and the Anglo world.”⁸⁵ For reformers during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era, he exemplified the transition from savagery to civilization, from paganism to Christianity, and he embodied in both mind and body the anticipated result of what

⁸³ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 353.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2005), 91.

a Euro-American education for Native peoples could be. Earlier in his career Eastman embraced the dominant ideology of the *Allotment and Assimilation* era, even staunchly advocating for the Dawes Act. But his identification with Dakota culture and identity became more pronounced after witnessing the aftermath of the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. Criticizing federal Indian policy, he considered the massacre to be a clear example of “American injustices and hypocrisy” and “attacked corrupt Indian agents and took on the Indian services.”⁸⁶ The dogged resistance he recalled from his early boarding school years would eventually gain him distinction as a medical doctor and spokesman for Native peoples and rights.

Eastman’s survivance voice integrates two conflicting cultures as a means to construct and maintain a distinctive Native identity. Rather than choosing one culture over the other, Eastman lives “in both worlds, comfortable and accepted in each.”⁸⁷ Eastman looks back with longing on the Dakota way of life prior to the imposition of dominant Euro-American culture and values. In *The Soul of the Indian*, he writes: “As a child, I understood how to give; I have forgotten that grace since I became civilized,” such that now the “Indian is reconstructed, as the natural rocks are ground to powder, and made into artificial blocks which may be built into the walls of modern society.”⁸⁸ Despite the fact that he laments the decaying effects of Euro-American education on his Dakota way of life he could never completely discard the influence of his white education. Both Euro-American schooling and Native traditions would serve as important sources to survive in the modern world; and both experiences would become equal

⁸⁶ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 354.

⁸⁷ Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 92.

⁸⁸ Charles Eastman, *The Soul of an Indian: An Interpretation* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 88.

sources of resistance against oppressive political and educational structures. Using both cultures, he remained “committed to using his education and skills for the benefit of his people.”⁸⁹

The more significant contributions Eastman made to the benefit of his people centered on his commitment to foster cultural and political relationships across tribal affiliations. These relationships developed into a pan-Indian identity during the *Allotment and Assimilation* era. David Martinez offers a detailed analysis of Eastman’s collaborations with other ‘educated’ Indians in the Society of American Indians (SAI). Recognizing the “common values and interests that bound all Indian people together,”⁹⁰ Eastman came to believe that progress for Native peoples lay in their ability to build politically astute Indian leaders and overcome “old tribal jealousies and antagonisms.”⁹¹ SAI promoted the contributions of Native groups to the broader society. Eastman’s article, “The Indian’s Gift to the Nation,” articulates this commitment. Describes Martinez: “Eastman makes his contribution to a tradition of celebrating the Native genius...[and highlighting] as evidence that the indigenous people of North America were anything but ‘primitive’.”⁹² Under Eastman’s leadership SAI provided an avenue to challenge Indian stereotypes and misconceptions constructed in the white imaginary.

Eastman’s utilization of both cultures and his pan-Indian identity organization led him to offer strong support for American Indian citizenship. Wounded Knee convinced him that the solution for Native peoples involved “incorporating [them] into American society, which would include the eventual elimination of the BIA and the gradual preparation of indigenous citizenship.”⁹³ Citizenship represented a viable possibility for Native peoples to be accepted in

⁸⁹ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 353.

⁹⁰ David Martinez, *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), 87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹³ Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 103.

dominant society. For Eastman, citizenship meant progress for Native peoples. As Eastman describes in his later writings, “the Indian no longer exists as a natural and free man...[those ideas are] a fictitious copy of the past.”⁹⁴ But it is important to note that for Eastman U.S. citizenship did not entail the elimination of tribal sovereignty. Eastman argued that citizenship should emerge from Native peoples’ “own free will, and not under compulsion.”⁹⁵ For Eastman, it was critical for Native peoples to maintain sovereignty in choosing the extent to which they would embrace their new ‘civilized’ position within the dominant culture without the paternalistic control of the nation-state.

The survivance voice of Eastman suggests that one strategy for Native survival and resistance during *Allotment and Assimilation* entailed building a relationship between opposing cultures. His own personal effort to weave together these cultures suggests that those who endured boarding schools could derive meaning and value from their experiences insofar as these experiences benefited Native peoples and communities. Improving the situation of Native peoples does not involve breaking from dominant structures. Rather, it entails using dominant colonizing structures in strategic and intentional ways. Eastman’s advocacy for Indigenous peoples to become citizens reveals the strategy of subverting colonizing structures that had been intended for the assimilation of Indigenous peoples. Citizenship meant that Native peoples would finally be treated with the respect bestowed on other citizens; it meant being recognized as America’s *first* citizens. Writes Eastman: “We do not ask for territorial grant or separate government. We ask only to enjoy with Europe’s sons the full privileges of American

⁹⁴ Calloway, *First Peoples*, 354.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

citizenship.”⁹⁶ The survivance strategy employed by Eastman creates a space within the nation-state’s political structure for Native peoples to be treated equally.

Chief Clinton Rickard: The Indian New Deal Era (1930’s – 1940’s)

Chief Clinton Rickard of the Tuscarora Nation offers another survivance voice that illuminates a Native identity rooted in Indigenous values before and during the *Indian New Deal* era. Described as a “modern Indian who yet had deep roots in his own cultural tradition,”⁹⁷ Rickard grew up in a time when the Tuscarora community remained relatively isolated from the broader influence of American culture and society. His strong attachment to his culture was due to the fact that he neither attended boarding school nor had formal higher education. This proved beneficial for Rickard. According to Barbara Graymont, this meant that “he was not taught to be ashamed of his culture by a series of misguided teachers all eager to encourage Indian children to adopt white ways.”⁹⁸ But Rickard’s lack of formal education did not prevent him from educating himself on the issues facing Native peoples. As the leader of his people, he “became very knowledgeable in the areas of Indian law and treaties.”⁹⁹ Unlike Charles Eastman, who weaved together an opposing and conflicting identity from two cultures, Rickard maintained “a steady self-assurance...firm persistence and a quiet dignity.”¹⁰⁰

Although Rickard identified closely with Tuscarora culture, much like Eastman he promoted and supported pan-Indian identity and unity. He embraced many Native traditions in his personal life, often times blending disparate cultures together in his regalia during ceremonies and presentations. His pan-Indian identity became more pronounced when, in 1924, he founded

⁹⁶ Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, 104.

⁹⁷ Barbara Graymont, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Fighting Tuscarora: The Autobiography of Chief Clinton Rickard*, ed. Barbara Graymont (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1973), xvii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiii

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxvi

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

the Indian Defense League of America (IDLA). The sole purpose of IDLA was to combat for all tribal nations the infringements of Indian rights by the federal government and to educate Indians and Whites “on the values of Indian culture.”¹⁰¹ Speaking of the need to build relationships outside his own community, Rickard writes that “we encouraged our friends in other areas to form branches of the league to unify themselves for our fight and to make our cause better known.”¹⁰² The outcome of these unifications “[bridged] sharp differences in outlook between reservation and urban Indians.”¹⁰³ Rickard’s leadership in IDLA helped Native peoples to recognize the broader issues of citizenship and tribal reorganization confronting all American Indians and the need to organize against them when necessary.

Reformers heralded the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 as one of the great promises of democratic inclusion for Native peoples. Whereas Eastman viewed citizenship as the next step to support Indian rights, Rickard rejected citizenship on the grounds that it diminished tribal sovereignty and fragmented Native communities. Writes Rickard: “We had a great attachment to our style of government. We wished to remain treaty Indians and preserve our ancient rights.”¹⁰⁴ Citizenship not only meant dissolving the treaty obligations that the federal government had towards Native peoples, resulting in the taxation of tribal lands and the loss of individual tribal members’ property. It also meant dissolving the political cohesion of tribal governments and communities. The Iroquois Confederacy, which included the Tuscarora Nation, exercised their “ancient rights” to inhabit the land prior to the imposition of the U.S.-Canadian border. While Rickard’s anti-citizenship stance ensured the ability of the Iroquois Nation to move freely within

¹⁰¹ Ibid., xxv.

¹⁰² Clinton Rickard, *Fighting Tuscarora: The Autobiography of Chief Clinton Rickard*, ed. Barbara Graymont (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1973), 77.

¹⁰³ Graymont, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxv.

¹⁰⁴ Rickard, *Fighting Tuscarora*, 53.

and between colonized lands, Rickard's advocacy served to expand the sovereign right of all Native peoples to inhabit their ancestral territories.

Rickard's challenge to the federal government's imposition of citizenship included opposing the IRA. Two reasons for his opposition became central. The first centered on the fact that the Tuscarora Nation participated in the Iroquois Confederacy that had been established centuries earlier. Each Iroquois person was born into a tribal system; each tribe sent selected representatives to the general council; and selected representatives made decisions for the specific tribe and general welfare of the confederacy. Imposing the Collier administration's progressive government reforms not only limited the sovereignty of the Iroquois traditional political structure: it also dissolved the representative basis of their entire community. The second reason Rickard opposed the imposition of citizenship emphasized the fact that no outsider is in a position to know what is best for another's community. States Rickard: "If we wanted to change any of our ways, we would do so according to our needs, but we did not want outsiders telling us how to run our affairs. We did not tell the white man how to run his government."¹⁰⁵ Rickard recognized that because both whites and Natives are sovereign, their relationship should be reciprocal rather than one dominant over the other. Whites therefore should not propose what is best for Indigenous peoples, no matter how well-intentioned.

Rickard's survivance voice reveals staunch support for tribal sovereignty and collective resistance among Native peoples against an imposing nation-state. Unlike Eastman, who attempted to integrate opposing cultures for the betterment of Native peoples, Rickard's survivance strategy during the *Indian New Deal* consisted primarily of preserving and defending traditional Native cultures. For Rickard, survivance for Native peoples emerges from their own traditions, values, and worldviews. This did not mean, however, that he supported separatism

¹⁰⁵ Rickard, *Fighting Tuscarora*, 125.

from the nation-state. The fact that Rickard envisioned the IDLA as educating both Natives and whites about the value of Indian cultures suggests his willingness to engage the broader structure for the betterment of Native peoples. But his survivance strategy was clear: Remaining Indigenous against civilizing policies entailed embracing traditional practices, protecting ancestral lands, and sustaining tribal sovereignty.

Vine Deloria, Jr.: The Self-Determination Era (1960's – 1980's)

Vine Deloria, Jr. becomes an important example of survivance during the *Self-Determination* era. Recognized as one of the most important voices within Native American scholarship in the past forty-five years, Deloria advocated for a distinctive Native identity and tribal sovereignty centered on political organization and action. A member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Deloria grew up in an intellectual family. His father served as the first Native Episcopalian minister posted at the national level and his aunt worked as a well-known anthropologist. He attended reservation schools in his early years, eventually earning a bachelor's degree in science from Iowa State University and two graduate degrees in sacred theology and law. "Through all this 'white' education," writes Charles Wilkinson, "Deloria never strayed far from his Indian roots."¹⁰⁶ For three years he served as the executive director of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), during which time he "revived the organization and made it into an effective advocate for tribal rights."¹⁰⁷ But Deloria's intellectual influence in Native American scholarship and political activism did not become fully apparent until the publication of his first text in 1969, *Custer Died For Your Sins*.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Custer engages the urgent issues facing contemporary American Indians, in many ways becoming a call for activism during the *Self-Determination* era. Describes Wilkinson: “*Custer*...hit the right tone. Never whiny or self-pitying, Deloria framed history, identified problems, and dug into theory and real-world considerations.”¹⁰⁸ At its heart *Custer* tackles the basic problem of Native identity and tribal sovereignty in contemporary America, deconstructing the binary relationship between the ways that American Indian identity has been constructed in the white imagination and the lived-realities of American Indians. “To be an Indian in modern America,” writes Deloria, “is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical.”¹⁰⁹ For Deloria, Native peoples remain permanent relics of the past, to be studied by anthropologists or saved by missionaries, creating the so-called expert on the plight of the Indian. Challenging the classic American Indian stereotypes—the “savage warrior, the unknown primitive, the instinctive animal” and the “Indian princess”¹¹⁰—he argues that white Americans have essentialized Native peoples, smoothing over differences between Natives and whites. Whites have constructed an American Indian in their own image and have failed to understand the modern circumstances of tribal peoples.

In contrast to the mythological and ahistorical American Indian constructed by the white imagination, Deloria argues that being American Indian in the modern sense is to be resilient against the colonizing policies and practices administered within each policy era. What makes modern American Indians distinctive is that they have learned to incorporate their traditional cultural practices and life-ways into their contemporary experiences insofar as they speak to the current needs and concerns confronting their communities. “The best characterization of tribes,”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁹ Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* 2nd edition (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 3.

describes Deloria, “is that they stubbornly hold on to what they feel is important to them and discard what they feel is irrelevant to their current needs.”¹¹¹ The survival of tribal peoples is due to their creative organization against colonization, particularly when they have “[banded] together to make themselves heard.”¹¹² While successful organization and action varies from tribe to tribe, Deloria recognizes that “Indian tribes are rapidly becoming accustomed to the manner in which the modern world works.”¹¹³ Deloria’s American Indian is firmly rooted in the here and now as a culturally and politically empowered agent, whose power arises from the idea that American Indians are the original, sovereign inhabitants of the land.

The survivance strategy that Deloria proposes for the continued existence and survival of Native peoples entails further realization of tribal sovereignty. While tribal sovereignty refers to the ability of Native peoples to govern their own affairs, “acknowledging our right to live in peace, free from arbitrary harassment,” Deloria argues for a broader notion of sovereignty that requires “the public at large to drop the myths in which it has clothed us for so long.”¹¹⁴ This suggests that tribal sovereignty not only concerns the ability of Native peoples to determine their own political and economic affairs: it entails their ability to define their own identity independent of the social and cultural expectations and images assigned to them by the broader society. To be free from arbitrary harassment is to recognize the inherent power of tribes to identify their own issues and work towards their own solutions. According to Kevin Bruyneel, Deloria argues for the idea of *nationhood*, a postcolonial political position in which Native peoples assert “the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 16.

¹¹² Ibid., 17.

¹¹³ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

government-to-government U.S.-indigenous relationship while affirming the need to renew indigenous collective identity and agency through resistance to American colonial rule.”¹¹⁵

Deloria’s idea of nationhood problematizes the Civil Rights discourse prominent during the *Self-Determination* era. In the chapter entitled, “The Red and the Black,” he juxtaposes the different political positions and aims of Black Americans and Native peoples in relation to the nation-state. The crucial difference, explains Deloria, centers on the desire among Civil Rights leaders and their liberal allies to combine “all people with darker skin in the same category of basic goals, then develop their programs to fit these preconceived ideas” in contradistinction to the specific needs of tribal peoples.¹¹⁶ All minority groups deserve to be treated equally in regards to political participation, cultural recognition, and economic opportunity. But Civil Rights leaders essentially interpreted the needs of tribal peoples through the lens of the Black struggle for equal rights. Deloria resists this equal rights discourse. “Equality,” he writes, “became sameness.”¹¹⁷ Significant historical differences and realities exist between Blacks and Natives, preventing them from being understood in the same way. The Civil Rights discourse, argues Deloria, proved to be yet another imposition by the nation-state to usurp land and define Native peoples out of existence.

Rather than weaving together Euro-American and Native cultures or embracing pan-Indian identities, Deloria’s survivance voice involves tribal peoples drawing from their present cultural strength and community resources to oppose colonization and reassert their sovereign, political status. The strength and resources in tribal communities derive from Native peoples’ belonging to specific homelands. Deloria sees land as the basis on which to determine tribal identity and nationhood. He argues that because “certain lands are given to certain people” it is

¹¹⁵ Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, 140.

¹¹⁶ Deloria, Jr., *Custer*, 170.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

Native peoples “who can flourish, thrive, and survive on the land.”¹¹⁸ To be American Indian in the modern sense is to belong to a specific homeland with an identifiable cultural practice and identity, where “time is static and the world becomes a psychic unity.”¹¹⁹ *Custer* helped Native peoples recognize that the basic problem between them and the federal government is their legal status as sovereign nations and peoples—it is between “the true owners of the land and the usurpers.”¹²⁰ The urgency with respect to political organization and activism centers on maintaining the relations to their homelands without colonial interference.

Concluding Remarks

I conclude the chapter by considering two implications relevant for IEFA. First, framing the conversation in IEFA from the perspective of survivance challenges the idea that ‘progressive’ reform policies have resolved the effects of colonization. While IEFA moves beyond direct and overt colonization policies, my analysis of US-Indigenous relations leads me to conclude that IEFA remains caught up with an ongoing colonizing history. Lomawaima and McCarty maintain that the “civilizing” mission extends well beyond the boarding school era to the contemporary period. State the authors: “From the rigidly racialized hierarchies endorsed by early-20th century science...to the current turn-of-the-century promise to ‘leave no child left behind,’ the U.S. government and many of its citizens have struggled with the ‘Indian problem’.”¹²¹ IEFA is not exempt from this colonizing history and its ongoing impact. This suggests that colonizing history has persisted in the lives of tribal communities and also in American Indian education in the state of Montana. I would argue that it is more useful to

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 177.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 196.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 174.

¹²¹ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain An Indian*, 7.

interpret IEFA as the most recent shift in American Indian education policy reform. It sees Indigenous cultures as more ‘safe’ for the education of all Montana students.

Second, survivance reveals the fact that white and Native groups stand within an unequal, historical relationship. In Chapter Two, I showed how the IEFA scholarship recognizes a history of colonization between the federal government and Indigenous peoples. Yet IEFA scholars also assume that the conversation about IEFA takes place between equal groups. This suggests that the legacy of colonization no longer matters in the conversation. All that matters in the conversation is that white and Native groups bring their skills and perspectives to collaborations in which they deliberate over curricular matters.

IEFA thus assumes equality between white and Native groups. However, since the *Allotment and Assimilation* era, no such relationship has existed. Thus, the current relationship between Indigenous peoples and mainstream educational institutions and practices in Montana is best described as a relation of *inequality* rather than *equality*. I suggest that we think of IEFA as a situation in which mainstream educators and Indigenous peoples remain embedded within unequal power relations. *They are not educational or political equals*. This unequal relationship makes the conversation about IEFA difficult. As Ellen Swaney describes, “[honestly] engaging IEFA requires us to consider the political, economic, and power issues involved with including people who are culturally different. Such discussions will be difficult.”¹²² For Swaney, the difficulty of the conversation about IEFA is less about *cultural* differences between white and Native groups and more about the *power* distinctions that exist between them.

My analysis of the dominant colonizing voice and the Indigenous voice of survivance shows that the conversation of IEFA needs to emphasize the unequal power relations that continue to exist between whites and Natives *rather than* inclusion. Insofar as IEFA emphasizes

¹²² Ellen Swaney, “The Challenge of IEFA,” *Phi Delta Kappan* vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 191.

the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and voices, the law fails to recognize how the historical conversation frames contemporary conversations between whites and Natives. Emphasizing the inclusion of Indigenous peoples distracts us from examining what is most fundamental to understanding the relationship between these groups: *the relationship between colonizer and colonized*. If IEFA is to foster education that is genuinely different and new, then all participants, Native and non-Native, will need to foreground the colonizer and colonized relationship that has dominated American Indian education reform for the conversation in IEFA to matter. To foreground the colonizer and colonized relationship requires us to engage in a political analysis of US-Indigenous relations, to which I now turn in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reconciliation & the Indigenous Voice of Survivance

Introduction

In Chapter Three, I argued that IEFA is not a new conversation in the history of US-Indigenous relations. Rather, it remains part of an ongoing colonizing history between the federal government and Indigenous peoples. We saw that this colonizing history entails a *dominant colonizing voice*. This voice entails the federal government's colonizing strategies that sought to limit tribal sovereignty and define Native identity, even in federal policy eras that seemed to favor Indigenous peoples. By contrast, the *Indigenous voice of survivance* speaks from distinctive tribal experiences, cultures, and worldviews to articulate meanings of Native identity in light of colonizing experience. The Indigenous voice of survivance occurs throughout all federal Indian policy eras. It is a counter-discourse that *challenges* the dominant colonizing agenda and *further*s the struggle of Indigenous peoples to remain sovereign.

My historical analysis in Chapter Three makes it clear that inclusive conversations fail to include the history of colonization and its enduring impact on Indigenous peoples. While IEFA seeks to build consensus between whites and Natives, the law does not fully recognize the role that colonization continues to play in their present-day interactions.¹ *Insofar as IEFA requires conversation between white and Native groups, what kind of conversation is required for these groups to address colonization and its enduring effects? How can white and Native groups*

¹ Jioanna Carjuzaa *et al.* capture this assumption well: "[IEFA] addresses the historical and contemporary oppressions of Indigenous peoples by transforming educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy." On this account, structural and political inclusion serves as a sufficient strategy by which white and Native groups can acknowledge and repair historical injustices and thus build new political relationships. The IEFA scholarship basically assumes that inclusion can move white and Native groups forward from the historical legacy of colonization and its enduring effects. See: Jioanna Carjuzaa, Mike Jetty, Michael Munson, and Teresa Veltkamp, "Montana's Indian Education For All: Applying Multicultural Education Theory," *Multicultural Perspectives* 12, 4 (2010), 192.

engender more historically authentic conversations that realize the aims of decolonization for Indigenous peoples? What is the role of survivance in these conversations?

To answer these questions, I will argue that what is required in IEFA is a *decolonizing conversation* between white and Native groups, not an inclusive conversation. A decolonizing conversation recognizes the need for whites and Natives to engage in conversations that directly and explicitly confront colonization and its enduring effects. Basing the interactions of white and Native groups on decolonizing conversations rather than inclusive conversations not only brings colonization and its enduring effects to the foreground. A decolonizing conversation compels these groups to acknowledge and repair this colonizing legacy.

In this chapter, I develop a meaning of decolonizing conversation by analyzing key concepts in the politics of reconciliation. The politics of reconciliation, I argue, serves as a political framework in which both white and Native groups can directly confront colonization and its enduring effects. Reconciliation requires dominant groups to acknowledge, repair, and take responsibility for the historical and continued oppression of Indigenous peoples. I argue that the politics of reconciliation creates a framework in which whites and Natives can engage in historically authentic conversations that serve the interests of Indigenous peoples.

However, the politics of reconciliation does not say much about the role of colonized Native groups. I therefore will argue that the politics of reconciliation requires the Indigenous voice of survivance that I describe in Chapter Three. Integrating the Indigenous voice of survivance with the politics of reconciliation suggests a way for Natives to participate in decolonizing conversations with whites *rather than* being in *opposition to* and *isolation from* whites. In these decolonizing conversations, whites and Natives are able to build alliances that

can transform public education to reflect Indigenous interests. Centering the conversation on the Indigenous voice of survivance brings whites and Natives into a more equal partnership.

The chapter proceeds in the following way. First, I begin by examining the recent scholarship in the politics of reconciliation. Specifically, I articulate the necessary conditions that help inform political engagements between democratic nations seeking reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. I take up the relationship between reconciliation and deliberative democracy as a comprehensive framework that can help white and Native groups engage in historically authentic conversations. Second, I describe how postcolonial and Indigenous studies scholarship defines decolonization. This definition focuses on what the scholarship refers to as the *decolonization of the mind*. I explain how reconciliation facilitates conversations that decolonize the mind. Finally, I integrate the concept of survivance with reconciliation. I show that reconciliation requires survivance and survivance also is enhanced by reconciliation. This integration of reconciliation and survivance helps make whites and Natives more equal.

Justice & the Politics of Reconciliation

Modern democratic nations are utilizing reconciliation as a political framework to find better ways to address past and current injustices towards Indigenous groups. In 2008, the Canadian government engaged in national soul searching with its colonizing past and offered a formal apology to First Nations Peoples for residential boarding schools. The Canadian government forcibly removed an estimated 150,000 Indigenous children from their families and placed them into jointly supported Christian and government schools.² Recognizing the nation's past injustices towards Indigenous peoples, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an

² Dennis H. McPherson and J. Douglass Rabb, *Indian From the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal*, second edition (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011), 141.

apology to First Nation's Peoples: "The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks for the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry."³ National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Phil Fontaine responded to Harper's apology with the following statement: "What happened today signifies a new dawn in the relationship between us and the rest of Canada...this day will help us put [the] pain behind us."⁴

Canada's formal apology was only the first step in repairing the relationship between the nation and its first citizens. The Canadian government also embarked on a truth and reconciliation tour across the country that documented the stories from residential boarding school survivors. The tour not only sought to bring the nation's colonizing history into public consciousness: it also sought to forge a "new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians."⁵ Reconciliation had become a political framework that could bring white and Native groups together into authentic dialogue and relationship.

The Canadian example shows that reconciliation is playing a prominent role within contemporary political theory and practice. But political theorists debate what *reconciliation* actually means. In "Accommodating Historical Oppressed Social Groups: Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Reconciliation," Bashir Bashir offers a meaning of reconciliation that surfaces the historical injustices committed against what he describes as *historically oppressed social groups*. Certain racial, ethnic, and immigrant groups require a politics of reconciliation that allows them to publicly voice their historical and contemporary experiences of oppression. Traditional political theories, argues Bashir, have failed to adequately account for injustices of historically oppressed social groups. A politics of reconciliation emphasizes the

³ Ibid., 143.

⁴ Canwest News Service. Phil Fontaine's response AFN leader Phil Fontaine's response to the House of Commons on Wednesday. Retrieved April 4, 2014: <http://www.canada.com/vancouver/news/story.html?id=4f3fddfd0-f3e7-43d4-a9a0-f6ebfbd6f20>.

⁵ McPherson and Rabb. *Indian From the Inside*, 144.

link between “past wrongs and the present political and social inequalities” in order for historically oppressed social groups to attain justice.⁶ Rather than minimizing the past as obsolete or irrelevant in contemporary political contexts, a politics of reconciliation turns toward the past as the basis upon which groups can realize social justice.

Bashir challenges two problems with the way that contemporary political literature typically describes reconciliation. First, traditional conceptions of reconciliation, writes Bashir, “tend to individualize and psychologize the process of reconciliation in the sense of reducing it into an interpersonal process or an intrapsychic process.”⁷ David Bloomfield, for example, resonates with the interpersonal process of reconciliation. He argues that reconciliation entails “finding a way to live alongside former enemies—not necessarily to love them, or forgive them, or forget the past in any way, but coexist with them.”⁸ On Bloomfield’s account, reconciliation requires persons or groups to find the means to live together peacefully despite their historically estranged or violent relationship, such that they may find alternatives to revenge or retribution.

David Crocker offers an example that resonates with the intrapsychic process of reconciliation. Reconciliation, contends Crocker, ranges from coexistence to more “robust conceptions...[such as] forgiveness, mercy...a shared comprehensive vision, mutual healing, or harmony.”⁹ For Crocker, reconciliation entails acts of forgiveness, pardon, or mercy between citizens. On this account, the purpose of reconciliation is to rebuild relationships of civic trust between estranged persons or groups and to bring them back into harmonious relationship after acts of violence or conflict.

⁶ Bashir Bashir, “Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups: Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Reconciliation,” in *The Politics of Reconciliation and Multicultural Societies*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59.

⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁸ David Bloomfield, “Reconciliation: An Introduction,” in *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, eds. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes, and Luc Huyse (Stockholm: IDEA, 2003), 12.

⁹ David Crocker, “Reckoning with Past Wrongs: A Normative Framework,” *Ethics International Affairs* 13 (1999), 60.

Bashir contends that reconciliation needs to move beyond these inter-relational or intrapsychic conceptions to an “intergroup process that is embedded in power relations.”¹⁰ On Bashir’s account, reconciliation presupposes a background of power distinctions that exist between dominant groups and historically oppressed social groups. Social groups are different from social associations, maintains Bashir. Unlike social associations such as political parties or civic organizations, all of which are voluntary, a social group “is typically involuntary and from birth.”¹¹ For the most part individuals do not choose their ethnic, linguistic, and national backgrounds, but rather find themselves born into these social groups and historical contexts. What is significant about these social groups, Bashir explains, is that their historical and contemporary circumstances are not due to luck or happenstance. Their current situations result from longstanding unjust practices and policies within social, economic, and political institutions that have benefited dominant groups. Thus, reconciliation is less about bringing dominant and historically oppressed social groups into harmonious relationship and more about these groups addressing the power distinctions that currently exist between them.

At this point we can see how the politics of reconciliation differs from the politics of inclusion. The politics of inclusion brings different groups together with the aim of reaching consensus on a shared goal or issue. While an inclusive conversation might recognize power distinctions between dominant and historically oppressed social groups, it does not explicitly or directly address these power-relations. It aims to find common ground between different groups, such that productive conversations can emerge. By contrast, Bashir’s meaning of reconciliation situates power relations at the center of political interactions between dominant and historically oppressed social groups. The reason is because these oppressed social groups present unique

¹⁰ Bashir, “Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups,” 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

challenges and demands that inclusion policies cannot fully accommodate. Indigenous peoples, for example, demand language revitalizations, land reclamations, and sovereignty recognitions that have been denied by the dominant group. Their claims of justice, writes Bashir, go “beyond familiar multiculturalist mantras of recognizing or accommodating ‘diversity’.”¹² Thus, seeking their inclusion within the broader social and political structure without accounting for their unique experiences of historical oppression misunderstands their struggles for justice.

The second problem that Bashir articulates concerns whether deliberative democracy can sufficiently meet the demands of justice that are articulated by historically oppressed social groups. Deliberative democracy arose as a prominent political theory in response to widely accepted conceptions of citizenship. Political theorists defined citizenship in terms of voting, commonly described as the aggregative model. On this account, the meaning of democratic citizenship centered on individuals expressing their preferences in “fair decision-making procedure[s]...about who to elect (in standard elections) or about what laws to adopt.”¹³ However, theorists wrestled with the problem that majority groups overpower minority groups in voting. Minority group votes are minimized due to low representation. The aggregative model, critics argued, fails to “fulfill the norms of democratic legitimacy,” mostly because “it provides no opportunity for citizens to try to persuade others of the merits of their views.”¹⁴ Indigenous peoples, for example, constitute only one percent of the total population within the United States. This small percentage raises the question of whether their concerns could be taken seriously within an aggregative model.

¹² Ibid., 54.

¹³ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 290.

¹⁴ Ibid.

In light of this critique, theorists of deliberative democracy shifted their attention from the aggregative model to more robust forms of political engagement. Instead of defining democratic citizenship primarily as voting, theorists of deliberative democracy argue that democracy should engage citizens in open debate and dialogue. All citizens—both majority and minority groups—would have opportunities to voice their perspectives and to have their perspectives voiced and heard in the public sphere.

According to Amy Gutmann and Denis Thompson, deliberative democracy brings diverse and competing perspectives into public discourse and aims to “provide the most justifiable conception for dealing with moral disagreements in politics.”¹⁵ Consensus between citizens is not the end-game of deliberative democracy. The goal, rather, is to develop mutual respect among and between citizens. State the authors, deliberation “cannot make incompatible values compatible, but it can help participants recognize the moral merit in their opponents’ claim when those claims have merit.”¹⁶ Gutmann and Thompson move deliberative democracy beyond procedural processes wherein citizens agree to a set of abstract principles of justice. As a political framework, deliberative democracy consists of an ongoing dialogue between different citizens that confronts moral disagreements and tensions. In negotiating disagreements and tensions, deliberative democracy fosters mutual respect between conflicting moral concerns among majority and minority citizens. In so doing, it secures the voice of minority groups, allowing those with different perspectives and moral claims to move forward in open-ended political relationships, which are subject to further revision and deliberation.

Gutmann and Thompson differ from earlier theorists of deliberative democracy, which required citizens to bracket their backgrounds within the deliberative process. Neutrality in the

¹⁵ Amy Gutmann & Denis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

public sphere, according to this earlier conception, ensures that political decision-making is based on universal values of tolerance and equality. Jürgen Habermas's description serves as an example of this earlier formulation. He writes:

People with competing value orientations who take part in a process of argumentation will more easily reach agreement on a common course of action if they can have recourse to more abstract points of view that are neutral with respect to the content at issue.¹⁷

In order for deliberation within the public sphere to be effective, Habermas contends that persons must ignore their cultures and histories. What differentiates Gutmann and Thompson's conception of deliberative democracy from Habermas's earlier formulation is that it allows deliberators to bring their moral concerns and historical experiences into political interaction. Describes Bashir: "[Gutmann and Thompson] bring moral disagreements...from the private sphere and background culture into the heart of public life."¹⁸ On Gutmann and Thompson's account, deliberative democracy recognizes that the claims of justice emerge from the lived-experiences of citizens and should be taken seriously in their engagement.

While deliberative democracy offers the possibility for oppressed citizens to voice their concerns within the public sphere, Bashir criticizes Gutmann and Thompson on two main grounds. First, Gutmann and Thompson's conception of deliberative democracy presumes that citizens regard each other as equals in order to deliberate effectively. But Bashir contends that equality has not been achieved in the case of historically oppressed social groups. States Bashir:

The difficulty is that [Gutmann and Thompson] assume that political adversaries in divided societies mutually accept and respect each other as equals prior to the process of reconciliation. This mutual acceptance and equality is precisely what political adversaries lack and what a process of reconciliation aspires to realize.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990), 75.

¹⁸ Bashir, "Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups," 62.

¹⁹ Ibid., 64 – 65.

The second criticism Bashir develops with respect to deliberative democracy centers on the fact that it presumes interaction between equal individuals, not between equal social groups. But historically oppressed social groups see justice as a collective struggle, not an individual struggle, Bashir argues. The struggle for justice by historically oppressed social groups centers on collective organization, activism, and experience. Focusing on justice at the level of individuals “depoliticizes social struggles and prevents collective action.”²⁰ On Gutmann and Thompson’s account, deliberative democracy pertains to individuals apart from their social group membership.

Bashir’s criticisms of deliberative democracy lead him to articulate more robust principles of reconciliation. According to Bashir, the politics of reconciliation must entail three principles to guide political engagement between dominant and historically oppressed social groups in order to realize justice. The first principle recognizes “the significance of the collective memory and history of exclusion.”²¹ Dominant groups, argues Bashir, erase and suppress the stories of historically oppressed social groups and “[downplay] the occurrences of past harms...and [portray] the dominant group as not responsible for causing these harms.”²² This principle takes seriously the stories of historically oppressed social groups and situates them as counter-discourses to the dominant group’s legitimacy in the national story. It allows for a public space in which historically oppressed social groups can voice their stories of exclusion. These counter-discourses challenge the meta-narrative of historical amnesia and offer a counter-narrative to the dominant group’s preeminence in society. Historically oppressed social groups

²⁰ Ibid., 66.

²¹ Ibid., 55.

²² Ibid., 56.

will remain skeptical, writes Bashir, of “any conception of democratic inclusion that requires them to set aside these memories of oppression and exclusion.”²³

Bashir’s first principle of reconciliation extends to issues that are relevant to Indigenous peoples and their colonizing experiences. It complicates the easy solution that democratic nation-states use to smooth over historical injustices committed against Indigenous peoples, what Nadim Rouhana describes as the “politics of historical denial.”²⁴ For Rouhana, there is something superficial about democratic engagement without an honest and truthful conversation of historical oppression and its current impact on the lives of oppressed peoples. Bashir’s first principle shows that unless stories of colonization come into public consciousness, the colonizing history will continue without examination. This minimizes the need to address past wrongs. Bashir’s first principle, by contrast, establishes the condition for democratic nation-states to confront their colonizing past and its continued legacy. It does so directly by creating a public space in which Indigenous peoples can voice their stories of oppression.

Bashir’s second principle of reconciliation emphasizes the need for dominant groups to “[acknowledge] the occurrence of historical injustice and seek to repair them.”²⁵ Unless the dominant group recognizes that historical injustices are not accidental occurrences but instead are central to its national story, it will be unlikely that historically oppressed social groups would want to participate in the democratic process. States Bashir:

As long as these past injustices are denied or portrayed as accidental historical incidents, and not as an integral part of the national narratives, the achievement of democratic accommodation is hardly attainable from the perspective of the historically oppressed social group.²⁶

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nadim Rouhana, “Reconciling History and Equal Citizenship in Israel: Democracy and the Politics of Historical Denial,” in *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73.

²⁵ Bashir, “Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups,” 57.

²⁶ Ibid.

Bashir refers to the examples of Native Americans and African Americans who will remain distrustful of any attempts of democratic inclusion until “the past wrongs against their ancestors are acknowledged as an integral part of American history.”²⁷ What this suggests, according to Bashir, is that the nation-state cannot, morally speaking, offer one hand of democratic inclusion towards Indigenous peoples without also offering the other hand of reparations.

Bashir’s second principle of reconciliation resonates with several Indigenous scholars who criticize reconciliation processes that exclude or minimize reparations towards Indigenous peoples. Speaking about Canada’s reconciliation process, Gerald Taiaiake Alfred argues that reconciliation without reparations pacifies Indigenous peoples and seduces them into accepting their colonized position within a liberal democratic framework. States Alfred: “I see reconciliation as an emasculating concept, weak-kneed and easily accepting of half-hearted measures of a notion of justice that does nothing to help Indigenous peoples regain their dignity and strength.”²⁸ To regain the dignity and strength of Indigenous peoples, Alfred contends that the Canadian government needs to undergo a reparations process prior to any movement towards reconciliation with First Nations Peoples. Reparations for First Nations peoples center primarily on land reclamations and financial restitutions for past injustices committed by the Canadian government. Without reparations, Alfred contends, reconciliation “would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice.”²⁹

Bashir’s third principle of reconciliation emphasizes the complicity of dominant groups in the historical injustices of oppressed social groups. It places the burden on dominant groups

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, “Restitution is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples,” in *Response, Responsibility and Renewal: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Journey* Gregory, eds., Jonathan Dewar Younging and Mike Delagn (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009), 181.

²⁹ Ibid., 152.

to repair historical injustices by requiring “the oppressors and dominators to take responsibility for causing these injustices and offer a public apology.”³⁰ Public apologies can take on multiple forms and activities—memorials, museums, or holidays—and they must be perceived by historically oppressed social groups as authentic acts of atonement on the part of the dominant group as opposed to being symbolic gestures devoid of sincerity, redress, or compensation. According to Bashir, a formal apology “is not to romanticize or perpetuate guilt or victimhood...[but rather to] help citizens...understand differently their history and its connection to current political, social, and economic inequalities.”³¹ Public apologies serve as a means to repair relationships between groups.

Bashir addresses the problem of whether current generations can apologize for the injustices committed by their ancestors. For Bashir, we cannot *personally* blame individuals or hold them *personally* responsible for injustices caused by their ancestors. But “it is not unreasonable to hold them politically (not personally) responsible,” Bashir argues.³² Political responsibility, Bashir argues, recognizes that the inequalities currently experienced by historically oppressed social groups are tied to past injustices. As a result the current generation benefits in material and economic ways from the historical injustices engendered by their ancestors.

Taking Canada’s formal apology as an example, Stephen Harper’s public apology towards First Nations Peoples does not implicate him or present-day Canadian citizens for being personally responsible for the past relocation of Indigenous children into residential boarding schools. No person currently living was present to make these decisions. Present-day Canadian

³⁰ Bashir, “Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups,” 58. Bashir does indicate that historically oppressed social groups also have responsibilities. I address this later in the chapter. But his main claim at this point is that dominant groups must take responsibility for causing historical injustices that are tied to current forms of inequality.

³¹ Ibid., 58.

³² Ibid.

citizens need only apologize for how the actions of their ancestors caused the injustices that have benefited their current economic and political circumstances. What current citizens instead apologize for is not taking responsibility to correct injustices that still linger in the present.

We can now see important differences between deliberative democracy and the politics of reconciliation as discussed by Bashir. Deliberative democracy takes place primarily between individuals rather than between social groups. In deliberative democracy, individuals are presumed to be equal and stand within a reciprocal relationship. Writes Bashir: “Gutmann and Thompson postulate the egalitarian principle of reciprocity (and accountability and publicity) as a precondition for deliberation.”³³ The aim of deliberative democracy is for individuals to sway each other through the compelling force of argument. This suggests that rationality guides the deliberation process between citizens, in the sense that individuals offer reasons to convince the other of their argument’s merit.

Deliberative democracy also can address the problem of historical injustices. Duncan Ivison argues that deliberative democracy offers a framework to deal with contestations about past injustices. This has taken the form of truth and reconciliation commissions in post-conflict societies. Guided by the norms of reciprocity and equality, deliberations about historical injustices encourage individuals to find “common ground where it exists and mutual respect where it does not.”³⁴ Although deliberative democracy may not lead to “a conclusive judgment about the ultimate meaning of the past,” it can help ensure that the procedures to contest historical injustices are reciprocal and open.³⁵ In deliberation, individuals are expected to respect the viewpoints and equality of those with whom they disagree.

³³ Ibid., 65.

³⁴ Duncan Ivison, “Deliberative Democracy and the Politics of Reconciliation,” in *Deliberative Democracy in Practice*, ed. David Kahane (Vancouver, BC, CAN: UBC Press, 2009), 124.

³⁵ Ibid.

By contrast, the politics of reconciliation occurs primarily between collectives. These collectives are neither equal nor reciprocal. Reconciliation acknowledges that the political engagement between dominant and historically oppressed social groups is embedded in power relations. Bashir's emphasis on acknowledgment is the key idea that distinguishes reconciliation from deliberative democracy. Writes Bashir:

Acknowledgement goes beyond the standard of reciprocity. Whereas the principle of reciprocity asks unequal parties to treat each other as if they were equals in public reasoning, the principle of acknowledgement demands the explicit recognition of asymmetries and unbalanced power relations.³⁶

Reconciliation, in other words, differs from deliberative democracy by the fact that it assumes an asymmetrical relationship between collectives. Rather than attempting to find common ground, reconciliation "recognizes these asymmetries and their significance...as fundamental issues for political public debate on the existing political and social arrangements."³⁷ The interaction between asymmetrical groups must center on the inequalities that exist between them.

Despite the differences between reconciliation and deliberative democracy, Bashir does not want to jettison deliberative democracy as a viable democratic theory and practice for historically oppressed social groups. While Bashir's three principles provide a political framework to accommodate the demands of historically oppressed social groups, he recognizes that certain limitations exist. For Bashir, the politics of reconciliation cannot effectively facilitate democratic engagement unless it is tied to a democratic theory that can engender political conversations between dominant and historically oppressed social groups. Writes Bashir: "[In] dealing with demands of historically excluded social groups, reconciliation should not be viewed as a comprehensive framework for democratic politics."³⁸ Bashir thus brings

³⁶ Bashir, "Historically Oppressed Social Groups," 65.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 69.

reconciliation and deliberation together into a more comprehensive political framework that can engender historically authentic conversations between whites and Natives.

Arguing that deliberative democracy should focus on dialogue between collectives and not between individuals, Bashir contends that reconciliation and deliberative democracy fulfill different yet complementary political roles. Reconciliation supplements the deliberative process by linking the backward-looking strategy of reconciliation between collectives with the forward-looking decisions of deliberative processes between individuals. By *backward-looking*, Bashir highlights the idea that reconciliation acknowledges and addresses enduring effects of past injustices committed against historically oppressed social groups. By *forward-looking*, Bashir refers to the role of deliberation in facilitating future-oriented decisions between individuals engaged in political dialogue. States Bashir, because reconciliation “lacks regulative norms and procedures for decision-making,” the “norms of deliberation become an essential supplement for reconciliation.”³⁹ Norms of deliberation include reciprocity, respect, and equality between collectives as they engage in deliberations over current political policies and practices.

Bashir’s marriage of reconciliation and deliberation develops a “thicker notion of deliberation, one which views modes of speech, such as story-telling, testimonies, and greetings, as legitimate modes of speech.”⁴⁰ This “thicker” notion of deliberation offers a comprehensive political framework for acknowledging, repairing, and taking responsibility for the injustices endured by historically oppressed social groups, such that estranged or acrimonious groups can deliberate more effectively over specific issues or concerns.

The marriage between reconciliation and deliberation thus establishes a meaning of justice that can better accommodate the circumstances of Indigenous peoples. The federal

³⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

government's forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities to off-reservation boarding schools is a unique history of colonization and assimilation. These historical events created the conditions of oppression that still linger in the lives of Indigenous communities. Including Indigenous peoples in inclusive conversations without addressing the link between historical injustices and their enduring effects renders the experiences of Indigenous peoples insignificant. Bashir references to Native Americans who will remain distrustful of attempts to establish democratic inclusion until past wrongs are acknowledged speaks to the necessity of political conversations to link past wrongs with current forms of injustices. For many Indigenous communities, the enduring legacy of educational practices and policies not only persists within their lived memories but colors their perceptions of education. A politics of reconciliation can and must foreground Indigenous educational experiences and perceptions in order to make them visible within political conversations.

To summarize, I have argued that the politics of reconciliation offers a promising framework to accommodate the demands of Indigenous peoples. On Bashir's account, reconciliation highlights colonizing history by "voicing the collective memory of exclusion; [acknowledging] historical injustices; and taking responsibility and offering an apology for these injustices."⁴¹ Unless these three principles are present, any attempt for reconciliation on behalf of the nation-state will be superficial and short-lived. The politics of reconciliation enriches the conversation between Indigenous peoples and whites by requiring groups to deal directly with colonizing history and its enduring effects. It establishes the claim that no deliberation between dominant groups and Indigenous peoples can ultimately be successful until the historical legacy of colonization has been brought into the conversation. The political conversation becomes more

⁴¹ Ibid., 55.

historically authentic, I argue, because it requires both white and Native groups to take the past seriously before moving forward in future-oriented deliberations.

Reconciliation: A Decolonizing Conversation

Decolonization plays an important role within the postcolonial and Indigenous studies literature. A direct and active response to colonization, decolonization entails political and cultural revival strategies that challenge the domination and exploitation of Indigenous lands and peoples. As Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird state, decolonization is the “meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. Decolonization is engaged in the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation.”⁴² As a political and cultural strategy, decolonization includes “creating, restoring, and birthing...various strategies to liberate oneself [and] adapt to or survive oppressive conditions.”⁴³

I want to examine decolonization as a political strategy that challenges essentialist definitions of Indigenous peoples. According to Pramod Nayar, decolonization is a *process* that seeks “freedom from colonial forms of thinking [and] to revive native, local, and vernacular forms of knowledge by questioning and overturning European categories and epistemologies.”⁴⁴ Through colonization, European nations constructed a colonial discourse that essentialized Native peoples and identities. Colonial discourses defined the “native...as primitive, depraved, pagan, criminal, immoral, vulnerable and effeminate.”⁴⁵ These colonial discourses served as lenses through which European nations defined Indigenous peoples. European nations used

⁴² Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird, “Introduction: Decolonizing Our Minds and Actions,” *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, eds. Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012), 3.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Pramod Nayar, *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 1-2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.

colonial discourses to relegate Indigenous peoples to a subordinated status within their own lands and territories. Decolonization thus seeks freedom from the colonizing discourses that have essentialized Native identity and have prevented Indigenous groups from expressing their cultures, languages, and values in traditional ways.

The decolonization process is complicated by the fact that the legacy of colonization persists in the lives of Indigenous peoples. Nelson Maldonado-Torres distinguishes between two concepts—*colonialism* and *coloniality*—to explain this complication. Colonialism refers to the political, cultural, and economic power of one nation over a particular group through acts of violence, domination, and possession. Coloniality refers to the “longstanding patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism.”⁴⁶ Important in Maldonado-Torres’s distinction is the fact that coloniality survives in the everyday discourses, experiences, and structures of colonized peoples. Coloniality distorts Indigenous peoples’ self-images and aspirations, such that “as modern subjects, we [colonized peoples] breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.”⁴⁷ For Maldonado-Torres, the project of decolonization not only refers to the “confrontation with the racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies that were put in place or strengthened by European modernity.”⁴⁸ It also refers to the recovery of colonized peoples, what he calls the *damnés*, “condemned of the earth,”⁴⁹ from these everyday discourses and structures, restoring their full humanity and being in the world.

The pervasiveness of coloniality is due to the continued systematic suppression and erasure of Indigenous cultures, languages, and epistemologies. As Marie Battiste describes: “Eurocentric thinkers dismissed cultural life they did not understand: they found it to be

⁴⁶ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” *Cultural Studies* 21, 2-3 (2007), 243.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁴⁹ Maldonado-Torres explicitly uses Franz Fanon’s concept of *damnés* to describe colonized status.

unsystematic and incapable of meeting the productivity needs of the modern world.”⁵⁰ The suppression and erasure of Indigenous ways of thinking and being continues to have deleterious effects on Indigenous peoples and communities. Explains Brian Brayboy:

Colonization has been so complete that even many American Indians fail to recognize that we are taking up colonialist ideas when we fail to express ourselves in ways that may challenge dominant society’s ideas about who and what we are supposed to be, how we are supposed to behave, and what we are supposed to be within the larger population.⁵¹

For Brayboy, Indigenous peoples manifest coloniality by the fact that they have internalized the colonizer’s ideologies and domination, as well as their own subordination and inferiority as subjugated peoples. Indigenous peoples thus maintain their own colonized status by internalizing dominant ways of thinking and being.

Maldonado-Torres’ concept of coloniality describes what is critical in the decolonization process of Indigenous peoples. The decolonization process begins by raising the consciousness of Indigenous peoples about their lived experience in coloniality. Indigenous scholars refer to this as the *decolonization of the mind*.⁵² In order for Indigenous peoples to articulate specific strategies that challenge colonizing discourses, it is critical for them to interrogate coloniality and its impact on Indigenous communities. This suggests that Indigenous peoples need to awaken to the fact that coloniality persists in their everyday lives.⁵³ In short, it requires them to decolonize the mind. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s description is helpful:

⁵⁰ Marie Battiste, *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A literature Review with Recommendations* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002), 5.

⁵¹ Bryan M. Brayboy, “Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education,” *Urban Review* 37, 5 (2005), 431.

⁵² I recognize that not all Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars agree with the decolonizing of the mind concept. See: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2012), 3–35.

⁵³ To understand the argument about waking up consciousness, see: Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird, eds. *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012).

The reach of imperialism into ‘our heads’ challenges those who belong to colonized communities to understand how this [colonization] occurred, partly because we perceive a need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity.⁵⁴

As Smith’s analysis suggests, part of the decolonizing process requires Indigenous peoples to understand how they have come to their colonized situation. Indigenous peoples need to recognize how coloniality persists in all aspects of their lives in order to realize liberation.

I want to position the decolonization of the mind as an essential political strategy for Indigenous peoples. Two points become critical. First, the decolonization of the mind immerses Indigenous peoples within their own traditions, languages, and worldviews. This can be achieved by Native peoples creating spaces in which their communities can reclaim their sense of humanity. Decolonizing the mind allows them to think and speak from their own cultural perspectives. The more Indigenous peoples are able to think and speak from their own cultural perspectives the more they are able to interrogate the ‘colonizer within’. To interrogate the ‘colonizer within’ is to awaken to coloniality, which means to become aware of the fact that Indigenous peoples have internalized colonization. In so doing, Indigenous peoples develop the critical consciousness to understand how they have unwittingly adopted dominant modes of thinking and being. As Gregory Cajete describes, “the effects of internalized colonization—manifested most profoundly as hopelessness and powerlessness—must be understood and remedied.”⁵⁵ Thus, the decolonization of the mind helps Indigenous peoples recover from the deep wounds of colonization, surfacing and challenging the dominant modes of thinking and being that Indigenous peoples have internalized.

⁵⁴ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 7.

⁵⁵ Gregory Cajete, “Decolonizing Indigenous Education in a Twenty-First Century World,” in *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, eds. Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012), 148.

This point resonates with Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, who argue that the first step in the decolonization process is to “question the legitimacy of colonization.”⁵⁶ The decolonization of the mind requires Indigenous peoples to reach a level of critical consciousness, “an active understanding that you are (or have been) colonized.”⁵⁷ Once the legitimacy of colonization has been questioned and challenged, Indigenous peoples can begin a process “by which [they] turn from subjugated human beings into liberated human beings.”⁵⁸

Second, decolonizing the mind allows Indigenous peoples to build the necessary foundation to realize other decolonization projects. The more Indigenous peoples awaken to the pervasiveness of coloniality in their own lived-experiences and tribal communities the more they are able to challenge the ‘colonizer without’. To interrogate the ‘colonizer without’ is to critically examine the historical and current strategies of colonization that are interwoven throughout the broader social and political structure. Writes Cajete: “we must especially understand the ways in which colonialism continues to function in hidden forms in educational, institutional, economic, and political structures.”⁵⁹ Insofar as Indigenous peoples interrogate colonization, they are in a better position see how to transform the broader social and political structure that perpetuates colonizing policies and practices. This allows them to move forward with other decolonization projects. These decolonizing projects include the reclamation of stolen lands, the recovery of suppressed cultures and languages, or the restoration of tribal communities. Thus, the decolonization of the mind serves as an essential first step in the overall

⁵⁶ Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, “Introduction,” 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Cajete, “Decolonizing Indigenous Education,” 148.

process of decolonization. As Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird state, “the [decolonization] project that begins with our minds, therefore, has revolutionary potential.”⁶⁰

We are now in a position to see how the politics of reconciliation can facilitate decolonizing conversations that aim to decolonize the mind. I previously mentioned that inclusive conversations seek consensus between different groups on a given topic or issue. Inclusive conversations presume equality between different conversers. They also expect conversers to be willing and able to engage in conversation. This suggests that inclusive conversations are sufficient to overcome historical and current injustices committed against Indigenous peoples. *Consequently, colonization and coloniality remain in the background of the conversation.* On this account, inclusion allows white and Native groups to move forward from the legacy of colonization and find common ground in conversation.

By contract, decolonizing conversations begin with the assumption that white and Native groups do not stand as equals in the conversation. This is due to the longstanding process of colonization and pervasiveness of coloniality. The aim of decolonizing conversations is to engage in conversations that directly and explicitly confront colonization and its enduring effects. *Consequently, colonization and coloniality come forward in decolonizing conversations.* Recognizing the inequalities between dominant groups and Indigenous peoples, decolonizing conversations compel white and Native groups to question the legitimacy of colonization and seek to transform it. On this account, it is only through decolonizing conversations that historically authentic conversations between whites and Natives can lift off the ground.

The politics of reconciliation facilitates decolonizing conversations in two important ways. First, Bashir’s emphasis on historical injustices and their enduring effects facilitates the decolonizing strategy for Indigenous peoples to interrogate the ‘colonizer within’. To interrogate

⁶⁰ Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, “Introduction,” 3.

the ‘colonizer within’ implies that there exist opportunities for Indigenous peoples to question the legitimacy of colonization and awaken to coloniality. It presumes that there is a context in which Indigenous peoples can actually engage in the decolonization of the mind.

Reconciliation facilitates the decolonization of the mind by linking past injustices to current forms of inequality between dominant and historically oppressed social groups. As Bashir explains, the “historical character of the oppression shapes identities in terms of conflict and opposition, and this raises profound challenges for any conception of democratic inclusion that must be addressed head on.”⁶¹ For Bashir, there is a direct link between how the historical occurrences of injustices have shaped the identity of oppressed groups. Rather than relegating colonization to the past or minimizing it in contemporary political interactions, reconciliation recognizes that in order to accommodate the unique demands of Indigenous peoples we must bring colonization and its effects forward in the conversation. White and Native groups engaged in conversation cannot minimize historical oppression, but rather see it as the starting point of their interaction. On this account, these groups must look backward in order to move forward in political partnership. “What matters to group members,” writes Bashir, “is not simply that they are oppressed but also how they came to be oppressed.”⁶² It is through reconciliation that Indigenous peoples would be able to interrogate colonization and question its legitimacy.

Second, Bashir’s emphasis on reparations and taking responsibility facilitates the decolonizing strategy for Indigenous peoples to challenge the ‘colonizer without’. We saw that the decolonization of the mind recognizes that Indigenous groups have internalized colonization. Other decolonization strategies become possible only when Indigenous peoples begin to recover from the deep wound of colonization. To challenge the ‘colonizer without’ implies that

⁶¹ Bashir, “Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups,” 53.

⁶² Ibid., 54.

Indigenous peoples have opportunities to reclaim their humanity. It also implies that the broader social and political structures need to be transformed to help facilitate this process.

Reconciliation fulfills this decolonizing strategy by requiring dominant groups to repair the damages caused by historical injustices. Reparations are not merely symbolic, Bashir explains, but must include “practical concerns such as the redistribution of material resources.”⁶³ But reparations are not only financially or materially based. For Bashir, repairing the damages caused by historical injustices requires dominant groups to help historically oppressed social groups recover and reclaim their sense of humanity. Writes Bashir: “[taking responsibility helps] members of stigmatized and excluded social groups to reclaim, re-describe, or transform their self-understanding and self-image.”⁶⁴ This is important for Indigenous peoples because it recognizes that financial restitutions or land reclamations are not the only issues in helping them attain greater recognition or equality. Transformations are needed on the social and political structural level because they help change the stigmatization that Indigenous peoples endure in the broader culture. As Bashir states, “taking responsibility and offering an apology are incomplete...[if they are] disconnected from efforts to change national narratives or identities.”⁶⁵

This analysis shows that the politics of reconciliation is in a better position to facilitate the aims of decolonization rather than a politics of inclusion. A politics of inclusion that engages groups in inclusive conversations might recognize historical injustices committed against Indigenous peoples. But because it does not foreground these historical injustices in the conversation, it lacks the framework to facilitate conversations that directly and explicitly interrogate colonization and its enduring effects. It assumes that the inclusion of different groups can overcome historical injustices and thus make partners in the conversation more equal. This

⁶³ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

is what we might describe as the business-as-usual kind of conversations between white and Native groups. Business-as-usual conversations maintain the status quo in white and Native relations and minimize what is central to Indigenous experiences. The politics of reconciliation challenges the business-as-usual engagements between whites and Natives by facilitating a new kind of conversation. It does so by making historical injustices explicit and central in white and Native interactions.

The politics of reconciliation also goes one step beyond a politics of inclusion by compelling whites to take responsibility and repair historical and current injustices. Because the politics of inclusion does not make colonization and colonality explicit in white and Native relations, it does not seek to repair the damages caused by historical injustices. Reparations are not part of the conversation. Given the fact that reconciliation links past injustices to current forms of inequality, it ensures that the conversation between white and Native groups entails specific actions to repair the damages of colonization. Writes Bashir: “The emphasis on these issues [historical injustices] is important because it helps bring into public attention the specificities of the experiences of oppression and exclusion, and the need to address them and their intimate connection to current inequalities.”⁶⁶

In summary, my aim in this section has been to show that reconciliation can effectively facilitate decolonizing conversations between white and Native groups. Decolonization is a political strategy that seeks the political and cultural liberation of Indigenous peoples from colonialism and colonality. This involves decolonizing the mind by interrogating the ‘colonizer within’ and challenging the ‘colonizer without’. Unlike inclusive conversations, which minimize historical injustices for the sake of consensus, decolonizing conversations directly and explicitly confront colonization and its enduring effects. I have argued that Bashir’s emphasis on taking

⁶⁶ Ibid., 69.

responsibility for historical injustices provides political space in which white and Native groups can successfully facilitate decolonizing conversations. Through reconciliation, whites and Natives can engage in decolonizing conversations that help Native groups recover from the deep wounds of colonization and reclaim their sense of humanity.

Reconciliation & Survivance

Thus far, I have proposed that reconciliation is a promising political framework that can facilitate decolonizing conversations between white and Native groups. Reconciliation is not without its critics, however. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have questioned whether reconciliation is a desirable political strategy for Indigenous peoples.⁶⁷ Critics of reconciliation argue that reconciliation efforts promoted by the nation-state actually ignore the demands of Indigenous peoples and thereby continue a colonizing agenda. Alfred captures this criticism well: “without massive restitution, including land, financial transfers and other forms of assistance to compensate for past harms and continuing injustices committed against our peoples, reconciliation would permanently enshrine colonial injustices and is itself a further injustice.”⁶⁸ No matter how sincere democratic nation-states appear to be, the historical

⁶⁷ Critical examples of reconciliation include the following: James Tully argues that reconciliation is a strategy to accommodate Indigenous peoples “as bearers of...aboriginal group rights in exchange for surrendering or denying the existence of their rights as free peoples.” For Tully, reconciliation accommodates Indigenous peoples only by recognizing their group rights at the expense of their status as self-determining peoples. In her analysis of Canada’s reconciliation process, Paulette Regan agrees highlights two criticisms. One criticism sees reconciliation as a means for the Canadian government to refuse “Indigenous peoples right to self-determination...[and] to cover up genocide,” while another sees reconciliation as “a massive public exercise in either inducing or alleviating settler guilt.” According to these and other scholars, we should be suspicious of reconciliation because it continues the colonization of Indigenous peoples and relegates their issues to a similar status as minority group rights. For a concise analysis of the criticisms towards reconciliation, see: Victoria Freeman, “In Defense of Reconciliation,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* vol. 27, no. 1 (2014), 213-223.

⁶⁸ Alfred, “Restitution,” 195-196.

relationship between Indigenous peoples and the nation-state is replete with broken promises and failed policies. Indigenous peoples simply cannot trust the nation-state.⁶⁹

Critics of reconciliation thus contend that Indigenous peoples need to separate themselves from the dominant group and resist any attempt to reconcile with whites. This claim does not mean that Indigenous peoples should seek absolute separation from the nation-state. It means that they must realize decolonization without partnering with the dominant group. On this account, resistance to colonization and the aim of decolonization are exclusively Indigenous projects that can be accomplished apart from whites. As Victoria Freeman states, “resistance is more important than relationship-building with non-Indigenous peoples.”⁷⁰

Contrary to the critics of reconciliation, my contention is that the politics of reconciliation remains a useful political framework that can further decolonizing strategies of Indigenous peoples. The reason is that reconciliation can facilitate opportunities for Indigenous groups that allow them to partner with whites on certain decolonizing strategies. I recognize that not all decolonizing strategies require a partnership between whites and Natives. Alfred is correct to doubt the sincerity and practicality of these partnerships within an existing colonizing state. He writes: “history has demonstrated that it is impossible either to transform the colonial society from within colonial institutions or to achieve justice and peaceful co-existence without fundamentally transforming the institutions of the colonial society themselves.”⁷¹

However, my argument does not center on decolonization strategies that Indigenous groups need to undergo in their own tribal communities. These decolonization strategies include the reclamations of stolen lands, the resurgence of tribal sovereignty, and the revitalization of

⁶⁹ This stance is well-justified in the Canadian context. Shortly after offering the formal apology, Stephen Harper claimed that “in Canada we have no history of colonialism.” The denial of colonization exacerbates the political distrust that exists between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government.

⁷⁰ Victoria Freeman, “In Defense of Reconciliation,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* vol. 27, no. 1 (2014), 214.

⁷¹ Alfred, “Restitution,” 183-184.

Indigenous languages and cultures. Rather, my argument centers on decolonization strategies in the context of *American Indian education*. Specifically, I want to make the argument that a political partnership between whites and Natives is in the best interest of Indigenous peoples within the context of public schools. My argument is particularly important in public education contexts that educate high numbers of Native students. It is also important given the fact that the vast majority of Native students across the United States attend public schools.⁷² In these public schools, Native students are primarily taught by non-Indigenous educators using a Euro-centric curriculum. Rather than rejecting partnerships between whites and Natives, my argument presents an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to partner with whites to transform public education contexts that promote and reflect decolonization strategies.

To support this claim, I contend that reconciliation offers the possibility for white and Native groups to foster the necessary relationships that can transform public education. My argument builds upon Freeman's idea of reconciliation and its ability to help realize the decolonizing aims of Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation, according to Freeman, "is an ongoing process of building the relationships, alliances, and social understandings that are necessary to support the systematic changes that are true decolonization."⁷³ For Freeman, political relationships with whites are essential for Indigenous peoples because the colonizer is here to stay. States Freeman: "because the colonizers never leave they must be transformed."⁷⁴ In order for Indigenous peoples to further the aims of decolonization, contends Freeman, it is necessary to transform how the colonizer thinks about Indigenous peoples and issues. This transformation of the colonizer does not mean that whites and Natives resolve deep-seated issues of inequality or

⁷² Approximately 90% of students attend public education. See the National Indian Education Association website for detailed statistics: <http://www.niea.org/Research/Statistics.aspx#Discipline>.

⁷³ Freeman, "In Defense of Reconciliation," 216.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

oppression. As Freeman describes, reconciliation is not about “seeking forgiveness...or ‘getting over colonization’ or simply ‘making friends’.”⁷⁵ Rather, it is about building alliances between whites and Natives that help serve the interests of Indigenous peoples.

Thus, Indigenous peoples should not jettison the idea of reconciliation, but instead should utilize it as a political framework to transform colonizing policies and practices in order to serve Indigenous interests. This utilization of reconciliation requires partnerships and alliances between Indigenous peoples and whites, especially in contexts where white educators and policy-makers oversee the education of Native students in public schools. Through reconciliation, white and Native groups can work collaboratively to transform public educational institutions that reflect and promote the aims of decolonization.

But collaboration between whites and Natives is challenging. Recall that in Chapter Three I argued that the Indigenous voice of survivance talks back to the dominant group’s colonizing agenda. Survivance articulates a “standpoint, a worldview, and a presence”⁷⁶ that speaks from distinctive tribal perspectives, experiences, and traditions. Survivance promotes a decolonizing strategy that advances and strengthens tribal sovereignty. As a decolonizing strategy, survivance awakens Indigenous peoples to internalized colonization and challenges the existing colonizing structure that seeks to suppress tribal sovereignty. Survivance shows us what is central to decolonization: it is the ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples to remain sovereign.

This characterization of survivance shows why collaboration between whites and Natives is challenging. Survivance is a political strategy that is undertaken *in opposition to* and *isolation from* whites. Given my analysis of the politics of reconciliation, it is now possible to consider

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Brian McKinley Jones Brayboy, “‘Yakkity Yak’ and ‘Talking Back’: An Examination of Sites of Survivance in Indigenous Knowledge,” in *Indigenous Knowledge and Education: Sites of Struggle, Strength, and Survivance*, eds. Malia Villegas, Sabina Neugebauer, and Kerry Venegas (Harvard Educational Review, 2008), 341.

survivance in a new way. I want to transition from thinking about survivance as an isolated Indigenous strategy in opposition to whites to thinking about it as an opportunity for whites and Natives to engage in decolonizing conversations. The politics of reconciliation can facilitate this new way of thinking about survivance:

- The politics of reconciliation can facilitate decolonizing conversations between white and Native groups.
- The Indigenous voice of survivance is a decolonizing strategy.
- Reconciliation can therefore facilitate the Indigenous voice of survivance.

My argument suggests that reconciliation allows the Indigenous voice of survivance to be in partnership with whites. Put differently, what reconciliation adds that survivance alone cannot provide is a political framework in which whites and Natives can partner on decolonizing strategies in the context of public schools.

At this point we are now in a position to see how Bashir's three principles of reconciliation integrate with the Indigenous voice of survivance. First, we saw that, according to Bashir's first principle, dominant groups need to create public space for historically oppressed social groups to offer counter-narratives to the dominant group's preeminence in the national story. "The significance of these counter-narratives," writes Bashir, "is to bring to public attention voices, stories, and injustices that have been either silenced or denied."⁷⁷ These counter-narratives expressed by historically oppressed social groups are not debates based on abstract principles of justice. In these public spaces created by the dominant groups, historically oppressed social groups share their collective memory of exclusion and oppression "through narration and story-telling."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Bashir, "Accommodating Historically Oppressed Social Groups," 55.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 56.

In the context of Indigenous peoples, Bashir's first principle of reconciliation suggests that whites need to create public spaces for Indigenous peoples to bring the Indigenous voice of survivance to the foreground of the conversation. Because these are voices of survivance, Indigenous peoples are able to articulate meanings of Native identity and tribal sovereignty in contrast to the dominant group beliefs about Indigenous peoples. Specifically, reconciliation creates public spaces for Indigenous peoples to speak from a position of sovereignty. By sovereignty, I mean the right of Indigenous peoples to determine and decide for themselves the direction of their own present and future circumstances. David Wilkins defines tribal sovereignty in the following way: "[sovereignty is] a tribe's right to retain a measure of independence from outside entities and the power of regulating one's internal affairs."⁷⁹

The Indigenous voice of survivance begins with the assumption that Indigenous groups are the sovereign peoples of the land. While survivance voices might understand tribal sovereignty differently, the basic claim among survivance voices is that the aim of Indigenous peoples is to assert and strengthen tribal sovereignty. Bashir's first principle, then, is not merely a way for Indigenous groups to offer counter-narratives to the dominant group. It creates a public space for Indigenous peoples to speak as sovereign peoples. Indigenous peoples are not merely expressing their collective story of injustice. Through survivance, Indigenous peoples are asserting the claim that they are sovereign entities but that this sovereignty has been suppressed because of colonizing policies and practices. Thus, because of reconciliation, the Indigenous voice of survivance becomes explicit and articulates the ongoing presence of indigeneity.

Second, we saw that Bashir's second principle of reconciliation requires dominant groups to hear, acknowledge, and repair the historical injustices committed against historically

⁷⁹ David Wilkins, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 48.

oppressed social groups. Acknowledgement and reparations build trust among these groups to participate in the political process. As Bashir explains, unless past wrongs are acknowledged and repaired, “it will be very hard for Native Americans to trust the broader society and its institutions that identify with them.”⁸⁰ Reconciliation thus compels dominant groups to accept these stories as legitimate claims about historical injustices and seek to repair them.

In the context of Indigenous peoples, Bashir’s second principle of reconciliation requires whites to acknowledge and take seriously the Indigenous voice of survivance. Without this principle, whites may or may not acknowledge survivance voices. As the dominant group responsible for colonizing history, whites have not been required to listen. Bashir’s second principle directs whites towards the voices of survivance and requires them to acknowledge Native claims. In short, this principle is designed to ensure that whites hear the Indigenous voices of survivance. But equally important, whites must not simply acknowledge that survivance voices are counter-narratives to the dominant group: they must also recognize that the survivance voice poses a legitimate claim of tribal sovereignty. If whites hear the story of exclusion and injustice, but fail to hear the claim of sovereignty, they miss the point. In acknowledging survivance voices, whites come to recognize that Indigenous peoples are speaking from positions of sovereignty to determine their own present and future affairs and interests. Put differently, to truly hear the voices of survivance is to acknowledge the sovereign status of Indigenous peoples.

Third, Bashir’s third principle requires dominant groups to take responsibility and apologize for historical and current injustices committed against historically oppressed social groups. But Bashir also recognizes that historically oppressed groups have to take responsibility for their *own* actions. He writes: “[Taking responsibility] does not of course exempt the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 57.

oppressed from having responsibility of their own actions, whether those acts are committed against the oppressing group or against ‘internal minorities’ within the groups.”⁸¹ Both dominant and historically oppressed social groups must take responsibility for transforming the ways in which historical oppression continues to negatively impact human relationships. Reconciliation shows that no group is exempt from transforming itself or society.

In the context of Indigenous peoples, Bashir’s third principle of reconciliation requires that both white and Native groups come to terms with the fact that both have a role to play in taking responsibility for colonization and its enduring legacy. The Indigenous voice of survivance shows what these responsibilities might entail for both groups.

For Natives, the survivance voice helps Indigenous peoples become aware of the fact that they have internalized colonization and at times replicate the same oppressive practices of the dominant group. One example is the ongoing issues of determining Native identity within Indigenous groups. Hilary Weaver states the issue this way:

Internalized oppression, a by-product of colonization, has become common among Indigenous peoples. We fight among ourselves and often accuse each other of not being ‘Indian enough’ based on differences in politics, religion, or phenotype...Such fighting among ourselves only serves to divide communities.⁸²

The integration of reconciliation and survivance offers a way for Native groups to take responsibility for transforming the oppressive meanings of identity that show up in their own communities. By reminding Indigenous peoples that they are the sovereign peoples of the land, survivance shows Native groups that they need to take responsibility for their complicity in colonizing practices *and* claim their sovereign status, thereby resisting the deep insidious power of colonial thinking and being.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Hilary Weaver, “Indigenous Identity: What Is it, and Who Really Has It?” *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2001), 250.

For whites, the integration of reconciliation with survivance shows whites precisely what they need to take responsibility and apologize for. We have already seen that Bashir's third principle requires dominant groups to take responsibility and apologize for historical injustices committed against historically oppressed social groups. By claiming tribal sovereignty, Indigenous peoples are now showing whites that taking responsible for colonization requires the white dominant group to acknowledge sovereignty and apologize for their role in denying that sovereignty.

In making this claim about the integration of the politics of reconciliation with survivance, I am disputing Indigenous scholars, such as Glen Coulthard and Taiaiake Alfred, who contend that reconciliation is a failed political strategy for Indigenous peoples. Earlier in this section I made the claim that various Indigenous scholars see reconciliation as another colonizing agenda of Indigenous peoples. Glen Coulthard, for example, criticizes reconciliation "as an inherently Eurocentric Christian concept with an emphasis on forgiveness rather than justice, which is inevitably reproductive of colonial thinking."⁸³

But in the context of public education, I am claiming that we need a different way of thinking about American Indian education reform. Specifically, my claim is that each side—white and Native groups—needs the other in order to sufficiently reform American Indian education in Montana's public schools. Thus, my argument demonstrates that the integration of reconciliation and survivance brings white and Natives into a decolonizing conversation in which the Indigenous claim to sovereignty becomes central to their engagement. In this decolonizing conversation, Indigenous peoples are able to articulate their sovereign ways of being in the world, while whites are compelled to acknowledge these ways of being in the world. *Put simply, through the integration of reconciliation and survivance Natives speak and whites listen.*

⁸³ Freeman, "In Defense of Reconciliation," 215.

Integrating the Indigenous voice of survivance with Bashir's three principles of reconciliation leads me to claim that the politics of reconciliation can position white and Native groups in an equal relationship. By equality, I mean that white and Native groups recognize the power differences between them and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous sovereignty in their conversations. My claim leads to a more robust notion of equality than inclusion implies. Inclusion suggests that equality means *sameness* between whites and Natives. An inclusive conversation presumes that white and Native groups come to the conversation on the same level of contribution over curricular matters. On this account, each voice counts the same on what an inclusive curriculum entails and how it should be implemented.

But inclusion misses the role that history has played in situating these groups in different power relations. Since the *Allotment and Assimilation* era, no relationship of equality has existed between white and Native groups. Given the history of colonization, we can thus describe the historical and contemporary relationship between whites and Natives as a relationship of inequality rather than equality. Put simply, these groups are not on the same level of political power: *whites are the colonizers and Indigenous peoples are the colonized*. My claim is that more equality is possible when whites and Natives *both* recognize the power differences that have historically existed between them *and* acknowledge the sovereignty of Natives. In short, more equality is possible when whites acknowledge sovereignty and Natives claim sovereignty.

Equality does not mean that structural equality between whites and Natives has been achieved. Alfred is correct when he states that in order for the relationship between nation-state and Indigenous peoples to improve the broader political structure needs to be radically transformed. He writes: "For justice to be achieved out of a colonial situation, a radical rehabilitation of the state is required. Without radical changes to the state itself, all proposed

changes are ultimately assimilative.”⁸⁴ Given that the broader social and political structure is ultimately assimilative, equality would only be possible when “settlers are forced into a reckoning of who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited.”⁸⁵

Alfred’s claim is helpful when we consider the question of equality on the broader social and political structural level. But I want to think of equality in the context of everyday interactions between whites and Natives as they occur in public schools. My idea of equality draws on Freeman’s claim about the need to build alliances between whites and Natives in everyday contexts. Decolonization is not only a broader social and political struggle, according to Freeman, but is “necessarily a bottom-up process involving individuals, families, communities and relationships to communities.”⁸⁶ For Freeman, when whites and Natives build alliances, they begin the important work of breaking down the divisions that separate them in order to realize necessary social and political changes in their immediate communities. These local alliances, although replete with “misunderstandings, serious differences, and learnings,” are important because they lay the foundation for broader social and political changes. Freeman refers to local alliances as “a laboratory for processes of personal decolonization, the development of alliances, and any successful nation-to-nation relationship.”⁸⁷ Thus, transforming the relationship between whites and Natives on the local level makes it possible to transform the relationship on the broader social and political structural level.

Building alliances on the local level allows us to think about the possibility of equality between whites and Natives. As white and Native groups interact with each other in public schools, local communities, or political organizations, the integration of reconciliation and

⁸⁴ Alfred, “Restitution,” 184.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Freeman, “In Defense of Reconciliation,” 220.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

survivance allows these groups to recognize each other as equals and treat each other with mutual respect. This is possible only when white and Native groups center the decolonizing conversation on the Indigenous voices of survivance. Survivance shows that Native groups have always been in a position of sovereignty in relationship to whites as the dominant group. In decolonizing conversation, whites respect the sovereign position of Indigenous peoples and Natives promote their sovereign status. The problem is that colonizing history has minimized sovereignty. Insofar as whites acknowledge the sovereign position of Natives in decolonizing conversations, they can engage Natives in conversation as sovereign peoples of this land and of these places. Certainly inequality still characterizes the relationship between whites and Natives on the broader social and political level. But equality becomes possible when we consider it on the local level in the everyday interactions between whites and Natives in public schools.

To summarize, I have argued that the politics of reconciliation can facilitate decolonizing conversations that are centered on the Indigenous voice of survivance. This becomes evident when we integrate Bashir's three principles of reconciliation with survivance. The first principle compels whites to create a public space in which the voice of survivance can come forward in the conversation. The second principle requires whites to acknowledge the voice of survivance. The third principle compels both white and Native groups to take responsibility to address the content of the voice of survivance. Whites take responsibility for repressing sovereignty and Natives take responsibility for decolonizing the mind. My integration of the politics of reconciliation and survivance makes it possible to consider white and Native groups as equals. Although we must recognize that structural inequality still persists in the lives of Indigenous peoples, the idea of equality that I propose is possible on the local level. On the local level of

public schools, white and Native groups can recognize each other as equals, but only insofar as the decolonizing conversation between them is centered on survivance.

Concluding Remarks

My analysis has shown what the politics of reconciliation adds to the Indigenous voice of survivance. I want to conclude this chapter by considering what the Indigenous voice of survivance adds to the politics of reconciliation. We saw how Bashir's principles of reconciliation compel dominant groups to acknowledge, repair, and apologize for the histories of oppression experienced by historically oppressed social groups. But Bashir's three principles of reconciliation are not specific to the experiences of Indigenous peoples. They remain abstract principles that can apply to any historically oppressed social group. This suggests that Bashir's meaning of the politics of reconciliation falls short of explicitly naming what is unique to the historical injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples. My claim is not that the politics of reconciliation cannot name what is unique to Indigenous experiences. Rather, it is that reconciliation requires more specific content on what that unique Indigenous experience entails.

The Indigenous voice of survivance adds a missing component to the abstract principles of reconciliation. Two points become apparent. First, because survivance foregrounds tribal sovereignty in the interactions between white and Native groups it adds more content to what the principles of reconciliation need to address with respect to Indigenous groups. The counter-narrative of Indigenous peoples that reconciliation seeks to facilitate is not simply a story about historical oppression. It is a unique experience of the federal government's ongoing suppression of tribal sovereignty. Second, survivance names the historical injustices of Indigenous peoples as *colonization*. Bashir's analysis certainly recognizes the colonization of Indigenous peoples.

But the Indigenous voice of survivance adds more specific content as to what colonization has entailed for Native peoples in the United States.

Thus, the Indigenous voice of survivance deepens the politics of reconciliation by explicitly identifying what is distinctive about Indigenous experiences and claims of historical injustices. In short, survivance helps make the politics of reconciliation more relevant to Indigenous peoples and their ongoing concerns. What remains to be seen is whether the argument that I have proposed about the integration of reconciliation and survivance can serve the interests of Indigenous peoples in the context of public schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Reframing the Conversation of IEFA

Introduction

IEFA has made a significant impact on American Indian education reform. The fact that Montana's Constitution is committed to recognizing and preserving Indigenous cultures and histories is an important advancement for American Indian education in public schools. As Donna Deyhle and Karen Comeau state, IEFA offers a "promising practice...[that] should provide greater understanding about the state's tribal citizens to all of its citizens, and should serve as a model for other states."¹ In particular, IEFA's requirement that mainstream educators must work cooperatively with tribes to design and implement the *Seven Essential Understandings* is a promising step forward in white and Native relations. This requirement departs significantly from earlier federal Indian policy eras. Historically, Indigenous peoples were recipients of rather than partners in federal educational policies and practices. The wisdom of IEFA seems clear: The collaborative effort to design and implement an indigenized curriculum *must include* Indigenous perspectives and voices to be effective.

But my analysis has shown that collaborations between whites and Natives present challenges. IEFA requires these groups to cross social and cultural boundaries and to overlook or ignore the fact that Indigenous peoples and whites remain caught up in an ongoing colonizing history. The continuation of colonization has created an atmosphere of continued distrust between Natives and whites. This presents a philosophical problem for IEFA. At the center of IEFA's curricular reform policies and strategies is what I have identified as an *inclusive*

¹ Donna Deyhle and Karen Gayton Comeau, "Connecting the Circle in American Indian Education," in *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*, ed. James A Banks (Hoboken, NJ: Routledge, 2009), 271.

conversation. My contention is that an inclusive conversation is insufficient to address the underlying issues of distrust that exist between white and Native groups. This distrust has been caused by colonizing history. Instead of engaging in inclusive conversations, I have argued that whites and Natives need to engage in decolonizing conversations, based on a politics of reconciliation and survivance, which seek to surface and interrogate colonizing history and develop strategies to directly address it. In short, white and Native groups need to address why trust does not exist between them.

I want to conclude by raising two practical questions: *What would IEFA look like and require if its model of conversation were to genuinely recognize and be affected by the Indigenous voice of survivance? What practical strategies can white and Native educators in IEFA employ to help realize decolonization and survivance?*

I consider these questions by proposing concrete strategies that can help inform IEFA's educational practices. Educational and political partnerships between white and Native groups are critical for IEFA. Since most Native students attend public education across the state of Montana, comprising 13.7% of the total student population,² it becomes necessary for tribal communities to partner with mainstream educators to realize decolonization strategies in public schools. While tribal communities may seek decolonization on political and economic issues without partnering with dominant groups, it is in their best interest to partner with mainstream educators who are charged with the education of Native students.

In this chapter, I argue that IEFA stakeholders need to reframe the conversation of IEFA from inclusion to decolonization. Specifically, I contend that whites and Native should work collaboratively to infuse the *Indigenous voice of survivance* into the mainstream curriculum.

² Montana State Office of Public Instruction, *Montana American Indian Student Achievement Data Report Fall 2014*. Accessed Dec. 30, 2014. <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/isa.html>.

This strategy departs significantly from inclusion strategies that currently inform IEFA. While IEFA's inclusive strategies seek to bring American Indian voices and perspectives into the mainstream curriculum and decision-making process, the overall structure of public schools remains intact. This means that dominant ways of thinking and being continue to frame the learning process and experience of students. By emphasizing inclusion, IEFA runs the risk of perpetuating the problem it seeks to address. Inclusion positions Indigenous peoples as objects of inquiry, as a group for students to learn *about* in the mainstream curriculum. When IEFA stakeholders transform public schools to reflect Indigenous survivance voices, students not only learn about American Indian culture and history. They learn how to engage and understand the world and human existence from Indigenous perspectives and voices.

This chapter begins by examining the basic claims and conclusions I made in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Next, I propose a way for IEFA stakeholders to apply decolonization to the mainstream curriculum. To do this, I extend my analysis of reconciliation and survivance in Chapter Four. I consider how my integration of reconciliation and survivance can help reframe *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance and how this reframing impacts student interactions in the classroom. I identify implications that my analysis has for teacher education programs and offer insights into what IEFA stakeholders might consider as they implement decolonization strategies in public schools. Finally, I conclude by proposing what a decolonizing conversation might look like in the context of white and Native educators.

Chapter Review

In Chapter Two, I introduce a philosophical problem that IEFA presents in American Indian education reform. I begin the chapter by analyzing and critiquing the meaning of

conversation that currently informs IEFA. IEFA is primarily informed by a politics of inclusion. As we have seen, a politics of inclusion seeks to bring different groups together in conversation for the sake of reaching consensus on a shared topic or concern. I show that IEFA's emphasis on inclusion draws from the multicultural education and political theory literature. My analysis shows that IEFA's emphasis on inclusion assumes that whites and Natives are equal in the conversation. It also assumes that these groups are both willing and able to come together in conversation. IEFA's emphasis on inclusion not only means that American Indian culture and history has become a critical part of educating all students in Montana: it also means that white and Native students can learn the necessary skills to interact as citizens.

Yet I argue that IEFA's emphasis on inclusion misses a philosophical problem. IEFA's emphasis on inclusion sidesteps the issue of distrust that exists between white and Native groups. On some level, IEFA recognizes that trust does not exist between white and Native groups. We might say that the design and implementation of IEFA is meant to overcome longstanding issues of distrust. But the philosophical problem is that the law basically brings white and Native groups together in conversation over curricular matters without directly and explicitly addressing why trust does not exist between them. I provide evidence from the IEFA scholarship to demonstrate that white and Native groups in fact lack the trust necessary to effectively engage in authentic conversations about American Indian education reform. This evidence reveals that whites and Natives do not stand as equals in the conversation, nor do whites and Natives come to IEFA willing and able to engage in conversation. My analysis shows that white and Native groups need to address the issue of distrust that exists between them in order to engage in authentic conversations. When white and Native groups consider the issue of distrust, history comes to the foreground of the conversation.

In Chapter Three, I examine and analyze the historical background of US-Indigenous relations. If it is the case that white and Native groups need to turn towards history in order to address the ongoing effects of colonization, then we need to understand what history entails. I begin the chapter by describing a mainstream account of US-Indigenous relations. This mainstream account states that federal Indian policy is caught up in a cycle of reform strategies. One policy era's solution is another policy era's problem and is seen as improving on the previous era's "failed" reforms. I challenge this mainstream account by arguing that, no matter what the reform is, the federal government perpetuates a deep insidious agenda to limit tribal sovereignty and define Native identity. I call this deep insidious agenda the *dominant colonizing voice*. The dominant colonizing voice suggests that a broader pattern is at work in US-Indigenous relations. Specifically, a set of ideological assumptions about American Indian identity and tribal sovereignty informs federal Indian policy, which influenced how reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries enacted educational policies and practices. My analysis demonstrates that the dominant colonizing voice is always operating in federal Indian policy, even in those eras that seem to favor Indigenous peoples.

But I argue that the dominant colonizing voice is not sufficient for understanding the history of US-Indigenous relations. In contrast to the dominant colonizing voice, I propose the *Indigenous voice of survivance*. I introduce the concept of survivance as a way to describe how Indigenous peoples have countered the dominant colonizing agenda. Using the work of Gerald Vizenor, I define survivance as "a native presence [that promotes] the notion of sovereignty and the will to resist domination."³ Survivance means that Indigenous peoples continually assert their sovereign right to remain Indigenous, as the original inhabitants of *this* land and of *these*

³ Gerald Vizenor and Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 93.

places. I document three Indigenous survivance voices. These three voices illustrate three distinctive claims of tribal sovereignty and Native identity in each federal Indian policy era. What becomes clear from my analysis is that survivance is a strategy that Indigenous peoples use in *isolation from* and *in opposition* to the federal government. Survivance reveals the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples to resist and survive the colonizing forces that would seek to limit tribal sovereignty and transform indigeneity through assimilation strategies. Survivance shows that Indigenous peoples endure despite a deep insidious colonizing agenda.

In Chapter Four, I transition from thinking about survivance as an Indigenous strategy undertaken in isolation from and in opposition to whites to thinking about survivance as way for Natives to partner with whites in public education. Reconciliation serves as a political framework to facilitate my reframing of survivance. Because of longstanding oppressive practices committed by dominant groups, historically oppressed social groups make unique demands of justice that inclusion strategies cannot fully address. I show that the politics of reconciliation together with deliberative democracy creates a framework in which white and Native groups can engage in historically authentic conversations that meet the demands of justice voiced by Indigenous peoples. The conversation is more historically authentic because reconciliation requires white and Native groups to confront colonizing history before engaging in deliberation. In short, reconciliation requires these groups to look backward in order to move forward.

My argument integrates Bashir's notion of reconciliation with survivance to imagine a type of conversation that I call *decolonizing conversation*. A decolonizing conversation explicitly and directly challenges colonizing history and interrogates its ongoing effects on tribal communities. My integration of reconciliation and survivance demonstrates that decolonizing

conversations presume a notion of equality that is stronger than the notion of equality presumed by inclusion or deliberative democracy. According to inclusion and deliberative democracy, equality means sameness, such that the perspectives of white and Native groups carry equal (the same) weight in deliberations over curricular matters. By contrast, decolonizing conversations require whites and Natives to acknowledge that power inequalities exist. Equality becomes stronger when whites acknowledge sovereignty and Natives claim sovereignty. I show that reconciliation requires survivance in order to foreground the Native claim of sovereignty. But, as I will show, in the context of conversations about public schools, survivance also requires and is enriched by a politics of reconciliation.

Decolonizing the IEFA Curriculum

I now want to apply the conclusions I draw from Chapter Four to the specific context of IEFA. Although IEFA is a promising educational reform strategy, my argument in Chapter Four shows that the law does not go far enough in reforming American Indian education in public schools. Specifically, IEFA's emphasis on inclusion fails to promote decolonization strategies. My analysis leads to the idea that white and Native groups must build alliances to reframe IEFA from inclusion to decolonization. In light of my integration of reconciliation and survivance, decolonization becomes possible in public schools when whites and Natives participate in conversations that serve the interests of Indigenous peoples. I want to use *Essential Understanding 6* to illustrate how white and Native groups can apply decolonization to the context of IEFA. My aim is to think about *Essential Understanding 6* from the perspective of the interaction between white and Native students in the classroom.

As I describe in Chapter Two, the *Seven Essential Understandings* guide teachers, schools, and districts across the state of Montana to determine what should be taught in the mainstream curriculum. Specifically, *Essential Understanding 6* reads as follows:

History is told most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from the Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.⁴

When we consider *Essential Understanding 6* from an inclusion model, white teachers incorporate Indigenous interpretations of history into the mainstream curriculum. In so doing, students learn about American history from different and conflicting perspectives. Students also learn that history is constructed to serve the interests of those groups who hold power.

I want to reframe *Essential Understanding 6* in light of a decolonizing conversation model. A decolonizing conversation model supports the following key ideas that I have articulated in Chapter Four:

- Decolonizing conversations directly and explicitly confront colonization and its enduring legacy. These conversations create opportunities for Native peoples to interrogate the ‘colonizer within’ and challenge the ‘colonizer without’.
- Because the politics of reconciliation foregrounds historical oppression and its enduring effects, this means that it can facilitate decolonizing conversation. The Indigenous voice of survivance is a decolonizing strategy. Therefore, reconciliation also can facilitate the Indigenous voice of survivance.
- Integrating reconciliation with the Indigenous voice of survivance means that survivance is not simply in opposition to whites. The integration of reconciliation and survivance means that Natives can be in conversation with whites.

⁴ Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians is available on the Montana Office of Public Instruction under Background Resources followed by Publications: <http://opi.mt.gov/programs/indianed/IEFA.html>

- In the context of public schools, whites and Natives can engage in conversations that decolonize public schools to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance.
- The integration of reconciliation and survivance in the context of public schools brings whites and Natives into an equal partnership. Whites are able to hear the claim of sovereignty and Natives are able to speak from a position of sovereignty.

In light of these key ideas, the decolonizing conversation model reveals a problem with an inclusion conversation model. According to the inclusion conversation model, students learn *about* American Indian histories and cultures as an aspect of the overall curriculum, but only as objects of inquiry that can be assessed and evaluated alongside other objects of inquiry. While white students learn about American Indian history and culture in the mainstream curriculum, Native students are *experiencing* this history directly. On an inclusion model, Native students are not given opportunities to interrogate and challenge American history from the perspective of the Indigenous voice of survivance. As such, they are not in a position to speak from a position of sovereignty. An inclusion model also means that white students are only able to treat Indigenous cultures as objects of inquiry. White students cannot learn to hear the claim of sovereignty. Thus, the *Essential Understanding 6* essentially continues to maintain and perpetuate colonizing practices and policies in public schools.

We are now in a position to consider how IEFA stakeholders can apply a decolonizing conversation model to *Essential Understanding 6* and what this application of decolonization means for student engagement in the classroom. I propose that IEFA stakeholders should infuse the Indigenous voice of survivance into the mainstream curriculum. This becomes an intentional decolonizing strategy that teaches white and Native students what is central to Indigenous concerns and issues: the ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples to remain sovereign.

Essential Understanding 6 already has established space for the Indigenous perspectives of history to be told. This suggests that the Indigenous voice of survivance can be infused in the mainstream curriculum, which ensures that all students can acknowledge colonizing history. If we see *Essential Understanding 6* as a space for the Indigenous voice of survivance to emerge, then the decolonizing strategy that I propose strengthens *Essential Understanding 6* by incorporating the distinctive claims of Indigenous sovereignty. The infusion of survivance does not merely include American Indian histories and perspectives in the mainstream curriculum. It goes beyond inclusion by privileging how Indigenous peoples historically and currently understand tribal sovereignty and how they are currently seeking to retain and promote it across Montana's tribal communities. By providing educational space for the Indigenous voice of survivance to be told and acknowledged in the curriculum, IEFA is promoting the claim of Indigenous sovereignty as an essential part of learning in public schools for all students.

Reframing *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance impacts how white and Native students interact in the classroom. It means that white students can learn how to acknowledge the distinctive claims of tribal sovereignty. On this account, white students are not merely learning about tribal sovereignty. Rather, they are learning how to hear the claim of tribal sovereignty. To truly hear the claim of tribal sovereignty means that white students understand how whites historically have suppressed the Indigenous right to exist as sovereign peoples. It also means that white students understand how whites have benefited from colonizing history. Put differently, white students come to understand that they are inheritors of a colonizing history and that they must acknowledge and repair the damages caused by colonization.

For Native students, reframing *Essential Understanding 6* allows opportunities for Native students to decolonize the mind. Recall that in Chapter Four I defined the decolonization of the mind as a process by which Indigenous peoples learn to think and speak from their own languages, traditions, and worldviews. Doing so allows them to reclaim their sense of humanity and being in the world. In the context of IEFA, reframing *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance creates an educational space for Native students to become aware of the claims of sovereignty that Indigenous peoples have articulated throughout the history of colonization. Through Indigenous survivance voices, Native students can interrogate internalized colonization and the enduring impact of colonization on tribal communities. Thus, a mainstream curriculum that is infused with the Indigenous voice of survivance teaches Native students how to speak and act from a position of sovereignty.

Given that white students are able to hear the claim of sovereignty and Native students are able to speak from a position of sovereignty, both white and Native students can learn to interact with each other as equals in the classroom. Equality does not mean sameness, but rather the recognition of power differences that exist between whites and Native groups. Equality also recognizes the significance of sovereignty in their interactions. Reframing *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance makes historical inequalities explicit in the mainstream curriculum. This means that white and Native students come to recognize that whites are the colonizers with power and Natives are the colonized without power. But reframing *Essential Understanding 6* also shows white and Native students what is central to Indigenous experience. Specifically, educating white students on survivance means that they will learn to acknowledge the claim of Indigenous sovereignty, while educating Native students

on survivance means that they will learn speak from a position of sovereignty. In short, white and Native students learn to recognize and interact with each other as equals.

So far, reframing *Essential Understanding 6* suggests that white educators are primarily responsible for transforming mainstream curriculum. In actuality, both white and Native groups need the other in order to realize decolonization strategies in public schools. Specifically, decolonization is only possible when white and Native educators and groups build alliances that can truly transform the mainstream curriculum to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance. White educators need tribal communities to provide the insider's perspective into what survivance would entail in the mainstream curriculum. As outsiders to tribal worldviews and experiences, white mainstream educators and policy-makers need Native educators and tribal groups to effectively transform *Essential Understanding 6* in ways that reflect Indigenous perspectives and voices. White educators require Natives to provide the curricular content of the Indigenous voice of survivance.

In turn, Native educators and tribal groups need white educators and policy-makers in the education of Native children. Because white educators are the primary teachers of Native students in public schools, it is in the interest of tribal communities to build alliances that serve their educational aims. Recall that the majority of Native children attend public education. This is no less true in Montana. As Jioanna Carjuzaa observes, “[Native students] often attend schools on or near reservations with high concentrations of other American Indian students. In fact, in 38 school districts in the state, the American Indian student population is between 50-100%.”⁵ Native educators and tribal groups cannot pursue the decolonization of public schools

⁵ Jioanna Carjuzaa, “The Positive Impact of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Montana’s Indian Education for All,” *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2012), 3.

alone. They require white allies in public education to be willing and able to promote the interests of Indigenous communities.

Thus, insofar as white and Native educators engage in decolonizing conversations, they can begin to transform the IEFA curriculum in ways that truly reflect Indigenous interests. By engaging in decolonizing conversations, whites and Native educators share a common language of decolonization and its relevance for public schools. With this common language, whites and Natives can engage in conversations about curricular matters that truly reflect decolonizing strategies. Both whites and Natives have roles and responsibilities to play in the conversation and both recognize the other's specific contributions in developing an IEFA curriculum.

To summarize, in this section I have proposed that IEFA stakeholders transform *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance. I analyzed *Essential Understanding 6* from the perspective of student interaction in the classroom. My analysis shows that teaching white and Native students the Indigenous voice of survivance allows whites to hear the Indigenous claim of tribal sovereignty. It also teaches Native students how to speak from a position of tribal sovereignty. To realize this decolonizing strategy, I have claimed that white and Native educators need each other. Whites need tribal communities to provide the Indigenous voice of survivance. Natives need whites as allies to serve Indigenous interests in the context of public schools. Together, IEFA stakeholders can decolonize public schools that situate white and Native students in equal relationship.

Teacher Education: Implications & Considerations

IEFA assumes that white educators have the necessary skills and competencies to instruct Native students in the context of public schools. Given the fact that “nearly all of Montana’s

teachers are non-Indian,”⁶ an important strategy in IEFA is to prepare white teachers to implement and teach an indigenized curriculum. For IEFA to be effective, white teachers must have adequate knowledge of the Indigenous cultures, traditions, and worldviews. As Lynn Kelting-Gibson describes, teachers “need a strong program of professional development that emphasizes both gaining knowledge about the tribes and developing the strategies necessary to infuse that knowledge into classroom instruction.”⁷ In Chapter Two, we saw that IEFA requires teachers to build cultural competency of American Indian history and culture. This requirement to build the cultural competency of white teachers prompted IEFA stakeholders to design comprehensive teacher preparation programs in higher education.

Jioanna Carjuzaa reports that many teacher candidates are open to the possibilities of IEFA. But others expressed considerable anxiety, if not outright resistance, towards implementing the *Seven Essential Understandings*. For many teacher candidates, understanding education’s role in the colonization of Native children engendered feelings of guilt and shame. States one teacher candidate, the truth about American Indian history “makes me so uncomfortable...[that] I feel like I am being blamed for all the atrocities that took place. Still, I know we need to know this.”⁸ We can understand teacher candidates who might object to being assigned guilt. They neither played a direct role in the historical oppression of Indigenous children, nor created the conditions of colonizing education policies and practices. For Carjuzaa, playing the blame game is not beneficial for teachers or students. The purpose of teacher preparation programs is not to instill guilt or shame, but to help teacher candidates acknowledge the history of colonization and become culturally competent educators.

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ Lynn Kelting-Gibson, “Preparing Educators to Meet the Challenge of Indian Education for All,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 205.

⁸ Jioanna Carjuzaa, “Montana’s Indian Education For All: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Embrace Culturally Responsive Pedagogy,” in *Innovative Voices in Education: Engaging Diverse Communities*, ed. Eileen Gale Krugler (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 47.

One way to address the issue of increasing the cultural competency of white teachers is to recruit and hire educators who already possess cultural competency about American Indian history and culture. This is especially true insofar as we reframe *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance in the mainstream curriculum. White teachers would need to understand the claims of survivance and have the cultural competency skills to teach American Indian history and culture to both white and Native students. But requiring white teachers to have an understanding of survivance and the cultural competency skills to teach American Indian history and culture is challenging. While increasing the cultural competency of white teachers is important, it will not be sufficient to educate students in the Indigenous voice of survivance. White teachers may come to know about American Indian history and culture through analysis and research—they may even come to know the central claims of survivance. However, because white teachers and policy-makers are outsiders to Indigenous communities and cultures, it will be unlikely that they can adequately understand the nuances and complexities of Indigenous claims of sovereignty or Native cultures and traditions.

This suggests that Indigenous peoples need to play an essential role in the direct education of survivance and American Indian culture and history in public schools. Thus, in addition to increasing the cultural competence of white teachers, IEFA stakeholders should develop strategies and direct funds to recruit and hire Indigenous peoples of Montana to become teachers within public schools. The kind of Indigenous educator required is not only familiar with *either* Indigenous worldviews *or* public education, but is someone who understands both areas. My suggestion to recruit Indigenous peoples to become educators assumes that these individuals are in a better position than white educators to engage both the structure of public education and tribal cultures and communities. IEFA requires what Dale Turner calls *word*

warriors. The concept of word warriors is important because it extends the argument that IEFA stakeholders need to decolonize public schools.

According to Turner, Indigenous peoples have had to participate in the colonizer's legal, economic, and political institutions for their resistance and survival. These institutions have excluded, suppressed, and marginalized Indigenous claims of sovereignty and Indigenous ways of thinking and being. This has rightly engendered skepticism and distrust among Indigenous groups. Participating in these institutions, writes Turner, is considered "to be a sign of assimilation," according to some Indigenous scholars.⁹ However, Turner contends that Indigenous peoples will need to participate in these institutions in order to continue the struggle for tribal sovereignty. As Turner states, "if [Indigenous] peoples want to survive as distinct political communities, they will need to use these intellectually imposed landscapes more effectively."¹⁰ For Turner, Indigenous peoples need to decide for themselves the extent to which they engage these institutions. But this engagement presents challenges. Indigenous intellectuals have "by and large [been] caught in the death dance of dependence between, on the one hand, abandoning ourselves to the intellectual strategies and categories of white, European thought and, on the other hand, declaring that we need nothing outside ourselves."¹¹

To avoid the death dance of dependence, Turner advocates for an engagement between Indigenous peoples and colonizing political, economic, and legal institutions. This engagement cannot be based exclusively on Eurocentric thought, however. Rather, it needs to be based on what Turner calls *critical indigenous philosophy*. A critical indigenous philosophy, writes Turner, "must unpack the colonial framework...assert and defend our 'indigeneity' within the

⁹ Dale Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 89.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

dominant culture, and defend the legal and political integrity of indigenous communities.”¹²

While tribal sovereignty is not dependent on these dominant institutions, Indigenous peoples must be willing to engage them to further their political aims and interests. Their rights and aims are tied up with these institutions. Writes Turner: “I am suggesting that instead of carving out their own communities and asserting their intellectual sovereignty within them, [Indigenous] intellectuals must develop a community of practitioners within the existing dominant legal and political intellectual communities.”¹³ Indigenous peoples must accomplish this “while remaining an essential part of a thriving indigenous intellectual community.”¹⁴

What is central to Turner’s word warriors is that they serve as mediators between dominant institutions and tribal communities. Word warriors are Indigenous persons who “must be citizens of an indigenous community” and who can “make...intellectual inroads into the dominant world.”¹⁵ They do not separate themselves from the dominant institutions. Rather, they work within them to help realize the political aims of Indigenous peoples and ensure the continuation of Indigenous intellectual thought. States Turner: “Word warriors are charged with protecting indigenous philosophies from unjust European philosophical scrutiny. This requires them to acquire knowledge of European philosophy, the history of ideas, and especially their own indigenous philosophies.”¹⁶ What this means is that word warriors are as familiar with the dominant intellectual institutions as they are with their Indigenous communities. On Turner’s account, word warriors are best positioned to help Indigenous peoples achieve decolonization because of their knowledge of both dominant and tribal worldviews and experiences.

¹² Ibid., 95 – 96.

¹³ Ibid., 90.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 93.

¹⁶ Ibid., 109.

To reframe *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance, IEFA requires teachers who are familiar with *both* Indigenous survivance *and* the dominant educational system. In short, IEFA requires word warriors. These word warriors would be Indigenous persons who belong to the tribal communities of Montana and who are trained as mainstream educators. As Indigenous educators, these word warriors would have intimate familiarity with tribal worldviews, cultures, and values. Belonging to tribal communities also grants them insight into Indigenous survivance voices.

However, it must be noted that not any Indigenous person can serve as a word warrior. If we follow my concept of decolonizing conversation, then only those Indigenous persons who have undergone the process of decolonizing the mind are best suited for the role of word warrior. As I discussed in Chapter Four, decolonizing the mind involves interrogating the ‘colonizer within’. This entails challenging the ways in which Indigenous peoples have internalized colonizing ideas and practices. Simply because we find Indigenous persons to become teachers or administrators does not necessarily lead to the idea that these individuals are prepared to represent and support decolonizing strategies in public schools. Unless Indigenous peoples have begun their own personal process of decolonizing the mind, they may end up reinforcing the very colonizing structures and practices we seek to challenge. It is only when Indigenous persons have questioned the impact of colonization in their own experience and consciousness that they can begin to move forward in decolonizing strategies. To be ultimately successful, then, Indigenous persons will need to begin the process of decolonization in their own experience prior to entering the classroom as word warriors.

Assuming that these word warriors have undergone their own process of decolonizing the mind, Indigenous teachers would bring a critically important presence to the context of public

education. First, they would be culturally competent about American Indian history and culture and there would be a relationship between the teacher's culture and the Native student's culture. As mainstream educators, these word warriors would be familiar with dominant education systems. They would be trained in and familiar with dominant systems of thought and practice, such that they can integrate the Indigenous voice of survivance with the mainstream curriculum. This also means that word warriors would have the competencies to work with Native and non-Native students.

Most importantly, Indigenous teachers would ensure that the aims of decolonization would be addressed or perhaps even realized in public education. Colonialist ideology is still pervasive in mainstream curriculum and public schools. Much of the curriculum remains rooted in western ways of knowing. Indigenous teachers would be charged with protecting Indigenous ways of thinking and being in public education from colonizing ideologies. They would also be charged with protecting Indigenous thought from unjust colonial practices in public schools. These word warriors would keep the aims of decolonization in the forefront of American Indian educational reform, as well as remind white educators about the critical importance of Indigenous peoples to promote and retain tribal sovereignty. In short, Indigenous teachers put the interests and concerns of Indigenous peoples in the foreground of the conversation.

Decolonizing the Conversation: A Scenario

Thus far, I have proposed that we reframe *Essential Understanding 6* to reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance. I have also recommended that IEFA stakeholders should invest resources to recruit and hire Indigenous persons to become educators in public education, insofar as these individuals have begun to decolonize the mind. We are now in a position to consider

what an *actual* decolonizing conversation might look like on the ground. *How would we facilitate a decolonizing conversation between whites and Native in the context of IEFA?*

To answer this question, I want to propose a possible scenario. Suppose that the Montana Office of Public Instruction asked if I would facilitate a four-hour workshop to help white and Native educators—teachers, principals, Native educators, and tribal representatives from across the state—to engage in my conception of a decolonizing conversation. My aim in this workshop is not to advise educators on curriculum design. Nor is it my aim to help public schools implement culturally appropriate programs or activities. Rather, my aim is to teach both whites and Natives to directly and explicitly address the issues colonization and its ongoing effects in public schools. In short, my aim is to facilitate a decolonizing conversation. Doing so helps whites and Natives address the issues of distrust that exists between mainstream education and tribal communities and engage in authentic conversations that are centered on survivance. To facilitate a decolonizing conversation, my workshop would include three essential components.

First, prior to the workshop all participants would be required to read selected Native authors who best reflect the Indigenous voice of survivance. This helps participants develop a shared language and understanding on the meaning of survivance and sovereignty. Selections from Vine Deloria, Jr's' *Custer Died For Your Sins* serves as a first step in framing the issue of tribal sovereignty in contemporary American society. Current Indigenous authors also would be important. Selections from Sandy Grande's *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* and Gerald Taiaiake Alfred's *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* offer relatively recent examples of Indigenous voices of survivance. Authors from Montana's tribal groups would also be included. These readings help to ensure that the contemporary concept of tribal sovereignty as understood from multiple Indigenous survivance

voices remains at the forefront of the conversation. They also make explicit the historical and contemporary experiences of colonization.

Participants will presumably have various responses to the claims of these assigned readings. Because these readings can elicit strong emotional responses, it is important to create space at the beginning of the workshop to discuss the claims of these authors. Discussions do the important work of complicating the participants' prior conceptions and assumptions about claims of sovereignty and Indigenous issues. Letting participants react to the Indigenous voice of survivance, even in situations where individuals strongly object to or react against the claims of the authors, helps to engender an open space for dialogue and learning.

Once participants have gained a basic understanding of the Indigenous voice of survivance and sovereignty, the second component of the workshop involves white and Native groups becoming aware of their own situation in the history of colonization. Both whites and Natives are inheritors of colonization and as such both groups remain part of ongoing colonizing history. As the colonizer, whites have benefited from the arrangements of colonization, from the forced relocation policies of Indigenous peoples that made room for white settlement to the dominance of Euro-American worldviews in the legal, political, and education systems. As the colonized, Natives have endured significant losses from the history of colonization, from the erasure of Indigenous languages, cultures, and lands to the marginalization of Indigenous ways of being in the dominant culture. The aim of this second component is to get both whites and Natives to recognize how colonization and its ongoing effects have impacted each person individually and their group collectively. It begins the process of awakening participants to the presence and absence of Indigenous experiences in mainstream culture, showing how white and Native educators are already entangled in colonizing history.

To facilitate this second component of the workshop, I would engage participants in an activity that I have developed for my own courses with undergraduate students. I begin the activity by articulating three assumptions. First, all of us are inheritors of colonization and its ongoing impact, whether we are conscious of it or not. Second, all of us have some familiarity with colonization as a result of living in American society. Colonization is an inescapable horizon. Third, the geographies we inhabit on off-reservation lands and territories exist because of the forced removal and relocation of Indigenous groups from their original homelands. We are standing on formerly held Indigenous lands and spaces. Once these assumptions are articulated, I pose a set of questions specific to white and Native groups:

- For whites, the questions are as follows:
 1. What was the first time you recall learning about Indigenous peoples? When was the first time you remember being conscious of Indigenous experiences and/or the differences between white and Native groups?
 2. Describe the proximity and relationship of your hometown with Native communities: Was there a Native community nearby? If so, what was the relationship between these communities? If not, what did you learn about the presence of Indigenous peoples in the territory where you were raised? Did they play a role in the origin story of your state?
 3. How did your schools teach you about Indigenous peoples? Were they represented in the textbooks and classrooms? What did your textbooks teach you about United States history and the specific experiences between Natives and non-Natives? What stories about white and Indigenous relations did you learn?

4. What have you learned about Indigenous peoples through the media? Can you identify films or television shows that portray Indigenous peoples? How were (are) they portrayed? And how did these images influence your past and current understandings of Indigenous peoples and their experiences?
- For Natives, the questions are as follows:
 1. What was the first time you recall being conscious of your own Indigenous identity? When was the first time you remember being aware of the differences between your own experiences as an Indigenous person and whites or other groups?
 2. Describe your proximity to your own tribal community: To what degree are you familiar with the origins of your Indigenous group, community, or nation? What did you learn about your own heritage from your family and community?
 3. How would you describe your relationship to the cultures, traditions, and values of your community? To what extent have Indigenous languages, traditions, and values played a role in your upbringing? To what extent do these play a role in your everyday experience?
 4. How did your educational experience teach you about being an Indigenous person? In what ways did textbooks, classes, and schools enhance your self-understanding of being Indigenous? In what ways were boarding schools or public education part of your family and community experiences? If so, how did your family and community members talk about these experiences?

Answering these questions will be challenging for some participants. Some might be able to answer them clearly and directly, while others might not be able to address them at all. Still others might express outright resistance and frustration. The aim of these questions is not to emphasize the differences between white and Native groups, but rather to help them become aware of their relationship to colonizing history. These questions ask: *Is colonization and its ongoing effects close to our experience? Or is it of the distant past? How does our group membership as colonizer and colonized make us conscious or not conscious of colonization?*

Participants presumably will need to discuss their responses to these questions. Instead of facilitating a large group discussion, this part of the second component breaks participants into caucus groups according to colonizer and colonized membership. Whites meet with other whites in small groups, while Natives meet with other Natives in small groups. Caucus groups are important because they allow groups to share and process their responses openly and honestly in the context of a shared experience without the influence of the other group's perspective. Whites, for example, can ask questions and surface assumptions about Indigenous peoples that they may be hesitant to discuss in the presence of Natives. They can avoid the fear of sounding racist or insensitive to Indigenous peoples. Natives, in turn, can share their collective experience of colonization. Collective experience of colonization does not mean the same experience. Each person experiences colonization differently. In caucus groups, these differences can come forward, such that each person expresses a wide range of responses to their relationship to colonization without fear of backlash from the colonizing group.

At this point we are prepared for the final component of the workshop. Having begun the process of understanding their unique experiences in colonization, white and Native participants are now poised to come together in conversation with each other. This is perhaps the most

unsettling component of the workshop because it attempts to put into practice the meaning of reconciliation and survivance that I have argued in Chapter Four. Three steps are involved.

In the first step, we seek to create space for Indigenous peoples to voice their collective experience of colonization, during which time whites remain silent and listen. This requirement to remain silent will be challenging for some whites, even Natives, who expect a back and forth, dialogical engagement. Yet this requirement is essential to allow the Indigenous voice of survivance to come forward in the conversation. By remaining silent, whites demonstrate their willingness to hear the counter-discourses of Natives without interjections or confrontations. It is critically important that the voice of survivance becomes explicit. This is not any survivance voice. In this context, it is necessary to make explicit the survivance voices that are specific to the Indigenous groups of Montana. These survivance voices share how the tribal communities and nations of Montana have survived and resisted colonization. This first step brings the experiences of colonization in Montana into public consciousness and compels whites and Natives to examine and confront that legacy directly.

Now that Indigenous peoples have voiced their collective experiences of colonization, the second step centers on whites acknowledging and taking seriously the Indigenous experiences of colonization and the Indigenous voice of survivance. For this second step, I would bring the group into a large circle, placing mainstream educators and tribal representatives side by side. I open the floor for whites to acknowledge the stories of exclusion expressed by Indigenous peoples. I guide the conversation by asking the following questions directly to whites:

- *What did you hear from the stories expressed by your colleagues?*
- *What did you learn from these stories that you were unaware of previously?*

- *How do these stories challenge, confirm, or inform your prior understandings of public education and its relationship to Indigenous peoples and communities?*
- *Think of your own teaching or educational experience: Can you identify examples where some of these stories have played out or resonate?*

Essentially, what white educators acknowledge are the exclusionary practices of public education expressed by their colleagues. This second step of acknowledging colonizing history is precisely what IEFA seeks to address and it is what makes the law compelling. But a decolonizing conversation goes further than IEFA by getting whites to acknowledge that exclusionary practices suppress tribal sovereignty. A decolonizing conversation creates an opportunity for whites to say to Natives: “we bear witness to your stories of exclusion, even without complete understanding. We acknowledge that we participate in an education system that has been and continues to suppress your sovereign right to exist as Indigenous peoples. We now seek to repair this system.”

Continuing the large circle format, the third step goes beyond the parameters of IEFA by centering on apologies. Apologies do not refer to personal apologies. Present-day whites are not responsible for causing the past wrongs of Indigenous peoples. What present-day whites apologize for are the exclusionary practices and policies committed against Indigenous at the hands of public education. They apologize on behalf of public education. Thus, this step asks whites to make informal apologies for what IEFA has already recognized as past wrongs. Specifically, I would open the floor for whites to apologize for the exclusion of American Indian culture and history from the mainstream curriculum, as well as the exclusion of tribal communities from the decision-making process. Whites state the following: “We acknowledge your story of exclusion. On behalf of a public educational system that has excluded Indigenous

histories and cultures and tribal communities from public education, thereby suppressing tribal sovereignty, we are sorry.”

These apologies are followed by strategies for action. Whites commit to promoting tribal sovereignty and decolonizing strategies in public education. Natives commit to challenging colonizing practices that have been reinforced in their own communities. Both groups have roles to play in transforming the educational structure. A decolonizing conversation shows both groups that they can transform this structure together. At this point the workshop places participants into mixed groups to strategize ways that teachers, schools, and districts can work collaboratively with tribal communities to incorporate decolonizing strategies in public education. Once groups have had sufficient time to propose concrete strategies, each group reports their findings to the larger group for consideration. Together, we propose the next strategies for action.

In sum, my proposed workshop begins by educating white and Native educators and groups on the Indigenous voice of survivance. This is followed by an activity that helps all participants to identify their relationship to colonization. Finally, the workshop puts into practice the meaning of reconciliation and survivance. I recognize that a decolonizing conversation contains risks and does not guarantee success. Whites, for example, may not see the value in apologizing for past wrongs; Natives may not accept the apology. But these three components, I believe, can help create an atmosphere of trust between white and Native groups. When whites engage in a decolonizing conversation, it demonstrates to Natives that they are willing to examine and confront the legacy of colonizing history. When Natives engage in a decolonizing conversation, it shows whites that they are willing to meet them half way. These are the building blocks of restoring relationships between groups whose histories have been caught up in

colonization. Whites and Natives can begin to build the necessary alliances to transform the public education system to be truly by and for Indigenous peoples.

Concluding Remarks

My analysis of *Essential Understanding 6* leads to one question that can help guide the next steps in my research. *Beyond IEFA, what does decolonization look like in the education of Native students within public schools?* The concept of decolonization plays a prominent role within the postcolonial and Indigenous studies scholarship. I have utilized this scholarship to explain a meaning of decolonization as the *decolonization of the mind*. But I have applied this meaning only to the context of IEFA. I would contend that a more rigorous analysis of decolonization is needed, if mainstream and Native educators are to reform public education on the broader social and political level. Because IEFA seeks to include American Indian history and culture in the mainstream curriculum, it has potential to facilitate decolonization conversations. This is not true in most public education contexts. My question thus considers what decolonization would require on the broader level of American Indian reform. It compels both mainstream and Native educators to articulate a notion of decolonization that can significantly reform American Indian education across the nation.

IEFA's reform strategies are certainly needed in today's context of educating Native students on the national level. In December, 2013, *Education Week* conducted a series of articles on the state of American Indian education across Indian Country on both the national and state levels. The articles paint a distressing picture. In 2010, Native students graduated fifty-one percent nationally, compared to White and Asian students, who graduated at seventy-nine and

eighty-one percent respectively.¹⁷ The academic disparities between Native and non-Native students are equally distressing on the state level. In 2011, only forty-two percent of American Indian students in South Dakota “scored ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’ on state math exams,”¹⁸ compared to eighty-percent of white students. Reading scores were equally lower among Native students in comparison to their peers: “[Forty-seven] percent of American Indian students scored proficient or higher, compared to 79 percent of white students.”¹⁹

To address these disparities, the Obama Administration drafted a report, entitled *Blueprint for Reform Implementation*. Reform strategies include budget increases for tribal school operations and building repairs, as well as strategies to recruit and retain talented teachers and offer professional development for current teachers in tribal schools.²⁰ At the center of these reform strategies is the reorientation of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). While the BIE no longer adheres to direct assimilation policies, it still operates “57 schools for Native American students and oversees 126 others run under contract by tribes.”²¹ The *Blueprint* proposes a new strategy in American Indian education reform: to “strengthen and support the efforts of tribal nations to directly operate BIE-funded schools.”²² This solution centers on transferring the control of American Indian education from the federal government to tribes.

IEFA offers its own blueprint to address the systemic problems in American Indian education across the state of Montana. While I recognize the important contributions of IEFA, the aim of this dissertation has been to critically analyze the law’s underlying assumptions about conversation and inclusion. I have argued that a decolonizing conversation between white and

¹⁷ Leslie Maxwell, “Education in Indian Country: Running in Place.” *Education Week*. Retrieved December 20, 2013: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/projects/2013/native-american-education/running-in-place.html#jumpm>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Blueprint for Reform Implementation*, Retrieved January 11, 2015: <http://www.bie.edu/BFRI/index.htm>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Native groups, not an inclusion, is needed for successful educational reform. I contend that IEFA can lead the way in American Indian education reform not only in Montana, but across the nation. But as my analysis shows, this reform effort needs to reflect decolonization strategies in the context of public schools. American Indian education reform needs to promote the strategies that are relevant to Indigenous peoples and Native students. This means that the conversation between whites and Natives in IEFA need to center on Indigenous interests and the recognition and promotion of tribal sovereignty. My hope is that this dissertation can offer insights into how white and Native groups, educators, and communities can actually engage in productive and genuine conversations that create an educational system that is by and for Indigenous peoples across the state of Montana and beyond.

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