Historical Perspectives for Working with Native Parents

Available online at: https://www.parentcenterhub.org/naptac-tier1-culture/
Overview of Presentation

- Pre-contact tribal education
- Early non-Native education
- Institutionalizing Native education
- Boarding schools
- Scars from the boarding school era
- Key historical reports
- Change of heart: Federal funds for AIAN education
- Implications for staff: What needs to happen now?
Bingo!

You’ll need the Participant Bingo Card

1. Sign your name in the center square
2. Sign only one square for another person
3. Learn as you go
4. Going for a blackout, but call out when you have a BINGO in any direction
Pre-Contact

- Native cultures were intact
- Parents and extended families cared for children
- Whole communities taught children
- Experience-based education was used
- Values like courage, love, generosity, and respect for the environment and others were taught
“As early as 1744, an Indian elder described members who returned from schools of the white man, as being unfit for tribal life, not able to speak the tribal language well, unfit to be counselors, and hence unable to make worthwhile contributions to the tribe.”
## Institutionalizing Native Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treaty-signing period ended around 1871</th>
<th>Children were removed from their families and sent hundreds of miles from their communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy was to “kill the Indian, save the man”</td>
<td>Education was dispensed outside of Native communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boarding Schools for Natives

**Boarding schools** became the primary institution encouraging **assimilation** of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) youth.

- Many boarding schools were housed in old military institutions.
- Children’s hair was cut, and they were punished for speaking their tribal language.
- Different views of history and religion were taught and were vastly different from tribal realities.
Grim Realities of the Boarding School Era

Tribal communities & parents were to have *nothing* to do with their children’s formal schooling.

Their only job was to send their children to school.

**Consequences?**
- Tribal community mistrust of education
- Loss of traditional child-rearing practices
- School curriculum lacked accurate Native content
- Changed roles & expectations of parents

Deep scars remain
Key Reports Documenting Status of Native Education

- **Meriam Report** (1928) | Found that Federal Government policies had dramatically eroded tribal lifestyles, governments, and economic positions

- **Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge** (1969) | Echoed earlier reports

- **Indian Nations at Risk Study** | Papers and White House Conference on Indian Education (1991-1992)

- **President’s Executive Orders on Indian Education** (2000/2004)
Change of Heart: Federal Funds for Indian Education

Congress authorized targeted funds to improve Indian education

- Johnson O’Malley (PL 81-874, 1958) | Funds were allocated to provide supplemental services for Native children


- Native American Languages Act (PL 101-477, 1990/ 1992)
## Implications for Parent Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved outreach to Native parents and families</th>
<th>Renewed <strong>Parent Center commitment</strong>, time, energy, resources, &amp; prioritizing of funds for outreach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training on <strong>how schools can take a proactive role</strong> in supporting Native parents in ways that reinforce school learning</td>
<td><strong>Additional incentives</strong> as necessary to entice Native parents &amp; school staff to attend Parent Center trainings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What else needs to happen?

- Extra efforts need to be made to reassure Native parents that schools truly recognize who Native students are and what is important to their community.
Suggestions & Observations

Individual tribal history is important for school staff to know for each community.

What Indian communities are in your state? In your schools?

Native parents may need additional skills so they can support their children’s school learning.

Parent Centers can help develop this training for repeated offerings.
Suggestions & Observations

School staff may need **support** on how to integrate Native history, language, and culture into the curriculum.

Parent Centers & Native communities can work individually and together to advocate for and support such efforts.