

Historical Perspectives for Working with Native Parents



Native American Parent Technical Assistance Center

<http://www.naptac.org>

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?



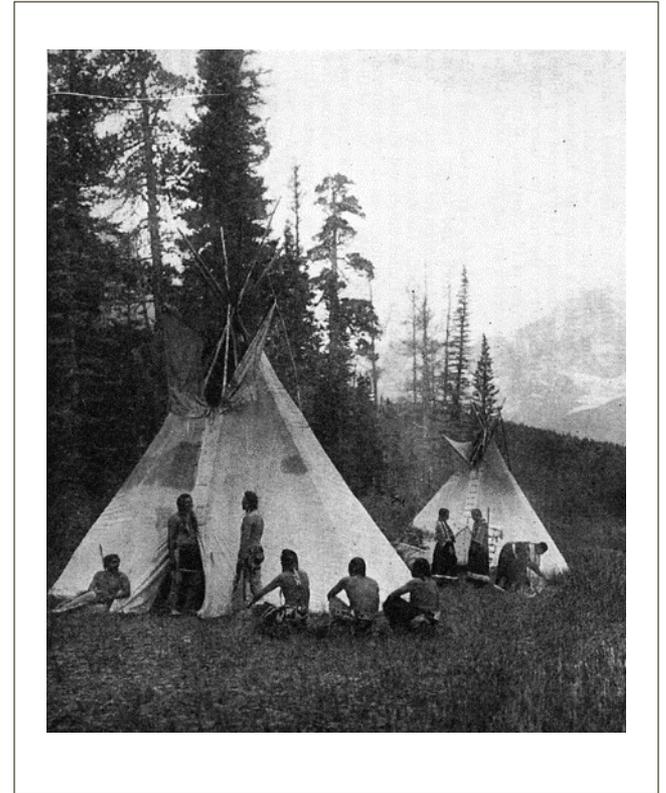
Bingo

*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



Early Non-Native Education

“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

Treaty-signing period
ended around 1871

Children were removed
from their families and sent
hundreds of miles
from their communities

Philosophy was to
“kill the Indian,
save the man”

Education was
dispensed outside of
Native communities

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
- *Indian Education Act* (1972) | Reauthorized in 1974, 1988, 1992, 1994, & 2015
- *Native American Languages Act* (PL 101-477, 1990/ 1992)

Implications for Parent Centers

Improved outreach
to Native parents and
families

Renewed **Parent Center**
commitment, time, energy,
resources, & prioritizing of
funds for outreach

Training on **how schools**
can take a proactive role
in supporting Native
parents in ways that
reinforce school learning

Additional incentives as
necessary to entice Native
parents & school staff to attend
Parent Center trainings

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

Resources



NAPTAC

Call us, write us, visit our website for information and support about working with Native American communities and families

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