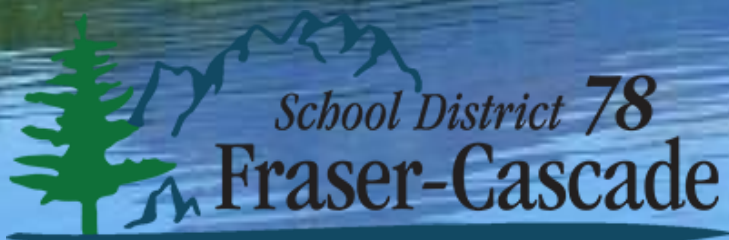


# Putting the Circle of Courage into Practice

Larry Brendtro



RECLAIMING YOUTH  
[reclaimingyouth.org](http://reclaimingyouth.org)



# Putting the Circle of Courage into Practice

Larry Brendtro



A digital copy of this presentation is available at  
[reclaimingyouth.org/handouts](https://reclaimingyouth.org/handouts)

# Putting the Circle of Courage into Practice

Respect

Colonialism

Belonging

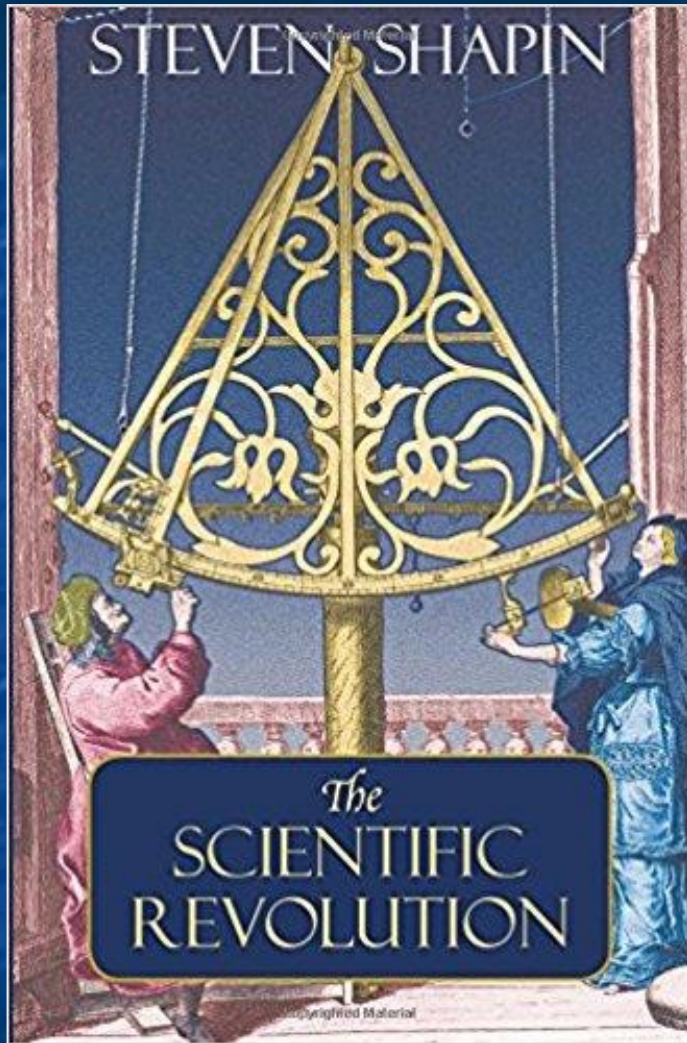


Mastery

Independence

Generosity



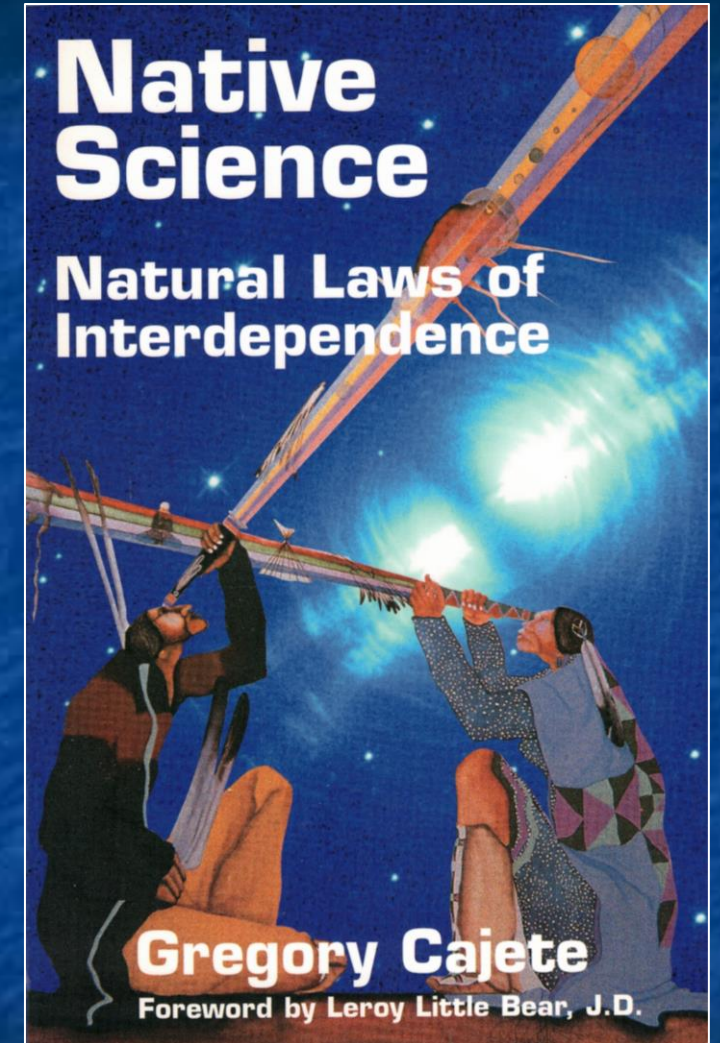


## Respect

**Western Science** describes how the world is without considering values.

**Native Science** describes how the world should be when all life is in harmony and balance.

**Native peoples** have thrived for millennia in cultures of respect for others and nature.





# Living in Harmony is in our DNA



Across a million years, humans have evolved to live in egalitarian groups.  
For 10,000 years, cultures of coercion have disrupted human harmony.

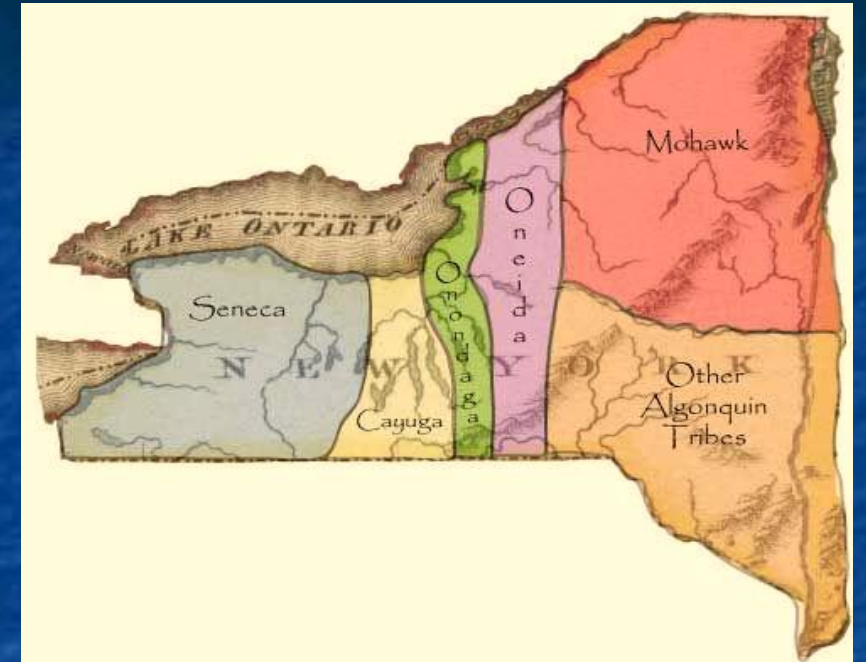
CHRISTOPHER BOEHM



# Origins of Democracy: The Iroquois Great Law of Peace



Formed at the solar eclipse of 1142



- ◇ Children are sacred
- ◇ Leaders are servants
- ◇ Women share power
- ◇ Decisions by consensus





## Relationships of Respect

The old are dedicated to the service of the young as their teachers and advisors, and the young in turn regard them with love and reverence.

OHIYESA  
[CHARLES EASTMAN]

1911



THIRD EDITION

# RECLAIMING YOUTH AT RISK

*Futures of Promise*



Larry K. Brendtro | Martin Brokenleg | Steve Van Bockern

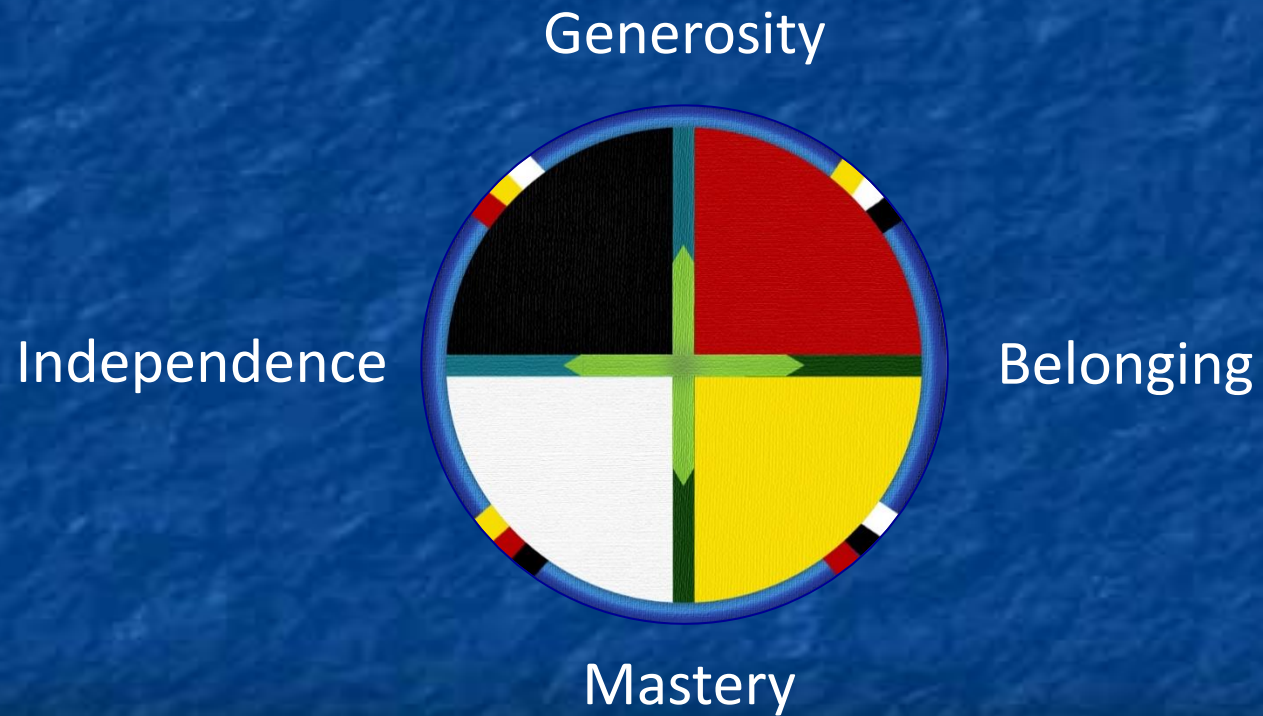
## Indigenous and Western Knowledge



Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern



# The Circle of Courage



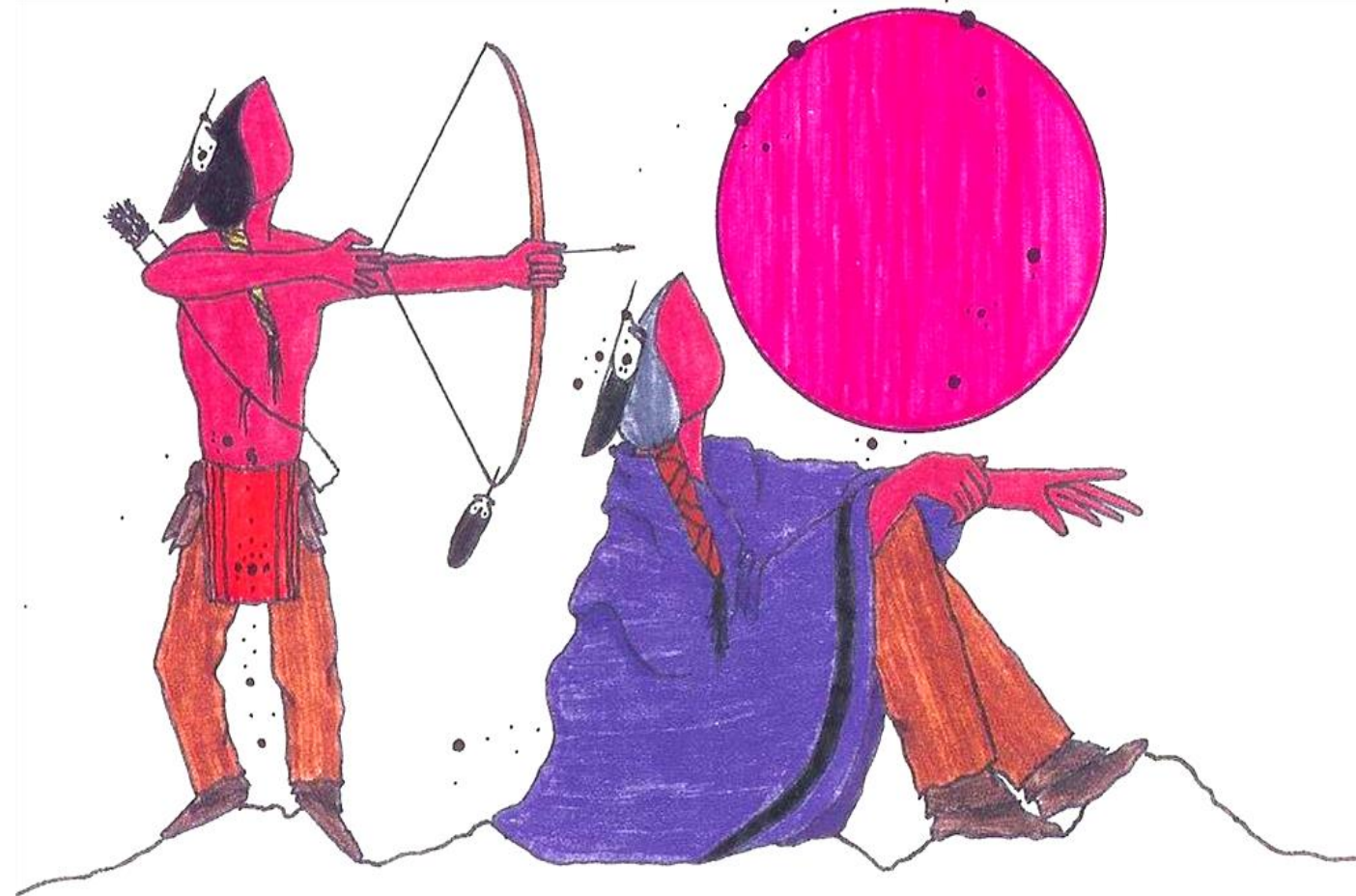


# Belonging





# Mastery



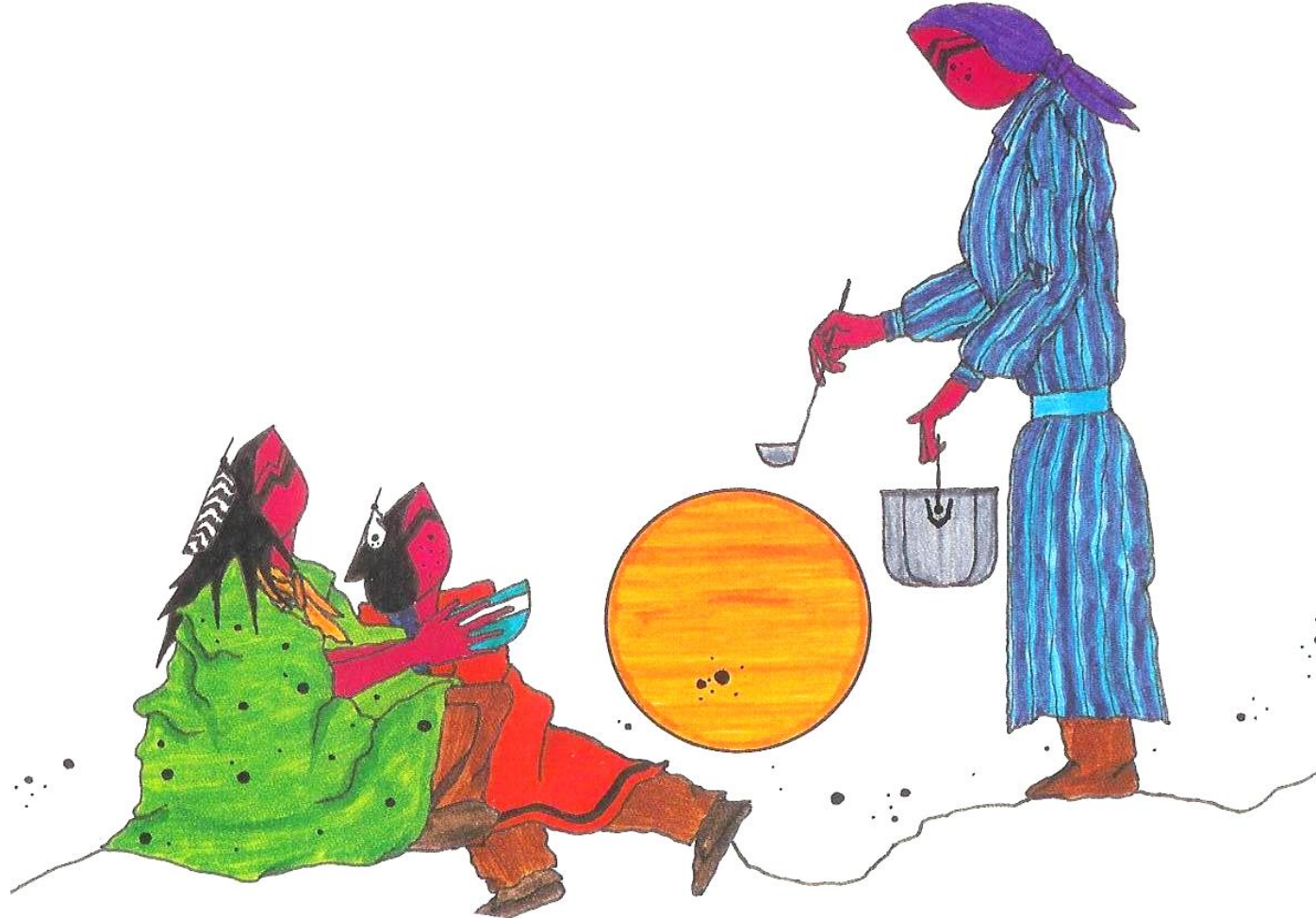


# Independence





# Generosity







A First Nations carver expresses the Circle of Courage in this totem.

- Belonging: Whale
- Mastery: Raven
- Independence: Eagle
- Generosity: Wolf





## Maslow and the Blackfoot People in Alberta, Canada

Maslow's summer of 1938 with the Blackfoot First Nation transformed his perspective on human behavior.

Maslow had assumed power was the main human motivation, this culture was built on generosity and people lived in harmony.

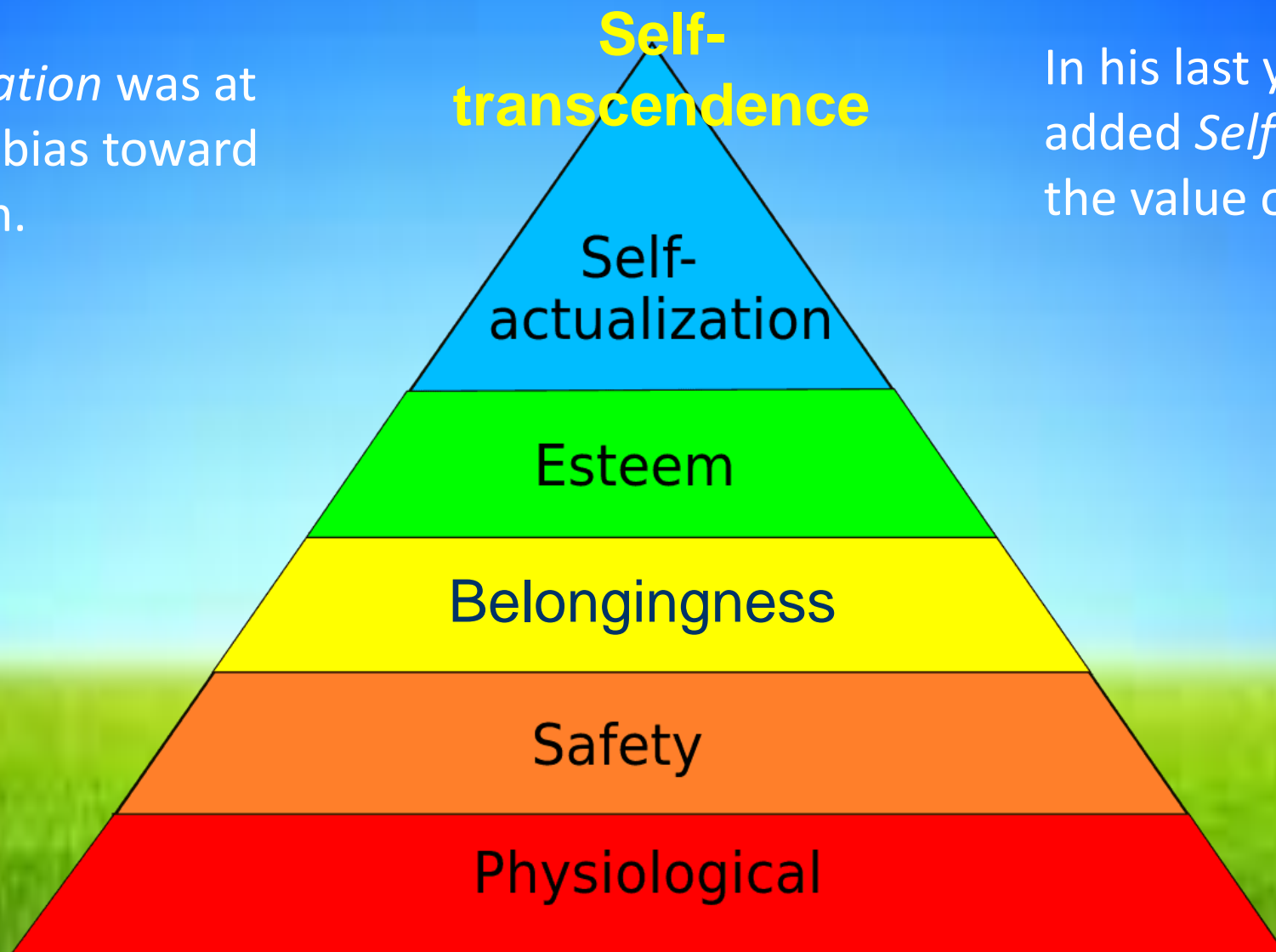
ABRAHAM MASLOW



# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

*Self-actualization* was at the peak—a bias toward individualism.

In his last year of life he added *Self-transcendence*—the value of generosity.



**Social  
Brain**

**Survival  
Brain**

Self-transcendence

Self-actualization

Esteem

Belongingness

Safety

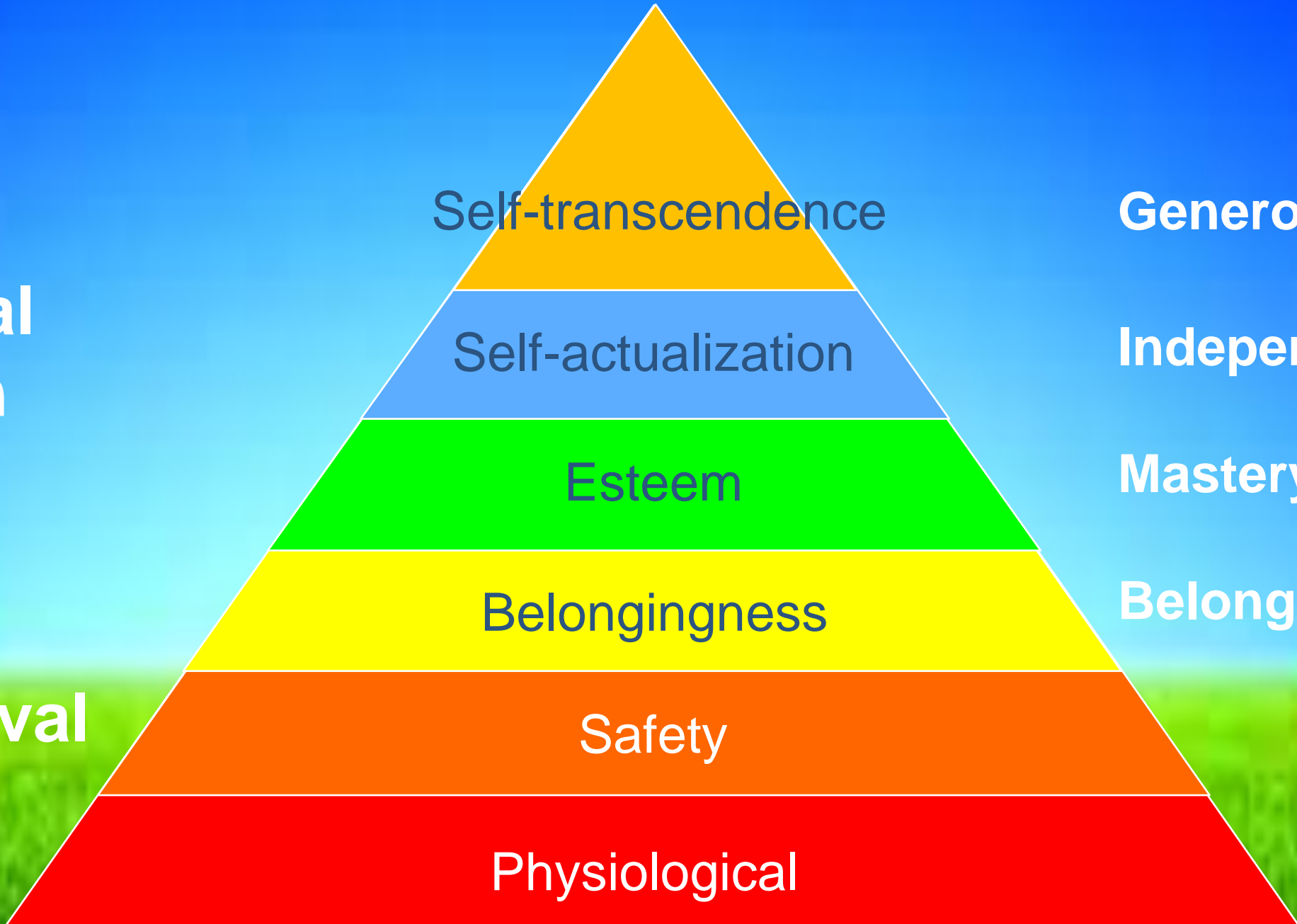
Physiological

**Generosity**

**Independence**

**Mastery**

**Belonging**





What is the *Active Ingredient* in successful work with youth at risk?

JUNLEI LI & MEGAN JULIEN

*“Developmental Relationships”*

URIE BRONFENBRENNER



1. A strong, caring bond
2. Increasingly complex tasks
3. Shifting power to the learner
4. Relationships of reciprocity

Belonging

Mastery

Independence

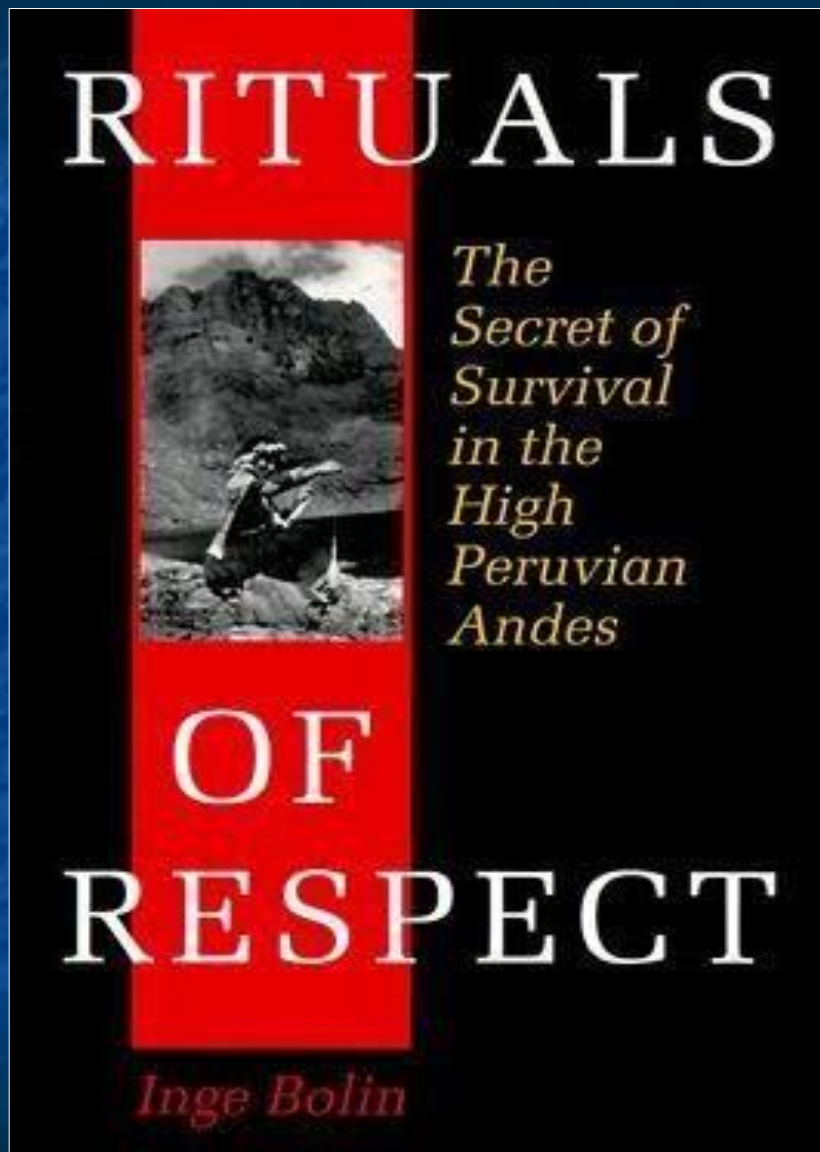
Generosity

# The Circle of Courage and Positive Youth Development

WILLIAM JACKSON

<b>Circle of Courage</b>	<b>Belonging</b>	<b>Mastery</b>	<b>Independence</b>	<b>Generosity</b>
<b>Hierarchy of Needs</b> Maslow (1943)	Belongingness	Esteem	Self- Actualization	Self-Transcendence
<b>Self Esteem</b> Coopersmith (1967)	Significance	Competence	Power	Virtue
<b>Resilience Research</b> Benard (2004)	Social Competence	Problem Solving	Autonomy	Purpose
<b>Resilient Brains</b> Masten (2014)	Attachment	Mastery Motivation	Self-Efficacy	Spirituality & Purpose

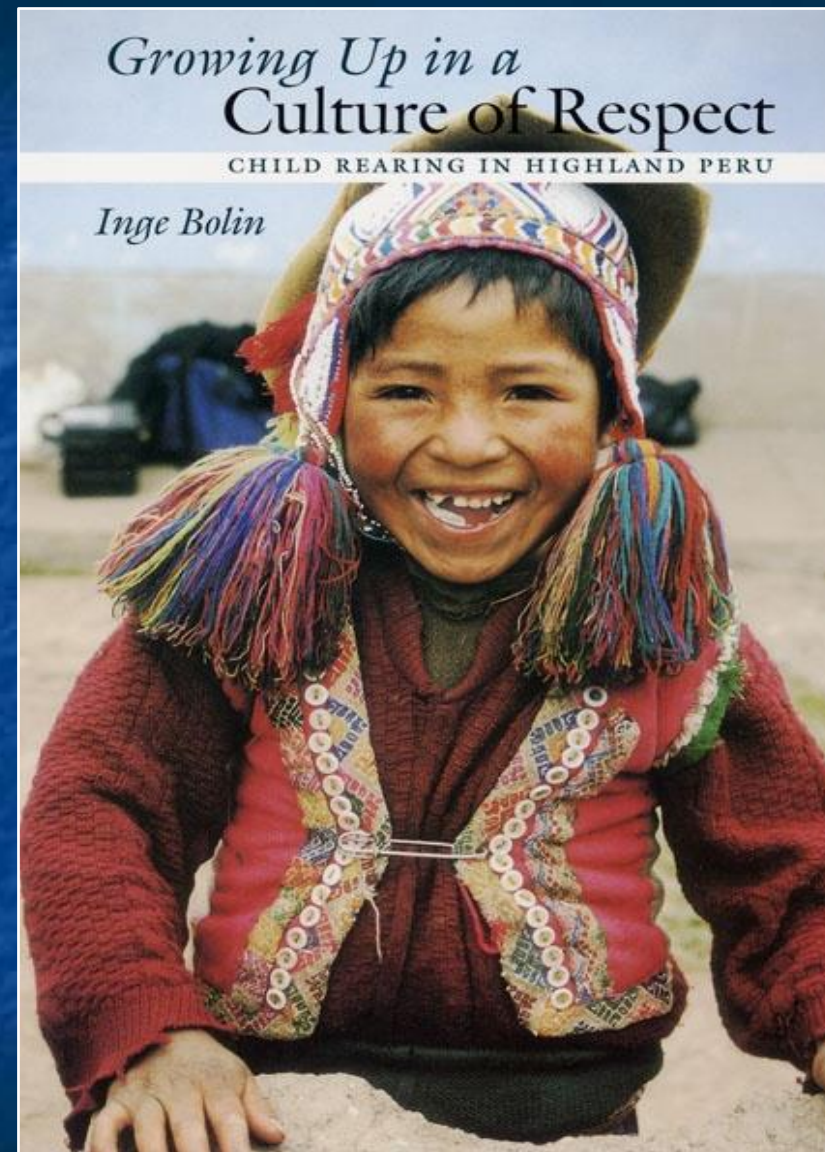




*I was captivated by their respectful behavior, self-confident demeanor, and astonishing creativity.*



INGE BOLIN  
Vancouver Island University







Despite great poverty, children are polite, responsible, compassionate, curious, adventurous, and courageous even at a very young age.

INGE BOLIN





## Belonging

Young people are taught that loneliness is the saddest experience, so all must be included in circles of respect.





## Mastery

Children eagerly learn from elders by observing and pitching in to help. In school, they are highly motivated but never flaunt their superiority.





## Independence

Youth take responsibility for tending animals and caring for small children who idolize them. They are never harshly punished.



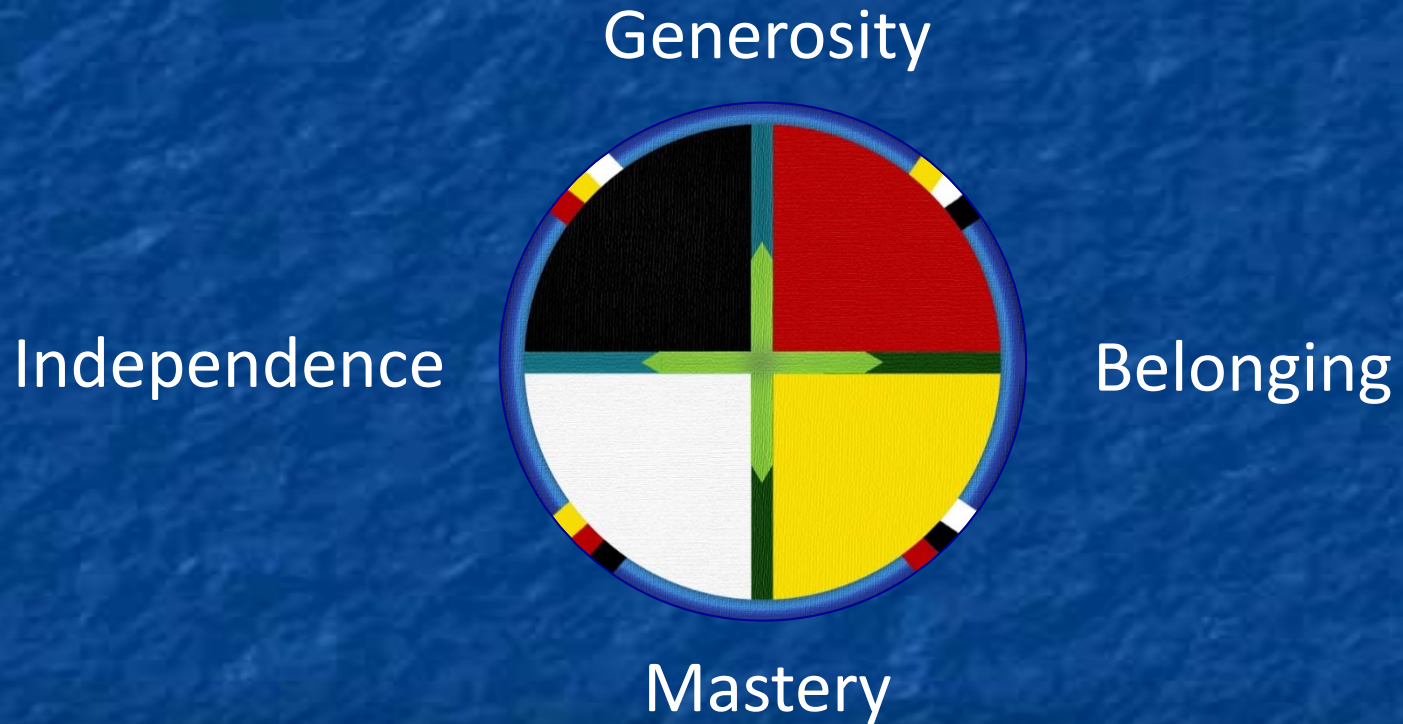


## Generosity

Teens are given the role of protecting the alpacas from rustlers. All young people contribute as full members of the community.

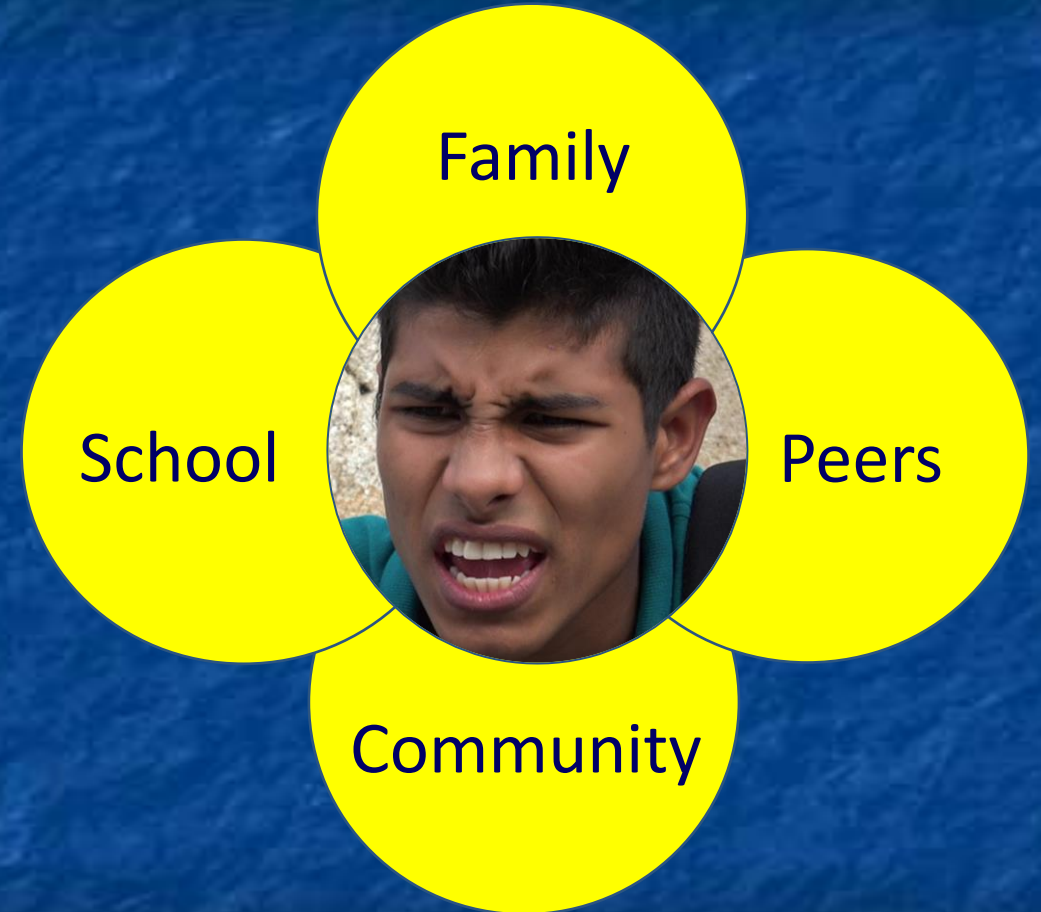


# The Circle of Courage



# The Ecology of Relationships

URIE BRONFENBRENNER



**Children thrive when their needs are met and are at risk when their needs go unmet.**





Connection to Caregivers





Connection to Positive Peers





Connection in School





Connection to the Community





The foremost value in traditional cultures is meeting the needs of children and youth.

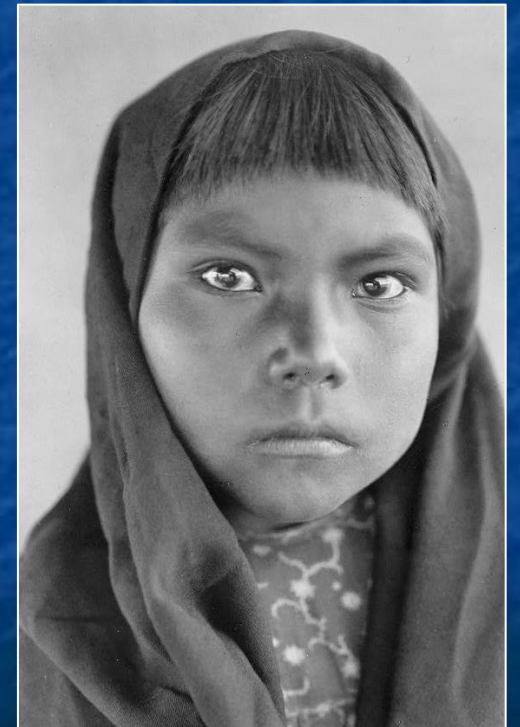
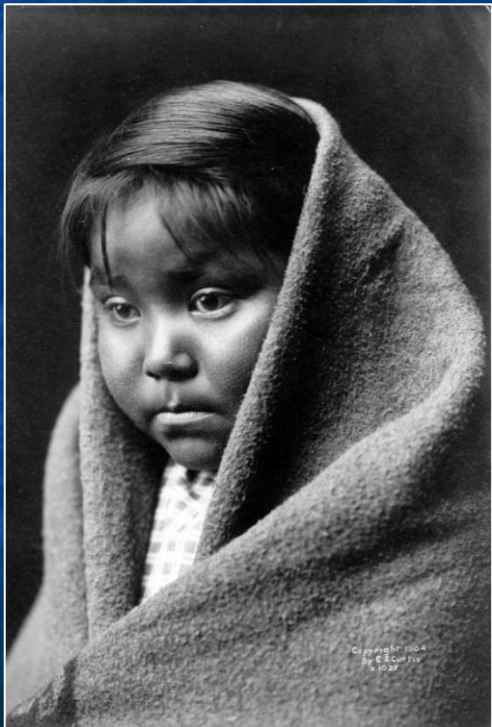
BARBARA ROGOFF

A majority of children today have less than half of the Developmental Assets for reaching their full potential.

SEARCH INSTITUTE



# Colonialism



Edward Curtis



# Turtle Island Learning Circle



Adrienne Brant James  
Turtle Clan Mohawk



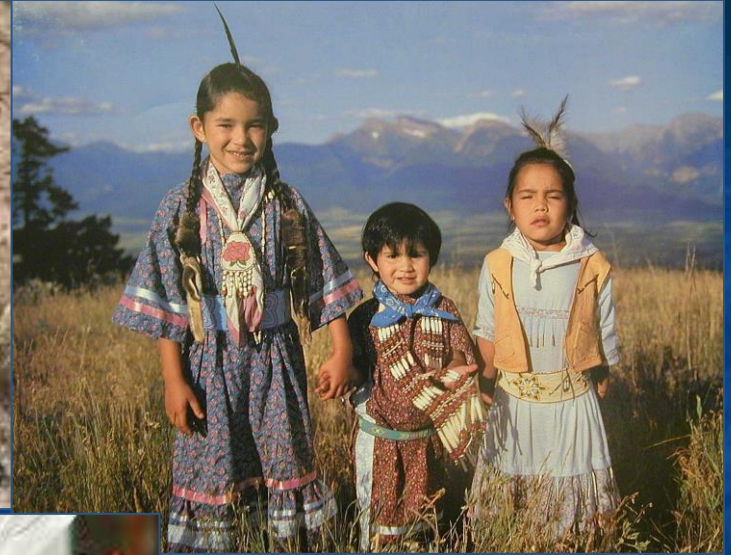
Tammy Lunday  
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate





The First Teacher





Educating the Young: The Top Cultural Priority





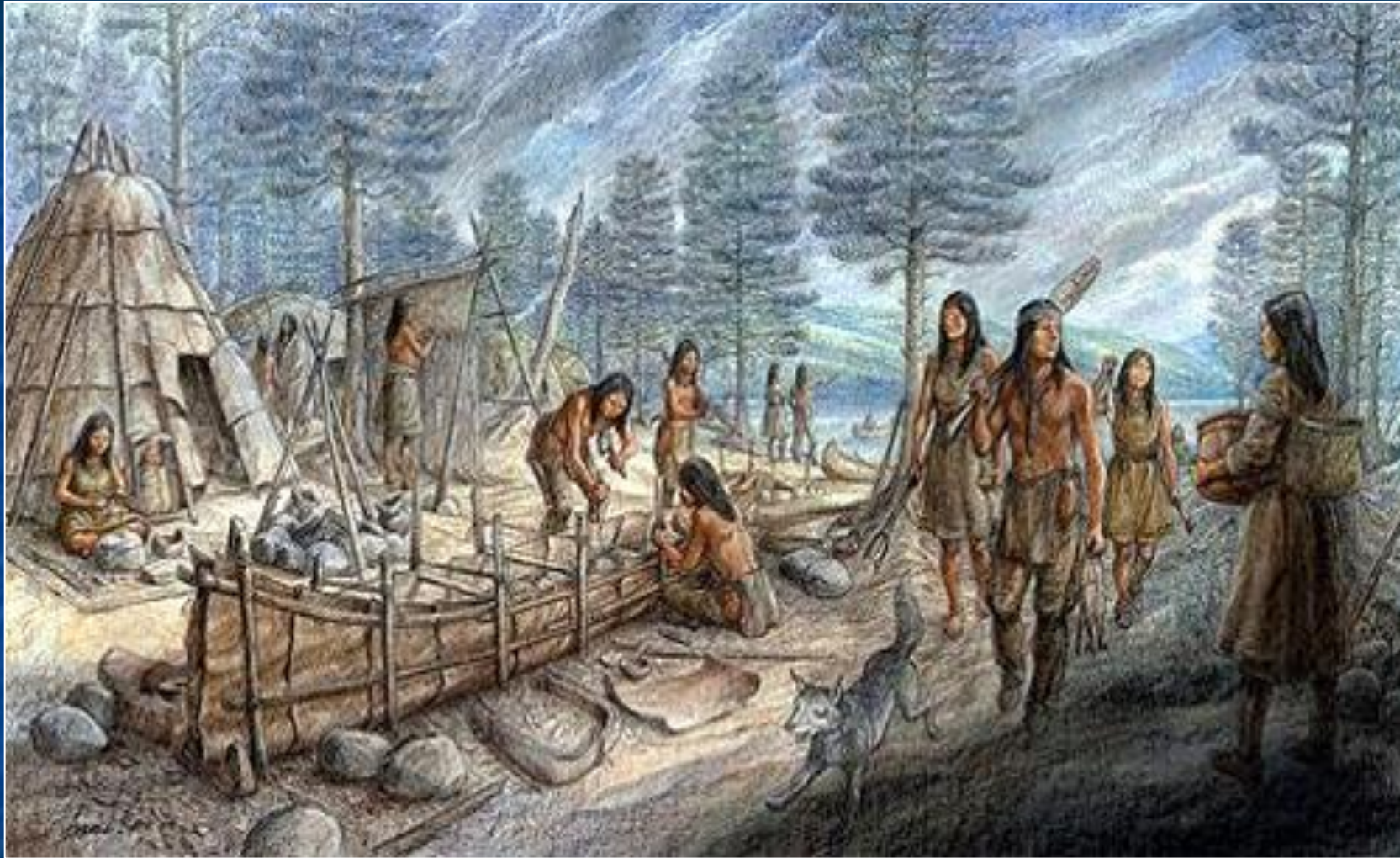
Native Trade and Commerce





Indigenous Knowledge and Oral History





Interdependent Living





Community Bonding and Sharing





Sixty per cent of the world's food supply originated with Natives in the Americas.



# Native Uses of Buffalo

## Tanned Hide

Backrests  
Bags  
Beds  
Belts  
Blankets  
Bridles  
Caps  
Cradles  
Doll Mittens  
Dresses  
Leggings  
Moccasin Tops  
Pillows  
Pouches  
Ropes  
Shirts  
Sweat lodge  
Cover  
Tapestries  
Tipi Liners  
Tipi Covers  
Winter Robes

## Hair

Bracelets  
Braided Ropes  
Doll Stuffing  
Hair Pieces  
Headdresses  
Horse Halters  
Medicine Balls  
Moccasin Lining  
Ornaments  
Pad Fillers  
Pillow Fillers

## Meat

Immediate use  
Dried  
Meat/Jerky  
Pemmican  
Sausages

## Tail

Decorations  
Fly Swatter  
Knife Sheaths  
Medicine  
Switch  
Whips

## Dung

Diaper Powder  
Fuel

## Hoof Sheath

Containers  
Glue  
Rattles  
Spoons  
Wind Chimes

## Stomach Contents

Medicines  
Paints

## Dew Claws

Glue  
Rattles  
Wind Chimes

## Bladder

Food Pouches  
Medicine Bags  
Water Container

## Gall

Yellow Paint

## Tendons & Muscles

Arrow Ties  
Bowstrings  
Cinches  
Sinew

## Liver

Food  
Tanning Agent

## Brains

Food  
Hide Preparation

## Skull

Altar  
Dehairing Tool  
Sun Dance

## Blood

Paints  
Puddings  
Soups

## Horns

Arrow Points  
Cups  
Fire Carrier  
Headdresses  
Ladles  
Medication  
Ornaments  
Powderhorn  
Signals  
Spoons  
Toys

## Beard

Ornaments

## Tongue

Choice Meat  
Comb  
(Rough Side)

## Bones

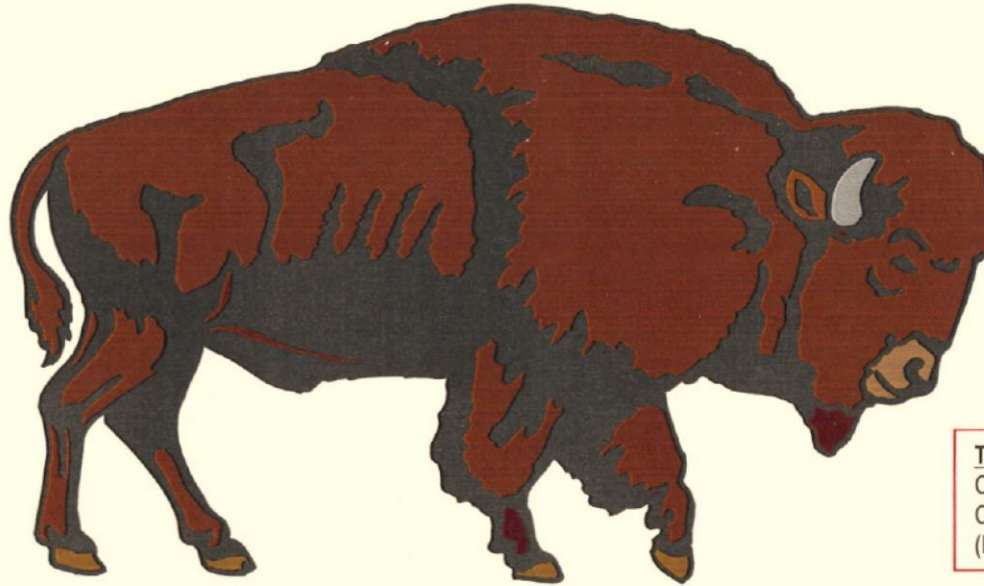
Arrowheads  
Awls  
Eating utensils  
Fleshing Tools  
Game Dice  
Jewelry  
Knives  
Painting tools  
Pipes  
Quirts  
Saddle Trees  
Scrapers  
Shovels  
Sleds  
Splints  
Toys  
War Clubs

## Teeth

Ornaments

## Fat

Soaps  
Tallow  
Tanning  
Hair Grease  
Filled Pipe Sealer  
Cosmetic Aids



## Scrotum

Containers  
Rattles

## Stomach Liner

Cooking Vessels  
Water Container

## Foot Bones

Teething Toys  
Toy Buffalo or Horse

## Rawhide

"Par fleche"	Horse-water Trough	Buckets
Masks	Moccasin Soles	Caps
Cinches	Containers	Drums
Ornaments	Quivers	Rafts
Rattles	Ropes	Saddles
Sheaths	Shields	Shrouds
Snowshoes	Splints	Straps
Trunks	Lariats	





Good Earth  
1400-1700 ●

Cahokia  
1100-1400 ●

## Major Trade Cities on Turtle Island



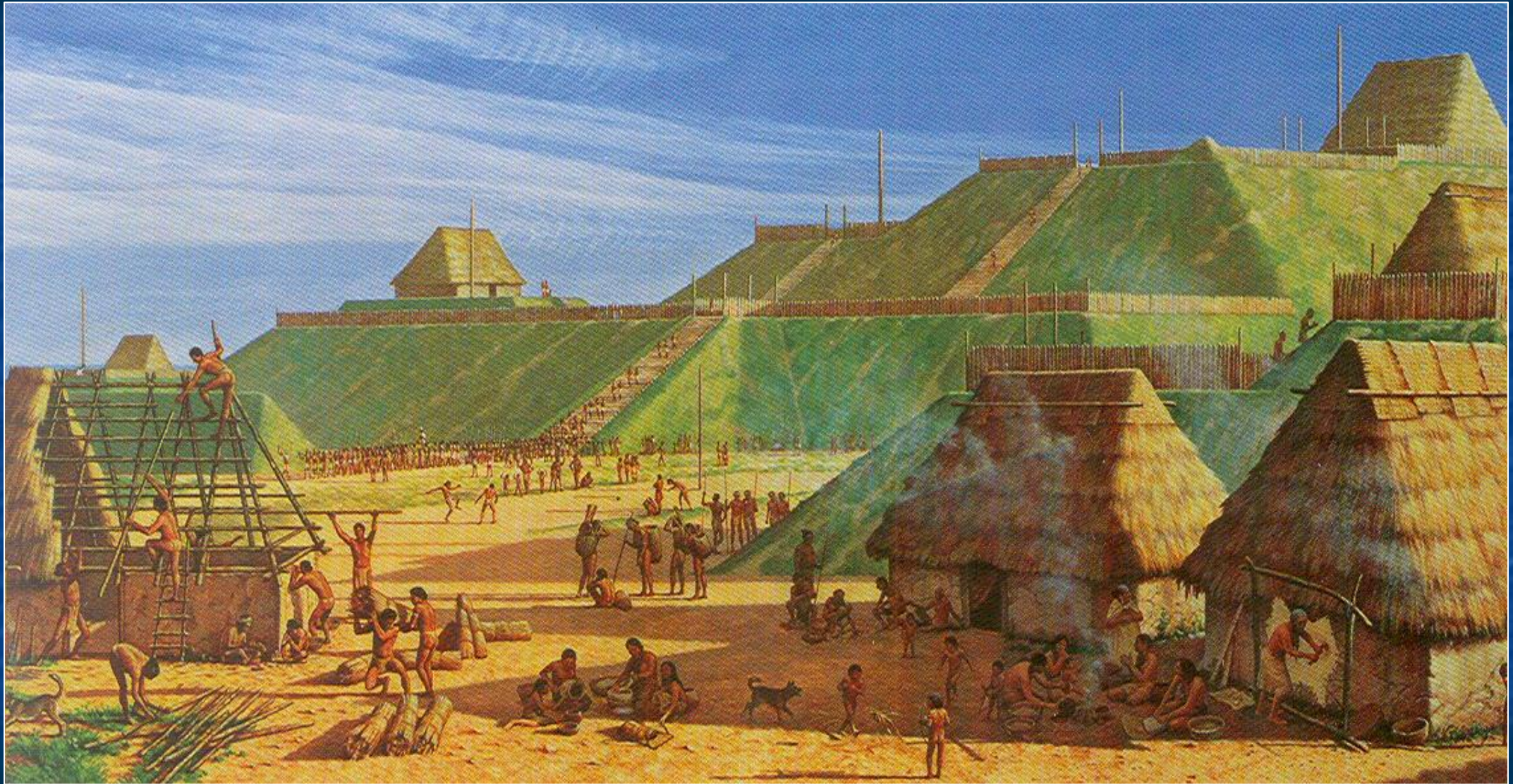


Urban Planning: Cahokia, 1100 AD



# Cahokia: North American trade center

800-1300 AD



Population of 20,000 exceeded London and Paris



# Good Earth on the Sioux River

1400-1700 AD



Population of 10,000 exceeded Boston and New York





*Good Earth* is from the name Native peoples use for Mother Earth which sustains life and where we go home upon leaving this life.

CALVIN HARLAN, Omaha Tribe



# The Great Law of Peace



Today: Canada, New York



## The Iroquois Confederacy

Formed at the solar eclipse of 1142



# A Balance of Power

Clan Mothers Chose the Chiefs



Founded by the Peacemaker, Hiawatha,  
and Mother of the Nations, Jingosaseh.

Wampum Mnemonic Laws



Decisions must be made to  
benefit seven generations.

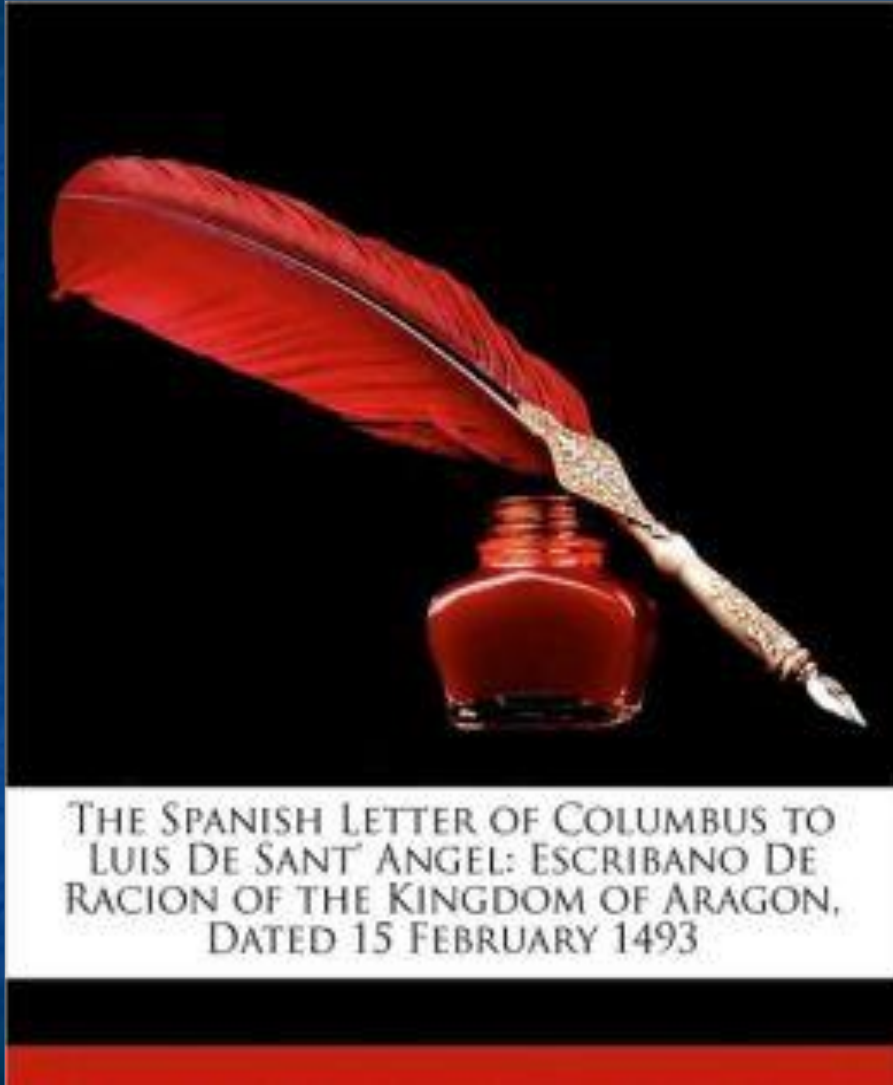




Columbus Brought a Dominator Culture



# The Fatal Letter



## Columbus Described Natives

Generous, kind, loving, extraordinarily timid, ingenious, men of commanding stature, with no weapons of war, and carrying on inter-island commerce in canoes longer and faster than Spanish 18-oared galleys.

He then declared that they and their lands were owned by Spain, taking hostages to display in Europe.





## Papal Bull of 1493

Pope Alexander VI "gave" the land to Christian monarchs of Europe because of the "inferior character of native cultures."

He authorized explorers and military leaders to convert, torture, enslave, or kill to seize the lands unless the foe was a "Christian prince" in which case he could keep the land.



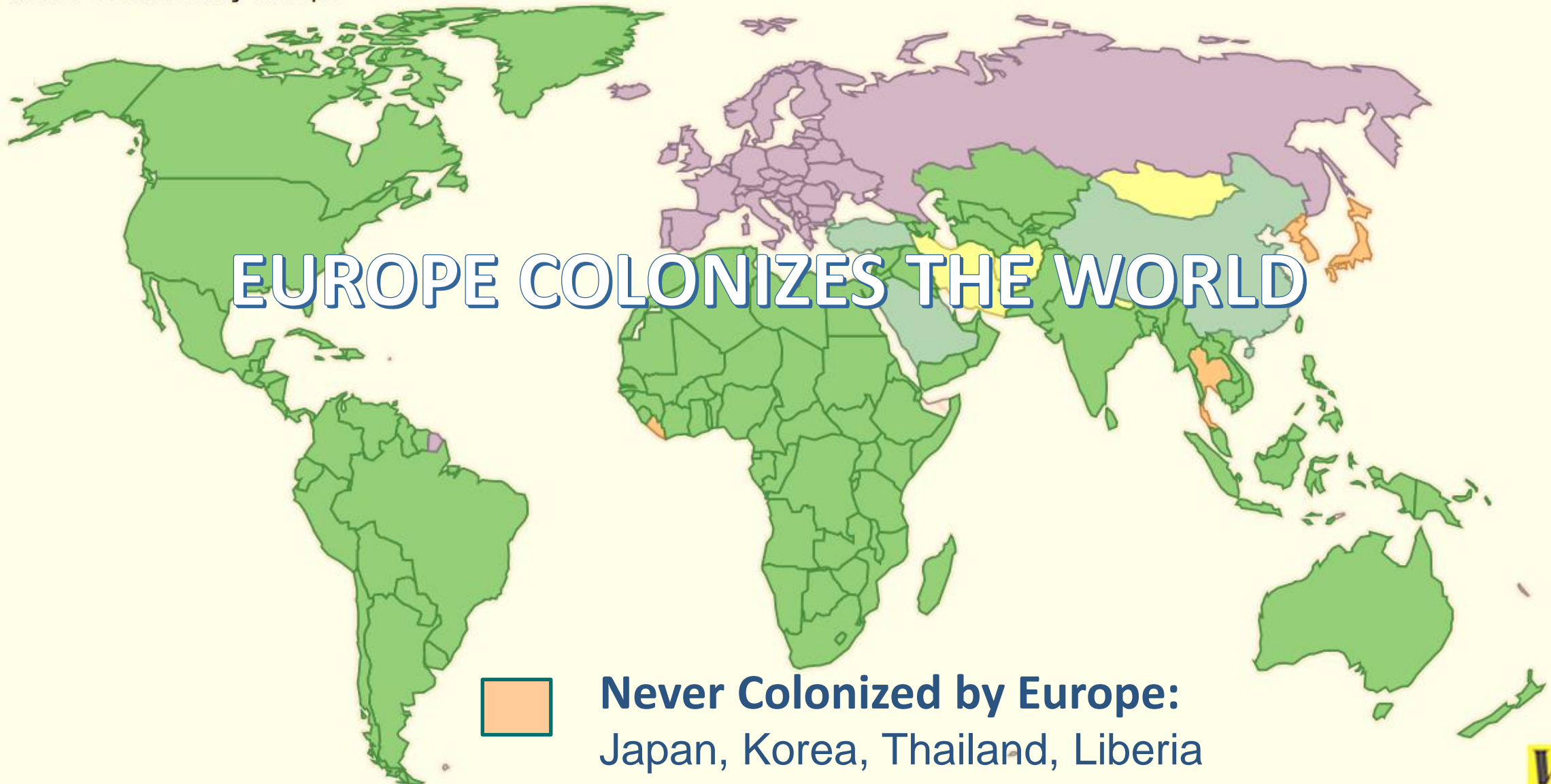


## Terra Nullis

Although perhaps 50 million persons lived in the Americas, this was declared vacant land open to settlement by European colonists.



- Europe
- Colonized or controlled by Europe
- Partial European control or influence
- European sphere of influence
- Never colonized by Europe



# EUROPE COLONIZES THE WORLD

**Never Colonized by Europe:**  
Japan, Korea, Thailand, Liberia







## Manifest Destiny

The rallying cry for westward expansion: "God intended for superior Europeans to control North America."

*American Progress painting by John Gast, 1872*





## Trails of Tears

Across the continent, tribes were forced to less suitable lands. The Cherokee are most well-known early victims.





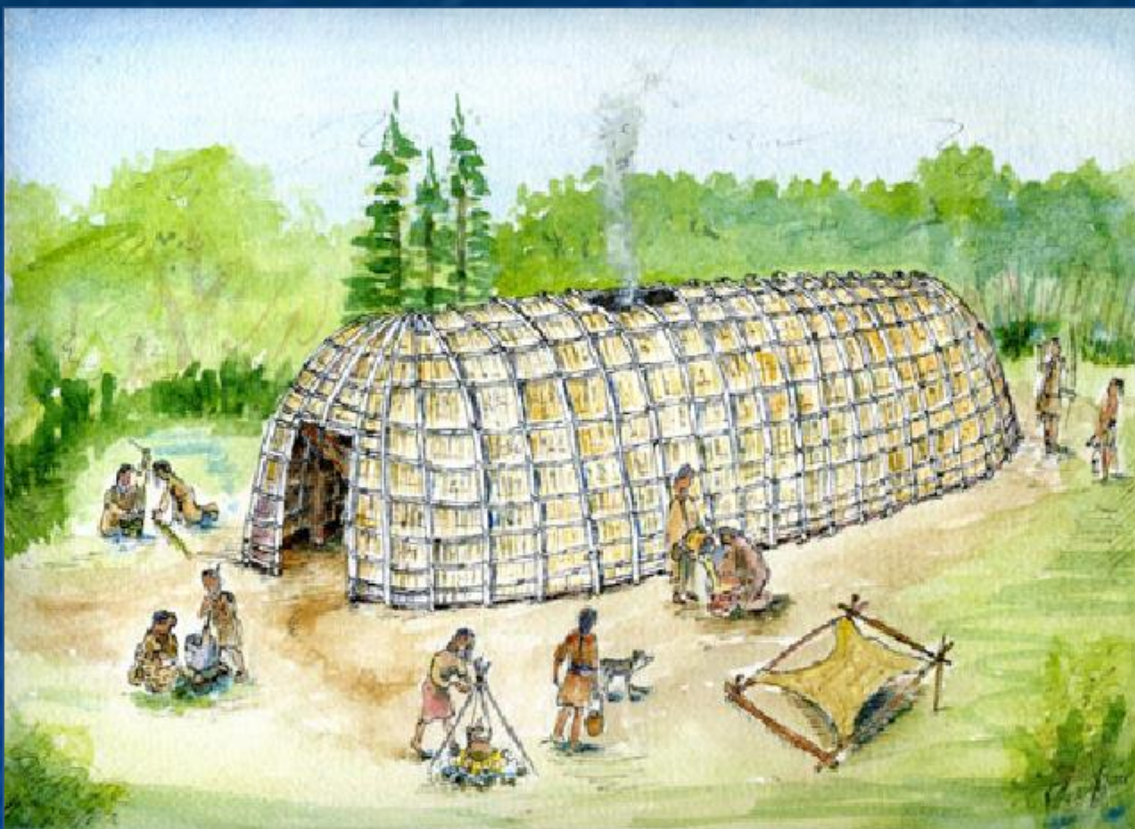
RATH & WRIGHT'S BUFFALO HIDE YARD IN 1878. SHOWING 40,000 BUFFALO HIDES. DODGE CITY, KANSAS

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

“Kill every buffalo...  
Every buffalo dead is  
an Indian gone.”

U.S. Army Colonel





From Communal to Colonized Child Rearing

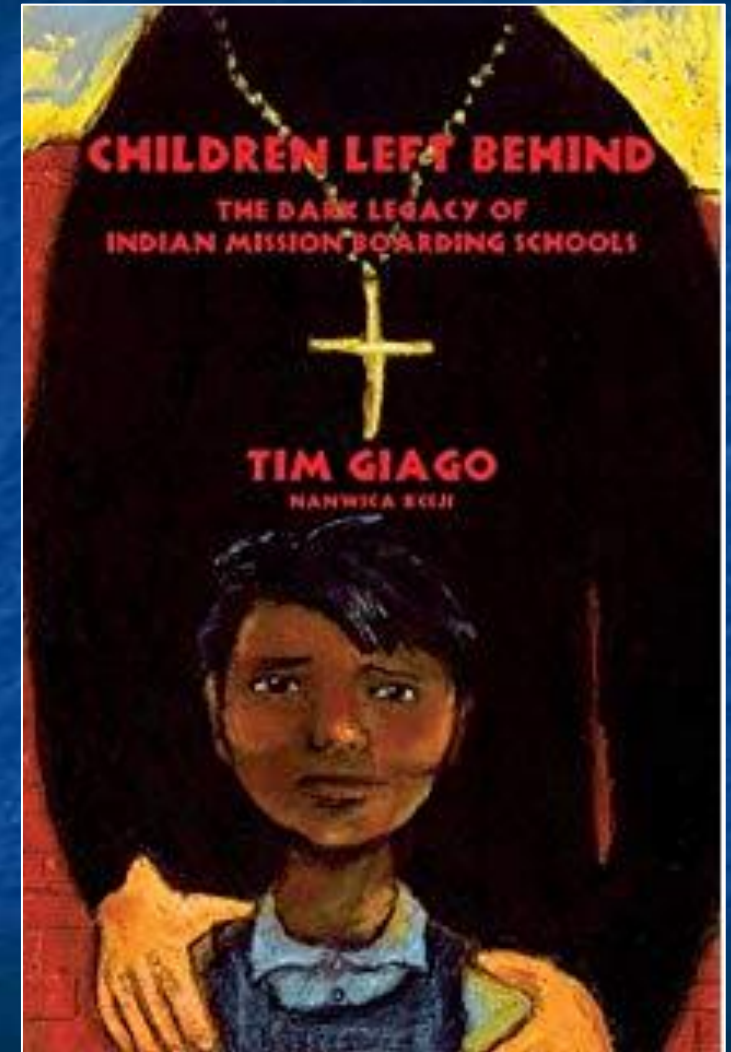




"Kill the Indian and save the man."  
Captain Richard Pratt, Carlisle Indian School



## The Aboriginal Sin







Trauma in past generations “switch on” genes for intense stress reaction.  
*Native healers and elders have always known this.*

LEE BITOSI





## Death by Disease

Europeans lived with farm animals so pollution crossed species evolving deadly germs. Polluted cities spawned plagues. Europeans who survived had some immunity. Natives did not.





More victims of colonization  
were killed by germs than guns:

small pox, cholera, diphtheria,  
influenza, measles, scarlet fever,  
tuberculosis, typhoid fever,  
sexually transmitted diseases

*Guns, Germs, and Steel*

JARED DIAMOND



# LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE



LAURA INGALLS WILDER

## Colonial Propaganda

There were no people on  
the prairie, just Indians.

—Grandfather

The only good Indian  
is a dead Indian.

—Pa



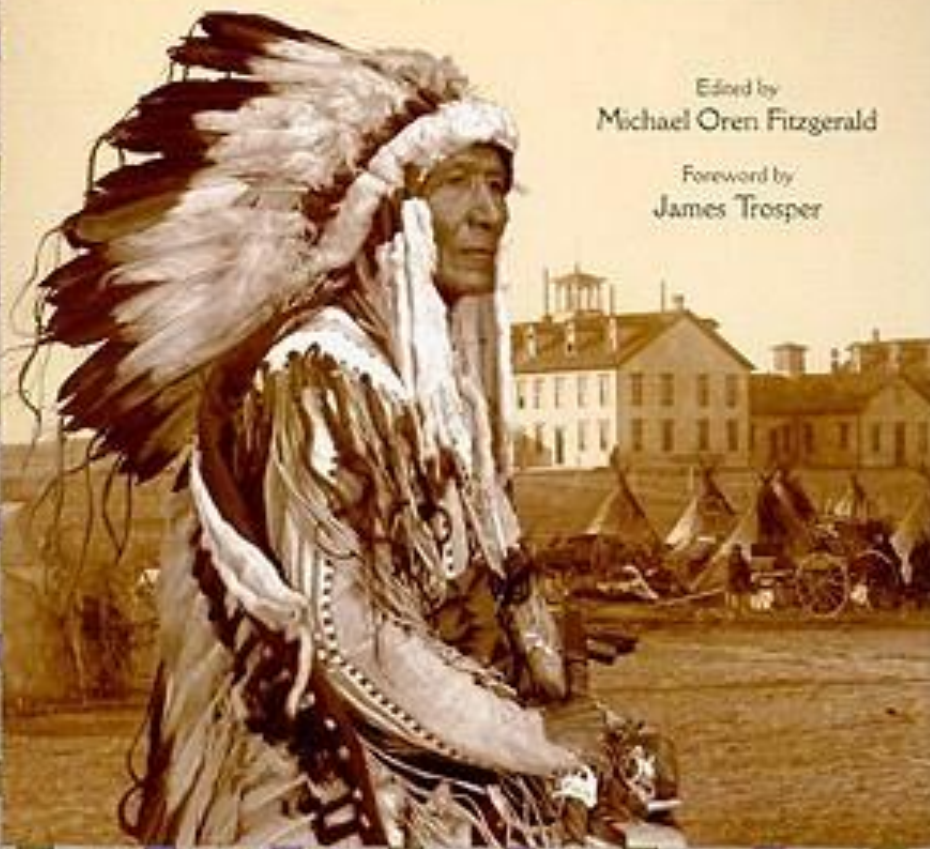
# Living in Two Worlds

## The American Indian Experience

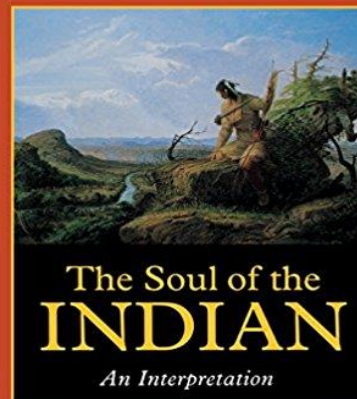
CHARLES EASTMAN (OHIYESA)  
Including Contributions by Other Notable Indian Leaders

Edited by  
Michael Oren Fitzgerald

Foreword by  
James Trosper



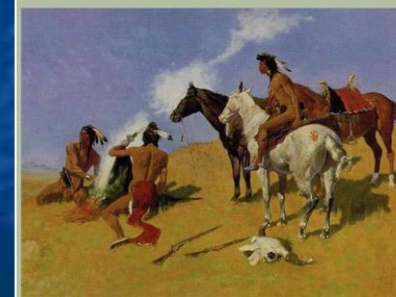
*Hardy* 493 Washington St. Boston



The Soul of the  
**INDIAN**  
*An Interpretation*

Charles A. Eastman  
*(Ohiyesa)*

INDIAN BOYHOOD



Charles A. Eastman



# Pre-Contact Housing

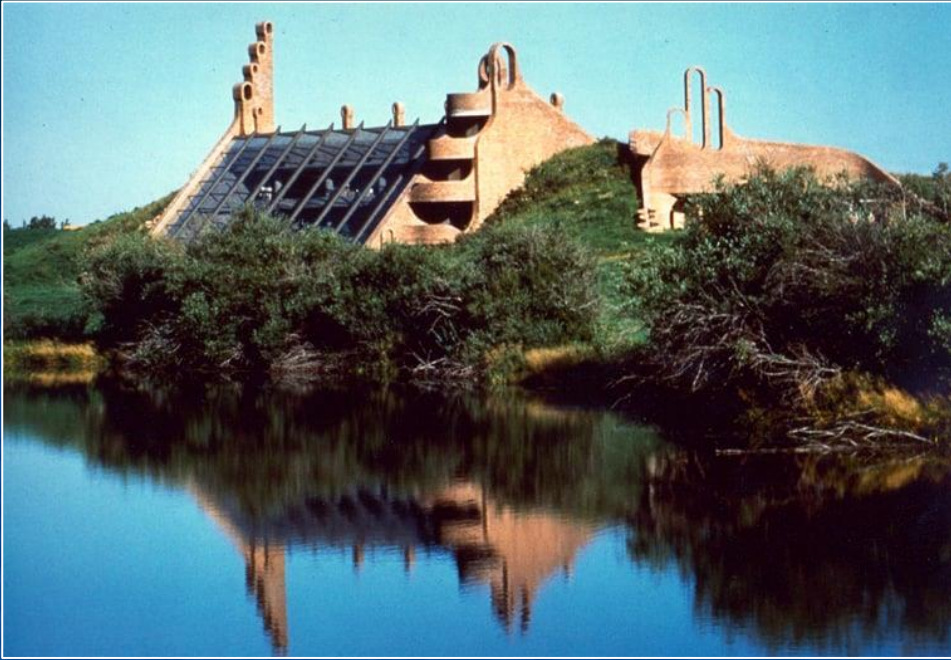






## Colonized Housing





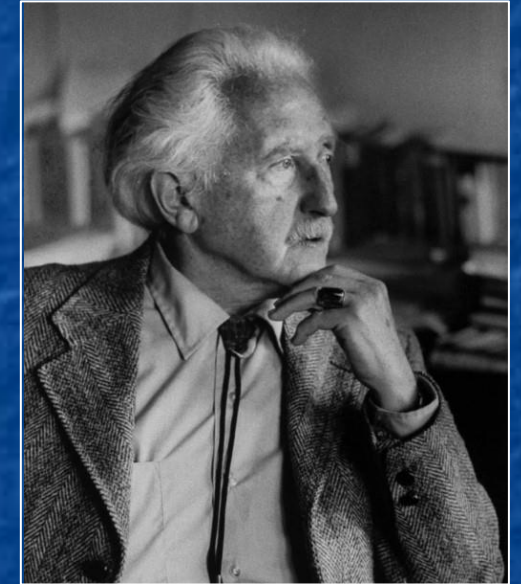
DOUGLAS CARDINAL  
First Nations Architect



# Indigenous Cultures Shape Child Development Theories

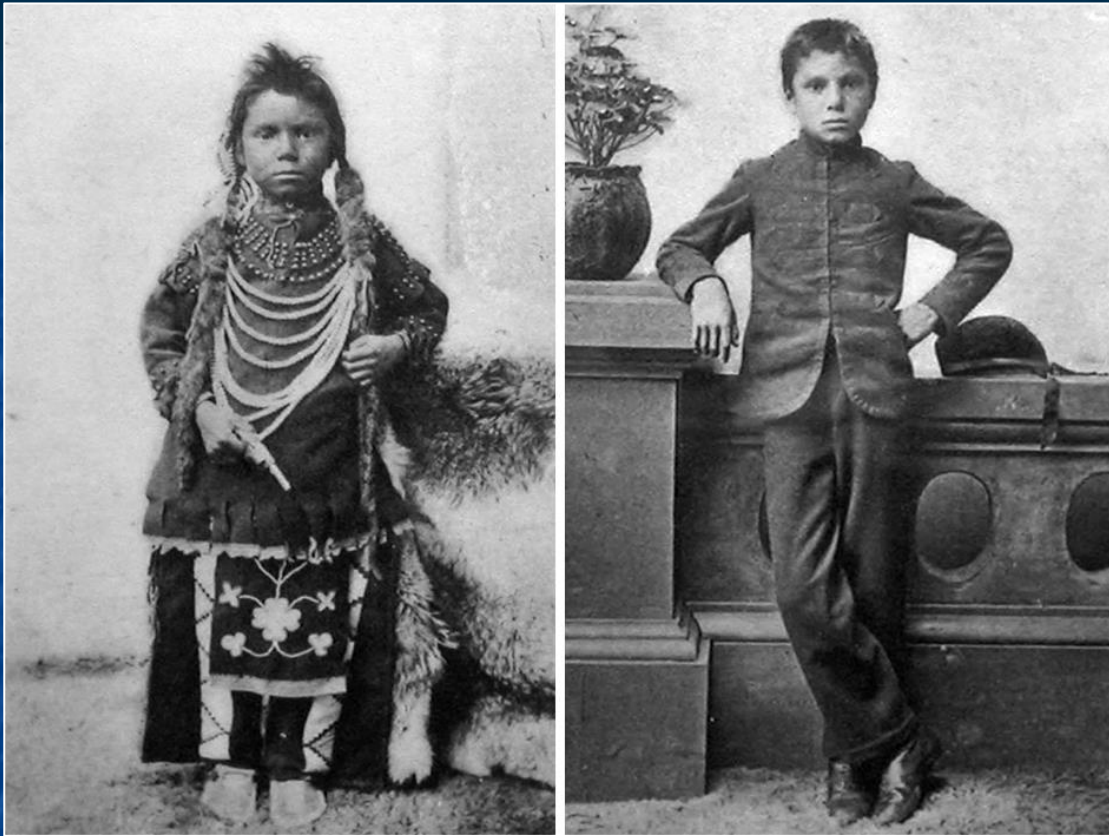


Blackfoot, Calgary  
Abraham Maslow  
1938



Sioux, Pine Ridge  
Erik Erikson  
1938





## Defining Historical Trauma

Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, resulting from massive group trauma and unresolved grief.

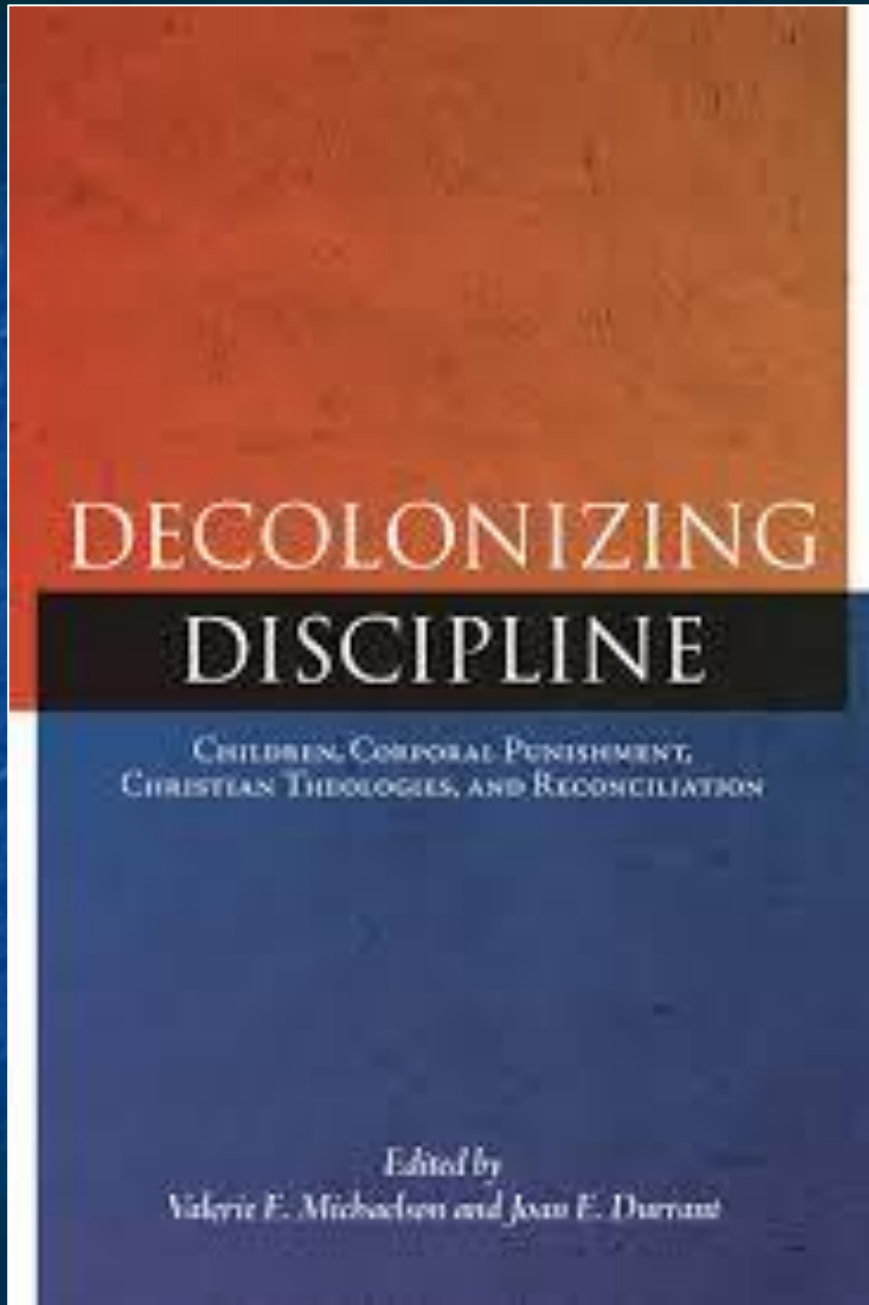
The moment they entered residential schools, they were assigned European names and stripped of their culture.

*National Post* Library and Archives Canada  
1897

MARIE YELLOW HORSE  
BRAVE HEART

University of New Mexico





## Confronting Colonialism

**Healing Trauma: Fostering Mental Health**

**Overcoming the Odds: Building Resilience**

**Changing the Odds: Confronting Colonialism**

JOSEPH GONE



# Cultural Pride





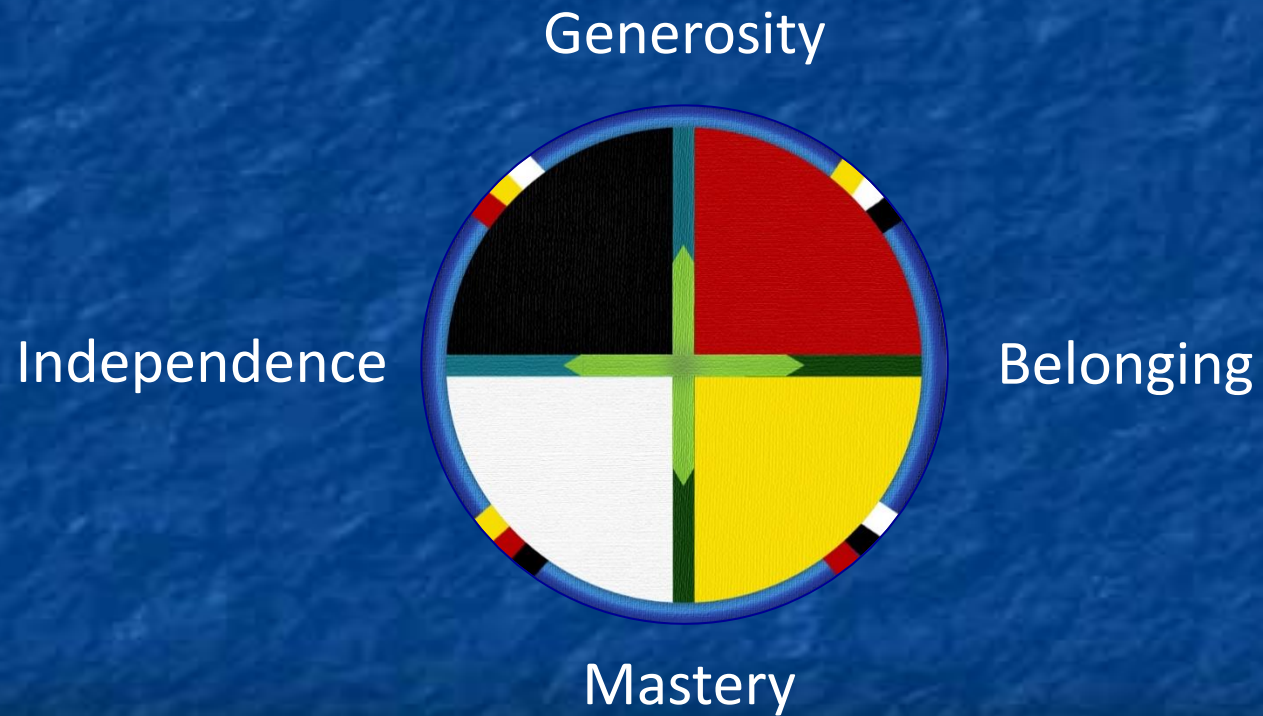


Circle of Courage:  
A cultural birthright of  
Native young people  
in North America

Dene First Nations Youth, Canada

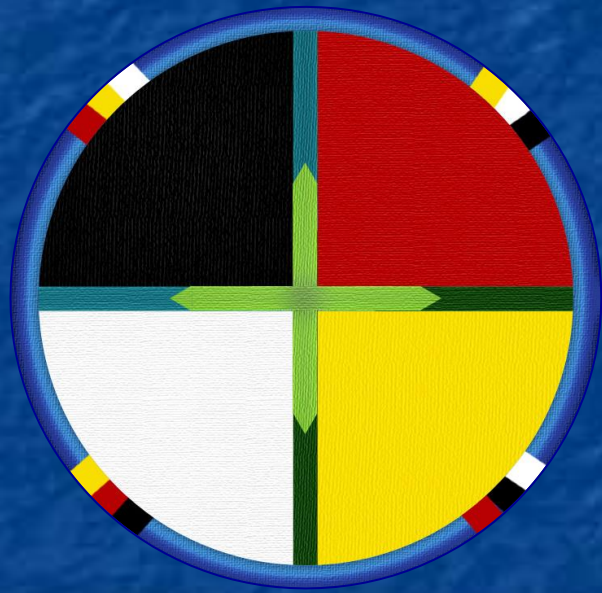


# The Circle of Courage





# Belonging







Babies are Primed for Hugging









Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.

URIE BRONFENBRENNER



# Humans have two chemicals for bonding



**OXYTOCIN** tames aggression and fear. Females have more oxytocin for use in *nurturing*.

**VASOPRESSIN** can enhance aggression. Males have more vasopressin for *protecting*.



# Oxytocin

## Trust and Bonding



*EROS*



*PHILIA*



*AGAPE*





Bids to Connect include behavior, emotions, physical appearance, and verbal conversation.

What are some bids young people make?





# The Science of Trust

JOHN GOTTMAN



**Bids to Connect**

*I am having a really hard day.*



**+ Turn Towards**

*Oh! What happened?*



**o Turn Away**

.....



**- Turn Against**

*Quit complaining and suck it up!*





**Bid** *Breakfast is ready Fred.*

**+** *Great, I'm really hungry.*

**0** *[No response]*

**-** *I suppose it's the same crap as usual.*



All humans make bids to connect.

How do we respond if someone we try to help rejects our bids?







Both the right and left brain evaluate whether to connect.





EXCLUSION

triggers

SHAME



BELONGING

triggers

PRIDE





## Building Rapid Trust

The Vagal System makes instant decisions about whom to trust—even with those we have just met. This is the *preamble to a social bond*.

STEVEN FORGES





## Trust Trumps Fear

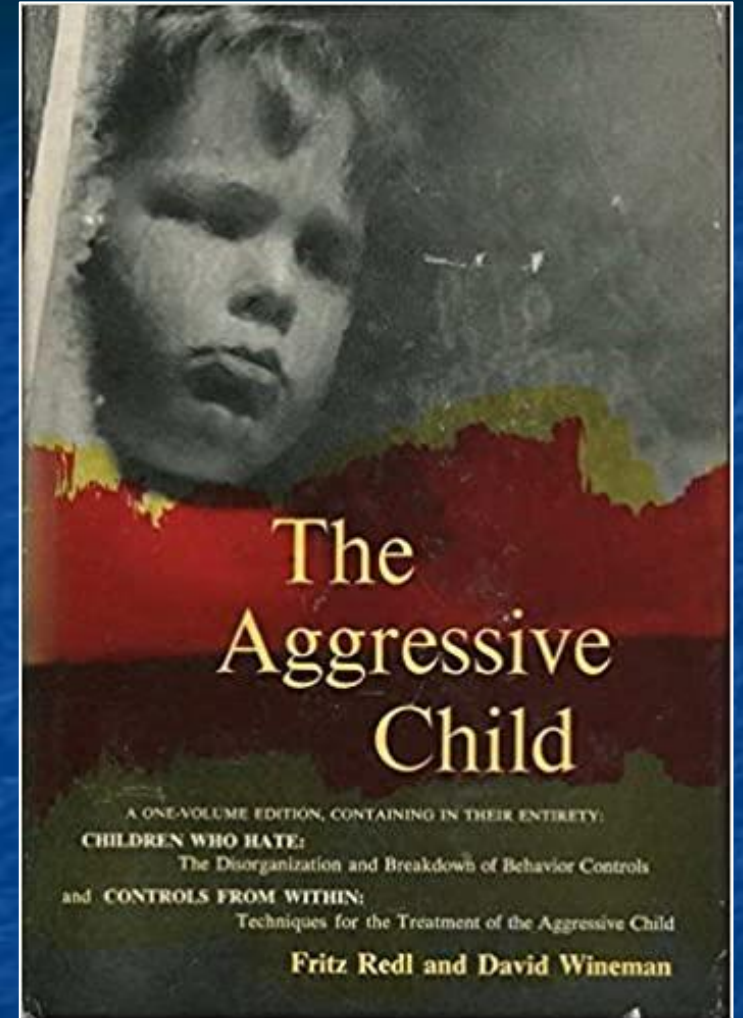
Child reads eyes, face, voice, touch, gestures.  
A sense of safety leads to **Social Engagement**

STEVEN PORGES



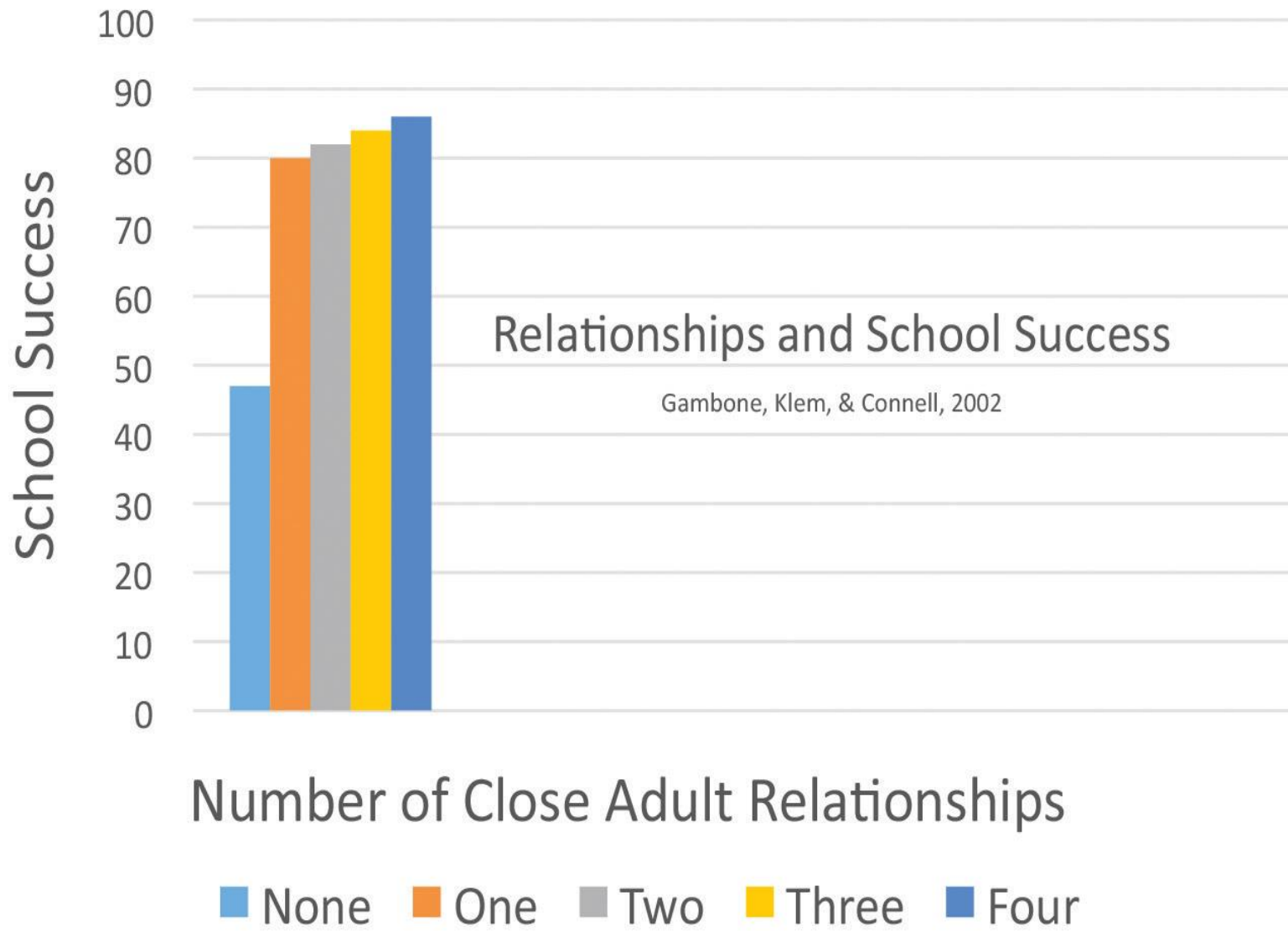


**Belonging** triggers a brain-based motivational program for cooperation and kindness.



**Rejection** fuels emotions of shame and hatred.







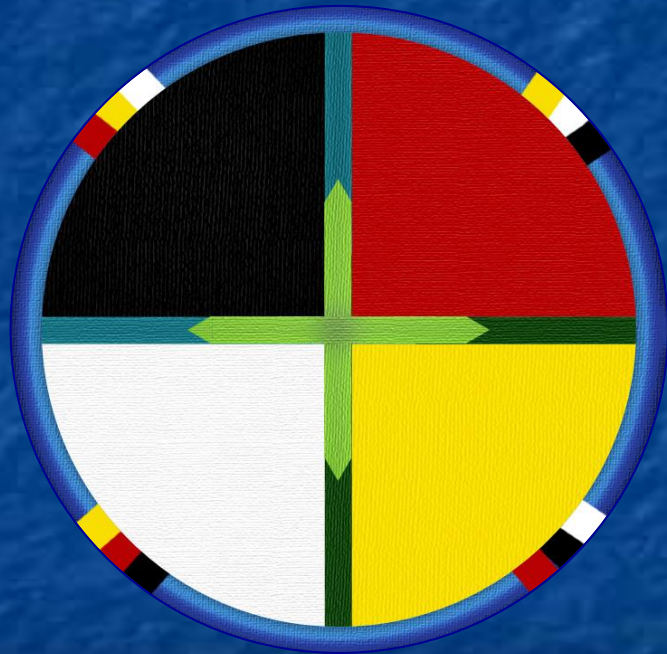


Relationships are the  
agents of change and  
the most powerful  
therapy is human love.

BRUCE PERRY



# Mastery





All children have an inborn drive to learn and master.

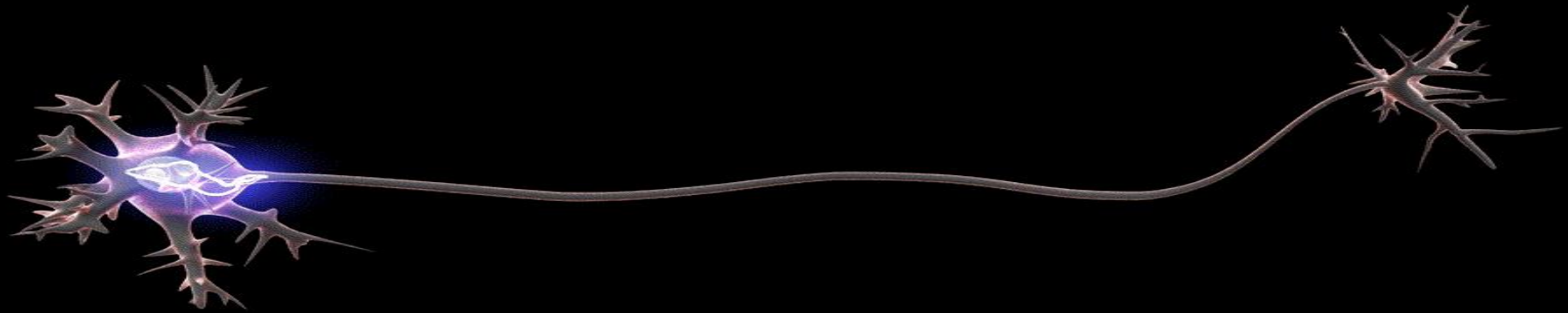




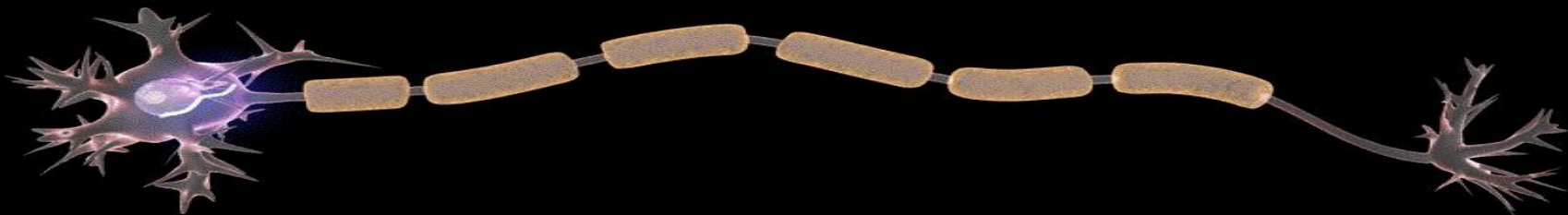




## Learning builds neuron connections



Myelin insulates Neurons making them 100 times faster.



Adding 40 layers of myelin builds expertise.





**SCHOOL  
FAILURE**  
damages self  
esteem and  
predicts poor  
life outcomes.





## Defending Self-Respect

Hostility to authority is a rebellious performance of kids whose self-respect has been degraded by rejection and school failure.



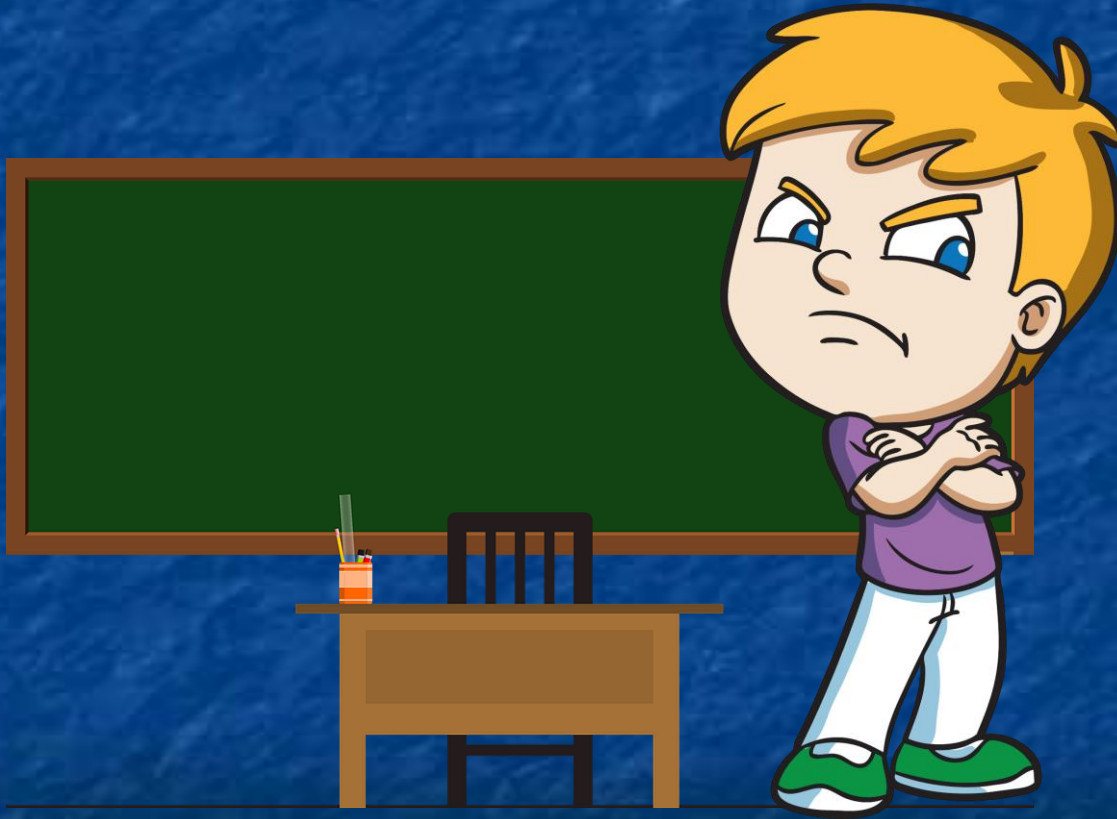


School Success  
has a lasting effect on  
life adjustment despite  
other problems.



Task Motivation  
*Learning Lots*

Egoistic Motivation  
*Don't Look Dumb*





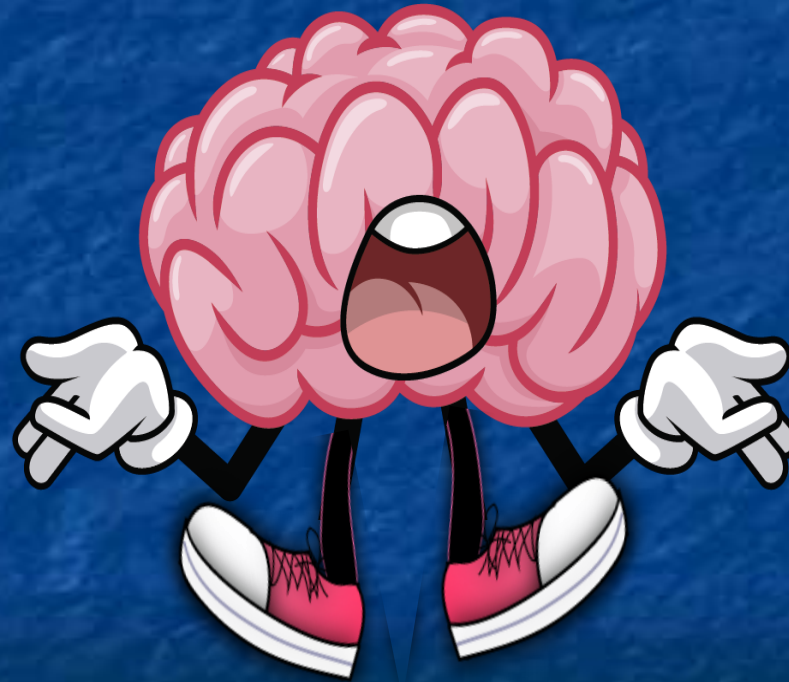
WORK HARD,  
GET SMART

Growth Mindset



I WASN'T  
BORN SMART

Fixed Mindset



CAROL DWECK



# Mindsets Affect Reaction to Failure



Try Again.  
Fail Again.  
Fail Better.

SAMUEL BECKETT





School failure is a pipeline to prison.



# School Climates Shape Student Success



Schools with diverse populations vary greatly in exclusion and dropping out.



# Success with Students at Risk



- Teachers who connect with students who distrust teachers.

- Teachers who can help struggling students succeed.





# Intelligence Equals Resilience

*intelligence* (noun)

A person's ability to respond successfully to challenges and to learn from such experience.

ROBERT SYLWESTER





***Schools That Matter*** shift the focus from test data to whether the needs of students are being met.

STEVE VAN BOCKERN





### **Learning by Observing and Pitching In**

- Learning based on social interaction
- Watching and listening with interest
- Students participate and contribute



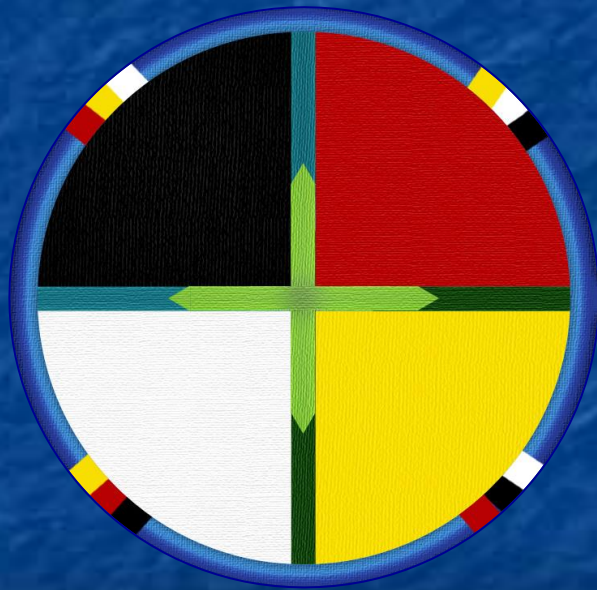
### **Assembly Line Instruction**

- Learning detached from social interaction
- Motivation based on extrinsic rewards
- Passive student role without contributions

BARBARA ROGOFF



# Independence



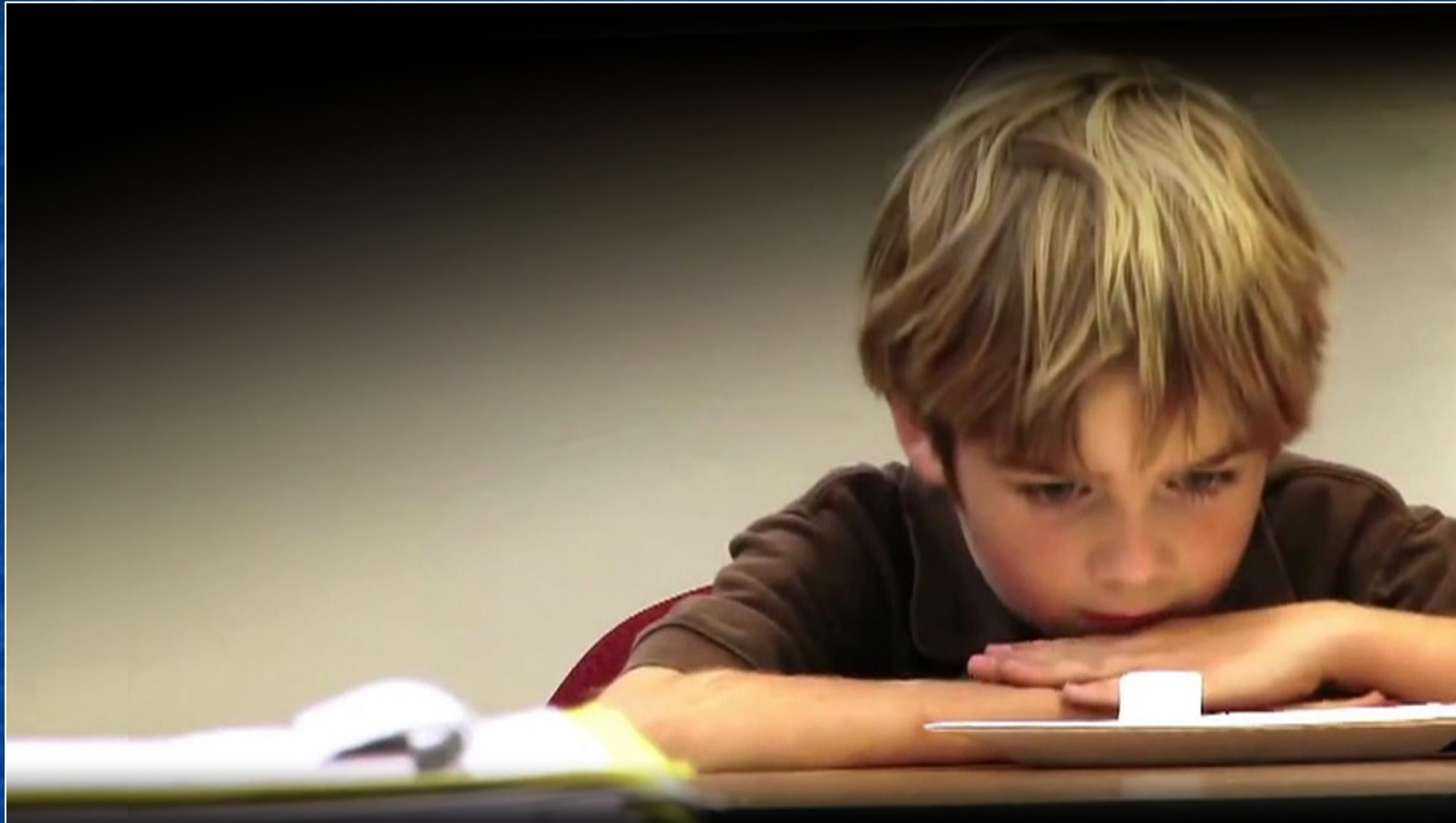




PEOPLE ARE  
**AWESOME**



# Walter Mischel's Marshmallow Test



Self-Regulation  
is central to social and emotional adaptation and maturation.



# How do children learn emotional regulation?





They borrow their caregiver's calm brain.





# Calming Cycles: Teaching Self-Regulation

Vera Fahlberg





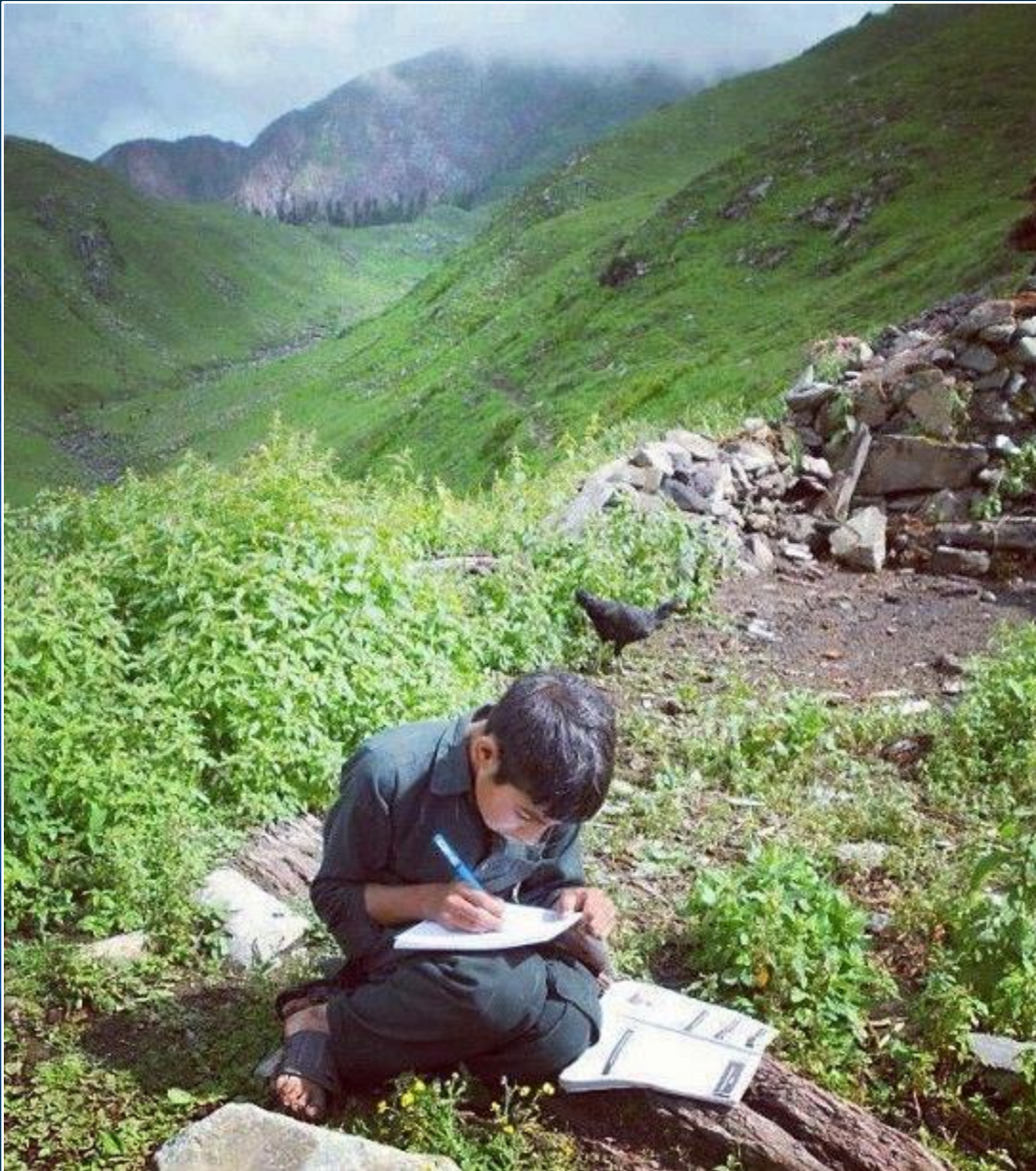


## Self-Efficacy

The belief in one's power to cope with challenges.

ALBERT BANDURA





Persistence and Grit  
were assets that enabled  
youth with serious behavior  
problems in childhood to  
have resilient outcomes.

EMMY WERNER & RUTH SMITH  
*Kauai's Children Come of Age*





## Powerlessness

The most robust trigger of stress and cortisol release

DACHER KELTNER



Power corrupts by high-jacking the brain.



Brainstem dominance programs stifle empathy.  
A dopamine high fuels impulsive pleasure seeking.



# Power Leveling in Cultures of Respect



**Consensus:** Full discussion assures all are heard.

**Teaching:** Encouraging generosity and devaluing dominance.

**Correcting:** Reminders or humor to eliminate arrogant behavior.

**Ignoring:** Withholding attention from those who are abusing power.



# Countering the Pitfalls of Power

DACHER KELTNER

## **Arrogance**

Sees others as inferior

## **Disrespect**

Rude to less powerful

## **Impulsivity**

Addicted to pleasure

## **Selfishness**

Ego overrides empathy



## **Humility**

Sees others as equals

## **Respect**

Treats all with dignity

## **Responsibility**

Practices self-restraint

## **Generosity**

Meets needs of others



# Transforming Discipline

MARTIN HOFFMAN



Power Assertion



Problem Solving



# Creating Egalitarian Cultures in Schools





# Avoiding Responsibility

*It's not my fault.*



Until persons own their problems, they are unlikely to change.  
Those who dodge responsibility get a simple verbal challenge.





## Reversing Responsibility



Student: *So I missed school.  
What's the big deal?*

Youth: *Why should I care?  
Nobody cares about me.*

Student: *Most of the other  
kids drink or use drugs.*

Adult: *Well, really you are  
the big deal.*

Adult: *Seems it is up to you  
to take charge of your life.*

Adult: *I always think of  
you as a leader.*





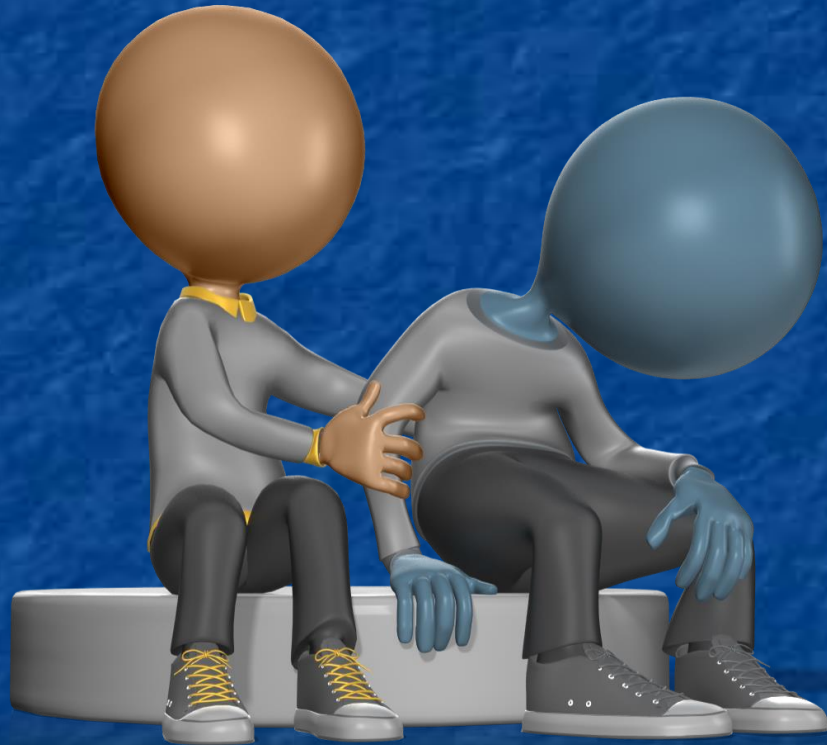
## VOICES OF YOUTH

*Other schools try to get you to do the right thing by making you afraid of the consequence.*

*Here you learn to make the right decisions because it is the right thing to do.*



# Generosity

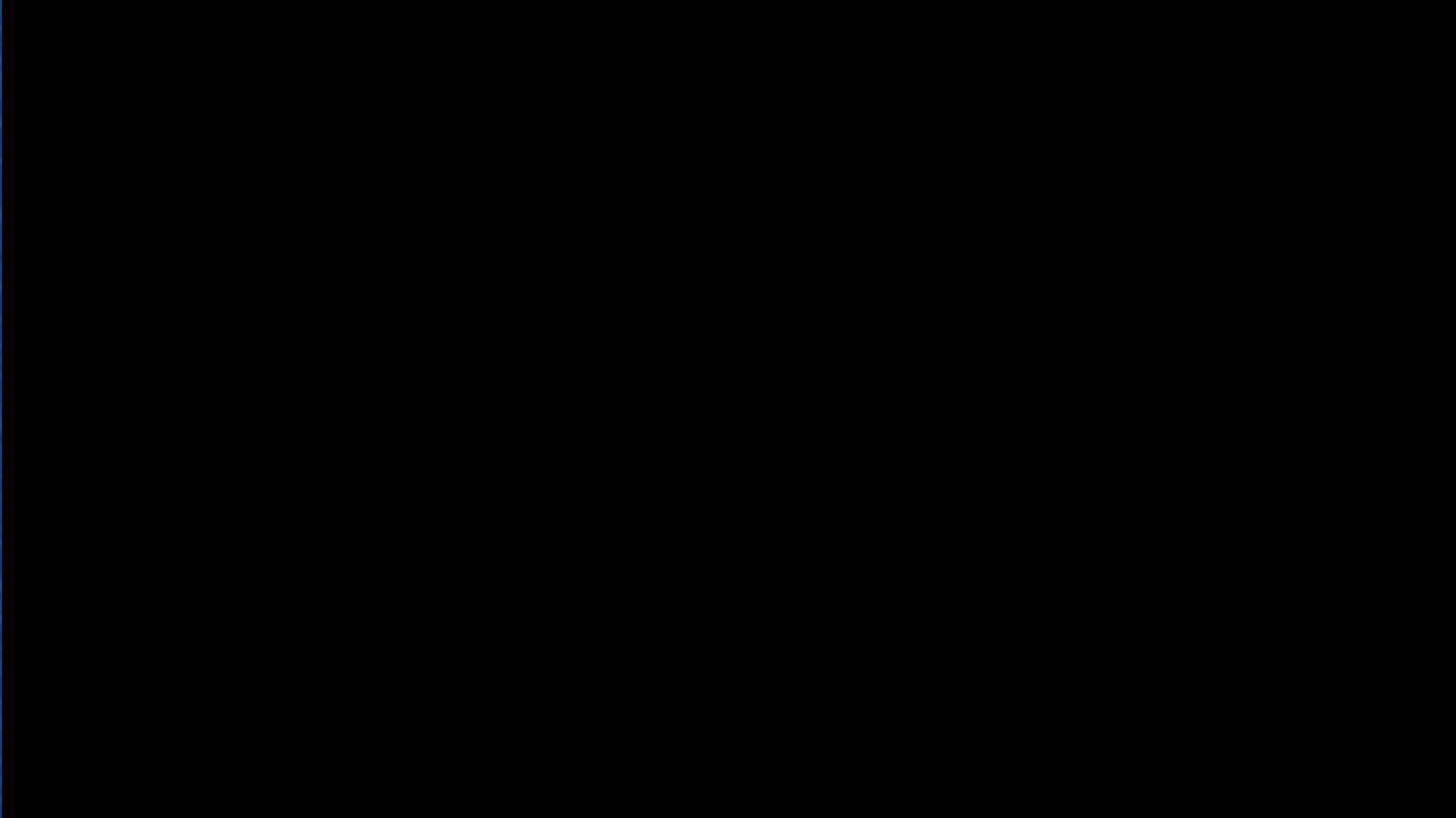




# The Transformative Power of Compassion











# Altruism and Empathy are Inborn

MAX PLANCK  
INSTITUTE  
Germany





Children are biologically hardwired, not only for close connections to others but also for “deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning.”

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AT RISK



In all primates but humans,  
a few dominate the many.



But egalitarian generosity  
has ensured human survival.





# Survival of the Fittest Most Compassionate



Sympathy is the most powerful human instinct.

CHARLES DARWIN





## Generosity

Children are born with a generous disposition. The need to give is just as vital as the need to receive.

Children who sense that their gifts are being rejected feel bad and unlovable.

IAN SUTTIE

*The Origins of Love and Hate*  
1935



# The Purpose of Life

A silhouette of a person standing on a beach at sunset, looking out at the ocean. The sky is a mix of blue, orange, and red, with some clouds. In the distance, there are mountains and a building with lights on the right.

Only 20 per cent of teens can identify a purpose in their lives.

WILLIAM DAMON





## A Cause Beyond Self

Only a positive prosocial purpose can provide the lasting inspiration, motivation, and resilience that is characteristic of a truly purposeful life.

WILLIAM DAMON  
Stanford Center for Adolescence

Naelyn Pike, 16, opposes mining on her Apache homelands.





Helping gives  
proof of one's  
worth – being of  
value to others.



Research on compassion in small children.







## Being Mean is Not in Genes

Both identical and fraternal twins are similar in showing compassion or disregard to a person in distress.





Does aggression in small children

predict antisocial behavior as teens?





Helping, sharing, and consoling in third grade is the best predictor of achieving in eighth grade.



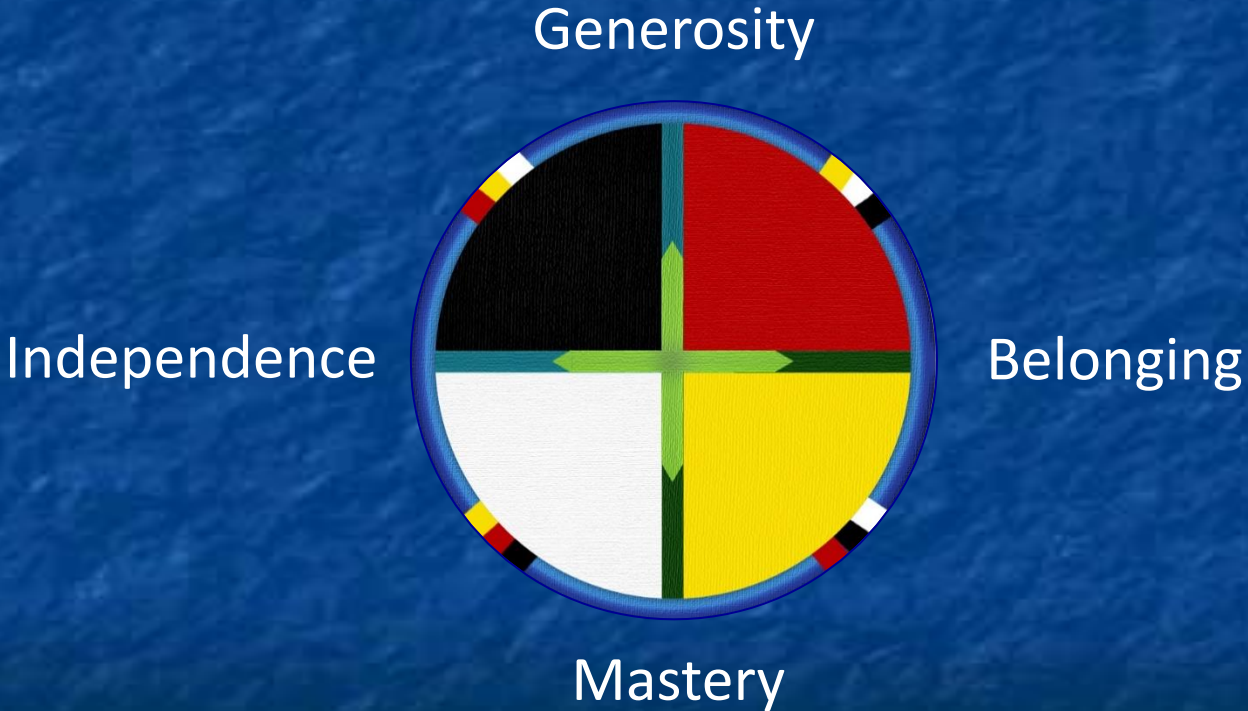


We must look at children in need not as problems but as individuals with potential to share if given the opportunity.

DESMOND TUTU  
*Reclaiming Youth at Risk*



# The Circle of Courage





# BELONGING



I didn't want to talk to anyone. But that just made them want to talk with me more. Before, when I didn't want to talk, they acted like it was my fault.

Here, people could tell I was having feelings but just bottled them up. They showed a lot of respect and love toward me. When I realized I could trust and share, it felt like my shoulders were uplifted.



# MASTERY



In my last school it was the fear of messing up, that is why I didn't participate. Here, people teach me how to do it right and help me. Nobody makes bad comments, nobody calls me dumb.

My parents can see a difference in me. I think I carry myself in a successful *yes I'm worth it* way.



# INDEPENDENCE



I came from doing drugs, disrespecting my mother and my whole family. It wasn't that I had to change. You've got to make up your own mind that you're willing to change; otherwise you are just putting up a front.

So I am excited that I made a decision to make this big change. I thought I couldn't do it at first because of all of my problems, but it happened.



# GENEROSITY



I tried to make people feel bad because I felt bad about myself. If staff or a peer would try to help me, I wouldn't accept their help.

You might think that people don't want your help or don't need you, like they are just cruel or coldhearted. It's just that they are trying to hide their feelings. You don't want to give up on people no matter who they are.



# Putting the Circle of Courage into Practice

Larry Brendtro

A digital copy of this presentation is available at  
[reclaimingyouth.org/handouts](http://reclaimingyouth.org/handouts)