

## Consilience

Larry Brendtro, PhD, Director, Resilience Resources,  
Lennox, South Dakota Bringing together Western and  
Indigenous Science to create sustainable futures for our  
children and our endangered world.



# Consilence: The Circle of Courage

Larry Brendtro

Reclaiming Youth Seminars  
Augustana University, July 21, 2023



RECLAIMING  
Youth at Risk

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



RESILIENCE  
RESOURCES

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# The Search for Evidence-Based Practice







***Much of the research that guides evidence-based practice is too inaccessible, overwhelming, and removed from practice.***

Carol Goodheart  
American Psychological Association



*Everything should be  
made as simple as possible  
but not simpler.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

*If you can't explain your  
theory to a six-year-old,  
you probably don't  
understand it yourself.*





We are drowning in data while starving for wisdom.

E. O. WILSON  
Harvard University

# The Solution is *Consilience*



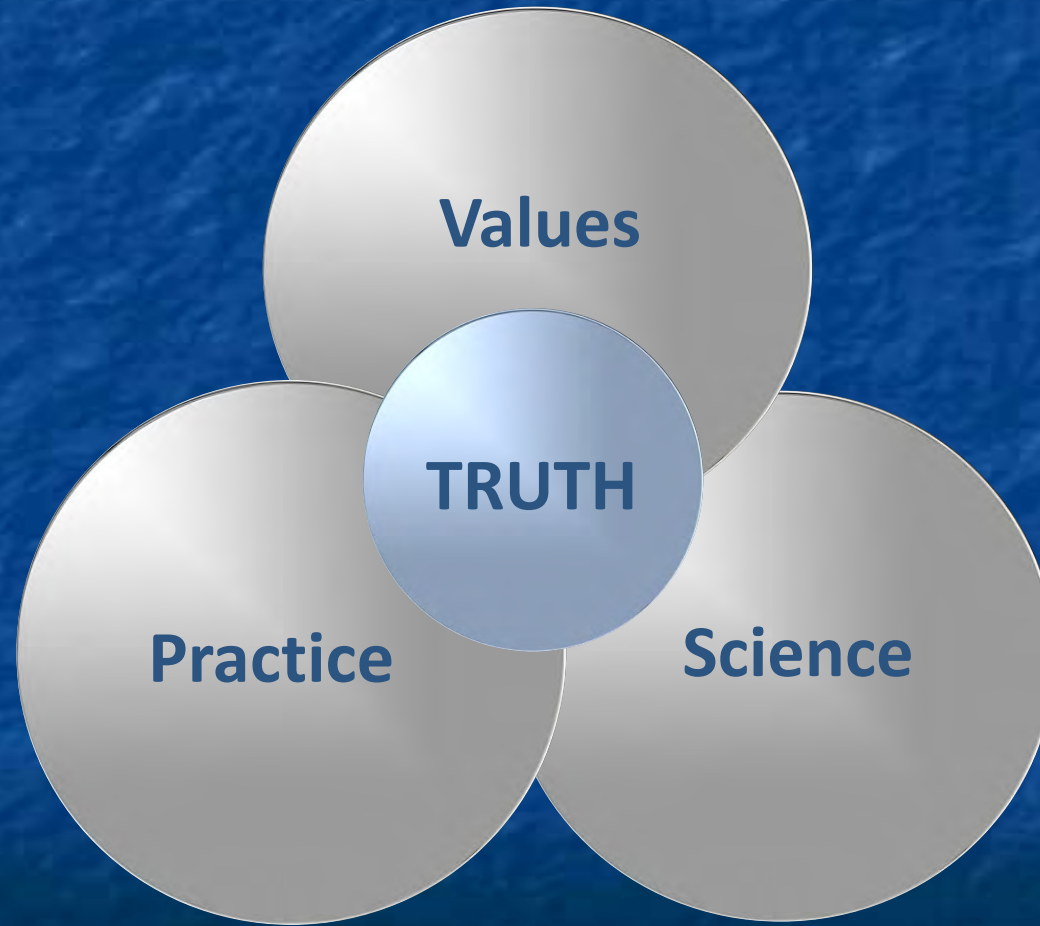
Discover powerful simple truths by tapping different sources of knowledge.

WILLIAM WHEWELL

1794-1866



# Consilience: The Test for Truth







## Values

Cultural Values  
Universal Values



**Experience**

Practice Expertise  
Youth and Families





**Science**

Modern Science

Indigenous Science



# What is Indigenous Science?







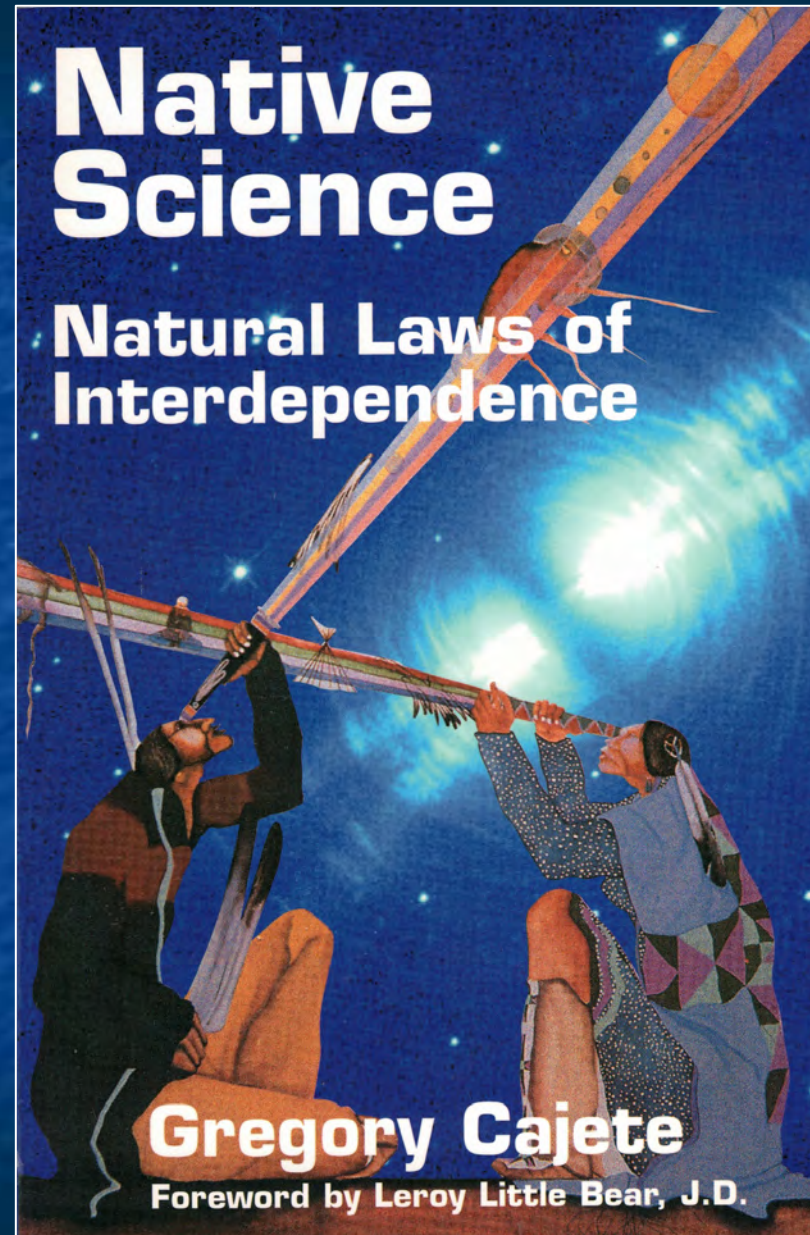
**Much knowledge about life is known to Indigenous peoples worldwide.**

The old African men and women, particularly the old women, were consummate child psychologists.

**HERBERT VILAKAZI**  
Zululand University



**Western Science** describes how the world actually is without value judgements.



**Native Science** describes how the world should be through living in harmony.





For most human history, humans have lived in cultures of respect. The Zulu language calls this world-view *Ubuntu*.



# Living in Harmony is in our DNA



Across millennia, humans have evolved to thrive in egalitarian groups.

CHRISTOPHER BOEHM





## Survival of the Fittest Kindest

CHARLES DARWIN

When his ten-year-old daughter died of TB, Darwin concluded that compassion for those we love is the strongest instinct in most humans.

He reasoned that groups that have more sympathy would strengthen this trait through natural selection.

# Pre-Colonization Peoples on Turtle Island







Good Earth  
1400-1700

**Cahokia**  
1100-1300

Major Trade Cities  
on Turtle Island

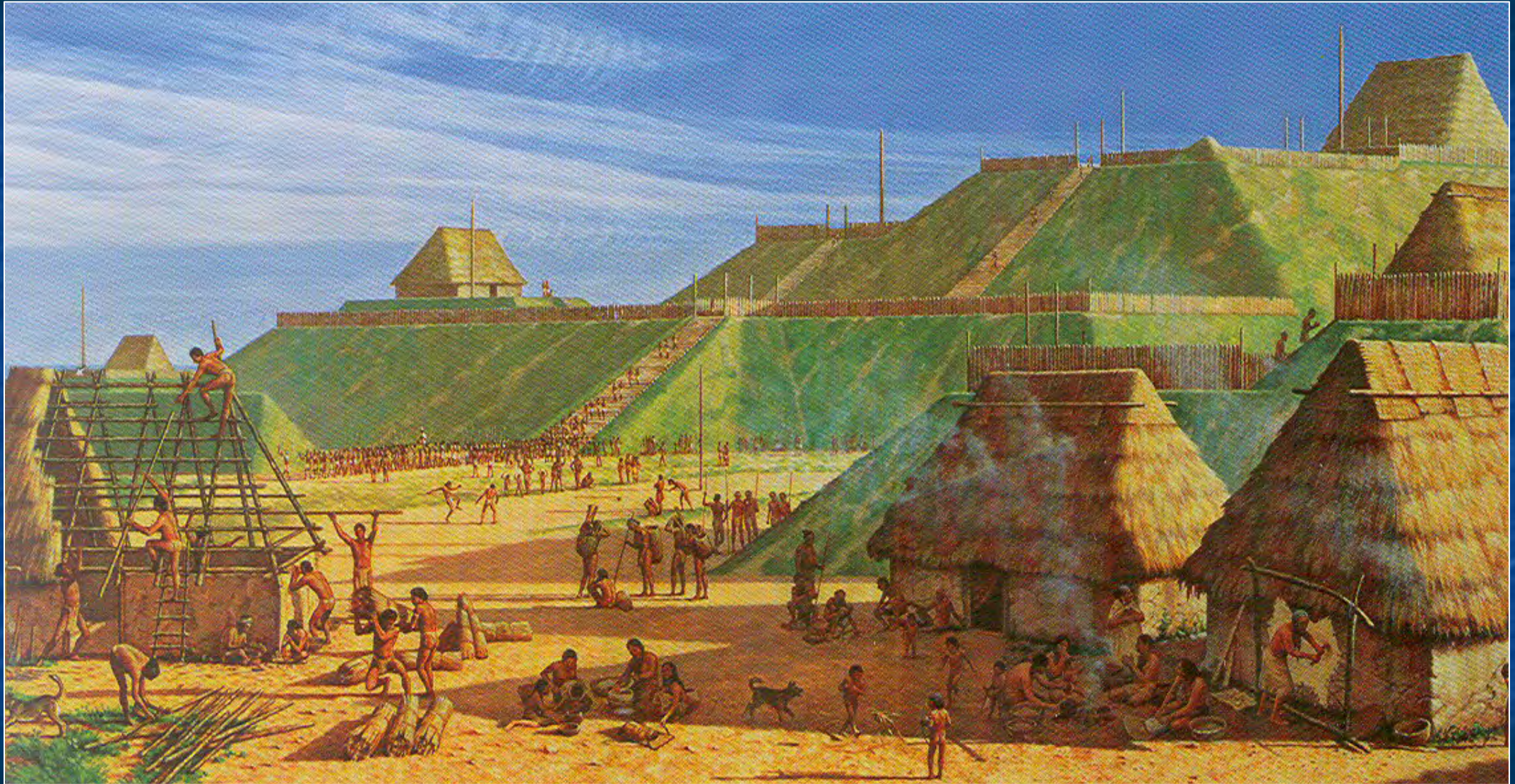


# Urban Planning — Cahokia on the Mississippi River, 1100 AD





# Cahokia: North American trade center



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*** refers to the name Native peoples use to describe Mother Earth which sustains life, and where we go home upon leaving this life.

CALVIN HARLAN  
The Omaha Tribe





Today: Canada, New York

# The Iroquois Confederacy

Formed at the solar eclipse of 1142



# Origins of Democracy: The Iroquois Great Law of Peace



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



# THE & CHALICE THE BLADE

**Our History,  
Our Future**

*"The most  
important  
book since  
Darwin's  
**Origin of  
Species**"  
—Ashley  
Montagu*

**RIANE  
EISLER**

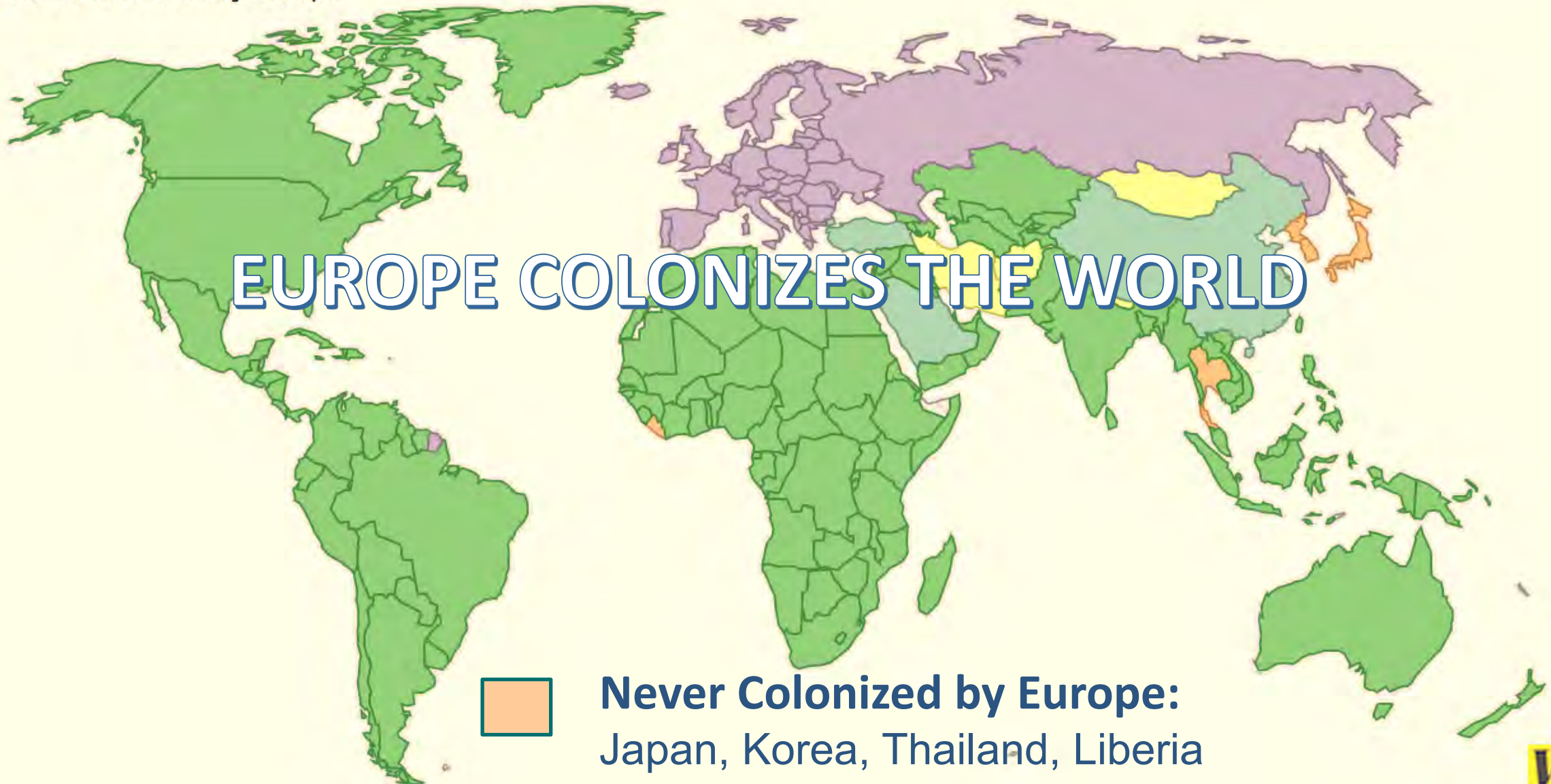
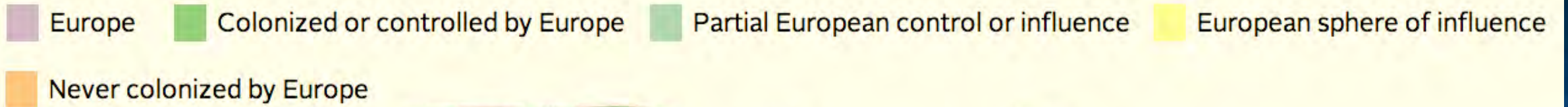


## Two Types of Cultures

Partnership Cultures  
prevailed through most of  
human history as people lived  
in hunter-gatherer groups.

Dominator Cultures  
ruled Europe from the Aryan  
invasions until the advent of  
Western democracy.





# EUROPE COLONIZES THE WORLD



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



## Colonizing Africa: The Papal Bull of 1455

Pope Nicholas V granted Portugal rights to enslave Muslim and African people. He called for non-Christian peoples to be invaded, captured, vanquished, and reduced to perpetual slavery to Christian monarchs. This fueled the slave trade.





1492: Columbus blew in and the world changed.





## Colonizing the Americas: The Papal Bull of 1493

Pope Alexander VI gave this land to Christian monarchs 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:*  
Latin for *empty land*

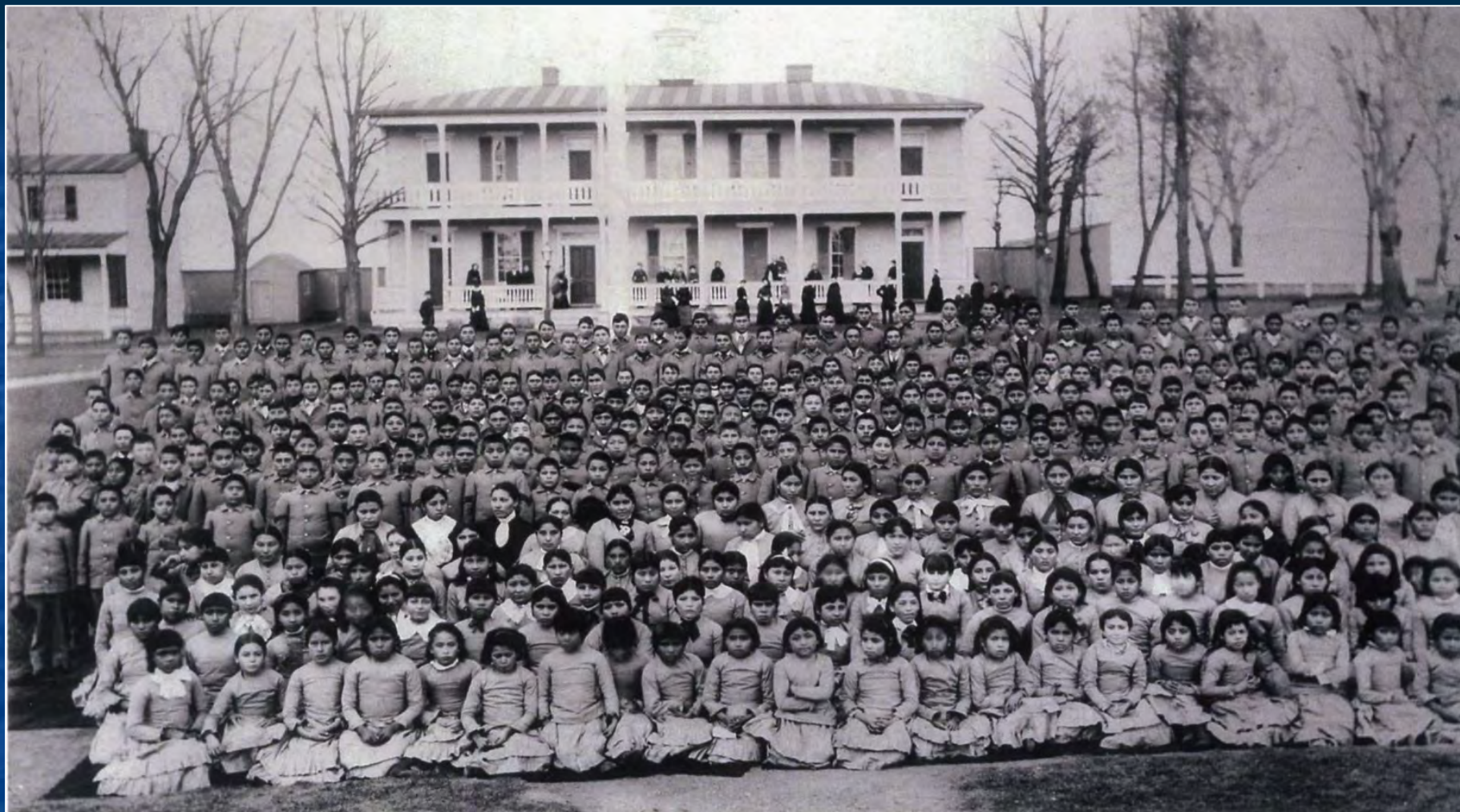
While millions lived in the Americas, the Pope used the legal fiction *terra nullis* to give title of land to Europeans.





Colonization: Students in Residential Schools





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

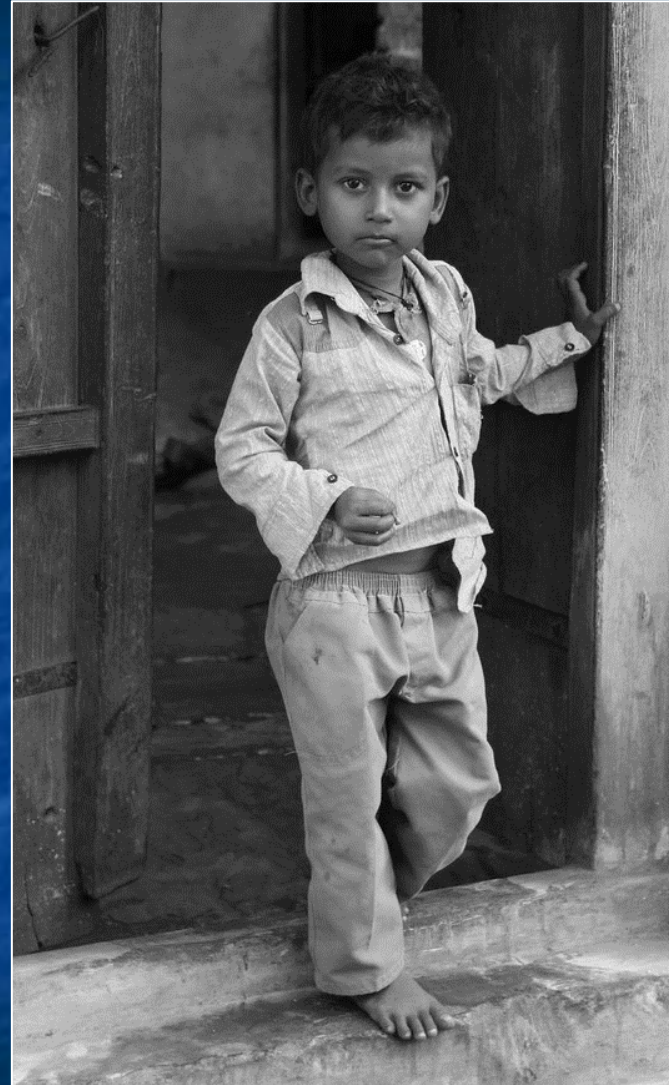


# Two Kinds of Cultures

People in some cultures are *insecure* and *sultry*. But members of other cultures are *secure* and *peaceful*. What makes the difference?

Those in **Insecure Cultures** strive to dominate one another. Those in **Secure Cultures** seek to meet needs of both individuals and the group.

RUTH BENEDICT







Across cultures and life span, all humans have the same needs.

MARTIN BROKENLEG



THIRD EDITION

# RECLAIMING YOUTH AT RISK

*Futures of Promise*



Larry K. Brendtro | Martin Brokenleg | Steve Van Bockern

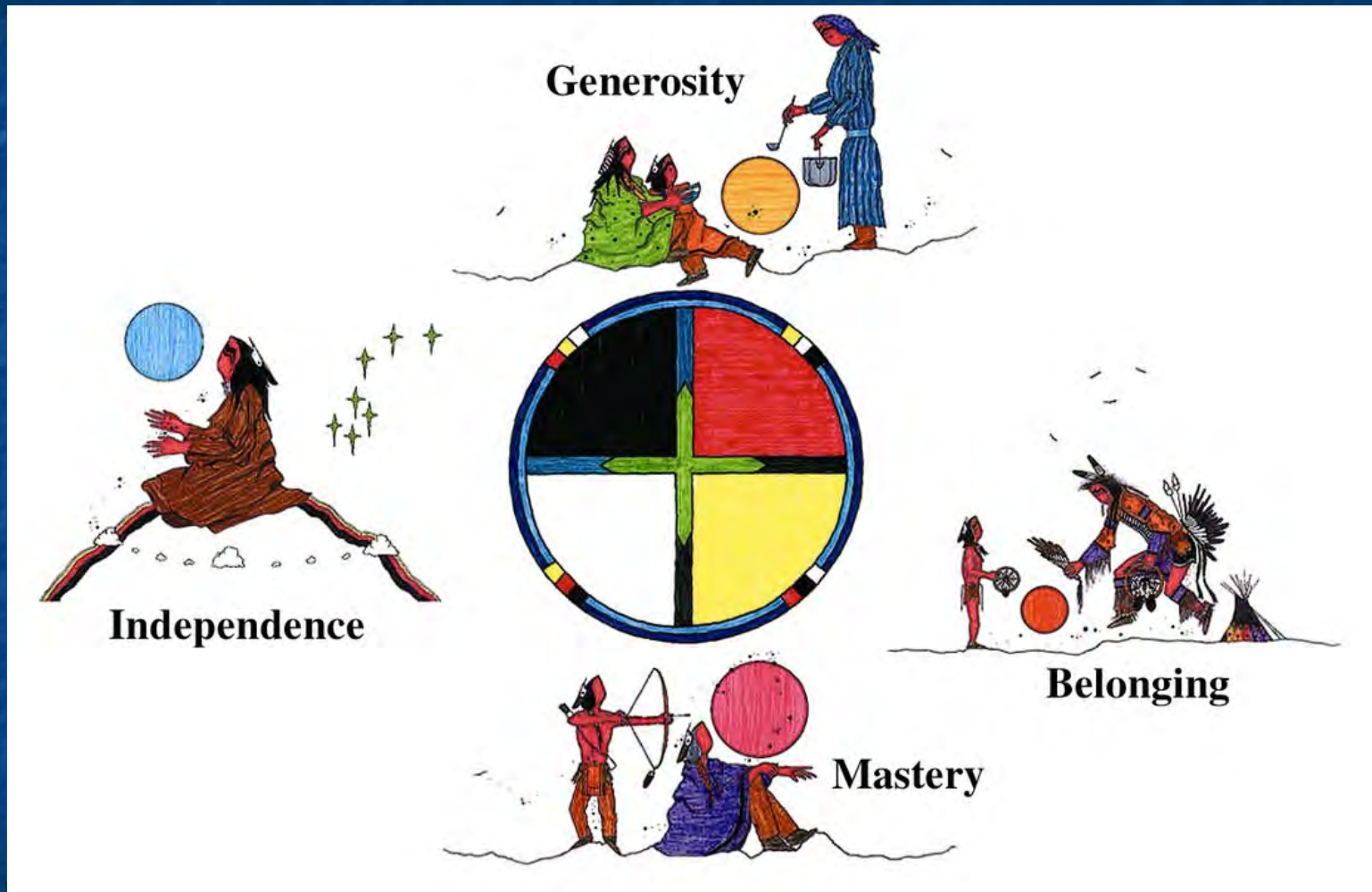
## Indigenous and Western Knowledge



Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern



# The Circle of Courage



GEORGE BLUEBIRD  
Lakota Artist

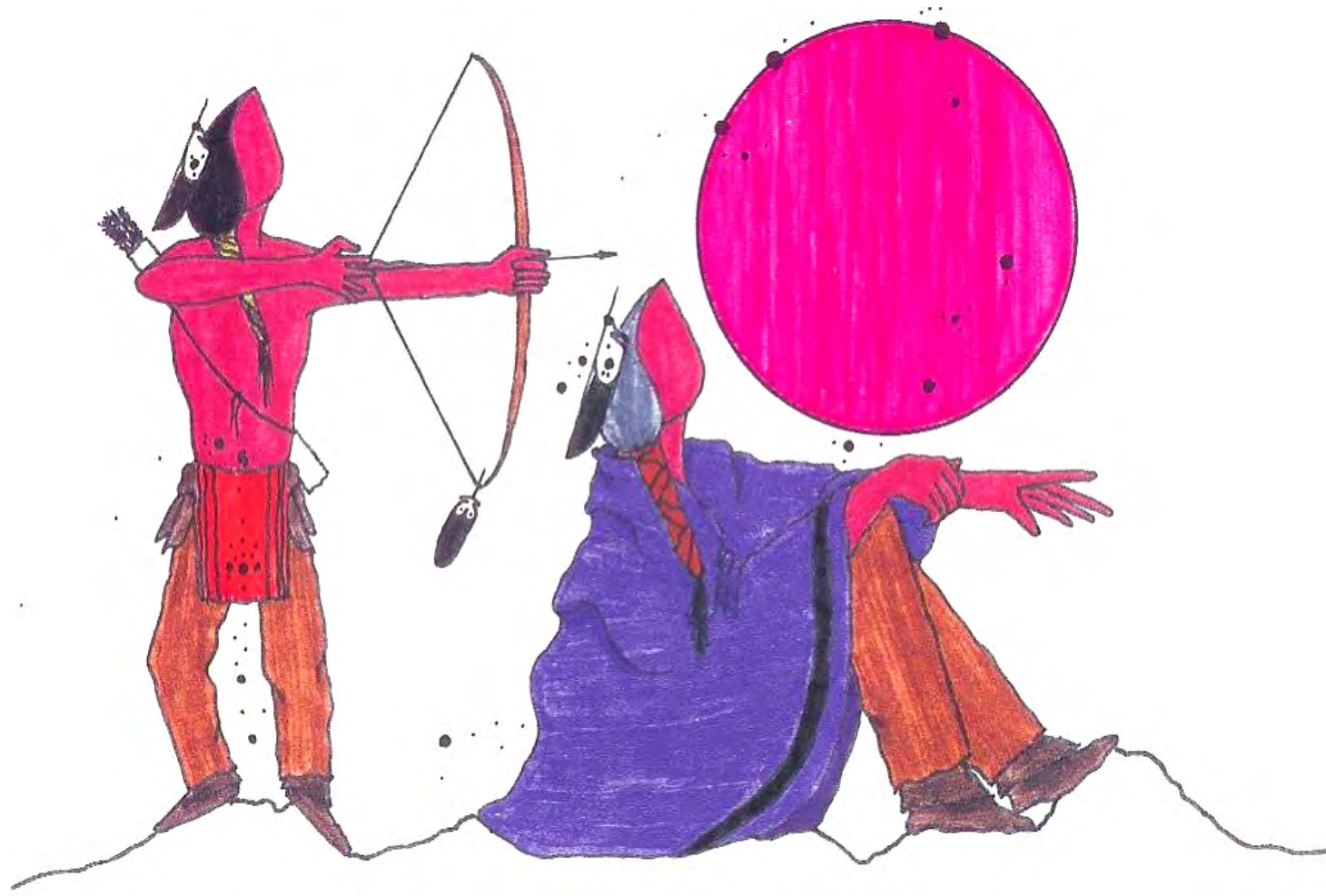


# Belonging





# Mastery





# Independence





# Generosity





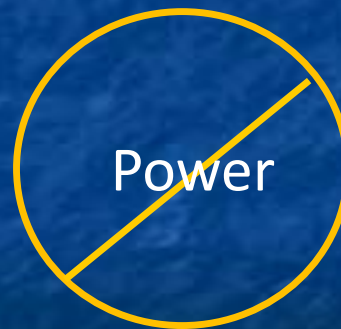
FIRST NATIONS  
NORTHERN BLACKFOOT  
Alberta, Canada



ABRAHAM MASLOW

1938

Maslow originally believed that **power** was the primary human motivation, but the Blackfoot thrived in a climate of **generosity**.





# What Matters Most? Developmental Needs

ABRAHAM MASLOW



## Prevention

Young people thrive when needs are met



## Maladjustment

Most problems come from unmet needs.



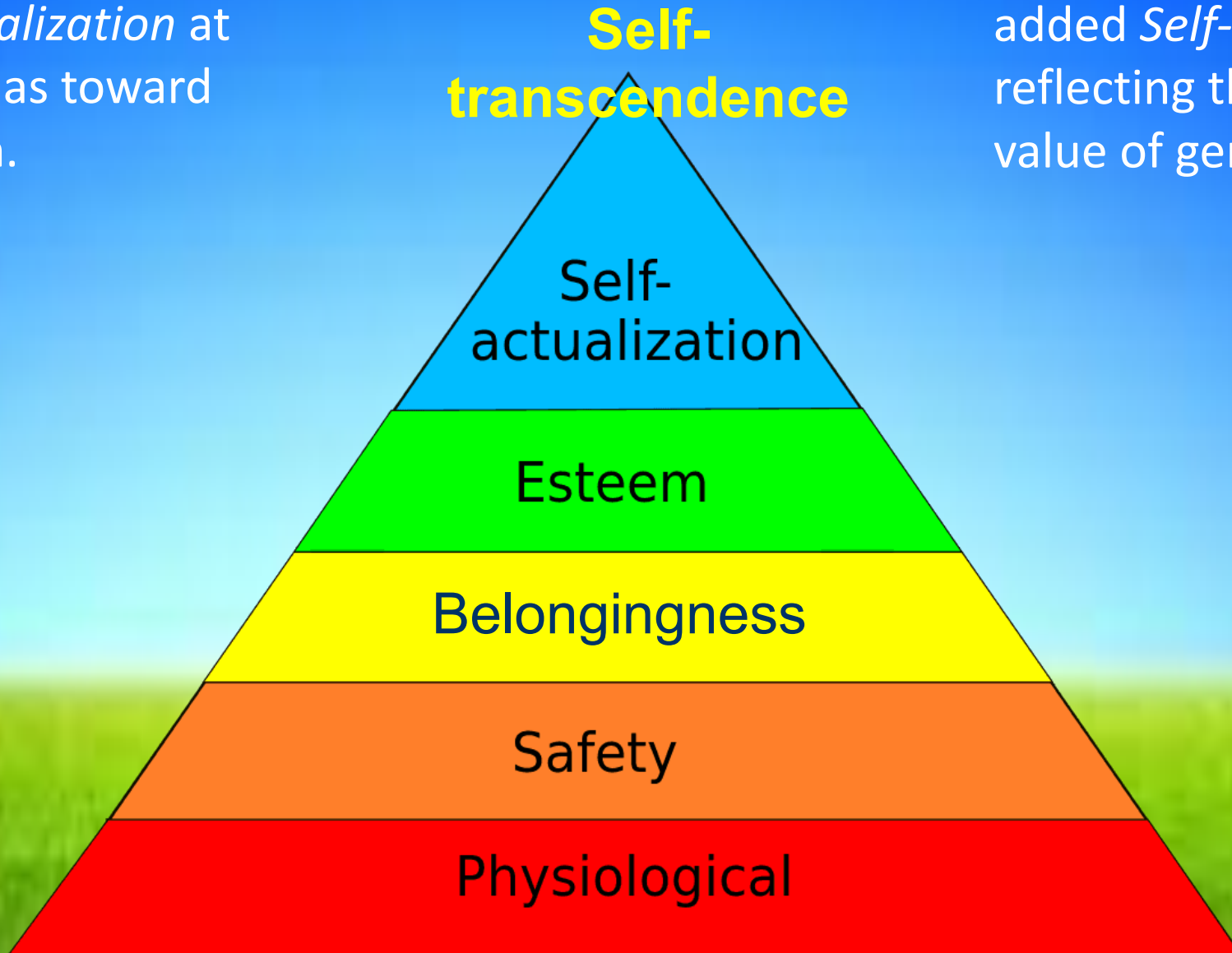
## Healing

This requires nurturing relational needs.



Maslow's original model put *Self-actualization* at the top—a bias toward individualism.

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





**Social  
Brain**

Self-transcendence

**Belonging**

Self-actualization

**Independence**

Esteem

**Mastery**

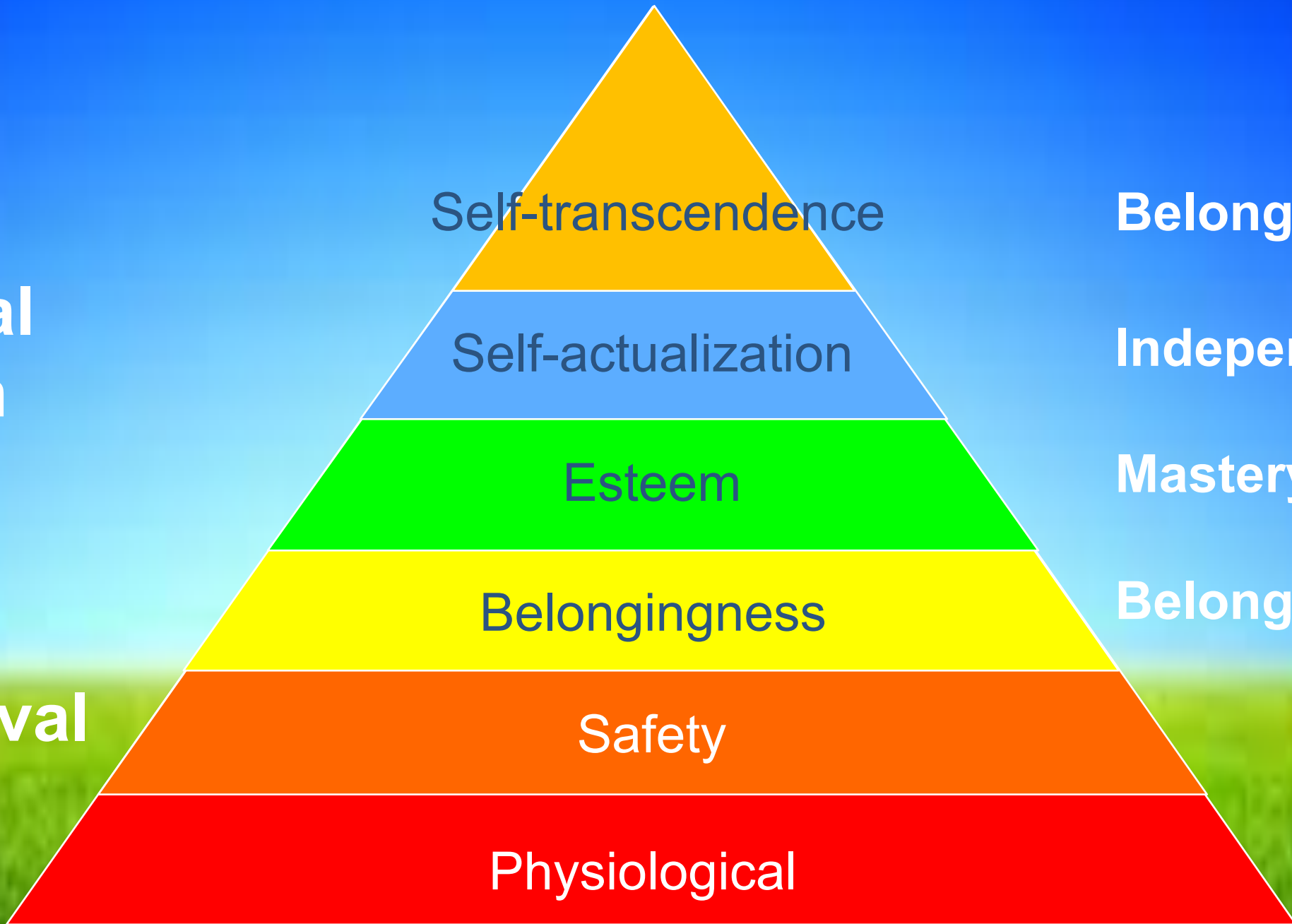
Belongingness

**Belonging**

**Survival  
Brain**

Safety

Physiological



What is the *active ingredient* for success with children and youth at risk in any setting?

JUNLEI LI & MEGAN JULIAN

## Developmental Relationships

URIE BRONFENBRENNER

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



## These Meet Developmental Needs

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Belonging

Mastery

Independence

Generosity



# Consilience: Universal Developmental Needs

|  |                  |                |                     |                   |
|--|------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Circle of Courage</b><br>Indigenous Science | <b>Belonging</b> | <b>Mastery</b> | <b>Independence</b> | <b>Generosity</b> |
|--|------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|

|  |               |        |                    |                    |
|--|---------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Hierarchy of Needs</b><br>Maslow (1943) | Belongingness | Esteem | Self-Actualization | Self-Transcendence |
|--|---------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------|

|  |              |            |       |        |
|--|--------------|------------|-------|--------|
| <b>Self Esteem</b><br>Coopersmith (1967) | Significance | Competence | Power | Virtue |
|--|--------------|------------|-------|--------|

|  |                   |                 |          |         |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|----------|---------|
| <b>Resilience Research</b><br>Bernard (2004) | Social Competence | Problem Solving | Autonomy | Purpose |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|----------|---------|

|  |            |                    |               |                      |
|--|------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Resilient Brains</b><br>Masten (2014) | Attachment | Mastery Motivation | Self-Efficacy | Spirituality/Purpose |
|--|------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|



# DECOLONIZING DISCIPLINE

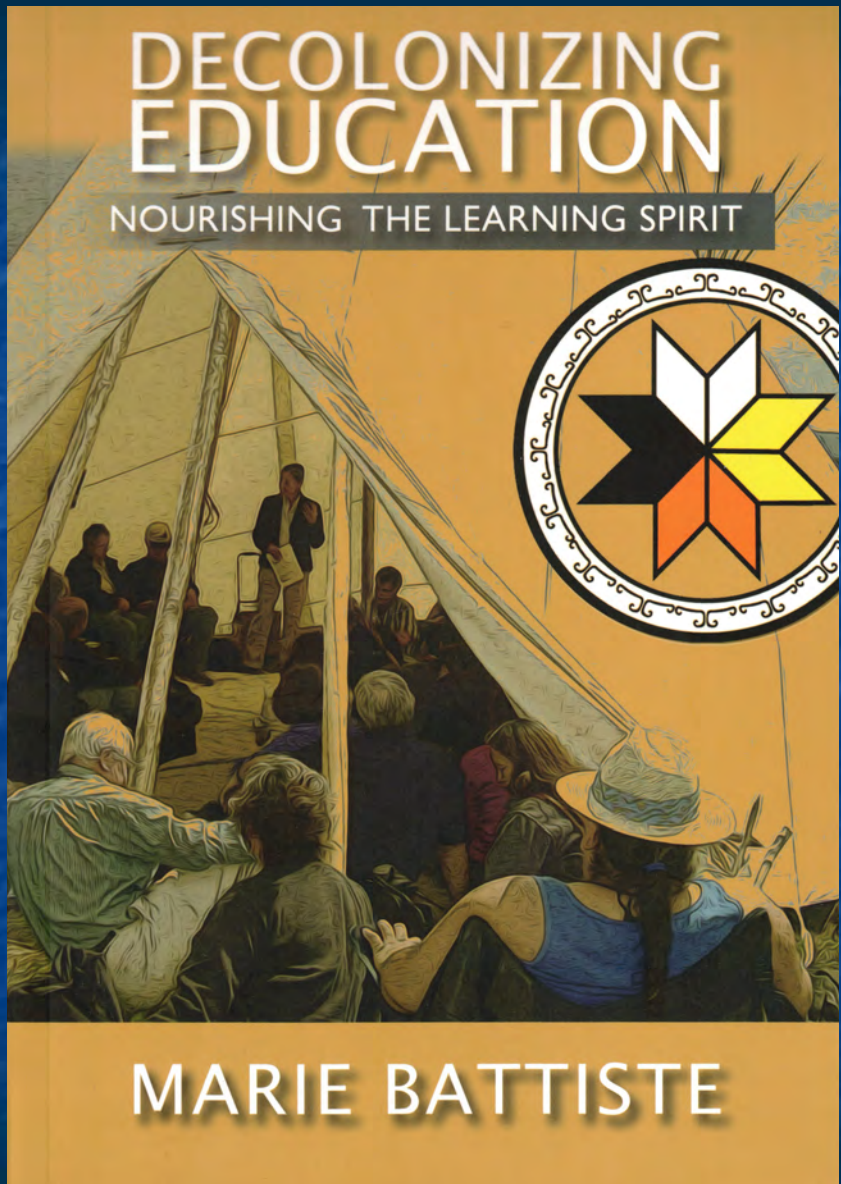
CHILDREN, CORPORAL PUNISHMENT,  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES, AND RECONCILIATION

*Edited by*  
*Valerie E. Michaelson and Joan E. Durrant*

Indigenous people have always had the knowledge and skills necessary to survive in good times and bad. All societies need this ancient knowledge now more than ever.

MARTIN BROKENLEG



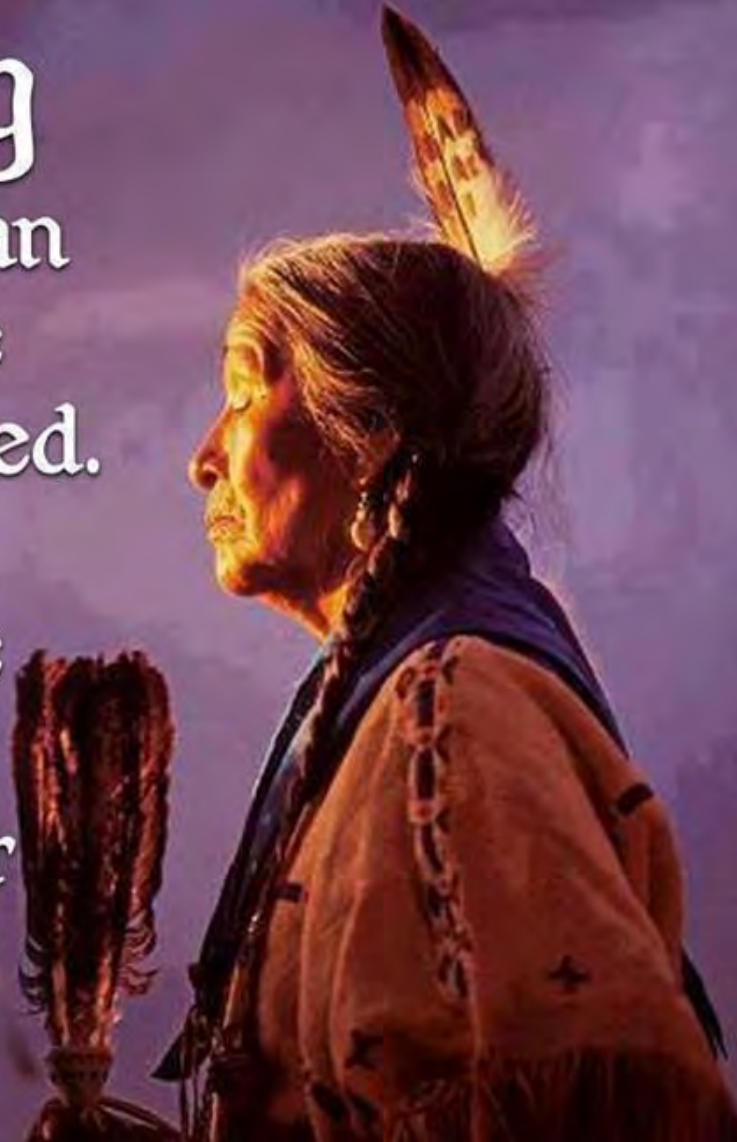


You can't be the doctor if you are the disease.

ALEX DENNY, First Nations Elder



Healing  
doesn't mean  
the damage  
never existed.  
It means  
the damage  
no longer  
controls our  
lives.



Healing Unresolved  
Grief from Historic  
Cultural Trauma





## Native Youth Summit

Teens from Rosebud went to DC, hosted by President Barack Obama.

They also visited the Carlisle Indian School graves where children from Rosebud are buried.





d

A group of Lakota youth seek to return the remains of children from Rosebud who died at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School in Pennsylvania.

Teens Josh Iron Shell, Sydney Horse Looking, and Lanie Crazy Bull work on a resolution for the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council.





Six years later as young adults, they bring nine children back to Rosebud.

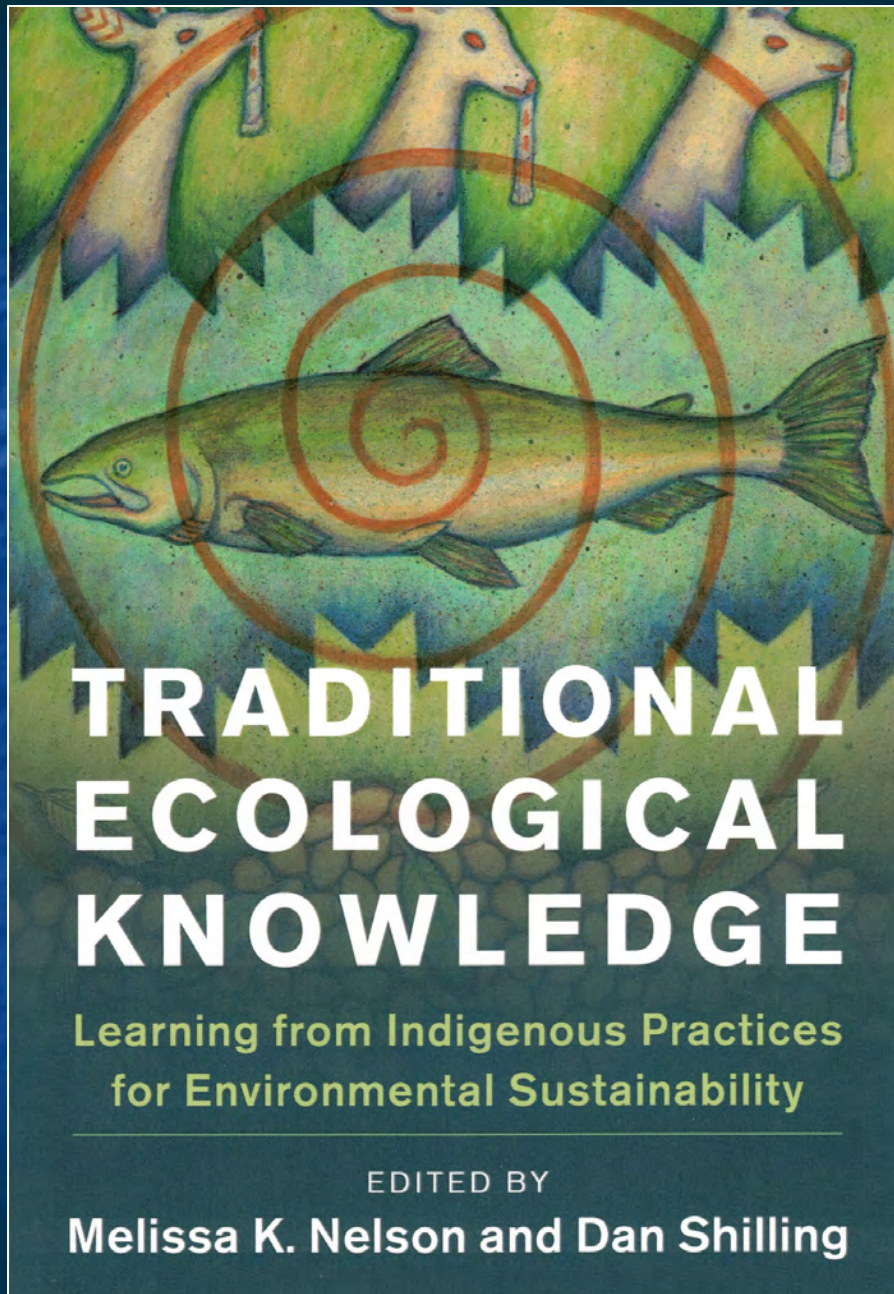




## Healing with Grief

Youth stand in graves to receive the children who are finally home.





## Native Environmental Science

Nature is not a collection of exploitable resources. We inhabit a landscape of gifts peopled by nonhuman relatives, the sovereign beings who sustain us, including the plants.

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation





The Spirit of Community





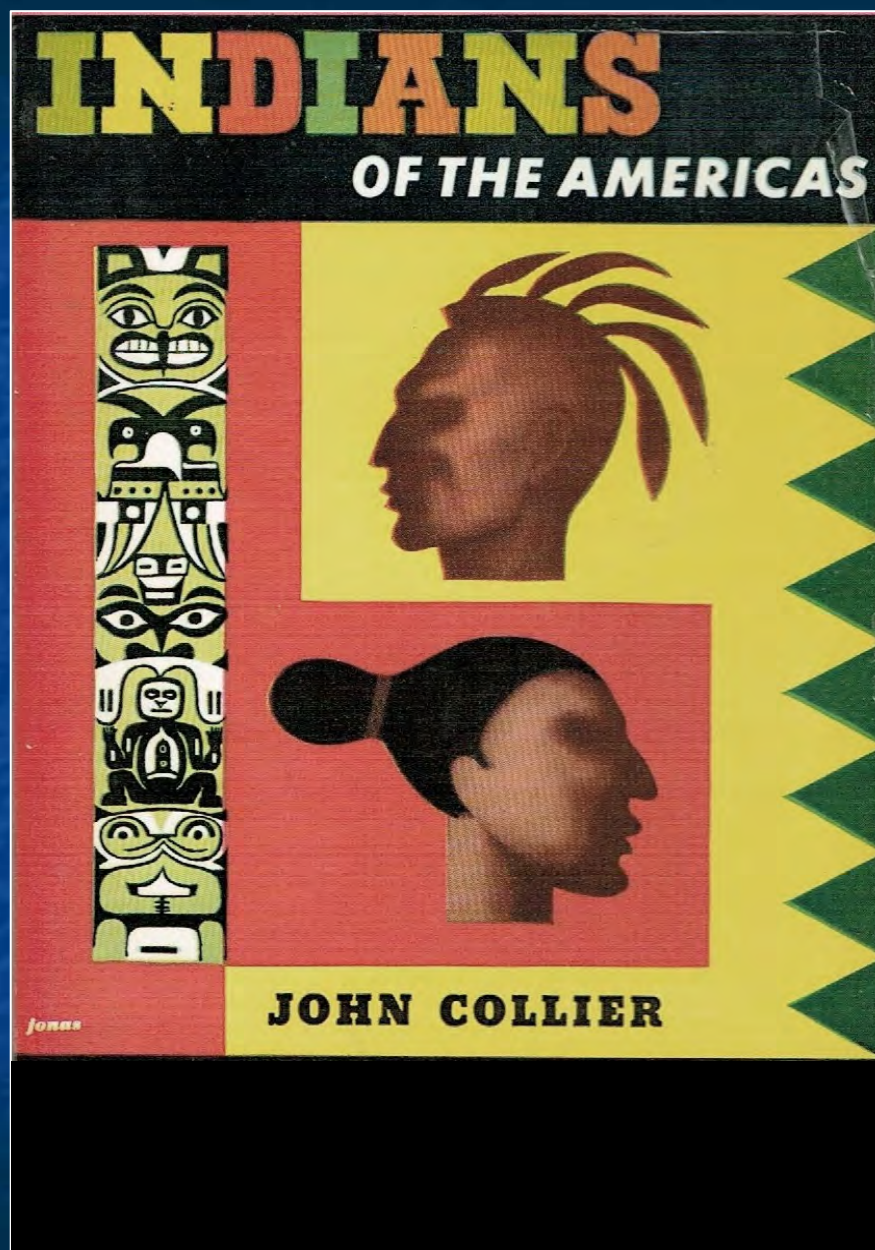
Mni Wiconi ~ Water is Life



# Reclaiming Indigenous Wisdom





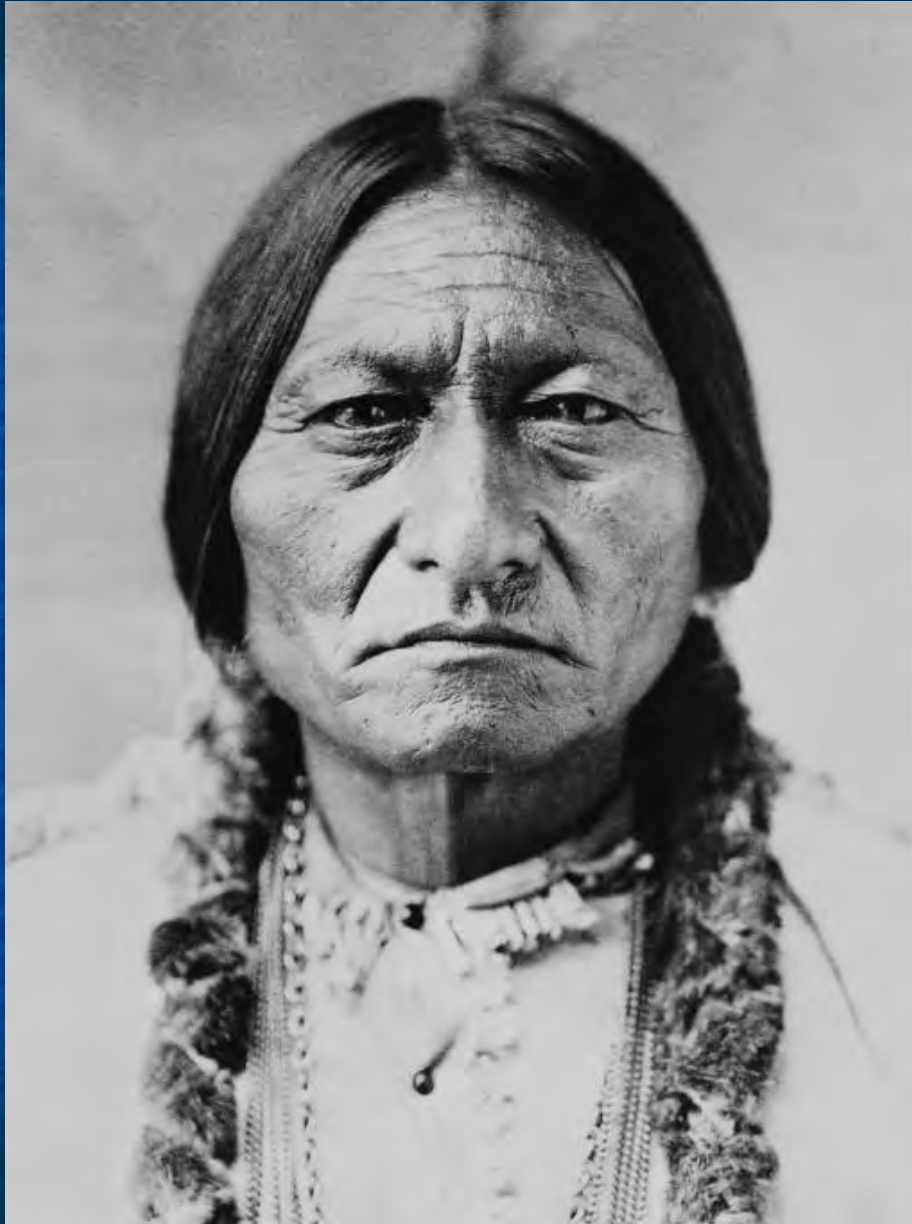


They had what the world has lost.  
They have it now. What the world  
has lost, it must have again . . . .

Be it now or a hundred years from  
now, or a thousand — so long as the  
race of humanity shall survive — the  
Indian keeps his gift for us all.

JOHN COLLIER  
1947





## Consilience

Let us put our minds  
together and see what  
life we can make for  
our children.

SITTING BULL





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