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TRAUMA INFORMED TEACHING PRACTICES FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to introduce educators to trauma-informed teaching practices for Indigenous children. Due to generational trauma, adultification, and other issues Indigenous children face, it is imperative to find strategies that educators can use to combat trauma-based behaviors that take place in the classroom. While there is a lot of research on the generational trauma that Indigenous children face, there is no connection to having it manifest in the classroom. Through a review of interviews, literature, and research, it was found that practices like restorative justice, Applied Behavioral Analysis, and activities like the Blanket Exercise by Kairos are all trauma-informed strategies that can serve Indigenous children in the classroom setting. By having teachers implement these practices, Indigenous children can have a safer classroom experience.

Keywords: indigenous, trauma-informed, education

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the children of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe. Thank you for allowing this young girl from Mississippi into your community and your hearts. Pidamayaye.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents for always supporting me in everything I do, my advisors for allowing me to explore these topics with love and guidance, my professors for always pouring into me, and my friends for letting me bore them with my research.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MMIW	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
ABA	Applied Behavioral Analysis
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
CPS	Child Protective Services
SM	Social Maladjustment
EmD	Emotional Disturbance
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975)

GLOSSARY

Indigenous: (of people) inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of colonists

Aboriginal: relating to the indigenous peoples of Australia or their languages

Native American/American Indian: a member of any of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America, especially those indigenous to what is now the continental US.

Generational/Intergenerational Trauma: a traumatic event that began decades prior to the current generation and has impacted the way that individuals understand, cope with, and heal from trauma.

Retraumatization: occurs when a recovering PTSD sufferer is exposed to people, incidents, or environments that cause them to relive their previous trauma, almost as if it were all occurring again.

Adultification/Parentification: Adultification bias is a form of racial prejudice where children of minority groups, typically Black children, are treated by adults as being more mature than other children their age

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: a condition of persistent mental and emotional stress occurring as a result of a traumatic event

Chapter I - Artifact

In the Summer of 2021, I spent two months serving the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe in Sisseton, South Dakota. I served as the Kids Club Coordinator and created meaningful educational opportunities for children on the reservation. Throughout the summer, I dealt with countless behavior issues ranging from violent physical outbursts to emotional meltdowns from my students. As their trust in me grew, my students started to divulge claims of abuse and neglect that began to put their behaviors into perspective for me. Many of my students had faced physical and sexual abuse, which was apparent in their day-to-day interactions with me and other volunteers. While serving in this community, I learned about the existence of Indian Residential schools and their profound effect on Indigenous communities to this day.

During my stay, over 1,500 bodies were discovered at Indian Residential Schools across Canada. These bodies were found in mass, unmarked graves and contained the bodies of children who were as young as two years old. This event sent shockwaves through the community and caused many tribal members to relive their days in the residential schools. I met with survivors to hear their stories and learned of the horrors that so many of them had faced. They spoke of how their experiences had affected their children, as they were never given a loving home, so they had no idea how to create one for them. I realized that the behaviors I was seeing in my students were the results of generational trauma that was occurring within the tribe.

Physical violence, foul language, and oversexualized behaviors were significant points of contention throughout the summer, and I was struggling to find a way to break

through to them. I started to research trauma-informed teaching practices in the hopes that I could implement them with my students and get better results. All of this research is what inspired this thesis. I knew I wanted to focus on the trauma Indigenous people have faced for hundreds of years, also known as cultural genocide, and how it has adversely affected them in today's schools. Through cultural genocide and generational trauma, Indigenous populations have suffered greatly. This thesis strives to answer the question of what are the most effective trauma-informed, evidence-based teaching practices that can improve the experiences of our Indigenous students in our public schools.

Chapter II – Review of Literature

Indigenous Students, Residential Schools, and Generational Trauma

Throughout this paper, I will use "Indigenous" or "Aboriginal" when describing the people I have researched. Terms such as "Indian" and even "Native American" are highly offensive and should not be used when discussing current-day events. These tribes have lived on the land for thousands of years, predating any English names that have been bestowed upon them, and I want to give them the respect they deserve.

Since the 1800s, Indigenous children in both America and Canada have been ripped from their families and sent to "Residential" schools where physical and sexual abuse were prominent. By removing children from their families and culture, these schools could strip these children of their Indigenous identities. Thus, creating a dangerous cycle where both the white and Indigenous communities did not accept these children. This system has led to an ongoing problem with physical, sexual, and mental trauma, substance abuse, loss of parenting skills, etc., within the Indigenous communities. According to Hanson (2009), government officials would show up in tribal lands, rip the students from their families, and transport them to their designated schools. Once the students arrived, their traditionally long hair was shaved off, and their native languages could no longer be spoken. Administrators would administer brutal physical and psychological punishments if students displayed cultural traits or acts. In an interview with Anderson Cooper (2022), Leona Wolf, a survivor of a residential school in Canada, described the inhumane punishments she suffered for speaking her native language, "They put me in a little, dark room like that. And they'd shut the door, and then they'd take off the light. All I had to look through was this much light like I was in jail."

In the same segment, Chief Wilton Littlechild recalls how he was given a number upon his arrival and would only be called that number for the duration of his stay, "My name was number 65 for all those years... Just a number, yeah. "Sixty-five; pick that up, stupid." Or, "65, why'd you do that, idiot?" (Cooper, 2022). Chief Littlechild also discussed the sexual trauma and abuse he suffered from the school administration, blaming his anger at the world on what he experienced in the school. According to Hanson (2009), some survivors would be shackled to their beds or have needles stuck in their tongues for speaking their native languages.

While it can be painful to learn about the abuse researchers are aware of, it is even more painful to learn about the thousands of students who died at the hands of these schools that have never been named. Hanson (2009) describes these practices as "aggressive civilization, and it came at a deadly cost. It is believed that between the United States and Canada, over 150,000 Indigenous students were sent to these residential schools, with roughly 4,100 passing away from diseases due to overcrowding, malnutrition, poor sanitation, or abuse, states Cooper (2022). Cooper (2022) alluded to a government study conducted in 1909 that discovered that some schools' death rate was 20 times higher than the national average. However, it is impossible to know the exact number since many government officials purposefully hid the real numbers. Some researchers believe there may have been as many as 15,000 deaths, states Cooper (2022). Many of these children were laid to rest in mass, unmarked graves, a final removal of their identity, without their families ever being informed. There are reports that some students were forced to dig graves for their classmates as punishment. In the summer of 2021, archeologists detected over 200 unmarked graves at a former school in Kamloops,

British Columbia. A few weeks later, an additional 751 graves were found at the Marieval residential school, where Chief Littlechild and Leona Wolf attended, according to Cooper (2022).

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School doors in Pennsylvania had a quote from Captain R.H. Platt brazened over the top: "Kill the Indian in him and save the man." All of this was done to preserve white, Anglo-Saxon values under the guise of a "religious" crusade. This cultural genocide has created lasting impacts affecting many generations of Indigenous children. It can be easy to shrug off these stories and say, "Well, this happened so long ago that it does not affect native communities today"; however, the last residential school in Canada closed its doors in 1998, according to Cooper (2022).

While residential schools may no longer be a pertinent issue, there is the current phenomenon of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). A significant lack of data about MMIW has led to a deep-seated mistrust of the American government and its justice system. According to Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk (2016), 5,712 Indigenous women and girls were reported missing to local police departments, but only 116 were logged in the DOJ database (p. 2). Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk (2016) and the CDC have ruled that murder is the third leading cause of death in Indigenous and Alaskan women (p. 2).

In "Trauma, Turmoil, and Tragedy: Understanding the Needs of Children and Youth at Risk of Suicide and Self-Harm," the study found that even in 2010, first-nation students are more likely to engage in risky activities, self-injurious behaviors, and even commit suicide. Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk (2016) found that the rate of violence on reservations is ten times higher than the national average (p. 6). Most of these issues stem

from Indigenous people's oppression and generational traumatization worldwide. These issues create a precarious sense of community and self that has affected Indigenous children's survival for years. Generational trauma is a severe problem that can affect a student in countless ways, which is why it is so important for educators to understand how it can manifest in the classroom.

Generational Trauma and Retraumatization

Two important terms to note and define before moving on are generational trauma and retraumatization. Generational trauma, or intergenerational trauma, describes the generational hardships within families and minority groups. According to Duke (2019), trauma passed through the generations can be caused by a historical event or oppressive situations that families face. Think back to Leona Wolf, who was described earlier. Her mother had been sent to a residential school long before she was, which removed her parenting skills and distanced her parental relationships. Once Leona was subjected to the same abuse and neglect in the residential schools, it only furthered the generational impact these schools had on her family. Many educators do not realize the importance of understanding generational trauma and how it can manifest in the classroom. Because Indigenous children were subjected to such heinous physical, emotional, and sexual trauma in these schools, teachers must be aware of their actions and how they could contribute to their students' retraumatization. Alexander (2012) found that retraumatization occurs when people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or past trauma are subjected to people, circumstances, or events that force them to relive their trauma (p. 24). According to Alexander (2012), retraumatization flashbacks are more intense than typical ones. They can cause intense physical reactions where the person

feels they are being transported back into the situation where the original trauma occurred (p. 51). Just like generational trauma, educators must be trained to avoid retraumatizing their students to provide a safe learning environment.

Sociocultural Theory and Ecological Systems Theory

When investigating the effects of generational trauma on Indigenous children, one can look to both the Ecological Systems Theory and the Sociocultural Theory for an explanation of how trauma can affect an entire population. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory illustrates "circles" that represent various aspects of human life, starting with the individual and moving out toward micro and macro systems. If a part of the system is taken away, a person's sense of self can be called into question. With the cultural genocide that took place in the residential schools, it removed the macrosystem of social and cultural values. Bronfenbrenner (1979) found that as individuals develop, they are influenced not only by their unique biological and psychological characteristics but also by the family system, school, community, and more extensive social system surrounding them (pp. 3-4). Leona Wolf talks about how her trauma did not start when she was sent to the school but rather when her mother first attended. She discusses how the school barred her mother from receiving a loving childhood, so her mother did not know how to provide one for her children. A child's home life can significantly affect their performance in school. López De Victoria (2008) found that many children who experience parentification/adultification have trouble with authority and tend to oppose the traditional authoritarian roles that their teachers take on. Parentification, which can be either emotional or instrumental, can cause many other issues like intense anger and

difficulty forming relationships with adults (para. 5).

Another theory that answers why the removal of cultural can create so much trauma is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky et al., 1978 explain that human social interactions play a significant role in their psychological development (p. 6). Our interactions with others can determine how we develop our personalities, mannerisms, and relationships. This theory is commonly used in the classroom when teaching language development because social interactions can significantly increase a child's grasp of language rules. Since these residential schools essentially controlled whom, Indigenous children interacted with, and how generations of children were affected, they could not form their psychological development. These events can explain why some residential school survivors fear their children will be taken from them or abused in school, leading to a deep mistrust in schools and their leadership.

Much like the Ecological Systems theory, once these social aspects are removed from a child's life, they may struggle to form lasting relationships or attachments to their culture. Many Indigenous and Aboriginal people feel so far removed from their culture that they genuinely feel that they do not belong in their communities but are too "brown" to belong in white communities. When a child loses their sense of identity or belonging, it can lead to an increased risk of self-harm and suicide. In an aggregate study done by the Representative for Children and Youth in British Columbia, Turpel-Lafond (2012) states that this loss of self has led to higher rates of repeated self-injury, substance abuse, aggressive behavioral issues, and suicide (p. 4). Turpel-Lafond (2012) also found that many Aboriginal children were relocated to social service placements from parents placed there during their childhoods (p. 14). This trauma cycle leads to behavioral

problems that manifest in the classroom and other parts of daily life. Looking at situations like the Dakota 38, the largest mass hanging in American history, it is easy to see how patterns of mistrust can be repeated throughout generations.

The Cultural Way vs. Wound

The cultural divide between indigenous and settler groups causes a cultural phenomenon known as the cultural way vs. the wound. There are many practices in Indigenous cultures that are viewed as harmful in white communities. This creates a strong divide between the cultures and leads to harsher interventions from government agencies. For example, co-sleeping is widely accepted in indigenous communities, but many white people view it as “abusive.” On Indigenous reservations, it is common to see children as young as two years old walking around unaccompanied throughout the community. In traditionally white, Eurocentric communities, this would be considered neglectful and grounds for Child Protective Services (CPS) intervention. Virgil Taken Alive from the Dakota 38 documentary (Hagerty, 2012) describes how native Americans were not allowed to leave the reservations, but “Indian Traders” who oversaw the reservation would starve and beat them and force them to eat grass. Instances like these led to phenomena of hoarding food and obesity in many reservations. In white communities, those behaviors are viewed as abusive or neglectful (Hagerty, 2012).

The cultural way vs. wound affects more than just social service placements. As discussed in earlier sections, cultural xenophobia can create a loss of self, leading to catastrophic numbers of self-injurious behaviors and suicides. Many of the parental differences that are credited as abusive by white society are deeply embedded in

indigenous culture. Many residential school survivors discuss the dehumanization they felt when they were told some aspects of their culture were evil (Hagerty, 2012). Vile (1994) reports that it was not until 1978 that the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act granted Indigenous people the right to practice their religions freely (para. 3). In a country that prides itself on the values of religious freedom, the isolation that occurs from this religious persecution is astonishing. This isolation only further contributes to the retraumatization of this community and its children. Let us take a closer look at how the disproportionate number of social service placements for marginalized communities creates a loss of self for the children affected by them.

Effects of Social Services Placements

Many Indigenous/Aboriginals are sent to social services due to domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse, learning disabilities, or a lack of stable living arrangements. Turpel-Lafond (2012) found that these children are five to six times more likely to commit suicide than white children (p. 4). These placements tend to happen early and often in a child's life and removing them from their families so early leads to a pattern of trauma, self-injury, and violence (Turpel-Lafond, 2012, p. 23). There is such an interwoven history of cultural genocide and indigenous child welfare that it is impossible to know the extent of social service placements for this people group. Grinnell Davis (2022) found that there is a belief that because of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and the government's vague description of what qualifies a child to be "Indian" and the underreporting of indigenous children in the welfare system, the law has done more harm than good (p. 4). African American and Native American Children are more likely to enter foster care and even more likely to receive secondary harm while within the system.

Cooper (2013) found that when thinking about the Ecological Systems Theory and foster care, the system can create severe trauma when children are removed from their homes unless there is an imminent threat of abuse or neglect (p. 218).

Child Protection Services (CPS) and other social service agencies, while they strive to protect children, can sometimes traumatize children even further. The system was created to remove children from situations where they are unsafe, neglected, abused, or living in poverty. However, they then provide money to the people who take in these children without offering cultural background/training to these foster families or financial aid for the situations from which they were removed (Cooper, 2013, p. 231). Many children continue to be abused in these placements and can suffer greatly from the sudden relocation.

In “Knucwénte-Kuc re Stsmémelt. s-Kuc: Trauma-informed Education for Indigenous Children in Foster Care,” Shelly Johnson (2014) conducted a community-based research project that focused on finding solutions to the “foster care problem.” Within their discussions with community leaders and other researchers, they devised six recommendations to better the foster care system for Indigenous children. Some of these recommendations included placing indigenous children in indigenous placements, developing cultural ways to encourage educational achievement, creating access to education with zero tolerance for racism, and implementing mandatory trauma-informed support for foster families and teachers (Johnson, 2014, pp. 164-166). Some of these practices could be transferred to the classroom to support children whose trauma manifests in many ways.

Trauma and Behavior in the Classroom

Trauma manifests itself in countless ways in the classroom. Problems with authority, attention-seeking behaviors, and other behavioral issues are commonly found in students who have experienced trauma. For example, students who have faced neglect in their lifetime are more likely to present attention-seeking behaviors than those who have not (AC et al., 2014). Because they are not getting the attention they crave at home, they look for it in the classroom. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs may provide an answer as to why this phenomenon occurs. Maslow's pyramid suggests that there are basic needs that every human being needs to succeed and thrive in their environments (Kurt, 2021, para. 3). The bottom tier is physiological needs, such as food and water, while the second is safety in the home and environment. Kurt (2021) states that many students who face abuse or neglect severely lack these categories, meaning they cannot reach the highest level of self-actualization. When trying to understand how students can succeed in the classroom, educators need to understand how they can help their students meet these basic needs (para. 8).

Children subjected to adultification in their home lives can manifest as problems with authority. Many students in lower-income areas are misdiagnosed with Social Maladjustment (SM) instead of emotional disturbances like Oppositional Defiant Disorder (Wells, 2017, p. 59). To be considered for an Emotional Disturbance (EmD) eligibility, Wells (2017) states that students must exhibit an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual or sensory issues (p. 57). The difference between receiving this eligibility and a Social Maladjustment ruling is that SM children's behaviors are

considered purposeful and not out of their control, unlike children with EMD (Wells, 2017, pp. 59-61). These students are often labeled as “bad” kids when their behavior is a direct trauma response. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1975) in order to receive an EmD eligibility:

(i) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.

Behaviors based on trauma responses are subjected to being triggered by teachers’ actions in the classroom. These actions can range from using harmful rhetoric, failing to use diverse literature and curriculum to the use of racial microaggressions. It is also important to note that these actions also lead to a continuance of racial oppression in the classroom.

Racial oppression occurs worldwide, and many would be surprised to learn that it also occurs in the classroom. While racial problems tend to be more explicit, many implicit occasions of racial oppression occur in the classroom. Heywood (2021) argues that teachers and administrators often use microaggressions that affect student self-confidence and devalue their culture (A Critical Look at the Big Picture section, para, 2). American curriculums often contain a whitewashed version of history that diminishes many minority groups' experiences and removes the true narrative from this country's troubled history (Heywood, 2021, Double Consciousness in Language Use section, para. 1). This racially driven system has led to the school-to-prison pipeline that is ever present in the United States. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), most students who receive corporal punishment and are involved in school arrests are students of color (Farmer & Neier, 2008, p. 5). With students facing discrimination in all aspects of their life, it leads to a significant rise in behavioral issues. Farmer and Neier (2008) identified that Indigenous students, particularly ones who live on reservations, are highly likely to face abuse, neglect, or other forms of trauma (p. 5). Paired with the generational trauma that their people have faced; school systems are not a safe place for many Indigenous students. Heywood (2021) states that the racial injustices they have faced are whitewashed out of many history curriculums, contributing to the spread of harmful rhetoric (Trauma-Causing Hegemonic Practices section, para. 3). The widespread distrust of the American school system throughout many Indigenous communities is further strengthened by this refusal to acknowledge wrongdoings from the past.

CPS and other social service agencies, while they strive to protect children, can sometimes traumatize children even further. The system was created to remove children

from situations where they are unsafe, neglected, abused, or living in poverty. However, they then provide money to the people who take in these children without offering cultural background/training to these foster families or financial aid for the situations from which they were removed (Cooper, 2013, p. 231). Many children continue to be abused in these placements and can suffer from the sudden relocation.

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When teachers use harmful teaching practices or have implicit biases, it manipulates the antecedent of the behavior for many students. Antecedents can include any triggering actions that may occur in a classroom, such as microaggressions or exposure to images that remind students of their trauma. Once these actions occur, a student’s trauma response cannot be avoided. This phenomenon plays a heavy role in retraumatizing students. Many teachers may not even realize that they are contributing to the behavior problems causing them so much grief. Teachers are also likely to have

implicit biases that lead to them labeling students and treating them differently based on these assumptions. Some of these aforementioned “harmful teaching practices” include using racially insensitive curriculum and language in the classroom and punitive discipline styles, states Heywood (2021, Trauma-Causing Hegemonic Practices section, para. 3). When students respond negatively to these practices, the blame is often placed on them, not the teacher, creating a harmful cycle of self-doubt and distrust of authority. In order to avoid perpetuating this cycle, teachers and administrators have a duty to their students to inform themselves about trauma-informed teaching practices and educate themselves on culturally responsive language and practices.

Trauma Informed Teaching Practices

As discussed in earlier sections, retraumatization occurs when a person is put in a situation that continuously forces them to relive a traumatic event or feeling. Many Native American students have faced retraumatization in their school experience. Trauma-informed teaching practices are proven effective in preventing students' retraumatization and significantly improving academic outcomes (“Trauma-informed schools,” 2018, para. 2). Listed below are evidence-based practices that should be implemented when working with Indigenous students.

Distinguishing the difference between teaching responsibility and perpetuating adultification is an essential balance for educators. As stated above, numerous Indigenous children are subjected to adultification and parentification in their homes, so educators need to combat this in the classroom. Many classroom rules teach children personal responsibility. If teachers use evidence-based, trauma-informed practices, they can help

balance the scale between teaching children to be responsible and further contributing to their adultification. For example, having students be active in creating a classroom set of rules allows them to take accountability for their actions and gives them a sense of independence and responsibility. However, exposing students to the adult responsibilities of a teacher, such as safety precautions or talking about other students, contributes to the child feeling the weight of adulthood in the classroom. For trauma-informed practices to work, this fundamental understanding must be met by educators and administrators alike.

Restorative Practices are becoming widely adopted in school systems across the country. These practices aim to remove the traditional punitive discipline customarily used in schools and replace them with a social-emotional approach that results in fewer suspensions/expulsions. Homrich-Knieling (2022) states that practices such as restorative questions and circles can be implemented in schools to resolve conflict and get to the root of the problem without turning to traditional punishments (Restorative Justice is not a Behavior Management Technique section, para. 1). Restorative questions rely on students being open and honest with their emotions and committed to resolving the issue. Restorative justice circles are another effective conflict resolution tool that requires the students to talk about how specific actions have made them feel and then come up with solutions together instead of the teacher providing all of the answers (Homrich-Knieling, 2022, Restorative Justice Requires a Root-Cause Analysis section, para. 2). However, it is essential to note that this is not a “wonder tool” that will immediately fix all behaviors. Restorative practices require educators to find the root cause of the issues before implementing any of the practices. According to Homrich-Knieling (2022), “Restorative justice is messy, complicated work, but our students and our teachers and staff deserve

the dignity, the connection, and the healing that it offers” (Restorative Justice Requires a Root-Cause Analysis section, para. 7). It is also important to note that this is not a form of classroom management but rather a way to build relationships with students to prevent escalation in the future.

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is used in schools to manipulate behavior antecedents to have a more desirable outcome (Cione-Kroeschel, 2021), 5 ABA Teaching Strategies section, para. It is also used to find the function of the behavior (i.e., gaining attention, avoidance, etc.) so that educators can provide opportunities for the student to receive what they want with the desired behavior. ABA is often combined with school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to create a positive behavioral outcome (“What is PBIS,” n.d.). When working with children with trauma, ABA can be used to create an environment where students feel safe to learn and grow without fear. ABA focuses on the ABCs of behavior: antecedent, behavior, and consequence. When a teacher can figure out the function of the behavior, they can create replacement behaviors that meet the same function to help the student achieve the desired outcome. For example, if a child is triggered by loud, sudden noises and yelling, the teacher should eliminate opportunities for these types of noises. That could include making sure they do not yell in the classroom and making other students aware of their noise level. The teacher can control when the child might react by making simple adjustments to the classroom environment. If the child’s function of their behavior is to gain the attention of their classmates, the teacher can use positive reinforcement to give the attention that the student is craving. By using these strategies, teachers can positively manipulate their classroom environment to get the results they desire with little student

pushback and protect students from facing any triggers.

A common theme amongst these practices is teacher sympathy. When looking at practices that create empathy amongst students and educators alike, the Blanket Exercise, created by Kairos, is a fundamental place to start. This exercise is used all around the United States and Canada to teach the true history of the Indigenous people of North America. The exercise gives participants a glimpse into millions of Indigenous people being forced out of their homes, discriminated against, or even murdered. It requires participants to take on the roles of Indigenous peoples, settlers, government entities, and a narrator. Participants are given “scrolls” with indigenous voices on them to give a firsthand account of what was taking place throughout their history. Contributors who take on the role of government entities are forced to read harmful rhetoric such as, “Infect the Indians with sheets upon which smallpox patients have been lying, or by any other means which may exterminate this accursed race”- Lord Jeffery Amherst (“Kairos Blanket Exercise,” 2012, p. 9). It also provides a physical component where people partaking in the exercise stand on blankets representing the land belonging to Indigenous people. As the activity continues, the blankets and participants slowly disappear until only a small number are left. These visuals leave attendees baffled by how quickly Indigenous people lost their rights to their lands. This activity would benefit educators as a team builder before the school year starts so that teachers can truly understand the generational trauma that has affected their Indigenous students. Educators can also use this exercise throughout the school year to teach a more culturally responsive and accurate version of North American history and instill empathy among their students. This activity often evokes a highly emotional response, a great tool to teach empathy and

something to students and educators alike.

Chapter III - Pamphlet for Teacher Education

From the findings of this research, I have created a pamphlet filled with resources for teachers to educate themselves on before the school year begins. Administrators and teachers should take time before students arrive to ensure that they understand the importance of this information and how they should implement it during the school year. Inside, educators can find facts about Indigenous children and trauma, overviews of trauma-informed teaching practices, and resources that can be used in the classroom from year to year.

Figure 1

The image shows the front cover of a pamphlet. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow. On the left, there is a dark orange vertical band containing the title 'WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?' and three sections: 'Background', 'Goals', and 'Research'. The main area is light yellow and contains the title 'LINKS TO RESOURCES' with a list of links under three sub-headings: 'Kairos Blanket Exercise', 'ABA Resources', and 'Restorative Justice Resources'. To the right, the main title 'Trauma Informed Practices FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN' is displayed in large, bold, orange letters, with a red handprint icon below it. At the bottom right, there is a note about the colors red and orange representing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Movement, with a website link. The entire pamphlet is set against a dark orange background.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Background

Indigenous children have long suffered at the hands of school systems, and it is our job as educators to ensure that their classroom experiences are different. Creating safe spaces for our students is paramount to helping them succeed academically.

Goals

This pamphlet aims to provide helpful resources and tips for implementing trauma-informed practices in your classroom. It is meant to provide a blueprint for personal research to see what works for your personal classroom and school environment. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to education, but hopefully, this pamphlet supplies insight into what may work for you.

Research

This research was conducted through a literature review by Raegan Gourley at the University of Mississippi through the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

LINKS TO RESOURCES

Kairos Blanket Exercise

- KairosBlanketExercise.org
 - provides a way to request the Blanket Exercise and other resources
- Kairoscanada.org
 - supplies facts about Indigenous peoples in North America as well as other activities

ABA Resources


- ABAtools.com
 - tips and tricks run by behavioral therapists!
- ABARESOURCES.COM

Restorative Justice Resources

- Edutopia.org
 - has valuable articles and resources on restorative justice practices
- RestorativeResources.org
 - visit the educator tool kit for helpful resources

Trauma Informed Practices

FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN



A Guide for Educators

The colors red & orange represent the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Movement. For more information, visit: NativeHope.org

Results of a literature review conducted by Raegan Gourley at the University of Mississippi

Front of pamphlet

Figure 2

Applied Behavioral Analysis

What is it?
ABA is a therapy that focuses on the science of behavior and learning. ABA focuses on the antecedent, behavior, and consequence when problem behaviors occur. Practitioners can use these observations to either manipulate the environment to remove triggers or set up reward systems that reward the student for practicing the target behavior.

How to Implement
Schools can use ABA therapy in many ways, but the most common is creating school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports. This can be as simple as creating school-wide token economies, to creating Functional Behavior Assessments to target individual student behaviors. Having a healthy classroom routine is another way to implement this strategy in your classroom!

Questions to Ask Your Administrator

- Do we have a school ABA specialist?
- Does our school implement a school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports plan?
- Do our students have access to therapy through the school if they have experienced trauma?

Blanket Exercise by Kairos

What is it?
The Kairos Blanket Exercise uses a physical approach to teach youth and adults about the Indigenous people of North America, pre-European contact to current day. It is often followed by a talking circle where students and adults can share their feelings throughout the experience. Its main goal is to create empathy amongst all participants.

How to Implement
This exercise can be implemented in countless ways in the classroom or professional development settings. While it does teach the true history of Indigenous peoples, it can also be used as a Social Emotional Learning lesson. The main goal of this activity is to strengthen empathy among participants, so it benefits both students and educators alike.

Conversation Starters:

- How did this activity make you feel?
- Do you understand our Indigenous brothers and sister more or less?
- How can you change your classroom environment to support Indigenous children?

Restorative Practices

Restorative Circles
Restorative circles can be used as a conflict resolution tool or to create a safe classroom environment. Students involved in the conflict must sit together in the circle and discuss ways to solve the conflict and how they felt during it. Educators should be there to facilitate questions and ensure that tensions do not rise. These circles aim to repair the harm done to the community; in this case, it's your classroom.

Restorative Questions
Restorative questions can be used during circles or in your classroom routine to create a classroom community. These questions build community, encourage sharing, and teach accountability. Examples of these questions include:

- What makes you feel like you are important to our classroom community? The school community? The community where you live?
- When have you felt like you belonged to a group or team? When have you felt that you didn't?

5 R's of Restorative Practices

- Relationships
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Repair
- Reintegration

Back of pamphlet

Chapter IV - Conclusion

This research aimed to identify trauma-informed teaching methods that can be implemented with Indigenous students. Based on a literature review of historical accounts, studies on trauma-informed teaching practices, and articles concerning the prevalent issues Indigenous children face, it can be concluded that these practices should be implemented in the classroom. Applied Behavioral Analysis, Restorative Justice, and activities such as the Blanket Exercise by Kairos can be used to create a safe classroom environment for all children. To better understand how these practices would benefit educators, a formal qualitative, observational study should be conducted to test the validity of these resources when working with Indigenous children. In the words of the Dakota Oyate (people): Tokβta ake waçiyaåke kte, pidamayaye. Until we meet again, in this very spot, thank you.

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