



A Culture of Connection:

A Tribal Relational Framework for Whole Child Engagement

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Tribal Student Achievement and Relations



Agenda

- Mindset
- Whole Child
- IWLRF (Relational Framework)

Session Goals:

- Discover the MT OPI TSAR unit's contextual/whole child approach to academic achievement
- Understand the elements of Montana's Indigenous Whole Learner Relational Framework.
- Explore the cultural imperative of relationality in tribal communities
- Discuss strategies for engaging tribal youth, families and communities.





Relational Mindset

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

Sitting Bull



Relational Mindset

“Let us put our minds together and
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children. “

Sitting Bull



The Relationship Standpoint

- Humans are always in relationship
- Relationships can be viewed as the stories we tell about ourselves, others, and the circumstances that surround us; narratives can be shared.
- Relationship is inevitable but connecting is optional
- Relationships become less disposable when positive connections are established
- Leaning into one another increases the opportunity for higher quality relationships
- Learning how to develop positive relationships is an integral aspect of educating our youth
- Harm is seen as relationships that have been fractured

Service Orientations

Relational

- Trust
- Enough time
- Appreciation for process
- Focus on understanding
- Reciprocity
- Generosity
- Potential for deepening

Transactional

- Caution
- Brief
- Goal is on benefits
- Focus on result
- Exchange
- Receipt
- Closed process

Western & Tribal Mindsets

Outside In



Inside Out

Fidelity as Documentation



Fidelity as Relationships

Short Term Relationship



Lifelong Relationships

Individual



Community

Verbal Communication



Non-Verbal Communication

Getting an “A”



Personal Gifts/Purpose

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Formal definition from National Park Services:

- Indigenous Knowledge is a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed by Tribes and Indigenous Peoples through interaction and experience with the environment.
- It is applied to phenomena across biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual systems.
- Indigenous Knowledge can be developed over millennia, continues to develop, and includes understanding based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment and long-term experiences, as well as extensive observations, lessons, and skills passed from generation to generation.

Informal definition from a Salish Elder:

- Indigenous Knowledge is survival. **Informal definition from a Salish Elder:**
- Indigenous Knowledge is survival.



Whole Child

Graduation Rate	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023
Native student on reservation	74%	79%	74%	77%	90%	84%	67%
Non-Native student on reservation	94%	95%	95%	94%	97%	94%	91%

Graduation Rate	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023
Native student off reservation	86%	82%	83%	81%	85%	83%	68%
Non-Native student off reservation	94%	92%	92%	92%	93%	92%	88%

Drop Out Rate	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023
Native student on reservation	11%	10%	13%	9%	5%	6%	5%
Non-Native student on reservation	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%

Drop Out Rate	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023
Native student off reservation	9%	11%	10%	9%	8%	10%	5%
Non-Native student off reservation	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	2%

Fostering Social and Emotional Skills Through Learning: Educating the Whole Child

- **Developing whole child skills**, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and the ability to make responsible decisions, **are essential to student success inside and outside of the classroom.**
- Development of these skills are associated with **lower levels of emotional distress, enhanced wellbeing, improved academic outcomes, and more stable employment in adulthood.**
- **These skills can be taught, practiced, and strengthened in everyday interactions in schools**, at home, in workplaces, and community organizations.

Looking at the data, please reflect:

- Summary: Non-Native students on reservation schools consistently have the highest graduation rate and lowest dropout rate, followed by non-Native students off reservation.
- What does this data tell us about the school experiences of Montana's Native students?
- What are we not providing to our Native students? What's missing from their school experience?



Self-Awareness

Identify Emotions

Recognize
Strengths

Self-Confidence

Self-Efficacy



Self- Management

Impulse Control

Stress Management

Self-Discipline

Goal Setting

Organizational Skills



Social Awareness

Perspective-Taking

Empathy

Appreciating
Diversity

Respect for Others



Relationship Skills

Communication

Social Engagement

Relationship
Building

Teamwork



Responsible Decision Making

Identifying
Problems

Analyzing Situations

Solving Problems

Ethical
Responsibility

Western & Tribal Mindsets

Outside In  Inside Out

Fidelity as Documentation  Fidelity as Relationships

Short Term Relationship  Lifelong Relationships

Individual  Community

Verbal Communication  Non-Verbal Communication

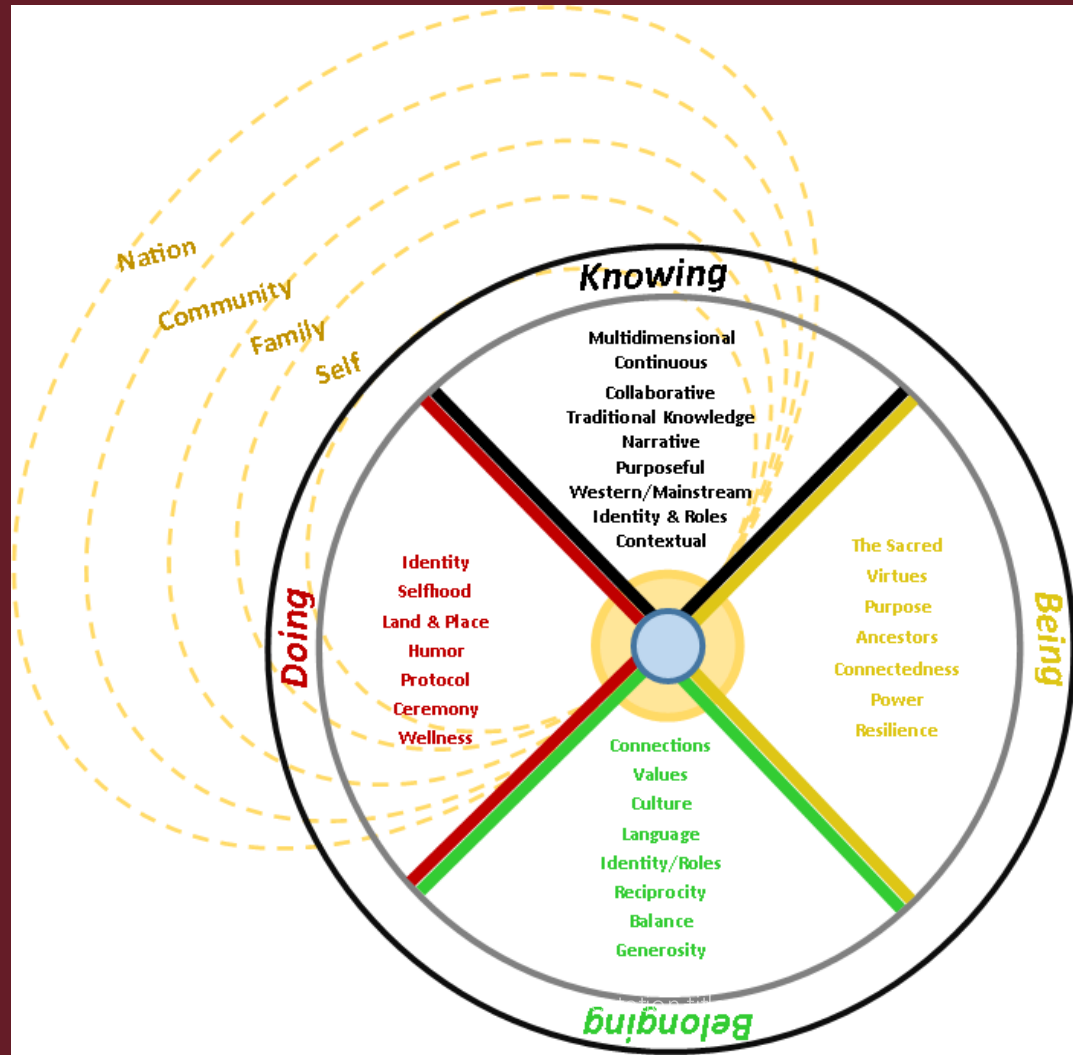
Getting an "A"  Personal Gifts/Purpose

What does self-confidence look like in a student who identifies more closely with a tribal mindset?

What does responsible decision-making look like?

What about ethical responsibility?

The Indigenous Whole-Learner Relational Framework





The relational framework and mindset accepts as its premise that every aspect of learning is impacted, supported, and facilitated by every life domain, and influenced by innumerable, nuanced aspects of each life domain.

Whole Human; Human Learner

The Big Picture

Domain

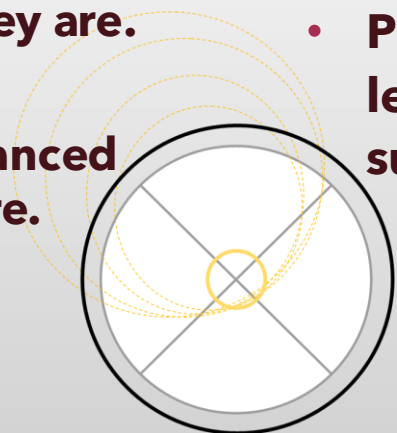
- The domain seeks to place a learner within their own context. (not ours)
- The domain helps us determine where we are and plot the appropriate path in order to successfully meet the learner where they are.
- Each domain has innumerable, nuanced aspects to explore.

Relationality

- Widens our lens and reminds us to understand how our learners are connected to their communities, with their history, in this moment and in the future.
- Places an emphasis learners' strengths and supports.

Aspect

- Offers perspectives from which to view the learner's behavior in the context of the identified domain
- Aspects are not all-inclusive and are nuanced.
- Are pathways to develop action that grows relationality.





Being
(Spirit)



Belonging
(Heart)



Doing
(Body)

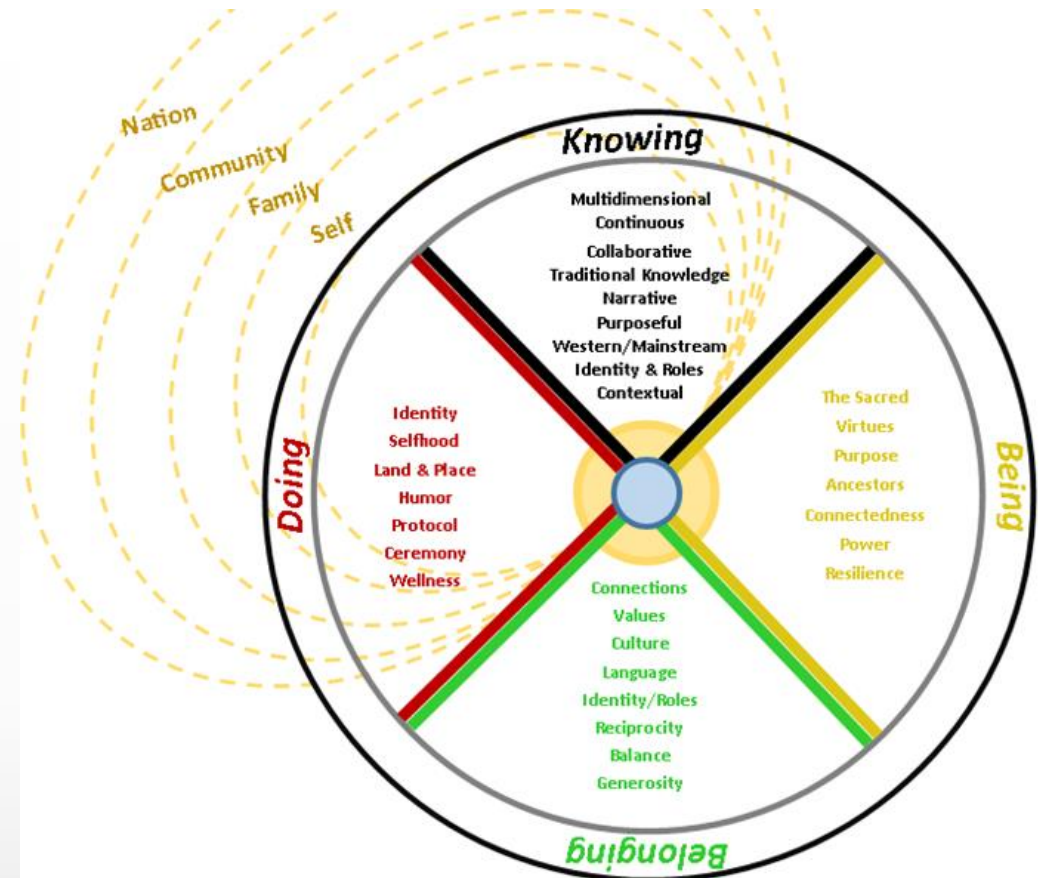


Knowing
(Mind)

The Domains

The object overlaying the domains is the relationality that is integral to all humans, and particularly to those connected to indigenous communities.

It communicates that while relationships begin within the self, all information spirals through all the dimensions of self.



Multidimensionality



Input and information starts in the self like a pebble dropping into water.

The ripples that are generated from that input are both extensions of the event (the pebble dropping) and a separate, but closely related phenomenon (ripples expanding outward)

- Self awareness and development
- Self in relation to the family
- The family (with self as a component) in relation to the community
- The community (of families) in relation to the nation

Self in Relation

- Visual model
- Recognizable cultural reference
- Cognitively complex model
- Cultural Epistemology



Using the framework IRL...

Student seems increasingly depressed

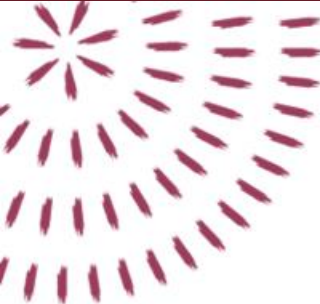
- Issue: Student is falling behind in their work
 - Domain: Being
 - Relationality: Self
 - Aspect: Power, Purpose
- Nuances: Youth in western education systems are not often encouraged to be powerful. We discuss productivity as a result of education, but not often about the educational outcome of becoming purposeful.
- Action: Assist student to feel confident that his effort will be impactful. Help student understand their education as a process for developing purpose.

Student seems increasingly depressed

- Issue: Loss of family member
 - Domain: Doing
 - Relationality: Family/Community (self)
 - Aspect: Ceremony
- Nuances: Students can feel like they must choose between their education and their culture—this is an assimilation norm. A second cousin in American kinship charts may be a sibling or parent in tribal kinship systems. Ceremony does not require regalia—cultural norms or practices like gathering as a family in the ICU can be “ceremonial” in the sense that ceremony is not a formality, but rather a life-sustaining practice.
- Action: Consider plan to cover learning loss/assignments while student engages in cultural norms. Offer support and encouragement that student can catch up. Ask students to journal some of their experiences. Propose and support a policy for cultural student leave.

Implementing the IWLRF

- Acknowledge diversity in the classroom with empathy, compassion and without singling out individual students
- Seek student voice on a continual basis
- Approach learning from the lens of the whole human, Being & Belonging as well as Knowing & Doing
- Establish relationships with knowledge keepers within the community
- Implement a restorative practices approach to education
- Cultivate Cultural Congruency
- Utilize language and culture throughout the school



participation that are not wholly dependent on student initiative.

Develop strengths based skills for creating success.

Seek student voice on a continual basis

Tolerate humor with thoughtful boundaries.

Utilize talking circles and restorative practices

Utilize tribal language in the classroom and/or in

Utilize indigenous language/names in school spaces —particularly from the indigenous nations in the area.

Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to develop skills around tribal knowledge and kinship cultures

Provide guidance on protocols for reaching out to indigenous partners and reservation community members with the help of local indigenous partners

Expand awareness of the

youth *with area tribal partners*

Encourage educators to engage with American Indian/Alaska Native students, parents, and community members to build respect for and prevent misconceptions about the culture

Discover cultural knowledge keepers and respected elders in the community. Learn the protocols for engaging them, and offer opportunities for them to share their knowledge and skills with students

environment and utilize cultural congruency whenever it is possible

Allow family & community members to set the pace of discussion and allow for connecting relationally before initiating focused discussion

Ask a member of the community to sit in on, or co-host, meetings

Develop a tolerance for vulnerability and humility when interacting with community members



Practicing Cultural Humility

Acknowledge	Acknowledge what you know, believe, and think about cultural groups that are not your own.
Be	Be okay with being vulnerable, understanding that you do not always need to be the expert
Practice	Practice compassionate curiosity.
Be	Be adventurous in your learning. Seek new ways of seeing the world.
Build	Build your cognitive complexity to consider multiple perspectives, think abstractly, and handle complex information.



“Every society needs educated people, but the primary **responsibility** of educated people is to **bring wisdom** back into the community and make it **available to others** so that the lives they are leading **make sense**.”

Vine Deloria, Jr.



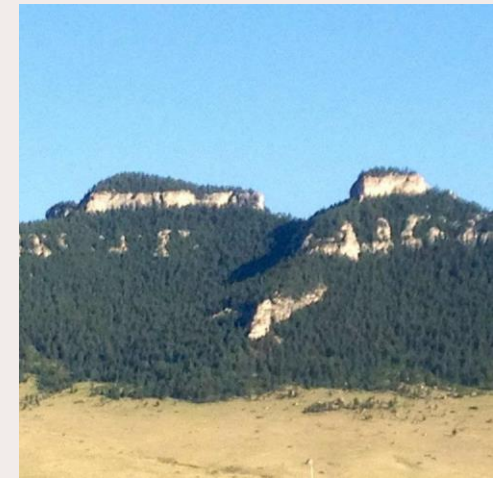
Thank you

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Session Evaluation

Every session will be
evaluated along with an
overall event evaluation

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