
Decolonizing the Student Experience

— Insights from *Ignite: A Decolonial
Approach to Higher Education
through Space, Place and Culture* —

Drs. Laura Pipe & Jennifer Stephens
August 2, 2023

Session Outline

- Insights from the **Ignite: A decolonial approach to higher education through space, place, and culture**
- Disrupting the impact of Cognitive Imperialism
 - Decolonization vs Dewesternization
 - Promise of Modernity/Colonial Matrix of Power (Quijano, 2000)
 - White Supremacy Culture (Okun, 2022)
- Impact of change by institutions and individuals on the student experience
 - Learner-centered to curiosity-centered
 - From transactional learning to reciprocal relationships and authentic trust
 - Living and teaching through tender resistance
 - Community Cultural Wealth Model (Yosso, 2005)
- Application of the Toward a Liberated Learning Spirit (TALLS) model for developing critical consciousness

Who we are:



Laura Pipe, PhD

Tuscarora/Haudenosaunee Descent

Director, University Teaching and Learning Commons

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Kinesiology

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

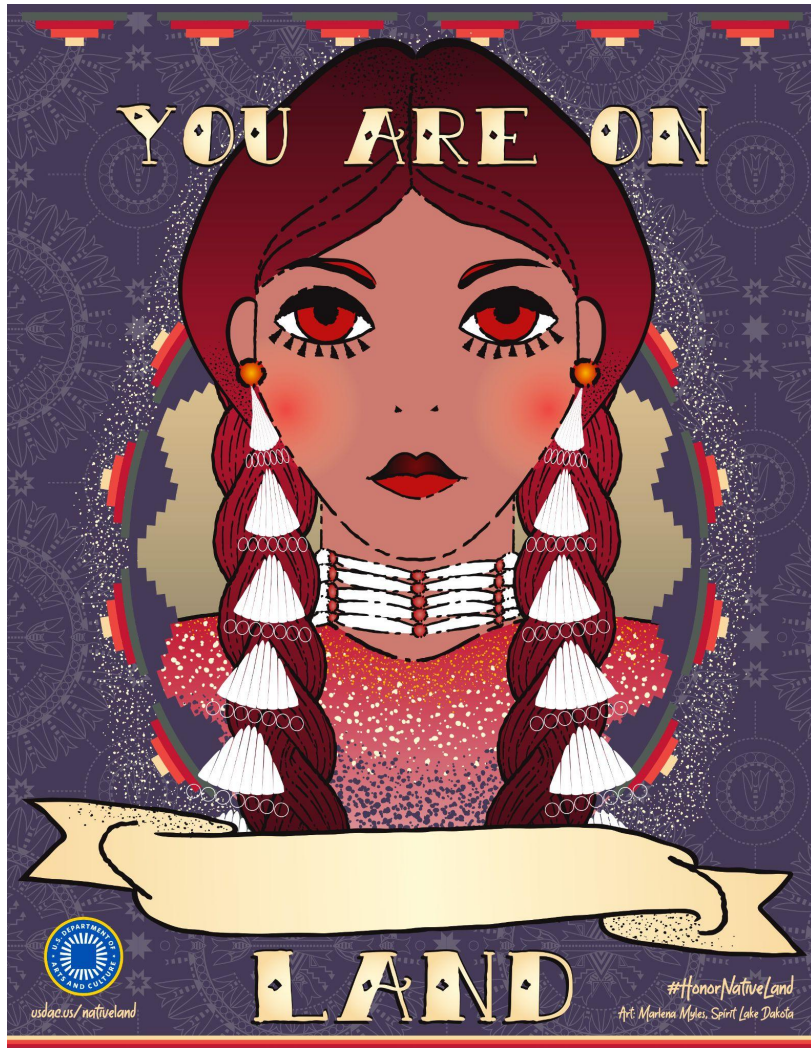


Jennifer Stephens, PhD

Director, Academic-Residential Partnerships

Assistant Professor, Education

Elon University



Occaneechi
Saponi
Saura
Keyauwee
Catawba

Please visit [Native-Land.ca](https://usdac.us/nativeland) to
honor the people whose land you
live, work, and love on daily.

<https://usdac.us/nativeland>

An Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

This acknowledgement was created from my own Haudenosaunee values system and influenced by the work of Corey Roberts (Occaneechi Linguist):

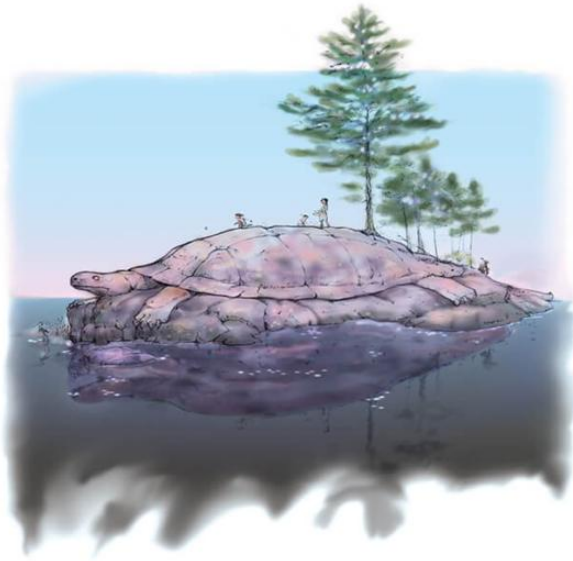


Image from the [Oneida of the Haudenosaunee](#)

Give thanks! We thank the land and Creator for providing and caring for us, and we in turn care for the land. The land has existed since the sacrifice of the muskrat, who brought dirt from the ocean to be laid upon the turtle's back. The land existed before us and will exist after. Our choices today impact the generations ahead, as we borrow the land from the next generation and the next. We honor our ancestors who respected and protected the land before us, so that we may be cared for by the land and that we may care for the land today. Give thanks!

Edited by

Laura M. Pipe,
Jennifer T. Stephens

IGNITE

A Decolonial Approach to Higher
Education Through Space,
Place and Culture

 VERNON PRESS
SERIES IN EDUCATION

IGNITE: A decolonial approach to higher education through space, place & culture

Purchase a copy from Vernon Press:

<https://vernonpress.com/book/1024>

Use this code CFC59011C51E to
receive a 25% discount

Cognitive Imperialism

Cognitive Imperialism (Battiste, 2017) is a form of mental **manipulation** used to devalue/disconnect knowledge systems and histories of one community in favor of a Eurocentric model.



Marie Battiste
(Mi'kmaw)

"[Cognitive Imperialism] asserts the distinction between these peoples lies in the superior quality of the European mind or spirit, which contains a certain intellectual or spiritual factor that leads to creativity, imagination, invention, innovation, rationality, and a sense of honor or ethics."

Colonization is built on the **Promise of Modernity** (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

DeColonization vs DeWesternization



Aníbal Quijano

Decolonial (Quijano) was a term birthed in the mountains of Peru.

It requires us to change the structure and rules we use to define and categorize knowing.

Decolonial epistemologies become the framework for living. We measure the relationship between people, entities.

Dewesternization challenges the content of knowledge, but stays within the structure and rules of Eurocentrism.

Maintains colonial epistemologies and foci. We measure entities and objects.

Works within the established systems - grading, registration, etc. But attempts to change how we do those things.

Colonial Matrix of Power



Mignolo & Walsh (2018);
Quijano (2000)

Features of White Supremacy Culture

Tema Okun (2000; 2016; 2022)

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info>



Artwork by [Melanie G. S. Walby](#)

"...white supremacy is a death sentence for white people because it invites us on a daily basis to collude with and participate in the reproduction of our own inhumanity."

Tema Okun
(2023, *Ignite*)



Artwork by Melanie G. S. Walby

“Through structural inequalities that shape learning spaces and the pedagogical and curricular design decisions that privilege certain ways of knowing at the exclusion of others, the formal learning process is often reduced to a transactional condition in which a credentialed authority imparts specific knowledge on passive learners, who regurgitate what they have been taught in exchange for advancement toward their own societally-valued credentials. **Therefore, many students get back to the business of lifelong learning only after they have finished their schooling.**”

Stephens & Pipe, 2023
In Inclusive Education and Lifelong Learning

Moving from Learner-Centered to Curiosity-Centered

Curiosity is...

- Central to biological and psychological models of social, emotional, and cognitive development (Holinger, 2016).
- Such a hallmark of the human experience that lack of it in children is seen as a sign of trauma (Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, n.d.).
- Unfortunately, given little space in formal educational spaces (instead replaced by disciplinary canon, a hierarchy of subjects, and assessed standards).

“Learning is remembering what you’re interested in.”

~R.S. Wurman

“In Aboriginal thought, the Spirit enters this earth walk with a purpose for being here and specific gifts for fulfilling that purpose...

It has a hunger and a thirst for learning, and along that path it leads us to discern what is useful for us to know and what is not.”

Marie Battiste (Potlotek, Mi'kmaw; 2010, p.15)

Moving from Transactional Relationships to Reciprocal Relationships and Authentic Trust

- Acknowledge that learners can and do know how to engage in learning if provided space to explore learning.
- Embrace learners' own curiosities as a key driving force by which learners determine the best path forward in their own learning process.
- Make transparent and provide a balanced presentation of both the problematic and the hopeful.

"Part of what we're trying to do is ground the equity work in stronger authentic relationships rather than transactional relationships."

~T.J. Okun (*Ignite*, 2023)



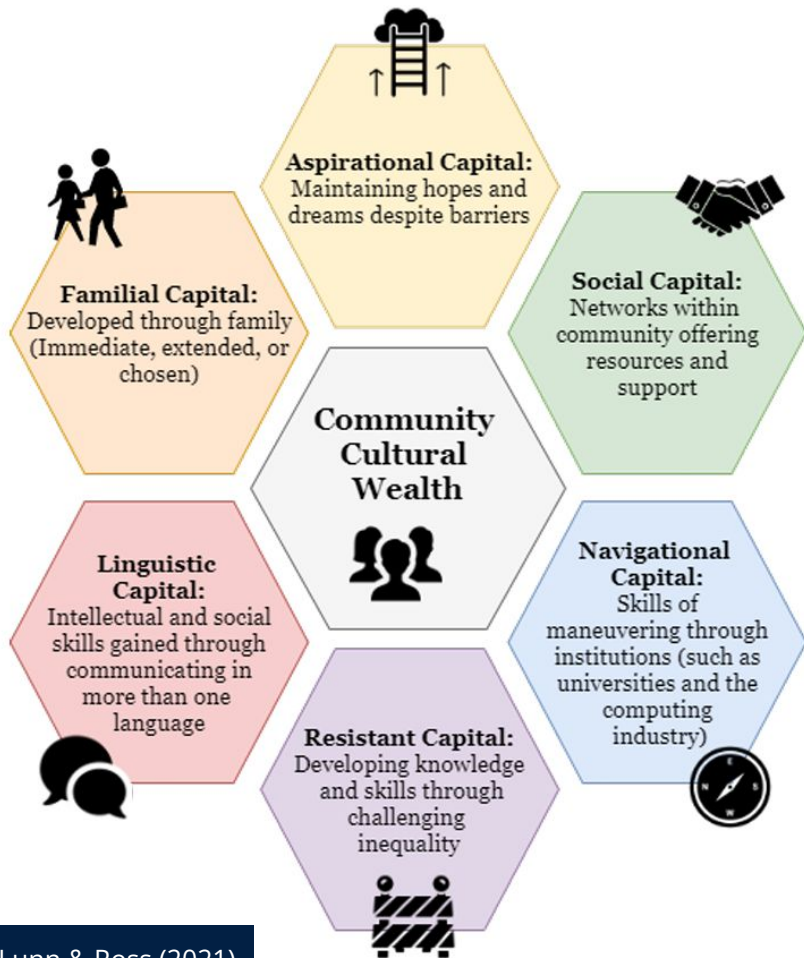
REALITY

**Tender
Resistance**

"A tender resistance is one where we resist the harmful effects of the status quo while at the same time open our hearts to the collective hopes of who we can become."

~Tanaka, 2016, p. 164

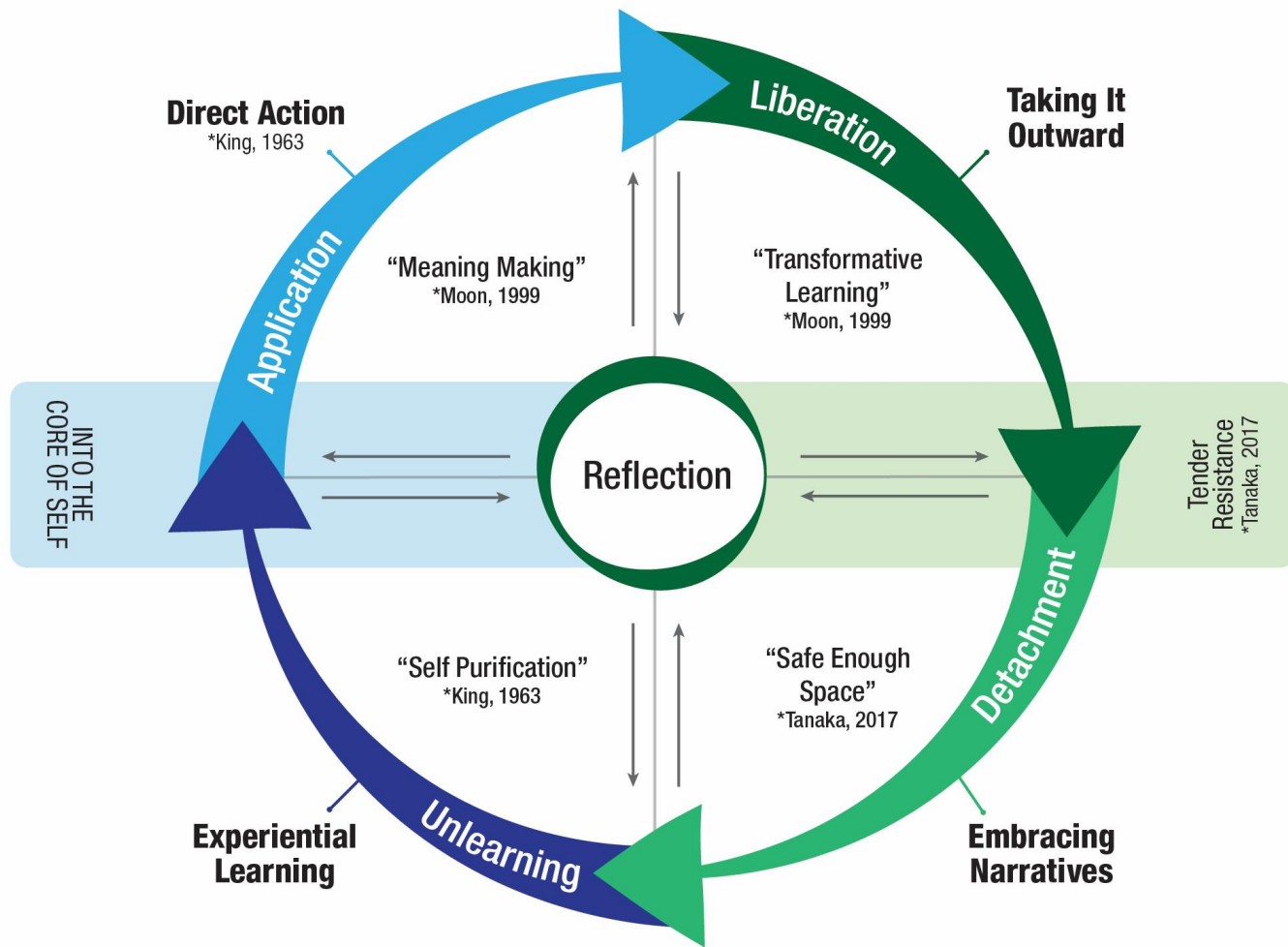
HOPE



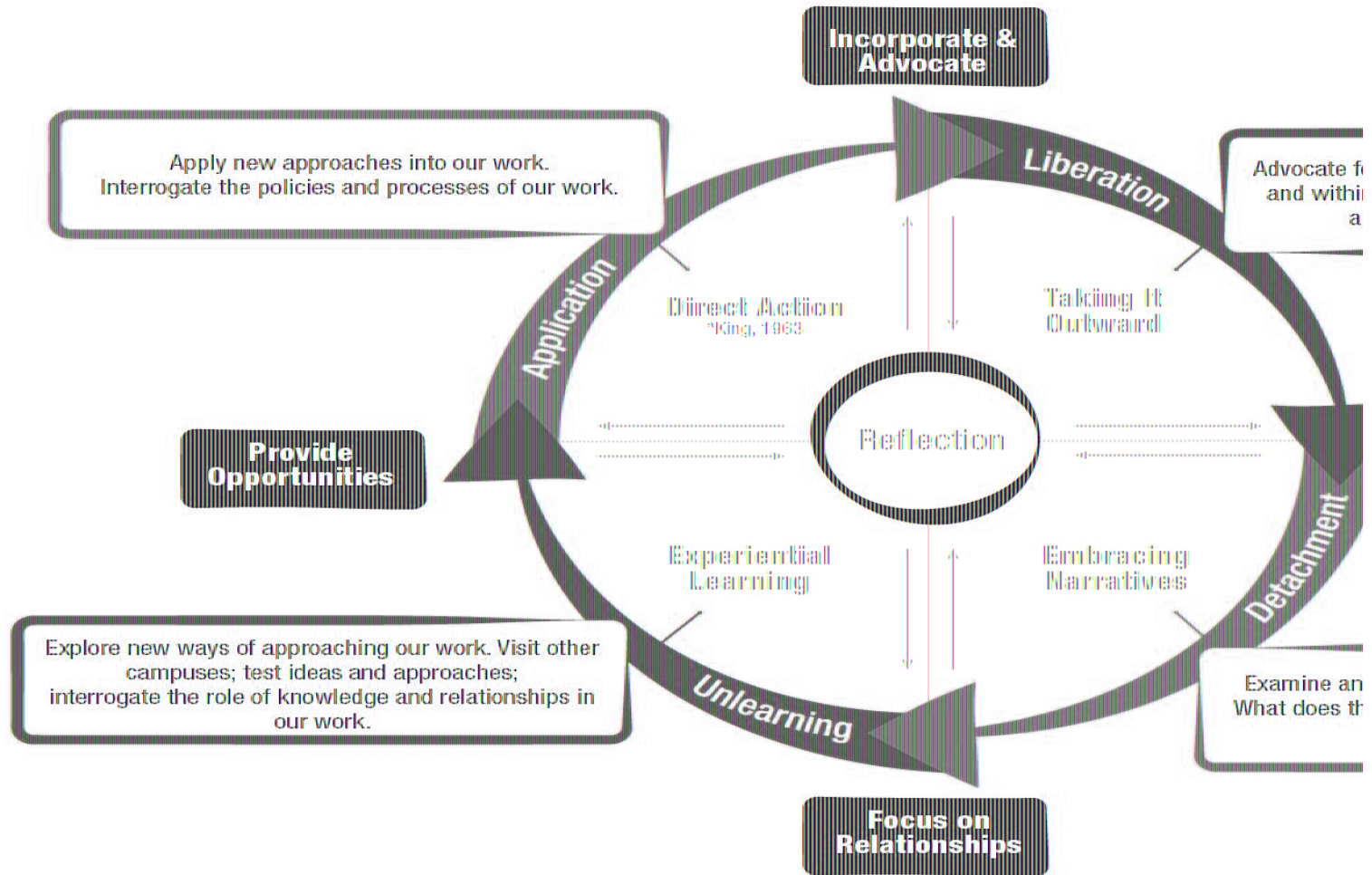
Community Cultural Wealth Model

Tara Yosso (2005)

TALLS (Toward a Liberated Learning Spirit) Model for Developing Critical Consciousness



Pipe & Stephens (2019), Stephens & Pipe (2020)



“Each time, an elder talks to you as casually and informally as if they were talking about anything else. They allow you the opportunity to retort and giggle, and they are able to captivate your attention with their storytelling. Sometimes the teaching does not come through conversation. Sometimes it comes from observing their actions or observing some part of the environment. Sometimes it’s a conversation that asks you to recall these observations. In all cases, it is fluid and mostly based on experience and observation...

[In College,] you are bouncing between lecture after lecture, trying to take notes, speaking minimally— since your professors are clearly getting annoyed with your constant hand raises—and feeling generally overwhelmed with information.

If the teaching you grew up with was a meal with an elder, this is a world championship hotdog eating competition.”

Sky Kihuwa-Mani (Tuscarora, Onondaga, Meherrin)
(*Ignite*, 2023)

Reflection is Essential

- Benchmarking Perceptions
- Incorporation of Narratives
- Pulling Knowledge Inward
- Reflection as a Comfort

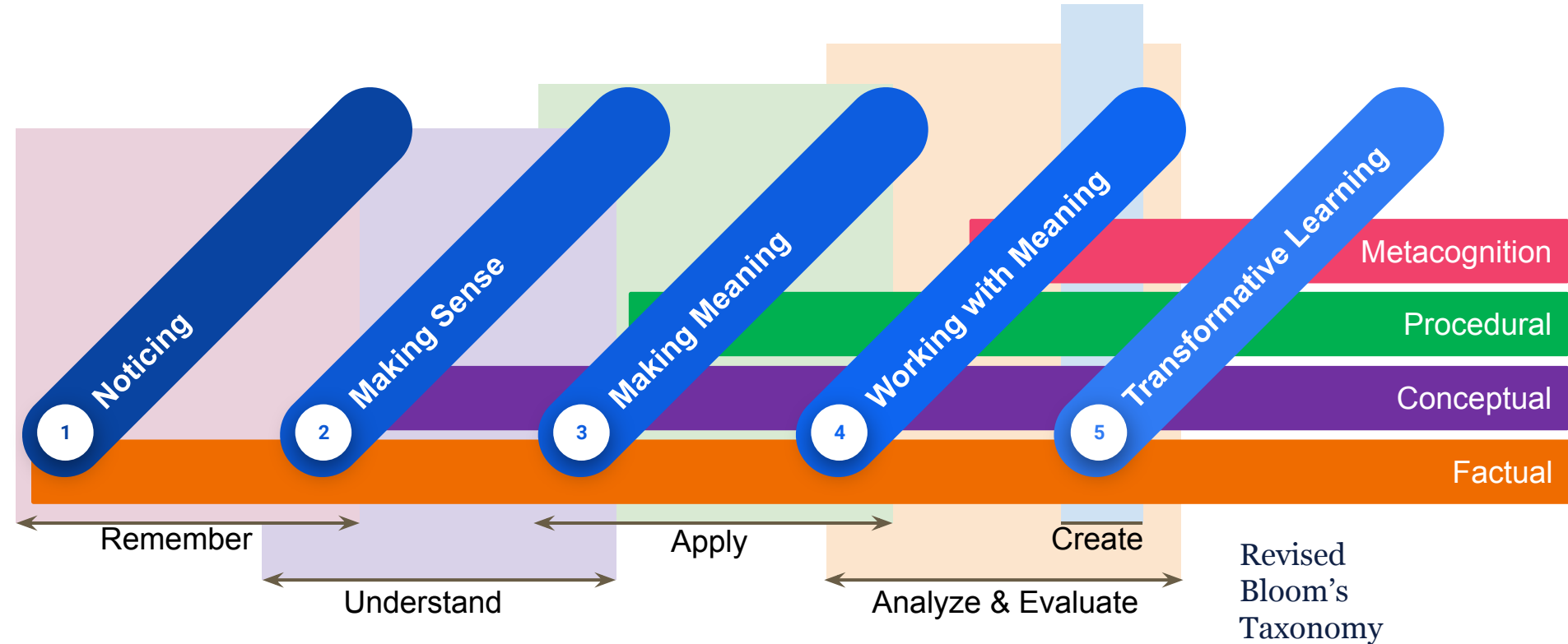
Learner sees that their perceptions are shaped by experiences, structures, and systems.

Jenny Moon (*Ignite*, 2023)



Reflective Learning

*Moon, 1999; 2001



Questions to Help Students Consider Their Curiosity:

Initial Questions

Who will I be in this space?

What do I need in this space?

Prompting

What does my learning spirit look like?

What does my curiosity look like?

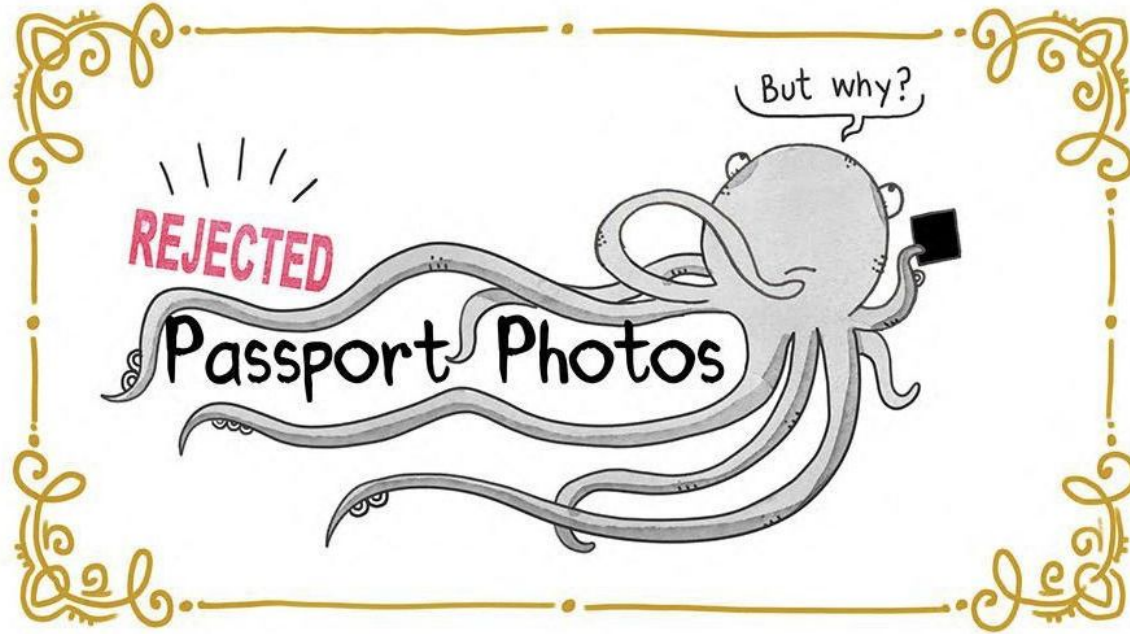
Consideration

What does my learning look like when my curiosity is considered?

“Cutting a child off from their cultural norms, the ways they communicate with those like them, is detrimental not an advancement. Making a student feel small or assuming they know nothing will not facilitate learning more quickly. **Learning is already happening. It has already happened by the time your paths have crossed. Do not feel challenged to introduce ‘legitimate’ education to your students.** Your job, as difficult as it may be sometimes, is to facilitate the learning journey and to be of service to it (the students relationship with learning), as long as you and the pupil are together, but never to dominate the journey.”

Simone Watkins (Eastern Band of Cherokee)
(*Ignite*, 2023)

Unlearning in Action:



Özge Samanci (*Ignite*, 2023)

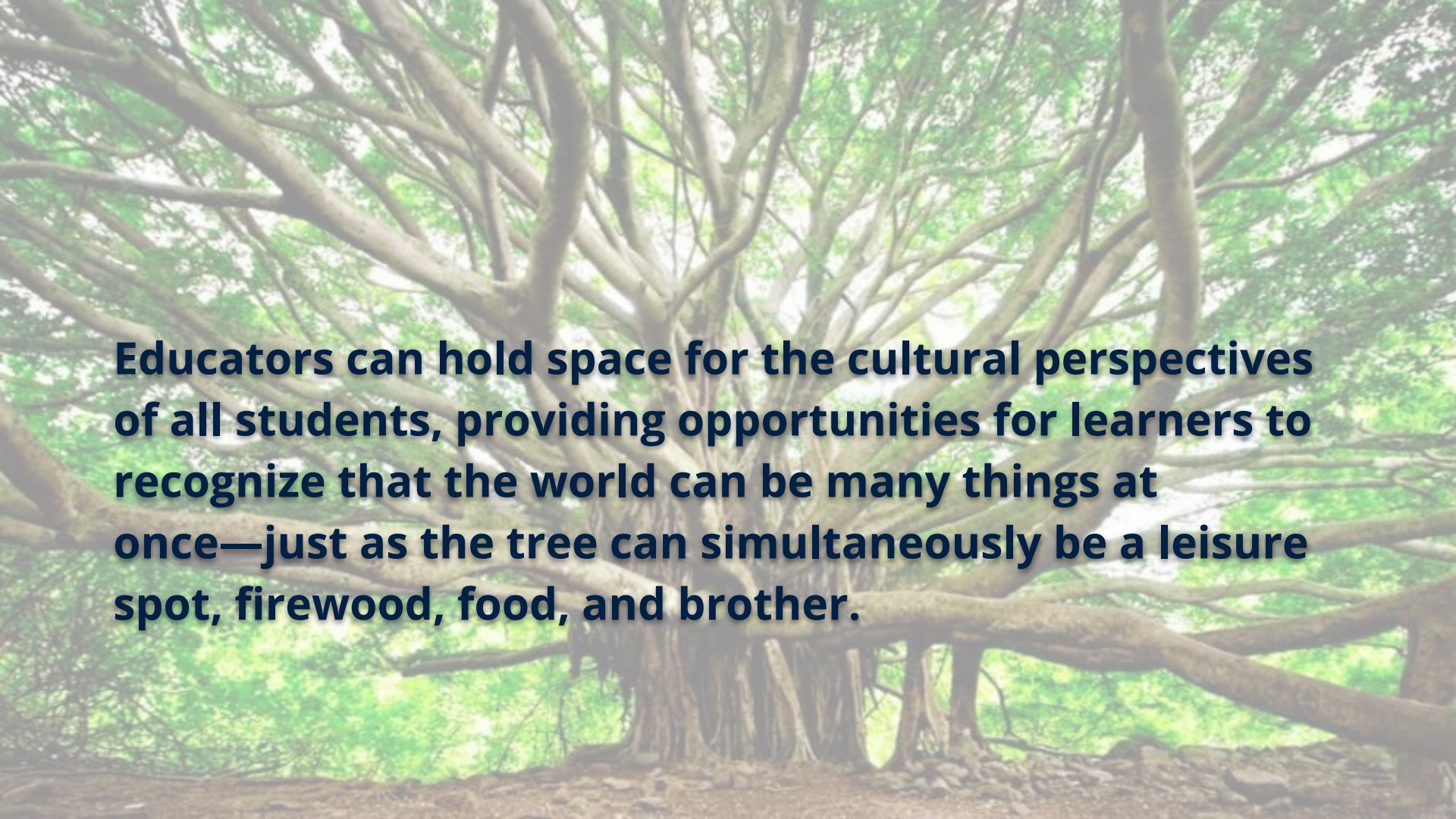
Unacceptable— Photo size is incorrect.



Polynesian Cultural Center In Laie, Hawaii



University of Hawai'i
at Mānoa



Educators can hold space for the cultural perspectives of all students, providing opportunities for learners to recognize that the world can be many things at once—just as the tree can simultaneously be a leisure spot, firewood, food, and brother.

Application in Action:

Impose a “creative tension”

~King, 1963

“Creation endows people with sacred gifts that emerge in different stages of their lives... Individual development is not predetermined, or based simply on cause and effect. Rather, **inherent talents and capability are animated when people are faced with life decisions and situations**” (p. 161-162).

~Battiste, 2013

Liberation in Action:

“[Decolonization] requires developing a critical consciousness that **activates questions and concerns about inequalities in society** and that interrogates the cultural and structural outcomes of inequality and structural racism evident in public services such as education, health, and justice.

“The efforts of educators need to **reveal inconsistencies, challenge assumptions, and expose ills of any knowledge system**. Educators need to search within themselves for meaningful principles of knowledge systems that will guide all children to lead dignified, respectful lives.”

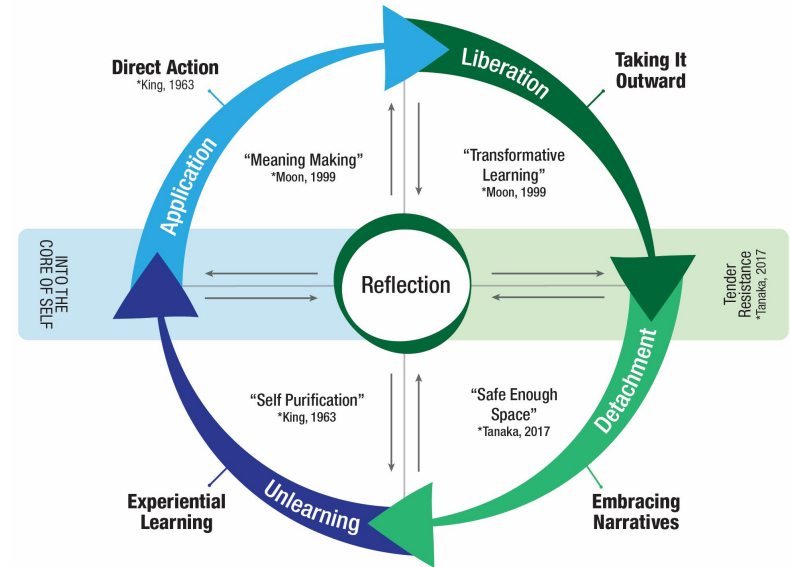
~Battiste, 2017



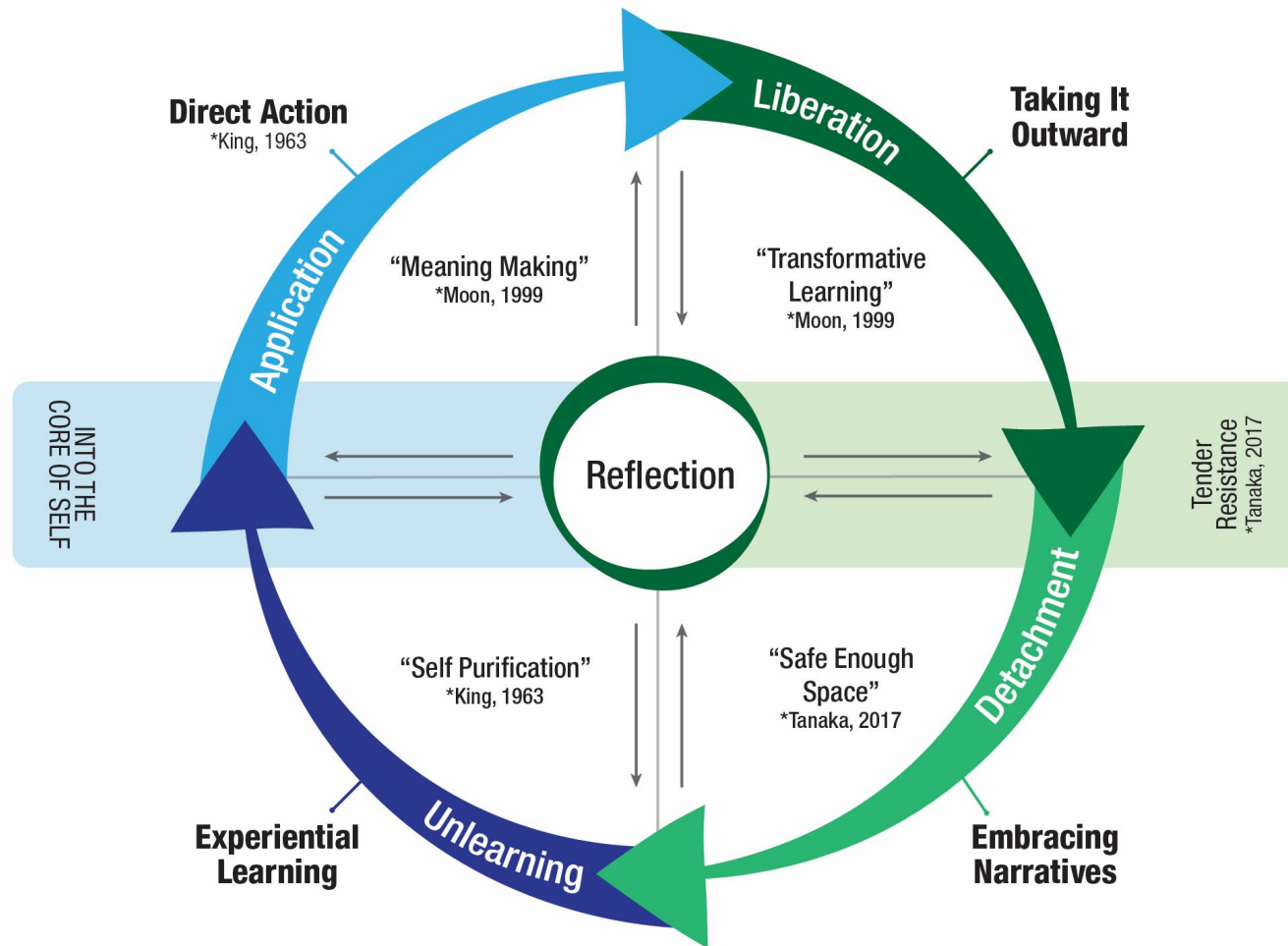
Marie Battiste
(Mi'kmaw)

Return to the Start

- Returning to the Start
- Seeing in new ways not possible before



Pipe & Stephens (2019), Stephens & Pipe (2020)



Pipe & Stephens (2019), Stephens & Pipe (2020)

Edited by

Laura M. Pipe,
Jennifer T. Stephens

IGNITE

A Decolonial Approach to Higher
Education Through Space,
Place and Culture

 VERNON PRESS
SERIES IN EDUCATION

IGNITE: A decolonial approach to higher education through space, place & culture

Purchase a copy from Vernon Press:

<https://vernonpress.com/book/1024>

Use this code CFC59011C51E to
receive a 25% discount