APA DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS Grant Report
Savage Education: Epistemic Injustice of Native American Boarding Schools

On July 6th, 2023, a group of Indigenous philosophers traveled to the U.S. Army War College – former grounds of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School – in Carlisle, PA to understand the history of, and familiarize ourselves with, the land, and pay our respects at the graves of the 173 Indigenous children who died while in attendance. The aim of these workshops is to highlight contemporary issues in Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies and how they are related to the legacies of Native American boarding schools. Given the recent publication of Volume 1 of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, the theme of this year’s workshop was, “Epistemic Injustices of Native American Boarding Schools.” The workshop itself took place on July 7th at West Chester University in West Chester, PA. A key component of these workshops is visiting the grounds of former Native American boarding schools to pay our respects to, and remember, the Indigenous children who lost their lives as part of the systematic assimilation and erasure of Indigenous peoples through settler colonialism.

Prior to the workshop we had organized a reading group – pine (Philosophy of Indigenous Education) – to recruit and garner interest about in the workshop. The reading group regularly had between 8-10 participants discussing articles on Indigenous pedagogy and education. Flyers were made for both the reading group and the CFP, and both were shared via email, APA discussion boards, and social media.

Towards the end of the reading group, we solicited abstracts to be presented at the workshop. We had eight submissions in total. After we reviewed each of the submissions, we accepted six. Of the six submissions, two were unable to attend: one had a previous engagement, and one couldn’t afford the travel from Hawaii (even with funding). Additionally, one person could only attend virtually (due to attending University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom). In total, three people were able to attend (in-person) in addition to Jeremy, Shelby, and myself. We invited two senior Indigenous participants: Brian Burkhart and Sandy Grande. Sandy couldn’t attend due to a prior engagement, but Brian accepted the invitation. However, a couple of weeks before the workshop Dr. Burkhart had to drop out due to personal and health reasons. Given the short time frame, we didn’t attempt to find another senior Indigenous participant. Instead, the workshop carried on with the seven of us.

During the workshop, participants that submitted an abstract gave a presentation of an idea they had for a paper. The aim was to have participants leave the workshop with an outline or better understanding of how to develop the paper they’d like to write for publication. Each

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presentation generated a tremendous amount of discussion while focusing on different aspects or different kinds of epistemic injustices perpetuated by Native American boarding schools. In total, there were seven participants during the workshop:

**Joey Miller** (Mvskoke), Assistant Professor, West Chester University  
**Shelbi Nawhilet Meissner** (Lүiseňо & Cupeňо), Assistant Professor, University of Maryland/Georgetown University  
**Getty Lustilla** (Enrolled Member, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), Assistant Teaching Professor, Northeastern University  
**Janella Baxter** (Enrolled Member of the Choctaw Nation), Assistant Professor, Sam Houston State University  
**John Miller** ( Métis Nation), Graduate Student, University of Toronto  
**Ashley Lance** (Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Member, Yurok Descendant), Graduate Student, Cambridge University  
**Jeremey Johnson** (Lenape), Cultural Director, Delaware Nation of Oklahoma

The workshop started with a blessing and brief history of Lenapehokeng (“land of the Lenape”). Since West Chester University occupies the ancestral lands of the Lenape - whose descendants are members of the Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe of Indians, and Stockbridge-Munsee Community in the U.S. and the Delaware Nation at Moraviantown, Munsee-Delaware Nation, and Six Nations of the Grand River in Canada - we wanted to not only acknowledge the land we were on, but learn it’s history, as well. Thankfully, Jeremey Johnson, Cultural Director of the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, accepted our invitation to speak at the workshop. During his introduction he relayed the history of Lenape peoples, as well as offered support and encouragement to projects focused on Indigenous histories and cultures. It was an incredibly powerful introduction about the resiliency and legacy of Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Throughout the workshop, participants presented ideas, engaged in collaborative constructions or narratives and arguments, and helped each other refine, and give shape to, ideas concerning epistemic injustices unique to Native American boarding schools. Our visit to Carlisle, juxtaposed with the analytical depth of our workshop, brought forth the tangible implications of epistemic injustice. It wasn’t just a theoretical discussion; it became an experiential realization. Philosophical discussions, when rooted in tangible experiences, can become more impactful and can potentially reach a wider audience. Engaging diverse philosophical voices in an intimate workshop setting fosters richer discussion and results in nuanced perspectives on topics like epistemic injustice. From this workshop we established a community of early career academics interested in working together to give space to Indigenous histories, cultures, and ideas.

At the end of the workshop, participants met and discussed plans for our papers, organizing future Savage Education workshops, as well as future activities that relate to Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies. The participants are currently in the process of writing a co-authored reflection of our experiences visiting the grounds of Carlisle Indian Industrial School and attending the workshop. This will be submitted to a journal sometime in the near future. Additionally, each of us is working on the papers that came out of the workshop. We have been encouraged by a prominent journal to submit these as a cluster publication or

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special issue when they’re completed, so we will continue to follow through with that once the papers have been completed and refined.

We’re also in the process of planning for the next workshop, as well as organizing panels and roundtables for upcoming conferences (including panels and presentations at the APA meetings). We’ve discussed possible locations for future workshops and have reached out to contacts at some locations looking for funding. We have also initiated future reading groups (e.g., Indigenous Fictions, Indigenous Education, etc.) to continue to foster and build our community while working towards providing space and access to Indigenous philosophies.

We are grateful for the support provided by the APA diversity grant, which allowed us to explore, in depth, the intersection of theoretical philosophy and tangible historical realities. Our collective efforts will continue to challenge and expand the horizons of philosophical thought, particularly in areas of epistemic justice and education.

Vrakkueckv (Respectfully),

Joseph Len Miller

Sincerely,

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner