



# Redefining and decolonizing philanthropy in American Indian communities

Authors: Jioanna Carjuzaa, William G. Ruff, and David Henderson

This is a postprint of an article that originally appeared in [Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science](#) in 2016.

Carjuzaa, Jioanna, Ruff, William G., & Henderson, David. (2016). Redefining and decolonizing philanthropy in American Indian communities. *Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science*, 8(2), 110-122.

Made available through Montana State University's [ScholarWorks](#)  
[scholarworks.montana.edu](https://scholarworks.montana.edu)

Running Head: AMERICAN INDIAN PHILANTHROPY

Redefining and Decolonizing Philanthropy in American Indian Communities

Jioanna Carjuzaa

William G. Ruff

David Henderson

Montana State University

Final Draft Submitted to:

Journal of Global Research in Education and Social Science

Edited and Published 2016, Vol 8(2) pp110 -122

### Redefining and Decolonizing Philanthropy in American Indian Communities

More than two decades ago, Adamson (1994) provided a brief historical account of philanthropy in American Indian communities, where she noted that this philanthropy has gone through several distinct phases starting with blatant assimilation to subtler forms of colonization. She underscored the limited resources that go to American Indian projects, the mismatch between the goals of foundations to move large amounts of money easily and visibly and the needs of American Indian communities for relatively small amounts of money distributed across a variety of different local projects, as well as knowledge barriers that exist both within the charitable foundations and the tribes. In her words, “The tendency has always been to fund the improvement of Indian people according to non-Indian standards...Philanthropy is not about doing *to* people or *for* people. It is about doing *with* people” (p.46). In this article, we reviewed patterns of American Indian philanthropy that persist in Montana, a state in the United States of America to explore what Adamson’s meant in writing “doing *with* people.” The basis of this review comes from content analysis of information distributed by philanthropic foundations and organizations that serve American Indian communities in Montana, and framed by existing literature on philanthropy which includes anthropological research, as well as the writings of American Indian educators and social justice activists. Regarding author positionality, we are non-Native academics who have more than 50 years of experience among the three of us working with American Indian community members.

### Framework for the Review

The visionary Crow Chief, Plenty Coups, underscored the importance of being educated to his people stating, “Education is your most powerful weapon. With

education, you are the white man's equal; without education, you are his victim, and so shall remain all your lives" (Little Big Horn College, 2009). Although American Indians have always valued education, what they have encountered in the Western educational system is the colonization of their minds and identity. The system is designed to promote socialization and adherence to Western values, beliefs, and traditions. The hegemony of Western educational policies and practices explains the compliance of Indigenous peoples to the educational system that in effect has enforced their own oppression (Smith, 2005). The brutality of this indoctrination process is well documented (Deloria, 1988; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Spring, 2004). Unfortunately, Indigenous pedagogies which are community-based, which are holistic, and which highlight the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning, differ greatly from the Western philosophy on education (Carjuzaa & Fenimore-Smith, 2010; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Wilson, 2005). This same sort of disconnect is reflected in all sorts of philanthropic efforts throughout Indian country.

As we begin this review, it is essential that we define our perspective of philanthropy. The idea is best conveyed in its original use by the ancient Greeks—*love for humanity* that was equally nourishing to the benefactor and the beneficiary. The Potlatch Foundation (Potlatch Fund Homepage, no date (n.d.)) provides an exemplar of this notion in stating, “We are one people... We measure wealth not in possessions but in generosity. That's why we honor the Native tradition of giving for the common good” (p.1).

Most philanthropic efforts that serve American Indian communities are not intended as colonizing acts; however, those who wish to serve in *American Indian*

*communities* must acknowledge two things: (1) that an American Indian understanding of philanthropy extends well beyond the typical notion of monetary charity, and (2) American Indian people have good reason to skeptically view non-Native philanthropic efforts as continuing the long, brutal oppression of colonization. Deloria (1988) stated this best in writing, "...Indians are being overrun by the ignorance and the mistaken, misdirected efforts of those who would help them" (p. xiii).

Our intent in this review is not to repudiate non-Native philanthropic efforts as much as it is to offer a shift in mindset which summons cultural humility in the act of philanthropy. We share examples later that model the sort of cultural humility endorsed by Freire (1970) and Freire/Horton (1990). As collaborators in Indian country who are non-Native, we have learned from our Native colleagues how our own efforts can become subtly colonizing. Our experiences have shown us that Native community members need to feel safe, and that we, as *the other*, are not coming into their communities with a perception that their community is broken. All communities share a *broken wholeness* such that every community has its struggles and vibrancy (Palmer, 2015). Furthermore, Palmer suggested that being aware of this invites all of us into a shared space of cross-cultural humility that equips us to work with each other.

Approaching American Indian philanthropy with a mindset of cultural humility and a mindfulness of the complexities that exist in all communities creates a space for meaning to exist among people with different and incommensurable worldviews. An example of this shared space can be seen in the following true story about different perspectives on poverty. An undergraduate student who was completing a week-long service learning project in a reservation school commented to her instructor about how

sad it is to see such economic hardship. The instructor, in the presence of the undergraduate student, said to a third grader passing them in the hall, "I see your name is [name]; there are a lot of people with that last name here. Are you related to all of them?" The child proudly stated that he has 68 cousins attending the school with him. The child then asked, "How many cousins do you have?" To which the instructor responded, "I only have two cousins." Alarmed the child exclaimed, "Only two - what happened?" So if poverty takes many forms, can't philanthropy take on different forms depending upon culture as well?

In reframing ideas of "gifts" and "gifting," there is a need to question commonly held assumptions. Most Westerners view the value of a gift by its dollar amount; however, most Indigenous cultures suggest a gift's value is determined by two criteria: the size of the giver's remaining assets after making the donation and the motivation of the giver's heart. Certainly these criteria redefine the way most Western organizations view gifts and giving (Godelier, 1990; Graeber, 2001; Mauss, 1990).

In light of this, we offer this review to non-Native philanthropic organizations in order that they might benefit from the kindnesses and teaching extended to us by Native communities. Cross-cultural communication can take on different meanings; therefore, it is important that we recognize how the entire context can shift with the subtle ways in which the privileged engage the conversation and can significantly diminish the content (Bergerson, 2002).

The practice of philanthropy, especially by Westernized practitioners, has often been driven by the *privileged* giving to the *underprivileged*; specifically, the underprivileged are in need and the privileged are in a position to give materially; a

hierarchical disconnection results. On the other hand, giving in American Indian traditions is a humble honoring and a show of respect by the giver to the recipient. Therefore, in this giving both parties engage in the act of philanthropy from a place of dignity where both reap rewards. In American Indian communities, philanthropy is directed to recipients because the very act brings both parties into deeper understanding of the unique insights into the realities of life that either may have lost sight of. This shift in donor mindset establishes a level playing field. To decolonize philanthropy, philanthropy from non-Native people to American Indian communities must be practiced in such a way that it honors this American Indian framing of giving. Anything less perpetuates marginalization (Godelier, 1999; Graeber, 2001).

This sort of philanthropy transcends the *Golden Rule* and becomes an enactment of the *Platinum Rule* (see <http://www.platinumrule.com/index.html>). In applying this rule, one's philanthropic efforts do not just "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" rather the platinum rule suggests that "we do unto others as they want done unto them." This requires listening deeply to what the recipients define as a needed gift and then offering it with the humility described above.

There are many American Indian communities who seek substantive sovereignty as their defined need. Clearly, the infrastructures in these communities have been decimated by centuries of cultural genocide stifling such things as the effective education of American Indian youth essential for nation building. Nation building begins with education. In order to provide a concrete perspective, this review highlights the efforts in one state in the United States, Montana, by describing the educational context, we share how a policy, Indian Education for All serves as a model for culturally responsive

pedagogy in practice, and highlight numerous philanthropic efforts to promote educational equity and social justice in American Indian communities. How we invest financial and human resources matters—it either furthers the colonization of these American Indian communities or helps to decolonize them.

If the goals of our education and philanthropy programs seek to facilitate the growth of sovereign American Indian nations, then our efforts and gifts must be evaluated in terms of their decolonizing potential. In this review, we examined the monetary contributions made by wealthy philanthropists and well-known philanthropic organizations to share some of the grassroots, innovative, progressive donation schemes that allow average citizens to make a difference in public education in Montana. A central theme among these donation schemes was the give-away spirit where tribal elders, community members, and dedicated educators have worked tirelessly and donated generously, gifts of the heart and soul, in order to demonstrate how stakeholders across Montana have come together to improve educational opportunities for all Montanans.

#### Montana's Educational Context

In 2014, there were 144,129 students enrolled in Montana's K-12 public schools, 19,761 were American Indian. Across the state, 78 school districts reported that their student population was made up of 50-100 percent American Indian students. Unfortunately, an alarming number of districts did not make Average Yearly Progress in 2013-14. Furthermore, 66 percent of the school districts on Montana reservations did not meet Average Yearly Progress (Office of Public Instruction, 2008). No substantial changes in Average Yearly Progress results have been reported in the most recent data (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2014). Like their non-Indian

counterparts, wherever the American Indian students attend public school, they are unlikely to have an American Indian teacher since only 2.68% of the teaching corps in Montana is made up of American Indian teachers (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2010).

The 2013-2014 data collected by the Montana Office of Public Instruction indicates that even though the number of American Indian students scoring “At or Above Proficient” levels has improved in Reading, Mathematics, and Science since testing began, the ever-widening achievement gap prevails and the completion rate for American Indian students in the Class of 2013 was considerably lower than the statewide completion rate and that of non-Native students. The overall graduation rate for all students in Montana during the 2012-2013 school year improved to 84.4%. While the American Indian graduation rate increased 2.5 percentage points in 2013 compared to 2012, it is still 21.6 percentage points below the non-Native student graduation rate (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2014). Data from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress show that these significant achievement gaps perpetuate cycles of limited economic opportunity (United States Department of Education, 2011). How, then, do we address this disparity?

A lot has been written about the cultural mismatch between the increasingly diverse K-12 student population and what is described as a teaching corps made up primarily of white, middle class, females in the U.S. It is our task then, to prepare our teacher candidates to be culturally competent and to meet the academic and social needs of *all* of our students. In Montana, that means making sure teachers know about American Indians’ unique histories, cultures and contemporary issues, as well as their

contributions to core curricular areas. “Most non-Indians don’t know a great deal about the first peoples of the Americas, but what’s worse is that much of what they do ‘know’ is wrong” (Fleming, 2006, p. 213). Indian Education for All, a Montana educational policy, benefits American Indian students in several ways: by reducing anti-Indian bias resulting from a lack of knowledge, by enriching instruction through cultural relevance, and by instilling pride in cultural identity. Pewewardy (1998a) claims, “Enhancing the self-concept of American Indian learners is essential to their effective education. Helping learners recognize their heritage and giving them a sense of belonging as well as a sense of their uniqueness as American Indians are equally essential” (p. 11).

As Fleming (2006) points out, American Indians are the most misunderstood and most isolated of all cultural groups. Although there are approximately 567 distinct tribal nations across the United States, stereotypes and pan-Indianism abound. Pewewardy (1998b) observed that because many teachers grew up with stereotypical and oftentimes racist imagery and messages regarding American Indians, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to become culturally responsive educators. Congresswoman Carol Juneau explained, “Indian people have understood for a great many years that it is only by educating our young people that we can reclaim our history and only through culturally responsive education that we will preserve our cultural integrity” (2006, p. 217).

Although there is no one proven formula for successful reform of Indian education, it is clear it must involve the entire school system, as well as American Indian leaders. “Individual teachers can do phenomenal things, but nothing (in education is going to change systematically) ... until power is shared”, says Julie Cajune (Salish), Director of American Indian Education for the Ronan Public Schools on the Flathead

Reservation. Montana is crafting a unique approach to school reform by recognizing tribal sovereignty, partnering with tribes, honoring self-determination, and promoting economic development (Boyer, 2006).

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Northwest) published a comprehensive report on Indian Education policies in the Northwest Region: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington (the five states where 16% of all of American Indian students in the U.S. reside.). They described the mechanisms each state used to adopt Indian education policies addressing the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native students (Smiley & Sather, 2009). By reviewing the literature over the 18-year period between 1991-2008, interviewing key players in the states' education departments and compiling their findings, they identified 13 key state-level policies including statutes, regulations, and executive orders. The researchers concluded that although states had different approaches to adopting Indian education policies, state statutes and regulations were the most common. Montana is unique in that it was the only state to meet all 13 policies as well as the only state to have Indian education policy outlined in the state constitution.

In Montana, Indian education policy translates into the constitutional commitment to preserve the unique cultural heritages and histories of American Indians by requiring all educators to integrate Indian content across the curriculum at all grade levels. The Montana Indian Education for All Act has set a national precedent (Carjuzaa, 2011). Educators in Montana have legal obligations, instructional responsibilities, and ethical commitments to teach all Montanans about the state's first inhabitants. "This precedent-setting education legislation is reverberating throughout Indian Country and stirring hope

among Indian educators nationwide that they might win similar victories in their home states.” (Pember, 2007).

Indian Education for All is a shared responsibility where American Indians and non-Native legislators, educators, and philanthropists have collaborated and continue to partner to share their time, talents, and treasures to address historical and contemporary oppressions of American Indian peoples by transforming educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy (Carjuzaa, Jetty, Munson, & Veltkamp, 2010). The faculty, staff and students at the Tribal Colleges in Montana have the knowledge and expertise to help the educators in Montana’s public institutions fulfill Indian Education for All Act by integrating accurate and appropriate information. Unfortunately, ‘their resources are limited and their services often over-taxed’ (Fox, 2006). Philanthropic contributions help address the financial barriers.

“Federally recognized tribes and American Indian educators indicated that now there is a severe shortage of ‘culturally competent’ and effective teachers in schools with large American Indian student populations. They cited the areas of teacher recruitment, training, certification, and cultural competence as falling particularly short.” (U. S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 28). According to U. S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, the Obama administration is committed to the education of American Indian/Alaska Native students. In a visit to the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana, Duncan witnessed firsthand the high unemployment, poor housing, and the inadequate school facilities that plague American Indian communities. Secretary Duncan identified the following problems: lack of access to culturally appropriate curricula, educators without sufficient cultural training, and poor learning conditions. Duncan

concluded, “We have to dramatically improve the quality of education in Indian country and for American Indian students, whether they live on reservations or not” (U. S. Department of Education, 2011, p.1).

#### Philanthropy in Montana’s American Indian Communities

Traditionally organized philanthropy has had minimal engagement in American Indian communities. “Nationally, less than half of one percent of all foundation dollars was directed to Native people” (Philanthropy Northwest, 2011). In the Northwest, the numbers are slightly higher and range between 1% and 2%. Additionally, most of the grants to American Indian communities originate from a relatively small number of foundations. Considering that Native populations face such significant socio-economic challenges, this weak alignment between philanthropy and Native communities is all the more disheartening.

All efforts to improve education, healthcare, and other quality of life issues, have to be addressed holistically. There are myriad challenges that go in tandem with poverty in American Indian communities which impact education including: absenteeism, tardiness, lack of family involvement, low expectations, historical trauma, past government policies of assimilation, substance abuse, domestic violence, and child neglect. Nonetheless, philanthropic efforts to promote economic development, support self-determination, and guide educational reform have positively impacted Montana’s students.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2016) is a very rich, high-profile organization by philanthropic standards which has invested heavily in redesigning American high schools at the sum of a half-billion dollars a year. Some of that funding

has supported reform efforts in Montana. Although not all of the Gates Foundation money goes to education, fifty-eight percent of the 1.3 billion in grants they funded did support education (Hill, 2006). Of course there are critics who are concerned with what the Gates Foundation money represents in the education-reform business. Other well-known foundations such as the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Wal-Mart Foundation, have supported efforts to boost underrepresented students and those placed in developmental or remedial courses to be successful in colleges across Montana (Sherwin, 2011).

Native Americans in Philanthropy, which believes deeply in the importance of diversity in philanthropy, is a national affinity group. It was formed in 1990 when a group of Native philanthropists convened in Chicago to discuss the socio-economic reality of many American Indians and the limited role philanthropy had played in helping the Native population up to that point. “The mission of Native Americans in Philanthropy is to advance philanthropic practices grounded in Native values and traditions.” It offers hands-on support, as well as professional development to American Indians pursuing philanthropic careers, and has sponsored conferences, programs, a website, and ongoing communications which have improved Philanthropy Northwest programs and helped its members build stronger connections in American Indian communities.

Since the national philanthropy received by American Indian communities is minimal, the lack of funding and the need to have American Indians involved with all efforts to build philanthropy in Montana was discussed at the 2006 Governor's Conference on Endowments and Philanthropy. In response, staff members in former Governor Brian Schweitzer's office worked with Indian leaders to address these

concerns. Capacity building for Indian nonprofits was identified as a major concern and the Indian Philanthropy and Nonprofit Group was subsequently formed. The Indian Philanthropy and Nonprofit Group organized several planning sessions. Leaders from American Indian communities, the philanthropic community, the nonprofit infrastructure community and state government were convened. To aid these discussions, participants researched the variety of ways philanthropy in American Indian communities was being handled in other venues. The ensuing relationships with participating foundations led to an increase in funding for American Indian communities and several first-time funding efforts were also initiated.

In 2006, Philanthropy Northwest set out to promote more philanthropic engagement in American Indian communities. The members of Native Americans in Philanthropy and the Potlatch Fund, which was established in 2002 to revive the traditional spirit of potlatch ceremonies that were at the heart of a philanthropic tradition among Northwest Coastal Tribes, amassed information. The Potlatch ceremonies honor the Native tradition of giving for the common good. This philosophy is mirrored in the philanthropic efforts in Northwest American Indian communities by strengthening ties with mainstream philanthropy, developing Tribal leadership, and making strategic grants to Native organizations. Board member Byron Mallott (Tlingit) suggested that members start their learning journey by practicing cultural humility. He emphasized that working with tribal communities is more complex than acquiring the level of cultural competence that is the norm for philanthropy workers and suggested that philanthropic engagement in American Indian communities would require philanthropists to: ‘embrace longer time horizons, build true relationships, and develop a deep appreciation for the gifts they

would receive' (Philanthropy Northwest, 2011). So, Philanthropy Northwest members were encouraged to open themselves to all that tribal community members would offer them, instead of thinking of themselves as charitable agents of money and power they were encouraged to focus on community building.

In 2007, Philanthropy Northwest members attended the national conference of Native Americans in Philanthropy to join the discussion titled "Everything You Wanted to Know About Working with Native Communities but Were Afraid to Ask" which was led by tribal leaders. This successful dialogue invited both grant makers and grant seekers to speak honestly about what they perceived as the barriers separating philanthropy and American Indian communities. As a result, philanthropists participated in visits to American Indian communities and invited diverse American Indian voices to share a variety of perspectives.

In *Context is Everything* from One Fire Development Corporation, the authors thoughtfully explore how philanthropy can strengthen its appreciation and understanding of American Indian communities (2011). Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) stressed the 4 R's: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility as essential to successful collaborations in higher education between Indigenous students and members of academe. These four principles proved invaluable to philanthropists. Early on, they realized that forming and nurturing these partnerships would take a commitment to listening that goes beyond what philanthropy typically requires.

One of Philanthropy Northwest's first trips to American Indian communities occurred in 2006, when they visited the beautiful but desolate Northern Cheyenne and Crow reservation communities in eastern Montana and experienced the abject economic

poverty first hand. As mentioned earlier, most non-Indians know very little about the histories, cultures and contemporary issues facing American Indians. Consequently, basic knowledge needed to be shared so philanthropists could start to understand why things are the way they are in American Indian communities today. Describing what it means that each tribal nation is a sovereign entity older than the United States and emphasizing the important power of the ties American Indians have to place and the deep sense of multigenerational belonging that they feel is the first step. Recognition that tribal identity, knowledge, history, and tradition are cultural riches that have allowed American Indian communities to survive overwhelming odds was very important as was pointing out that some of the most egregious accounts are from the Indian boarding schools established in the late 1800s to ‘kill the Indian and save the man’. Unlike the boarding and mission schools of the past which promoted forced assimilation and the eradication of American Indian cultures, today culture is paramount in American Indian communities and educational programs are designed to improve well-being by emphasizing cultural identity, history, and community.

The Seventh Generation Fund was one of the first American Indian-focused philanthropies in the United States; it has served as an important bridge between American Indian and non-Native philanthropy. Another philanthropic organization, the First Alaskans Institute, has distributed almost \$1 million since it began in 2006, making grant awards to support early education, youth and leadership development, as well as cultural learning among Native Alaskans and American Indians.

In 2011, 600 participants from 30 different states participated in the *Growing Economies in Indian Country: Taking Stock of Partnerships and Progress* workshop

series designed to: discuss economic development issues facing Indian Country, raise awareness of federal assistance programs and highlight best practices of economic development strategies that are showing promise in American Indian communities. In the knowledge sharing which took place, members of the community highlighted the barriers to economic development in American Indian communities. The Growing Economies in Indian Country: Taking Stock of Partnerships and Progress gathered key community stakeholders; connected government officials with practitioners; brought attention to many pressing economic issues in American Indian communities across the country. Another important outcome was the partnership that was formed by the participating federal agencies and regulators to unify the efforts of the federal government's American Indian economic development initiatives. As a result, there has been success in facilitating a more focused approach to policy development, improved program and resource development and implementation, and expanding opportunities for tribal-private-public philanthropic collaboration in order to bring much-needed employment, services, and goods to American Indian communities.

In 2011, the Northwest Area Foundation, and the Foundation for Community Vitality in Montana, launched their bridge-building initiatives. The two foundations were focused on creating and deepening connections between Northwest funders and Native leaders. They started by assembling representatives of both groups to meet in Billings for a three-day roundtable discussion. There, the various stakeholders explored how philanthropy could better engage with and be more effective in American Indian communities.

At the 2011 Philanthropy Northwest conference, eight philanthropic leaders reflected on the significance of the Montana roundtables and the excitement they shared about learning together with Native leaders. Ultimately more than 20 funders joined the second meeting at the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch.

Bill Vesneski, Director of Evaluation, Planning, and Research, evaluated how millions of dollars in grants from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation are making a difference to the organizations and people they support. Vesneski's position required a high degree of comfort with data, timelines, analysis, and reports. He shared that the Montana roundtables reframed the way he thinks about the Foundation's role in American Indian communities. "There is always this tension in philanthropy around what we measure. The truth is that funders measure what is available and that leads to measuring deficits. We need to figure out how to measure assets" (Philanthropy Northwest, 2011, p.30). The Montana roundtables clarified for Vesneski the need for philanthropy to create deeper connections with Native leaders and to develop a more concrete appreciation for assets and partnership.

#### Investing in American Indian Communities

According to Kevin Walker, President & Chief Executive Officer of Northwest Area Foundation, American Indian communities are "great places of potential to do work that makes a lasting philanthropic impact" (Northwest Area Foundation, n.d., p.1). In 2012, the Foundation dedicated 40% of its grant dollars to programs that support poverty-reduction and prosperity-building programs among American Indians. In 2001, the Foundation made a grant of \$20 million to establish the Indian Land Tenure Foundation which seeks to address the root causes of poverty due to the inability of Indians to fully

utilize and benefit from their land related assets. Over the past 15 years, the Foundation has awarded more than \$80 million to support culturally-based, innovative philanthropic initiatives in both reservation and urban American Indian communities across the eight states in its region. The Foundation is committed to American Indian giving because of the great need and opportunity for social change it represents.

Investing in education is an essential element in tackling the ramifications of poverty. The roundtable discussions, in designing their vision for 2030 concluded that: comprehensive school systems use American Indian languages, children should be reflected and valued in schools, and empowering youth should be the norm. There is a strong support system for American Indians in philanthropy when community involvement is fostered and spirituality and culture are embedded in the efforts, transparency is modeled by philanthropists, and “funders recognize that ‘assets’ are more than money”.

In the fall of 2011 the Native American Social Entrepreneurship Initiative was launched. It has awarded grants to stimulate local reservation economies. They have worked to build a network of American Indian owned businesses and support building entrepreneurial skills that American Indians can use to address social challenges including improving education and healthcare as well as reducing poverty.

The National Directory of Philanthropy for Native Americans Featuring Corporate, Foundation, and Religious Grant Makers is national in scope. It profiles 39 private sector grant makers that are prominent funders of American Indian programs, 24 private family charitable foundations established by wealthy individuals, 12 corporations

grants and corporate revenues, and 3 religious institutions. It specifically targets philanthropy for American Indians.

#### Innovative Philanthropy in Montana for American Indian Education

DonorsChoose.org is a revolutionary online charity where everyone can help public school teachers in Montana and across the U. S. by supporting a variety of projects and helping students in need by giving to the project of your choice. Not only do you have choice in what project you support, but you also get the transparency and feedback big donors receive.

The tag line for DonorsChoose.org reads, “*Teachers ask. You choose. Students learn*”(p.1). Charles Best, a former social studies teacher from the Bronx, created DonorsChoose in 2000 to engage public donors in public education in an effort to promote educational equity by providing the needed resources and materials to students across the country. To date, this innovative philanthropic organization has distributed over \$395 million, funded 682,759 projects, and impacted more than 17.5 million students. A total of 66,349 schools from all fifty states, including Montana, have participated. Ninety-four percent of the 274,061 teachers whose projects have been funded said their funded projects increased their effectiveness in the classroom.

DonorsChoose.org has had phenomenal impact as evidenced by the 68% of all the public schools and 71% of high poverty schools in America which have had at least one teacher post a project on DonorsChoose.org. Recently, the Montana Art Teacher of the Year, Jon Wayne Bercier of Butte High School funded his Indian Education for All ledger art project with donations he received from DonorsChoose.org. Montana also boasts the largest project ever funded by DonorsChoose, Gallatin Gateway’s mobile computer lab.

Donors can experience the thrill of being a citizen philanthropist and joining supporters of DonorsChoose like Stephen Colbert and Bill Bradley, as well as Oprah Winfrey and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. DonorsChoose.org connects individual donors with individual teachers and their classrooms. Once a project is funded, donors receive teacher impact letters, thank you notes from students, and photos of the project taking place. Best emphasizes that the majority of the one million supporters of projects of DonorsChoose.org are first-time givers to public schools.

St. Labre Schools in southeastern Montana provide education which integrates the Catholic religion and American Indian languages and cultures. Their three institutions, St. Labre elementary, middle and high schools in Ashland, Pretty Eagle Catholic School in St. Xavier and St. Charles Mission School in Pryor, Montana, serve 700+ students. St. Labre has a reputation for ethically, efficiently and effectively raising funds sufficient to meet their annual operating and capital budget. Moreover, St. Labre has been very successful in developing and implementing a comprehensive fundraising strategy that integrates ‘direct mail, major gifts, planned gifts, charitable gift annuities, grants, corporate sponsorships, telemarketing, special events, capital campaigns, e-fundraising, Newsletters, social media, and other strategies and media as needed’ (St. Labre, (2009). They work to set priorities, goals and budgets, in addition to researching, identifying, cultivating and communicating with their donors. They make sure that all of their fundraising activities are appropriate to, and respectful of American Indians and the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, cultural traditions and identity are regarded as fundamental (rather than detrimental) to the education of American Indian students. Now, administrators proudly explain that the school’s philosophy relies on “education,

spirituality, and *American Indian culture* (emphasis added) to educate the whole child” (St. Labre, 2009).

Another philanthropic scheme in Montana, a partnership between KBZK Television, a local television station, and First Interstate Bank, helps fulfill the needs of local area schools by providing a check for \$250 each week during the school year to a teacher and his/her class. This weekly grant program called "One Class at a Time" shows a commitment to education and helps Montanans help Montana kids. The funded projects vary greatly; previously funded projects include: a digital video recorder for a dance class; hardcover journals for students; parts for an auto mechanics class; craft supplies to build scale models; and science kits to supplement textbooks. Teachers, parents, students or community members can nominate a class with a special project or submit an application. In fact, anyone with a special project that would enhance the educational objectives in a classroom can apply. This financial support is available to K-12 teachers in Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls and Helena. The committee members include employees of Montana's News Station and First Interstate Bank, as well as area educators (KBZK Television, 2016).

Another successful and innovative non-profit organization providing philanthropic support to American Indian communities is Hopa Mountain. Under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, Hopa Mountain has provided numerous trainings and support to non-profits and individuals in rural communities and has been investing in rural and tribal citizen leaders by providing on-going training to help individuals improve the health, economic stability, environment and education of their respective communities. Based on the philosophy of Myles Horton and the Highlander

principle that change happens in communities when local people bring it about, Hopa Mountain develops the social capital of citizen leaders by leveraging their talents, positions and skills. “Hopa Mountain invests in rural and tribal citizen leaders who are working to improve education, ecological health, and economic development” (Hopa Mountain, n.d., p.1).

### Can Philanthropy in American Indian Communities Be Decolonizing?

As we consider philanthropy in American Indian communities, it is critical to consider the hegemonic interaction that continues to exist in crossing cultural boundaries by members of the dominant society and the power that privilege provokes in extending the pattern of colonization. How might philanthropic efforts avoid this?

To support decolonization efforts, some American Indian managed philanthropic organizations feel that it is tribal peoples that need to share knowledge, determine needs, design programs, and empower tribal members to strengthen tribal and community institutions. First Nations Development Institute is one such organization. For 30+ years, their philanthropic mission has focused on educating and supporting American communities with the necessary training tools, model programs and financial resources to sustain community-based non-profit and tribal organizations. They claim, “At First Nations we believe that only solutions provided by Native peoples, for Native people, and defined within their own development strategies and cultural values, will succeed” (First Nations Development Institute, 2015). In accordance with their philosophy, First Nations works with American Indian communities that invite and welcome them to do so. They choose their projects based upon the likelihood that they can help communities while maintaining American Indian community values and priorities. First Nations

awards grants designed to help strengthen the organizational, managerial, and programmatic capacity of American Indian-controlled nonprofit organizations and tribal government programs.

Fanon (1961/2004) analyzed what he called *the psycho-affective predicament* of all colonized people. In this seminal work, Bhabha (in Fanon, 2004) described the psycho-affective predicament portraying the colonized person as hyper-vigilant in attuning his defenses to pick up signals of a racially divided world and thus adapting to the colonized environment to protect survival in both body and spirit. This sort of hyper-sensitive psycho-affective predicament creates in colonized Indigenous people what Duran (2006) has described as a *generational soul wound*. Horse (2005) in his examination of American Indian identity supported Fanon's contention but with a more measured assessment concluding that colonization subordinates the identity of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Clearly colonization adds a layer of complexity for non-Natives contributing to philanthropic efforts as they cross the cultural boundary into American Indian communities, no matter how genuine their motivation to assist. Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) 4 Rs and Wilson's (2008) 5<sup>th</sup> R of relationality are essential understandings in any philanthropic effort. Honoring the dignity of American Indian cultures must take into account American Indians intense sensitivity to efforts that further diminish Indian identity or, as Tuck and Yang (2012) noted, become an effort more about the non-Native's "escape to innocence" rather than what "philanthropy" originally meant in ancient Greek: *love for humanity* which was equally nourishing to the benefactor as the beneficiary. Philanthropic acts in American Indian communities, or any other context

where an hegemony exists may create unintentional consequences that are too often fraught with the oppression continuing what Fanon (1961/2004) hauntingly described as a “phantom-like” dehumanization. Cultural awareness and humility are essential elements in avoiding such unintended consequences.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

There are undeniable disparities between non-Native and American Indian populations in the United States when it comes to educational attainment, health, longevity, substance abuse, and other factors (Moss, 2016). Sovereign American Indian nations today reflect the legacy of a brutal western expansion that many have either conveniently romanticized or forgotten, yet this legacy continues to structure the lives of many American Indians to this day. When understood in this context, these disparities are not as remarkable as they are astounding in revealing the resilience and fortitude exhibited by American Indians to overcome these hardships.

Until recently, philanthropic investments in American Indian communities have been minimal and sometimes questionable. In this review, we have highlighted the efforts towards self-determination and highlighted the economic progress that is being made in American Indian communities, as well as underscored the tremendous need for continuing and innovative philanthropic efforts to address the challenges. We have also shared efforts designed to have American Indian organizations support American Indian communities and highlighted the complicated tightrope walk non-Natives involved in philanthropic efforts need to navigate. There are hopeful signs that philanthropy is to play a creative and constructive role in revitalizing American Indian nations. Philanthropy Northwest, a regional network, Hopa Mountain, a non-profit organization, and other

entities support peer-to-peer learning conferences, member briefings, and leadership development; thus creating new tools and platforms in order to share their collective knowledge, continue to collaborate, and find ways to better listen to American Indian communities. First Nations Development Institute responds to the needs of American Indian communities by supporting their philanthropic initiatives and governmental organizations.

In all of these efforts relationality is critical in American Indian communities. Global business relationships in the 21st century often rely on reports, contracts, email, and other forms of impersonal business transactions. In contrast, American Indians place a high value on long-standing personal relationships and face-to-face communication. Opportunities for misunderstandings abound in the continuum between these two value systems, worldviews, and operating cultures. Even though misunderstandings and disappointment are inevitable in any relationship, they are likely to surface frequently in a relationship challenged with cultural differences, power imbalances and very different communication styles.

As highlighted here, it is important to redefine the intention, role, and purpose of philanthropic efforts led by non-Natives since there has been a long history of culturally inappropriate services being pushed on American Indian communities. A large number of progressive philanthropic foundations in the Northwest are addressing past wrongs. Many foundation leaders and staff members have reached out to make connections with tribal members throughout American Indian communities. To combat their 'ignorance', funders' tours to American Indian communities, funders' briefings on American Indian issues, and collaborative partnerships where tribal leaders are asked to voice their needs

have been implemented. Philanthropy Northwest and other organizations are developing new tools and platforms in order to share their collective knowledge, continue to collaborate and find ways to better listen to American Indian communities. Asking and listening to what tribal members want sounds obvious but is not practiced nearly enough. The Platinum Rule as mentioned earlier needs to be used in place of the Golden Rule learned by so many of us in childhood. Non-native philanthropic efforts too often fall back into the pattern of the Golden Rule. For example, a well-intentioned non-Native fundraising group decided to gather numerous school supplies for students in schools on neighboring reservations, a gesture which seemed to fill a self-evident need. However, many American Indian school administrators were honest enough to explain that the supplies were not needed nor wanted. We cannot assume that we know how to best solve the problems others face. As Vine Deloria, Jr. (1988) so astutely pointed out, when it comes to addressing issues involving American Indians, why not ask the Indians? This culturally humble and decolonizing practice will serve current and future philanthropic efforts.

So, if we do not want to further ‘settler colonization’ as defined by Tuck and Yang (2012), it is important that Native-run organizations like First Nations Development Institute lead the way. We call for a broader definition of philanthropy that honors a redefinition of *gifts*. Philanthropy that includes shared wisdom, servant leadership, cultural knowledge and humility, an acceptance that Westernized definitions of gifts and giving are not universal, and a constantly growing awareness of power differentials that can dehumanize and continue colonization all become critical to efforts to enhance Native sovereignty and nation-building.

## References

- Adamson, R. (1994). Money with a mission: A history of Indian philanthropy. *Tribal College Journal*, 6(3), 26-46.
- American Indian Education Data Fact Sheet. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/indianed/data/09MarDataFactSht.pdf>
- Barnes, J. D. (Fall 2011). The balancing act: The personal and professional challenges of urban teachers, *PennGSE Perspectives on Urban Education*, 9(1). Retrieved from  
<http://www.urbanedjournal.org>
- Barnett, L. G. & Greenough, R. (2004). *Regional needs assessment 2004. Northwest educators' priorities for improving low-performing schools*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Bergerson, A. A. (2010). Critical race theory and white racism: Is there room for white scholars in fighting racism in education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(1), 51-63, DOI: 10.1080/0951839032000033527.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (2016). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>.
- Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (April 2012). Growing Economies in Indian Country: Taking Stock of Progress and Partnerships: A Summary of Challenges, Recommendations, and Promising Efforts. Retrieved from  
<http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/conferences/GEIC-white-paper-20120501.pdf>
- Boyer, P. (2006). It takes a Native community: Educators reform schools in an era of standards. *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, 17(4), 14-19.

- Carjuzaa, J. (2011). Montana's Indian Education for All: Preparing teacher candidates to embrace culturally responsive pedagogy. In E. G. Kugler, (Ed.), *Innovative Voices in Education: What It Takes to Engage Diverse Communities* (pp. 43-62), Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Carjuzaa, J. & Fenimore-Smith, (2010). The give away spirit: Reaching a shared vision of ethical indigenous research relationships.
- Carjuzaa, J., Jetty, M., Munson, M., & Veltkamp, T. (2010). Montana's Indian Education for All: Applying multicultural education theory. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 12(4), 192-198.
- Deloria, V., Jr. (1988). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (originally published New York: MacMillan 1969).
- Deloria, V., Jr. & Wildcat, D.R. (2001) *Power and place: Indian education in America*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Resources
- DonorsChoose. Teachers ask. You choose. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.donorschoose.org/>
- Duran, E. (2006 ). *Healing the soul wound: Counseling with American Indians and other Native peoples*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: T. Grove Press.
- First Nations Development Institute. (2015). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.firstnations.org/>.
- Fleming, W. C. (2006). Myths and stereotypes about Native Americans, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(3), 213-217.

- Fox, E. (2006). Indian Education for All: A tribal college perspective. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(3), 208-212.
- Freire, P. (Translated into English 1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Godelier, M. (First published in English, 1999). *The enigma of the gift*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gordon, K., & Barcham, M. (A new dawn: Northwest foundations and Indian Country).
- Graeber, D. (2001). *Toward an anthropological theory of value: The false coin of our own dreams*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hill, P. T. (2006). Philanthropy high school: A foundation goes to school. *Education Next*, 6(1). Retrieved from: <http://educationnext.org/afoundationgoestoschool/>
- Hopa Mountain (n.d.) Hopa mountain homepage. Retrieved from: [www.hopamountain.org](http://www.hopamountain.org)
- Horse, P. G. (2005). Native American Identity. *New Directions for Student Services*, 109 (Spring).
- Horton, M. & Freire, P. (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. Bell, B., Gaventa, J., & Peters, J. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- House Bill No. 528. (1999). *The Indian Education for All Act, proceedings of the Montana legislature*. Helena: The Montana Historical Society. Retrieved from [data.opi.mt.gov/bills/billhtml/HB0528.htm](http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/billhtml/HB0528.htm)
- Johnson, C. S. (2011). Montana population migrating west, Census data shows. *Independent Record*. Retrieved from <http://helenair.com/news/montana->

- [population-migrating-west-census-data-shows/article\\_ea22c4ae-4f94-11e0-9c5f-001cc4c03286.html](http://www.kbzk.com/category/295974/one-class-at-a-time)
- Juneau, C. (2006). Indian Education for All: Through our own eyes -- Building on yesterday, looking to tomorrow. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(3), 217.
- Juneau, D. (2006). *Montana's agenda: Issues shaping our state, Indian Education for All*. The University of Montana Press.
- Juneau, D., & Smoker Broaddus, M. (2006). And still the waters flow: The legacy of Indian Education in Montana. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(3), 193–197.
- KBZK, (2016). Retrieved from: <http://www.kbzk.com/category/295974/one-class-at-a-time>.
- Kirkness, V. J., & Barnhardt, R. (1991). First nations and higher education: The four Rs—respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 30(3), 1–10.
- Lee, R. E., Creasey, G., Showalter, B. D., & D'Santiago, V. (2010). Cognitive development of social justice through re-designed courses community-based partnerships: An initial investigation. *Perspectives on Urban Education*, 29-34.
- Littlebear, R. (1997). Montana Adopts landmark language certification process. *Tribal College*, 9(2), 26-29.
- Little Big Horn College. (2009). Homepage. <http://www.lbhc.edu/>
- Mauss, M. (This translation first published in 1990). *The gift*. New York: Routledge.
- Maynard, S., & Howley, A. (1997). Parent and community involvement in rural schools. ED408143 ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools

- Charleston WV. Retrieved from  
[http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Parent\\_Community/](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Parent_Community/)
- McNeil, M. (2009). Rural areas perceive policy tilt. *Education Week*, 29(2), 1-3.
- Meiners, P. (1992). National directory of philanthropy for Native Americans featuring corporate, foundations, and religious grant makers.
- Mont. Code. Ann. tit. 20, ch.1, pt. 5, § 1. Indian Education for All. 1999.
- Mont. Const. art. X, §1. Retrieved from:  
<http://courts.mt.gov/content/library/docs/72constit.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics, (2006). Urban education in America: Definitions  
Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/urbaned/page2asp>
- Northwest Area Foundation. (2014). Mission investing. Retrieved from  
<http://www.nwaf.org/>
- Office of Public Instruction (Montana Office of Public Instruction). Indian Education  
Division. (2014). Montana American Indian student achievement data report Fall  
2014. Retrieved from  
[http://leg.mt.gov/content/Publications/services/2014-agency-reports/Montana Office of  
Public Instruction-Montana-American-Indian-Student-Achievement-Report-  
2014.pdf](http://leg.mt.gov/content/Publications/services/2014-agency-reports/Montana%20Office%20of%20Public%20Instruction-Montana-American-Indian-Student-Achievement-Report-2014.pdf)
- Office of Public Instruction (Montana Office of Public Instruction). Indian Education  
Division. (2008). Annual Data Collection Yearly Summaries. Retrieved from  
<http://opi.mt.gov/pub/IndianEd/ADC/>
- Office of Public Instruction (Montana Office of Public Instruction). Indian Education  
Division. (2010a).

Office of Public Instruction (Montana Office of Public Instruction). Indian Education Division. (2010b). Indian Education for All reflections: Montana educators comment on Indian Education for All. Unpublished raw data from study in progress.

Office of Public Instruction (Montana Office of Public Instruction). Indian Education Division. (2014). Annual Data Collection Yearly Summaries. Retrieved from <http://opi.mt.gov/pub/IndianEd/ADC/>

One Fire Development Corporation. (2011). Context is everything. Retrieved from <http://www.onefiredevelopment.org/index.php/2011/12/14/context-is-everything/>

Palmer, P. J. (2015, July). The Quaker tradition: Broken into wholeness. Friends General Conference. Retrieved from: [http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/parker\\_j\\_palmer\\_fgc15\\_plenary](http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/parker_j_palmer_fgc15_plenary).

Pember, M. A. (2007). A mandate for Native history. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 24(7), 18-19.

Pewewardy, C. D. (1998a). Culturally responsive teaching for American Indian learners. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED459981)

Pewewardy, C. D. (1998b). Fluff and feathers: Treatment of American Indians in literature and the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 31(1), 69-76.

Philanthropy Northwest. (2011). Lessons for philanthropy: A journey into Indian Country. Retrieved from [http://www.philanthropynw.org/s\\_pnw/bin.asp?CID=19868&DID=57266&DOC=FILE.PDF](http://www.philanthropynw.org/s_pnw/bin.asp?CID=19868&DID=57266&DOC=FILE.PDF)

Philanthropy Northwest, (2011). Building vibrant Native American communities through relationships and investments. Retrieved from

[http://www.philanthropyNW.org/s\\_pnw/sec.asp?CID=18829&DID=50593&morel=true&mored=true](http://www.philanthropyNW.org/s_pnw/sec.asp?CID=18829&DID=50593&morel=true&mored=true)

Potlatch Fund Homepage, (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.potlatchfund.org/>.

Russo, P. (2004). What makes a school an urban school? Retrieved from

[http://www.oswego.edu/~prusso1/what\\_makes\\_any\\_school\\_an\\_urban\\_s.htm](http://www.oswego.edu/~prusso1/what_makes_any_school_an_urban_s.htm)

Saifer, S., & Speth, T. (2007). Supplemental educational services and implementation challenges in the Northwest Region states (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007-No. 006). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

Sherwin, S. (2011). Boosting underprepared students: Salish Kootenai College uses research to build success. *Tribal College journal of American Indian Higher Education* 22(4).

Smiley, R. & Sather, S. (2009). *Indian education policies in five Northwest Region states* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2009- No. 081). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from [www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs](http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs)

Spillane, J. P. (2012). The more things change, the more things stay the same? *Education and Urban Society*, 44(2), 123-127.

Spring, J. (2004). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equity*. New York: McGraw-Hill

St. Labre Indian School, (2009). Retrieved from:

<http://www.stlabre.org/?referrer=https://www.google.com/#.V12VWPkrK1s>

Tuck, E. & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Education and Society, 1*(1), 1-40.

Unruh, R., & Lundt, J. (1999). Rural school-community relationships in north central Montana: The role of schools in rural communities. *Rural Educator, 21*(1), 15-19.

U. S. Census Bureau. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/geo/index.html>

U. S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Indian Education, White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities, *Tribal Leaders Speak: The State of American Indian Education, 2010; Report of the Consultations With Tribal leaders in Indian Country*, Washington, D.C., 2011.

World Population Review. (2012). Retrieved from:

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/population-of-montana-2012/>

Wilson, S. 2005. *Research as ceremony*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Zehr, M. A. (2008). Native American history, culture gaining traction in state curricula. *Education Week, 28*(11), 1-3.