DEI Articles in Cougar Prints

(11/13/2020) NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE THANKSGIVING LEGEND

Written by the KASD Equity Team: Kristen Fricke, Michenelle Groller, Amy Howard, Karise Mace, Beth Patten, Melissa Till Smith

This summer, in a Call for Equity, the Kutztown Area School District Board of School Directors adopted an Educational Equity Policy, and many teachers answered that call.
From the group who answered the call, a KASD Equity Team was convened to facilitate this work. After meeting with faculty district-wide and completing an equity audit, it became clear that our educational community feels we have more to learn about fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school culture. The KASD Equity Team is researching and identifying ways in which we might help the district engage in this education. To that end, we have selected a monthly theme to center our learning, and that theme will guide our monthly activities and KASD community outreach. As Native American Heritage Month, November's theme is focused on understanding Native American perspectives.

We are pleased to share with you this first newsletter installment in Answering the Call for Equity.

For many of us, Thanksgiving is a time when we focus on gratitude. As we reflect on the blessings we are thankful for during this challenging year, we are reminded that this holiday is about so much more than just giving thanks. The Native Americans* have a different relationship with this holiday, and it is important to contemplate our country's Indigenous people and Thanksgiving's complexity.

The story of the first Thanksgiving that is often told is actually a myth. According to Dennis Zotigh (2019), writer and cultural specialist of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, "The Pilgrims did not introduce the concept of thanksgiving; the New England tribes already had autumn harvest feasts of thanksgiving. To the original people of this continent, each day is a day of thanksgiving to the Creator. In the fall of 1621, William Bradford, the governor of the Plymouth Colony, decided to have a Plymouth harvest feast of thanksgiving and invited Massasoit, the Grand Sachem of the Wampanoag Federation, to join the Pilgrims. Massasoit came with approximately 90 warriors and brought food to add to the feast, including venison, lobster, fish, wild fowl, clams, oysters, eel, corn, squash and maple syrup. Massasoit and the ninety warriors stayed in Plymouth for three days. These original Thanksgiving foods are far different from the meals prepared in modern Thanksgiving celebrations."

Please read our next Cougar Prints' installment to learn about Squanto, who selflessly saved colonists who immigrated from the very countries that brought disease to North America, wiping out many Native American tribes.

*The term ***Native American*** is the appropriate term to refer to the people who inhabited these lands prior to the Europeans. Indigenous people is the most inclusive term referring generally to the original inhabitants of any land area.

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(11/20/2020) Part 2 of NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE THANKSGIVING LEGEND

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team: Kristen Fricke, Michenelle Groller, Amy Howard, Karise Mace, Beth Patten, Melissa Till Smith

Last week we shared some of the myths that are often told surrounding the first Thanksgiving, including the myth that the first Thanksgiving was a feast shared by Pilgrims and Native Americans when, in fact, Native Americans celebrated harvest feasts prior to the Pilgrim's celebration. This week our focus is on Squanto and the role of attire in Native Americans' religious celebrations.

According to Zotigh (2019), writer and cultural specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., Squanto was a Native American who was kidnapped and sold into slavey in Spain around 1614. He was purchased by monks traveling to England where he learned English. In 1619, Squanto returned to his homeland with an exploration expedition and found that the people of his village had been wiped out by a plague. Soon after his arrival, Pilgrims arrived and Squanto taught them to farm using the land that had been plowed by his people. He also taught them to fish. Squanto's help made it possible for the Pilgrims to survive the brutal winter. While he is often highlighted as a key figure in the Pilgrim's survival, his personal history is often overlooked in the Thanksgiving story.

Something else that is often overlooked is the sacred significance of headdresses and feathers for Native American tribes. It is not uncommon for school children to make paper headdresses at this time of year. However, this practice is disrespectful to our Native American brothers and sisters. "Headdresses are given to warriors and chiefs. To have children make a headdress ignores this sacred meaning" (Blossom, 2018). In fact, a headdress is akin to a cross in the Christian faith or a war medal in the military tradition (Blossom, 2018).

As we work toward being more inclusive, it is important to learn more about other cultures. One way to do this is by engaging in curious and non-critical conversations about our history with those whose experiences are different than ours. As renowned American poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

Please read our next installment on Native Americans in next week’s *Cougar Prints* , including additional readings on Indigenous people for children and adults.

Interested in learning more? Consider joining Penn Museum's Living Room Lecture, " Thanksgiving Myths and Indigenous Memories" on Tuesday, November 24 from 5:30-6:30 PM. Click **here** for more details.

References & Resources

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(11/25/2020) NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE THANKSGIVING LEGEND, PART 3

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team: Kristen Fricke, Michenelle Groller, Amy Howard, Karise Mace, Beth Patten, Melissa Till Smith

Tommy Orange, Native American and author of *There, There: A Novel* , described November as “the only time of year anyone thinks of us” (Cox, 2019). We certainly do not want this to be the case. We want to learn more about our Native American brothers and sisters and celebrate their lives and cultures. To that end, we are sharing some resources here that will help you learn more.

Books for Children

Akulukjuk, R., Christopher, D. & Arijanto, A. (2019). *Putuguq and Kublu and the Qalupalik!* Inhabit Media.

This graphic novel is a grandfather's tale told to his grandchildren and is recommended reading for children in grades 1 through 3.

Child, B.J. (2018). *Bowwow powwow* . Minnesota Historical Society Press.

This is a dual-language picture book that is a celebration of the Ojibwe tribe's past and present. It is recommended reading for children in grades 2 through 4.

Maillard, K.N. & Martinez-Neal, J. (2019). *Fry bread: A Native American family story* . Roaring Brook Press.

This is a picture book that centers around the history and strength of Native Americans through the story of fry bread. It is recommended reading for children in kindergarten through grade 4.

Books for Mature Readers

Orange, T. (2018). *There, there: A novel.* Knopf.

This multi-award winning title is about what it really means to be Native American.

Loewen, J.W. (2018). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong* . The New Press.

Best-selling and award winning author, James Loewen, explores the complexities of American history.

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(12/18/2020) **Answering the Call for Equity**

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team: Kristen Fricke, Michenelle Groller, Amy Howard, Karise Mace, Beth Patten, Melissa Till Smith

Over the summer, KASD developed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee with the mission of initiating and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion practices and programming throughout the Kutztown Area School District. In September, KASD's Board of School Directors and administration committed to evaluating our culture to ensure that diversity is encouraged and equity and inclusion are core values across the district. The Board adopted an ***Anti-Racist School Climate Resolution*** *and* ***Policy*** *, and as a first step, the Equity Team conducted the* ***Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium*** *("MAEC") audit to determine our status, needs, and future steps as an organization.*

UNDERSTANDING DOMINATE CULTURE

Culture is powerful. It impacts so much around us on a daily basis, but it is often something we do not name or specifically identify. It is as though it just exists. “Culture is the way we do things - our values, customs, and communications styles” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 35). So, when individuals, communities, and/or organizations commit to evaluating their culture, it can be a difficult endeavor. To understand the need for this reflection and action, we must understand culture’s connection to history.

As a nation of immigrants, the United States is made up of diverse cultures. Initially, a majority of the settlers in the American colonies hailed from white European and Protestant backgrounds. However, the “new wave” of immigration arriving during the turn of the 20th century diversified the cultural composition of the U.S., as immigrants largely from Eastern and Southern Europe sought opportunities. People from Armenia, Greece, Italy, Poland and Russia flocked to the U.S., with New York City’s Ellis Island as an entry point. Many immigrants settled near their point of entry. By 1910, 40% of New York City residents were immigrants. [1]

Over time, often motivated by economic opportunities, these immigrants moved inward. This wave of immigration introduced new religions, traditions, and ideologies to communities largely composed of whites of Northern European descent (British, German, etc.), with Native Americans and African Americans concentrated in certain regions. After WWI, the Great Migration inspired internal movement of Black Americans from the rural South to urban areas in the Northeast, Midwest, and West. [2] As Blacks moved to new communities throughout the U.S., they continued to face the deeply embedded Southern caste. In the 20th century, our diversity continued to expand as Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern immigration increased. [3] While we have always been a nation of immigrants, the precise ethnic make-up of those immigrants has dramatically changed over time.

In diverse societies, sociologists assert that a “dominant culture” and “subcultures” develop. The dominant culture is made up of those people who hold most of the power. They typically also make up the majority, but this is not always the case. In the United States, our dominant culture identifies as white, middle class, Christian, and heterosexual. Because the people who make up the dominant culture control most of our society’s institutions (government, schools, businesses, etc.), they establish the acceptable behaviors, values and traditions in our country. The behaviors and attitudes of the dominant culture become the society’s norms. Generally, the closer one is to the traits of the dominant culture, the more privileged he/she is.

As early as the mid-1700s, scientists engaged in classifying humans, just as they would animals. These classifications slowly seeped into social structures, too. In 1776, German scientist Johan Friedrich Blumenbach’s *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* created five classifications: "Caucasian, the white race; Mongolian, the yellow race; Malayan, the brown race, Ethiopian, the black race, and American, the red race." Blemenbach took an additional step and ranked each of the 5 races, placing "Caucasian" at the top. [4] This ranking, which was not substantiated or supported with scientific evidence, planted the seed of justifying racial discrimination and inequality in the United States. Furthermore, every country (as evidenced by census data), has a different way of classifying people, demonstrating that race is purely a social construct. Today, the U.S. has five classifications for race: (1) White, (2) American Indian or Alaska Native, (3) Asian, (4) Black/African American and (5) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. [5]

Despite America's ethnic diversity and the prediction that by 2044 America will be a "majority-minority" nation, with white non-Hispanics comprising less than 50% of the U.S. population, [6] Whiteness remains our dominant culture. As a result, a bias for light skin develops, leaving darker skinned people being viewed as inferior. Katz and Kofkin (1997) documented light and dark skinned prejudices in infants as young as six months of age. We have been conditioned to hold biases toward Whiteness. These biases have been observed across our daily lives, from hiring practices [7] to school discipline [8] , to medical treatment [9] and character representation in entertainment. [10] These biases are often unintentional, and they are reinforced by a steady stream of subtle and not-so subtle messages that favor the dominant culture (white, Christian, heterosexuals). Once we become aware of the dominant culture and its pervasive preference across society, we can recognize that it is an imaginary constraint of human creation. We can then work toward de-centering the dominant culture, celebrating diversity, and ensuring equal opportunity.

1 https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/datamaps/nycpopulation/nny2013/chapter2.pdf
2 To better understand the impact of the Great Migration see Wilkerson's (2016) Smithsonian Magazine article based on the research of her best-selling and highly acclaimed ***The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*** (2010).
3 https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/immigrant-population-over-time
4 *Race: The Power of Illusion* is a 3 part PBS documentary exploring the basic question of what is race in society, science and history.
5 See USCB for more information regarding U.S. race designations.
6 https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/22/us/white-americans-minority-population.html
7 See Bertrand, Chris P. Dialynas Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at The University Chicago Booth School of Business, in her essay adapted from "Field Experiments on Discrimination," a chapter in the *Handbook of Field Experiments* and coauthored with Esther Duflo, the Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics in the Department of Economics at MIT.
8 See Gordon's Brookings Institute Report on Black Discipline, based on 2013-14 Department of Education **Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)** .
9 See JACC's study of patients admitted to an ICU for heart failure. African Americans were less likely than Caucasians to receive primary care by a cardiologist, confirming the findings of similar studies in other medical specialties. Primary care by a cardiologist is associated with higher survival for both Caucasians and African Americans.
10 See USC Annenberg's Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative review of gender and race in 800 popular 21st century films.

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(1/7/2021) Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

WHAT IS IDENTITY?

This month the Equity Team invites you to examine identity. What is identity? What parts of identity does society choose for us? What parts of our identity did we choose?

Noted American author and activist, James Baldwin, writes in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), “I am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am, also, much more than that. So are we all.”

Language and labels created through our **dominant culture** shape the ways that we identify ourselves and one another. We learned through our last newsletter article that the dominant culture is made up of those people who hold most of the power. In the United States, our dominant culture identifies as white, middle class, Christian, and heterosexual. According to **Facing History and Ourselves** , “these labels are based on beliefs about race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, and so on. Sometimes our beliefs about these categories are so strong that they prevent us from seeing the unique identities of others. Sometimes these beliefs also make us feel suspicion, fear, or hatred toward some members of our society. Other times, especially when we are able to get to know a person, we are able to see past labels and, perhaps, find common ground even as we appreciate each person as unique.”

Before we dig deeper to acknowledge and celebrate the identities of everyone, we need to understand our own personal, social, and cultural identity. By using questions from the **social identity wheel** developed at the University of Michigan by the Program on Intergroup Relations, we have a better understanding of where we are coming from.

Answer these questions for yourself:
What is your first language?
What is your nation of origin?
What is your sexual orientation?
What is your sex?
What is your gender?
What is your socio-economic status?
What is your ethnicity?
What is your race?
What is your spiritual or religious identification?
What are your physical, emotional, and developmental (dis)abilities?

Then identify:
What are the identities you think the most about?
What are the identities you think least often about?
What are the identities you would like to learn more about?
What are the identities that have the strongest impact on how you see yourself?
What are the identities that have the strongest impact on how others see you?

Please read our next *Cougar Prints* installment to continue the conversation about how to grapple with the identity that others place on us.

Learn more about how the KASD Equity Team was formed and our purpose **here** .

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1/15/21 Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

WHAT PARTS OF IDENTITY DOES SOCIETY CHOOSE FOR US?

Last week we defined what identity is and how we identify ourselves. We learned that labels and language from the dominant culture sometimes prevent us from getting to know a person and find common ground. This week we will examine the parts of identity society projects on to us and how to grapple with it.

Race is a social construct and not a biological factor. In some ways, society projects race on to us. According to the Pew Research Center, "It was not until 1960 that people could select their own race on the census. Prior to that, an individual's race was determined by census takers, known as enumerators. And it was not until 2000 that Americans could choose more than one race to describe themselves, allowing for an estimate of the nation's multiracial population. In 2020, for the first time, the form asks respondents who choose white or black for their race to give more information about their origins – for example, German, Lebanese, African American or Somali."

As high school sophomores, Vulchi and Guo formed **CHOOSE,** a nonprofit dedicated to discussing race. After high school they traveled around to all fifty states interviewing people about racism and wrote their book, *Tell Me Who You Are: Sharing Our Stories of Race, Culture, & Identity* (2019). They listened to first hand accounts of how racism affects individuals every day and most often in unexpected ways. They were the first high school students to host a **TED talk** on racial literacy and identity. If you are searching for ways to open up the conversations surrounding identity with your family, their book and TED talk are great ways to start a dialogue.

Author and activist, bell hooks [sic] reminds us that, "Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

Please read our next *Cougar Prints* installment to learn more about the ethnic identities. We will be featuring student writing and voice.

Learn more about the KASD Equity Team formation and purpose **here** .

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(1/25/21) Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

IDENTITY CONCLUSION

This month, the KASD Equity Team focused their articles on identity. We examined: What is identity? What parts of identity does society choose for us? What parts of our identity did we choose? We grappled with racial and ethnic identity. For our last article this month, we explore gender identity.

First openly gay elected American politician, Harvey Milk states, “All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential” (Shilts, 2009, p.13).

According to the Center for Disease Control, r esults from the **2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey** show that, nationwide, more U.S. high school students who self-identify as LGBTQ+ report having been bullied at school; 43% of transgender youth have been bullied on school property; and, 29% of transgender youth, 21% of gay and lesbian youth and 22% of bisexual youth have attempted suicide. As we reflect on these sobering national statistics, we become acutely aware of the importance of working toward becoming a more inclusive community and in which we support one another.

We are providing some resources below that might open up dialogue for you and your family about gender identity:

Amer, L. (2019). Why kids need to talk about gender and sexuality. [Video file]. Retrieved from **https://www.ted.com/talks/lindsay_amer_why_kids_need_to_learn_about_gender_and_sexuality?language=en#t-447165**

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Learn more about the Equity Team formation and purpose **here** . Next month we will explore microaggressions.

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(2/5/21) Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Written by Elizabeth Oroxom, Class of 2021

It is true that we are all human — each and every one of us is capable of achieving many goals and reaching amazing heights. However, the paths we take toward our goals are impacted by many factors, like race, sexuality, gender, and income. These factors can make getting from point A to point B challenging for some and simple for others. This is, in part, because of the microaggressions that people experience along their journeys.

According to the American Psychological Association, microaggressions are "brief statements or beliefs that, *intentionally or not* , communicate a negative message about a non-dominant group" (Clay, 2017). For example, it is not uncommon for people to assume that students of Asian descent will excel in their studies. Assuming a student will probably know how to do a math problem *because he/she is Asian and therefore good at math* and then asking for that student's help based solely on that assumption is a microaggression (School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, n.d.). Now, that said, it is not insulting to think someone is intelligent, but making generalizations about a group of people—thinking of all members as a collective entity—is stripping those individuals of their uniqueness and celebratory differences. It should also be noted that, while asking someone for help with academics is a mild and not by-nature harmful act, microaggressions can also indicate more hurtful assumptions. For example, if a black or Latinx individual enters a store, and the owner discreetly keeps an eye on this person, the owner is being microaggressive by assuming the person of color is a criminal or will steal products.

Unfortunately, microaggressions occur everywhere including schools. Some occur because unacceptable behaviors and language have been normalized. Using sexist language (for example, "Be a man," "You can't hit a girl"), assuming heterosexuality ("when you [a boy] get a wife"), and neglecting to attempt to pronounce a student's ethnic name correctly, even after receiving correction and instruction about how to do so, are all microaggressions (Sue, n.d.). They perpetuate inappropriate norms for what is to be interpreted as "abnormal" or "bad" and often show a lack of respect for the student's culture or just a complete lack of care.

Microaggressions are not always easy to spot, but they can be damaging when continuous in conversations and relationships. Luckily, there are measures that can be taken to prevent this form

of underhanded bigotry. We must remember to express and honor differences among people, use inclusive language, and most of all, be willing to learn, listen, and challenge previously held beliefs. These actions can ensure there is a space where everyone feels included, regardless of race, sexuality, gender, income, or any other factor that may influence his/her persona or lifestyle.

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(3/18/21) Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

KASD EQUITY WEBSITE

By Elizabeth Oroxom

Social inequality is still alive and well, even after years of work towards change everywhere around the world. This injustice can be diminished as it is brought to attention, addressed, tolerance is taught, and differences in cultures and customs are embraced. These doings are important in order to effectively listen, communicate, collaborate, and connect. That said, we are pleased to announce the launch of a new website that attempts to fulfill these necessities in working towards social justice and fair treatment for all! The site was created and is monitored by the Kutztown Area School District Equity Team, that currently comprises twelve individuals--faculty members, a student, and a school board member--dedicated to making Kutztown a safe and accepting place for all. It includes resources for teachers, students of all ages, and parents to raise their awareness of issues and topics pertaining to the social dynamics in modern society, as well as resources for how to help us learn how to be a more equitable learning community. Additionally, the website provides information about state-wide action for equity and Kutztown administration's plan of action for creating a safe place for all students. We invite everyone interested to delve into the **KASD Equity website** , which is available twenty-four-seven!

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(4/16/21) Answering the Call for Equity

Submitted by the KASD Equity Team

April's Topic:

"WHAT IS WHITE PRIVILEGE?"

This year the Kutztown Area School District Equity Team is exploring topics and ways that we can create a more equitable learning environment and community. In November, we acknowledged the sacred Lenape land that Kutztown Area School District is built on and reexamined the historical contexts of Thanksgiving. Each month since then we have explored topics like dominant culture, identity, and microaggressions. And, last week, we released the new **KASD Equity website** , which provides tools and resources for students, teachers and parents.

This month, we are inviting you to reflect on a challenging topic - white privilege. While we know that this is not an easy topic to reflect on, we believe it is important. The mission of the KASD Equity Team is *to initiate and support diversity, equity, and inclusive practices and programming throughout the Kutztown Area School District.* One way we are striving to meet this mission is by sharing information about ways we can be more equitable. Sometimes this means identifying and sharing information about practices and structures that are inequitable. We recognize that learning about inequities can make us feel uncomfortable. However, as the late poet Maya Angelou reminds us “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” We hope that the information we share about white privilege will help us know better, so that we can do better. Please keep in mind that this space is not a classroom with an approved curriculum but a space to share resources and perspectives to be considered by all members of our KASD community. We invite you to keep learning with us and thank you for joining us.

Many of us experience white privilege even though we do not seek it. To better understand what is meant by white privilege, consider the statements below written by professor, author and activist, Peggy McIntosh in Daily Effects of White Privilege (2003). While these are experiences from Dr. McIntosh’s life, you may find that some of them resonate with you too.

- I can if I wish to arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
- If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.

If, like Dr. McIntosh, you have had any of these experiences, you have experienced white privilege. This realization may leave you wondering what you can do to make a change. Here are some ideas!

- Explore the articles in our references list and the additional resources to continue your learning.
- Check out the KASD Equity Team’s **website** and explore the resources there.
- Reach out to the Equity Team if you would like to add on or push back. You can do that by using **this form**.

Please read our next *Cougar Prints* installment to learn more about how white privilege exists in schools and how we can dismantle it together.

Learn more about the KASD Equity Team formation and purpose **here** .

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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