2021–2022 National Book Read:
Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and Strategies

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Social Justice Committee (SJC) developed this guidance document to offer a structured way to engage in discussions about our recommended group read for the 2021–2022 school year, *Decolonizing Trauma Work* by Renee Linklater, PhD. The questions are designed to help readers think both broadly and specifically about how the issues discussed in the book connect to social justice for youth and families who experience traumatic stress. The questions are also designed to prompt thought, critique, and action steps towards increasing the ability of individuals, schools, and communities to be a force for social justice.

As you engage in the book read, please reference the NASP (2017) definition of social justice for additional context:

Social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action. School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting nondiscriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth.

Keeping in mind the centrality of social justice to school psychology practice, the SJC encourages school psychologists to organize groups (e.g., school-based colleagues, district colleagues, graduate education program faculty, and students) to read and discuss the book. Videos with tips for facilitating book reads will be available via the Social Justice page of the NASP website. We also offer this guidance document to help organize book read groups.

**TIMING AND SETTING**

To help coordinate your book read, we suggest using one of the following timelines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Meetings</th>
<th>Time Per Meeting</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Chapters to Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>1. <em>Decolonizing Trauma Work</em></td>
<td>1. Foreword–Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2                  | 1 hour           | 1. History and Indigenous Perspectives  
2. Indigenous Healing & Strategies | 1. Forward–Chapter 3  
2. Chapter 4–Chapter 6 |
| 3                  | 45 minutes       | 1. History and Introduction Indigenous Perspectives  
2. Indigenous Healing & Strategies | 1. Forward–Chapter 2  
2. Chapter 3–Chapter 4  
3. Chapter 5–Chapter 6 |
Facilitators should be mindful of the safety and comfort of attendees when determining if in-person meetings are appropriate. Please see the Facilitating a Book Read video available on NASP’s Social Justice website for additional considerations for in-person environments.

If you decide to meet virtually, Zoom and GoToMeeting are excellent options for synchronous virtual group discussions. If you would like an asynchronous approach, we recommend the following sites for engaging with your book read members:

1. **Flipgrid**
2. **Padlet**
3. **Seesaw**
4. **Nearpod**
5. **Discord**

In addition to timing and setting, facilitators should consider ways to ensure comfortable, safe spaces for dialogue that can lead to action in the field. Please see the Facilitating a Book Read and Fostering Dialogue Across Differences videos provided by the SJC for guidance.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Facilitators are encouraged to create learning objectives to help guide their group’s book discussions. We offer the following learning objectives as examples.

Attendees of this book read will:

1. Gain knowledge and awareness of the historical and systemic factors that contribute to the traumatization of Indigenous populations;
2. Understand the process of colonization and its subsequent impact on Indigenous communities;
3. Gain knowledge and awareness of the ways in which trauma is experienced by Indigenous populations;
4. Recognize the need for decolonized trauma strategies when working with Indigenous populations;
5. Develop their skills in using a social justice framework to describe ways in which school psychologists can address colonization’s traumatic impact and provide effective services for Indigenous students.

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

Successful book reads are often participant driven, which allows for the group to determine the focus of the meeting. Facilitators can pose general questions, and it is recommended that they allow group members to freely move from topic to topic as naturally as possible. That said, some book groups will be more or less engaged with each other. At times, conversation may stall. In an effort to keep the discussion moving, as well as action oriented, we offer the following guiding questions for facilitators to consider.

Because each group will be organized differently, we have provided general questions as well as chapter-by-chapter questions that can be used for groups that are meeting multiple times. It is not intended that every single question be discussed; these are merely examples to help get conversations started. For each question, we have indicated the corresponding learning objective (LO) from our example above.

**General Questions**

1. How does the book describe the process of colonization? What impact does it have on Indigenous communities? (LO 2)
2. How does colonization impact educational services? (LO 2) What impact do these services subsequently have on Indigenous youth, and potentially on youth from other marginalized communities?

3. How does the concept of trauma and healing differ for Indigenous populations compared to current practices in school psychology? (LO 3, 4)

4. Based on descriptions provided by Dr. Linklater, what are the barriers and facilitators for equitable, inclusive trauma healing for Indigenous youth in education across each dimension of social justice outlined by Malone and Proctor (2019)? (LO1)
   a. Procedural
   b. Distributive
   c. Relational

5. There are several examples of appropriation and misuse of Indigenous conceptualizations of wellness and healing (e.g., Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs). What examples have you seen, and how do these impact services we provide for Indigenous populations? (LO1)

6. Given the information provided by Dr. Linklater:
   a. In what ways are we positioned to effectively serve Indigenous youth and communities? (LO5)
   b. What can be done to improve our competency in serving Indigenous youth and communities? (LO5)

7. What would decolonization and Indigenization look like in school psychology? In education? (LO2, 5)

8. Based on the recommended strategies and method of healing trauma presented in this book, what are some opportunities for advocating for Indigenous youth? Use the figure below to outline action steps across each level of advocacy on behalf of, and with, Indigenous youth and families. (LO5)

**Figure 1. Advocacy Model Presented by Malone, Mann, and Parris (2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1</th>
<th>Tier 2</th>
<th>Tier 3 &amp; SPED</th>
<th>Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families &amp; Communities</td>
<td>Schools &amp; Districts</td>
<td>Classrooms &amp; Groups</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Trainings</td>
<td>School-Wide Intervention (e.g., PBIS)</td>
<td>Group Intervention</td>
<td>Individual Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Community Centers</td>
<td>Advocating for Improved Policies and Systems-Level Procedures</td>
<td>Advocating for Student Group Needs &amp; Resources</td>
<td>Supporting Laws and Policies that Protect &amp; Empower Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join National Workgroup</td>
<td>Supporting Community Centers</td>
<td>Advocating for Student Group Needs &amp; Resources</td>
<td>Advocating for Student Needs &amp; Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foreword & Prologue**

1. In the foreword, Dr. Mehl-Madrona lists the various forms of trauma and traumatic outcomes for Indigenous populations that will be covered by the book (p. 10). (LO3)
   a. Were any of these new for you?
   b. How many of these incidents or circumstances were you already aware of and how so?

2. Throughout the prologue, Dr. Linklater describes her family’s experiences with residential boarding schools. In what ways is education still used to culturally oppress and/or assimilate populations? (LO3)
3. Dr. Linklater mentions the “Sixties Scoop,” and there were similar trends here in the United States (see this fact sheet). (LO1, 3)
   a. What are the long-term implications of these acts?
   b. How do these acts potentially contribute to the experiences of Indigenous youth today?
4. Multiple times Dr. Linklater indicates that she was “not alone” in her journey (p. 15–16). How do we as school psychologists help, or not help, ensure that children are not alone in their journeys? (LO 5)
5. Dr. Linklater states the importance of recognizing the cost and benefits, as well as timing and appropriateness, of medically prescribed drugs as a means of healing. What does this balance look like for children, and how can we help promote such balance? (LO 3, 5)
6. Dr. Linklater describes what it means to be “unwell” (p. 1.5) throughout the prologue. How do these perspectives of wellness align, or not align, with: (LO 3, 4)
   a. Your personal experience or world view?
   b. The perspectives of your school system?
   c. The general perspective taken by the field?

Chapter 1: Colonialism, Indigenous Trauma and Healing

1. Turtle Island consists of Canada, United States, and Mexico (p. 19 & p. 50), which has subsequently been divided by “settler nations” leading to “displacement and disconnection.” Based on this chapter, what does such displacement and disconnection look like? (LO 1, 2, 3)
   a. For families?
   b. For children?
   c. In schools?
2. Dr. Linklater describes the negative outcomes associated with Western treatment, including further traumatization, isolation, misdiagnosis, and a mismatch in perspectives of wellness (pp. 20–22). How might these negative outcomes be observed in schools and among Indigenous youth that we serve? (LO 3)
3. Consider the definition of trauma provided on pages 22–24. How do these definitions align with the field of school psychology? (LO 3, 4) How would trauma services look differently if we held similar or different perceptions of trauma?
4. What are the indicators of wellness and trauma described in this chapter? How are they similar and dissimilar to your own perspectives and that of the field? (LO 3, 4)
5. Dr. Linklater states that Indigenous people must be part of the efforts to develop appropriate and effective trauma services for Indigenous communities. How can we, as a field, improve our efforts in including Indigenous school psychologists and experts to improve our own practices with youth? (LO 4, 5)
6. This chapter outlines the world view, knowledge, and theory of trauma held by Indigenous populations. How do these differ from the field of school psychology? Education? (LO 3, 4) What impact do these differences have on the services we provide?
7. Dr. Linklater dedicates a great deal of time to describing the ways in which healing and responding to trauma are experienced by Indigenous populations. How might such healing and trauma responses be supported, disrupted, or exacerbated in schools? (LO 3)
8. Similar to Canada, the United States issued a formal apology to Native American populations. What are your thoughts on the resolution and how might schools integrate this stance into creating more equitable and inclusive services for Indigenous populations? (LO 1, 5)

Chapter 2: Indigenous Health Care Practitioners Join the Circle

1. Dr. Linklater presents the strategies and efforts of various Indigenous healers in this chapter. Of the techniques described, which would be easiest to implement as a school psychologist? (LO 3)
2. Multiple Indigenous healers noted feeling that their training was not aligned with Indigenous world views. For example, Janice noted that diversity courses were "geared towards white people working with other races or cultural beliefs." Is the same true for school psychology, and how might we improve this form of training? (LO 1, 2, 5)

3. Carrie notes that “a lot of what we’re dealing with today is because of the historical trauma of what happened.” How do we address this historical trauma as school psychologists? How could we improve such efforts? (LO 1, 2, 5)

Chapter 3: Indigenous Perspectives on Wellness and Wholistic Healing

1. Wellness is described as balance and harmony among the four areas of self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (p. 75). How do we, as school psychologists, help promote wellness in these areas for children? (LO 3)

2. Dr. Linklater notes restorative practices as a means of resolving conflict, restoring balance, and helping support wholistic healing (pp. 79, 96-99). How are restorative practices used in education, and how can we help promote such practices? (LO 4, 5)

3. Being aware of multiple world views is important for Indigenous healing. How does training in school psychology promote the awareness of various world views? Are certain world views emphasized more than others? (LO 3)

4. Consider the use of the Medicine Wheel (pp. 85-87) described in this chapter. How might this concept be used in school psychology? Education? (LO 1, 2, 3)

5. Respecting religious and spiritual beliefs is crucial for providing effective services for Indigenous youth (pp. 82-83). How comfortable is our field with discussing religion and spirituality, and with integrating these perspectives with services? (LO 5)

6. Dr. Linklater outlines the importance of interconnectedness, collaboration, family, and community in Indigenous healing. What role does school psychology play in promoting such collaborations? (LO 3, 4)

Chapter 4: Psychiatry and Indigenous Peoples

1. Dr. Linklater clearly identifies ways in which psychiatric services, particularly the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder, have harmed and marginalized Indigenous populations. How might similar impacts and disparities exist within education in terms of intervention services, special education eligibility, and labeling? (LO 1, 2, 3)

2. It is noted that most diagnoses do not consider historical trauma (p. 105). How do school psychologists consider historical trauma, and how might we better integrate an understanding of these factors in our practice? (LO 1, 5)

3. Similar to descriptions of psychiatric assessment and intervention, how might the common forms of school psychological services be inappropriate for Indigenous youth for: (LO 5)
   a. Assessment?
   b. Academic intervention?
   c. Behavioral intervention?
   d. Social-emotional intervention and counseling?
   e. Consulting with families?

4. Consider the discussion on Residential School and Culture Bound Syndromes (pp. 116-120) and the need to identify and label the process, versus the person, as pathological. How can we promote such a reframing of symptomology and disorder for Indigenous youth? (LO 1-5)

5. What is the role of school psychologists in collaborating with Indigenous families when considering medication? (LO 5)

6. At the end of this chapter, Dr. Linklater states that room must be made for Indigenous healing strategies in treatment for trauma (p. 131). How can school psychologists make space for Indigenous treatment options within our own practice? (LO 5)
Chapter 5: Indigenous Strategies for Helping and Healing

1. On page 132, Dr. Linklater states that part of Indigenous healing is understanding there is “no formula for resolving a person’s issue.” How is this counter to school psychology practices, and how might we integrate this perspective within the field? (LO 5)

2. This chapter describes several strategies for healing, including prayer, spiritual connection, humor, love, relationships, and ceremonial resources. How can we as school psychologists integrate these strategies in our practice? (LO 3, 4)

3. How is the cultural assessment described on pages 141-142 different from current school psychology practices? (LO 3, 5)

4. Consider the description of helping with depression (pp. 144-147). How might school psychology benefit from this framing? (LO 3, 5)

5. How can school psychologists integrate an understanding of parallel and multiple realities within our services and education in general? (LO 3, 5)

6. What aspects of experiencing spirit (pp. 147–155) would be easy for school psychologists? Hard? (LO 3, 5)

Chapter 6: A Decolonizing Journey

1. How can school psychologists help protect Indigenous knowledge and practices (p. 158)? (LO 4, 5)

2. This chapter describes several strategies for decolonizing practices, such as recognizing and validating Indigenous healing, addressing funding concerns, and improving the training of healthcare and community service providers. Which strategy do you think is most salient to education, and how might we, as school psychologists, promote and implement these strategies? (LO 4, 5)

3. In what ways does school psychology promote resiliency (pp. 162–164)? In what ways does the field hinder resiliency? (LO 3, 5)

REFERENCES


Contributor: Leandra Parris

Please cite this document as:
