Up•stander

/əpˈstændər/
noun

A person who stands up, speaks out, and/or takes action in defense of those who are targeted for harm; one who aims to prevent or stop harm and/or injustice and transform situations where individuals or groups are mistreated; Can refer to situations defined by interpersonal, communal, social, and international disputes.

antonym: bystander
Finding Truth: White Supremacy and Forced Removal of Native Children

Mishy Lesser, Ed. D.
Learning Director, Upstander Project/Dawnland
Education Fellow, Thomas J. Dodd Center at the University of Connecticut
mishy@upstanderproject.org

Sarah Shear, Ph. D.
Asst. Professor, Social Studies Education
Penn State University-Altoona
sbs5180@psu.edu
Find me on Twitter: @SBShear
Acknowledge

Whose land are we on?
YOU ARE ON INDIGENOUS LAND
Workshop Goals

1. Watch and discuss feature film *Dawnland*
2. Engage in textual analysis of film quotes
3. Introduce key analytical tools and identify film’s Big Themes
4. Share First Inquiry of the *Dawnland* Teacher’s Guide and its Compelling Question
5. Learn about and participate in Listening Circle
Trigger Warning for Native people, adoptees and those who were in foster care or whose siblings and relatives were taken away.

Take Care while watching the film, leave the screening if you must, seek support, fill this room with love and compassion.
What is the perspective of the federal government, as articulated by Senator Abourezk and C.L. Walker? That is to say, what values, beliefs, assumptions, worldview, and/or narrative are being expressed?

**Senator James Abourezk** - “The federal government for its part has been conspicuous by its lack of action. It has chosen to allow the child welfare agencies to strike at the heart of Indian communities by literally stealing Indian children, and on the premise that most Indian children would really be better off growing up non-Indian.”

**[BIA Official] C.L. Walker** - “Here we are on the Western Navajo Indian Reservation in Northern Arizona among our friends, the Navajo Indians. Through the agencies of the government, they are being rapidly brought from their state of comparative savagery and barbarism to one of civilization. Here on the one hand, we have the children as we find them before we bring them to the government schools. Few of these boys and girls have ever seen a white man. We bring them in, clean them up and start them on their way to civilization.”
Quotes Textual Analysis

What is the perspective behind these quotes? That is to say, what values, beliefs, assumptions, worldview, and/or narrative do the quotes reflect?

Chief Joseph Socobasin - “We have customs and ceremonies, a language, a way of life that is very different. And to pull us away from that I think is what's most concerning to me.”

gkisedtanamoogk - “Everything that state policy and federal policy is doing is about the eradication of us from the earth. Now probably the softest example of eradication is social integration. But the results are the same: No more treaties. No more Indian rights. No more lands. No more Indians.”
Quotes Textual Analysis

What is the perspective behind these quotes? That is to say, what values, beliefs, assumptions, worldview, and/or narrative do the quotes reflect?

Sandy White Hawk – “When we bring that out and open that wound…we have to put something back in it that very same time… The most incredible thing…for that healing is each other, because when we went through that experience, we experienced that alone. We experienced it in isolation.”

Esther Anne – “The Wabanaki are the people who are there to greet the light; so we are the people of the dawn. 13,000 years, Wabanaki here in this territory. At one time we had over 20 tribes in our confederacy. Now, in Maine, there are four tribes left.… But we're still here. We know that silence, and keeping these stories in, is not working for us. And we have faith that this is the only way to heal our communities.”
What is the perspective behind these quotes? That is to say, what values, beliefs, assumptions, worldview, and/or narrative do the quotes reflect?

**Sandy White Hawk** – “This [the Final Report] is nothing new to REACH or any of us, right? But what we now have, which is what white people love, is we have documentation and we’ve got research.”

**gkisedtanamoogk** – “I never would have thought that the state of Maine would ever engage with the Wabanaki on this level. They might see it as a superficial gesture but we see it as something very deep, a necessary transition from being an occupier to being a neighbor with legitimacy.”
What is the perspective behind these quotes? That is to say, what values, beliefs, assumptions, worldview, and/or narrative do the quotes reflect?

Matt Dunlap – “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has just concluded its work. We've issued our report. Some of the feedback on this report, people are saying, "No, no, no, this is not genocide. [G]enocide is what happened at Auschwitz, in El Salvador." …When you forbid people from speaking their language, you take their children away and put them in totally different cultural settings, what are you really doing? What else do you call it besides cultural genocide?"

Gail Werrbach – “The piece that I keep thinking about that's so hard to translate is the piece of our findings that have to do with that self-reflection, that have to do with dealing with institutional racism and dealing with white privilege.”
Teachable Themes

- Women-led social change
- How social movements inform new laws
- Settler colonialism / settler privilege
- Origins of white supremacy / Institutionalized racism
- Decolonization / Un-erasure
- Genocide / cultural genocide
- Abuse of state power
- Collective denial / culture of complicity and silence
- Collective remembering and responsibility

#DawnlandMovie
upstanderproject.org
Woman-led Social Movements

● Problem identification
● Problem analysis
● Theory of change
● Message clarification
● Partners and allies
● Action
● Reflection
● Action

#DawnlandMovie
Settler Colonialism

- System with deep historical roots and contemporary manifestations
- Brought by Europeans to Americas to replace Indigenous population and establish new society
- Native people would have to be destroyed or assimilated
- System rests on centuries of settler privilege

#DawnlandMovie
upstanderproject.org
Settler Privilege

“Being born into circumstances that alleviate you from feelings of complicity is perhaps at the core of settler privilege. The ultimate privilege of being a white settler American is the feeling of freedom from a troubled past in the place in which you reside, and not being asked to have to do anything about that past. To not be accountable. To believe the lies you have been spoon-fed your whole life in order to avoid these unsettled feelings. To rest assured in narratives of an exceptional America that was built for everyone--everyone, that is, of the correct heritage and immigration status.” - Dina Gilio-Whitaker, Center for World Indigenous Studies
Perceived Superiority: An Invisible Regime of Normality & Exemption

White supremacy is a comprehensive condition whereby the interests and perceptions of white subjects are continually placed center stage and assumed as ‘normal’. -David Gillborn (2006)
Erasure of Wabanaki tribes?

In a newspaper article from 1954, Maine’s Commissioner of Health and Welfare predicted that Wabanaki tribes and lands will eventually disappear and that “the ‘Indians themselves’ are looking forward to dissolution.”-Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Final Report, 2015
Un-erasure

- Land Acknowledgements
- Call out offensive, condescending speech, writing, and behavior
- Contest the way public spaces are used and challenge popular narratives that erase Native peoples
- Use View from the Shore/View from the Boat as tool of analysis
- Ask who’s at the table, whose voice is heard, who gets to make decisions, who gets funded, whose issues are addressed
Dimensions of Decolonization

- Our Minds and Mental Maps
- Land
- Dominant Narrative
- Institutional Practices
- Curriculum
Institutionalized Racism

A pattern of behavior, attitudes, policies, and procedures, embedded in and reproduced by social institutions — schools, public sector entities, small and large businesses, media, law enforcement, courts of law — that targets a group of people based on their race for stereotyping and negative treatment. It is upheld by one group’s claims of superiority over other groups.
Dawnland and First Light: The Compelling Question
At the center of our Inquiry

What is the relationship between the taking of the land and the taking of the children?
First Inquiry, 
Dawnland Teacher’s Guide

dawnland.org/teachers-guide
Reflection

How has racism, white dominance, settler colonialism, and erasure of Native people influenced the formation of your community, the stories told, and the stories that remain hidden?
Raphael Lemkin-Upstander Extraordinaire

“Genos” (Greek): race, tribe

“Cide” (Latin): killing
Article II of UN Genocide Convention

any of the following acts committed with **intent** to **destroy**, in **whole** or **in part**, a **national, ethnical, racial or religious group**, as such:

a. killing members of the group;
b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within group;
e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
Cultural genocide

The first step in liquidating a people...is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster.

Genocide in New England: Maine Wabanaki TRC

MWTRC asserts that “disproportionate entry into care of Wabanaki children can be held within the context of continued cultural genocide.”

Collective denial / Collective remembering

“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”

“Just get over it”

Culture of complicity and silence

Ten Stages of Genocide: the 10th is denial
The Power of Denial

Ten Stages of Genocide developed by Gregory Stanton

1. **Classification:** divides society into ‘us’ and ‘them’
2. **Symbolization:** words/symbols used to target ‘them’
3. **Discrimination:** denial of rights to powerless groups
4. **Dehumanization:** ‘them’ become outcasts, hate speech spreads
5. **Organization:** leaders, followers, plans, propaganda, weapons, training
6. **Polarization:** voices in center silenced, targeted group scapegoated
7. **Preparation:** outcasts separated from rest
8. **Persecution:** victims singled out, death lists created and disseminated
9. **Extermination:** slaughter begins
10. **Denial:** leaders of genocide cover up, downplay, tell lies again and again
Dispossession and dehumanization have deep roots in U.S. history

“The History of the present King of Great Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations..

He [the king] has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the **merciless** Indian **Savages**, whose known Rule of Warfare, is undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.”