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When Wellness is Resistance: Wholistic and Anishinaabe Matriarchal Pedagogies in Indigenous Education

Short description / Abstract:

Many Indigenous education systems continue to operate within colonial structures that privilege productivity, standardization, and measurable achievement of an individualistic nature. This is often at the expense of the relational, spiritual, and communal wellbeing of the children and families we serve. This presentation explores Indigenous wholistic understandings of balance as both pedagogy and resistance. Grounded in Anishinaabe worldview and informed by my lived experience as an Anishinaabekwe mother, educator, and scholar, this work examines how emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental dimensions of wellbeing are inseparable in educational practice. Central to this discussion is the role of matriarchal pedagogies – relational, care-centered, and intergenerational ways of teaching and leading that prioritize responsibility to children, community, and aki (all of mother Earth). Rather than framing resilience as an individual trait, this presentation positions wellness as a collective endeavor, sustained through kinship networks, cultural continuities, and everyday acts of love and protection. This presentation invites reflection on how sustainable development extends beyond environmental frameworks to include cultural survival, language revitalization, and the protection of children's identities. By centering wholistic and Anishinaabe matriarchal pedagogies, this work contributes to the ongoing discussions about Indigenization and reconciliation in early childhood centres, schools and high education.