

Indigenous Voices: Educational Perspectives from Navajo, Native Hawaiian, and Ainu Scholars in the Diaspora

Suggested Questions and Topics

Section 1: Personal Stories

- Dr. Begay introduces the three layers of the Navajo Nation Reservation. What are they?
- Research the four sacred mountains that Dr. Begay mentions.
- Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano refers to her ancestral homeland as Ainu Moshiri (“Land of the Ainu”), which is present-day Hokkaido, Japan. How does she describe Japan’s interaction with Ainu Moshiri?
- Research the following topics: a general history of the Ainu; why the Ainu immigrated to Hawai‘i; why it is difficult for Ainu to disclose Ainuness in Japan.
- Dr. Edwards and Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano refer to Hawai‘i as “illegally occupied.” Share your thoughts on this.
- Dr. Edwards mentions that she was raised not knowing about her Ainu ancestry and notes that this is not uncommon because immigrants from Japan were often instructed not to disclose their Ainu ancestry. What parallels can you draw between her experience and your ancestral background or that of someone you know?
- Dr. Edwards introduces her grandfather to her children though he died before they were born. What are some ways that you can transmit information about your ancestors to future generations?

Section 2: Ethnic Studies

- What significance does Dr. Begay place upon ontology and epistemology in the Dine’ (Navajo) philosophy?
- What does Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano say about ethnic studies in Hawai‘i as compared to ethnic studies in states like California and Arizona? Research the teaching of ethnic studies in one of the U.S. states.
- Share your thoughts on what we can do to prepare teachers or schools in general to be welcoming of various cultural identities.
- Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano notes that the Hawaiian language is not normalized in Hawai‘i. What does she mean by this?
- Describe the Moshiri Model that Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano and Dr. Edwards have developed. What is its purpose?

- How does Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano distinguish between “settler” and “colonizer”?
- Dr. Edwards comments that in Japan, any study of ethnic diversity assumes that ethnic diversity comes from the presence of people from other countries in Japan, with the assumption being that Japanese are ethnically homogenous. Research the topic of ethnic homogeneity in a Japanese context. What are the arguments that surround this notion?
- How does the Moshiri Model help people to reflect on topics like who they are, how they got to where they are, and what their responsibilities are based on their unique positionality and unique genealogical background.

Section 3: Insights and Take-Aways for K–12 Educators

- Yamashita asks, “How can we reflect upon our own biases as we move forward and in what ways can we make our classrooms more inclusive?” What does Dr. Begay say in response, and what references does he make to the four sacred mountains?
- Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano makes the comment that at her school, educators are not “doing ethnic studies” but “doing heritage restoration.” Write your reflections on this difference.
- Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano notes that “Many of our Native students are coming in with generations of historical trauma around not speaking their native language. We have to understand that this is the same with our immigrant students as well.” Write an essay on this.
- Dr. Edwards notes that indigenous studies should not be taught just in ethnic studies or relegated to a specific subject; rather indigenous studies should be in all subjects because indigenous peoples have developed systems for creating knowledge in the sciences, math, the arts, literature and language, and psychology. Write an op-ed on this topic for your school newspaper.

During the question-and-answer period, the scholars responded to several questions from the audience. The following questions are recommended for students to consider.

- What does Dr. Begay say about community healing and blessing as a result of trauma?
- What does Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano say about the importance of “balance” in the Ainu culture?

- What does Dr. Edwards mean by “other forms of literacy”? What are her thoughts on oral traditions?
- What importance does Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano place upon storytelling, poetry, and hip-hop?
- How do Dr. Hayashi-Simpliciano and Dr. Edwards distinguish between religion and Indigenous spirituality?