

Message From the TODOS President
September 2022

Land as the Backing for the Emerging Patchwork Quilt

Last month I shared a metaphor for a classroom - the emergence of a patchwork quilt. It is a powerful image to think about the diversity of humans and thinking that occurs in a mathematics classroom. Each quilt that I've seen also has a backing; and I invite you to imagine now, what is the backing of the emerging patchwork quilt that is unfolding in your 'classroom' or in your work as a mathematics educator.

For me, the backing is the land, the place(s) where we are located as humans. The land supports the humans and the systems that humans have created. For me, the land is the backing of my emerging patchwork quilt.

When I think about the land as the backing it causes me to think about the history of the land; the land that was occupied for thousands of years prior to the "discovery" of North America by 'explorers.' I think about the ways that the First peoples of these lands must have been curious by the 'arrival' of humans that looked differently than they did, spoke languages differently, and were traveling by means that they did not know. I also think about how the First peoples of these lands would not have known what those early 'explorers' would bring to their communities. The early explorers were not killed because they were different; in fact the early explorers learned to survive (and I imagine it is because they were taught by the First Peoples) with these new lands. The early explorers were able to return to the lands where they were from and report about their 'discoveries.'

Over the hundreds of years since the arrival of these early explorers, the First Peoples of these lands have been consistently 'displaced' by the policies and systems that emerged from those early explorers. Over the centuries, the stories told about First Peoples were erasures of their experiences with the early explorers. The beautiful part of the somewhat new practices of acknowledging the territories of First Peoples is that it is a recognition that First Peoples were here, in what we now call North America, prior to the arrival of those early explorers.

So, for me, the backing of my quilt is the land, the land that has been occupied for thousands of years, by First Peoples who are my ancestors. It is the land where ceremony was conducted, where stories were told, where different tribes met to share learnings, where disagreements occurred, and where peace was made. And this is why I think the backing of my quilt is the land. Those ancestors' ceremonies, stories, learnings, disagreements, and peace are still shaping the systems that I live in and the emerging quilt that is unfolding in my classroom.

The experiences and responses of those early First Peoples to the early explorers have shaped the diversity of the humans that now call these lands of Mexico, United States of America, and Canada home. It is why we can have an organization of diverse perspectives and experiences like TODOS: Mathematics for ALL.

TODOS: Mathematics for ALL is making visible those erased stories and acknowledging that we ALL have the privilege of living, playing, and working where we do because of the responses that the First Peoples had to those early explorers. The agreements that were signed in those early interactions were often of friendship and learning about and from one another. However, we know that in all of the countries that are now known as part of North America those first agreements of friendship and learning changed to spaces where systemic policies were enacted to take away land from and to erase First Peoples.

As you transition into the month of October, I invite you to think about the land where you live, work and play and the history of that land and which stories have been erased. If you live in what is now known as the USA then October 10 might be known to you as Indigenous Peoples Day or as Columbus Day. I invite you to read these insights from a 2020 [article](#) in the Harvard Gazette.

On August 31, Drs. Belin Tsinjinne, Rochelle Gutteraz and I shared our understandings of the ways in which land acknowledgements shape and continue to shape mathematics classrooms and discourse in mathematics education. Please keep an eye out for the availability of a video from this TODOS Live session.

TODOS also has a special interest group, Educators of Native American Students (EONAS) and a small group of amazing humans are attempting to activate EONAS. I invite you to join EONAS when you renew your TODOS: Mathematics for ALL membership!

I invite you to invite your colleagues to join TODOS: Mathematics for ALL - we are an exciting organization where we invite perspectives and experiences of humans and worldviews that have been 'erased' by dominant discourses, practices, and worldviews. The organization is a space where you will hear and learn about the ways in which humans of all ages and experiences participate in creating equity for ALL in mathematics.

With respect and gratitude,

Florence Glanfield, President
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL