

# Universal Design for Learning, and the Woope Sakowin (Seven Laws): Integrating Lakota Values into the Classroom

*Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Jamalee Stone, MAP Center Equity Fellow Alum – South Dakota

## TRANSCRIPTION

**Robin:** Good afternoon, everyone. Sorry, I tried to fade that music out. It didn't quite work the way I thought it would. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Robin Jackson, and I want to welcome you to the *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable*. I'm the Products Lead and a Graduate Assistant with the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, and I'm serving as your Host and Technical Director. Today's *Virtual Roundtable* is entitled *Universal Design for Learning and the Woope Sakowin (Seven Laws): Integrating Lakota Values into the Classroom*. The Woope Sakowin (Seven Laws) are universal virtues of the Lakota people that are a foundation of Lakota culture. They align with the asset-based goals of Universal Design for Learning, or UDL: to develop expert learners who are: purposeful and motivated; resourceful and knowledgeable; and strategic and goal-directed. This *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable* will highlight how the Woope Sakowin and UDL, how they can be used to honor and engage every learner in a safe, adaptable, and creative learning environment.

**Robin:** I want to also introduce my co-conspirator today, Erin Sanborn, who will be serving as your...my Assistant Technical Director. And I'm going to pass it to Erin now.

**Erin:** Hello, sorry about that. My name is Erin Sanborn. I'm a Doctoral Research Assistant here at the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center. I will be serving as your Assistant Technical Director today. *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtables* are intended to be interactives. Participants are asked to interact in real time via our teleconferencing format. Also, to reduce noise, we ask that all participants mute their microphones when you're not speaking. Lastly, the video function has been turned on, thus if you have a webcam and you'd like to join, please feel free to do so by clicking the camera icon at the lower right...the lower right-hand corner of your screen. Please feel free, if at any time, you have a question, comment or

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concern, to send me a chat message directly. Again, please don't forget, when you are not speaking, to...feel free to go ahead and come off mute if you have a question or comment, but when you're not speaking, make sure your microphone is on mute.

**Erin:** As we begin today's *Virtual Roundtable*, please ensure that you are making yourself comfortable, move about as much as you need to, take breaks as needed to, and we want to let you know that we do have alt text. Alt text is used on all slide images throughout the presentation. Welcome everyone.

**Robin:** Thank you, Erin. One of our goals at the MAP Center is to engage participants in well-defined, content-rich technical assistance such that knowledge and expertise are shared in a way that results in transformative systemic change, as well as personal reflection and growth. To this end, we aim to make this unique learning experience available on our website via recording and transcription. Additionally, sharing photos of today's conversation on our social media platforms. We encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they shared and engage today. So, later on at the end of the presentation, we will be taking group photos and you will be prompted and warned we are going to do that. So you have the option of being the photo or not. So, we will let you know when that is happening.

**Robin:** During today's *Roundtable*, we will align to the Four Commitments when discussing the topic. First, stay engaged. Second, experience discomfort. Third, speak your truth. And lastly, expect and accept non-closure. Now, I will turn it over to Dr. Stone, who will share her screen, and we will get started.

**Jami:** And I'm muted. Following Erin's lead there. Well, welcome everyone to today's *Virtual Roundtable*. I'm happy to introduce Tamera Miyasato, who is a

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Mdewakantowan Dakota. She is a Learning Specialist for Technology Innovation in Education, known as TIE, in Rapid City, South Dakota. And then Matt Rama, who is a Lakota Immersion Classroom Instructor and K-5 Curriculum Director at Red Cloud School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. And I'm Jamie Stone. I am an Associate Professor of Mathematics Education at Black Hills State University. And I have been blessed to be an Equity Fellow for the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center. I've learned so much. And thank you for being here.

**Erin:** Pardon me, Dr. Stone. Do you do you mind making your PowerPoint presentation mode so we can see it?

**Robin:** If you wouldn't mind starting at the slide where the three of your faces are on it?

**Jami:** Oh, you're not seeing that?

**Robin:** No.

**Jami:** That's, oh. I hit share. I will start over. Let me know. I probably...do you see it now?

**Robin:** Yes.

**Jami:** Technology. You know, why is it I did the exact same thing. But we'll go right ahead and start over. So Tamera Miyasato, on the left, who is a Mdewakantowan Dakota. And she is a Learning Specialist for Technology Innovation in Education, or TIE, in Rapid City, South Dakota. Matt Rama, who is the Lakota Immersion Classroom Instructor and the K-5 Curriculum Director at Red Cloud School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. And then I'm Jami Stone. Always keep moving forward,

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make errors, but keep moving forward. So fortunate to be an Equity Assistance Fellow for the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center.

**Jami:** So, the anticipated outcomes for our *Virtual Roundtable*, is for participants to recognize and appreciate the universal virtues of the Woope Sakowin, and how their use results in productive, respectful learning communities. To recognize and appreciate how the Woope Sakowin aligns with the Universal Design for Learning framework, or UDL. And to reflect and reinforce an anti-racist classroom through the virtues and using UDL. Tamera.

**Tamera:** Hi, [Lakota Greeting]. My name is Tamera Miyasato. I welcome you today and shake your hand with warm heart. So today we're really going to briefly walk through the Woope Sakowin in the educational setting framework. So this is a framework that I developed with my former students at Pine Ridge School. And it has been shared in many schools in the state of South Dakota, including seven of our nine state reservations. But it's also been shared for replication in other schools in Nebraska and in Maryland. So honestly, what started out as a simple plan for a classroom management strategy, it's really evolved into this school-wide framework with the...it's got an overarching goal to decolonize education. And we do that through cultural proficiency at the levels of the classroom, and of all levels of the school environment. But the four overarching outcomes of this framework are to humanize policies, transform patterns, radicalize practices, and voice people's truths. So we're going to get into each component of the framework in just a little bit.

**Jami:** Thank you, Tamera. So, a little bit about Universal Design for Learning. Here's a picture of their framework. Why I'm so excited about the use of it is because it advocates for multiple means of engaging students, through multiple ways of

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representation. Rather than saying that everyone has to write a term paper, some people may choose to do that, others may choose to do a PowerPoint or a poem, or a song list, whatever. It's multiple ways of representing the—the goal of the activity. And then the same thing about action and expression: multiple means. It's not just one way. It is very student-centered, and it's—it's collectivist. But then also there's times where a student may want to work individually. It's students' choice and student voice.

**Jami:** And the outcomes of using the Universal Design for frame...Universal Design for Learning framework is it promotes self-regulation. The students are accountable for completing the work, and carrying the cognitive load. Also, it provides multiple means of comprehension. Whether we are...this goes right along with different learnings, well, learning styles, I want to say learning preferences. They said that learning styles are myth, but we all have preferences, but multiple means of comprehending. And then also for our executive functioning in our brains. So, ways of engaging ourselves in the learning.

**Jami:** This summer, Andratesha Fitzgerald, who works at CAST, which is the primary Center for Universal Design for Learning, wrote a book called *Antiracism and Universal Design for Learning*. Well, several years ago, I was fortunate enough to be a participant in Tamera's Woope Sakowin presentation about those seven virtues. And when I was reading the UDL—UDL to begin with, it's all about integration and relationships. And so, because of the way our school systems aren't...have been set up, there are...the UDL framework really does align with giving students choice, and helping them learn in ways that they feel that move them forward. A quote—a quote from Andratesha was the fact that there is no such thing as a learning environment that is truly universally designed, and not

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culturally responsive. There's no way to be truly culturally responsive without universally designing the learning experiences.

**Jami:** And so, again, Universal Design for Learning is meeting the needs of all of the students, rather than doing the one size fits all, everyone's going to do it the same way. It's using the framework so that students express themselves in a way that makes sense to them. It's about providing choice, which gives student voice. And also, if you...teacher gives multiple options for students to choose from, one that should be included is if none of these align with what you were thinking, please propose something to me, and we can...you can use that option. So, it really is letting the students have that voice. All right. Tamera.

**Tamera:** So, what does all of this look like? A culturally responsive learning environment look like through the indigenous lens? So in my classroom, for me personally as an educator, I had to take some time for deep learning and deep reflection, and tapping into my humility to change things, to change the way that I was engaging in some practices. But when we prioritize and center indigenous virtues, and I'm going to unpack those here in a little bit. But when we center the indigenous virtues, the Woope Sakowin, our sacred laws helped us to do several things: they helped us to set the tone for trust and relationship building; to transform the brain and the way we were thinking; promoting high expectations; offered flexibility and choice; required ownership and responsibility for behaviors; foster and repair trusting relationships; and taught valuable life skills.

**Tamera:** I want to take just a second to point out: notice how I did not say that it required students to be flexible, and offer them choice. To require students' ownership of their behaviors. Taught...teaching students valuable life skills. Because in this

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circle, it's all of us. So, I was engaging in the same expectations as we move through our classroom environment. So next slide, please, Jami.

**Tamera:** So, my classroom climate, why did I feel the need to change? So, I guess step back just a little bit to kind of give some context. But I grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and I graduated from Red Cloud Indian School many, many years ago. And it had been 20 years since I had lived at home on the Res. So, I had left, and I got my fancy degree from Notre Dame, and my master's degree in Secondary Education. I was well-equipped with Harry Wong, his teachings and I knew how to teach like a champion. Hey, but honestly, my first week back in the classroom on the Res, my kids brought me into—into humility really, really quick. Because I thought I was doing the right thing, you know. I was—I was skilled. But what I realized was that being away from home for so long, I kind of forgot about the practices of being a good relative. What did it mean to be Lakota?

**Tamera:** I—I knew, and I was aware of, like, the barriers in my community, but I forgot what it meant to be immersed in them, and to deal with them on a daily basis. So again, forgetting how to be a good relative, and coming with these dominant norms of teaching and instruction. This is what happened in my classroom. There were negative student behaviors, or they were perceived as negative, right? Feelings of no support. I had very limited and consistent practices, because some days I was just trying to get through the day. I was definitely inequitable, and very punitive in the way I worked with my students, which of course strain the relationships, exhausted learners, and me. And the thing I think that made me the most aware of the need for change was that I was exhausted. And I immediately thought I could just give up on my students. Nobody would think any differently of me because it's a challenging place, right? And I didn't want to be that sort of a teacher.



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**Tamera:** So it took me a moment to step back and realize, I think probably after the 100th time of coming home and crying to my mom, crying to my husband, when my mom finally said to me, “Tamera, who’s the adult here?” So, kind of that realization and I’m crying and between sobs, it’s like, “me.” So, going ahead and run to the next slide, Jami. The—the realization, again, having that, “Oh, I am the adult. What is going on with, with the learners so that I can meet...better meet their needs?” And so, it took me just a moment to remember and realize the issues that each of my learners had. And the issues around the spectrum from substance abuse, homelessness, suicide, hyper-vigilance. All these different types of trauma were manifesting themselves inside the classroom. And so, the way I was doing school, you know that the—the sage on the stage with punitive discipline and compliance-based practices, teaching in the ways that dominant society pushes on marginalized communities. Of course, none of these practices fit our community. It didn’t fit the individual learner needs, and it definitely didn’t meet the need for indigenous culture and language. So, it was pretty exhausting. Next slide, please, Jami.

**Tamera:** So it was one morning coming into school, I used to always go in at about six o’clock in the morning because I really valued that quiet time for planning and grading. And I walked into the building, and I looked at my door. And the learners had decorated our door for a contest on anti-bullying. And what they did was...my answer. They had pulled pictures of the treaty chiefs from Pine Ridge who erected our school. And they had included these ancestors. And they included quotes, you know, things about our--our virtue, courage. What does it mean to be kind? What does it mean to have compassion? And in that moment was when my students then became my teachers. Okay.



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**Tamera:** So, I did paint a picture of those challenges in my classroom, but it wasn't always bad, it wasn't like that. So I really had to stop and think for a minute and say, “okay, so these are the things that are not working, but what are the things that are?” And so, I was teaching the mandated curriculum and *The Crucible* was a required text. And so I honestly had a hard time understanding how my learners would connect with it. But it was my mom who reminded me and helped me. She said, “why don't you integrate the Woope Sakowin?” My mom's been integrating Indigenous culture into her teaching practices for over 40 years. And something she always told me throughout my career is look for the Lakota counterpart in everything that you teach and you learn. Because at the end of the day we are Lakota, she said, so you have to always come from that place of knowing who you are.

**Tamera:** And so when we did this, and when I integrated the Woope, we took that understanding of our beliefs of these laws of way to be, and we compared and contrasted with Christian philosophies, with the Ten Commandments. And so as we did that, our students started to make the connections with the text. They were seeing themselves in their learning. They were understanding that these virtues transcend time. They transcend culture. And we were learning together, because I am not a first language speaker. So a lot of my students who were, were helping me with the pronunciations of these laws and the translations. And we didn't realize it at the time, but when we were engaging in this, and students were coming to class, and they were engaging in discussions, we realized how much Lakota culture really is healing. So essentially, we made the mandated curriculum fit our needs.

**Tamera:** And not completely, because we still had some work to do, but we were definitely onto something. So after seeing that improvement of learner engagement, I took

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this model of using the Woope Sakowin, and I just threw out the mandated curriculum. Oops. My principal didn't know this at the time, but again, I need to figure out what was going to work for us. So we started centering the Woope Sakowin, started centering our cultural teachings and our philosophies. And I still have this really good connection with my students six years later. I recently had a conversation with one, actually just two days ago. He sent me a message and he was like, "Hey, Miss Miyasato, I got a question for you." He's like, "why did we never read Shakespeare?" He's like, "I'm getting into Shakespeare, and I really like it. Why did we never read it?"

**Tamera:** And it was kind of like one of those moments like, I like my job is done. But I basically said to this young man, I said, you know, Joahn, I was like, I love Shakespeare. I said, but at the time I felt that it was more important that we all fall in love with our culture. We fall in love with who we are as Lakota beings. And so I first wanted you all to know who you are as a Lakota person, then come to read Shakespeare from that perspective. So that's something that we're still learning, you know, six years later as a class. But I just want to take a moment to pause to process, and invite a conversation in the, in the chat. Because I guess let's just share what the question would be: What are the elements of a culturally responsive classroom? So based on your experience, what are the elements of a culturally responsive classroom?

## Participant

**1:** One that feels safe.

**Tamera:** Yeah, absolutely. Learning from our learners. Student-led inquiry. Value student experiences. Asset-based humility. Yeah. Learning together. Absolutely.

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- Jami:** Honor student voices. Not my way or the highway; together.
- Tamera:** I love that: authentically listening to our students. Dorothy, yes, thank you. I am so blessed that my mom could help me on this journey. Yes, embracing the spirit, oh my gosh. Ok, if you guys want to keep putting your answers in there, we're going to, just for the sake of time, going to move on. So if you want to go to the next slide, Jami. Really what I looked at when I was thinking about, okay, you know, I always have to think about the research to back this up, right? Becoming a culturally responsive classroom, and I adapted this definition of classroom management from Karen Bosch in 2006. And so far, it's still the best way that I could kind of capture what it is. So everything on the left is Karen Bosch's work, and I just kinda added my, my adaptations. But really it's how the teacher works. It's how we respond to triggers, in our students and in ourselves, and de-escalate those triggers...de-escalate the trauma that's happening with our learners, or ourselves.
- Tamera:** It's how the class works through structure, consistency, and community. How the teacher and students then begin to work together. How do we establish trust and positive relationships, and as teachers put ourselves in their shoes, to the best of our abilities? Because we don't want to assume that we know exactly what they're experiencing, right? But just kind of approach it through empathy. And then how teaching and learning happening. This is where we can tap into cultural and personal experiences to really make those stronger connections. Ok, so I'm going to let Matt tell a wonderful story here.
- Matt:** Hello, my name is Matthew Rama, and I'll start with a little background before...a little bit about ground. So 2012, me and another guy decided that we wanted to raise our children in Lakota. So we started an immersion daycare that...we

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thought it'd be cool work at an immersion daycare, but there was no immersion daycare in existence. So we decided let's just start one. So we did. And so the kids that were in that daycare, are now in fourth grade. And so when we got...when those kids got to kindergarten, we shopped around at schools, we ended up at Red Cloud, and said, "can we try this at your school?" And they...this is...Red Cloud had been dominated by...they've done well...all of my older kids went to school at Red Cloud, and have done the best that they can do. They're in college, and two of them are graduating this year. So, they had their experience, but I wanted a different experience for my younger kids, selfishly. I wanted to try something different.

**Matt:** And so, I didn't even know, you know, terms about culturally responsive classroom, or nothing like that. I've been teaching for many years. But I guess I never, or maybe when they taught that I wasn't paying attention, which happens sometimes for me in college. Or maybe it wasn't a term back then. But I didn't know, but I wanted it to look different. So our classroom was...all the kids were some--some percentage Lakota. So, you're 99% Lakota at Red Cloud School. So, we wanted to base our education around Lakota. So, I met Tamera, and she, and she introduced me to the Woope Sakowin, which we started to introduce in our classroom, and I'll talk about that a little bit later. But the story I want to tell is about a student named Max, and that...Tamera was actually in the office the day this happened.

**Matt:** And we'd been I guess, we'd been...the day...we'd been in the school for about three years now. And we'd been teaching all through Lakota, we're kind of like this little hold off room where nobody... "those are the Lakota kids." Well, all the kids are Lakota, but that's kind of the, you know, how we were talked about. So, we're in the office and things had been going pretty good, and, you know, just things

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were going pretty good. And she was in...the Principal's talking with Tamera, and they were talking, saying there's this boy, he's a first grader, and he just keeps getting in trouble, and he can't really read, and he's not he's not going to make it. We're going to have to let him go. I don't see how he can make it. I said, "Well, just give him to me. He can come in my classroom. We got some space." And granted, he doesn't know any Lakota, and he's already in first grade, so he's never...so he's going to be walking into a situation that's already going to be tough for him.

**Matt:**

And so, he comes in, and let's fast forward a year, and now he's one of the top three or four students in our class. Not only that, he's above average on national testing. And that's testing in English, when a year ago he couldn't read, so learning in a different language changed him. And then using these values, and this...in a classroom that was based on being Lakota, is we're celebrating that every day in everything that we do. And doing that, he just had a transformation: academically, socially, and he's really doing well, so. Next slide.

**Tamera:**

I always say I'm glad that Matt tells that story because when I do, I kinda get choked up, because just witnessing being in that room, and witnessing that conversation play out. I had seen way too many conversations that went the other way. So, [Lakota Language], Matt, for stepping in and doing that with our learner. So, we're going to just kind of briefly go through the different components of the framework here. But I want to be clear that this is not a linear process by any means. So, the seven components, of the Woope Sakowin educational setting can be applied to any area of school transformation and improvement: at the classroom, school, district, or community levels. Some of...so let me give you an example of using the components.

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**Tamera:** So, if we were to start here in Wowahwala, which means to be humble or seek humility. And I always give credit to Virgil Killstraight because he was the speaker and the Elder who I received these translations from. But if we were to start with Wowahwala, to be humble and seek humility, this might be where an individual classroom teacher might look at where he or she might redesign their classroom management plan. At the school level, if we started here, it would be where small teams could work to address implicit bias. It may be examining their own cultural backgrounds because sometimes, you know, to really engage with other cultures, we have to have a strong sense of who we are. But this is where we really think about that reflective process that asks us to be vulnerable. And then how do we engage in actions that we can take to seek humility as a school community. So this is one of the components where one might start, is Wowahwala.

**Tamera:** So next, again, not linear, not necessarily. But if we were to start with Woohitike, which is to be guided by principles, discipline, bravery, and courage. Here's where teachers or small teams and district leaders can start to look and evaluate their current practices. What are the practices that are working, and which are not? So then again, asking what are the actions that we can take to courageously critique? And I mean courageously because we're going to take a look at some of these practices and see how harmful they definitely are for some of our learners, especially students of Color, students who belong to LGBTQ. How are our systems harming them? What are the practices, and how can we change them?

**Tamera:** Okay, next we have Woksape, which is understanding and wisdom. This is where we're learning. We're exploring, we're asking questions. This is where we're increasing our cultural proficiency, or what Paul Gorski calls our "equity literacy." So, what are the sociopolitical barriers in our community? What are the burdens that our learners walk into school with every single day? How do we apply our

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understanding and learning to our practices in the classroom, and school, and our district? And how do we work together to alleviate some of that burden and engage in culturally responsive practices to meet learner needs, and then ultimately set them up for success?

**Tamera:** Wowaunsila, which is compassion. This is where we're working together to create a plan. So, we're developing plans that envision, and encourage, and enact compassion and change. So, what do we have to change? Are we willing to do it? And if so, how do we do it?

**Tamera:** OK, and then Wowacitanka, which is patience. It's really, you know, with implementation we've done it before with many, many initiatives, you know. But this is giving us a patience to try, try again. We know through implementation sometimes we find ourselves stopping and pivoting and moving in a completely different direction. But again, with that, if the ultimate goal is to decolonize our thinking, decolonize is our approaches in education. We really want to think about how we, how we intentionally and authentically engage in implementation processes that help us reach those overarching outcomes of the framework.

**Tamera:** So, Wowounihan, to respect and to honor. This is the collecting data piece. So how do we respect and honor all of the voices in the process? So, learner voices, parent and community voices, or if some of those staff who are otherwise really quiet, who have amazing ideas. And then also how can we think outside of the box in terms of what data we collect? Are we collecting data for student achievement? Are we kind of backing up and actually collecting other data, climate surveys, just, you know, conversations with parents and communities as to their needs for prioritizing Indigenous virtues, Indigenous practices and culture.



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**Tamera:** And then finally we have Wacante Oganake, which is to help to share and to be generous. This is where we're expanding and connecting this whole framework process into other areas of the school environment. How do we share our learning through the process? What are the actions that help us share this learning to facilitate transformational change? Okay? So we're going to focus now on how Matt has implemented this in Red Cloud Immersion. And we're actually also in an implementation process now in grades K through 8 at Red Cloud Indian School. And I know I breezed through the Woope Sakowin in the educational setting, but I just want to take a moment again to stress that this is not a linear process. It's not ever meant to be complete, but it is something that helps us as educators, but also as individuals. So we can kind of see how each component can be operating in concert with others.

**Tamera:** The front framework is meant to be implemented at the individual classroom district levels. But always be mindful of how you collaborate with learners and families. Because we know that this process takes time. It definitely requires buy-in commitment and action. But that doesn't mean the individual teachers can't start the journey on their own. When I was doing this, as I said, I threw out my curriculum. I didn't listen, I didn't ask for permission, I just did it. And when things started changing in my classroom, the students stops skipping, they started coming to class. They were on time and ready and anxious to learn. Other teachers started to see that, and they were asking questions, "what are you doing like, how are you doing this?" And administration got, got wind of it too. And we ultimately ended up implementing this framework into our school improvement plan. And I think it was the first time in several years that our first plan was accepted by PIE. So, I want to stress, don't wait for the system to tell you you can; find those ways to navigate within that system to make it work. Because acts of love and acts of decolonization such as these definitely have a rippling effect.

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# Universal Design for Learning, and the Woope Sakowin (Seven Laws): Integrating Lakota Values into the Classroom

*Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Jamalee Stone, MAP Center Equity Fellow Alum – South Dakota

**Matt:** Okay, so what does it look like inside? I mean, we've had a...we've only been doing it for a couple of years, so it's evolved and gotten better. But the whole thing that resonated with us was like...so I'm a second language learner. So Woope Sakowin...Woope translates as "laws," but the words we're looking at...I mean, in English, we call those values, right? And so, when you start thinking about it, these are the laws to being...this is the laws that we're trying to live by as Lakota. This is what...there's a story that the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought these rules and things for the Lakota to live by. And these laws were...this is how you have to live to be in harmony as Lakota.

**Matt:** And so we started taking that to the class and sharing that story. So we start off with that story of White Buffalo Calf Woman, and when she came to the people, and what she brought to the people, and when she brought these laws. And that starts every single classroom. We start that every single year with that story. Because most of the kids have heard part of that story, or something about that story, in some part that they've heard something, so they can relate right away. And there when we're saying...so then, we don't even call it classroom management; I guess that's the best, like terminology that you can use for classroom management. I guess it is a classroom management system, but it's more of like...so we don't do sit in the corner, go sit in the hall, "la la la, you've 15 minutes off recess," you know. What we really try to do is just exemplify when someone's portraying these laws, we just really try to be like, "Oh, they're...look at...Antwan, look how hard he's working." That's, that's he's walking with wisdom, is how you'd say it, I guess English translation would be "walking with wisdom." He's walking with wisdom. He's walking with wisdom.

**Matt:** "Oh, look at...thank you, thank you, Camimila for sharing your pencil. That is walking with generosity. That's what I love to see." And you know...and we use

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that kind of terminology all the time. And then, so, we started doing this in the classroom, and we made these posters and so that the kids could be kind of be relatable to the kids. So it wasn't this far-off idea, even though these are really abstract things, right? For kindergartners or first graders. So we're talking about them, and they're getting it, and they're getting it. And then, and Tamera can talk about it more, as she said earlier the school decided to adopt it because the kids were acting so different, that were in our classroom. Because they were acting so different. So, and I'll talk about that a little bit more later. Next slide.

**Matt:**

So we have to first talk about it...it, so...Woope Sakowin is part of it, but part of that, that idea and one of the things that Lakota and Dakota culture is like, was made upon, was relationships. So even, even your relationship to everything is like so important. The very first thing...if you read stories, all the old stories, and they meet a raccoon, they have to figure out if that raccoon is it's older brother, it's younger brother. You have to figure those kind of things out. So it's, it's very important, it's very important for us as classroom teachers that we let the kids know that we're relatives. There we're relatives. As being part of this family, we're relatives. And then all of a sudden, it takes this...so, in our classrooms that are immersion, it feels different, right? Because you're not...and I know a lot of schools aren't comfortable with this, but for...for our classroom, it's like you're not Mr. Rama; you're Uncle. Which is very accepted in this community.

**Matt:**

So, the kids call me Uncle, or other Immersion teachers they call their Auntie. All the kids do that. It isn't like...it's not...and they do it, anyway. They did it before, especially if you're Brown. But it takes some of that feeling of like...and I want the kids to feel that way too, because I want them to feel like I love them, and I want them to be my family. Just like how I treat my family. I want you, and you, and you to be successful. And I feel like if they feel that way too, as like I'm their family, and

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so it's a different relationship from day one, as opposed to this really, really standoffish thing. And like I said, I understand some communities aren't about that, but it definitely has been wonderful in our classrooms.

**Matt:**

And then along with that...so then we talk about kinship, which is definitely a Lakota, a Lakota thing, right? And then we have to talk about...so Mitákuye Oyás'id, means "you are all my relations." And so, then when you're talking about like the people are your relation. All the people here in the school or your relations, the people on the Reservation are your relations, all the Lakota are your relations. Lakota and Dakota are your relations. So we have to find ways to work together. But in that same sense, the plants are your relation, the animals are your relation. How do you take care of them? If you literally...are you taking care of them? Are you taking care of your relations? If you...if we don't grow our food, we don't think about where our food comes from, when we hunt, if we don't honor that, you know, are we taking care of our relations? Are taking care of our relatives? Because they're taking care of us. And so, like changing the way that their mind thinks about their interaction with the whole world.

**Matt:**

So we're not...first we're changing their mind with how they interact with each other, because they're related, and then how they interact with the teacher and the other adults in the community. And then we have to change and how we have to think about how we take care of all the other things that we're related to: the plants, the animals, because those are our relations, too.

**Matt:**

And so how does this work for us? What are the outcomes? We don't have lots and lots of data, because like I said we haven't been doing a lots of years. But so, we've been doing this for five years...for four years in my classroom. We've had two kids go to the principal's office in those four years, and they both happened

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outside. The kindergarten classroom started last year with a really young teacher that had never taught before. And the year before that, they had a 115 principal visits. And that number went down to 15 with a brand new teacher that never had taught. But she taught Immersion and she some of these kinds of things. And then along with that, academically, we did something they didn't...academically, the kindergarten's test scores with the highest they've ever been in the history of Red Cloud. They tested English but they learned through Lakota. The kids in the Immersion classroom test higher than the kids that are not in Immersion classroom: fourth, third, and second, and so on.

**Matt:** I think that like...us infusing our children through a Lakota framework, a Lakota mentality, trying to get them to, to live through these laws, has created a wonderful atmosphere at Red Cloud. And it's not, like I said...I feel that way, of course, I'm the teacher, and I'm the one doing it, so I'm like, "yeah, this is great." But that's why the school's adopting it. That's why the non-native teachers are adopting it. It's really made a major change. So I feel like I, I think that like, anybody sees this presentation has to adapt it to your community, to where you live, and the things that will resonate with your children. But I think that when Tamera introduced me to this, I felt so thankful. I felt so thankful.

**Matt:** And like, her passing this on...because traditionally, this is how things worked, right? We passed on stories. We pass down these laws, and there was a break. There was a break in that passing-on. So my kids, all of the kids here, they don't they don't hear these things now because their parents don't care. Or because of boarding schools and all those kind of things that happened. There was a break in that passing-on. So Tamera passing it on to me, allowed me to pass it on to our students, which has allowed the school to pick it up and pass it on to more students. And which is creating it...which is creating like this moving back, to this

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thing of like maybe getting it back into the homes, getting it back into these childrens' like, just insides of who they really are.

**Matt:** So, I'm thankful to Tamera that we've had this opportunity. I'm glad she's been around Red Cloud to even help enhance it and make it better, and to actually make a part of...my kids go to school here. So they get to live it not only in a classroom; they get to live it in the hallways, and in everything that they do in life. So.

**Tamera:** I think we have just enough time, am I right, Robin? We have some time for questions? A bit of discussion.

**Robin:** We have about...I'm going to say about ten minutes?

## Participant

**2:** I have a question. Do you also implement Oceti Sakowin? And how does that play in this as well, if you do incorporate, do incorporate both of them, or do you kind of save the Oceti for classes that are more in middle school or high school level or...how do you integrate it?

**Tamera:** Personally I integrate...I mean, I've integrated OSEU, at least myself in the K through 12 setting. So, I integrate the OSEU into my instruction, my lesson plans. And that's, again, that's that Lakota counterpart that I had spoke of earlier. How do I center...so Jason put in here about "ethnobotany," you know, plants that might, that might fall under one of the OSEU, which is Kinship. It might also fall into lands and environment. So how do I center that, and then pull in the standards for science, or social studies, or English, whatever you want to do. I do still integrate the Woope Sakowin into the class, which would be an OSEU, the Culture piece.

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But also I look at, I look at the Woope as just this way of being. It's that whole idea of [Lakota language] Lakota: how do you be a good relative? So, whereas the OSEU is an instruction, I use the Woope as a whole school climate and culture approach.

**Matt:** We use it...from start...we use it from kindergarten. And we, like, want our other teachers to use it from kindergarten, Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings, because we feel like that's a roadmap. It was created by, by elders. It was created by educators. It allows for us to, to have a roadmap and like, what should our classroom look like, that's it's full of Lakota. And then we use Woope Sakowin as part of that too. And we use Medicine Wheel. An we use all of those kind of things together. Like all these wonderful tools to help make a wonderful classroom. So.

**Brian:** My name is Brian. I just want to say, thanks for doing this. Raise your hands and acknowledge. [inaudible]. All those elders that have continued to teach us and it's really inspiring. And I feel like it's a part of the healing and the decolonization, coming back into who we are as Indigenous people. And it's just really important, like I said in there, like I live in the Northwest and the Swale territory. And I'm grateful for the new way and seeing the lifeway come back, because it's healing. It's healing for everyone. And just thank you for your work, and really appreciate being able to attend, to hear it's all instilled in from the beginning and...the children, they are going to help heal this planet. So thank, you know, really appreciate it. Raise my hands.

**Tamera:** [Lakota Language]. I see a question from Tina. It says “what is appropriate in places where students represent different ethnicities, nationalities, and cultures? Would it be appropriation to use this without being part of the Lakota community?” I think that's the beautiful thing about this framework. Because in the beginning I

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shared that this has been shared in some of our reservation schools and schools in the state of South Dakota. But, but we are in Oceti Sakowin lands. These are our homelands, right? When I share it with other, especially Indigenous communities, we take the time beforehand to ask “what are the virtues?” How do we approach this from your community context? So it would be the same approach with other ethnicities. You know, virtues are universal. We all have forms of respect, of humility. It's just in the ways that respect looks, might look different in specific communities. So paying attention to those different ways or different lenses, how we operate and approach through these, these virtues. But yes, it's definitely replicable. And if you're doing it from your community context, and not going into a classroom in Northern Michigan and saying, “Oh, let's practice Woohitike today,” you know, what is the form of bravery or discipline in your community? Does that help a little bit?

**Jami:** So, the slide that you're seeing right now are some of the resources. Whoops, of course. Let's see. Come on. I clicked one thing. There we go. Can we see the slide again? That look, well, first off, we have both culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy resources. Many of the Equity Assistance Center resource, just links to the Centers themselves. The work by Dr. Sharokky Hollie on culturally responsive teaching. Zaretta Hammond, who had came out with *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, one of my favorite books. And also, it's not showing on this slide here, but in the slide that I shared through the chat feature, I included a link to a webinar from CAST with Andratesha Fritzerald, and she's talking about students and sharing stories. And we're all related, and we can all find connection with our stories.

**Jami:** And anyway, I watched it for more inspiration before the, before our session here. And it just, to me, advocates what it means to be someone that's in education. It's

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about helping students learn and keeping what's most important, most important: and that's the students and moving them forward in their learning. It's not about us; it's about them. It's being students at the center. And that's with the values of the Woope Sakowin that can be translated into different languages. Those are what are necessary in classrooms to create that self-regulated learner that we're hoping to develop. Just like Matt, Matt's story of Max, and how we turned from someone saying he's going to be lost. And you know what, we don't know what to do with him, to someone that the next year has turned completely around. So.

**Tamera:** Can I add, can I add something, too, also to that discussion of these virtues? Also, just paying attention to how diverse our Indigenous communities are. Because although this is the set of laws, or Woope Sakowin, which translates to Seven Laws, these are the laws that were, again, demonstrated by Virgil Killstraight. But on our same reservation in Pine Ridge, he was from outside of Kyle, all the way over to [Lakota Language] and Pine Ridge where Red Cloud is. They have different sets of laws. Also understanding the extreme diversity among communities in Indigenous settings. So also me being Mdewakantowan and Dakota, so we have a different set of laws as well. So again, just really having that understanding of working if you do...in the community, Indigenous community, working with your community elders, your language speakers, and going to them to ask them which are the appropriate virtues, which are the appropriate translations and, and such. So I just wanted to come back to that and point that out.

**Robin:** I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm very full. From today's conversation, and everything that you all shared in the chat, and the wisdom that we are afforded from having Tamera, Matthew, and Dr. Stone here. So I want to thank you all for your labor that you have put forth in this last about hour. Before we close, we want

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to be sure that we capture all of you who joined us today, in a few photos. So, if Dr. Stone, if you wouldn't mind unsharing for a second.

**Jami:** Of course.

**Robin:** And I want to turn it over to our photog, Erin.

**Erin:** Hi everyone. I just want to mirror for a second what Robin said. I feel so honored to be here. I at times forgot my role as Assistant Direc...Technical Director because I was so engaged in learning. And I felt the same way the last session, but I felt it even more today, so thank you. We're going to take a group photo. If you are comfortable being in the group photo, please take a second to come off, or, turn your camera on. I will give a "three-to-one, cheese" warning so that everybody can get in their pose. And then I'm going to have to do it twice, because we have two screens, and there's a little bit of an awkwardness in between. All right, 1, 2, 3. Ok, give me one second to put that on here. All right. And second picture here, 1, 2, 3. All right. Thank you so much.

**Robin:** Thank you, Erin.

**Erin:** Okay, and then I'm going to put a couple of resources into the chat. We want to thank everyone for who came today, and who participated in today's Equi, *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable, Universal Design for Learning and Woope Sakowin: Integrating Lakota Values into the Classroom*. We also want to provide a special, a special, special thank you to Tamera Miyasato and Matthew Rama and Jami Stone for taking the time to be with us today to share their expertise and insight. In addition, we would like to highlight two resources located on our site. These are the two resources that I put in the chat. The first is entitled *Creating Equitable*

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*Learning Spaces for Indigenous Students.* This newsletter provides educators, administrators, and community stakeholders with an overview of American Indian Education. Provisions for Indian education embedded in...the Every Student Succeeds Act and research-based strategies for effectively meeting the unique educational needs of Indigenous students and communities.

- Erin:** Second is a podcast entitled *Using Service Learning to Support Educators in Assessing the Assets of American Indian Students*. In this podcast, Dr. Stone hosts an interview with Gloriana Underbaggage of Little Wound, Little Wound High School in Kyle, South Dakota. Gloriana speaks further about the benefits of using service learning as a means of engaging students. Gloriana also shares service learning success stories, provide the framework for school district interested in implementing service learning.
- Erin:** Lastly, we want to encourage you to visit our website for tools and resources in our Equity Resource Library such as quarterly *Equity Dispatches* and *Digest* publications, our *Equity Spotlight*, our *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*, and our *Equity Tools*. You can access all materials on our website, as well as stay abreast of upcoming events via our Calendar of Events. And in one second, I will put our website in the chat as well.
- Jami:** I put several of the UDL resources that were recently developed since the pandemic on the sheet that I shared in the chat feature, too. The Center has some great UDL resources.
- Erin:** Additionally, if you aren't already, please find us and like us on Facebook at Great Lakes Equity Center, and follow us on Twitter at Great Lakes EAC. We are updating our Facebook and our Twitter every day with information about newly

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released products, upcoming events. And all of these are free to engage, engage with, and to use within your local contexts. So please find us there. And then finally, I have put the link to the, the post-session questionnaire in the chat, but I dropped it in there again, we really strongly would appreciate if you have five minutes to go through and provide feedback on today's session, we, we use this feedback for our future professional learnings that we would really appreciate it. Thank you again, everyone.

**Robin:** Thank you all for coming. Just as a heads up, Dr. Stone, Tamera, and Matthew did a *Virtual Roundtable* earlier this month. All of our Virtual Roundtables are posted to our website. So the presentation, that physical presentation, the PowerPoint presentation, resources, everything will be posted on our website. If you sign up for our listserv on our website, then you'll get those updates for when they become available. Thank you all.

**Jami:** Thank you.

[End of audio]