

**Summative Reflection**

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Curriculum and Instruction: MACI Portfolio

**Artifact References of Department Goals: Intellectual and Ethical****Artifact's Relation to Department Goals, Explained: Inquisitive, Professional**

**Inquisitive**-Critically analyze, produce, and disseminate research, developing curiosity, interest and sensitivity about diverse ways of thinking and acting

**Professional**-Embody professional attitudes and identities guided by reflective practices directed at personal, local, and global development.

**Artifact Context:** I am a native of Poteet, TX. A town so small if you blink while traveling through, you'll miss it. It is petite, to which some traveling people have often pronounced it that way. This weekend, in 2024, happens to be the 77th annual Strawberry Festival that puts us on the map every year. Almost all of my fellow Poteetians in town become decorated in everything strawberry. We are strawberry farmers too. So when I shifted from mother, educator, to farmer these last two years daily. I have been at UTSA for two years, I didn't see this coming as it does today, but my theme for this summative reflection is so "berry" sweet. Throughout my journey of commutes, missed festivals, college field trips, kids field trips, life in general, etc. I realized my life was a literal elevator with a revolving door in front of it. I wore many hats, capes, shoes, and at times I didn't think I could get by, but I did. Here I am. I graduate in May. So with my work throughout my life with helping babysit, take care of my own children, now being an educator, I see similarities in both fields of study and I hope I do a good job synthesizing through my analysis of life with my faith, my hobby, and in education through the English Department readings provided by Dr. Sinanan in the Native American aspect of nature and earth.

**Artifact Development in My Role of Creation & Promotion of Learning**

## Testimonio for Change: Yearning and Learning

Every year, for a few weekends in August through September, we, at Reyes Farms, begin to clear the land of our previous crops (October, the previous year, to June, the current year). After we pull the black plastic covering used to protect the raised beds the strawberry plants grew and nurtured on, the tractor dozes through brown crispy leaves burned by the south Texas hot-summer sun, which once was a beautiful scene of voluptuous green leaves and vibrant red deliciousness that gave off an aroma of sweetness traveling through the wind that filled the air for acres upon acres. As the broken red clay and sand forms powdery-solid rocks, my children begin launching the crumbling rocks and as they hit the ground, a family member, or disintegrate in mid air, that's the commencement of the "Strawberry Field Wars," as my children call it. This frequently happens at the strawberry farm during the "land-clearing" weekend, where chunks of dirt rock come flying at you, but in harvest season you can expect a strawberry cull.

The very next day, the field is cleared and clean, ready for production, and so we open the land by discing it with the family tractor, and then chisel as we prepare it for the next crop. We then plan out the crops, make the rows and beds with the bedding implement attached to the tractor. The raised beds are formed, then we connect the irrigation system, lining up and laying large pipes to connect to the water well. Next, we lay the black plastic over the beds. Finally, at the end of October, we receive seed plants and plant them into their perfectly made and plastic-covered bed. Planting is one of my favorite parts in the whole process, though it's a "back-breaker" as you are constantly in bending motion. Once all 30,000 seeds are all inserted into the newly-made beds of fresh-moist red clay soil, we irrigate. Standing and feeling

accomplished for the day, you look bittersweetly forward to the season of never-ending cultivating, tending, and protecting the crop. It never stops. You must weed the plants weekly, deter the wildlife from eating the delicious blooms (to them) and berries (to us), inspect and protect the plants from mold or fungus, water them and also be ready for irrigation pipe mishaps; and when the harvest comes in January through April, you prepare, pack, sell, and compete with the good “show” berries, and you jam, preserve, and bake the misshaped, bruised “culls” of the berry field. The production of farming is never-ending, tedious work, but it is so rewarding to see the excited, bright-eyed faces of the people who rely on you to provide the cream of the crop of Poteet, TX, for the pre-season, which leads up to the annual festival called The Poteet Strawberry Festival.

In reading and observing the Alternative Indigenous Humanisms in my British Literature Class last Fall, I was reminded of the work in taking care of farming land and I appreciated it more. From the beautiful story of *Skywoman Falling Turtle Island Folklore*, to Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass: Skywoman Falling*, and Apess’s *An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man*, I couldn’t help but admire the way these stories, storytelling, and counter storytelling came together to show me a glimpse of what I’ve been missing in my early education. Surely going through the motions of learning but never really digging deeper into the soil of life and knowledge that comes from within every one of us and our backgrounds, some silenced and not.

Critical Pedagogy, inspired by Pablo Freire, is the direction I tend to explore when looking at giving back to my community. My small hometown has issues with social class and status quo just like any other, and so it trails from grandparent to parent to child, which makes up this close-knit society that pulls plumes of hatred and chaos at times, but also brings forth the

quenching thirst of overflows of rivers of youthful renewal at times as well. My desire is to inspire the youth of today to make a change for the better. With this Masters Program, I will continue to teach in my small community, but now with some global views that I now have under my “community work” belt, I now feel more equipped for the challenge. When I saw my most favorite detail of SkyWoman, which was that of being pregnant, children make the world go round. I saw how the animals tended to her, breaking her fall, and coming to the rescue even sacrificing their lives just so she would not drown. The muskrat, turtle, and magic mud from beyond the depths of the sea came to build the land and foundation of Canada and the Americas, not the flag or any constitution. Hmmm? I thought to myself. There is something about new life: it’s revolving, evolving, at a constant survival for mankind that the United States of America is missing, intentionally.

The Iroquois, the first people of Canada, have long-shared this narrative, which is the description of how they describe the earth and its inhabitants first surfaced through SkyWoman not Eve, who is the “colonial” first woman and mother on earth. In *Braiding Sweetwater: SkyWoman Falling*, I agree with Kimmerer as she states, “*In winter, when the green earth lies resting beneath a blanket of snow, this is the time for storytelling. The storytellers begin by calling upon those who came before who passed the stories down to us, for we are only messengers.*” This is where we can help understand cultures and their origins of belonging to the earth and finding solid ground. She also states, “Moved by the extraordinary gifts of the animals, she sang in thanksgiving and then began to dance, her feet caressing the earth. The land grew and grew as she danced her thanks, from the dab of mud on Turtle’s back until the whole earth was made. Not by Skywoman alone, but from the alchemy of all the animals’ gifts coupled with her

deep gratitude. Together they formed what we know today as Turtle Island, our home.” I saw that retelling this story as the foundation of learning to be caretakers of earth, animals, and others in it because we are only guests, but this is a great reminder to be a thankful guest. I am now also a messenger of these stories here to pass to other generations to come, which is the children of the world: our future who will be the cultivators and tenders to our home here on earth.

At the end, Kimmerer calls out teachers to be diligent, “I like to imagine that when Skywoman scattered her handful of seeds across Turtle Island, she was sowing sustenance for the body and also for the mind, emotion, and spirit: she was leaving us teachers. The plants can tell us her story; we need to learn to listen.” And without having known this would be a reading, I have known and felt this in my bones, that this would be a calling to my profession. Every day, I’m surrounded by children, if it’s not my own, I’m teaching them in public school or coaching them in a sport or skill. I always have been drawn to children, you see, I was made to babysit my nieces and nephews while my mom and sisters worked. Playing “pretend” school was how I got through it. Looking back, I realize I was trying to entertain and amuse my young family members and taught them skills they needed. They went on as great learners in school, to some I was made their role model. This is my first time reading these narratives and I find myself once again repeating my “strikes of awe” in that ugly surprise of the colonial-white supremacy way. To see how it was fed to my seemingly “masticating” brain in grade school, I learned the core subjects and how to also be an “Aggie,” short for Agriculture Farmers. By just going to school, being a good accomplished student, and participating in extracurricular activities, as well as being a good citizen, that was good enough. I even learned how to be a “Strawberry Belle,” just sit and look pretty in Poteet. Poteet Pride. But never speak politics or religion, never tell others

what you feel or think, just obey and all will go well with you, that was the type of mindset my generation of women were fed.

I feel a kindred spirit to Apess at this time because though I'm appalled at the way things were handled by the very foundations of beliefs and faith, I'm still very proud and honored to have my Savior, Jesus Christ and the Father God who made a way for me to get here at this very moment in my life. I'm glad that I can read, write, and talk about this topic too; it seems almost a crime to mention to most that you're a believer in Christ these days. And so, you see, I'm a big thinker, not so much of a talker, which has often caused me to be an outcast, no one truly gets me in my seemingly "mad woman/mother" outer appearance. I'm usually going somewhere to get something, I'm a mom, I must work, cook, clean, do laundry, organize, and still maintain my sanity, and of that, also tend to the man and his needs, in my life? What life? But I love my books and my studies, and my Father God knows that, being consumed in motherhood all these years has been tough as I started as a teen mom at the age of fifteen. I've always tended to my family first and always, my blood-kin knows that, but the men, the regulators, the state, the people don't. They see a woman whose dumb as a "box of rocks" and can only amount to "servant" service, "slave-drivers" is what I called them, in the Hispanic culture, it's "Macho" Man.

Father God and Jesus give me this new-found hope that I'm more than just a life giver on welfare, more than just a daughter fulfilling her seemingly "call-of-duty", more than sitting in the classroom, more than teacher who longed to be a professor, more than a Cosmetologist who beautified and encouraged the consumers that they are queens and kings, more than a number working in the oil field industry, more than a strawberry farmer whose work is never accounted for just eaten in a split second and demanded for more that next second. I'm a real person with

real goals, real life! I'm a woman! I'm BIPOC! I'm me. A skilled, high-functioning, busy mother/student/farmer/Cosmetologist/teacher! And I'm free! Free from control of the white supremacy way of molding and corrupting and oppressing society, BIPOC, and women.

In my mind, heart, and soul, as much as this class cracked my beliefs in the education system of the US of A and still does, I vouch and plead to honor these writers. As Appess made the white people aware of their whiteness and white supremacist ways, and in that negative energy they created in all their superiority, it still does not emerge from God nor Jesus. Jesus is said to have been a brown-skinned Middle Eastern Jew when looking at geography, when in *An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man*, Appess states, "Now if the Lord Jesus Christ, who is counted by all to be a Jew, and it is well known that the Jews are colored people, especially those living in the East, where Christ was born—if he should appear amongst us, would he not be shut out of doors by many, very quickly? And by those too, who profess religion?" (6). I thought of my plea to people when they put me down as a Christian and ridicule/question my beliefs, I say to them I do not believe in religion I believe in a relationship with Jesus Christ, just Jesus, God, Bible, brothers and sisters in Christ. I also want the same Appess wanted, "pray you stop not till this tree of distinction shall be leveled to the earth, and the mantle of prejudice torn from every American heart—then shall peace pervade the Union" (7).

God came for all of us, people of color, background, ethnicity, gender, religious/doctrine belief just as much as Skywoman came to build the earth. If not for Him I wouldn't be here in this time and place learning about myself and this country to make it better. I would still be teaching Christopher Columbus and the Pilgrims first Thanksgiving. But now I will not. I am not



white, but I was raised in a white society and country, and I'm learning about that now. God calls on his appointed ones, and I do feel called.

As I see the farming soil of red clay dirt and the black plastic-covered beds that protect and nurture the strawberry plants I tend to and cultivate around for most of the year, I know there is brutal winters and summers on the way, possible floods and droughts, hungry animals and rodents that graze and attack our prized strawberry farm. I know the risks and dangers of the heavy machinery and fear the future of our crops and if they will flourish or not. So much comes into account for hurting or helping the crops. The "crops of people", the seeds are similar with my job, I tend to the children in school, not in the laboring realms. I teach children who have their mothers, but some have been ripped from their biological mothers, some have economic and social status impacts, some are handicapped, some are quiet thinkers, believers and non-believers, so are BIPOC and some are not, and some obnoxious and macho, and some are warm, generous, and giving. I see a significant relation in farming to teaching, only on a farm the injustice is not people it's nature, but people farmers take care of them. To be a farmer of society and liberty is a challenge, with all the injustice in our country, it needs a reset, renewal, revival, rebirth, a renaissance of remedies for cultivating, tending, and reshaping humanism and humanity!

Works Cited

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