Much of our work as a staff this year has been centered around ways to build an anti-racist, anti-bias community at the Center that celebrates and acknowledges diversity. Part of this work has included interrupting norms such as reading children's books with all white characters by only choosing books that reflect BIPOC characters or characters from non-white cultures. As we are a community of predominately white individuals, representation of diversity is lacking. Choosing books with illustrations featuring non-white characters not only exposes children to more diversity but also allows the children at BCCC who do come from diverse backgrounds to see representations of themselves that is not present in their community of caregivers and peers at the Center.

Our staff has had the privilege of working with anti-racist educator, Britt Hawthorn in a series of workshops this year. Britt has guided us in our anti-racist, anti-bias work by sharing and helping us implement the framework of anti-bias education.

The slides below are a series of examples of children's questions and the staff reflections and work as we strive to actively engage in anti-bias education for young children. As teachers listen to children's wonderings or questions that they are processing, we find that we are given the gift of using these moments as opportunities to engage with children about racial or cultural differences and offer children conversations to deepen their understanding. These conversations help cultivate a community where everyone has a sense of belonging and pride of who they are and where they are from. Our hope is to share these examples with families monthly as a way to partner in this work as well as communicate how children are asking questions and how teachers are responding and reflecting.

At lunch one day, the children recently remembered a child who used to be in their class. As they thought about him fondly, one child exclaimed: “He has black hair and black skin!” The teacher responded by saying, “Yes he does.  There are many different colors of skin and hair that people have. My skin looks white.” The teacher turned to a white child next to her who was studying his arm and asked, “What does your skin look like?” Looking down, the child replied, “My skin is normal.” The teacher responded that his skin appeared to be white, like hers and his parents.

This example happened during the summer of 2021. As the staff at BCCC build on the skills to support children's observations and wonderings about racial and cultural differences, reflections from past interactions are often thought upon. "What could I have said differently?" or "What could I say next time?" are questions we ask ourselves as we think about our work.

*Looking at a book called "A Little Peace", a child pointed to the boy on the front cover and excitedly said "hey he has the same color skin as _____!" (named a black child who they know). The teacher responded in agreement, as she noticed the cover featured a boy with similar skin tone, though he was of Indian descent.*

Later, the teacher reflected on her interaction. She had wished she had responded in a way that brought the child's attention to the cultural differences of the skin tones they were noticing and comparing. In her moment of agreeing with the child's observation, the teacher later recognized the lost opportunity to scaffold their understanding of skin tone differences in relation to culture. She expressed: "What if I had talked about how the boy who they noticed in the book was from India and that his parents are Indian? This could have led to a conversation that other children may have been interested in, especially those who have parents or relatives from other countries."

We have noticed how children's questions are often sparked from the images of the books they are reading at the Center. It is our intention for our library of books to feed children with other perspectives and allow them opportunities to ask questions. This also allows teachers the opportunities to reflect on their intentionality in offering children responses that build on children's understanding of inclusivity.

While a group of children ate their lunch together, they noticed the teacher sitting with them had a mask with different colored leaves on it. As they talked about her mask and the various colors on it, the teacher mentioned that her mom had made the mask for her. One child asked, “What does your mom look like?” The teacher replied, “She and I actually look quite different- she has short, dark, curly hair and she has brown eyes and mine are green.” The children began chiming in with the color of their hair and eyes and noted that the teacher might be the only one at the table with green eyes.

Still curious about the teacher’s mother, the same child asked: “What does your mom’s skin look like? The teacher replied, “Me and my mom both call our skin white”. At this point, the children began studying their skin and naming what they noticed. Most children identified their skin to be white. “My skin is a little bit different though” one child announced. “You’re right” the teacher acknowledged. “What color do you like to call your skin?” The child responded, “darker than ours- like brown.” This began a conversation about what this child’s parents look like and where they are from.

As the conversation went further, two white children pointed out that their skin looked different but they both had light skin. This led the teacher to discuss various shades of people and how that can be connected to their culture and family.

# discussing and exploring skin tones

with young children

## Exploring and Discussing Browns

The United States has a long, ugly, and complicated history when it comes to race and racism. But our story shouldn't start with racism, it begins with skin tones, phenotypes, and genetic variations.

Young children are very concrete thinkers, so it's best not to use idioms, metaphors, or socially and politically created terms to explain big concepts. If you ask a child to "show me the black crayon," they'll pick the crayon we've all agreed is black. If you ask a young child to "show me a Black person," they'll look for a person who matches the color of the crayon.

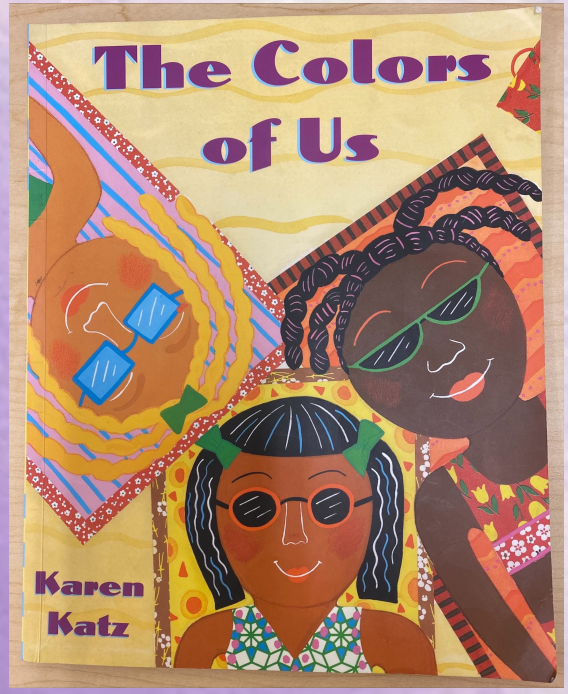
britt hawthorne

## where do we start?

Discuss skin and skin tones. These are simple biology lessons. Skipping over these scientific lessons does not lend to young children's need for understanding the world around them - or even understanding themselves. A solid lesson should both affirm a child's skin tone and offer a scientific explanation.

britt hawthorne

Teacher reflection from the week:
“A child and I looked at two different books on two different days this week. Each book had many different skin tones represented in the illustrations and the text commented about the different colors. I held my arm up to the page and pointed out which one was closest to mine, commenting that mine was a little more pink than the illustration. The child held his arm up too and said that all of his family is "light" like that one (pointing to one color). I nodded and said mine is light like that too, and that I have a cousin with skin that's darker (pointing to a darker brown) and another cousin with medium skin like this one (pointing). The child nodded and we continued reading.”




As a white child was walking down the hallway with their teacher at pickup time, they noticed a child of color from another room. Recognizing the child of color had a similar skin tone as a peer in their class, the white toddler exclaimed, “There’s _____!” (naming their classmate). The teacher responded to the white child saying “That’s _____(naming the child). You’re noticing they have the same color skin as_____(named their classmate). The teacher paused, wondering if she should say more. The child continued down the hallway, commenting on other items and children they noticed around them.

Later that day, the teacher shared this example and wondered what more she could have said. Her observation was that the child seemed disinterested in her response, moving on quickly and naming everything around them. In the teacher’s discussion, talking about the children’s parents and what they look like was thought about as well as thinking about what materials (books, family photos, baby dolls) could help young children understand skin tone differences. As it is developmentally appropriate for young children to assimilate and categorize sameness, how can we strengthen their understanding around race?

By talking about it! Waiting for children to notice differences prompts educators to respond to children about race. As we continue this important work, waiting for children’s questions is not enough. Normalizing talking about race is an important aspect of this work.

# They're not too young to talk about race!

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005) | Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008) | By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997) | Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008) | By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al. 2008) | By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016) | Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009) |

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

**Do some learning of your own** to get ready for conversations with children. Here are some good places to seek *information* and *training*:

- Teaching Tolerance — tolerance.org
- Raising Race Conscious Children — raceconscious.org
- Embrace Race — embracerace.org
- Teaching for Change — teachingforchange.org
- AORTA Cooperative — aorta.coop
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — dvaeyc.org


The Children's Community School
1212 South 47th Street, Philadelphia PA 19143
childrenscommunityschool.org

# Talking to Kids about Race and Racism: A Conversation with Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

https://www.discoveryacton.org/event/virtual-event-talking-kids-about-race-and-racism-conversation-dr-beverly-daniel-tatum

The staff at BCCC have discussed the many ways in which we can work to be anti-racist in our daily lives. This not only applies to our work with young children and their families but also stems down to holding ourselves accountable as a larger organization and model to Maine's childcare workforce.

In Chapter 12 of Nice Racism by Robin DiAngelo, choosing to support BIPOC-owned businesses and service providers is listed as she discusses next steps white individuals can take in their anti-racist work. This year, BCCC has used Black Owned Maine as a resource to lead us in choosing a Black owned restaurant to cater our Holiday staff party. We are excited to try Yardi Ting, a Black owned business in Portland, offering authentic Jamaican dishes. Taking this small but important measure has offered us the opportunity to consider moving away from the convenience of choosing a familiar restaurant and helped us pause to consider how we can support local BIPOC-owned establishments in our community.

# The basics Robin DiAngelo follows:

-Donate a percentage of your income to racial justice organization led by BIPOC people...
-Get involved in and donate your time and services to BIPOC-lead organizations...
-Promote work and service of BIPOC people. Channel work to BIPOC people.
-Seek out and choose BIPOC-owned businesses and service providers.
-Always cite and give credit to the work of BIPOC people who have informed your thinking.
-Develop accountability partners of color... someone with whome you have built a trusting relationship and who has agreed to coach you, talk through challenges with you...
-Build relationships with white people who have a strong anti-racist analysis and can serve as white accountability partners...
-Attend white affinity groups...
-Never consider your learning finished...
-Break white silence on racism...
-Look at your organization's policies to ensure that there isn't a racist policy, one with racially inequitable outcomes...
-Join organizations and groups for racial justice...
-Subscribe to online sources that publish lists, guides, and tools for racial justice work...
-Find you particular strength and apply it to the work of racial justice....

Reflections from Nice Racism by Robin DiAngelo

White people are not outside of race. Our voices and perspectives on racism and anti-racism are critical. All too often, we have been a missing piece of the puzzle.

The opposite of racist is not "not racist". The opposite of racist is "anti-racist". "Anti-racist" is active, "not racist" is passive and passivity in a racist society is racist.

Anti-racist action is the answer to "What do I do"... Niceness won't cover it.

This week, we had our community meeting with parents. Martha shared the anti-racist work that the Center is doing and communicated our vision and hopes of partnership with families towards the goal of committing to being active in our learning and growth. In our path moving forward, our mission is to consider anti-racist work with young children to be a part of our pedagogical practice at BCCC.

If you missed the community meeting, we hope you will take the time to watch it over the break as well as delve into a few resources that provide information on beginning to talk about race and racism with your children. If your family has any resources you would like to share with the Center, please reach out to Martha and Betsy!

On our homepage, you will find our anti-racism resource list. Below is the community meeting for your viewing as well as the PBS Special, "Kids Talk About Race and Racism"

This week, a child arrived at the Center with a photo of himself from when he was a baby. He was delighted to share this with his teachers and friends. One child, who has known him since the Infant Program was particularly interested in looking at his photo with him. She commented: “We looked the same when we were babies. I had blonde wispy hair just like you.” The boy with the photo nodded in agreement and replied: “Yeah, we looked the same but not anymore”. While helping the children get dressed to go outside, a nearby teacher who had observed this conversation offered a moment to explore this more with the child who had recognized their similar hair.

Teacher: “You were so curious about ____’s baby picture.”
Child: “Yeah. We looked the same but now we don’t. He has brown hair now.”
Teacher: “I remember when you were in the baby room. And I remember when (names other peers) were babies with you. Some of you didn’t have hair at all yet! Now that you’re all preschoolers, you can see all the different color hair that you have been growing since being a baby.
Child: “Yeah and my baby brother will have hair like me.”
Teacher: “I think you’re right. I wonder what color hair he will end up having?”
Child: “Maybe blonde. Or maybe black like my dad.”

This exchange centered around the children’s identity as well as their developing understanding of similarities and differences. The children were recognizing sameness in relation to their physical characteristics as babies and through comparing their hair, noticed that they are now different. What a beautiful example and reminder of young children’s ability to understand and celebrate differences and similarities. Through a brief moment during a busy morning, this interaction was inspiration to developing curriculum that can highlight each child’s identity through photos of when they were babies. Though identity is not solely based on physical features, the children were making connections to how their hair is a part of who they are. They also made the connection of the role their family plays in this way.

# Reflection from a Teacher

During lunch this week, a group of preschool children began discussing hair color. One child mentioned that they had white hair and another child felt insistent that the hair color was actually yellow. The teacher pointed out that it was interesting that they couldn't quite put their finger on what color it was and shared with them that that hair color is often called blonde. This was a word that seemed familiar to some and new to others.

The children went on to discuss how a couple of their peers in the group had the same color hair while some of the others had different colored hair. The conversation evolved into them considering who had the lightest color hair and who had the darkest color. They identified that one child had the darkest brown hair, while the other children who also had brown hair, had lighter brown hair.

The teacher prompted the children to consider why they might have the color hair that they each have. To which the children responded, "I don't know!” The teacher then went on to consider with them that this might be due to the fact that their mommies or daddies have that color hair.

As we work on our conscious effort to scaffold children's awareness and understanding of individual differences, our goal as educators is to not only observe children's conversations and wonderings around human diversity, but to also ask questions and provide a space for the children that offers them understanding and language to move forward in the world with knowledge and an openness to celebrate diversity.

The Anti-bias Education model by Louise Derman-Sparks has been a helpful resource to the BCCC staff. Below are the four goals of Anti-bias Education and an excerpt from the article "The Goals of Anti-bias Education: Clearing Up Some Key Misconceptions" by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards. The full article is listed on our website in the "Anti-Racism Resource List" tab.

1. *Identity: Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social/group identities.*
2. *Diversity: Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity, accurate language for human differences, and deep, caring human connections.*
3. *Justice: Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.*
4. *Activism: Each child will demonstrate a sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions*

*From birth onward, all children are on a developmental journey, actively forming both their individual, personal identities and their social group identities (racial, gender, family structure, culture, and so on). These two sides of identity reflect both external societal impositions and internal construction. Overt and covert negative messages and treatment act like micro-contaminants (Pierce, 1980), which gradually accumulate and undermine children's healthy development. Anti-bias education offers children the tools for countering the toxins of racism, sexism, classism, and all the other '-isms' on themselves and on their behavior towards others.*

*As a fundamental survival tool in a diverse world, everyone needs to accomplish both goals one and two . Through this learning, they come to understand how people share basic human needs, yet meet those needs in diverse ways. They come to understand the layers of human differences (family structure, gender) and find language to talk appropriately about difference. Silence about children's social group identities or about human diversity, leaves children vulnerable to the most pernicious, divisive messages, with no way to ask questions or to get help in making sense of what they absorb from the world around them.*

This week, the BCCC staff engaged in their monthly staff meeting which was focused on the upcoming anti-bias education work we will be doing with Britt Hawthorne. We are thrilled to be led by her expertise for the next year and look forward to her guiding us in this work. The staff recently watched a video presentation on “Talking to Kids about Race and Racism” by Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum and read the first chapter of the book “Waking Up White” by Debby Irving. With these two resources as jumping off points, the staff shared observations, wonderings, and ideas about where we are in this journey with the acknowledgment that there is much ahead of us.

During our meeting, a preschool teacher voiced the timely opportunity of listening to Tatum’s talk in which she gives an example of how she addressed a conversation about slavery with her 4 year old son. The teacher shared that she had been looking at a recently acquired preschool book called “Where Are You From” by Yamile Saied Méndez in which there is a page about slavery. The teacher brought this up in the meeting, using the staff and Martha as a sounding board of where to go next and how to prepare for reading the book. With Tatum’s video as inspiration to not avoid difficult conversations about race and racism with children, she felt sure that she wanted to read the book while understanding that she would feel vulnerable about potentially saying the wrong thing.

As the staff discussed their hope for parents to engage in this work with us, it was clear that entering a conversation about slavery with young children needed to be in partnership with parents. With the goal of building more trust together to have conversations that feel challenging, the preschool teachers have invited their parents to further explore this conversation with them in a zoom meeting. We are including the link to Tatum’s talk for your viewing (Watching the first 50 min or specifically the 27 min mark to hear her conversation with a 4-year old on slavery)>

Reflection from a teacher:

*A group of preschoolers were looking at a page from the book Called "Lovely" by Jess Hong. An array of various people with different shades of skin tone, hair color, hairstyles, and facial characteristics are portrayed in the book. The children began to point out who they felt most represented themselves on the page. Each child looked at one another and assessed for themselves who they felt they looked like, pointing to various characters on the page. One child pointed out that they thought they looked like a character who displayed more feminine characteristics. Another child responded by saying they couldn't look like them because the child was a boy and that was a girl because they had eyelashes. The teacher then prompted the children to look closely at one another's eyes and see if they all had eyelashes - they noticed that they all did, even the boys. The teacher commented: "It's interesting that we think of only girls having eyelashes. All of you noticed noticed that boys have eyelashes too!"*

Research shows us that young children develop biases at a very young age. As children work to understand their social world, they are influenced by many factors (what they see on screens, toys, books, and what they observe from others around them). When these biases present themselves, educators at BCCC are working to support children's understanding by asking questions, scaffolding conversations, and giving children information that can highlight a different perspective. This week, we are sharing a study done by researches at Northwestern University that explores the intersection of race and gender bias of young children.

A few weeks ago, Preschool teachers observed a conversation between two children who were making connections about their physical features as they looked at a baby photo that one child had brought to school. Teachers were inspired to create supporting curriculum based on this observation (Reference Week Eight above for the whole observation).

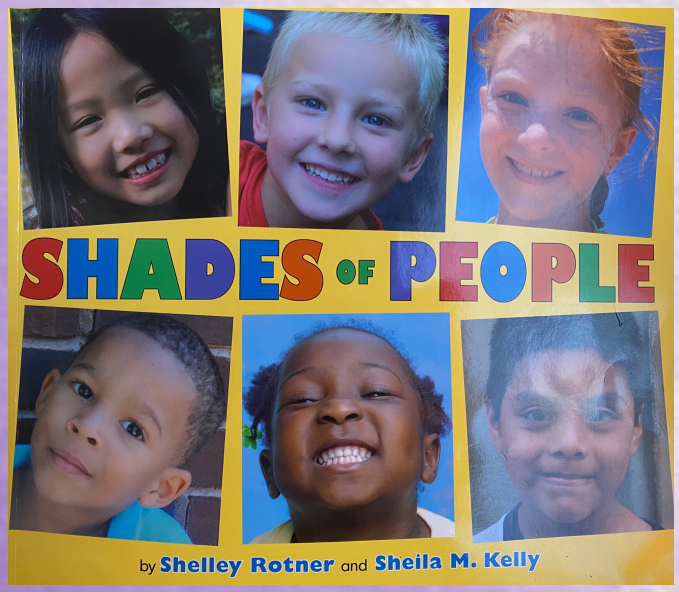
Teachers created a book which featured a page for each child with multiple pictures of when they were babies. A matching game was also created for children to pair a baby photo of a child with their symbol. These tools offered children opportunities to intentionally consider similarities and differences they noticed about one another. They were thrilled to both share their own photos and see their peers as babies. Below is a reflection from a teacher as her children engaged with the photo book.

*In our baby photos experience, children have been pointing out more ways that they've changed over the years, while also finding ways that they haven't changed. This week, one child pointed out "When I was a baby my arms were bigger and I had less hair but my skin has stayed the same." The teacher replied "Oh yeah, it's true, your skin does look the same" while holding the photo next to him, allowing his peers to witness the same observation for themselves.*

Teachers are noticing that children are using both the baby photo identity book and other classroom books as tools to understand and compare their skin tones. In another recent example, children use the book *Shades of People* by Sheila Kelly and Shelley Rotner to draw connections about their skin tones changing based on the seasons.

*This week there has been a theme of "yes and…" in our moments of exploring identity. Preschoolers have been looking at a book called Shades of People. In this book there is vocabulary and language offered for helping children name various shades of skin tones. One child pointed out that right now, their winter skin is pale and ivory as they held their hand against the page that represented those shades. The child went on to identify that this was true but then in the summertime, their skin was a golden shade and they flipped forward in the book, holding their hand against the shade to show how it was different.*

The Preschool teachers have observed a lot of recent examples of race and identity conversations from children that have been inspired by the book *Shades of People* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly.  Children have been experiencing a broadening of vocabulary in how they identify shades of skin tones. The book has offered lots of conversational exploration in this area. Many of our preschoolers use "light skin" and "dark skin" to describe the array of skin tones they encounter. Last week, a preschool teacher sat with her group and as the children pointed out "this kid has light skin... this one has dark skin" the teacher confirmed "that's true - this child has ivory skin that's light" or "oh, I see that... their dark skin might also be called cocoa." In these moments, children have been repeating these new words for themselves "cocoa...ivory...peach..." and pausing to take in the photo again with new words to put to it.




While we have found books that help provide both educators and children with the vocabulary to describe varying shades of skin tones in relation to foods, we came across a blog written by Britt Hawthorne that highlights why these types of books can be problematic. The two books that we find children frequently gravitate towards are *The Color of Us* by Karen Katz and *Shade of People* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. In both books (particularly *The Color of Us*), the language used to describe skin tones refers to different types of food. For example, naming dark skin tones as "chocolate" "cocoa" or "cinnamon" and lighter skin tones as "peach" or "honey" . Britt's blog entry titled *The Color of Us Children's Book and Racial Fetishization* is geared towards white educators and provides a perspective that helps us understand why this style of children's literature should not be used, especially by white individuals who are working with young children. Below is an excerpt from the blog. We hope you find it as enlightening as we did as we readjust our thinking with descriptive language around skin tones. You will find the entire blog link below, as well as a link to an article by Mod Colette titled *Words for Skin Tone: How to Describe Skin Color* that offers examples to reframe the desire to describe skin tones as food. We are looking forward to having a larger conversation about this particular topic with Britt as we begin our first workshop with her at the end of the month.

*"According to Janice Gassam Asare in her Forbes article "What Is Fetishization And How Does It Contribute to Racism?", "Fetishization can be thought of as the act of making someone an object of sexual desire based on some aspect of their identity." In Tayi Sanusi's Elite Daily article, "You Could Be Fetishizing Your Dates Without Even Knowing It," we learn that "the history of racial fetishizing can be traced back to colonization and slavery." Quoted in Sanusi's article, Dr. Donna Oriowo explains that "the act of making someone a fetish is steeped in white supremacist patriarchy, which says you can own anything and anyone for your own pleasure." Describing Black and brown children as things we consume contributes to fetishization."*

While reading the book *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman, a child studied an image of a black women and exclaimed “Her hair is weird!” The educator reading the book replied, “Are you noticing her really curly hair?” The child nodded. The educator went on to say “My mom is brown and has lots of curly hair just like this character. There are so many different types of hair that people can have!” The educator went on to talk about her own hair and how it’s not as curly as her mother’s but still has some curls. She explained that her Dad has light skin and that her Mom has dark skin, and her own skin is a mix of light and dark, making it look like tan.

Research shows that talking about differences with young children is an effective way to decrease bias and racism. Having a color-blind approach or pretending differences don’t exist can be harmful. Children are naturally working to understand similarities and differences and often try to make sense of them by attempting to place their observations in a familiar category. If adults don’t help children process their observations, children will create their own ideas about what these differences mean.

On Monday, the staff joined together for our first session with Britt Hawthorne. The focus of the workshop was on identity, which is the first goal of the anti-bias education framework. In understanding our own personal and social identities, our work to support children in recognizing and acknowledging the diversity of individuals around us becomes deeper. Encompassed in this first goal is an understanding of self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social and group identities. With the foundational knowledge, appreciation, and self-awareness around our own identities and the identities of our community members, the work to express comfort and joy with human diversity can evolve. In our next session with Britt, we will focus on the second goal, which is diversity.

As we began our time with Britt, she invited our staff to participate in a Land Acknowledgement, a practice of publicly honoring the traditional land of the Indigenous peoples that occupied the land before us. This shows respect and gratitude to the land we now live on with the intention to uplift the voices of displaced Indigenous peoples and advocate for native sovereignty. As we reflect on the anti-bias, anti-racist progress we hope to make as life-long learners, we felt it was important to create our own BCCC Land Acknowledgment. Priding ourselves as being a nature-based program accentuates this further as we consider and give thanks to the land where our children learn.

# Bowdoin College Children's Center Land Acknowledgment

Here is a Land Acknowledgment that we are working on:

**Bowdoin College Children's Center Land Acknowledgment**

We acknowledge with respect that the Children's Center occupies the traditional land of the Wabanaki people. The Wabanaki Confederacy is made up of the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribal nations. We honor the Wabanaki Nations, whose ancient relationships with this land continue today. We recognize that the land our educators and children explore, learn from, and love each day is accessible to us because of the forceful displacement of the Wabanaki people. We honor the invitation to educate ourselves about the history of the Wabanaki Nations and work to uplift their voices, culture and sovereignty.

An invitation was extended to staff to join Martha and Betsy for lunch on Tuesdays to share reflections, considerations, or questions about the ABAR work we are doing at the Center. Though staff are always welcome to spend time in the office and often do, having the intentionality to host a day of lunchtime conversations centered around our *goal to work together* to build a more inclusive and anti-racist environment was well received by staff as they shared what stood out to them or what they've been thinking about and hoping to work on.

Many of the lunchtime conversations with staff revolved around Britt Hawthorne's introduction to land acknowledgements from our first workshop on identities last week. Thoughts around how we could introduce land acknowledgments to children in a developmentally appropriate way were discussed as well as reflections on the importance of doing this work in an authentic way that creates meaning. One idea was to reach out *to Indigenous* groups to hear the voices and stories of the Wabanaki people of Maine. We found a helpful resource called Wabanaki REACH which is centered around truth, healing, and change. Their mission is to "Support the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities."
This week, we are sharing the website for Wabanaki REACH as well as a read aloud video of a book we have at the Center called *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Traci Sorell. The book is read by Diikahnehi Delaronde.

In our second session with Britt, we finished up a conversation about identity and began to move into the second goal of the Anti-Bias, Anti-Racist framework which focuses on human diversity and supporting the expression, comfort, and joy with human diversity and differences. The practice of using accurate language to promote deep and caring connections is at the forefront of this goal.

During our time together, Britt led us in a discussion about how curriculum and language used by teachers can and should represent different types of identities. She asked us to think about what identities were represented in our work with children, and which ones needed more representation. She circled around the importance of considering the many types of identities as we work to create more representation and not to focus on what is already represented in our work with children. To help us with this, the staff participated in a jam board activity together and filled pages with ideas as a way to reflect deeply on the various types of identities that can be present as we consider the children we care for.

After two sessions with Britt, understanding our identity and the complexities around identity development has probed the staff to reflect deeply. Discussions, questions, and ideas are bubbling through in daily conversations as staff move towards anti-bias, anti-racist work being at the forefront of how we think about our care with young children and building an inclusive community.

The motivation and momentum to progress and grow has been evident as staff share their research of resources and materials that could be implemented to inform our practice and program environments. A theme of research has focused on Maine's history and treatment of the Indigenous people. The staff at BCCC are delving deeply into understanding the history of the Wabanaki Confederacy through articles, books, and creating an on-going list of Wabanaki materials and artwork that could be brought into our programs.

For our staff meeting this coming Tuesday, the staff will join together for a viewing of the film Dawnland at the Bowdoin library. This story is about the first government-sanctioned truth and reconciliation commission in the U.S. investigating the impact of Maine's child welfare practices on Native American communities.

PHOTO: BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

On View

# Innovation and Resilience

An exhibition at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art highlights the dynamic tradition of Wabanaki basketmaking.

**INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE** *Across Three Generations of Wabanaki Basket-Making* features Abenaki, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac artists bringing historical baskets together with some of the finest examples of contemporary Wabanaki artistry. The Wabanaki have woven baskets for all of their history, but it was when they were forced off their land by European colonization that basketmaking became a means of economic independence and resistance to assimilation. Since the nineteenth century, Wabanaki artists have innovated traditional utilitarian forms to meet collectors' tastes, leading to a new style of basketmaking—"fancy baskets," like the one pictured here by artist Geo Neptune, *Apikcilu Binds the Sun*.

Neptune is a master basketweaver, educator, and activist who is the grandchild of legendary basketweaver Molly Neptune Parker H'15. In a virtual conversation with the Bowdoin community, Neptune, who is nonbinary, explained that they are what is known as "two-spirit" by the Wabanaki people and talked about growing up without elders. ("I had to be my own elder," they said.) Neptune started weaving baskets with their grandmother at the age of four. After graduating from Dartmouth College in 2010, Neptune has worked to foster cultural preservation within Wabanaki communities and advocated for contemporary issues faced by Indigenous people. Though known mainly for their ash and sweetgrass basketry, Neptune is also a drag queen and model for print and runway, and is featured in the "Can We Say Bye-Bye to the Binary?" episode of the Netflix series *Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness*.

Curated by Amanda Cassano '22, Sunshine Eaton '22, and Shandiin Largo '23—all members of the Native American Student Association—the exhibition runs through May 1, 2022. A recording of the conversation with Neptune can be found at bowdo.in/neptune.

**Left: *Apikcilu Binds the Sun*, 2018, ash, sweetgrass, commercial dyes, acrylic ink, 24k gold-plated beads, by Geo Soctomah Neptune, Passamaquoddy, born 1988. Museum Purchase, The Philip Conway Beam Endowment Fund, Bowdoin College Museum of Art.**



In the most recent Bowdoin Magazine, there is an article about an exhibition at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art highlighting the tradition of Wabanaki basketmaking. Members from the College's Native American Student Association helped curate the exhibit which will run through May.

This piqued our interest as staff have been researching the art of Wabanaki basketmaking and working to find local Indigenous artist that we can support.

**Indigenous books that we are currently using as resources:**

- *Baskets of the Dawnland People*
  Project Indian Pride
- *Giants of Dawnland: Ancient Wabanaki Tales*
  Alice Mead
- *If You Lived During the Plimouth Thanksgiving*
- Chris Newell and Winona Nelson

*Many Hands: A Penobscot Indian Story*

- Angeli Perrow & Heather Austin

*The Micmac: How Their Ancestors Lived Five Hundred Years Age.*
Ruth Holmes Whitehead and Harold McGee

- *Six Micmas Stories*
- Ruth Holmes Whitehead

*Swift Fox All Along*
Rebecca Lea Thomas & Maya McKibbin

- *Racoon's Last Race*
- Joseph & James Bruchac

*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*
Daniel Heath Justice

On Tuesday the staff gathered at the Bowdoin library for our April staff meeting to view the documentary film *Dawnland.* The film explores the impact of Maine's child welfare practices on Native American communities and the history and creation of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MWTRC). Maine is the first state in our country to develop a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The generational trauma and hurt from a brutal history of mistreatment is told by Wabanaki community members who want to share their truth. The impact of white supremacy and privilege is interwoven throughout the film's retelling of Maine's history with Wabanaki tribal members and the State's current relationship with these communities. Staff are still digesting what questions and reflections the film brought to light for us. It was a powerful experience.

Bowdoin has the rights to *Dawnland,* making it accessible for anyone affiliated with the College to view it at any time. We highly recommend taking advantage of the opportunity to watch this impactful story. You can set up at time to watch it by contacting the library and view it in Media Commons. Below you will find the trailer to the film.

As the staff at BCCC continue to learn about and research the history of the land that we occupy, we have been invited to begin our sessions with Britt Hawthorne by giving a Land Acknowledgement. Staff are dipping their toes in the water to share their research of the Indigenous people who lived in Maine before us—The Wabanaki Confederacy is made up of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribal nations . We are reflecting together on how to fold a Land Acknowledgement into our days with children.  In a recent post, Britt shared some considerations and steps to giving a Land Acknowledgment that we'd like to share with you.

## What is a Land Acknowledgment?

A land acknowledgment (or territory acknowledgment) is acknowledging the Indigenous history and present-day rights of the land that you use. The acknowledgment can be done before reciting the pledge of allegiance, during morning circle, or even at home with family.

If done well, a land acknowledgment can be the first step towards combating Indigenous erasure, the individual and systemic removal of Indigenous and Native history, language, culture, medicine, worldview, and existence from contemporary teachings and education.

## 4 steps to get started

- **Research**
  - Use Native-created resources to gather information (native-land.ca).
- **Create Your Acknowledgment**
  - There's no formula or right way to do a land acknowledgment.
- **Connect**
  - Go out into nature and build a relationship with the land.
- **Acknowledge and Reach Out**
  - Reach out to see how you can partner with your local Indigenous communities.

## reminder

If your child is old enough to know the name of your city, they're old enough to know about the traditional caretakers of the land. Young children can focus on contemporary people, native languages, and connecting with nature. Older children can include the above information and add the accurate history they're learning.

britt hawthorne

## let's keep the conversation going

IN THE COMMENTS BELOW:

- How do you make your land acknowledgment come alive?
- Earth Day 2022 is coming up. How are you building a relationship with the earth?
- What's activating your brain?

britt hawthorne

*With the effect of COVID weighing on our Center this week, it brought up questions for the staff to consider as we checked in with our own privilege. As we work to move through each week with an awareness of the anti-racist, anti-bias work we are doing, we thought about the disproportional effect COVID has had on communities of color. I wanted to share a few findings from Mental Health America, a leading community-base nonprofit organization.*

**Black Americans who are not essential workers are more likely to have lost their jobs because of COVID-19 than white people and other racial minorities. Economists call this a "first fired, last hired" phenomenon – Black people tend to lose work early on, and their unemployment rate continues to rise despite the employment market recovering for white workers.**

**Nearly half (49 percent) of the Latinx population say they or someone in their household had to take a pay cut or lost their job (or both) due to COVID-19, compared to 33 percent of all US adults**

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has turned down a series of requests from tribal epidemiology centers for COVID-19 data – the same data that is freely available to states. Without this data, tribal authorities can't initiate contact tracing on their lands or impose informed lockdowns or other restrictions**