

# The Red Road The Indigenous Worldview as a Prerequisite for Effective Character Education

Don Trent Jacobs

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*Curriculum development in the postmodern era must also include attention to the wisdom embedded in Native American spirituality, for it is in the very sacred land of the native people that American education now finds its home.*

— Patrick Slattery  
(*Curriculum Development in the Post Modern Era*)<sup>1</sup>

*Traditional Native American child-rearing philosophies provide a powerful alternative in education. They challenge both the European cultural heritage of today's child pedagogy and the narrow perspectives of many current psychological theories.*

— Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steven Van Bockern  
(*Reclaiming Youth at Risk*)<sup>2</sup>

## PART I

Last night my neighbor, a Lakota man in his early thirties, stopped by my house to use the phone. He wanted to call the jailhouse to find out how much bail was for his brother.

"It's eighty-five dollars," he told me after hanging up. "They got him on a two-year old warrant for drunk driving. I think I can get the money in Gordon this weekend."

I asked him what he planned on doing in Gordon, the Nebraska border town about forty miles south of our homes.

"Oh, it is not what you might call ethical work. We find things like answering machines and old televisions that people on the rich side of town have thrown in the garbage dumpsters. Then we sell them at the pawnshop. Works pretty good though."

Such is life on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, located in Shannon County, South Dakota. The district's claim to fame is that it is the poorest in the United States. It is also the home of the Oglala Lakota, better known to the "outside" world as the Sioux Indians. This is the tribe of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, Black Elk, and others known for their courage, patience, honesty, fortitude, and spiritual wisdom.

"It is not really what you might call ethical work," my neighbor had said. I wondered why not. I compared taking old throw-away televisions and reselling them to other ways of making a living. Although digging through garbage dumps has its obvious shortcomings, is it unethical? I think what my neighbor meant was that it is not what people in the dominant culture would expect from someone of "good character."

It might help to know my neighbor to understand where I am going with this anecdote. He, like his famous ancestors, has a sense of generosity, honesty, bravery, patience, fortitude, and humility rarely seen in the fast-paced economic world of the dominant culture. In spite of the harsh realities of reservation life, his spirituality generally sustains him. Like many who have learned that alcohol is not a good way to escape despair, he prizes his sobriety. His desire for money has not yet corrupted his spiritual convictions.

Still, my neighbor is beginning to define himself in terms of the white man's culture, where the measure of character seems

to be more about external appearances than inner peace. His concern that his work may not be thought of as ethical reveals a belief that character relates more to money than to concern for others. The quiet compassion of a caring waitress deserves less respect than the dispassionate success of a famous celebrity.

There are many people on the reservation like my neighbor. In spite of the tragic consequences of poverty, disease, and oppression that surround them, they still believe that children are sacred; that elders deserve respect; that air and water are meant to be clean; that all creatures should be honored; that there is joy in remembering the relatedness in life's diversity; and that a balanced life, referred to in Lakota as "The Red Road," is not likely unless it is guided by such core, universal virtues as courage and generosity.

My neighbor dropped out of school early and so did not gain his good character from school learning. This is no surprise. Most formal educational institutions (both on and off the reservation) do little to encourage the authentic development of character. Seeing a relationship between an absence of virtuous attitudes and actions and the rampant violence and apathy in society, many educators and politicians want this situation to change. They endorse "character education" as a legitimate endeavor. With few exceptions, however, the new character education programs do little for the moral development of youth. Most are built on foundations that continue to overemphasize competition, standardization, disconnected curriculum, individual gain, and materialism. Ultimately, the programs are more about compliant behaviors, religious or social indoctrination and classroom management than about the deep, experiential awareness needed for the common good of all.

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In his article "How Not to Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1997),<sup>3</sup> Alfie Kohn offers an excellent critique of the current character education phenomenon by identifying a variety of problematic issues associated with it. In the following paragraphs, I paraphrase his assertions (*in italics*) and then briefly describe how the indigenous worldview may offer a remedy.<sup>4</sup> (To better contextualize Kohn's arguments and understand his rationale for them, the interested reader ought to read Kohn's entire article.)

1. *What goes by the name of character education nowadays is, for the most part, a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducements designed to make children work harder and do what they're told.* (Kohn, p. 2)

Intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation is a hallmark of indigenous approaches to learning. Learning a new skill is seen as a way to help others and to honor the complex connections associated with the skill. This especially includes the personal traits involved in applying the skill. A good hunter is defined as much by his or her generosity in sharing food as by any expertise in stalking. Learning to paint well is as much about respect

for the elements used in making the colors as it is about execution of the drawing. With this perspective, science would be as much about free inquiry and healthy ecology as it is about convenience or economic gain.

American Indian educators understand that when learning is motivated predominantly by rewards and punishments, a culture emerges that is dependent upon the approval of external authority figures. Such a culture focuses on the outer journey to the exclusion of the inner one.

In his award winning book, *Ishmael*, Daniel Quinn divides the world into "takers" and "leavers." Leavers are people with the indigenous worldview, "an endangered species most critical to the world" because they understand they are "in the hands of God" (142). The Takers, on the other hand, attempt to rule the world by establishing criteria for good and evil and for the rewards and punishments accorded to each category.<sup>5</sup>

The "takers" world depends upon mandates from human authorities to maintain order. This worldview opposes the traditional primal or "leavers" view, which says that only personal experience and intuitive insights can offer legitimate authority. Spirits may give guidance through a medicine person, but the individual is expected to make his or her own choices. The central purpose of indigenous teaching is to recognize the power in each student. Authority over others would therefore be contrary to good teaching.

2. *Character education generally tends to ignore systems in which more and more of the nation's wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.* (Kohn, p. 4)

It would be difficult to imagine traditional Lakota or Aboriginal educators teaching virtues outside of the social and ecological context. The very reason for teaching courage, generosity, fortitude, and humility is to assure respect for the many relationships that create a healthy community. Nor do typical indigenous economic and social systems condone significant discrepancies of wealth among people. For example, I know a Raramuri Indian whose talents and skills resulted in his owning many more oxen, horses, and goats than did his neighbors. When he learned that a man's family who lived several hundred miles away had only two goats, he had a great give-away party for the community. By the end of the day, he still had ample stock, but the disparity between his wealth and his neighbors had narrowed considerably.

Many tribal customs help assure that excessive material wealth is shared and that no one suffers economic misfortune while others are rich. Name-giving ceremonies, send-offs for young people going to school or into the military, and many other occasions all involve giving away gifts. Wealth, in essence, is determined by how much is shared rather than by how much is accumulated.

It is also important to note that the same systems that create poverty are also destroying ecosystems. In the indigenous worldview, character education is as much about creatures, rivers, rocks, and sky as it is about people. Considering the large-scale denial of such environmental problems as global warming, such a perspective may be vital to our very survival. (For a sense of how widespread and calculated the anti-environmental movement really is, see Don Trent Jacobs, *The Bum's Rush: The Selling of Environmental Backlash*.)

3. *The character education movement seems to be driven by a stunningly dark view of children—and of people in general.* (Kohn, p. 4)

The words for men, women, and children in American Indian languages include a syllable that means “sacred.” In traditional native worldviews, babies enter the world as spiritual beings and they are born into a sacred relationship with the universe and its creatures. Given such an understanding, if character education attempts to “control” inherently bad children or “fix” their problems, then it is not relevant to true life. In indigenous traditions, the teaching of virtues through stories often offers warnings about “tricksters” who tempt good people away from “The Red Road,” but are rarely about changing bad people into good people.

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**Still, my neighbor is beginning to  
define himself in terms of the  
white man's culture.**

Larry Brendtro of Augustana College is considered to be one of the most respected researchers on education for the growing number of youths being failed by modern schools and culture. He believes that “Native American philosophies of child management represent what is perhaps the most effective system of positive discipline ever developed because they emerged from cultures where the central purpose of life was the education and empowerment of children.”<sup>6</sup> Brendtro considers this view quite different from that which we have inherited from our European ancestors, whose motto “Children should be seen and not heard” still disturbingly rings in this author’s ears.

4. *The question, “Whose values?” should not be dismissed.* (Kohn, p. 6)

With very few exceptions, there is little to no historical evidence that any of the hundreds of tribes living in North America prior to European colonization, ever attempted to impose their particular tribe’s values onto another, nor murdered others for having different values.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary native peoples continue to respect all religious perspectives and tolerate a variety of values that do not violate or disrespect diversity. Considering the history of western civilizations, there is much to be said for such a worldview.

Contemporary character education generally distinguishes between “values” and “virtues.” So do American Indians. They are very skeptical of what can happen when one person’s or culture’s preferred values are forced on another’s. On the other hand, they believe that there are core universal virtues that are beacons for walking the Red Road. In fact, most cultures have identified courage, generosity, fortitude, patience, and humility as core universal virtues.<sup>8</sup> When combined with a spiritual understanding that “We are all related,” these virtues help individuals become what most people in the world would consider to be persons possessing “good character.”

5. *Most character education programs resort to exhortation and directed recitation.* (Kohn, p. 8)

Scholars like Patrick Slattery and Larry Brendtro (see opening quotes) point to American Indian pedagogy as exemplary for child development. This pedagogy is equally ideal for character education. Recalling the native approach to authority, it would be unnatural to expect that exhortation would be of much value in this worldview. In an unpublished survey I conducted for my doctoral research at Boise State University, I combined several lists of ways that American Indian students learn best and mixed them with lists of typical pedagogical approaches used in most schools. I asked graduate students, white-collar workers, and blue-collar workers to choose the ones they thought would best lead to meaningful learning. More than 80 percent of the respondents selected more than 70 percent of the “Indian” learning strategies. In other words, the worldview that tends to define Indian learning also happens to be the best way for most people to learn, yet it contradicts the dominant culture’s assumptions about teaching and learning.

Another study at BSU, conducted by Karen Swisher, showed that contemporary American Indian learners are influenced significantly more than non-Indian learners by the degrees to which group harmony and holistic approaches to health and spirituality exist in the learning environment.<sup>9</sup> This tendency reflected a worldview different from that which underlies most western schooling, one taught to them by relatives. If embraced by all educators, such a holistic perspective would eventually become policy, preventing the kind of deleterious pedagogy currently used in many character education programs.

6. *Most leading proponents of character education approach their subject from a highly religious foundation. William Bennett, for example, has flatly asserted that the difference between right and wrong cannot be taught without reference to religion, and almost all of the leading proponents of character education are devout Catholics.* (Kohn, p. 10)

This last observation of Kohn’s opens a discussion about a significant problem for contemporary character education and provides an interesting arena in which to contrast indigenous and western paradigms as they relate to teaching virtues. Without doubt, this territory is full of mines, and it will take courage for most readers to read what follows with a loving heart and an open mind. The sensitivity surrounding critical awareness about the distinctions between character education and religion is high. For example, consider the letter recently sent to me by the publisher of a mainstream educational journal. It was an honest and respectful note in response to my having sent an article questioning mandatory postings of The Ten Commandments in public schools as a way to teach virtues. It states,

“Dear Don,

Your article is logical, well-written and thought provoking, but it is too controversial for our audience.”

Critical pedagogy is an important aspect of effective character education. This kind of response is just one example of how far we have to go before educators take critical pedagogy seriously. We only learn virtues when we carefully reflect on what

is true about situations in which we apply virtues. I think of truth as Parker Palmer describes it in his book *The Courage to Teach*: “Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline (104).”<sup>10</sup> With this definition in mind, I will continue to address Kohn’s sixth critique as it relates to this “controversial” subject of religion and its role in character education.

## Part II

The American Indian worldview sees all religious beliefs as divine metaphors for a common truth that allows different people to concentrate on spiritual matters in different ways. The various tribes have their own creation stories and specific religious ceremonies. Their spirituality generally reflects a concern for the great questions about how best to live respectfully as a part of God’s world. It honors the diverse ways to pray or to comprehend God and the universe. It is, in a way, more about the great mysteries than about man’s ability to offer great answers. Sacredness and mystery are inseparable in this view.

Many western religions, especially Christian ones, appear to be more about answers, rules, and consequences than about questions and mystery. When moved into arenas of education, power, and politics, organized religion has led to some of the greatest tragedies of our past. It has not made and is not likely to make a positive contribution to genuine moral development. For example, most organized religions tend to emphasize extrinsic motivation for virtuous conduct, despite the fact that brain research shows that this is not the best way to learn.<sup>11</sup>

Besides American Indian leaders, many great western educators, philosophers, and political leaders have recognized the potential dangers of organized religion when it goes beyond the boundaries of personal faith. For example, Alfred North Whitehead wrote that “Christian theology is one of the greatest disasters of the human race.” (82)<sup>12</sup> Thomas Paine said, “As an engine of power, Christianity serves the purposes of despotism, and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests, but so far as respects the good of man it has no great benefit.” (26)<sup>13</sup> Arthur Schlesinger said, “Religion enshrined hierarchy, authority and inequality.” (44)<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jefferson, who said we have much to learn from the American Indians, also said, “I do not find in our particular superstition one redeeming feature.” (122)<sup>15</sup> Bertrand Russell wrote, “The Christian religion, as organized, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world.” (94)<sup>16</sup>

One might think the potential problems of religion in education have been handled by the establishment clause of the First Amendment. However, recent federal and state legislation seems to have ignored separation of church and state in the name of character education, as when the U. S. Government contracted with missionaries to force Christianity on American Indian students. In 1999, for instance, The U.S. House of Representatives voted 248 to 180 to allow states to post the Ten Commandments in public schools. This rider was attached to a juvenile justice crime bill. Its author convinced the legislators that only an improvement in the morality of youth could prevent

the violent crimes these youth are perpetrating, and that biblical laws are the best source for such a task. It is interesting to note that in February of the year 1999, Pope John Paul II concurred, saying that “The Ten Commandments provide the only true basis for the lives of individuals, societies, and nations” (the Pope made his speech in St. Louis; cf. the CNN online news article located at [www.christusrex.org/www1/pope/pope1-27-99.html](http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pope/pope1-27-99.html)).

To date, fourteen states have passed laws either allowing or mandating that schools post the ten biblical mandates in all public school classrooms. For example, the Colorado government passed Senate Bill 114, which states: “Each school district shall post in every public school classroom and in the main entryway in every public school a durable and permanent copy of the Ten Commandments as specified in paragraph (b) of this subsection.” Similarly, Georgia’s House Bill 1207 amends Georgia’s Quality Basic Education Act to require local school systems to ensure that the Ten Commandments are displayed in every classroom within the school district, “as a condition for receiving state funds.”

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As character educators, we must consider carefully the possible repercussions of this growing public policy that endorses the Ten Commandments as “the only true basis” for our children’s lives. A good place to start is with honest questions. Will the practice of posting (and presumably explaining) the Ten Commandments enhance or confuse moral development? If we are ordered to post them in our classrooms, how can we best study them so as to help our students grow into people with good character? What kind of worldview do the Ten Commandments give us in support of character education?

The following questions are from a chapter in my book *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*.<sup>17</sup> They are offered to teachers and students as a way to help them critically and respectfully address the role of the Ten Commandments in moral education. I ask two questions about each commandment. I intend the first question to be critical. The second is meant to help us look for the commandment’s possible positive contribution to the student’s learning virtues. After posing the questions, I offer a different set of guidelines for life, from an indigenous perspective, to give the reader an opportunity to consider the different worldviews that are reflected in each question. [Note: A slightly different format to the one offered below published in *Teaching Virtues*.]

**The First Commandment:** *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

1. Does the first commandment, which demands that only the Hebrew God be worshipped, convey respect for diversity and multicultural perspectives?

2. Could we interpret this commandment to mean that we should believe in one divine creator and not worship such false gods as money or fame?

**The Second Commandment:** *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not serve them for I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations.*

1. Might a mandate against any object of worship create confusion or unnecessary guilt in children who themselves or whose parents create or otherwise use sacred symbols, such as the American Indian pipe? And, in light of moral development, is it helpful and healing to talk about jealousy and threats of punishment, including punishment of future generations for the “sins” committed by their ancestors?
2. Could this commandment mean that worship should only be for the great mysterious Spirit and that we should never be so arrogant as to think we can reduce this Spirit to an image?

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**Wealth, in essence, is determined by how much is shared rather than by how much is accumulated.**

**The Third Commandment:** *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.*

1. The original interpretation of this commandment related to breaking contracts that were sworn on God’s name. More recently people have come to think that this commandment means not cursing with God’s name. Whatever the interpretation, does this commandment truly reflect one of the ten most important rules to govern the development of good character?
2. Could this commandment just be telling us to be very truthful always, but especially if we invoke God’s name?

**The Fourth Commandment:** *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.*

1. Since the Sabbath originally referred to Saturday, is a mandate not to work on Saturday going to contribute to the moral development of young people?
2. In our modern world, could we use this commandment as a reminder that we need to slow down and spend more time in spiritual pursuits and less in material ones?

**The Fifth Commandment:** *Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land.*

1. From a critical thinking standpoint, is it a violation of the

mandate to honor one’s father and mother if a child’s father has abused, molested, and violated the child and continues to do so? If a young person has such a good reason not to honor a parent, is it healthy to expect that this person’s life may be cut short by God if she or he does not therefore honor her/his parent? If we generally respect all people, is it wise to be more selective concerning which ones we honor?

2. Might this commandment simply be a reminder that we should remember all the good things our parents do and show respect for their good work and love?

**The Sixth Commandment:** *Thou shalt not kill.*

1. What is the difference between killing as in hunting and killing as in murder? Is it inconsistent if the same state that mandates the teaching or posting of this law also mandates capital punishment?
2. Could this commandment give us a way to discuss the various meanings of the word “kill” and to distinguish between such things as murder, capital punishment, war, animal slaughter, etc.? [Note: The English translation of the Hebrew wording is misleading. As Rabbi Joseph Telushkin notes in his book *Jewish Literacy*, the Hebrew words *Lo tirtzakh* do not mean “Thou shalt not kill.” Rather, they mean, “You shall not murder,” or, one might translate, “Don’t murder.” So, the Hebrew phrasing already accounts for the very distinction that I am asking us to consider but which English translations blur. See p. 56 in Telushkin’s book. See, too, on pp. 56–57, Telushkin’s comments on the translational and interpretive problems with the Third Commandment.]

**The Seventh Commandment:** *Thou shalt not steal.*

1. Can anyone name a situation in which stealing to survive may not be one of the top ten violations of good character? Since the original meaning of this commandment referred to stealing a person’s slaves, would it be inappropriate for us to ignore this deplorable context?
2. Which of our core universal virtues would be violated if someone stole from another?

**The Eighth Commandment:** *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

1. What can we say about the character of the forty percent of U.S. adults who have violated this rule? Are there situations in which adultery might not rank as one of the top ten morality issues in the world?
2. With diseases like AIDS, would not this mandate now have life and death repercussions if not followed?

**The Ninth Commandment:** *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

1. Is this reference to honesty complete enough? For example, is it just as bad to be dishonest with oneself or dishonest with those who are not “neighbors.”
2. Could this commandment be telling us that the worst form of dishonesty occurs when we hurt another?

**The Tenth Commandment:** *Thou shalt not covet [thy neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything else of his].* [Note: since I find different endings for this commandment in different sources, I note in brackets the various cited elements of possible covetousness.]

1. Are we breaking a serious code of moral conduct and good character if we wish for or desire (covet) someone else's possessions but take no actions?
2. Since our thoughts all too often manifest in our actions, could not this commandment motivate us to try to control our inappropriate desires as much as we try to control our often concomitantly inappropriate actions?

## Part III

Contemplating such questions about a code too often blindly accepted and now beginning to increase its hold on educational policies, we might better understand the worldview that is the basis for our choices. By using both types of questions, one criticizing and one supporting the efficacy of the Ten Commandments, teachers, parents, administrators, and students can engage in a healthy dialogue regardless of their individual religious persuasions. Whatever personal conclusions participants in this dialogue might draw, they might all reach a better understanding of the truth.

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**However, recent federal and state legislation seems to have ignored separation of church and state in the name of character education.**

Across from my office at Oglala Lakota College is a poster entitled, "The Ten Indian Commandments" (Joe Vlesti, 1989). None of us at the college know Mr. Vlesti, and we have not been able to find out who he is, but we think he accurately represents moral guidelines that reflect indigenous perspectives. Using these "rules" by following the pattern used in Part II of this article, ask similar "pro and con" questions of each of the following ten moral recommendations. Do this not as a way to see which "religion" or "culture" is better, but, rather, to understand which set of guidelines better identifies and articulates a worldview that supports diversity and a more ideal foundation for moral development.

**The Ten Indian Commandments** (Joe Vlesti Associates 1993):

1. Treat the Earth and all that dwell thereon with respect.
2. Remain close to the Great Spirit.
3. Show great respect for your fellow beings.
4. Work together for the benefit of all mankind.
5. Give assistance and kindness wherever needed.

6. Do what you know in your heart and mind to be right.
7. Look after the well being of mind and body.
8. Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good.
9. Be truthful and honest at all times.
10. Take responsibility for your actions.

We feel that these "recommendations," or "suggestions," may also be subject to criticism, but that they make for a more sensible foundation for character education than do the Ten Commandments. Besides looking at such "commandments" or "suggestions," another way to study the different worldviews is to briefly look at what the indigenous perspective does NOT do:

- It does not see genuine democracy as being more about protecting the rights of property owners than it is about equal rights for all members of the democratic community.
- Its focus is not predominantly on competition and "winning."
- It is not more concerned with the accumulation of individual material gain or authoritarian power than it is with the common good of all or with life's intricate interconnections.
- It does not assume that young people, especially children, are inherently bad or relatively incompetent, nor does it create an unhealthy hierarchy of parents over children or of humans over the animals and the earth.
- It does not give absolute authority to individuals.
- It does not emphasize external rewards and punishments as the motivation for one to do good.
- It is not about humans only. The indigenous view gives equal respect to animals, insects, birds, rocks, trees, water, and spirit.
- It does not lead to a culture based on fear and its negative consequences.
- It does not lead to widespread personal and ecological disease or poor health.
- It does not adore celebrity status.
- It honors the mystery of spiritual matters.

Alfie Kohn concludes his critical evaluation of character education by saying that there is a "need to reevaluate the practices and premises of contemporary character education. To realize a humane and progressive vision for children's development, we may need to look elsewhere." (Kohn, p. 14). Indeed, it is unlikely that the current "character education" movement will significantly contribute to developing more virtuous people until we challenge and replace some basic assumptions that are driving it. I suggest that the "elsewhere" to which Kohn refers is in the traditional understanding of the First Americans, who are our neighbors throughout this land. Their view provides an alternative and more successful model for teaching virtues, one that has

existed for thousands of years, as it has in the world's other indigenous cultures as well.

With such a worldview we will not only provide a more successful foundation for character education, but also renew hope for American Indians. Although dormant amidst westernized reservation schools, the roots of this ancient worldview remain alive within the hearts and minds of our first nation's people. If we travel The Red Road together, respecting the diversity of each other's cultural and religious foundations, "character education" can make a significant difference in the lives of children and adults from all walks of life for generations to come.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Slattery, *Patrick Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, New York: Garland, 1995, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Brendtro, Larry K.; Martin Brokenleg; and Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, Ind.: National Educational Service, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Kohn, Alfie, "How Not To Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1997. (<http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/hnttv.htm>).

<sup>4</sup>Many agree that there is a worldview common to indigenous people the world over. For more about this and for a more in-depth analysis as to whether or not the primal worldview offers a legitimate model for more harmonious paths toward learning, see my book *Primal Awareness: A True Story of Survival, Awakening and Transformation with the Raramuri Shamans of Mexico*, Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1998.

<sup>5</sup>Quinn, Daniel, *Ishmael*, New York: Bantam, 1992, p. 252.

<sup>6</sup>Brendtro, Larry K.; Martin Brokenleg; and Steve Van Bockern. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*. Bloomington, Ind.: National Education Service, 1990, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup>Jacobs, Don Trent. *Primal Awareness*. See also R. Brian Ferguson, "Violence and War in Prehistory," in Debra L. Martin and David W. Frayer, eds., *Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past*, New York: Gordon and Breach, 1997.

<sup>8</sup>Jacobs, Don Trent and Jessica Jacobs-Spencer. *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2001.

<sup>9</sup>Swisher, K. "American Indian Learning Styles Survey: An Assessment of Teacher's Knowledge," in *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, Spring, 1994, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

<sup>11</sup>See Eric Jensen's, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1998, pp. 59-70.

<sup>12</sup>Haught, James, *2000 Years of Disbelief*. New York: Prometheus, 1997.

<sup>13</sup>Cardiff, Ira D. *What Great Men Think of Religion*. New York: Arno Press, 1972, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup>From a speech at the inauguration of Vartan Gregorian as president of Brown University in 1989. See Haught.

<sup>15</sup>From a letter by Jefferson to a Dr. Woods published in Noyes, Rufus, *K. Views of Religion*. Boston: L.K. Washburn, 1906.

<sup>16</sup>Haught, James, *2000 Years of Disbelief*. New York: Prometheus, 1997. (Haught notes that the original source is from an article by Russell entitled, "Why I am Not A Christian," published in 1927.)

<sup>17</sup>Jacobs, Don Trent and Jessica Jacobs-Spencer, *Teaching Virtues*.

"The topics addressed here are of great importance for educational practice...Teaching Virtues is a stimulating and thoughtful contribution." —Noam Chomsky, Professor, M.I.T., and author of *Language and the Problem of Knowledge and Manufacturing Consent*

"We give our highest endorsement to Teaching Virtues. The authors present an approach that does not separate character education from effective teaching, but instead makes it foundational."

—Edward DeRoche and Mary Williams, Co-Directors, University of San Diego, International Center for Character Education, authors of *Educating Hearts and Minds*

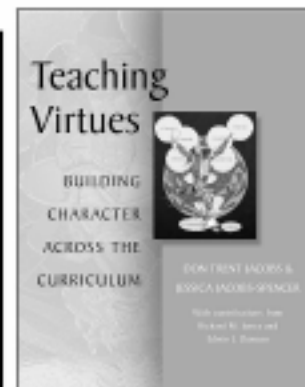
"Here is an educational approach that honors the interconnectedness of the world...The result is a refreshing perspective on character education."

—Ron Miller, author of *What Are Schools For? Holistic Education in American Culture* and publisher of *Paths of Learning Magazine*

"This splendid book will help us bring to education one of the most neglected and abused resources of our continent: the deep knowing of the American Indian people..."

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## Teaching Virtues Building Character Across the Curriculum

DON TRENT JACOBS AND  
JESSICA JACOBS-SPENCER

2001 200 pp. \$35.00 paper  
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## Supplement to “The Red Road” by Don Trent Jacobs A Resource List Compiled by Robin Martin

The issues and topics raised by Don Trent Jacobs brought forth many perplexing questions as I read. Who is this man that so captures my attention with his engaging writing? How can I begin to learn more about indigenous worldviews? Are there any character education programs worth knowing about? What other actions might I take to explore these topics further?

### Jacobs and His Other Writings

Don Trent Jacobs holds doctorates in health psychology and education. He is the author of ten books and numerous articles on such diverse topics as wellness, management, persuasion, hypnosis, education, sports psychology, and indigenous psychology. He is of Scotch-Irish, French, Cherokee/Muskogee heritage, but he lives, works, and sundances with the Lakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where he heads the teacher preparation programs at Oglala Lakota College. His spiritual name is Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows).

Jacobs most recent book is *Teaching Virtues: Building Character Across the Curriculum*, co-authored with his daughter Jessica Jacobs-Spencer. Other well-known books by Jacobs that can be used in teaching are: *Primal Awareness: A True Story of Survival, Transformation, and Awakening with the Raramuri Shamans of Mexico* (published by Inner Traditions, phone 605-455-1408) and *THE BUM's RUSH: The Selling of Environmental Backlash* (Legendary Publishing, phone 605-455-1408).

For more information about these and other books, visit the delightful and informative web site [www.TeachingVirtues.net](http://www.TeachingVirtues.net), or call Scarecrow Education at 1-800-462-6420.

### Exploring Indigenous Worldviews Online

Fire on the Prairie — website highlights ongoing struggles for human, civil, and treaty rights in Lakota country. Fire on the Prairie is located in Porcupine, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, in southwestern South Dakota, USA. <http://www.fireonprairie.org/>

NativeCulture.com — a comprehensive portal site for Native American resources on the Internet. Includes hundreds of Web links with expanded sections to Tribes and Nations; Arts and Expression (An Internet guide for exploring the richness of Native American artistic expression); Learning Teaching and Information Sharing. In addition, this site includes feature articles, with several by Don Trent Jacobs. <http://www.nativeculture.com/home/>

Also, for variations of the Ten Indian Commandments referenced by Jacobs, you can find a similar set of commandments attributed to Chief White Cloud, at: [www.councilfire.com/historical/indten.htm](http://www.councilfire.com/historical/indten.htm) (and you can even buy a poster of them at [www.allwall.com](http://www.allwall.com)).

### Character Education

Despite the warnings of Jacobs, Kohn, and others about the behavioral-based approaches of many character education programs, there are a few web sites and programs that may be worth your time to investigate further.

Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character (CAEC, Boston University) : <http://www.bu.edu/education/caec/>

Character Education Partnership (CEP): <http://www.character.org/>

The Values Institute, connected with the University of San Diego's International Center for Character Education: <http://ethics.acusd.edu/values/>

Character Education Reading List: compiled on the New Horizons for Learning web site, lists many of the best books printed on this subject in the 20th century. [http://www.newhorizons.org/restr\\_charread.html](http://www.newhorizons.org/restr_charread.html)

### Ideas for Taking Action

Here are a few ideas for further explorations to build your own meanings and understandings on indigenous approaches to teaching and learning.

Learn to integrate awareness and application of virtues into all subjects on a daily basis. Attend a workshop or presentation by Don Trent Jacobs. For more info, visit his web site, [www.teachingvirtues.net/workshops.html](http://www.teachingvirtues.net/workshops.html)

Explore the Reclaiming Youth Network, and the “Circle of Courage” philosophy, as described in the book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, by Augustana professors Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern. Reclaiming Youth web site: [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com)

Begin your own local dialogue about the questions raised in “The Indigenous Worldview as a Prerequisite for Effective Character Education.” For suggestions on how to get a study group started, please visit the NCACS Learning Circles web pages: [www.PathsofLearning.net/circles-home.cfm](http://www.PathsofLearning.net/circles-home.cfm)

Bring *Ishmael* into your classroom. Classroom lesson plans and guides for exploring the deep questions about an alternative view of history and humanity's role in the universe as raised by Daniel Quinn's award-winning novel *Ishmael* can be found on Quinn's web site at: [www.Ishmael.org/Origins/Ishmael/Companion/](http://www.Ishmael.org/Origins/Ishmael/Companion/)

If you would like more action ideas to supplement these reflections, we invite you to visit our Online Action Guides, at <http://www.great-ideas.org/guides.htm>, where you can more easily link to the referenced books and web sites as well as finding many more. Or, for a printed version of this Online Action Guide about “The Red Road,” just call 1-800-639-4122.