

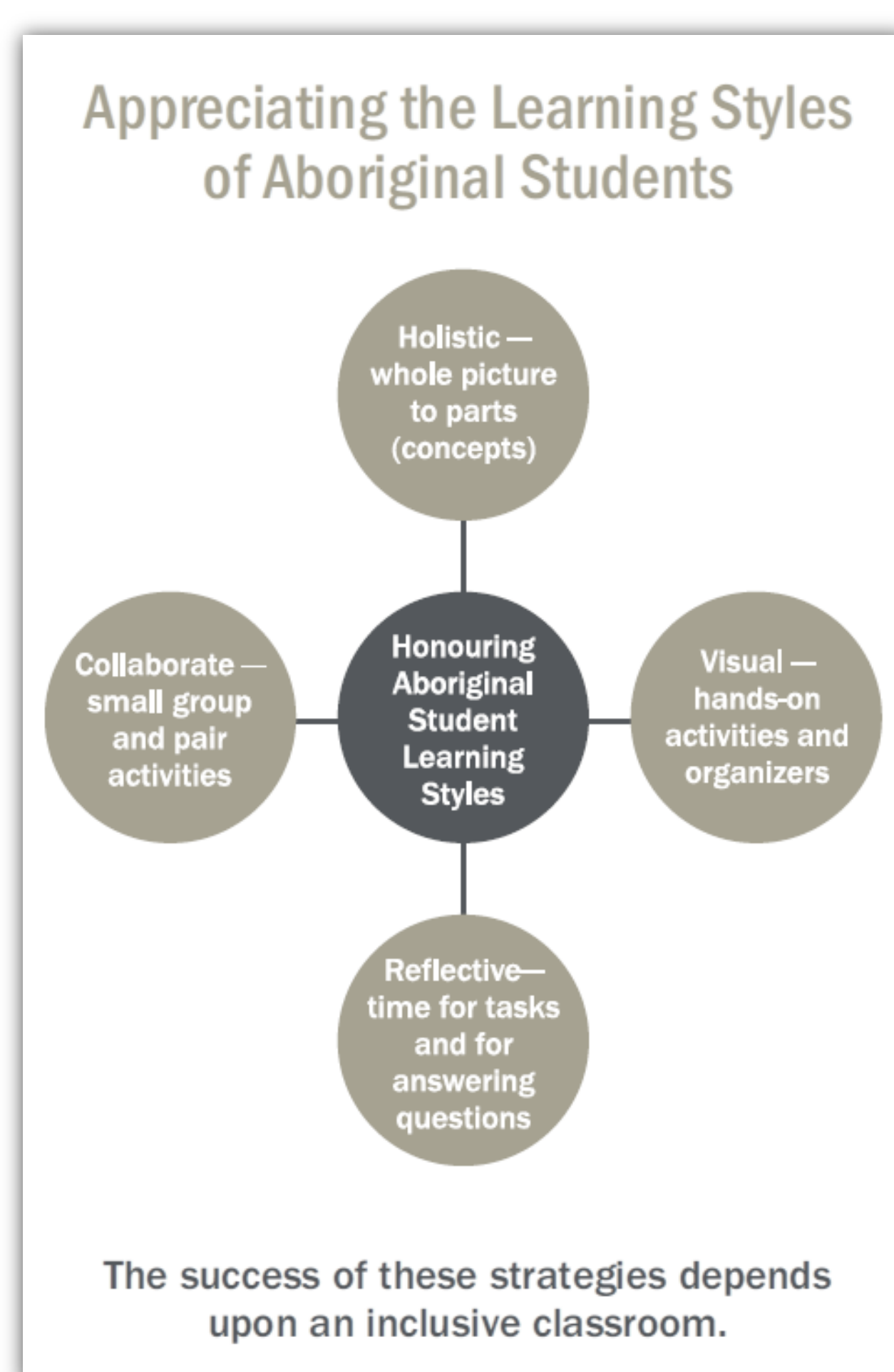
Culturally Responsive Language Teaching for Indigenous Students in Canada

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The Importance of Integrating Indigenous Values into the Classroom

As a teacher at Carleton University, in Ottawa, from 2013 to 2015, I was faced with the issue of teaching a colonizer's language, namely French, in the second colonizer's language, English, at an institution ruled by government guidelines and curriculum. As an educator and an immigrant settler, I took upon the responsibility of aligning my pedagogy with decolonizing strategies. In parallel with Indigenous and Canadian Studies Master's degree, I educated myself on the topic of Culturally Responsive Teaching, which helped me bring First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into my classroom.



Sharing the Responsibility

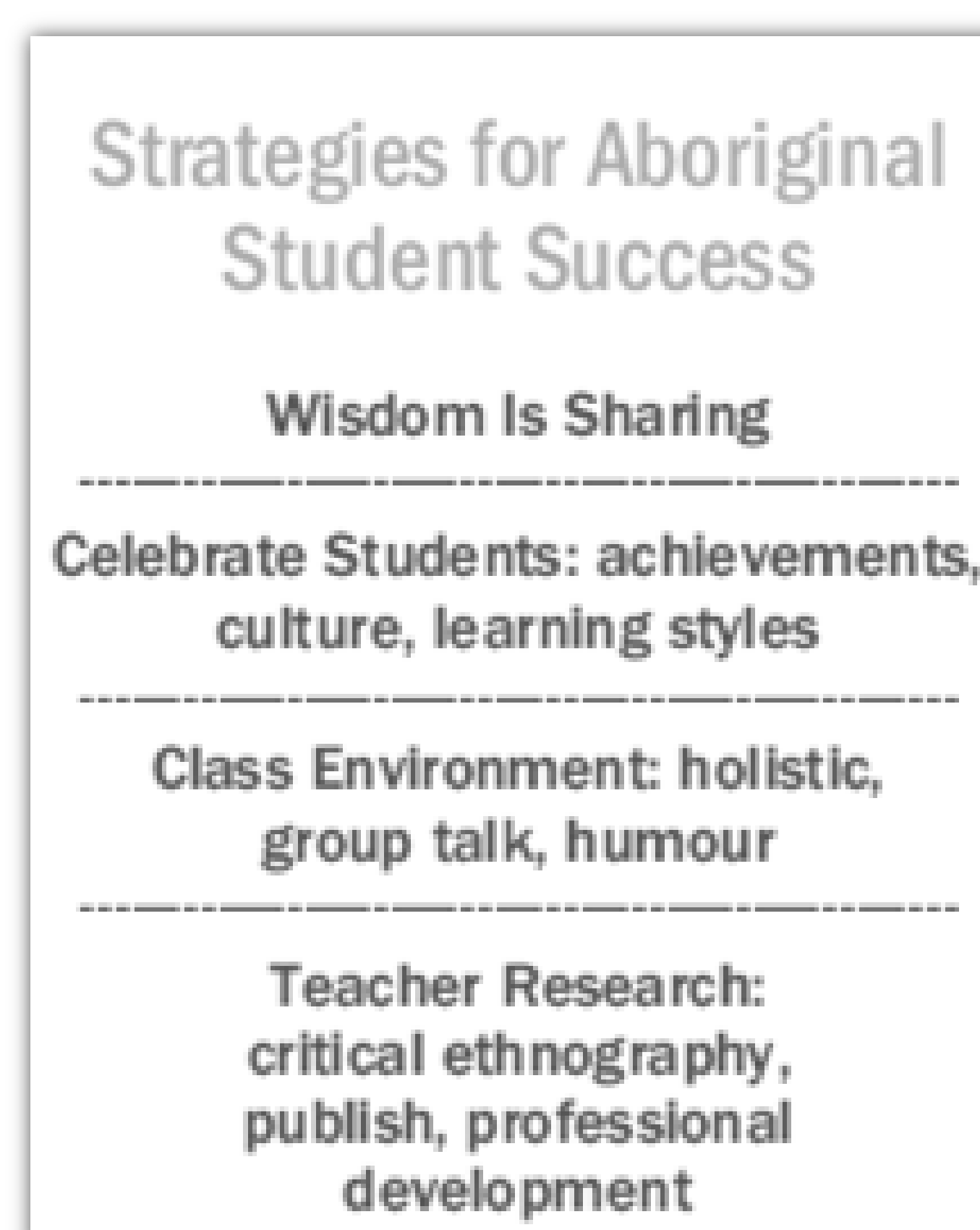
The Residential Schools system took Indigenous children from their communities and forced them into state and church run schools for over a century. The goal was facilitating their assimilation into White Canadian society. The children were required to learn English and participate in Christian rituals. Their hair was cut, and their possessions taken and burned. They were punished violently for speaking their Native language or attempting to flee home. This created inter-generational trauma and a generalized distrust of colonial (i.e. federal and provincial) education among today's Indigenous youth.

Supporting Indigenous Student Success

It is important for settler-educators to understand and respect the diversities of Indigenous cultures, languages, and worldviews. The relationship of mutual support and understanding between my role as a teacher, and the young people in my class, played an important part in their academic success. I had to develop cultural competence, and improve my skills at teaching in both a cross-cultural *and* multicultural setting.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a student-focused pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. It identifies not only the differences between students, but also their unique strengths, encourages their academic achievement and sense of belonging in the classroom. In my courses, creating an atmosphere where my Indigenous students' perspectives were reflected and respected benefitted the entire group, including the non-Native learners.



Sources:

Teacher's Toolkit www.ontario.ca/aboriginaleducation

"Our Words, Our Ways" www.education.alberta.ca

"Integrating Aboriginal Teaching and Values into the Classroom" www.edu.gov.on.ca/