



## Facilitation Guide

# Human Nature

## The Implications of a Society Not Connected to Nature

This facilitation guide aims to recognize the impacts of colonialism on the earth as we confront historical contexts, push back on colonial habits, and uplift traditional practices that address the impacts of colonialism on the earth. We hope that through collective conversation, we realize, deepen, and articulate our inherent connection to nature and reclaim our relationships with the earth.

### Materials Needed

- [Interactive Human Nature Exhibition](#) (print)
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer (optional)
- Poster paper
- Sticky notes
- Paper
- Markers

## Facilitation Steps

### A. Introduction: Who are we? Who's all here? Goals for today [10 min]

### B. The Earth's ways of knowing [5 min]

1. Have participants grab a chair and make a large group circle. Take a moment to ground participants in the space, reading an excerpt from Robin Wall Kimmerer's book: *Braiding Sweetgrass* (pgs 9-10; starting at paragraph 4):

## Excerpt From Braiding Sweetgrass

“In the Western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top – the pinnacle of evolution, the darling of Creation – and the plants at the bottom. But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as ‘the younger brothers of Creation.’ We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn – we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance. Their wisdom is apparent in the way that they live. They teach us by example. They’ve been on the earth far longer than we have been, and have had time to figure things out. They live both above and below ground, joining Skyworld to the earth. Plants know how to make food and medicine from light and water, and then they give it away.”

### C. Colonialism and Mother Earth [45 min]

1. Work as a large group to collectively define the term *Colonialism*. If participants are unsure of where to begin, set the tone by sharing your own working definition (i.e forcefully acquiring political control of a land not your own; occupying a land not your own for economic exploitation). Take notes on a large poster paper.
  - a. Does anyone have a working definition of colonialism that they would like to share?
    - i. Prompt one participant to share their definition; after they’ve shared, ask another participant what stood out to them about the definition; ask a different participant how they can build on this definition, continue until all participants have shared. Write out the final working definition/view of colonialism decided by the group on the large poster paper.
2. Set up the [Interactive Human Nature Exhibition](#). Explain that this will be an Interactive exhibition/gallery style activity used to discuss and recognize the historic and present-day impacts of colonialism.
3. Pass out sticky notes and markers to all participants. Instruct participants to approach the exhibition and consider the prompts and information presented; encourage them to write their thoughts, feelings, views, etc. on their sticky notes and add them to the exhibition. Allow ~10 minutes for viewing and peer discussion.
4. As a large group, walk around the exhibition together, calling attention to the added notes from participants. Allow for participants to speak to their notes as you walk through the exhibition.
5. Once complete, have participants find their way back to their seats. Facilitate the discussion for conversation around colonialism and its impacts on the Earth– and human societies:
  - a. How has colonialism shifted the way societies think of nature / How do we treat the earth [as a result of colonialism]?
  - b. What are the consequences of this? / What are the implications of a society that is not connected to nature?
  - c. How does this mirror our current situation on earth?

## D. Reciprocity and care [25 min]

1. While gathered in a large group circle, encourage participants to consider the various ways humans are connected to the earth. Use prompting questions to guide the conversation as participants realize, deepen, and articulate the inherent connection to nature humans share with the earth:
  - a. What [gifts] does the earth provide us with?
  - b. How does the earth care for us?

Note the interconnectedness of the earth's resources and our needs as human beings. We *need* the earth, and in turn, the earth *needs* us.

- c. What [gifts] can (or do) we provide to the earth?
- d. How do we care for the earth?
- e. Describe the earth using one word
- f. Describe humans using one word
- g. How can we connect and align ourselves more deeply with the earth?

## Our Traditions

As Robin Wall Kimmerer stated: "Plants know how to make food and medicine from light and water, and then they give it away."

The earth is inherently selfless, giving, and abundant. In our interactive Human Nature Exhibition we saw the detrimental impacts of colonialism [in the name of power and money] on the land; as societies grew, people lost sight of the gifts given to us by nature, and our reciprocal giving and care for the earth began to fade. This does not mean that all is lost, many cultures and traditions still live on, honoring the earth for its selfless giving and abundance, pushing beyond colonial expectations and habits.

2. Prompt participants to consider the good (or reciprocal) traditions still alive in our very own culture(s):
  - a. How does our culture recognize the gifts of nature?
  - b. What stories in our traditions live on today, guiding our relationships with the earth?
3. Prompt participants to consider the good (or reciprocal) traditions still alive in our local society:
  - a. What policies exist in our government that support the earth and its protection?
  - b. What campaigns or initiatives in our local cities are advocating for environmental justice?

## G. Collective visioning: reflections and actions [10 min]

1. The wellbeing of the earth is directly linked to the wellbeing of humans. In caring for the earth, we are caring for ourselves. Encourage participants to confront historical contexts, push back on colonial habits, and uplift traditional practices that address and remedy the

impacts of colonialism on the earth. Facilitate the conversation using guiding questions as needed:

- a. As a society, how did we get here? (encourage participants to reference learnings from previous activities)
- b. If we do nothing, what does that mean for the earth – and for humans?
- c. How can we individually practice care and reciprocity with the earth?

## **F. Reflections & Closing [10 min]**

1. Wrap-up; what did participants learn? What will they be sharing with community members? What remains unanswered?
2. Thank participants for their time and participation; we hope that they learned something new and are energized to continue conversations like today's.