What is the Race and Pedagogy Institute?

The Race and Pedagogy Institute (RPI) is a collaboration of the University of Puget Sound and the South Sound community or as our Native American partners say, the Salish Sea community that integrates academic assets of the campus into reciprocal partnerships with local community knowledge and experience to educate students and teachers at all levels to think critically about race, to cultivate terms and practices for societal transformation, and to act to eliminate racism. The Institute’s attention to pedagogy reflects a commitment to learning and teaching that is multidirectional, occurs across multiple sites and modalities, promotes awareness of past and present contexts, and affirms social identifications, shared accountability, and inclusive representation in making and using knowledge. Central to the vision and mission of ending racism is a focus on fostering the terms and practices of institutional, community, and societal transformation. To this end, the Institute enacts a stance of critically belonging to both campus and community, and is responsive to immediate and enduring demands at the nexus of race and education.

Why Race?

Race persists as a challenging category of social life demanding address. Particularly given the foundational role that race has played in the making of the United States and the broader Americas, alongside a critique of the conception of race as natural and biological, the Institute engages race as a real, embodied construct that produces and pervades our social relations and institutions, and intersects with other categories of difference, disparity, and discrimination.

Why Pedagogy?

The focus on how instruction occurs has been a hallmark of critical educational practices. Such a focus is often expressed through the category of critical pedagogy, which emphasizes and extends particular dimensions of effective teaching-learning processes. In pursuing critical pedagogy about race, emphasis is placed on learning and teaching as a multidirectional process in contrast to a one-way transaction between teachers and learners. Teachers and learners in the encounter are encouraged to be aware of their contexts, their identities, and their shared accountability in making and using knowledge. Such an approach includes the promotion of a reflexivity that challenges self and others, as well as notions that educational engagement ought to be apolitical, ahistorical, and value neutral.