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KNOWING THE INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP JOURNEY:
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE NEED THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM AS MUCH AS THE
ACADEMIC SYSTEM NEEDS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

DAWN ELIZABETH HARDISON-STEVENS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program
of Antioch University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December, 2013

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

KNOWING THE INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP JOURNEY: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE NEED
THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM AS MUCH AS THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM NEEDS
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

prepared by

Dawn Elizabeth Hardison-Stevens

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Jon Wergin, Ph.D., Committee Member date

Cornel Pewewardy, D.Ed., Committee Member date

Evelyn Steinhauer, Ph.D., External Reader date

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Dedication

Indigenous knowing shares our stories to the next generations. Memories become our legacy voicing who we are in life. – Dawn

I dedicate this dissertation and my entire academic process to family; ancestral, today, and the future, especially toward the future with my beloved grandchildren, my granddaughter, and grandson, Grace CarolAnn, and Zane Michael Stevens. Every day you are in my thoughts to remind me how much love, delight, fun, and fresh perspective there is in this world. I will love you and be with you forever as your Grandma Dawn (GD) through eternity. This experiential life journey dedication is to you and the next generations, and I will continue to work at encouraging you and others to discover their resonating voices that build enlightened perspectives. Always remember your family and those who have walked this Earth before you, as it is the ancestors who behold the stories that make you and those journeys become yours to pass on to the next generations. This story belongs to us.

This acknowledges the voice of my Native grandmother, Elizabeth Byrd, her mother Martha Byrd, the grandparents who raised her, Joseph and Elizabeth (LeGarde) Byrd, and great grandparents, Philip and Mary (Fiddler) Bird and their travels to Washington Territory from Canada's Red River Settlement and family home of James Curtis and Elizabeth (Montour) Bird. This accomplishment honorably goes to my father, Donald Gary Hardison, who planted the notion of this dream in my mind when I was young, and knew I was going to accomplish a Ph.D. ever since. Dad, I achieved this feat for you, and me. To my beautiful mother, Bonnie Jean, who loves her family yet separated identifies the need for women to behold confidence, a resonating voice to speak with conviction, stand tall in life, and to be strong emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually free from fear and dominance of another. I thank the spirit of our Indigenous ancestors, for all of us today, as we grow toward our future. I will stand tall,

honorably proud as the first ever in the family, a first-generation doctoral graduate, to achieve such an honor. I emblazoned this path for all of you.

Acknowledgments

I have walked a life journey with many significant people appearing on my path as guides leading me to where I am today. Many family, friends, and colleagues offered guidance, support, encouragement, and inspiration with a few who did or would not believe me while knocking down optimistic viewpoints in degrading ways. I learned to fight my own battles for my own convictions, knowing they were placed on my path in order to determine strength.

Key people have walked on my life's path for differing reasons and I must acknowledge one who has continuously proven herself as a true teacher, guide, an Indigenous Auntie adopting me as a Native niece. Many traditional people often open their arms to others, and call them family. To Dr. Carolyn Kenny, my dissertation chair, thank you for taking me under your wing and guiding my journey towards success as a Native spirited woman. I cannot imagine completing this journey, and had doubts, but then our paths crossed in 2008, when I suddenly found myself in tears hugging you as if we had known each other for generations. You are the epitome of strength emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually for Indigenous women. As my professor, advisor, and dissertation chair, I thank you for your encouragement, patience, belief, Spirit, and guidance and for sharing your scholarship, dedication to excellence, friendship, and wisdom. Carolyn, you proved to be dear personally and professionally, believing in me, and a philosophy not understood by many and needing to be voiced through an education process. I felt similar connections towards Dr. Cornel Pewewardy. Cornel, I cherish your knowledge, wisdom, and experience, which coincides with my passionate work of traditional views in leadership, philosophy, and as a change agent in the academic field identifying Indigenous people's rights. The Ph.D. program and resources helped solidify knowledge by sowing roots bridging cultural inclusion and responsiveness between learning institutions and Indigenous

communities. Carolyn and Cornel, you both provided an opportunity to see a grounded awareness for academic change in support of underrepresented Indigenous peoples. To Dr. Jon Wergin, I thank you for taking me on in my committee as the only non-Native person to bridge cultural knowledge with a grounded awareness of another academic perspective. Today and at residencies, you were a pillar of a grounded kind wisdom and experience and challenges of the differing perspectives through research. Another world opened paralleling the trail I needed to take to reach my academic goals. I am especially honored to have the three of you part of my life path. Thank you, Evelyn Steinhauer, for agreeing to be my external reader and opening the path toward Indigenous community knowledge. I hope our journey continues.

A heartfelt thank you extends to the following people who provided both professional and personal support. To Cohort 8, thank you for becoming part of my extended family and continued support through a myriad of residencies and multimedia opportunities through tears of pride and astonished joy, and a forever connection in a wonderfully enriching and powerful way. To a dear friend, Dr. O. Ray Kling, and his sweet late wife, Dr. Nancy Kling, retired dean, and professors of Oklahoma University, through your trust and guidance, you modeled a passionate work of academic love on a path of helping young minds further develop their leadership potential and capabilities. To Dr. William “Bill” Gray III, your friendship and emotional support were constant reminders of the goodness in the world that inspired me to persevere through thick and thin. I would not have come this far if it was not for your pushing, prodding, and unconditional acts of the utmost sincere kindness and unselfishness ensuring I complete this path. I will always be indebted to you. To my dear Alaskan friend Daniel Kantak, for your love and admiration in my work and spirit. Capturing me in poetry and sharing your deeply motivating photos of the other “people” in our lives. To Shannon Kenny for being such an

awesome knowledgeable reader of my work and offering kind constructive feedback. As the dedicated truthful reader and editor of my work, I could not have gotten this far this fast without you. To Joy Coates, my Boston sister in ancestral blood and true friend, who can read me like a book and intuitively call and care at all of the right moments. To Lori Dugdale, you and I, Aqua Verde is for life! To Willie Wolf, who authentically embodies true Indigenous spirit as a model leader and brings forth an important aspect missing in many lives, a simple notion called humor. To my biological one and only sibling, Debbie Hardison, thank you for recently proving to be a pillar of emotional and physical strength through thick and thin. I almost lost you, which for the first time left me wondering what life would be like without you. To the memory of a dear stimulating friend, an across-the-hall Antioch University Seattle office neighbor, the late John L. “Jack” Yantis, III, I thank you for being there during one of life’s transitions and sharing how Indigenous methods fit in today’s education system and curriculum. Our shared vision of exploring ethno-mathematics while using all of the senses has begun through observations, yet needs a stronger implementation and awareness among Native communities. Upon completion, I will continue our dream. When our collaborative efforts were supposed to begin, you unexpectedly passed away, January 23, 2008, a week before we were to start our work with a walk through the forest among the tree people at my home to relate academic mathematical skills within the forest community. As your headstone states in your small community, “Dance on, Jack, dance on!” To the many other people who believed in and viewed me from their outside perspective. Their generousities, kindness, pushing, and prodding helped get me here today.

Finally, to my family: My husband, best friend, and high school sweetheart of 37 years, Richard “Rick” Michael Stevens, Sr., our 35 year-old son, Richard “Ricky” Michael Stevens, Jr., and 32 year-old daughter, Melissa Dawn Stevens-Puhn, their respective spouses, Katherine

“Kady” Rollins-Stevens, and Joseph Scott Puhn; my beloved grandchildren, Grace Carolann Stevens, age 10, Zane Michael Stevens, age 7, and all future generations. Our motto, “We are growing up together” echoes deep inside our souls; pointedly sharing we are living our life journeys in a collaborative and forever learning manner through resonating voices of respect. Rick, your love, and unconditional support allowed this envisioned dream through thick and thin, smiles and laughter, and many, many tears of fear, sadness, and joy. I thank you. To Ricky, Kady, Melissa, Joe, Grace, and Zane, I thank you for your patience, encouragement, and strength throughout this academic journey in hopes the world is opened through experiential learning and sharing. Kudos to Joe and Melissa for keeping me in photos, too! I love you all so dearly.

Abstract

This dissertation explores the research question, “How can we create the best learning environments for Indigenous students through good leadership at all levels?” A bridge between cultures provides learning opportunities toward academic success between Indigenous students, families, leaders, and communities. Through personal experience as a practitioner, professional, and education, my research examines and identifies results from personnel and students at five schools, tribal and public, their tribal communities, and two Indigenous people in high profile leadership positions indicating an educational philosophy recognizing Indigenous people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs Indigenous people. Portraits and interviews revealed the existence of pedagogical methodologies oriented toward Native student success yet mainstream academic institutions are failing Native peoples to the detriment of their tribal communities. In many tribal communities, leadership beholds many styles, modeling modes of life amid Mother Earth, yet education needs to be bridged with philosophy. Through personal experiences and delving in to educational leadership, a life’s passion emerged toward Indigenous leadership philosophy to educate in collaborative and inclusive manners bridging perceptions between educators, Indigenous peoples, respective communities, and leadership building toward policy attainment. Academic opportunities for success with intergenerational Native students identify necessary interconnectedness with a leadership philosophy. Many successful leadership and education models compare to Indigenous styles from several hundred years ago. The literature reflects on challenges and academic success bridging cultural standards resulting in a range of academic and leadership interest among Native communities. The electronic version of this Dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd>

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Chapter I: Envisioning Indigenous Leadership in Education Through a Spiritual and Philosophical Perspective

When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live life so when you die, the world cries and you rejoice. (White Elk as cited in Cadotte, 2007, p. 7)

This dissertation came forth in some of the most amazing places, while looking out a window or walking somewhere in some of the most beautiful and inspirational scenery.

Chartrand (2007) quotes a grandmother's word,

When you look around in nature, in creation, you will see many different plants and flowers. All are different, but have a role in making the land a healthy place. They do not say that one of them not belongs. They all make room for each other. They depend on each other and make creation beautiful for us. (p. 18)

I stay close to Mother Earth, viewing and reflecting upon some of my most determined educators; the communities of diverse forests with leaders standing tall or arms branched out collaborating on the growth of their surrounding community. At my home, I peer out windows and sit among the second growth Douglas fir, Western Red cedar, Big Leaf maple, Western hemlock, Golden Chinquapin, and Red alder. These trees are the Elders, keepers of story and wisdom, as the neighboring logged areas grow young saplings. Deer graze as chipmunks, robins, ravens, owls, and an occasional cougar speak their voices. My Seattle home on Portage Bay at the University of Washington embraces the water community, while the surrounding Earth roots Western hemlock, Western red cedar, honey locust, European white birch, pin oak, zelkova serrata 'Village Green', Norway maple, Summit green ash, Chinese scholar trees, Japanese black pine, white pine, Rocky Mountain juniper, atlas cedar, sugar maple, and Austrian pine. Through Alaska windows, I reflect with the Sitka spruce, Western hemlock, and yellow cedar among glaciers and expansive Lynn Canal in Juneau with the Chilkat and Chilkoot Mountains in the distance. Whales emerge, with eagles and ravens greeting each day with resonating voices. In Leavenworth, Washington, I witness Western cedar, Ponderosa, Lodge pole, and Western white

pine, Quaking aspen, water birch, and Oregon white oak all stand tall along granite walled rock cliffs with a roaring white water icicle creek near my feet. These teachers comfort Earth's life from where their ancestral roots dig deep, and understory life flourishes everywhere I walk, standing tall with arms stretched up toward the ancestral Spirits against an ever-changing sky of clouds, sun, stars, and moon. I have been blessed my whole life with these big people, rich in diversity, and feeding my mind. In customary Indigenous tradition, these are all our relatives, honoring all in our World with the Two-legged Ones, Four-legged Ones, Feathered Ones, Finned Ones, Ones That Crawl, Rooted Nations, Mineral People, and Sky Nations. This interconnectedness honors all creations with the understanding that we are all related and created equal, and in turn, affecting one affects all. Honoring my Cree, *N_hiyawak*, ancestry, I will share "The land gives you your culture" *Miyo-W_hk_htowin*, philosophy of good relations, to "all my relations" *Niw_hk_m_kanak* (Chartrand, 2007, p. 5). Like the plants, animals, soil, and environment that are "Native" or "Indigenous" to their location as developing "successfully," I consider these terms throughout the dissertation also with the "human people" living on a land they are accustomed based on their ancestors. To be "successful" especially in leadership, one should take in to account their environment and consider the people knowing they are all unique and placed in their positions for reason. An effective leader guides the people toward their own individual success, knowing each person should be aware of their own cultural selves (Pewewardy, 2003).

This dissertation titled, *Knowing the Indigenous Leadership Journey: Indigenous People Need the Academic System as Much as the Academic System Needs Indigenous People*, investigates Indigenous leadership, and explores how the conceptual framework of interconnectedness relates to tribal communities today through "mutuality and equality" (C.

Pewewardy, personal communication, November 7, 2013). This research will identify Indigenous philosophy that informs viable teaching knowledge and methods effective for Native people to make education, especially secondary and postsecondary, an inclusive experience and practical opportunity for all involved in the process. All interviews conducted were approved by submitting an Ethics Application for review to the Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Institutional Review Board (IRB).

One of the foci of my research is a consideration of how leadership styles within most cultures adapt based on leaders learning from mistakes and establishing the necessary change to offer individual and group growth toward successful outcomes. I define “success” as an individual and/or groups leading a good life through personal emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual heart, through development of their passions from his or her understanding of their past to make the present and develop further the future. Success considers the individual or groups story unique in quality or quantity based on experience and perspective. I define story as a powerful understanding of self based on lived experiences one can share and acknowledge as their own. This identifies the individual’s uniqueness as one individual’s story or perception differs from another’s. Each individual is differently unique like that of a snowflake, trees, or environment.

Indigenous leadership styles encompass an educational balance of all people relative to the natural world with an emphasis on equality (Belgarde, Mitchell, & Arquero, 2002). The orientation of traditional Indigenous methods of education encompasses an awareness of how the learning process is relevant for the learner’s innate life path within their natural environments. The traditional European style of rote memorization within a textbook education and a reward system fails Indigenous students because of its disregard for Native ways of holistic learning

(Belgarde et al., 2002; Demmert & Towner, 2003). In Native knowledge, education must be more experiential and thus transformational for the individual Native student. Pewewardy (personal communication, November 2013) noted author Alfred's (2005) following observation about traditional Indigenous teachings,

The ideal personality in [Indigenous] cultures is a person who shows kindness to all, puts the group ahead of individual wants and desires, who is a generalist, who is steeped in spiritual and ritual knowledge – a person who goes about daily life and approaches “all his or her relations” in a sea of friendship, easy going-ness, humor, and good feelings. (p. 10)

Traditions of most tribal cultures demonstrate knowledge in broader content fields of holistic learning such as building relationships within and between the contexts of math, science, art, social studies, writing, etc. Several studies successfully argue that relevant learning is crucial to Native students (D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005). Lee Little Soldier (1989) stated, “Cooperative learning appears to improve student achievement, matching such traditional Indian values and behaviors as respect for the individual, development of an internal locus of control, sharing, and harmony” (p. 161).

In the bigger picture of the state of education today, it is dismal to acknowledge that a significant percentage of students across the nation continue to fail academically, which affects the current and future leadership of Indigenous Nations. In the United States, an entire country is falling behind other developed countries in basic core academic skills, especially with math and science (Cavanaugh, 2010). We must continue to ask why. Within this context, Native students have high dropout rates in the academic world for many reasons, but mainly due to a perceived negative ancestral history, which included boarding or residential schools across the country (Demmert & Towner, 2003; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004). Respectfully, these stories became a part of this dissertation.

State test scores reveal Native students are failing the core courses of reading, writing, math, and science. Change in learning and teaching has thus become a necessity (Demmert & Towner, 2003; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Little Soldier, 1989). I have worked in education, especially in Native educational fields, since 1987. During my career, I often observed bored students feeling unchallenged as consistent lecturing teachers spoon-fed information to them in a singularly didactic style. The learning did not pertain to their life journey or history. Often, feelings of shame regarding one-sided accounts of ancestral historical perspectives were the perhaps unintended consequences of such teaching. Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010) mentioned that the latest data shows no progress as Native students continue to drop out, noting, “The most recent state and national dropout statistics, released by *Education Week* in June 2009, show that the graduation and dropout crisis continue to intensify” (p. 19), affecting the future of tribal communities and leadership in world economies.

Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010) compared the 2000 and 2007 U.S. Census reports estimating the number of Native peoples “in the United States when counted alone or in combination with other races estimated that this number had increased” from 4.2 million to 4.5 million (p. 21). The authors noted, “Much of the growth is due to an increasing number of children and youth” with “one third of the [Native] population under the age of eighteen” (p. 21), concluding further, “Failure to ensure that Native youth graduate from high school places the entire population at risk” (p. 21).

This dissertation topic evolved out of abundant evidence identifying the need to rethink education of Indigenous peoples. In present-day public education and postsecondary institutions, the mainstream curriculum serves to maintain a disconnection between Native knowledge and educational practices, a fact that is discouragingly evident in statistics pointing to the weaker

academic performance of many Native students (Belgarde et al., 2002). It is my hope that in pursuing this research, I might raise awareness about the importance of leadership that encourages culturally relevant approaches. Indigenous placed-based, relevant, and experiential learning methodologies, with culturally integrated curriculum contribute significantly to Indigenous students' ancestral heritage thus gaining pride, and academic success leading toward leadership opportunities. I have attempted to achieve my goal through preliminary research, pilot projects, and formally approved dissertation research.

If Indigenous leaders encourage teaching methods that are culturally sensitive, educators can bring together Native communities as part of the learning and teaching process. I explore how transformational relationships contribute to applications of Native curricula in the classroom, school system, and partnerships with Indigenous communities from the conceptual perspective of the Medicine Wheel (see Figure 1.1).

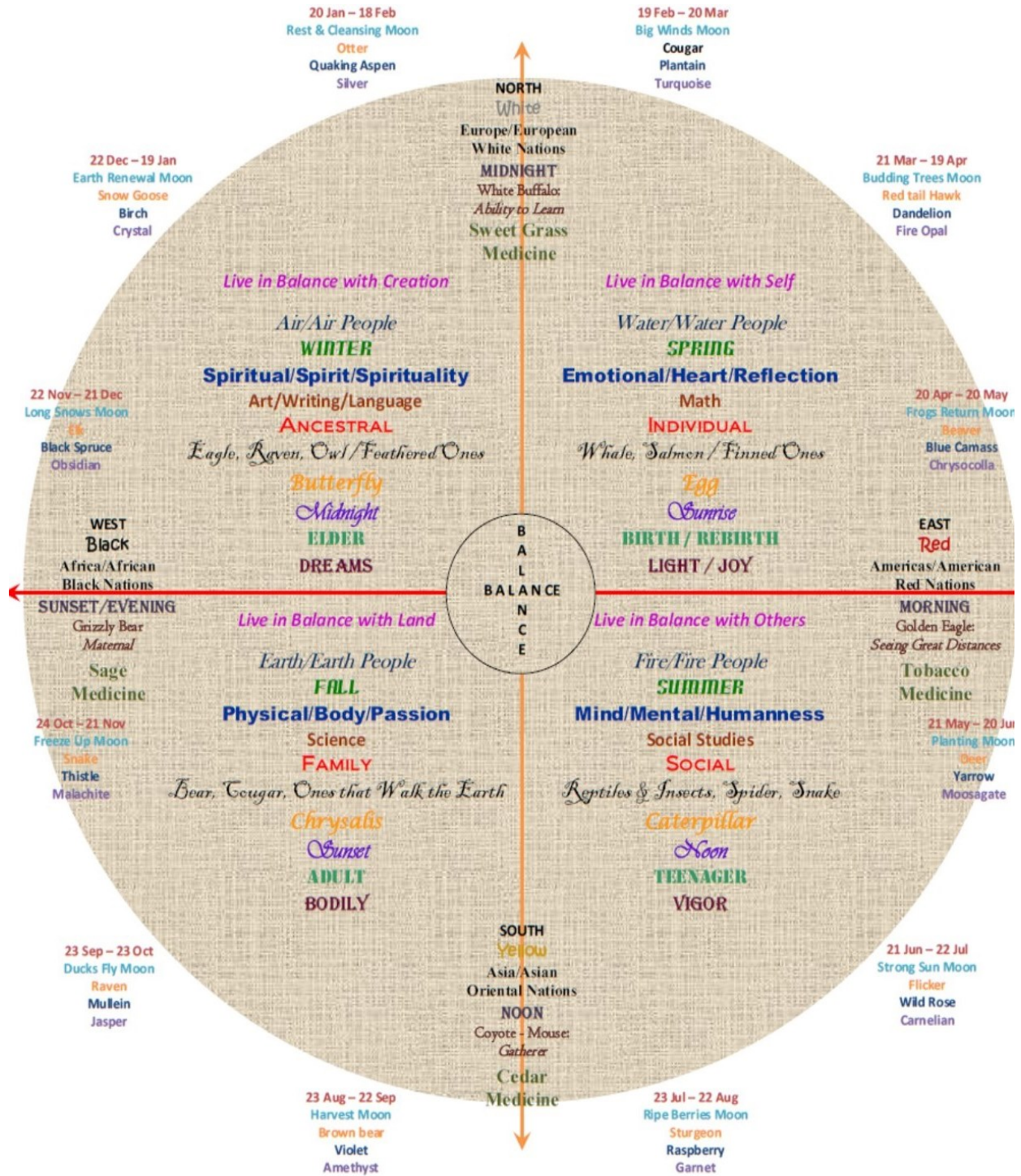


Figure 1.1. Medicine Wheel: Indigenous Philosophy of Interconnectedness

The Medicine Wheel details a balance within the circle of life (Graveline, 1998). Whiteman (2013) shared, “The Medicine Wheel represents the Circle of Life – Mother Earth where we are all connected, man, animal, and all living things” (para. 1). The Medicine Wheel identifies the balance in four quadrants, primarily noting diversity, intergenerational, seasons, directions, life stages, among others. The circle divides in half noting two genders, Sun and Moon, left and right brain, and others. People who walk in two genders or “Two Spirits” are special in Indigenous communities and in many instances become Medicine people or Shaman (Holliman, 1997; Lang, 1999). The Medicine Wheel depicts the interconnectedness with the months of the calendar year and identifies animals, plants, minerals, and stones (R. L. Wilson, 2011).

To build understanding between Indigenous and non-Native cultures in hopes of establishing appreciation, the Medicine Wheel (see Figure 1.1) embodies a model of balance considered powerful in some Native communities as it demonstrates interconnectedness with life. Castellano stated (as cited in Kenny & Fraser, 2012), “The circle, representing the circle of life, contains experience, everything in the biosphere – animal, vegetable, mineral, human, spirit – past, present, and future” (p. 30). Many scholars reference such a philosophy without referring to the Medicine Wheel as an object, while according to McLeod (as cited in Kenny & Fraser, 2012), “The Medicine Wheel conceptual framework is accepted as appropriate in Indigenous research” (p. 35). Battiste and Barman (1995) discuss the circle from the directions, east, south, west, and north with detailed meaning.

This dissertation considers this framework to construct connections between the learning process, curriculum development awareness, and community involvement in the education of Indigenous students to be the future leaders. Lavallée (2009) stated, “The medicine wheel is

both a symbol and a tool to understand phenomena” (p. 23). The four quadrants are separate but interconnected “in a state of separateness but interconnected” (p. 23). The entire circle represents the global perspective and divides in to individual stories and perspectives. “The circle represents infinite life, whereas the four quadrants can represent teachings such as the four races: black, white, yellow, and red. The teaching here is that all races are equal, all are related, and all are interconnected” (p. 23).

The Medicine wheel has myriad meanings within our realms of life. The circle has various interpretations for individuals, but primarily,

Have four domains: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual and four [quadrants], which suggest the teachings, learned from self, family, community, and larger society. In this situation, the leader, as the learner, is situated in the center of the first circle where personal reflection on influences, experiential relationships, and connections starts and then proceeds to the easterly quadrant covering all four domains in a circular manner. Learning in the Medicine Wheel framework includes integrating the process of reflection, experience, and self-direction into the four domains. Learning applies to “skills, attitudes, sensibilities, and values” which are viewed in the Medicine Wheel framework as leadership skills in the physical; leadership attitudes in the emotional; leadership sensibilities in the mental; and leadership values in the spiritual domains. (McCloud, 2012, p. 35)

Every aspect of my being is to try to keep in a balance, from health, education, learning, leading, life. Battiste and Barman (1995) state that, “The circle typology illustrates the continuum and interconnectedness of the events and conditions that shape racism, multiculturalism, anti-racism, and peacekeeping” (p. xv).

Moving this spiritual philosophy into practice within a learning environment or classroom at the school, the technique of incorporating relevancy can bring together a community as leaders and educators working together to teach and view everyone as a learner (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004). Cajete (2000) explained that the interconnectedness life beholds “with the natural world is simultaneously a type of ‘perceptual phenomenology,’ as well as a

sensual type of experience because of the close intimacy” (p. 34). The documentation for my study includes Indigenous methodologies, phenomenological, ethnographic, and portraiture based on an understanding that lifeworlds included individual change at any given age. Individuals develop their own skill-sets through life’s experiences (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). The research will develop full-circle through direct experience with interviews of individuals enmeshed in Native leadership positions vying for academic change, and continuing the phenomenological, ethnographic, and portraiture methodology.

Researcher Position

For generations Indigenous people were educated forcibly, submissively, and oppressively in a system oriented toward limiting their education to fulfill servitude roles. Native leadership philosophy focuses on balance and interconnectedness “grounded in experience and represent(s) specific contexts, particular tribe’s diverse lands, inherent values and beliefs, varieties of protocols, a plethora of languages, and a tremendous variety of circumstances” (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 13). Each individual brings his or her own history. Kenny & Fraser (2012) shared, “The road to leadership is paved with land, ancestors, elders, and story—concepts that are rarely mentioned in the standard leadership literature. These are embodied concepts unique to Native Leadership” (p. 16).

As Indigenous communities strive to maintain their sovereign nations, educational opportunity is required for the leadership to continue thriving in today’s societies. Mihesuah (2003) observed a need for educational institutions to gain assistance while working with Native students and Indigenous communities based on historical experiences and current figures for academic dropout rate. To a large degree the impetus and structure of this study finds its source in my own experiences as an educator in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational

institutes, with a particular influence emanating from the predominance of empathetic values in Native culture and my own views and perspectives of Native youth. Pewewardy (2002a) stated,

[Indigenous] students have distinct cultural values, such as conformity to authority and respect for elders, taciturnity, strong tribal social hierarchy, patrimonial/matrilineal clans, and an emphasis on learning, which are deeply rooted in the teachings of the elders. These cultural traits are exhibited in family socialization patterns, which are quite different from those of other ethnic groups. (p. 27)

I have seen a lot of misunderstanding of the Indigenous student in all areas of mainstream academic institutions.

Growing up, I felt different from the non-Native students in the public school system. There were the physical differences of darker hair and skin, but then there were also the emotional and mental differences. My non-Native peers were outgoing, rambunctious, and outspoken. I was quiet, observant, and listened to everything happening around me, utilizing all sensory processes. Other students talked and questioned everything. I pondered all moments as coming onto my path of knowledge for reason. I observed and analyzed people's actions, reactions, motions, and verbal communications as a learning tool to gain knowledge about personalities. I did not speak but watched and listened. Growing up I felt there was something amiss with me personally. While my classmates were reacting more to their environment, I found myself taking it all in and processing these experiences quietly. Later in life, I fondly recognized and identified myself as a typical standard for a Native student.

The stereotype of the quiet Indian continues today. Many educators mistake the silence of Native students as an indication that they do not know the content, or are disengaged from learning (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy & Hammer, 2003). To the contrary, scholars have noted that listening and observing are highly valued skills in many Indigenous populations (Pewewardy & Hammer, 2003).

When teaching Native students, I shared the revelation of traditional observation and listening skills as a normal learning process. I was not surprised to see the expressions of incredulity among the students as I empathized about how they felt. As a teacher, I reflected on my own experiences of feeling different as a youth, which prompted spirited conversation with the students who displayed relief and increase in confidence. Students wanted to learn more about themselves as Native people in relation to the researched learning styles. From then on, my students became very engaged in their learning and academics. I continued to employ this experiential technique in order to establish understanding for Native learners.

I taught high school United States History, and shared the knowledge of Native ways and accomplishments throughout history and in to today. I shared the knowledge of the lesser known Iroquois Confederacy assisting in the framework of our United States government system.

Background. All of my research as an interested individual is personal and experiential for my ancestors, future generations, and me. I seek solutions and change for family and community orientation to see what practices and methodologies demonstrate graduation attainment for Indigenous students. Student graduation success can only come when education blends in with the components of a youth's natural environment.

By virtue of my experience in Indian education as an educator, administrator, and work with the Center for Native Education, I have contact with tribal people who are struggling with issues of graduation attainment for Native youth. Through stories of those involved, education has become a journey with Indigenous peoples as discussion and solutions become addressed. To work with indigenous peoples, one needs to understand the history from leadership qualities of democracy and equality of all people through education. National Indian Education Association (NIEA) President Dr. Shotton shared in her speech at the 2013 Legislative Summit

addressing, “Why we must stand for high-quality Native education and build education nations and communities.... Our communities cannot thrive in an increasingly global economy if we do not prepare our students to be leaders in such an economy” (para. 10). Educational institutions must relate with today’s tribal communities. “And education societies in which our families, tribes, and communities are leaders in structuring high-quality academic and cultural education” (Shotton, 2013, para. 8).

As a student in the 1960s and 1970s, I found some of the learned content in the classrooms demeaning to my Native ancestry and culture. There were moments when I felt ashamed to be a Native descendent because of horrible misdeeds I learned from textbooks and movies. I became one of the Native student statistics by dropping out of high school after my junior year, pregnant. I later signed up to obtain a GED, but the counselor saw my GPA and stated, “You are getting your high school diploma with these grades.” With two babies, I secretly went back to high school with my aunt and cousin babysitting. Graduating with a 4.0, I gift-wrapped my high school diploma and a letter from my counselor for my dad on Father’s Day.

My academic experiences established the precedent for my involvement with my own children’s education at their schools. I wanted my children to feel proud of their Native ancestry and build a better educational foundation demonstrating a truth minus the misconstrued perspectives. I observed teachers and classroom environments to chose educators I felt were best suited to instruct my children as unique individuals.

As my children grew up, I became instrumental in assisting other Native youth to feel pride in the Native culture and to inspire them to become educators in the teachings of Native people and traditions. I realized change had to start with the individual, and then I started the

process of continuing an education process that delved into the social injustices happening to Indigenous people. In the process of becoming a social studies teacher at the high school where I had attended and became one of the Native dropout statistics, I created a different teaching approach and methodology. Students deemed me as “the hardest teacher, but made learning fun.” As an educator, I placed learning in the students’ hands, giving them ownership of what they chose to learn. For the majority of them, this required their own research for report topics, which included their own personal culture and ancestral lineages. Topics required approval, but this made me a learner as well, as students considered topics, which I had not considered or learned. Within the classroom, a learning community of trust needed to be established between students and educators. With Native students, this method seemed to work well and graduation rates rose. Classroom management and attendance was hardly an issue in the classes while at the same time there was a concern in other classrooms with many of the same students. When questioned, students seemed to acknowledge they were bored in other classes.

I repeatedly heard from teachers and administrators in the halls of schools, “How do you motivate today’s students?” I have also heard, “Today’s students are not motivated to learn.” Are teachers or educators lacking motivation while teaching? Do students lack characteristics associated with motivation such as inspiration, enthusiasm, and stimulus, or is it the instructor? More specifically, are Native students lacking these characteristics, or might there be other factors at work? Through my work with the Center for Native Education, I have come across case studies and research that discuss high school dropout rates of Native people, but I want to seek effective teaching solutions cognizant of the Indigenous learner. I will include research to understand these issues and to seek solutions that may also help my children and grandchildren as they begin or enhance their academic careers with pride in their ancestry. This may provide

insight into an antiquated theory that Native people are not capable learners, an idea that often limits them to blue-collar work, a point that came up in one of my preliminary interviews for this study with a tribal administrator in 2012. I hope to fill in some of the areas that can help in knowing the story, and understand an Indigenous people's journey toward the nature of student educational success.

Need for Research

Identifying these gaps contributed to the development of my research in a manner that allowed me to become more aware of unresolved issues based on my own observations and experiences within the education process. In my effort to come to terms with some of the issues described above, I offer an analogy to resolving these issues that also functions as a metaphor because the following image is the sensory reality in which I live as a Native person. The natural world grounds my perspective, as the elements of nature are also our teachers. "There needs to be reciprocity of worldviews, meaning a *two-way* exchange of ideas that honours both Western and Indigenous knowledge and ways" (Gardner, 2012, p. 176). This reality helps me to hold on to my values and beliefs in the complex system of Native educational leadership often within a non-Native system.

I have consistently maintained a visual analogy/metaphor of a structural bridge as a mental representation when teaching and presenting the importance of linking cultures, notably the Indigenous culture with the dominant society. The original bridging envisioned in my environmentally centered mind consists of a fallen old growth tree. The decaying "nurse" log spans a small forest gorge with a gurgling creek providing a rich ecological sustenance that nurses the younger trees, seedlings, and other forest vegetation among the biodiversity of trees and understory vegetation. In contrast, relationships with schools on or near reservations have

fabricated constructed bridges crossing water systems between most of the Native and non-Native communities. Because of the ignorance and antiquities of an education system that virtually diminished or even eliminated Native cultural knowledge and understanding, the bridge symbolism has become my personal analogy/metaphor of the work connecting Indigenous knowledge with the learning styles and relevant needs of Native learners. My philosophy is that Native people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs Native people. Hence, the imagery of the bridge comes into play as both cultures connect to share in the common goals of academic degree achievement and cultural enlightenment.

I believe Native learners have always been educators and bring a unique perspective and gift of knowledge and relevancy to those who teach culturally traditional content. My personal investigation of this concept in the course of my dissertation research included consideration of the relationship of tribal sovereignty and the education of Native youth as they acquire an understanding of cultural content associated with Native traditional knowledge. With resonating voices, Native people need to become involved by sitting on school boards where significant Native populations of students attend schools, becoming educated themselves as adults to be academic role models, and seeking out more encouraging viewpoints toward their community's educational future. The historical incidences of boarding schools should be part of the experiential learning process of understanding unfavorable methodologies, both educationally and culturally. This era in history is useful in galvanizing the trauma endured by Indigenous cultures. It can also be useful in restoring a lost sense of pride as it clearly can display how time heals and strengthens individual groups of people. Indigenous people should convey pride in knowing their own educational system for generations and viewed as favorable in the context of

contemporary Western learning methods. There are many stories orally told and written by Indigenous people about who they are as a people, and how they got to where they are today.

State of the Literature: Seeking the Story—Hearing the Voices of the People

I found many “stories” written by Native people voicing their perspectives about their personal history, shared and untold stories, truths, and educational experiences. To find the information for my dissertation, I learned a brief lesson when I explored differing perspectives about “What do I call myself?” My research thus took additional time in order to review the identification and explanation of word usage chosen in the documentation of Native learners. I learned that expanding my keyword search to include the terms “American Indian,” “Indian,” “Native American,” “Native,” “Native American Indian,” “Aboriginal,” and “Indigenous” in order to identify “First Peoples” or “descendants of the land” increased my search results exponentially. I came across several prominent authors and field experts by simply expanding the usage of definers generally associated with Indigenous people. The reports bear reference in most academic and conversational positioning (Belgarde et al., 2002; Bird, 1999; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy, 2002b; Powers, 2006). I noted the Native people identified as “Indigenous people” in Canada and “aboriginal” in Australia. In the interest of uniformity for this paper, I am going to use the terms most comfortable for me: “Native” or “Indigenous.”

According to Pewewardy (2003), the United States government identified “American Indian” as the legal term. I have chosen to use the term “Native” interchanged with “Indigenous” based in part on an understanding of the ties between Native people and Native plants, as both descendant and Indigenous from the land itself, which is, tied to a place. Garrett, Bellon-Ham, Torres-Rivera, Garrett, and Roberts (2003) identified the U.S. Bureau of Indian

Affair's legal definition of "American Indian" as an enrolled or registered member of a tribe whose blood quantum is one-fourth or more:

Native American ancestry use the term Native American to refer to Native peoples Indigenous to the lower 48 states who self-identify as Native American and maintain cultural identification as a Native person through membership in a Native American nation or tribe by the state or federal government or through other tribal affiliation and community recognition. Ideally, the name of Native nations or tribes should be used rather than a generic name. Native people tend to identify first as members of a specific nation or tribe, then as Native peoples. (p. 229)

A. C. Wilson and Bird (2005) discuss decolonizing tribal enrollment with the blood quantum as barriers are established amongst the communities themselves. Many Native people question proper identification for their race and consider the variations mentioned above. Thus, "identity" is a critical concept when exploring my research statement.

Another concept identified in educational research on Native peoples was that of being "culturally responsive" in the educational process. Although culturally responsive schooling for Native youth has asserted for over 40 years that schools and classrooms continue to fail the needs of Native students (Belgarde et al., 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy, 2002b), the identification of terms has brought an awareness of the global perspectives of education. Pewewardy (2003) identified this in the following framework: "recent 'culture wars' over the school curriculum is a continuation in a newer form of ideological structures of hegemony that follow the old path of separating children and communities from their cultural traditions" (p. 76). The process of learning and teaching must also consist of the development of a life-long awareness toward a culturally responsive education within the Native people's own environment. Inupiaq member Leona Okakok (1989) reflected, "To me, educating a child means equipping him or her with the capability to succeed in the world he or she will live in" (p. 411). My review

of the literature in this area found that in general, researchers advise educators to infuse the student's culture as an effective method for educating the Native learners.

Scope of Reviewed Literature

The literature ranged from Native and non-Native perspectives of Indigenous leadership and educational practices benefiting learning for Native students. Several solutions were studied that will be shared with outcomes and observations. Most were qualitative studies addressing differing arenas of Indigenous peoples learning and leadership with historical backgrounds, including residential schools.

My main areas of interest are reflected in the literature reviewed for this study, which includes historical accounts of the establishment of boarding schools in the United States during the 19th century, as well as residential schools in Canada and New Zealand. The injustice of controlling groups of peoples Indigenous to the land based upon views of a Eurocentric dominance, whether for religious or opportunistic gain, is apparent across these studies. In my analysis of this literature, I identified ideological critiques of the prejudices that lead to the creation of a militant educational philosophy for Indigenous children.

My research further revealed that Native people have used a traditional means of knowledge that is more demonstrative than didactic and incorporates applied, hands-on, and experiential learning (D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009). There is a need to bring together and bridge different worlds of education to build understanding between conventional Western and traditional Native ways of knowing and learning in view of change (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995). Research on Native student learning styles, in conjunction with students failing in the current school systems, identified in numerous studies, largely predicted failure based on lack of cultural relevance and content (Ascher & D'Ambrosio, 1994; Bishop,

1988; D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005). A range of studies shows that pedagogies inclusive of placed-based education and relevant experiential learning have qualified as traditional Indigenous practices (Stagich, 2001). Student engagement in learning from two worlds, Native and non-Native, should build understanding among educators of how learning content disciplines work together from a big picture or holistic thinking pedagogy. Stagich also noted the relationship between the historical events of Indigenous nations and their environments. Moving the theory into practice within a learning environment or classroom at the school, the technique of incorporating relevancy can bring together a community as educators work together to teach and view everyone, including themselves, as a learner (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

Native and Non-Native Author Perspectives

I would like to begin this section by discussing the research of someone who has believed in my work, the first Indigenous woman Ph.D. I have met who has now become an advisor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Carolyn Kenny (Choctaw, Haida). Kenny's passion and insights capture the power of Indigenous women empathetically by presenting women, honoring the great-great grandmothers, great grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, aunts, daughters, granddaughters, great granddaughters, great-great granddaughters, nieces, through intergenerational research that beholds the strong voices in the leadership within Indigenous communities. I start this section honoring Dr. Kenny's respectful work, because when I began my research with the Boolean method; Dr. Carolyn Kenny's work appeared first, starting my research journey. This passage took me to influential Native women, some of whom come from an area of my ancestors, and opening my eyes and heart to a world I have "felt" and began to learn that I do not stand alone.

In my research, there was a difference in perspective between Native and non-Native authors, especially concerning research on Native peoples and educational practices. In particular, there was a deeper empathetic understanding as to reasoning why Native students did or did not achieve in school, with family and community taking priority in nearly all instances. Pidgeon mentions in Kenny and Fraser (2012),

Indigenous presence in mainstream post-secondary institutions in Canada is a recently “new phenomenon,” given universities’ long history in this country starting in the early 1700s. While some Aboriginal students attended college and university during the late 1800s, noticeable participation did not occur until 1960s and 1970s with the establishment of relevant programs (e.g., Native Teacher Education, First Nations Studies, and Aboriginal Law) and services (i.e., Aboriginal student services). (p. 180)

Most population groups in the United States consider college attendance a norm and the next, logical, expected, and desired stage in the passage toward personal and occupational achievement. If both parents attended college, then there was a prevailing intention that the children would attend. Among non-traditional, primarily first generation, college students, however, the passage to college is far more problematic. For many, going to college constituted a major incoherence in their life course. CNE associate and Nez Perce enrolled tribal member Dr. Raphael Guillory (2009) noted in a study that the major factor for many students to continue their education is living up to “family expectations and a fear of letting their families down by not graduating from college” (p. 16). The impetus for Native students to continue was the community connections with their families and the persistence “in earning a college education brought hope of making life better for their families” (p. 16).

Native traditions typically place the student’s tribal community first before placing themselves as more important. “Additionally, a college education meant more than just a means to obtaining a career and financial independence; for these students, it was an instrument to combat deleterious conditions back home” (Guillory, 2009, p. 16). The Center for Native

Education's Early College coach, associate, and Dr. Cornel Pewewardy (Comanche and Kiowa), with colleague Dr. Rodney Frey's research, confirmed Native students have the greatest difficulty with secondary and postsecondary education. Schools need programs intended for cultural diversity and postsecondary institutes need to seek solutions in order to reduce prejudice and discrimination on their campuses (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

Peer groups and social support systems are useful functioning bodies for Native students, whether in secondary or postsecondary educational institutions. Programs designed specifically for cultural groups work well in developing a social network of peers, thereby creating the sense of "community" that is necessary for "student support from the institution, which countered the negative effects of leaving home and the feelings of isolation many of the Native American students experienced [while] at the university" (Guillory, 2009, p. 16).

As a Native researcher, Powers (2006) identified a significant positive difference with Indigenous student academic success when cultural-based programming on the school campus positively influenced urban Native students. Indigenous culturally infused educational systems promoted outcomes of students who most strongly identified with their Native culture. Many Native students who come from their close communities of people in urban settings or reservations have established extended support systems with immediate family structures that are largely invisible to teachers and administrators within formal school systems. It is important to recognize that Native students socialize to this tribal norm. Guillory (2009) observed, "Enclaves or gathering places where students can socialize and feel a part of a university (although not a part of mainstream campus life) was vital to the growth and resiliency of these students" (p. 16).

Once in college, students are more likely to drop out of college during the first year than any other time. If students return in their sophomore year, they are more likely to graduate.

Native students may dropout from their formal education based on learning non-relevant ideologies toward their traditions and culture making recruitment of American Indian/Alaskan Native for postsecondary education a challenge (Guillory, 2009).

In general, the majority of the research has demonstrated a significant need for culturally responsive curriculum. Research identified Isleta Pueblo member and professor emeritus at the University of New Mexico, Dr. Mary Jiron Belgarde, in conjunction with her colleagues, Dr. Rosalita Mitchell, a Cochiti Pueblo member, and Albenita Arquero. Belgarde et al. (2002) defined culturally responsive curriculum as education that “generally validates the cultures and languages of students and allows them to become co-constructors of knowledge in the school setting” (p. 43). The authors explained that teachers should “infuse the curriculum with rich connections to students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community contexts” (p. 43).

Student support programs assist institutions with eliminating potential “feelings of academic inadequacy, isolation, alienation, and marginalization” (Guillory, 2009, p. 12) for Native students. Suggested approaches include hands-on cooperative learning experiences and holistic teaching, which promotes mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being in each student. Indigenous individuals have based their societies for centuries on this foundation.

Researchers Devon Abbott Mihesuah (Choctaw) and Angela Cavender-Wilson, aka Waziyatawin (Wahpetonwan Dakota), are women passionately delivering encouragement for empowering tribal communities in delivering cultural awareness. They support Native scholars in sharing their oral histories and knowledge. Dana-Sacco (2010) likewise advocated for tribal empowerment through Indigenous researchers. Another voice for Indigenous peoples is that of K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Creek), who embraces Native ways, democracy, and Native women’s

voices. The Indigenous scholars offer empathetic views and understand cultural awareness through living and breathing from the past, present, and future. Their research voices perspectives all readers and researchers should hear.

Gaps in the Literature

The gaps in the literature begin with the unfortunate classification of people with Indigenous heritage. These erroneous classifications make literature confusing and misguided in many cases. The U.S. Census (1997) defines “American Indian or Alaska Native” as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment” (p. 1). The United States federal government “recognizes” over 560 tribal communities encompassing over 560 differing languages, customs, and traditions (Juntunen & Cline, 2010; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2001). Categorizing Indigenous people as one group detrimentally affects the education of all races of people since they each have their own story or history unique to their people based on relations with other tribes, settlers, and people today.

There is a collective identity regarding Indigenous cultures through respect of Elders, living closely with nature, honor of time with the past, present, and future generations, humbleness, collaborative considerations of all individuals and community (Juntunen & Cline, 2010). Currently, many Indigenous peoples are scattered across the landscape on reservations or in rural and urban settings. Whitbeck et al. (2001) mentioned the fact that teaching students who live in urban Indian communities rather than on reservations can be a limitation of teaching cultural traditions, in part because Indigenous people living in urban areas are as diverse as the communities are and come from many tribal backgrounds.

The U.S. Census (Williams, 2013) indicated that “American Indians” have the highest national poverty rates at 27%, with the following nine states having poverty rates of about 30% or more for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Arizona, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah. Williams (2013) stated,

Moreover, data show that in a number of metropolitan areas, American Indians have levels of impoverishment that rival some of the nation’s poorest reservations. Denver, Phoenix, and Tucson, for instance, have poverty rates for Indians approaching 30 percent. In Chicago, Oklahoma City, Houston and New York—where more Indians live than any other city—about 25 percent live in poverty. Even worse off are those living in Rapid City, S.D., [with] poverty level stands at more than 50 percent, and in Minneapolis, where more than 45 percent live in poverty. (para. 12)

Among the differences identified in the recent census was the variation in the communities where Indigenous peoples resided. “As of 2012 70% of [Indigenous] live in urban areas, up from 45% in 1970 and 8% in 1940” (Williams, 2013, para. 4). William identified urban areas with significant [Indigenous] populations to include Minneapolis, Denver, Phoenix, Tucson, Chicago, Oklahoma City, Houston, New York City, and Rapid City. Indigenous peoples commonly refer to this phenomenon as living in “Two Worlds” because whereas their definition of their world was primarily cultural, it can now include “home.”

Thornton, Collins, and Daugherty (2006) commented that Indigenous students behold a resiliency even through oppressive acts in the educational system. “The public educational system fails to meet the needs of many student populations—primarily poor minority students,” noting that “for many at-risk students, the achievement gap increases until they drop out of school” (p. 4). Whitbeck et al. (2001) discussed resiliency and the importance of Indigenous students traditions supported in the classroom. Burke (2007) observed that with many tribal customs, there is a concerted emphasis on collective rather than individualistic achievements

within the community. This contradicts an academic system where student expectations are to succeed individually.

For students who have not had the luxury of an economically solvent school district or public library, these incidentals can mean the difference between succeeding and failing academically. Students from socio-economically deprived communities may arrive on campus poorly equipped to manage cultural dissonance or concentrate on a culturally irrelevant curriculum (Burke, 2007). On many occasions, Indigenous students' cultural norms, values, and beliefs are at odds with Eurocentric *norms* with which they must acquiesce. There is minimal or no negotiation of identity upon entering a non-Native college classroom due to the academic discourse already in place, especially in core courses where arranged skills taught are based on socially constructed Eurocentric norms (Burke, 2007).

Subsequently, living away from home to attend college, as many students do, may deprive Indigenous students of the necessary and dependable support systems on which they rely (Burke, 2007). Maxwell (2001) reported Indigenous students face unique challenges in the educational system, especially if they come from reservation-based communities where family precedes individualism.

Guillory (2009) mentioned the extensive research demonstrating “college success is a constant struggle for [Native] students” (p. 12), quoting the 2009 U. S. Department of Education statistic that Native college enrollment is less than 1% and Native students receive “0.6% of all associate’s, bachelors, and advanced degrees conferred in the U. S.” (p. 12). Cultural values remain consistent, however, whether students and community are reservation based or settled in urban settings, as most Native students consider family and community an area of self-identity, confidence, and security. Indigenous students consider where they come from in the world

(Burke, 2007; Guillory, 2009; Pewewardy & Hammer, 2003). According to Pewewardy and Hammer (2003), “Indigenous cultural traditions may result in a diametric opposition to [Native] college experiences on non-Native campuses” (p. 6), this identifies a needed awareness for colleges regarding Indigenous learners.

Silmere and Stiffman (2006) found that research conducted on Indigenous youth focused “predominantly on pathological and problem behaviors” (p. 39). The researchers learned through surveying 401 Native students that over one-third of the youths are moderately successful, and one-fourth deemed highly successful, demonstrating that over half of Native students engage in positive practices, again, mirroring their environments, and achieving academically. Moderately successful students were students not failing academically, but had capabilities of doing better. The Silmere and Stiffman (2006) results highlighted the significance of the student’s environment: “Consistent with previous theory and research with the general population of adolescents, we found that family and social environment could both enhance or interfere with successful functioning in [Native] youths” (p. 39). Students who attend institutions where there are large Native populations have higher success rates whereas the less populated institutions lacking proper community support systems see a greater incidence of student failure. Higher success rates included students graduating with degree or certificate attainment, thus completing their goals. Within the network of an extended family found predominately in Indigenous communities, whether on a reservation or in an urban area, youth have freedom to make their own choices. Indigenous perspectives establish group collaborations, especially regarding community decisions, over individuals. This concept can create problems when Native youth are in the classroom, where collaboration as an individual is a norm (Maxwell, 2001).

Multicultural inclusion in the classroom environment is an important factor to student success. Freng, Freng, and Moore (2007) asserted that parent, family, and/or community involvement is detrimental to Native student success. As we look to the future of Indigenous education, the obvious direction according to preliminary research and interviews is to incorporate more American Indian culture/language in the classroom, utilize parents and community members as educational resources, and encourage teachers to be flexible, respectful, caring, and curious about Indigenous culture. Students, as well as tribal communities, need to “walk in both worlds” together. To “walk in two worlds” is challenging for Native people as cultures, languages differ between Indigenous, and non-Indigenous people, many times conflicting differences where the Indigenous person needs to choose.

Blending cultures in the learning process becomes a learning experience for all those involved, whereas everyone becomes part of the learning environment. Silmere and Stiffman’s (2006) research recognized that high achieving Native students experienced positive environmental and cultural factors from their tribal communities and family. Troubled students mirrored their neighborhoods, highlighting the reality that Native “youths have received perhaps the most negative attention of all American adolescents due to a high occurrence of various problems in many Native communities” (p. 24).

Academic and career counselors need training in the historical events that have affected Indigenous people (Juntunen & Cline, 2010). Traditional Indigenous households continue the values, beliefs, and tribal customs, while some relate to the dominant cultural norms with little regard for tradition. The assimilation practices behold Native people living “in ‘two worlds’ of traditional culture and contemporary U.S. culture” (Juntunen & Cline, 2010, p. 395). Some Indigenous people maneuver successfully between the two cultures, but some find difficulties as

the two clashes, especially when it comes to the people within their environments. Juntunen and Cline (2010) stated, “Cultural ignorance could certainly affect the way in which both assessments and interventions are developed, interpreted, and used with [Indigenous peoples]” (p. 399). Juntunen and Cline further noted that culturally informed and culturally competent counselors need to provide services to Indigenous clients. Native student retention strategies voiced from students claim social support systems on campus were critical to their perseverance and to maintaining the family and tribal connection as leading strategies. Guillory (2009) cited additional factors affecting student performance, including single-parent students, students with family issues, and academic assistance through peer mentoring. Juntunen and Cline (2010) discussed commonalities with “urban Indian” communities, which have multiple tribes represented as well as various values and traditions, noting that,

These communities are also likely to comprise a relatively fluid network of individuals, families, and organizations dispersed throughout multiple neighborhoods. In contrast, reservation communities are likely to represent a single American Indian nation or tribe or a group of nations with an historical affiliation. By nature, the members live in an identified geographical consisting of one or more identified communities, towns, or cities. This social structure contributes to recognition and visibility to outsiders as well as the potential for isolation from non-Indians. Given the differences inherent in these living situations, it is reasonable to assume that geographic location will influence acculturation. (p. 397)

Juntunen and Cline (2010) categorized “urban Indian” people as an experience and not a kind of “Indian.”

Community values further demonstrate the need for collaborative community support, whether on or off a reservation. Counselors and people who offer services to Indigenous people need to be aware of all various issues relative to Native culture and traditions. Lobo (2003) noted that whether on a reservation or in an urban setting, the community network is strong for Indigenous peoples, especially among mothers. Mothers are instrumental in Native households.

Households with “clan mothers” (Lobo, 2003, p. 505) are vital places for Indigenous people in urban settings. These homes are familiar “gathering spots [that] often provide short-term or extended housing and food for many people, health and healing practices and advice, a location for ceremony, emotional and spiritual support, entertainment, and transportation and communication resources” (Lobo, 2003, p. 505). Urban Indian people typically have more opportunities offered close to home such as health services and educational opportunities.

Incorporation of caring support systems from the community, family, peers, and educators has proven to be necessary for students to succeed in school. Educators in particular need to be aware of the importance of cultural factors in teaching to Indigenous students (Thornton et al., 2006). Lee, Donlan, and Brown (2011) researched Indigenous student graduation rates and found that issues related to family, tribal community, and financial difficulties affected undergraduate retention. Their research identified a high need for student support systems at academic institutions based on a more general community need due to the fact that the “sociocentric individual often perceives itself as existing for the good of the family and community” (Lee et al., 2011, p. 270). The authors “suggest universities acknowledge and support this critically important relationship to a much higher degree” (p. 271).

Thornton et al. (2006) found that Indigenous communities’ involvement is instrumental in creating lifelong learners in environments that establish relevant learning experiences supporting cultural traditions. Incorporation of traditions in the classroom requires an “Enculturation concerned with [Indigenous] culture, traditional spirituality, and traditional activities. A basic construct for improvement of student graduation is attendance in school (Thornton et al., 2006, p. 8). Deyhle and Swisher (1997) observed that Indigenous student barriers are not just found within their communities, but exist mostly at the schools among

neglectful educators and in society as a whole. Native and surrounding communities need to support each other and understand each other's culture. Educators themselves are critical in the success of Indigenous students. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) pointed out,

Community control and self-determination efforts focus strongly on the training of Native teachers as a means of transmitting effective practices around language and cultural maintenance, rather than assimilation, to increase student achievement. Simultaneously, the preparation of non-Native teachers who are understanding and knowledgeable of Indian students, their families, and communities is an important aspect of self-determination and local control of schools. (p. 113)

Teachers emit energy that even the youngest of Indigenous children can feel. Lipka (2009) commented, "The children in this community clearly understood that their teachers harbored negative assumptions and feelings about them and their parents" (p. 156).

Indigenous cultures generally demonstrate respect toward other individuals by showing attentiveness through nonverbal communication, preferring listening and observation skills rather than talking (Burke, 2007). In many tribal communities,

Native children are encouraged to be active listeners, rather than participants in discussions. While effective listening is a social construct perceived as a beneficial attribute for students in college courses, dialogic participation is expected as a means to demonstrate knowledge. Non-Native teachers may misinterpret classroom behaviors deemed appropriate in a tribal community, as uncooperative or uncommunicative. (p. 7)

Instructors adhere to standardized curriculum objectives based on federal and state mandates therefore determining ways educators might incorporate more culturally inclusive methods of disseminating course material and acknowledging diverse perspectives of viewing the world (Burke, 2007). Indigenous student cultural norms or traditions may seem confusing to non-Native educators. Native students' stories about their own individual experiences offer the potential to inform non-Native instructors about identity negotiations and in turn clarify behaviors that might otherwise create misunderstanding (Burke, 2007).

Ball (2004) discussed community-based education partnerships between Indigenous communities and postsecondary institutions. Community Elders teach alongside teachers in the classroom, infusing cultural knowledge with the curriculum in many areas in Canada. A common concern among tribal nations in Canada and the United States is whether Native students will return to their communities, either returning having lost their cultural traditions or not returning at all. Tribal communities need their young people to return as future leaders. Elders support students at postsecondary institutions through their wisdom and life experiences.

Mooradian, Cross, and Stutzky (2006) emphasized the importance of family and the community based on ecological factors as many Indigenous grandparents raise their grandchildren. In their study, interviews shed light on ties between elements of Indigenous culture and history and United States policy. Participants expressed the value of retaining traditional culture, especially with respect to parenting their grandchildren. The interview participants commented on the fact that Indigenous people are “reluctant to trust government and educational systems based on the legacy of assimilation policy and historic philosophy of boarding schools” (p. 81). Verbos, Kennedy, and Gladstone (2011) observed how true Indigenous “storytelling is a traditional way by which grandfathers and grandmothers (Elders) pass wisdom to the young, although storytelling itself is ubiquitous, [Indigenous] stories differ from Western norms in temporality and pedagogical utility” (p. 52).

Ball (2004) also pointed to the importance of community involvement to Native education, stating, “Seen in this light, far from contributing positively to sociocultural recovery and capacity building, much postsecondary education for Indigenous peoples has been capacity depleting” (p. 459). Differing viewpoints of curriculum holistically open up a “both worlds”

approach to the syllabus (p. 459). Ball (2004) pointed to specific factors reinforcing the assertion that community is integral to Native education:

Ninety-five percent of program graduates have remained in their own communities, and 65 percent of these have introduced new programs for children, youth, and families. Many others have joined the staff of existing community-based services. Eleven percent of program graduates have continued further on the education ladder toward university degrees. In small, rural, and remote First Nations communities, this level of capacity has the potential to make remarkable differences to the quality of life and level of accessible, culturally safe services available to children and families. (p. 461)

Culture is uniquely contained within the sociolinguistic web of a human group, within family and community. As Pewewardy (2003) noted, “Additional cultural values, distinctive from the dominant culture, such as family socialization patterns, conformity to authority and respect for Elders, taciturnity, strong tribal social hierarchy, and patrimonial/matrilineal clans, are deeply rooted in Native teachings” (p. 6).

Adherence and maintenance of these values helps to define social and cultural continuity with the past while adapting change. For example, Beaulieu’s (2006) study demonstrated a strong relationship between the density of the Native student population at a school site and the presence of culturally based education. The socioeconomic environment and geographic location where students live are huge differences when it comes to the types and level of education received. There are huge discrepancies when it comes to the education of a student on a reservation versus one in a large wealthy community (Maxwell, 2001).

According to McNally (2005) “Native communities have their own theories of culture, their own sovereign ways of knowing, teaching, and learning traditions, and scholars have seen it increasingly as our task to indigenize the language that religious studies brings to Native life ways” (p. 805). McNally noted that educators must ensure classrooms are adaptable enough to

identify learning processes that accommodate Native peoples through awareness of Indigenous means of cultural teaching and learning.

This pedagogical approach can modestly incorporate some Indigenous pedagogy into the classroom learning processes. The learning becomes more solid in relevancy as it adheres with the structure as well as content of Native tradition. Education is more memorable for the Indigenous learner because the human encounter works against the grain of deeply rooted stereotypes concerning Indigenous peoples. The education process transforms students as they emerge with a sense of both the beauty of cultural traditions and of what is at stake with cultural survival. (McNally, 2005, pp. 604-605)

McNally (2005) reiterated the point that customs include oral traditions, especially in reference to the teaching of Indigenous Elders over text from books. “Knowledge of and stories about the past in lived moments of oral exchange” become “tangible realities that create a felt relationship with the past that cannot easily be engendered in histories written and read alone” (p. 606).

A community of inhabitants from where people grow is similar to the natural communities developed within the forest. All things allow the nourishment of body, mind, and spirit to all those living around it.

Relationships From Nature

Community is everywhere in the web of life. The focus on the best practices in Native leadership styles as demonstrated with the natural world. Since ancient times, Native cultures have lived as one with the environment in which they reside. Through observation of the forests, plant people, animal relationships, and populations, histories spoken by the trees in their rings and the soil layers depicting previous climates and a deeper lifetime, many Native peoples have learned the story of life. I have delved into the best practices of leadership models taught to the people who are connected to life in all realms.

The research wove through the natural environments of earth, plants, and animals as the teachers modeling leadership to the human communities. Here, Indigenous cultures that observe

and listen to the environment around them pass on the learning to those with the wisdom to listen among the non-Indigenous people. The Indigenous government systems provided a model for the future United States of America observing Indigenous cultures living as one with the natural environment than one educated by a book or conventional European style. In the beginning, this government structure honorably bridged the knowledge and education of two worlds.

The improvement of post-secondary education might contribute to renewed integration of Native styles of education and respect for nature not only among Native students, but also in the wider society. One way of being is not right or wrong but when many ways of being come together, a rich society emerges that better serves everyone. Stagich (2001) observed,

Ravaged by conquerors and displaced by settlers that contributed in a significant and transformative way to future generations, were the Native Americans. These cultures were farmers, hunters, and fishermen and were spread throughout North America. Even though they were diverse in many ways with many rich and interesting customs, they had one very significant transformative characteristic, which seemed to thread itself synergistically among all of the Native American cultures. This trait consisted of a deep understanding of and appreciation for nature. (p. 200)

The natural aspects of leadership and joining communities together, whether family or organizational, reflect models among the animal and plant peoples and the environments from where they belong.

The communities not human in nature demonstrate equality in leadership. The earth and humankind are currently in trouble based on models of leadership that see everything and everyone as separate. Daily we view on television news broadcasts or read in newspapers or magazines discussion of the state of the oceans, rivers, global warming, and wars over resources with displaced people. These are just a few examples of why Native styles of leadership could be so beneficial to the world at this time.

Some Native born people have had the honor of growing up and living in two worlds: One is a world of the Indigenous learning of listening to the elders' stories with their experiential wisdom, in addition to observation within the environment of the land, forests, and animals (Lemoine, 2003). In the other, some people become educated in a conventional Euro-Western style with college and university books and professors. Each one brings its own unique spirituality as traditional Native people honor the wise ones who speak to guide through destined life paths or journeys. Many Native people honor the fact of building a lifeworld through experiences that come along a path (Lemoine, 2003). As one ages, wisdom gained is from several worlds. Intriguing for some traditional Native educated people is the following fact, reflecting the percentages of Natives who pursue higher degrees:

In 2003, out of 443 applicants who applied for assistance to pursue graduate degrees, the AIGC received 11 applications from Native American students pursuing MBAs. The Native American community must encourage more young men and women to consider business as a viable career. (Lemoine, 2003, p. 1)

The time has come to acknowledge that there is a need to see the other worlds and educate from a perspective that will build a balanced form of leadership. The experience of living and being educated in both worlds brings a perspective balanced with a gained wisdom. Leadership is enhanced by knowing a deeper perspective of all those involved. An education helps build compassionate leadership for an entire community.

Begay (1997) noted scholars look to traditional blends of leadership that build on strengths and weaknesses of collaborative groups sharing visions, goals, morals, and values. Experience of leadership theories in various organizations contributes to efforts to expand the value of collaborative efforts with everyone working together to build success through sustainable measures. Many theories of leadership have taken major steps in learning methodologies that work where others do not (Begay, 1997). Authors might do well to look at

Native styles of education and leadership, which were inherently collaborative, not only within the tribe, but with the land itself.

Szasz (1974) stated, “The Indian’s system of values was expressed in the education of his children and in his attitude toward the land” (p. 8). Experiential learning is demonstrated through observation of the changes and teachings of the environment around a person. M. Jennings (2004) noted that, “Consequently, the assimilationist chose to attack these two concepts as the major targets of their campaign” (p. 1) instead of bridging cultures.

Native people have historically had a relationship with the land based on respect. The land was the source of determining relationships and leadership. Mother Earth modeled a natural transformative leadership style as one element affects the other. Kenny and Fraser (2012) shared,

In order to maintain this sense of coherence, we can accept the Earth as our first embodied concept of leadership. We follow the Earth. We respond to the guidance of the processes expressed in our home place. Many say we listen and respond to our Mother. Everything begins here. We mirror the patterns, textures, colors, sounds, and processes of the Earth as embodied beings. (p. 15)

The relationship nurtured knowing the land, which provided food, home, and was the sustaining piece to life. M. Jennings (2004) wrote,

Views of the land represent entire worldviews that encompass the relationship between the environment and all other aspects of social life. Land has been and continues to rest at the core of Indigenous worldviews; at the heart of Native American values is the belief that we come from the earth and that we are bound to the cosmos by spiritual links to all things. (p. 2)

The view speaks to establishing a constant balance; not placing one being over another, but living in collaboration. Life in a balance is not hierarchal but placed within a circle, the circle Mother Earth beholds as she has no beginning or no end. “The culture of Native students refers to the worldviews that encompass complete ways of being in the world like bundles of

relationships” (M. Jennings, 2004, p. 13). Native people view life differently. Non-Native people who have worked and lived in the forest have built in them this common understanding. For many who live with the land, inspiration is found in the considerate and respectful use of the land. To live as one in balance with the land is to perceive and honor the lifeworld as the plant and animal people give to the human people. The counterbalance would be the human people honoring the plants and animals by giving back to their communities.

Wheatley (2007) compared human life with the natural world, observing,

Social insects, bird flocks, schools of fish, human traffic jams, all exhibit well synchronized, highly ordered behaviors. Yet any leader does not direct these sophisticated movements. Instead, a few rules focused at the local level lead to coordinated responses. Computer simulations mimic flocking, swarming, or schooling behaviors program in only two or three rules for individuals to follow. There is seldom a rule about a leader or direction. The rules focus only on an individual’s behavior in relation to that of its neighbors. Synchronized behavior emerges without orchestrated planning. (p. 35)

Education comes from all people, whether human, plant, or animal within their own lifeworld. Education builds leaders as perspectives are developed. “Education, in both form and content, is an important social institution that embodies and reproduces worldviews. The Native leadership comprised of social activists, corporate leaders, politicians, subsistence hunters, and its members often holding all of these positions simultaneously” (S. Jennings, 2007, p. 13). Leadership takes on many forms within Native communities. People develop or are educated in accordance with the natural strengths given to them at birth. A Native artist or historian may use their hands deftly or have a memory for distinct detail. “Kinship with the nonhuman world is the source of spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and communal sustenance” (S. Jennings, 2007, p. 2).

Wheatley (2007) wrote of “Living our interconnectedness” between “the dense and tangled web of life – the interconnected nature of reality” (p. 204), and discussed how events and ideas connect, stating,

Many great teachers have been trying to teach us this for thousands of years. Buddhism teaches that any one thing is here because of everything else. Jesus said that if ‘ye are not one, ye are not mine.’ Chief Seattle reminded us that ‘the earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth.’ And the American naturalist, John Muir, commented that when we tug on any one part of the web of life, we get the whole web.’ But, in spite of such timeless and ancient wisdom, we’ve turned a deaf ear on all these wise ones. (p. 204)

Wisdom is timeless and stays with us for centuries weaving a web. Life compares to a web versus a box or a line where there are many thoughts and ideas. To teach people to think within a box, they remain there, rarely coming out or making a decision that requires reasoning (Wheatley, 2007).

Natural Transformative Leadership Education

For educational systems to establish knowledge of working with Indigenous groups of people, one must understand the leadership philosophy established with many of the Indigenous nations in the America’s and other lands where Indigenous peoples seek their voice of expertise. Indigenous leadership philosophy establishes a transformational outlook that needs addressed when educational systems bridge cultures with a respectful appreciation. Leadership takes on stories of experience, transforming people towards establishing an understanding, especially for education purposes. With preliminary and proposed research, stories are shared explaining experiences of transformation. Kenny and Fraser (2012) stated that stories “reflect the innate strengths of the individuals who have written them and the communities that they represent” (p. 14). Natural transformative leadership can thus be seen to engage the surrounding environment from where one stands.

Sinclair (2007) viewed transformational leadership as the ability “to mobilize employee aspirations and align them with organizational purposes” (p. 132), sharing how employees’ identities “become interwoven with organizational interests; the leader is not outside this process, but enmeshed in it” (p. 132). Leaders are “inspirational influences” (p. 23). Rost

(1993) wrote about the moral aspects of transformational leadership into “the excellence theories of leadership” (p. 31).

Northouse (2007) theorized about cultural ethnocentrism in leadership, recognizing the views leaders need to identify as a “balancing act” (p. 304), stating, “On one hand, they need to promote and be confident in their own ways of doing things, but at the same time they need to be sensitive to the legitimacy of the ways of other cultures” (p. 304). This suggests that there is a need to value others for whom they are, and grow the individual through their self-interests. Identification of individual goals and needs is necessary to grow a person or organization.

Ethical and moral leadership incorporates principles of respecting others, serving others, showing justice, manifesting honesty, and building community (Northouse, 2007). Wheatley (2007) commented, “Human communities are no different from the rest of life” (p. 48).

Historically and today, some styles of leadership enhance and teach domination with a conquering mentality. Part of the leadership style is viewing men as the leader deemed through physical and educational strength. “A Euro concept is classifying areas such as economy, culture, politics, religion, as closed systems like bits and [turning] them into names of things” (S. Jennings, 2007, p. 13). A difficult concept for some non-Indigenous people to understand is that of an inert relationship that seeks a balance. All capacities of the human, plant, animal, soil, and spiritual are conceptually balanced. Telling conventional educators who are unfamiliar with such a concept is an education in itself. S. Jennings (2007) shares,

The Euro-American conception of land is also central to Western worldviews. Both Christianity and scientific materialism distinguish humans from nature and set them above it, contrasting the intellectual or spiritual capacities of humans with the resources that exist for their manipulation and exploitation. (p. 2)

The bridging of community’s individual knowledge areas and belief systems may establish understanding as they enmesh thoughtfulness and respect of notable differences.

Wheatley (2007) noted how community is all around us wherever we are living life or experiencing life. The communities “know how to connect to others through their diversity, communities that succeed in creating sustainable relationships over long periods of time; these communities are the webs of relationships called *ecosystems*” (p. 45). Life systems live in a diversity of sustainable relationships that builds on self-determination to succeed. Each species establishes and partakes in its own talent as part of an interconnected web system (Wheatley, 2007). Gutierrez stated in Kenny and Fraser (2012),

We are moving towards a doing that grows more deliberately out of being; an understanding that freedom from external systems of oppression is dynamically related to liberation from our internal mechanisms of suffering. It provides us with a way to release the construct of "us versus them" and live into the web of relationship that links all.
(p. 142)

All things enmeshed in life seek survival, as some say, survival of the fittest as one matures.

Heider (1988) addressed leadership from an Indigenous perspective, comparing a wise leader to water. “Consider water: water cleanses refreshes all creatures without distinction and without judgment; water freely fearlessly goes deep beneath the surface of things; water is fluid and responsive; water follows the law freely” (p. 15). Heider goes on to compare the leader of behaving like water in regard to benefiting all that is served speaking “honesty and simply and intervenes in order to shed light and create harmony. The leader is yielding because the leader does not push, the group does not resent or resist” (p. 15). Water, through its yielding characteristics can soften what is rigid and solid. “Water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard (p. 155). The wise leader knows this and is aware if they “were not like water, the leader would break and they know what is soft is strong” (p. 155).

Most Indigenous cultures see everything as one with nature whether it is land use, belief or spirituality, and social life. Native peoples learned to adapt in a harmonious manner to the land on which they lived. Stagich (2001) identified the people have a very special relationship with the animals of the forests and the fields of which to harvest seasonal foods. Indigenous cultures only hunted and farmed respectfully and as needed when the life gave itself to the people identifying that taking a life gives life to another. There was an honoring of the plant or animal that gave it to the Native people. The land offered a respect based on the life it provided with an understanding that the territory supplied plentiful resources to survive. The land's bountiful wealth provided life as well as food, shelter, and clothing from the vast array of resources. Native circles honored the balance (M. Jennings 2004; Stagich, 2001). "These practices were successful in maintaining the rich abundance of North America for many thousands of years. They were the experts on ecology" (Stagich, 2001, p. 200).

Spiritual beliefs of Native and other Indigenous people who are one with the earth encompass every living being. In this belief system, living things, whether human, plant, or animal, behold a natural spirituality that includes ancestors from the past and people who have not come to the earth yet. "Human beings are but one of the many intrinsic parts of a much larger, interrelated universe. When Native people speak of kinship with nonhuman beings, they are being quite literal because of their belief system" (M. Jennings, 2004, p. 27). Many of the shamanistic rituals honor the plant or animal people. This practice existed among many cultures within North America. Stagich (2001) explained,

These studies by anthropologists and experts on North American Cultures have uncovered a deeper appreciation of the power and influence of nature if not a complete understanding of its mystery. These shamanistic practices have also been discovered in other parts of the modern and ancient worlds and are still being used today. Most importantly, however, it is not necessary to believe in the power of the shamans to appreciate the transformative benefit that the Native Americans have given to the world

culture through the understanding of nature. By living, working and adapting in harmony with nature, the Native Americans have given the world an example of how all cultures and civilizations can live in oneness with nature and preserve the environment for all future generations. Such a synergistic understanding and appreciation of nature must become a standard for all future civilizations if they are to be considered highly developed. (pp. 200-201)

This introduction from Stagich (2001), if viewed in light of the plant and animal kingdoms, shows how they are providing the models to reflect and learn from the change we need as a people. Here we have the teachings of the plant and animal people. Visually place yourself in a forest and look at the plants. Now think of the plants and animals as he comments,

Collaboration in organizations and group cultures is changing the way we think about leadership as well as individual, social, and global transformation. Change is inevitable and the transformations, which occur through collaboration and group synergy, are reshaping the world in which we live in every area of community life. We are becoming a more collaborative society. Leaders who understand how to facilitate collaboration are better able to improve performance and motivate people to learn, develop, share, and adapt to changes at home, at work, and throughout the global community. The transformations, which occur through this process, help each individual and group to reach their highest potential and in the process generate benefits for society and the environment. (p. 8)

Envision being in a forest and looking around. There are plants of many shapes and sizes, like people. Look at the vast array of colors, like the diverse tones and hues with the human people. Each plant works collaboratively with another by protecting, shielding, or providing nourishment to another. The tall tree canopy provides shade and shelter to the understory, which in turn provides nutrients and feeds root systems that sustain the life of the plant kingdom. Stagich (2001) affirmed, “Clearly, as we think more collaboratively, we are producing changes which are more collaborative in nature. And, as our worldview becomes more in line with nature and the synergy principle, greater global accomplishments will be possible with benefits for all” (p. 8).

Native people have been competitive for years, like other species, such as engaging in endurance training made necessary for their means of survival. Canoe families race not only for

speed but also for endurance for distance and time. Canoe pullers ascertain respect of individual abilities, teamwork, trust, communication, and other detrimental skills to reach goals.

Competitive sport takes on the environment from which they arise. Stagich (2001) stated,

By definition, competition is the act of seeking victories over another, often at another's expense. In nature man is the only species, which has sought to conquer others and control the environment while all other species only try to adapt and eat solely to survive. Man has rationalized his competitive urge for power and control as a "survival instinct;" however, the fundamental difference with animals and the rest of nature is huge. Darwin's (1859) theory of "survival of the fittest" is a theory of adaptation and how all creatures only eat to live and to survive as well as possible. The fittest creatures are the most adaptable, not because they are the most competitive, but because they have found a way to live successfully in concert with their environment. Clearly, man has coined the term "competition" in process of turning adaptation into conquest and violating the most fundamental laws of nature and the synergy principle. Leadership in organization and in society must come to terms with this conflict and seek out practical, synergistic solutions in concert with nature and the environment. (p. 11)

As human people collaborate and compete, what sport enthusiasts are familiar with is a type of synergy. Stagich's (2001) statement, "Mankind has hunted other species to extinction and polluted the environment as though he has some kind of competitive mandate to conquer the world" (p. 36) rings true globally.

A phenomenon where an individual's mind, body, and soul become in harmony with themselves captures the energies of all of those around them. This synergetic motion is timeless. This can happen in short spurts or longer time frames where there appears to be no beginning or no end. The synergetic energy a forest has will be in harmony until cut by human forces. Stagich (2001) commented, "There already exists a profound synergistic order to our world. We only have to look around us to see the synergistic effect of the self-organizing environment inherent in nature and in the people of the global society" (p. 12). Native leaders attest to the synergetic wisdom of balance in all species. Native people honor the earth where all things grow

and the air that we breathe, “We share the air we breathe, the water that we must drink, and the food that we grow from the earth” (Stagich, 2001, p. 12).

Survival of all things on earth encompasses a greater synergistic energy that many people find difficult to fathom. The synergy the earth beholds is one that humans cannot control, but the earth controls. “The organisms and cultures of the world self-organize and adapt to each other and the environment based on the synergy” (Stagich, 2001, p. 14). The synergy needs to be viewed globally, or, as Stagich (2001) posited, “It is important to visualize the world as a complete eco-system of which we are all a part, and every part has a special contribution to make to the whole, same as in synergistic collaborative groups” (pp. 15-16). Indigenous cultures rooted themselves in groups. There were families that allied themselves with other families to share in the resources the earth provided for the survival. Through observation, many animals group themselves in the same manner.

Northouse (2007) focused on several differing types of leadership styles. A couple of the theories viewed leaders with more of a collaborative approach towards growing individuals to organizations. Northouse (2007) discussed transformational leadership as,

The process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential. (p. 176)

Northouse (2007) commented on a true transformative style as a type of “socialized leadership, which is concerned with the collective good” (p. 177). The definition can contribute to the development of the natural world with collective development of strengths from within noting individual differences of goals and ambitions. Transformative leaders build on collaboration to establish a vision collectively through individuals and group dynamics. Effective in working

with people, transformative leadership builds on trust and encourages others who in turn feel good about themselves and “their contributions to the greater good” (p. 190).

M. Jennings (2004) mentioned, “[Indigenous] people are full and active citizens of a Nation, but they are also themselves sovereign societies as recognized in federal treaties, with specific, historically delineated, intergovernmental relations with the United States” (p. 20). M. Jennings (2004) charts the differences of industrialized and tribal societies from the viewpoints of land use, governance, environment, social life, belief systems, communication, and relationships. Tribal societies have demonstrated to be more participative, adaptive, naturalistic, oral, visual, and experiential. Industrialized societies tend to favor hierarchical, manipulative, deistic, written language based, individualistic, and abstract.

S. Jennings (2007) identified tribal nation building or rebuilding, which has become an obstacle to maintaining a self-sustaining tribal government, noting the Indian Self Determination Act of 1975 had many tribes wrestle with self-governance. Some government structures failed and some were successful. The first and foremost key to success is ensuring the tribal political house is together. S. Jennings (2007) goes on to state successful tribal governments have politics out of their justice and enterprise systems. The government house has to be stable. Economic development with culturally appropriate views focus on the long-term effects of sustainability measures 100 years down the road. Begay, Cornell, Jorgenson, and Pryor (2007) noted leadership is critical with constitutional processes in tribes, which are rethinking how they govern themselves. Some of the obstacles encountered include tribes’ dependency on federal agencies. Tribes need to first try changing a mind frame and taking ownership of their people without government assistance. To maintain sovereignty is to get the jurisdictional power to rule and not have it chipped away by government systems. What needs to happen is to shift decisions

to tribal nations thus giving the Nations power and ownership of their members (Begay et al., 2007).

Tribes need to be stable and keep the politics in its place with fair decision making keeping young people and fresh minds on reservation. The tribes need enterprise and innovation to keep young people prosperous on reservations with ownership of their government systems. The best practice is to make sure non-native people support sovereignty. Political sovereignty needs to be strong so the tribes can support neighboring communities. Eliminating sovereignty allows non-native to tell Native people what to do and will need to support them (Begay et al., 2007).

S. Jennings (2007) quoted Begay, who shared a story of a Pueblo chief who argued that,

One of the limitations that I see in Euro-American standards of leadership is it sets an almost elitist orientation. Because you deal at a whole different level, one that separates you from your constituency, from the people you're serving. A lot of Euro-American concepts of leadership are based on a structure and thought in which leadership comes from the top down. And empowerment is at the top as opposed to Indian tribal concepts, in which it doesn't matter where you are; you're always a part of the whole.

[In the pueblos] you govern from the community instead of governing the community....I see leadership in an Indian community asconcentric circles, as opposed to the Euro-American concept where leadership is a level in a pyramid. Your degree of leadership depends on what level you're at, whereas in the Indian community you can be a leader and you are on the same level. It's a matter of function, not of a level in society or status. (p. 32)

S. Jennings (2007) shared "Native societies tend to be more democratic, as the people have more direct involvement in the decision making and leaders have a greater breadth of knowledge and responsibilities in the various realms of community life (p. 32). Governance has a system of non-hierarchal standards where "Leaders are not elevated to exalted, specialized roles that represent seats of power that they can "possess" or "wield" (p. 32). A system known in many organizations and found in many tribal governments structures is that of consensus building,

A Native leader certainly garners respect and leverage, yet political service is a specialized function but not a role that defines individual worth, or in which an individual expects to rise socioeconomically. From a Native perspective, all things – inherent traits or particular skills – are interrelated and have equal value in benefitting the people as a whole-hence the image of flat, concentric circles. Power is defined much differently in Western institutions-organizational structures presuppose a differentiation of an individual's worth within a pyramidal hierarchy. This value of the individual is defined and ranked in terms of traits that may be inherent-such as gender, or occupational title, education, or type of specialized skill (e.g., white collar ranks higher than blue collar). (S. Jennings, 2007, p. 32)

Ideally, all people have an equal status regardless of areas of strengths or weaknesses. Each is an integral part of a circle of being.

Trepanier (2008) mentioned tribal community leaders are part of the society as a whole with distinct responsibilities. The Elders are the ones who protect the customs and provide spiritual insight connected to the land. Mothers oversee family matters and the well-being of members by dealing with human relations. Fathers provide protection, sustenance, and shelter with advice on strategy, logistics, and action. Even the youth lead, as they are the providers of creative energy with their desire to change. “Their opinions are sought for their artistic and creative views and for their ability to conceptualize innovative possibilities” (Trepanier, 2008, p. 5). The roles develop as they build understanding of another's viewpoint as noted by Trepanier (2008) stating, “The process is not to convince people of one's own opinion but rather to understand the reasons for opposite opinions” (p. 5). Solutions form an understanding of bigger picture ideas from formation of the thoughts and ideas of community members. Trepanier (2008) mentioned values such “respect; responsibility towards youth—the next generation; appreciation of Elders; kindness; sacred responsibility towards the land and the importance of consensus in decision-making” (p. 6).

Morris (1995) pointed out how today Native Nations embark on reclaiming their languages, ceremonies, histories, spirituality, political and social sovereignty, and “a willingness

to express an Indigenous alternative to the ecological, social, and political crisis of the late twentieth century” (p. 3). Native societies embrace traditional methods of educating students, which includes incorporating the senses to involve the oral, visual, and experiential learning. Sensory learning and teaching highlights a process and content in which education is based on individual experiences, observation and revelation, and applied toward abilities. The outcomes of learning are by the life experiences of the elders, incorporating rationalization, feeling, and spirituality. Knowledge generation transmits from the human, spiritual, or natural worlds.

Pierotti and Wildcat (2000) compared learning from elders to learning from the earth:

In nearly all Native creation stories, animal and plant persons existed before human persons.... These kin exist as our Elders and, much as do human Elders, function as our teachers and as respected members of our community. Acknowledging non-humans as teachers and Elders requires that we pay careful attention to their lives, and recognize that these lives have meaning on their own terms. (p. 1333)

When viewing groups or organizations, Heider (1988) recommended looking with the inner eye to see what is happening through the knowing. He speaks to stepping back and remaining calm to see what an individual who reacts would not see or feel stating, “See without staring. Listen quietly rather than listening hard. Use intuition and reflection rather than trying to figure things out” (p. 27). A leader needs to open all senses to allow for the knowing of what is happening in a group (Heider, 1988).

Morris (1995) discussed Native people’s belief system as communal, noting, “In 1492, over 600 distinct Indigenous nations existed in what is known today as the United States, with all of the colonization, destruction, and forced assimilation that has transpired since then, over 500 nations survived, representing 2,000,000 Indigenous Americans” (p. 1). For tribal nations, the communal system was a common norm (Morris, 1995). Morris stated,

The future of transformational thought, be it communitarian, utopian, green, or otherwise, can only be enhanced and strengthened by the respectful inclusion of Indigenous views.

This inclusion must not be an afterthought, or patronizing attempt to appear multicultural; it must be a serious evaluation of Indigenous perspectives. Such an inclusion could lead to a new, sustainable society that will promote cooperation, equality, and deep ecological principles, while simultaneously celebrating diversity, individual liberty, and dissent on to a postindustrial planet. (p. 3)

Even though there were differences in each of the tribal nations, such as language, location, and environment, there were many similarities giving each of them a distinct common thread.

Bridging cultural knowledge in collaborative efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples needs consideration, whether as leadership within a community, school system, or a classroom of Indigenous learners, one must value the philosophy binding the people toward a common goal: Understanding a past to establish a success today.

Rost (1993) defined of leadership as, “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). He goes on to comment the carefully selected words in the definition to “contain certain assumptions and values, which are necessary to a transformed, postindustrial model of leadership” (p. 102), noting four essential elements that define leadership:

1. The relationship is based on influence.
2. Leaders and followers are the people in this relationship.
3. Leaders and followers intend real changes.
4. Leaders and followers develop mutual purposes. (p. 104)

Christie (1998) viewed the Makah tribe as a community that makes decisions communally. One person does not make the decisions but the community as a whole. “Our Elders are not afraid of death. What they are afraid of is having their words and things used wrong later on” (p. 453). In my exploration of the level that educational systems relate to today’s tribal communities, I wonder if the story of the Indigenous people is not only known, but also understood. Leadership needs to be transformative to grow the individual and all of those that are a part of the web.

Research Question

My research question considers, how can we create the best learning environments for Indigenous students through good leadership at all levels? Historically, research has identified elements discounting Native knowledge in genocide of not only a race, but also a culture. Based on the literature's strong indication that hierarchal leadership, decontextualized learning, and discounting of Native knowledge contribute to students' lack of engagement and success, I hope with this dissertation to demonstrate that incorporating Native leadership, contextualized learning, and Native knowledge would contribute to students' engagement and success. The issue then becomes one of bridging culture with the educational processes.

Based on this principle, the research presented here includes an example of incorporating Native knowledge curricula through strong Indigenous leadership practice, with student engagement as the focus, and interviewing students reflecting on their knowledge and methodology of state standards for secondary education and observing an elementary school with language immersion. The research focus pertains to what factors increase student educational success. I developed interview questions in order to gain an understanding of viewpoints on "What is the influence of cultural relevant learning through transformative relationships on educational success for Native youth?" In pilot study interviews I asked,

- To what extent do Native learners have positive learning experiences?"
- What are the elements of those experiences?
- How do educational leaders encourage pedagogy allowing positive learning experiences?

My research focuses on how students experience the school environment to gain an understanding of what learning means in the Native culture and develop curriculum that meets

those needs for revitalization and renewal. Through sharing the story of the educational history of Native peoples, I seek to understand the continued impact of forced learning through the historic boarding schools and establish a philosophy of interconnectedness through the Medicine Wheel as my foundation for conceptual interpretation. I looked to the philosophy of balance when utilizing the concept of people and phenomena in the pilot research, and with Indigenous leadership for the dissertation, therefore observing a balance within the circle. I kept to an Indigenous epistemology, knowing every individual holds a theory of knowledge or story, whether written or oral knowing. The medicine wheel brings to my research and learning a philosophical analysis leading to a balanced truth or belief. Lavallée (2009) described this as, “a process of decolonizing the academy by incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the research, rather than relying on Western theories” (p. 23). I was honored to know that “The Medicine Wheel conceptual framework is accepted as appropriate in indigenous research. The Medicine Wheel captures the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development of the aspiring leader” (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 35). Pewewardy (2002a) shared, “The Holistic Medicine Wheel is a model of transformational leadership and a movement that makes indigenous education the practice of freedom” (p. 28). I believe viewing the research in this perspective assists in the Indigenous research methodologies of knowing the past, present, and future through the process of developing the interconnectedness encapsulated within the Medicine Wheel.

Steinhauer (2002) reviewed perspectives of indigenous research methodology from indigenous scholars and analyzed the notion that there is a need for indigenous people to perform Indigenous research. With indigenous researchers, there may be a better understanding of indigenous ways of knowing that embodies a balanced perspective of senses with dreams, visions, memory, and intuition (Steinhauer, 2002).

The exploration incorporates a perspective on how we change an educational system for all students with the primary focus on my passion of working among Indigenous tribal communities. Kovach (2010) stated, “We have the right to know who we are, and that this right involves responsibilities—but there are people to help us out, that we are not alone” (p. 12). She shares that research needs “to start where you are, it will take you where you need to go” as “Indigenous methodologies disrupt methodological homogeneity in research” (p. 12).

I have identified a need to restore cultural standards that were literally eliminated in history with a forced education in boarding schools resulting in loss of even basic tribal customs. This needs to be done through strong Indigenous leadership and voice. Additionally, I focus on Native traditions integrated into today’s education process and bridging student success to build the future.

This dissertation proposes viewing change in curricula through leadership engagement with tribal communities and instructors with four schools based on feedback from observation and interviews with the tribal and urban Indian schools. The leadership philosophy guiding this dissertation parallels a belief that transformational and relational leadership theory as appropriate to Native values and general worldviews. Research identified speaks of cultural knowing and responsiveness with leadership working collaboratively with individuals or communities. This leads to what I have identified as culturally relevant learning and inclusion of Indigenous communities as educators.

My research approach will draw from the lived experience of participants with a focus on relationships, especially on how students experience the school environment. The research methodology is to implement the phenomenological story in the dissertation through an ethnographic and portraiture technique interwoven with relevant theory and philosophy. The

research will help create the conditions for Native people to have their own voices heard about their cultural traditions of teaching and learning. Cultural customs include family and community, especially the Elder voices of experience and wisdom. The experiential learning derived from elder wisdom offers youth guidance and mechanisms of exploring educational paths based on the innate natural child curiosities and emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual strengths (Demmert & Towner, 2003). I believe many themes will surface through a phenomenological lens.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The preliminary interviews picked up the stories of educational experiences of Native people. Informed participants perceived no risks as the confidential information gathered in all interviews. Data will not be shared with other researchers, but limited to their incorporation into the data analysis presented in this dissertation. The confidentiality insures the participant a review of any transcription for accuracy or misunderstandings. Confidential handling of the interview information is guarantee with removal of names or an organization's name prior to publishing the final report. I further guarantee that the electronic recording and transcripts are filed in a safe that will remain locked indefinitely.

The participants for this dissertation will be made aware all opinions may be utilized for research purposes, but no one will be identified by name in the final written document. Participant notification informs that the research findings may benefit Native people in the education process, Native communities, and professional development of educational personnel. Participants will be aware that their involvement is voluntary and that they may discontinue participation at any time. They will have the right to express any concerns and complaints to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Participants.

Lomawaima (2000) mentioned that “many tribes now require research proposals be approved by either tribal councils or cultural committees” (p. 1). The Hopi and Navajo established research guidelines and protocols to protect their history and the people from misinterpretations of their heritage, while other tribes are building their own research guidelines to take ownership of the information. Norton and Manson (1996) noted the awareness of research in Indigenous communities has led to promotion of tribal approvals and support for internal review boards that preserve the confidentiality of individuals and tribes. Research needs to benefit Indigenous communities. Research in tribal communities requires respect through open and honest communication with collaboration of all peoples and honoring the time contributed to the study. Burhansstipanov, Christopher, and Schumacher (2005) identified the following key suggestions for encouraging collaboration:

- Invest Time to Create the Partnership Team
- Allocate Budgets “comparably” among participants
- Create partnerships with leaders who have decision-making responsibilities
- Provide salaries to tribal partners and project staff
- Implement active, effective communication among
- Share raw and summary data related to projects
- Modify standardized evaluation procedures to be culturally acceptable and respectful of the local community
- Follow both tribal and researchers’ protocols for disseminating and publishing the findings. (pp. 73-75)

Studies undertaken collaboratively with tribal communities and individuals provide an opportunity to form a positive relationship between the researchers, their academic research institution, and tribal community or organization.

Research projects must involve both participants and the leadership throughout the course of the study. J. S. Hill, Pace, and Robbins (2010) listed distinct themes that honor Indigenous voices, especially while conducting interviews and understanding the people as a collective. The following themes help to establish understanding with tribal people and their experiences:

knowing their core belief systems; experiences of racism and discrimination; conflicting epistemologies; living in two worlds; community connectedness; responsibility and accountability to the community; traditional knowledge; stories as traditional knowledge; and language and historic loss. As in any relationship regardless of ethnicity, areas to consider are commitment, respect, open and honest communication, trust, and honor.

The research protocol must give tribal communities ownership of the process since the information belongs to them. Burhansstipanov et al.'s (2005) research in "Indian Country" stressed the importance of community-based approaches and tribal empowerment. Community engagement is essential in all aspects of research conducted. Input from the community about how to conduct research honors the respect of the people. Burhansstipanov et al. (2005) shared lessons from conducting research in tribal communities recommending,

- Grouping all tribes together;
- Excluding Native American individuals and communities in research taking place in their communities;
- Reinforcing stereotypes;
- Emphasizing negative behaviors;
- Blaming individuals and communities as the causes of problems;
- Placing their own interests ahead of those of the people they are working with;
- Violating Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards or informed consent; and
- Using tribal specimens for research not specified within the study protocol and IRB application. (p. 70)

Indigenous communities trust that when Indigenous academics conduct research in the community that it will somehow assist with "building healthy, self-determined Native communities" (p. 78). Dana-Sacco (2010) shared that, especially with traditional language, "the research process will enable us to access our legacy of Indigenous creativity and transformative energy. This is one way for Indigenous communities to engage in healing practices and for Indigenous researchers to practice reciprocity" as giving back to the communities (p. 79).

Mihesuah and Wilson (2002) are deeply committed to their tribal communities and to cultural awareness of the need for a liberating sense of tribal decolonization and empowerment. The authors point out that “the majority of non-Native scholars who use Indigenous peoples as research and writing topics to further their careers, our writings, lectures, and committee work reflect our concerns” (p. 145). They are working for awareness and “effective ways to empower Indigenous students” (p. 145). Dana-Sacco (2010), another Indigenous researcher, suggested that a compelling factor for Indigenous researchers “is to engage and act to make change that will serve our communities, therefore, participating in maintaining the status quo usually serves colonial, assimilative interests” (p. 77).

An Anonymous (2003) non-Native author shared stories reflecting concerns for Indigenous faculty in academic institutions. “For all the talk about the grass roots and reverence of Elders, we see very little concern for the people on the homelands; Everyone is proud to claim a tribal heritage, but many times it appears as a status symbol” (p. 52). Poupart, Baker, and Horse (2009) similarly identified a need for Indigenous communities to participate in research through open and honest communication on the part of researchers.

Conclusion

My philosophy of Native knowing is grounded in the self-knowledge offered by all of the participants in the process. The experience incorporates “elements of an idea, feeling, or situation” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99). The process reflected an, “Understanding to be gained by a study that includes empathetic immersion, slowing down and dwelling, magnification and amplification of the situation, suspension of belief, the employment of intense interest, turning from objects to their lived meaning, and questioning” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99). Bentz and Shapiro (1998) identified the “surrender and catch” by sociologist Kurt H. Wolff referring to a

“process that is cognitive-intellectual on the one hand and existential on the other” (p. 164). This leads to encountering the unexpected of what is being learned in the voice of the people. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) also cited the Husserl motto “To the Things Themselves” (p. 165) as a reminder “to focus on our actual experience of things rather than on received ideas or mental models or cultural prejudices that we have about them” (p. 165).

My objective in this research is to have themes emerge through observation and as tribal communities participate in the education of their own people. The strategy thus incorporates, as mentioned by Bentz and Shapiro (1998), “a focus on others involves listening, watching, and engaging in empathetic understanding of another person” (pp. 98-99). Views of a lifeworld take on a commonality of knowledge as a lived experience (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Schultz & Kroeger, n.d.).

The aim is to focus on the phenomenon of events that take on the turning points or changes in direction of an individual’s life path pertaining to the Medicine Wheel. Husserl believed phenomenology provides a foundation for human comprehension, which includes a scientific familiarity of knowledge (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). Cajete (2000) identified the natural connection between Husserl and Indigenous philosophy.

Through observations, interviews, and reports of historical experiences, in the course of this research I sought to listen and observe tribal community members to understand their challenges and opportunities in education. In doing so, I collected ten adults’ reactions to their experiences in education and five high school students’ perspectives on the education of Native people and incorporation of cultural knowledge. Interviews were conducted with six participants from one school ranging in age from elder to teen to establish collaborative stories. I then worked with smaller groups ranging in size from two to four, and collected an individual story

for comparison. The specific content areas I reviewed were categorized according to the areas identified in Figure 1.2 below under the umbrella of “Envisioning Educational Opportunity Focus in Today’s Native Communities,” focusing on Native communities as educators; teaching in Indigenous classrooms; and Indigenous learning styles. Student services enhancing their learning encompass relevant learning, cultural development, and professional development.

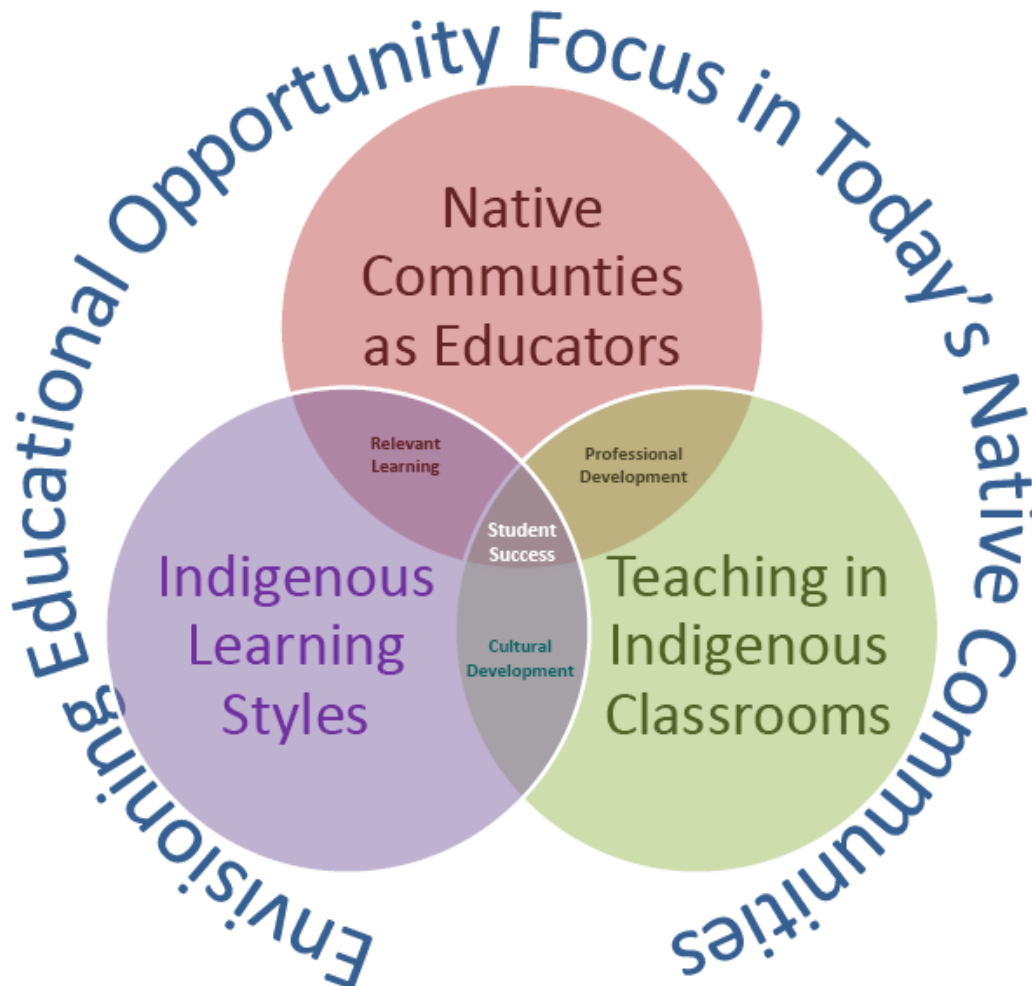


Figure 1.2. The Venn diagram demonstrates specific areas of interest. Each segment extends an overarching relationship with community involvement.

Summary of the Chapters

In Chapter I I have situated the researcher by providing background information on Indigenous leadership and Native educational practices, and briefly reviewed some of the

literature between Native and non-Native perspectives. I then introduced the research question and discussed the scope and limitations of the study. In the following chapters of this dissertation, the literature review in Chapter II includes research by Native and non-Native authors identifying issues in leadership and change in the educational fields involving Indigenous learners. I also include consideration of the need of community involvement to bridge the academic field with Indigenous knowledge in the establishment of relevant learning practices.

In Chapter III, I describe my research methodology and my position using Indigenous methodologies and phenomenology, with portraiture and ethnography. Application of these methodologies correlates with Indigenous knowledge and tradition. In Chapter IV, I share the results of my study with the portraits of my participants and descriptions of the settings. Many of the participants were excited to have an opportunity to voice their perspectives on the success of Indigenous learners, including in some cases participants in the preliminary interviews of a pilot project, by providing personal stories for my dissertation. In Chapter V, I interpret the results of my study through the emergent themes that surfaced in the portraits, then compare and contrast the themes with significant literature and my own perspectives. In Chapter VI, I comment on the implications of my study and recommend areas for further research with the importance of necessary change in the educational process of Native students and involvement of Indigenous communities in the learning process.

Chapter II: Leading Learning Approaches for Native Students:

I do not think anybody anywhere can talk about the future of their people or of an organization without talking about education. Whoever controls the education of our children controls our future. (Wilma Mankiller [Cherokee], 1987, as cited in N. S. Hill, Jr. [Oneida], 2010, p. 23)

I begin this chapter in one of my favorite places where I am at home with my ancestors, sitting on my boat, a 54 foot Western cedar, teak, and mahogany motor yacht, floating with the wave's gentle movement and the Water Spirits all around. The Earth with urban forests and fauna surrounds Portage Bay, between Lakes Washington and Union, where one can escape the fresh water through the Ballard Locks and enter the expansive Puget Sound, whom many Indigenous peoples call the Salish Sea. My grandfather's people of Cowichan, Suquamish, and Duwamish, and the late Vi Hilbert (Upper Skagit) called this unique place on Earth the Whulge, sharing stories of travel in cedar dugout canoes. Here in this place I see connections and teachings between the water and Earth people. I see ourselves as human people, and then there are the tree people, finned people, and feathered people, and I am aware of how we are all connected to our world. We are all one with Earth where one interconnects with another; affect one and you affect the other. Pierotti and Wildcat (2000) mentioned disconnects when contemporary Western approaches as derived from a Western European philosophy regarding natural resources are to be controlled, "they assume that humans are autonomous from, and in control of, the natural world" (p. 1333). There is a natural phenomenon "combined with a concept of community membership that differs from that of Western political and social thought" (p. 1333). Community includes the animals, plants, and landforms within an environmental locality.

As a consequence, native worldviews can be considered to be spatially oriented, in contrast to the temporal orientation of Western political and historical thought. Connectedness and relatedness are involved in the clan systems of many Indigenous peoples, where nonhuman organisms are recognized as relatives whom the humans are

obliged to treat with respect and honor. (Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000, p. 1334)

This sums up knowledge of Indigenous thought processes of interconnectedness through leadership and the educational development.

In this chapter, I identify the literature and research Indigenous people's experiences of the Eurocentric education system with a particular focus on educational opportunity in Native communities today. We cannot locate where Indigenous leadership must take place until these important issues are identified. Issues of Indigenous education dovetail critically with Indigenous leadership. Therefore, this chapter provides extremely important historical and pedagogical background to leadership initiatives. We encircle Native communities as educators, teaching in Indigenous classrooms, and Indigenous learning styles. These significant topics also address the overlapping culturally relevant learning, cultural relevance, especially in the curriculum development, and professional development within the communities themselves. The core of this topic identifies the necessary degree attainment of individual student success, for all students, primarily indigenous scholars, based on areas of interest, whether cultural, mathematics, science, technology, or social studies.

Historical Indigenous Leadership Background

Human history includes many turning points for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Proper educational perspectives need to be part of the academic system portraying detailed accounts from non-degrading viewpoints and untruths (Calsoyas, 2005). There are many stories that need told as part of the education process affecting learning from the past, in the present, and toward the future.

With the advent of industrialization in the 19th century, Western society's governance systems became hierarchical and bureaucratic in relationship to Native peoples. Federal, state,

and local levels of government contain their own hierarchies of power that exert control over the lives of people. Historically, there is a precedent for mainstream American society borrowing leadership models from Native culture (Morris, 1995). Morris of Shawnee heritage shared that the League of the Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee Confederation, formed before 1600 with five Native nations of the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca, had lands encompassing what is now upper New York State. Later the Tuscarora joined to make the confederation six nations. Morris (1995) stated, “In reality, Indigenous societies play a vital role in the evolution of modern political thought. Belief in individual liberty with natural rights and egalitarianism are all found in Indigenous thought” (p. 2). Some Native Nations such as the Muscogee (Creek) Nation have the “oldest political institutions in North America, with a continuing recorded history going back beyond 400 years” (p. 2). Important to the Muscogee people is continued individual freedoms and harmonious living. Each person has a voice and is prized for their thoughts. Morris (1995) shared how the Nation has key elements to the make-up of their ancient system:

- The importance of spirituality and respect for all life;
- The absence of hierarchical, coercive authority with the goal of consensus in decision making;
- The liberty of the individual coupled with the individual’s consciousness of responsibility to the whole;
- The importance of extended family with concomitant respect for both the children and the Elders; and
- The operation of systems of justice that focus on the healing society and restoration of balance, rather than retribution or vengeance. (p. 2)

Many Native people in strong collaborative societies regard all members and non-members with a respect and view everyone with wisdom and integrity. The wisdom serves to ensure decisions have lasting effects for seven generations (Morris, 1995). Resolutions focus on “wisdom of the

earth, about the fruits of the earth, and about human settlement over time in any particular part of the earth” (p. 3).

Weatherford (1990) speaks to the leadership portrayed at the nation’s capital in Washington, D.C. One would never know by visiting the impacts the Native people had in the development of the democratic concept of all people as equal. The capital depicts a European founding and “Nothing in the Capital hints that contemporary Americans owe the slightest debt to the Indians for teaching us about democratic institutions” (p. 134). Weatherford (1990) explained,

America’s settlers from Europe knew little of democracy. The English came from a nation ruled by monarchs who claimed that God conferred their right to rule and even allowed them to wage wars of extinction against the Irish. Colonists also fled to America from France, which was wandering aimlessly through history under the extravagances of a succession of kings named Louis, most of whom pursued debauched and extravagant reigns that oppressed, exploited, and at times even starved their subjects. (p. 134)

The European “Old World” bore little resemblance to a government system that unified people. The monarchy and aristocratic society reigned. A democratic society came about on the European continent during the 18th century generations after the “New World” focused on a democratic leadership principle (Weatherford, 1990).

The League of Iroquois governmental system developed on a consensual design with the Onondaga acting as the executives and mediators or fire keepers (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995). They also held the wampum belts, which serves as the Iroquois constitution. The confederation’s legislation holds either the upper and lower houses held within the other nations. Morris noted that Iroquois society continues a matrilineal system today and had never been one of a dictatorship. Clan mothers hold the majority of the power by selecting each nation’s

political leadership, removing leaders, and serving as the judiciary (Morris, 1995). In *Forgotten Founders*, Johansen (1982) explained that

The Iroquoian system, expressed through its constitution, “The Great Law of Peace,” rested on assumptions foreign to the monarchies of Europe: it regarded leaders as servants of the people, rather than their masters, and made provisions for the leaders' impeachment for errant behavior. The Iroquois' law and custom upheld freedom of expression in political and religious matters, and it forbade the unauthorized entry of homes. It provided for political participation by women and the relatively equitable distribution of wealth. These distinctly democratic tendencies sound familiar in light of subsequent American political history -- yet few people today (other than American Indians and students of their heritage) know that a republic existed on our soil before anyone here had ever heard of John Locke, or Cato, the *Magna Charta*, Rousseau, Franklin, or Jefferson. (p. 3)

Collaborative efforts thus involved framing a government structure between the Indigenous and European inhabitants of the land.

Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and John Hancock consulted with Native people to form a government structure beneficial and rich to honor the people. Paine was appointed to Philadelphia's Council of Safety, commissioned a treaty with the Iroquois, and was well known among the Seneca (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995; Paine, 1945). He addressed the Native men as “brothers” and was friendly in their presence. A type of government structure honoring the people was an experiment in carrying a “natural-rights” philosophy based on the observations of Native American societies (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995; Paine, 1945). On the European continent, political reformers looked to America to observe how the natural-rights viewpoint functioned in government. “To understand what the state of society ought to be, it is necessary to have some idea of the natural state of man, such as it is at this day among the Indians of North America,” wrote Thomas Paine (1945, p. 7).

The Continental Congress, including Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and other members, had extensive contacts with tribal nations during the framing of the

United States Constitution. Thus, it can be said that the political philosophies and institutions of the Native people, including the League of Iroquois, Delaware, and Cheyenne, contributed to this foundational document (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995). As leaders planned a government system, the nations of the Iroquois were part of the planning of not only a unified government structure, but of a revolutionary war for the colonists to gain freedom from a continent far away (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995). Johansen and Grinde (1990) highlighted the point that,

To Paine, poverty was a creation “of what is called civilized life. It exists not in the natural state. . . . The life of an Indian is a continual holiday compared to the poor of Europe.” As one who sought to mold the future in the image of the natural state, Paine admired the Indians’ relatively equal distribution of property, but he realized it impossible “to go from the civilized to the natural state. (p. 67)

Paine’s theory focused on the Indigenous philosophies of natural rights and equality (Morris, 1995). Thomas Jefferson grew up based on the natural rights of the Native people. His father was a naturalist welcoming Native medicine men into the family home. Jefferson claimed,

I am safe in affirming that the proofs of genius given by the Indians place them on a level with the whites. . . . I have seen some thousands myself, and conversed much with them. . . . I believe the Indian to be in body and mind equal to the white man. (Morris, 1995, p. 422)

Johansen (1982) asserted,

American Indians and their societies figured into conceptions of life, liberty, and happiness in the mind of Jefferson, who authored the phrase in the Declaration of Independence, and Franklin, who operated in many ways as Jefferson's revolutionary mentor. A major debate at the time resulted in the phrase "happiness" being substituted for "property" in which the two founders' description of American Indian societies played a provocative role. Both sought to create a society that operated as much as possible on consensus and public opinion, while citing the same mechanisms in native societies. Both described Indians' passion for liberty while making it a patriotic rallying cry; they admired Indians' notions of happiness while seeking a definition that would suit the new nation. (pp. 103-108)

Leadership from the Indigenous peoples modeled the political system the United States adheres to today with respect to balances preventing one government body to have power over another.

Framers of the democratic government system rebuffed the notion of women's roles in leadership. Like the teachings of the forest, plant, and animal people, honoring women is significant for their role of continuing life (Johansen, 1982; Morris, 1995). Native people or people who know of the natural law have an awareness of the equality needed for a male and female to maintain a species on a continuum. Johansen (1982) shared a quote from the Iroquois present at the framing of the United States government between the Continental Congress and Iroquois Confederacy and other tribal nations noting Native people's relationship to the natural world,

Island began to shake and tremble along the Eastern Shore, and the Sun darkened by a Black Cloud which arose from beyond the great water, we kindled up a Great Council Fire at Philadelphia . . . so . . . that . . . we are now twelve Colonies united as one Man. . . And . . . As God has put it into our hearts to love the Six Nations and their allies we now make the chain of friendship so that nothing but an evil spirit can or will attempt to break it. But, we hope thro' the Favor and Mercy of the good Spirit that it will remain strong and bright while the Sun shines and the Water runs. (p. 619)

This quote indicates the degree to which Iroquois' worldviews were inclusive and maintained equality among the tribal nation's peoples.

From a leadership perspective, Wheatley (2007) commented on the importance of systems of relationships and the need to develop together collaboratively in human government and society, noting, "It is impossible to look into the natural world and find a separate individual" (p. 25). She then expanded the notion of the needed relationships to establish support systems, or deemed as collaborative work. Wheatley pointed out, "Everywhere life displays itself as complex, tangled, messy webs of relationships. From these relationships, life creates systems that offer greater stability and support than life lived alone" (p. 25). Living

systems co-evolve and work together to form relationships through adaptations and building on a gained wisdom through a process to support sustainability (Wheatley, 2007).

Despite their role in the country's founding, Native Americans found themselves discriminated against, marginalized, and under attack in their own land (Healey, 2006). White politicians with ulterior motives often altered their tribal leadership structures. Healey explained that the dilemma of the Native American Indians eventually found a compassionate ear within the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. The president appointed John Collier in 1932 to administrate the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Collier was familiar with the mounting issues of the American Indian being influential to secure the 1934 passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) (Healey, 2006). Many changes benefitted the Native people, but land was the most pressing issue. The legislation permitted a more progressive approach to the tribes, which differed from the past practices of the federal government. Healey discussed the fact that the IRA reversed the Dawes Act of 1887, thus allowing the return of tribes to self-government. This eliminated the individualized landownership or checkerboard affect when non-Native people were buying land from individuals who had lost their land through marriage, or other means. Tribes were given the ability to manage their land and other assets without much interference (Healey, 2006). The inhabitants of the tribal reservations were given the means to establish their own trade and industry. The IRA allowed a tribal self-governance thus reducing the BIA and other federal agencies roles (Healey, 2006).

The IRA had some misgivings due to a distrust of a U.S. government system. Some of the provisions never materialized and terms were in place to conform to the dominant society's standards. Healey (2006) noted an adherence to Western philosophy of governance as tribes tried to maintain sovereignty,

For example, the proposed increase in the decision-making power of the tribes was contingent on their adoption of the Anglo-American political forms, including secret ballots, majority rule, and written constitutions. These were alien concepts to those tribes that selected leaders by procedures other than popular election (e.g., leaders might be chosen by councils of Elders) or that made decisions by open discussion and consensus building (i.e., decisions required the agreement of everyone with a voice in the process, not simple majority). The incorporation of these Western forms illustrates the basically assimilationist intent of the IRA. (p. 285)

Traditionally, Elders with wisdom from life experiences had a voice that influenced Native governance, yet today many tribal societies have adopted majority rule.

Juntunen and Cline (2010) recounted the fact that Indigenous peoples and nations on the American continent have endured a shared grief since the 16th century. European immigration generated a transformation of life that disturbed the environmental balance of the land and people Indigenous to the territory. After centuries of suffering hostilities of physical and cultural genocide, Indigenous populations were forced to assimilate into the dominant cultures through government-instigated programs covering mental and physical health, economics, and educational plans (Juntunen & Cline, 2010). “Cultural survival” continues to be a primary consideration for contemporary Indigenous people, a fact most non-Native people do not understand (Champagne, 1989).

Historical Indigenous Academic Background

Many historical factors contribute to high dropout rates among Native students. While early U.S. government policy toward Native Americans was primarily aimed at eliminating them or removing them from their traditional lands, during the 1930s and 1940s, the goal shifted toward “assimilation” (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997, p. 114). To that end, the government adopted the pervasive use of boarding schools to simultaneously eradicate Native culture and assimilate young Native students into the wider American society. Deyhle and Swisher noted that the

history of Native education in the United States is inextricably linked with a determined attempt to undermine Native culture, a fact that continues to impact tribal students and Indigenous people today.

In many Native communities, the child is traditionally never left alone as relatives carried babies around, enveloped in warmth, always surround them, treating the child with respect due to any human being, even a small one (Healey, 2006). Native people teach to the whole child based thematically on the student's interests. Healey identified Indigenous leadership and community taught their own population of youth through mentors and educators knowledgeable in their expertise. A learner taught thematically bases learning on their strengths and natural interests.

The Clarke Historical Library on American Indian Boarding Schools (2003) identified traditional learning methodologies as:

The traditional way through which Native American children were educated for the responsibilities that they would assume as adults was by working with and imitating their Elders. There was no "school" as it was understood by nineteenth century Europeans. Rather, children were allowed to roam freely throughout the community stopping and asking questions when and where they pleased. Children would work companionably alongside their parents or other adults, helping in small ways and gaining confidence and ability in various skills. Children often engaged in what the Dakota referred to as "small play," impersonating adults and mimicking their activities, conversations, and manners. (p. 1)

Native people understood that learning and educators came from all realms, whether from the people or the natural environment. Education was not predominately one person or place from where to learn but from everywhere an individual roamed or experienced (Fixico, 2003).

Lessons were hands-on, experimental, and experiential. Discovery was instrumental to the learning process through observation of events and patterns in life such as the changing of seasons, weather by observing clouds or sleeping habits of the animals like bears hibernating during winter.

Fixico (2003) mentions the contrast that boarding schools were created to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant Caucasian society through methods that not only failed to take students' culture into account but in fact punished them for any expression of it, including speaking their native language, wearing traditional clothing, or engaging in any tribal rituals or ceremonies (Fixico, 2003). The dominant society wanted to teach farming, servitude, and religion from a dominant perspective unlike an equality of all things on Earth. W. A. Wilson (2004) stated,

Through the combined efforts of government institutions and Christian workers, Indigenous Peoples in the United States and Canada faced severe persecution for practicing spirituality, for speaking our languages, and for attempting to live the way our ancestors before us had lived. The federal boarding and residential schools continued this tradition, aiming their most concerted and brutal assaults on our most vulnerable and precious populations—the children. Our values and life ways are inconsistent with the materialism and militarism characteristic of today's world powers. In this world that colonialism has created, there is no place for Indigenous knowledge. (p. 360)

The established government in partnership with religious factors felt it was a necessity to force Indigenous cultures to adhere to a norm.

Thompson, Hare, Sempier, and Grace (2008) described an educational system that was repressive and not seen as opportunistic. Indigenous students were forced to assimilate into the dominant culture by becoming “civilized and Christianized” (p. 397). This hierarchical mindset led to an elimination process as described by Starnes (2003), who recounts a part of history hardly mentioned within the education system:

Children were forcibly removed from their families, usually with much screaming and crying. Indigenous students were taken from families to boarding schools, often hundreds of miles from home away from the influence of their families. Students were subjected to an education philosophy focused on “kill the Indian - save the child” and then conversion to Christianity, and finally on teaching basic skills. (p. 330)

Indigenous children changed physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually when sent to the boarding schools. These stories pass down from generation to generation within Indigenous cultures so the people will remember and learn from the history. Starnes (2003) stated,

When the children arrived at the schools, their outward appearance was altered as much as possible. Braids were cut and Indian clothing removed. Forced to dress and act white, they were taught to hate the Indian inside them, to feel ashamed of their customs and beliefs, and to reject their parents' traditional lives. To the extent that the schools were effective, the children's blood would be the only thing Indian about them. The headmaster of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, told graduating students, "Let all that is Indian within you die. You cannot become intelligent, cultured, [and] civilized until the Indian within you is dead!" (p. 330)

My grandfather shared his negative experiences at the Fraser River residential school and how the punishments endured led him to run away three times to escape. His father would paddle his canoe across the strait from Vancouver Island to confront the school seeking reasons as to why his son would run away.

The United States government looked into revising the Indian policy after Captain Richard H. Pratt opened the Carlisle Indian School in 1878. The retired military army captain claimed to have gained his expertise by managing prisons with Apache prisoners in Florida (Clarke Historical Library on American Boarding Schools, 2003; Debo, 1970; Fixico, 2003; Marr, 2003). The school allowed Pratt to try out his theory of what many deemed, "the Indian problem." Pratt believed Indians could be educated if severed from their homes, culture, and families. The administrators of the first school established to train and assimilate Indigenous people toward a more European way of life and education noted,

In its now, nearly perfected form the school employed military, cadet-like training to teach the English language, basic academics, industrial training focused largely on agricultural skills, the importance of hard manual labor, and the need for remunerative employment. To further reinforce the value of the work ethic Pratt adopted the "outing system," in which student labor was contracted out to local farmers and other businesses, with the student receiving at least some of the wages earned. Native languages were banned and Christianity was strongly encouraged. Pratt's oft-quoted philosophy: "Kill

the Indian and save the man.” (Clarke Historical Library on American Boarding Schools, 2003, para. 7)

Carlisle was a school developed to be multi-tribal. Pratt visited tribes to gain their trust and convince the leaders to allow him to take their children and educate them (Debo, 1970).

Over the course of the 19th century, the U.S. government had retained funds given to missionaries to establish schools for Native students. These government-financed schools increased rapidly from 1887 to 1900 (Thompson et al., 2008). As the schools increased, so did the funding. Native students returned home in the evenings to the dismay of the educators who claimed students “were allowed to return home to the heathen and uncivilized ways of their families, which greatly inhibited assimilation and civilization. The close proximity of Indian families served as a deterrent to federal education” (Thompson et al., 2008, p. 398). This served up the notion of establishing schools away from the reservations, known as “boarding schools” in the United States, or “residential schools” in Canada. Thompson et al. (2008) mentioned, “The solution was the separation of Indian children from their families, resulting in the off-reservation boarding school. The solution to the white man’s ‘Indian problem’ was not achieved through forced education” on the reservation, but rather attempted off reservation (p. 398).

Alfred (2005) infers that the real problem is not an Indian problem, but a Settler (white) problem, one of colonialism. He shares,

There are of course vast differences among the world’s Indigenous peoples in their cultures, political-economic situations, and in their relationships with colonizing Settler societies. But the struggle to survive as distinct peoples on foundations constituted in their unique heritages, attachments to their homelands, and natural ways of life is what is shared by all Indigenous peoples, as well as the fact that their existence is in large part lived as determined acts of survival against colonizing states’ efforts to eradicate them culturally, politically and physically. (p. 597)

I have personal knowledge of the trauma endured by many Native people in the government boarding schools come from the stories of my relatives sharing that many of the boarding

schools were thematic based on different religious groups and their belief systems. My grandfathered and other Elders shared their stories so we would not forget, purposely passing their accounts from generation to generation so that we would act if history started to repeat itself. The education of Native people in the boarding schools has been as recent as a generation ago with institutions established nationwide (Marr, 2003, p. 2).

These schools were a solution to what many deemed as the “Indian problem,” as evidenced with Marr’s (2003) stating, “The goal of Indian education from the 1880s through the 1920s was to assimilate Indian people into the melting pot of America by placing them in institutions where traditional ways could be replaced by those sanctioned by the government” (p. 2). Native policy removed children from their homes and communities as the schools were government operated and instilled a military likeness as children “would be immersed in the values and practical knowledge of the growing dominant American society while also being kept away from any influences imparted by their traditionally-minded relatives” (Marr, 2003, p. 3). In an interview a tribal elder recounted experiences as a youth within a boarding school system that,

On the reservations, there was no electricity or running water. When kids came to the boarding school, they had these things – showers and clean clothes – and they ate decent food. My mom died when I was 13 months old. I stayed with my grandmother who was not well. My main criticism of the boarding school is that it did not allow you to do your own thinking. You marched everywhere, you were governed by the bell and bugle, you were told when to go to bed and when to get up, your whole life was governed. As a result, you did not learn how to become an independent thinker. (Marr, 2003, p. 3)

Today’s education system contains similarities as governed by a bell system and forming lines to travel as a group to other locations on the school campus. The bell dictates when a certain subject is learned.

Young Indigenous students who were very impoverished may have gained from the boarding schools. Marr (2003) mentioned that many students did not have the “luxuries” the schools offered, but at the same time it is important to maintain perspective on definitions of “poverty,” keeping in mind that Indigenous people were “impoverished” based on a Eurocentric idea of wealth. A history of military style education played an effective role in undermining the Native students’ appetite for learning, a factor that continues to impact subsequent generations, as evidenced by statistical data demonstrating high dropout rates for Native people in secondary and postsecondary institutes (Marr, 2003)

In 1928, a published report titled, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, also known as the Meriam Report, assessed critically the Office of Indian Affairs. Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) quoted the report supporting Native people’s educational involvement asserting,

The position, taken, therefore, is that the work with and for the Indians must give consideration to the desires of the individual Indians. He who wishes to merge into the social and economic life of the prevailing civilization of this country should be given all practicable aid and advice in making the necessary adjustments. He who wants to remain an Indian and live according to his old culture should be aided in doing so. (p. 88)

The Meriam Report heavily condemned the government’s role in the education plan of Indigenous students. The document has carried on through history to become a stepping-stone for Indigenous people’s involvement in the education of their students. Schools and their tribal communities need to be culturally responsive and educate the people for continued growth and empowerment (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Thompson et al., 2008). Day schools opened near reservations so that family unity and cultural practices could remain intact (Thompson et al., 2008). Additional reports such as *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge* and *The Indian Nations at Risk Report* examined the welfare of the education system, and the Indian Education Act and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act made

tribal communities an accepted component of the their students' educational process (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Thompson et al., 2008). Thompson et al. (2008) stated, "The relationship between tribal leaders and educational leaders is vital in providing opportunities for [their] children to be successful in school and in life" (p. 398).

Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) have noted that the education system offers a sanctuary for change. Through an educational process, there is the notion Indigenous people are part of the past, thus identified as a "cultural genocide" (p. 284). They go on to explain,

The words—*diversity, democracy, sovereignty*—are not simple abstractions or lexical tags. They carry whole domains of human experience built on the backs of human lives, human stories, and personal, individual reality. Native students, parents, and communities have fought many battles in the last century over rights to heritage languages, cultural and religious expression, and control over the content and style of curriculum and pedagogy. (p. 284)

There are many stories told by the elders and other Native people about the fallacy of education with respect to the process and their experiences.

Lopate, Flaxman, Bynum, and Gordon (1970) included a historical perspective and context in their look at Native educational systems in the 1930s and 1940s. Issues addressed included comparisons of larger and smaller school districts. These comparisons looked at community involvement and power in the decision-making process. The research viewed the need for school districts to be adaptable to change based on the needs of the communities they serve. Lopate et al. found that many of the larger school districts had a top-heavy administrative office that stymied growth and change.

Administrative offices rarely listened to the needs of the community, even through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), civil-rights groups, and Teacher Unions, which largely focused on professional interests. A child's educational development depends upon a dynamic interaction between the parent and the school. Although this interaction generally has been limited in the public school situation, several studies showed that even circumscribed participation by parents in school affairs correlates with heightened pupil development. (Lopate et al., 1970, p. 141)

This is especially true with interactions between tribal communities and the academic institutions their students attend.

Lopate et al.'s (1970) research on other schools with parents and community involved in the education process showed improved student learning, especially when curriculum was infused with culture. The community and students felt empowered, as they became part of the educational process, noting, "The child's sense of control over his environment may be more important to achievement than school characteristics" (Lopate et al., 1970, p. 144). Lopate et al. (1970) identified other areas of community and student developments as well, including "self-esteem, motivation, level of aspiration, peer relationships, teacher attitudes, and the general school and home environments—[acknowledging] as important in the child's development [since by the time a child enters school he/she has already developed an individual and cultural identity]" (p. 144). Freng et al. (2007) identified three themes in Indigenous people's accounts of cultural inclusion in school: "(1) the nature of cultural inclusion; (2) factors influencing cultural inclusion; (3) and recommendations for ideal cultural inclusion" (p. 42). In the course of their study, Freng et al. (2007) found that "when cultural inclusion was experienced, it could be categorized into five types: 'Native pride,' student initiative, and inclusion due to parental, familial, and/or community involvement placing multicultural education at the forefront" (p. 42). A curriculum focused on providing every student with the same knowledge eliminates a student's chances of seeking their own niche in society.

The education of all people must be the basis of learning and knowledge. In order to move forward into the future, both past and present must be embraced and fully understood. Most people with this awareness are richer because of a balanced knowledge. W. A. Wilson (2004) noted Indigenous knowledge recovery as an Indigenous empowerment, deemed an anti-

colonial project, suggesting the need to acknowledge, “What was” with the “determined hope for what will be” (p. 359). The philosophy takes the negative aspect with centuries of colonialism and turns the events into the positive of empowerment, which leads toward the future (W. A. Wilson, 2004). A dominant culture tried to eradicate Indigenous “ways of seeing, being, and interacting with the world” whereas “at the dawn of the twenty-first century the recovery of Indigenous knowledge is a conscious and systematic effort to revalue what has been denigrated and revived what has been destroyed” (p. 359). Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) explained that,

Indigenous people have sometimes been imagined as a counterexample—as everything that a civilized, Christian, agrarian, democratic society wished to believe it was not. Another strategy has been to lay claim to Native qualities as being essentially “American”—a love of nature and freedom—while justifying the expropriation of Native qualities on the grounds that Native people are endangered, vanishing, or in fact extinct. In this second strategy, the essentialized, imagined American Indian has provided a romantic, spiritual, ecological, and noble ideal for the non-Indian citizenry to look up to, but typically, that stereotype has not translated into tolerance for real Native people pursuing sovereign goals. (p. 280)

W. A. Wilson (2004) pointed out the need for “regaining the ways of being that allowed our peoples to live a spiritually balanced, sustainable existence within our ancient homelands for thousands of years” (p. 359). Exploitation of the earth’s natural resources reflected an attitude of human selfishness and not one of respect.

Indigenous knowledge should “enrich, engage, and transform the Western scientific project” to the “challenges the epistemological foundations of the ethno knowledge known simply as science” (p. 362). Those who listen will embrace the foundational change of educational practices and the science from all angles. W. A. Wilson (2004) commented,

While most Indigenous Peoples would likely concede that some formalized education in the colonizer’s system is necessary for us to survive in the modern world while developing strategies of resistance, there still exists tremendous distrust for the educational systems that have treated our children so brutally. Indigenous knowledge has rarely, if at all, impacted educational institutions responsible for teaching our children even today. (p. 365)

Healey (2006) identified how we as individuals belong to a membership, whether it is through ethnicity, race, social class, gender, and religion stating, “Group memberships affect the ways others perceive us, the opportunities available to us, the way we think about ourselves, and our view of American society and the larger world,” (p. 11). How Indigenous people feel about themselves has historical roots based in how others have perceived them. Historical texts and current generational perspectives mentally and emotionally pummel Native people with images of themselves as heathens, drunkards, and impoverished individuals.

American education can be an “equitable educational system for all U.S. citizens” instead of standardization of knowledge, “which has marginalized Native peoples” (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, p. 279). As Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) stated, “Many Americans view diversity as a threat to the national fabric as a problem” (p. 281). Additionally, government officials and religious groups continue to believe that a democracy “must face the Indian ‘problem’” (p. 281).

W. A. Wilson (2004) stated, “Many of our young people drop out of school rather than subject themselves to institutions that implicitly or explicitly denigrate Indigenous peoples” (pp. 365-366). Ingalls, Hammond, Dupoux, and Baeza (2006) echoed this, “Culture plays an important role in influencing a child’s learning process and the skills that are learned” whereas “cultural heritage often conflicts with mainstream school practices” (p. 16). Teachers and Native students often encounter difficulties with communication based on cultural and traditional differences. Beaulieu (2006) recounted his own Native traditions, claiming the,

Extended family is a vehicle for learning academic content; and the teacher who has improved her teaching by interacting with students according to their relationship to the teacher in the kinship system of the tribe—I was reminded that learning is a *social* activity. Culture does not exist separate from its specifically associated and congruent sociolinguistic container, which weds relationships, stories, conversation, and experience

as shared by a group of people. Culture cannot be transmitted or passed on to the next generation without learning within that social web of stories and relationships. Indeed, they are separable only when we are alone. (p. 51)

Teacher education should not imply the “teacher knows everything” when in fact classrooms need to be open as learning environments for all participants (Ingalls et al., 2006, p. 16).

“Teacher practices that are often in direct contrast to unique attributes prized in the student’s home and culture. Approximately 90% of American Indians receive their education in rural mainstream schools; a teacher’s cultural responsiveness is an important educational issue” (Ingalls et al., 2006, p.16). Teachers need to be culturally responsive toward the communities in which they reside and educate others.

Teachers need to be trained to “demonstrate knowledge, cultural competence, and the willingness to adopt new strategies and concepts” as we enter into areas of diverse communities, not just religiously as in the past, but in racial relationships (Ingalls et al., 2006, p. 16).

“Multiple challenges generate stressful situations that affect any [Native] student’s experiences. However, students from the dominant, privileged culture rarely experience the same demands that [Native] students living a bicultural life endure” (Burke, 2007, p. 5).

Belgarde et al. (2002) defined “culturally responsive education as curriculum and instruction that generally validate the cultures and languages of students and allows them to become co-constructors of knowledge in the school setting” (p. 46). Ingalls et al. (2006) also asserted that, “Culturally responsive education recognizes and addresses students’ learning styles, the modalities of reflective learning, the role of group collaboration, the function of non-verbal behavior and the implications of self-regulation” (p. 16).

Established learning environments infuse curriculum with the Native communities’ cultural and linguistic traditions in a manner that allows students to share their own knowledge

and experiences in the classroom. Belgarde et al. (2002) recognized community involvement also incorporates guest speakers in the classroom or to the school. Rivera and Tharp (2006) pointed to the importance of empowering Native communities to guide students' development in educational settings, suggesting "A strong agreement by the community on the direction by their school district in efforts to improve classroom instruction, as well as in efforts to guide their children's development as Native Americans" (p. 435).

The belief that a culturally infused education will make a difference in the effectiveness of schools requires a viewpoint focusing on classroom pedagogy. "A large part of our thinking in [Native] education carries with it the belief that it is possible to transform the educational programs of schools serving Native students so that they will serve the interests of specific tribal communities" (Beaulieu, 2006, p. 53).

Research has demonstrated that the inclusion of Indigenous traditional culture produces academic success among Native students (Whitbeck et al., 2001). Whitbeck et al. (2001) scientifically established the "effects of traditional culture on child development" and highlighted the "important policy and funding implications for prevention work, school programs, and other [student's] activities," thus determining "[Indigenous] Nations have been decades ahead of the scientific community regarding the positive effects of cultural practices and intellectual identities for their people" (p. 16). Verbos, Gladstone, and Kennedy (2011) noted the importance of Indigenous values in education administration, particularly with respect to inclusiveness in establishing relationships. The study pointed out deep connections and parallels with life on Earth "that all creatures and natural phenomena are animate, connected, and worthy of respect" (Verbos, Gladstone, et al., 2011, p. 11). Indigenous perspectives encompass a

holistic circle of parallels, which include the past, present, and future, thus lending present meaning to historical traumas.

Christman, Guillory, Fairbanks, and González (2008) posited that a circle of knowledge in Native schools is complete when the “experiences and perceptions of American Indian pre-service administrators proceed through an educational leadership preparation program” (p. 53). School administrators are foundational to educating teachers and building community engagement. Native students need role models in the academic system, such as counselors and others who can relate to their needs with Indigenous cultural issues. Academic success for Native students wields a commitment by academic institutions whereas students feel part of the learning process with positive experiences (Maxwell, 2001).

Christman et al. (2008) identified themes based on their analysis of school administration, including “relationships, outside influence, getting prepared, altruism, and concern for family” (p. 53), not only through personal experiences, but also in response to the surrounding environment. Burke’s (2007) research revealed that there has long been an assumption the Indigenous student, especially college youth, will assimilate into the deemed “norm” with respect to their instructors’ cultural beliefs. Non-Native instructors imply what it means to be successful, claiming, “The majority of American college courses are deeply rooted in the hegemonic, colonialist, pedagogical paradigm that trains instructors, produces textbooks, and designs instructional tools” (p. 1). A school’s influence on the education of minority students imposes their empowerment of assimilation, thus reflecting an institutional oppression (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) further argued that

The hegemonic cultural values that colonialist curriculum perpetuates reinforces the belief that alternative ways of knowing are inferior to traditional, Euro-centric ways of knowing. The negation of other ways of knowing, cultures, or worldviews may prevent access to understanding for some students and create academic environments where

students of color are uninvited or unmotivated to succeed. The inherent implication for American Indian/Alaska Native students is that unless they forfeit cultural heritage, beliefs, and identities, the American system of higher education may obstruct or suppress their personal and academic development. Systemic tolerance of disempowerment for any individual or student population prevents all college students from achieving the ability to succeed in a pluralistic, multicultural, global environment. (p. 5)

Each student is unique and his or her learning gears itself toward a holistic understanding where content needs to be relevant. “Many Indigenous students are non-assertive, which can be misunderstood by instructors who may perceive [Native] students as culturally deprived, rather than rich in cultural traditions, if students do not demonstrate assertive or competitive behaviors” (Burke, 2007, p. 6).

Buckley (2004) identified high dropout rates in school, whether secondary or postsecondary, where depleted numbers of Indigenous students move into the professions. The majority of college faculty is white, of European descent, while very few college faculties are Native. Native people fear they will be unable to incorporate their traditional knowledge into a mainstream professional education environment. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) recognized all students are uniquely different, learn differently, and behold differing perspectives based on their different experiences. Based on these individualistic qualities, there are always social norms that further influence student performance and completion. Deyhle and Swisher quoted Cajete (2000) in noting that Indigenous students consider influences in terms of interconnectedness as “Human beings have an instinctual understanding and need for affiliation with other things” (p. 20). This factor is significant to understanding Native student learning.

Recommendations on how to improve Native student learning include “energizing the community of scholars and educators by infusing curriculum with multicultural examples and ways of knowing” (Burke, 2007, p. 13) and by “providing opportunities for tribal leaders and Elders to be guest speakers. In this way, [Native] students may become empowered in the

communication within the classroom and be more academically successful by witnessing community leaders in school settings” (p. 13). This wide range of studies indicates the high level of importance of incorporating the community and cultural knowledge into the learning environment for Indigenous. Lopate et al. (1970) noted that even years ago schools were not successful in educating [Indigenous students] due to a lack in the relationship between schools and Indigenous communities, predicting, “Education will probably have to become more relevant to the students, community and cultural integrity will have to be recognized” (pp. 147-148). Older studies such as Lopate et al. are thus useful for demonstrating a change in the situation over time.

Juntunen and Cline (2010) conducted a case study with a single Lakota woman who wanted to attend college to further her education so she could be involved in the community as a healthcare practitioner. Even with a partial scholarship and tribal stipend for some of the living expenses, the tribal council offered to pay tuition if the career served tribal needs (Juntunen & Cline, 2010). For many Native students, seeking a higher education brings apprehension (Kenny, 2002). In her case, the postsecondary institution was miles away, her father was ailing, and she needed childcare for her son. There is a culture shock when universities have larger populations than the tribal communities themselves. Close-knit communities typically offer a safe area where everyone knows everyone versus leaving and knowing nobody (Juntunen & Cline, 2010). Experiences intimidate most Native people, as they feel different and may feel “ignored” or just want to “blend in” without being seen. As in her case, the tribe offers a job with benefits and few community or family members encouraged her to further her education. The majority want her to stay home near them, and not “be white” (Juntunen & Cline, 2010).

Juntunen and Cline (2010) identified the following five factors as hampering the decision of many Native students to pursue an education:

- (a) Cultural identity
- (b) Cultural explanations of career
- (c) Cultural factors related to psychosocial environment and levels of functioning
- (d) Cultural elements of the relationship between tribal community and education
- (e) Cultural assessment for diagnosis and care of self and community. (p. 393)

It is important for tribal leaders and postsecondary administrators to encourage students to “live in two worlds, while benefiting from both” (p. 396). Students need to feel supported with all their efforts recognized, and employment available for them upon their transitional return from a postsecondary institution and back in to the community. The Native students’ expertise needs to fit into the community’s vision of growth (Juntunen & Cline, 2010).

In reporting on their research conducted through the Northwest Regional Lab, Demmert and Towner (2003) observed that, “One of the most powerful ways to strengthen family and community partnerships for successful student learning is to change instructional and curricular practices so that they are more culturally responsive” (p. vi). One important aspect the authors deemed necessary for student success was “Drawing on the knowledge, skills, and experiences of students and the support of family and community members enriches the curriculum and builds family and community support, broadening learning experiences for all students” (p. vi).

General Concepts

Students learn very little about cultures within and outside of their immediate environments. In many instances, the learner receives vague or no information about Indigenous cultures and their authentic roles in history. Learners are often exposed to hatred breeding negative discussions and portrayals of heathens, murderers, impoverished, and uneducated individuals (Demmert & Towner, 2003). As a new teacher at a high school, I was the only

Native teacher out of 70 educators in a community situated between two large Native sovereign nations. As I taught students, and held discussions with adult teachers, I heard the comment many times, “I never learned [that] in school,” or “I didn’t know [that], how come I was not taught this?” in reference to the Indigenous knowledge and historical contributions to our nation shared in the introduction. I purchased a photo packet of Indigenous leaders, as well as many other implements, to displayed in my classroom and thematically taught many lessons from an Indigenous perspective

Conceptual categories. Theoretical concepts I addressed through the research formed three main areas of student academic success: the learning styles of Indigenous students, Native communities, and their leadership as part of the education process, and teaching in the Indigenous classroom. Each area had overlapping concepts of culturally relevant learning, cultural development, and professional development. The research in this chapter identifies each of these areas. The main areas address the need for bridging the cultures between the Native and non-Native communities. Tribal councils and their education departments need to meet the leadership of the school boards and city and county councils. Goals need addressed and established for all to learn from each other to grow the next generation of students and leaders.

Community focuses in Indigenous student graduation rates. The research literature supports the notion that cultural context has a significant impact on educational outcomes for minority students. The care of dependent children is a challenge facing American Indian college students. Recent statistics reveal that nearly one-third (27%) of all undergraduate students have dependent children compared to 35% of American Indian undergraduates (Kee, 2007). Data also show that 8% of American Indian students report being responsible for the care others in addition to their children, weighted compared to just 3% of Caucasian students (Kee, 2007).

Maxwell (2001) addressed the unique challenges that American Indian students experience. Although some of these challenges may be applicable to other minority groups, American Indians have additional obstacles specific to their tribal cultures. As indicated above, American Indian students have strong ties to their extended family, which are typically not common among non-Native families. These strong familial ties result in elevated levels of separation anxiety on occasions when Indigenous students attend universities away from home (Maxwell, 2001).

The enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for Native students are proportionately lower than any other ethnic group in the United States. For many Indigenous students, departing college prior to completion of a degree signals delayed or forgone personal aspirations and often diminished or deferred opportunities (Larimore & McClellan, 2005). According to Larimore and McClellan (2005), “the attrition of these students also has a negative and detrimental impact on their campus communities because their absence diminishes the multi- and cross-cultural educational potential the learning environment has for all students” (p. 18). Students need the opportunity to learn about all cultures in balanced perspectives, especially from the cultures themselves.

Culturally relevant education. In order to educate diverse cultures school communities must have a relationship with the surrounding environment of those cultures (Okakok, 1989). Indigenous cultures live as one with the world around them in order to survive, especially through sustenance by living off the land. Okakok identified education for survival techniques vital to living with the land such as the harsh environments in Alaska. The differences in location also contribute to inconsistent generalized education practices. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) asserted that “Indigenous youth need not learn just tribal cultures and languages at the expense of learning mainstream culture taught in schools” (p. 942). They advocated for a

curriculum that encourages development of a blended knowledge facilitated by schools, was they called a “‘both/and’ approach rather than an ‘either/or’ approach” (p. 942). Indigenous people promote the notion that their youth should incorporate their cultures and traditions into the learning environment, thus protecting ancestral identities. Like learning two or more languages, culture and Native traditions are experiences bridged by dominant cultures and ethnicities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

To establish effective learning environments within a classroom, educators need to connect with their students’ culture. “Becoming a culturally competent educator is a constant learning process requiring flexibility and adaptability on the part of the teacher depending on the particular students and contexts with which they are working” (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 946). Without adherence to this flexibility, students may drop out from their formal education based on learning ideologies that are not relevant in their Native traditions and culture, making recruitment of American Indian/Alaskan Native for postsecondary education a challenge (Guillory, 2009). A teacher in a diverse classroom needs to acknowledge differences in student history and family values since all are not the same. Guillory (2009) noted a culturally responsive curriculum allows students to infuse their cultural knowledge in the classroom when prompted. Topics identified in this research categorize themes typically found within student learning style such as support systems, multicultural knowledge, culturally diverse schools, and classroom awareness (Guillory, 2009). Furthermore, the culture differences from home compared to the school, as well as the need to be academically prepared for college, are topics further identified in this research.

The literature reviewed reflected the need to establish a change in the education system, especially for American Indian students. Knowledge of our heritage provides individuals with a

strong foundation. Pewewardy (2003) recognized the fact that “the complex issues surrounding tribal identity and representation in education” (p. 71) must not be stereotypical, but rather viewed in terms of the diverse traditions of many tribes as multi-tribal and multi-cultural. In general, schools need to address their local tribe’s customs and not portray the romanticized versions many stereotypes characterize today (Pewewardy, 2003).

Indigenous learning styles. Singer songwriter Gene Daughtry mentioned in an interview, “we never forget our summers, we remember everything about them” (Radio Interview, The Pulse, January 2, 2011). His song “September” speaks to the memories constantly present of summertime as an experiential time of learning for youth while building on the reminiscences of friendships and community. In this sense, scholars who promote a culturally responsive learning approach agree with teachers who emphasize the need to utilize pedagogical techniques that openly connect learning to students’ everyday lives (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Kleinfeld and Nelson (1991) question this in their ethnographic study:

In sum, both psychological research on Native Americans’ cognitive ability patterns and ethnographic research on Native Americans’ observational learning style lead to the hypothesis that Native American children would do better in school if instruction were not so verbally saturated and drew more on visual and spatial abilities. This expectation seems so straightforward, logical, and compelling that it is difficult to believe it is not valid. (p. 276)

During the weeks of summer break, students utilize all of their senses of feeling, smelling, hearing, tasting, and seeing. The memories of students remain rich based on such sensory-loaded experiences.

Evans (Allen as cited in Evans, 1994) cited another researcher who stated that the “tribal concept of time is of timelessness, as the concept of space is of multidimensionality” (p. 147). Kleinfeld’s research on her subject “yielded only three studies testing empirically the proposition

that instruction adapted to Native Americans' learning styles would increase achievement" (Kleinfeld & Nelson, 1991, p. 276). The authors found it "curious that little research had been published in this area because this issue has been discussed for at least 20 years" (p. 277), theorizing results may have been disappointing or not published. Kleinfeld and Nelson (1991) distinguished the term "learning style" to "suggest that differences in school achievement are not due to 'deficiencies' but merely to variations in the way students learn" (p. 280). Evans (1994) pointed toward the traditional belief that life is in a circle and is not associated with time:

A search for harmony and a chronological time sense (where events do not occur linearly) echoes that circle. The educational system, however, is constructed to prepare students for an industrialized society that depends upon chronological time structuring. This system is linear, time-clock-oriented, and censures American Indian women who seek harmony in time. Native women seek harmony in completing the circle, the whole task, learning not only how but also why. (p. 6)

Native concepts focus primarily on circular rather than linear methodologies. Cultural traditions observe circles as cycles of time, the earth, sun, moon, plant stems, eyes, life, and other areas beholding significance (McGregor, 2009). These systems of synergy bring about learning style.

The circular concept found in many instances with traditional knowledge considers mind, body, spirit, and emotions as mainstays of Indigenous intelligence (Evans, 1994). Evans remarked on syntactical differences in languages as a reason for Native people's difficulty in education, reflecting the general belief that language is the issue with Native students' difficulty with lectures and readings. Evans considered how intelligence and achievement, as measured on typical standardized tests, reflect white middle-class learning functions. Native learners are holistic, contextual, reflective, and more circular in thinking as the worldly view involving their self as they learn about everything being part of everything rather than compartmentalizing (Evans, 1994).

The circle concept involves inclusive education where everyone in a learning environment gains knowledge from each other. Evans (1994) considered “the richness of life experience brought to the classroom by each learner and recognition of ways in which new learning can connect with the old are vital” (p. 10). Evans found Native student academic engagement to be lacking based on the “cultural incompatibility of this type of teaching” (p. 22). Powers (2006) noted the assumption that Native students do not respond to empirical types of teaching, highlighting the lack of opportunity available for Native students to be academically engaged in the learning process. Okakok (1989) identified the need of students seeking relevance in the learning. “The children need to see how their studies are applicable to real life: how the command of English is important in secretarial work; the use of calculus in surveying; the role of logic, mathematics, and social skills in management decisions” (p. 6). This concept of empowerment has universal support among all students (Powers, 2006). Cooperative learning offers a support system beneficial to Native people. Evans (1994) noted how a supportive learning system could “raise achievement levels of adult minority learners, just as it does with children of ethnic minority groups” (p. 10). Yet, as Evans points out, Native people view life experiences as part of the capacity from which learning happens, especially from personal observation. This fact deserves respect when including Native people as an essential part of their epistemological position. Additionally, Evans (1994) asserted that Native people dislike standing out in a crowd. These students prefer that communication regarding any issues remain private rather than public. This is true especially if the communication considers any negativity toward the recipient (p. 9). One such recommendation was to attempt to have one-on-one communication when speaking to younger Native people, a method of offering respect to the individual (Evans, 1994).

Powers (2006) identified studies defining differences based on cultures and research noting Native communities define learning through skills as “field dependent, visual spatial, right hemispheric dominance, etc.” (p. 21). Even as Native learning styles continue to be a topic of interest, “there is now greater emphasis on examining constructs having more direct, observable, and manipulated effects on the desired outcomes of schooling” (p. 21), especially within groups.

Student support systems. Student support systems are a necessity within institutions needing to eliminate potential “feelings of academic inadequacy, isolation, alienation, and marginalization” (Guillory, 2009, p. 12) for Native students. In addition, financial assistance factored into college participation with Native students is a necessity for students to consider furthering their education. Yet Guillory’s (2009) study revealed the aid “motivated Native students to persist through college completion, but few stated sufficient financial support did help, and did not perceive adequate funding to be a principal persistence factor” (p. 16).

Shockingly, the financial assistance “was viewed as a barrier because there never seemed to be enough money for childcare (for the single mothers in the study), tuition, or rent” (p. 16).

Powers (2006) stated that a fundamental requirement and prerequisite for learning for students is safety, which is thus an important indicator of the school’s climate.

According to Guillory (2009), a major factor for many students to continue their education is living up to “family expectations and a fear of letting their families down by not graduating from college” (p. 16). An important incentive for Native students to continue was therefore community connections with their families. Guillory found that persistence “in earning a college education brought hope of making life better for their families” (p. 16). Guillory (2009) noted how Native traditions typically place the student’s community first before placing themselves as more important. “Additionally, a college education meant more than just a means

to obtaining a career and financial independence; for these students, it was an instrument to combat deleterious conditions back home” (Guillory, 2009, p. 16). Because Native students have the greatest difficulty with postsecondary institutions, they need programs intended for their cultural diversity. Administrators must thus seek solutions in order to reduce prejudice and discrimination on their campuses (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

Guillory (2009) asserted that peer groups and social support systems are useful functioning bodies for Native students, whether in secondary or postsecondary educational institutions. Programs designed specifically for cultural groups work well in developing a social network of peers, thereby creating the sense of “community” that is necessary for “student support from the institution, which countered the negative effects of leaving home and the feelings of isolation many of the Native American students experienced [while] at the university” (Guillory, 2009, p. 16). Powers’ (2006) research identified a significant difference in Native student academic success when cultural-based programming on the school campus positively influenced urban Native American students. Native culture educational systems promoted outcomes of students who most strongly identified with their Native culture (Guillory, 2009; Powers, 2006). Many Native students come from their close communities of Native people in urban settings or reservations have established extended families with immediate family structures. Guillory (2009) observed that, “Enclaves or gathering places where students can socialize and feel a part of a university (although not a part of mainstream campus life) was vital to the growth and resiliency of these students” (p. 16). Guillory (2009) went on to state, “It is critical for colleges and universities to understand the cultural capital of their regional tribes” (p. 18). In his research, Guillory (2009) identified strategies for learning institutions to assist their Native students academically to “Maintain Connections to Family and Tribal Community;

Address Single-Parent Students and Students with Family Issues; Academic Assistance through Peer Mentoring” (pp. 18-20). Connections between college and tribal communities are necessary where students “desire to benefit with their educations” (Guillory, 2009, p. 18) and where family involvement connects with their student. College systems need to embrace a “whole community approach to lifelong education, based on the principle that a student does not have to abandon culture or family to obtain an education” (p. 19). Culturally sensitive counseling encourages educational processes to include areas of learning where the student can contribute to their community, whether as an urban Indian or reservation based (Guillory, 2009). Imperative for the Native learner is developing confidence, especially in the core courses. Peer tutoring allows the Indigenous learner to “catch up academically” since many lacked “exposure to advanced mathematics and poor English writing skills” (Guillory, 2009, p. 20). Academic bridging is imperative for a community’s growth. Courses need to emphasize cultural similarities and differences to enrich the mind. Steinhauer (2008) mentions, “Positive relationships formed through warm, sensitive, and responsive care help [students] to feel valued and gain more from their learning experiences (p. 112). Many schools that primarily use a mainstream approach of “one-size-fits-all” learning do not recognize the importance of family and community relevant to considerations as possible solution for increasing student success, especially with Native students regardless of academic level, whether elementary, secondary, or postsecondary (Evans, 1994). Educators need to familiarize themselves with Indigenous communities, even if it is learning their culture and visiting their tribal reservations to attend gatherings (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009). “Relationships between teachers, families, peers, and even place are important and help to build environments that nurture children’s growth and development” (Steinhauer, 2008, p. 112).

This is even more important in light of Evans' (1994) observation that the "Native woman 'struggles' to reconcile her identity in the academic world with her identity in the tribe, she adapts in ways that white educators may not understand" (p. 6). Evans' research identified the effectiveness of utilizing the "big sister" relationship for Native students, especially those new to the campus, noting that institutions need to consider a support system for the student's family, too. Garrett et al. (2003) contrasted traditional Native values with mainstream values,

Imagine for a moment, that formal education was based on Native American traditional values with which ALL children were expected to comply in order to succeed. Let us say, for instance, that children of all cultures upon coming to school were expected to: Share or give away their possessions; talk about their extended family and/or heritage rather than themselves as individuals or their accomplishments; participate in cooperative group efforts with no competition among individuals tolerated; drop their heads and eyes when addressed by teachers or counselors and take plenty of time to reflect before answering questions posed to them; learn by quietly observing and/or listening to stories and legends without asking questions or blurting out comments; and attend school even during holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter. (p. 234)

Relationships are important for many cultures, especially among Indigenous peoples where community is important. Such cultures remain living examples of the old proverb "It takes a village to raise a child."

Native students as spatial, visual, relational, and experiential learners. Educational systems need to focus on student cooperation and eliminate the notion of tests as the primary means of determining individual students' learning competencies (Garrett et al., 2003). Students should feel empowered by their learning and have an inclusive and active role within their schools and communities. Education then becomes like a rite of passage, carrying more meaning and social responsibilities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) believe there needs to be understanding of cultural concerns as primary variables for educators hoping to engage Indigenous students. Native youth

see the world and understand knowledge based on everyday experiences. Teachers need to bridge their knowledge with the cultures from where they work, creating a balance of understanding differing viewpoints. Educators could serve their Indigenous communities by integrating cultural partnerships with community members in development of pedagogy, curricula, and educational policies (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Educators need to reflect on the differences between the ideology of Native student learning styles and the right-brain dominance perspectives. According to Castagno and Brayboy (2008), “Scholars and educators must continue to be alert to assumptions and expectations that portray Indigenous youth and communities in these ways” identifying research as “both racist and sexist in nature” (p. 942). They further cited research claiming Native students learned largely through “right-brained intelligence” entailing “spatial, musical, interpersonal, and bodily kinesthetic” (p. 942).

Castagno and Brayboy’s (2008) research implied that all students could learn based on a diagnosis of a Native learning style balancing both sides of the brain, and accommodating effective methodologies allowing all students to succeed. Knowledge development is best when groups formulate rich discussions instead of identifying individualistic gains. Indigenous people need to take a stand and advocate for change in the educational structure of the schools offered to their people (Belgarde et al., 2002). With resonating voices and actions, Indigenous people must sit on school boards in order to become educated themselves on the entire education process. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) urged for the need to engage as more positive and respectful role models for all people so that Native students and teachers can endeavor to bridge the gaps between those entities that lack empathy because they are unaccustomed to or uneducated about the Native world (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Cultural responsiveness in educational institutions with Native students and their respective communities allows ownership of teaching

and learning that bridges Indigenous students' home culture and school (Belgarde et al., 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy, 2002b). Indigenous people, young and old, need to model cultural responsibility.

In evaluating the relationships identified within cultures, Ogbu (1992) recognized the affiliations between cultures, language, and knowledge, comparing differences and similarities as Indigenous peoples establish connections within their environments and ascertain the learning and teaching tools that function within their own communities. Ogbu discussed the development of community knowledge as a source of pride among Indigenous students that in turn connects them with the community, especially elders. Students need to take responsibility for their own academic performance. Ogbu reasoned schools ignore the importance of educators' trust in the minority student's own sense of responsibility as an indicator of academic performance. The hardest thing anyone, let alone a teacher, can do is trust others. With awareness that their teachers trust they will accomplish quality work, supported by adequate guidance, Indigenous students can be successful as such trust further indicates that the educator understands and embraces their culture (Ogbu, 1992). As part of the process of change to ensure an optimal learning environment for Native students, administrators and faculty should promote the acquisition of differing cultures for the school, student, and their community. Cross-cultural understanding supports high academic achievement for everyone: educators, student, schools, family, and community (Ogbu, 1992).

There are also psychological pressures against "acting White" that are just as effective in discouraging involuntary minority students from striving for academic success. An involuntary minority individual who desires to do well in school may also define the behavior enhancing school success or the success itself as "acting White." Thinking that attitudes and behaviors associated with academic success and the success itself may result in loss of peer affiliation and support and at the same time uncertain of White acceptance

and support if he or she succeeds in learning to act White, a student may feel a personal conflict. (Ogbu, 1992, p. 11)

When students juggle two worlds, the Native community and the non-Native community, choosing between the two becomes difficult. Native students struggle with behaviors as they try to adapt to a dominate culture. Ogbu (1992) urged teachers to be proactive when teaching Native students through:

(a) observation of children's behavior in the classroom and on playgrounds, (b) asking children questions about their cultural practices and preferences, (c) talking with parents about their cultural practices and preferences, (d) doing research on various ethnic groups with children in school, and (e) studying published works on children's ethnic groups. (p. 12)

Experiences vary in the classroom between instructor and Native student, especially concerning cultural knowledge. Each has an innate intellectual comprehension that is sometimes difficult to communicate to another ethnicity in a respectful manner without stating one is right, and the other is not. Each needs to build an understanding in a considerate method (Ogbu, 1992).

According to Powers (2006), "[Native] students are at great risk for school failure citing cultural differences, or discontinuities between Native culture and the majority culture of most schools are commonly cited as the major cause of academic failure among American Indian students" (p. 21). She goes on to state:

When the word "nation" is used with [Native] peoples, it means something different in [Indigenous] communities from academic people. "Nation" and "nation building" in the international development literature suggest a public body of citizens or members mobilized to create democratic government institutions or commit collective action. "Nation" within [Native] communities usually implies a specific combination of kinship, government, worldview, and cosmic community. The Dakota expression *mitakuye owasin* implies not only relations among humans but also relations with all animate beings in the universe. Western expressions of collective national organization are secular, while traditional [Native] expressions of a collective group include nonhuman powers. (p. 357)

Language and its meaning differs between cultures as Indigenous groups see a synergy of all beings working in a harmony, and not with a life dominated by human peoples. Steinhauer (2008) identifies that educators have low expectations for Native students in public school systems.

Powers (2006) suggested that the simple word “nation” is not only a vast departure from the governmental or political perspective that commonly exists, but rather implies a more universal awareness that includes all living things and all perspectives; past, present, and future. From this viewpoint, the term is a true expression of the depths of the American Indian way of life, one that will benefit young Native learners.

Teaching in Indigenous Classrooms

A key consideration when pursuing student success is understanding the ancestral history of tribes and the issues they faced during forced assimilation efforts by the United States. Educators acknowledge a major area of concern toward teaching and administration strategies is to ensure that cultural issues address student, curriculum, and teacher preparation projects (Ball, 2004). Suggested approaches include hands-on cooperative learning experiences and holistic teaching promoting mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being in each student (Ball, 2004; Beaulieu, 2000; Belgarde et al., 2002; Kidwell, 2009; McNally, 2004; Pewewardy, 2002b). American Indian/Alaska Native individuals have based their societies for centuries on this foundation (Ball, 2004; Belgarde et al., 2002). The following strategies are from a variety of sources and represent a broad range of ideas. It is important to recognize that each Native student is an individual and every interactive learning situation is unique, so instructors must use their judgment, find what works best, and avoid stereotyping students (Ball, 2004). It is

important to understand that every family unit and every Native nation will have its own cultural values and customs (Belgarde et al., 2002).

The primary need is to develop a Culturally Responsive Curriculum (CRS). Belgarde et al. (2002) define this approach as an education that “generally validates the cultures and languages of students and allows them to become co-constructors of knowledge in the school setting” (p. 43). The authors explain teachers should “infuse the curriculum with rich connections to students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community contexts” (p. 43). This process empowers the students to take ownership in their learning abilities in order to partake in the education process through sharing of knowledge.

Broad elements key to CRS involve not only the curriculum, but also identifying pedagogy, school policy, student expectations, standards, assessment, teacher knowledge, community involvement, self-determination, sovereignty, racism, and epistemologies rarely spoken in classrooms (Belgarde et al., 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Tribal nations’ unique political systems within the United States account for education to be understood, researched, analyzed, and developed in ways that take into account the sovereign status and self-determination goals of Indigenous communities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Castagno and Brayboy (2008) noted in Belgarde et al.’s (2002) study how a tribal elder explained, “Do not teach our children our culture; use our culture to teach them” (p. 955).

As the 21st century progresses, Native students continue to perform inadequately in school relative to their non-Native peers (Beaulieu, 2006). Statistics showing the lack of relevant learning signify, ironically, that Native peoples (who are Indigenous to this country and who speak English as a first language) are experiencing the second highest dropout rates within the last 20 years, trailing only Hispanic immigrants who speak English as a second language (U.S.

Department of Education, 2012). Cultural significance and relevance continue to be present in the majority of educational institutions maintaining the Eurocentric pedagogy (Guillory, 2009; Okakok, 1989; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004; Tyler et al., 2008). Social familiarity is a necessity in the classroom, especially if a student lives on a reservation where close community ties are developed. Few researchers have provided empirical data supporting the claim cultural discontinuity exists, which contributes further to the academic difficulties experienced (Tyler et al., 2008).

A major area of concern about teaching strategies and administration for minorities is ensuring topics addressed are cultural issues in student, curriculum, and teacher preparation projects. Student support programs are a necessity with institutions eliminating potential “feelings of academic inadequacy, isolation, alienation, and marginalization” (Guillory, 2009, p. 12) among Native students. Suggested approaches include hands-on cooperative learning experiences and holistic teaching, which promotes mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being in each student. Indigenous individuals have based their societies for centuries on this foundation (Guillory, 2009).

Multicultural knowledge. When discussions center on multicultural knowledge, scholars and educators have differing perspectives based on how the cultural groups interact. Dominant mainstream values contrast with cultural values and beliefs, especially with Native peoples in the education systems (Garrett et al., 2003; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004). Culturally responsive education would include students sharing, giving away possessions, speaking about their community or heritage and not themselves or accomplishments, preferring cooperative group efforts without competition, looking down when spoken to by adults, taking plenty of time to reflect before answering questions, learning through quiet observation, and listening without

interruption (Garrett et al., 2003). Native students bring life experiences to draw upon as part of their learning experiences, constructing a multicultural pedagogy (Garrett et al., 2003).

Education programs need to include experiences and knowledge of culturally diverse student populations. Although most research in multicultural education examines how to prepare Native students, Sleeter (2001) observed difficulties in multicultural educational settings with non-Native students noting that when students of color merge in predominately-white programs, the minority individual may experience “the overwhelming presence of ‘Whiteness’ [which] can be silencing” (p. 101). Native students build relationships with a sense of equality, observing all conscious relations in the universe. Champagne (2007) identified this quality with the Dakota expression *mitakuye owasin*, meaning not just with the human form of peoples. “Western expressions of collective national organization are secular, while traditional American Indian expressions of a collective group include nonhuman powers” (p. 357). Native American studies need to be centered on the culture of Native students with an awareness of differences among the social and political actions of the respective communities involved (Champagne, 2007). It is imperative that educators understand cultural differences and similarities at this level.

Culturally diverse schools and classrooms. Sleeter (2001) commented, “Students of color tend to bring richer experiences and perspectives to multicultural teaching than do most White students, who dominate numerically” (p. 95). Whereas Ball (2004) noted, “mainstream, standardized, one-size-fits-all curriculum is all that is offered, too often the result is a homogenizing, monoculture, colonizing approach to community and human service development that is inappropriate for the varied social ecologies of Indigenous children and families” (p. 457). Castagno and Brayboy (2008) concluded that Indigenous students need to be bicultural and multicultural and schools need to facilitate the process. Education systems need to be culturally

responsive when working in Native communities bridging the different communities (Belgarde et al., 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy, 2002a). Well-designed and implemented multicultural education “must be based on actual knowledge of the cultures and languages of the children's ethnic groups, how they differ from mainstream culture and language, and the kinds of problems they generate” (Ogbu, 1992, p. 12).

Powers (2006) noted students who drop out of school burden themselves with cultural clashes and may represent the historical oppressive educational system passed down generationally. “In an attempt to prevent American Indian student failure and dropout, some schools have addressed the issue of cultural discontinuity by including culturally relevant teaching methodologies and materials and by incorporating Native cultural traditions into the curricula” (pp. 27-28). Native communities are natural resources to draw on in efforts to incorporate cultural relevancy into the learning process.

Native Communities as Leader/Educators

Native communities, especially Native leadership, must be culturally responsive and bridge the tribal community and the school their students attend to achieve valuable learning and school success (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Pewewardy, 2003). According to Castagno and Brayboy (2008), Indigenous students need to be bicultural as well as multicultural. A school's most important role educationally is to facilitate this process:

When teachers, curricula, and schools provide a challenging and high-quality education that is intimately connected and relevant to tribal communities, they will be far more likely to graduate youth who are academically prepared, connected to an active members of their tribal communities, and knowledgeable about both the dominant and their home cultures. (p. 942)

Students prefer to link learning with their interests, which provides relevance to the process of establishing life goals. This is evident in the strong links between student interests and their general interest in learning.

McGregor (2004) called for all cultures to be proactive in their respective communities. “Indigenous people are creative people surviving from common knowledge and integrating the knowledge to survive! Our worldview is about creation, being co-creators, transforming ourselves, and re-creating ourselves, as we meet our challenges” (p. 403). McGregor also pointed to the impact of personal loss from the passing of grandparents and great-grandparents and the knowledge lost with their passing. Anguiano (2004) incorporated “an ecological approach and by grounding the framework within social capital theory, demonstrated the possibilities of exploring future contextual relationships between families, schools, and communities” (p. 83). Ball (2004) discussed the distinctive approaches employed when Native communities are part of the academic development identified as “community-based education partnerships between First Nations and postsecondary institutions in Canada” (p. 454).

Intergenerational learning and expanding curriculum models with Native community elders’ knowledge provides for a diverse pedagogy. Research evaluating partnerships of community and schools Ball (2004) noted higher postsecondary diploma completion rates with Native peoples. The community of learner/educator technique reinforces Native knowledge and identity, increases social cohesion and values, secures commitment, and creates supportive programs for Native families (Ball, 2004). These ideals become models for the Native communities in which they reside, thus teaching community members themselves.

When Native communities are involved in the educational practices of their students, richer learning experiences empower communities to embrace their heritage Ball (2004).

Eliminating the “mainstream, standardized, one-size-fits-all curriculum result is a homogenizing, monoculture, colonizing approach to community and human service development” thus allowing “community members to ‘walk in both worlds’” (Ball, 2004, pp. 457-459). The bicultural opportunity between two cultures creates a level of respect that establishes a “safe and supportive context for communities of learners to become engaged in co-constructing culturally grounded training curricula that combines two knowledge traditions” (Ball, 2004, p. 460).

When community members actively participate in the educational process of their students, a diverse culturally balanced learning environment emerges. Ball (2004) noted that when this happens a significant change occurs with the people observing an:

- Enhanced confidence and involvement of individual community members in community roles
- Increased commitment within the community as a whole to providing for children’s well-being
- Cultural healing, continuity, and pride
- Increased parenting effectiveness and parenting role models
- Networking between the community and other groups
- Development of a cohort of skilled community leaders
- Innovation of needed services for children and families
- Enhanced intergenerational relationships
- Integrated Elders and traditional knowledge into everyday community life. (p. 470)

The balance happens when all age groups learn together. The older people can learn from the younger people, as well as the younger people learning from the older people in an environment in which students are learning from all people and honoring their experiences.

Ball (2004) recognized the intergenerational approach “didn’t ‘give’ students their Indigenous voice” (p. 474) because they already had their voice, but rather “gave them an opportunity to use their voice and, as a group of Indigenous people, to hear each other, and to learn together” (p. 474). Communication is a vital aspect when working with Native peoples.

Communication is not only the voice, but also pertains to other communication modes, such as listening, body language, facial expressions, but also language variations of tones.

Home vs. school. Tyler et al. (2008) pointed out that educators who work with Native students often find a disparity between values at school and home (p. 290). The effects of student performance can develop into a situation where a teacher may blame the home environment for poor literacy and mathematic skills. Tyler et al. (2008) stated,

Empirical evidence to suggest that home-school dissonance is (a) a significant part of ethnic minority students' schooling experiences and (b) associated with academic performance and its psychological antecedents. When Native communities are involved in the educational practices of their students culturally based attitudes, beliefs, and values are important in out-of-school contexts, in particular, students' homes. (p. 290)

Research by Tyler et al. (2008) observed differences between home-based cultural experiences and culture-based experiences at school.

Powers (2006) cited Native students dropping out of school based on a "lack of parental support as contributing to their decision to leave school terming 'parental noninterference' a lack of parental involvement among [Native] families" (p. 23). Differences with social interactions "may be misunderstood by Anglo educators as impertinence, immaturity, or disinterest in forming friendships and subsequently impede the development of a caring relationship between student and teacher" noting Native dropouts had a direct relationship to "unsupportive teachers" (Powers, 2006, p. 25). McGregor (2004) mentioned personal experience, quoting Dr. Gregory Cajete, who asserted,

Knowledge and creativity have their source in a person's inner being and in their personal journeying and thinking. Self-reliance, even in young children, based on the belief that all persons have the ability to know and to share, to bring forward great strides in understanding and knowledge. Consequently, there are many myths revolving around the learning experiences of young people, as well as their roles in bringing new knowledge to the people. (p. 405)

One of the key factors in professional development of faculty who teach Native students are thus to instill an awareness of such cultural gaps that account for the differences in perspectives on the part of each individual student.

Okakok (1989), an Inupiat Eskimo, shared knowledge regarding the importance of the traditional oral histories in the art form of storytelling. Stories continue to be valued today as teaching tools and as a means for passing on survival methods and cultural values. Okakok (1989) noted that one component of change over the years is the audience, “which used to be composed of young and old listeners now usually include only the Elders. Our accelerated entry into the twentieth century has brought much confusion. The Elders’ role as the teachers and resource regarding contemporary life is no longer a given” (p. 405). Okakok (1989) reflected on traditional education as follows:

Remember that education is also the passing down of a society’s values to children. Although I suppose there are people who would disagree, I think teachers pass down values by what they do in certain situations. Showing approval to a child for quickly attempting to answer a question—even wrongly—is valuing a quick answer to questions. At home, this same child may have been taught not to say anything until he or she has observed and observed and *observed*, and feels certain that his or her answer is correct. At home, the parents value accuracy more than a quick answer. They know that accuracy may mean the difference between life and death in the Arctic. (p. 4)

The stories learned are important aspects for many cultures as they bring on a meaning. Many lessons pass down from generation to generation as students grasp relevance to their own life.

Community members have always been educators in many cultures. Someone in the community may be an expert and assist with arrangements for a child or student trained in the knowledge (Okakok, 1989).

Thompson et al. (2008) noted that Native communities’ knowledge of Native languages and cultures usually exists among tribal Elders.

Elders involved in the process of curriculum development [are] the link between the past and future. Tribal involvement is a critical element in the transmission of language and culture from one generation to the next. While mainstream educational practice with [Native] people has been relatively ineffective, the search for educational alternatives reveals limited research. (p. 399)

This reflects the importance of community as part of the academic process when dealing with Indigenous peoples, especially the student.

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, Indigenous peoples, especially students, need to see education in a prideful manner with truths told, especially in areas addressed by Johansen (1982) of Indigenous history such as structural perspectives evidenced in written work from historical figures as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Indigenous historical value is imperative for Native learners to learn, grasp, and appreciate the significance of these histories to the development of leadership and educational practices for all learning.

Changes in the education system outlined here are of potential cultural value for all learners. Knowing one's heritage and history establishes a sense of foundation within the individual that can solidify the learning process and offer the learner a sense of purpose. Pewewardy (2003) suggested that "the complex issues surrounding tribal identity and representation in education" must not be stereotypical, but rather addressed through "the diverse traditions of many tribes as multi-tribal and multi-cultural" (p. 71). Schools need to represent their local tribe's customs and not portray the romanticized versions many stereotypes characterize today. Leaders from the tribal communities, especially tribal councils, need to establish partnerships with school leaders, including school board members, and local leaders within city councils and county governments. The issue of student achievement thus becomes a community issue.

Schools need to provide appropriate education opportunities for Native students outside of the large assembly type of schools, and incorporate their communities as part of the learning process. Teachers need specialized preparation for working with Indigenous students and communities based on Title VII federally funded Indian education. Staff, teachers, and administrators should be required to support Native heritage with culturally appropriate curriculum and assessments with parents and community having an equal voice in the education of their children (Reyhner, 1992a). American Indian people educated their children in their own traditions and knowledge. With an involved community, the traditional education utilized today will see higher incidences of student success with college preparation, college attendance, and improved socioeconomic status (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004).

Powers (2006) observed that the “data clearly demonstrates universal principles of learning are relevant to [Indigenous] students and that school-based American Indian cultural programs increase student outcomes by enhancing those conditions that lead to school success for all students” (p. 48). School personnel need to provide “caring and supportive relationships central to solving the problem of underachievement” (p. 48) among Indigenous students, whether on reservations or in urban Indian settings. American Indian people need an education to grow socioeconomically within their own communities. Differing cultural backgrounds between Native students and their instructors often contribute to students’ failure to understand content, especially among instructors unfamiliar with Indigenous cultures (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004). Caldwell et al. (2005) shared that educators need to respect Native communities’ collaborative and culturally competent methods:

In a pluralistic society, members of the dominant group may be particularly limited in their understanding of other groups. Political, economic, and other pressures may force members of minority cultures to learn about the dominant culture. Conversely, members of the majority group tend to be free from pressures to understand minority cultures.

Consequently, relatively few have in-depth understanding of and experience with Native communities and their cultures. (p. 2)

Teacher education needs to include Native perspectives from Native people. Introductions to cultural traditions should bring an awareness and understanding of cultural differences.

Pewewardy and Frey's (2004) research indicated that American Indian students thrive when their ancestral information becomes part of the multicultural learning process. They also noted the negative effects of racism on school campuses. Educators need to have a solid awareness and not merely an impression of cultural differences between races and act accordingly (Caldwell et al., 2005; Pewewardy & Frey, 2004). Sleeter (2001) recognized differences in the educational process when educators resided in the Native communities and immersed culturally as part of their learning process and curriculum development. Educators and Native community members connected strongly in positive outcomes of the education of their students. Sleeter (2001) reported educators wrote about positive experiences claiming that "the value of cross-cultural immersion projects and the power of learning from the community. The [practice] attributed students' learning to the power of community based, cross-cultural contexts in which [educators] have to grapple with being in the minority" (p. 97).

As mentioned above, educators must also have knowledge of differing tribal structures, especially in the various sovereign tribal nations. Based on key research practices, it is important to recognize guiding principles in working with Native communities under the education umbrella of improving Native student academic success through community engagement. Strong relationships require partnerships in educational processes that serve to eliminate status differences such as education and monetary issues. Through respectful relational partnerships, Native and non-Native communities can bridge any differences and similarities and learn from each other with a view toward creating a sense of unity that benefits all socio-economically.

This chapter focused on literature that identified concepts in the education of Indigenous students that will help to guide Indigenous leaders in education. Education and the Native student dropout rates have been a topic of discussion for years, yet change moves forward slowly. The U.S. Department of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force commissioned a report completed by Reyhner (1992b) claiming that American Indian and Alaska Native students are more likely to drop out of school at a rate greater than the national average. The report reveals, "About three out of every ten Native students drop out of school before graduating from high school both on reservations and in cities" (p. 1). Reyhner (1992b) reported that,

However, too often in schools today teachers are not reinforcing what Native parents show and tell their children producing cultural discontinuity between home and school and forcing Native children to choose between their Native heritage and school success with disastrous results (p. 1).

Even then, the report suggests "schools to allow teachers to get to know and interact with their students, caring teachers (especially Native teachers) need to be recruited who will spend time and effort to learn from as well as teach their students to keep their students motivated," (p. 1).

There continues to be a need for professional development programs to train teachers about their local Native communities, history, and language. These programs need to support Native heritages from pre-school to high school. Even today there is a need for Native-infused curriculum viewed holistically with basic skills and culture taught together in order to establish communities of learners in a classroom where the teacher and student learn from each other.

Reyhner (1992a) observed, "Caring teachers are willing to learn from their students and their students' cultures as well as to teach students" (p. 6). Guillory (2003) noted in three states, "The majority of the students interviewed claimed that 'giving back to the tribal community' is a primary driving force toward earning a college education" (p. 7). Most of the people interviewed in his research called a reservation home where there were "high rates of poverty,

unemployment, drug, and alcohol abuse, as well as under-funded public schools and substandard education” (p. 7). Guillory (2003) wrote, “The tribal community is also a source of encouragement and motivation. Some Indian students stated there have been so many people within the community that have given them support emotionally, psychologically, and financially that they owe it to the tribe to succeed” (p. 7).

The following chapter describes the methodology for investigating Indigenous people’s experiences in education among their communities. The methodologies used were consistent with an identified Indigenous cultural philosophy of phenomenology, ethnography, and portraiture through observation and listening. The methodologies align with an Indigenous Research Methodology that focuses on the people involved from a holistic viewpoint that captures their individual essence. As a researcher, I placed myself within Indigenous communities to interview those involved, and listen to their experiential stories recounting educational processes.

Chapter III: A Phenomenological Journey in Time. Indigenous People Need the Academic System as Much as the Academic System Needs Indigenous People

A significant number of people believe tribal people still live and dress as they did 300 years ago. During my tenure as principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, national news agencies requesting interviews sometimes asked if they could film a tribal dance or if I would wear traditional tribal clothing for the interview. I doubt they asked the president of the United States to dress like a pilgrim for an interview. (Wilma Mankiller, 2008, p. 62)

Introduction

We are one or, as Verbos, Gladstone, et al. (2011) quoted John Fire Lame Deer (Lakota), “We all come from the same root, but the leaves are all different” (p. 15). From where I sit, the leaves are preparing for the winter season’s rest with a view toward the rebirth of future phenomenological events in time. Leaves turn their fall seasonal colors and descend from their tree to protect and nourish tender root systems. This annual phenomenon signifies a transformation in an extraordinary manner that encircles the surrounding environment, taking its time, like an effective manager leading others toward change. In life, we are all interconnected, benefiting from our environment. We learn to occasionally step back and take notice, filling our lungs with the fresh poignant air. I reflect on the interconnectedness life beholds. Academic institutions should be aware of diverse and differing perspectives. The stories must be voiced as part of the learning process. This notion came to me when a strong-willed tribal council member commented to me that she had considered getting a Ph.D., too. Knowing her as one of my former students, I encouraged her and realized that Indigenous people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs Indigenous people. She would be a good educator.

In this chapter, I describe my research methodology. I embrace the overall umbrella of Indigenous methodologies and have selected formal research process that is in accord with an Indigenous approach (Kenny, 2002; L. T. Smith, 1999; W. A. Wilson, 2004). In undertaking this

research, I was inspired to learn research methodology based on a philosophy of listening to Indigenous voices. This approach seemed like a natural fit for me as an Indigenous researcher. My pilot research was not limited to traditional “focus groups” but rather conducted “sharing circles” or “talking circles” as everyone learned from each other through listening and identifying with diverse perspectives (Lavellée, 2009; Kenny, 2002). Kenny (2002) stated, “Any holistic framework for Aboriginal policy research will only be legitimate if it employs the holistic attitude to which it subscribes” (p. 3). Key to working with Indigenous people is ensuring the researcher understands the history of the people researched and their communities. “Researchers need to understand Aboriginal people, their history, their experiences with research, their current situation, and their vision for the future” (Kenny, 2002, p. 4). It is thus important to ask a researcher if their culture parallels their history, purpose, and goal.

The sharing circles in the pilot research demonstrated a large difference of responses from Native and non-Native participants. Yet, there was deep understanding of history and in particular the challenges of Indigenous peoples. I honored all of those who shared their story. This dissertation focuses on Indigenous leaders in leadership positions as the future of education seeks a holistic approach. In the Native community, direct involvement at all stages of the research is crucial (Kenny, Faries, Fiske, & Voyageur, 2004; Lavellée, 2009). A holistic approach to research includes:

- Honoring past, present and future in interpretive and analytical research processes including historical references and intergenerational discourse;
- Honoring the interconnectedness of all of life and the multi-dimensional aspects of life on the Earth and in the community in research design and implementation;
- Honoring the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of the person and the community in research protocols, methodologies, and analyses. (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 8)

All of my research practices entailed a respect for time and an honoring of the participant’s home, community, or place of business. In this qualitative methodology, I listened to oral stories

based on guiding questions, comments, and observation of their environment where interviews took place.

My methodology of choice is portraiture, which is greatly influenced by both phenomenology and ethnography. The portraitist conducts interviews and gathers observations in order to create a portrait of a person or place that is an “aesthetic whole” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Additionally, I explain how this methodology reflects my personal academic philosophy and approach to my topic as well as being characteristic of the storied nature of the expression of Indigenous knowledge. Pilot project interviews relate to Native people’s stories, traditions, and values in secondary and postsecondary schools. During my foundational research, I also took extensive field notes describing my own experiences and responses to my sites of research in the pilot studies. The phenomenological experiences discussed from my pilot project reveal emergent themes in the data gathering process. My analysis and interpretation combine tribal educational leaders and tribal communities’ involvement in the academic development that experientially grew their life paths toward where they are presently.

In a conversation with my late grandfather, he explained to me that, “You don’t choose life, life chooses you; your circumstantial interpretation defines who you are, whether what emerges is positive or negative, the viewpoint becomes part of your life journey.” This insight can be seen as relating to the circular relationship referred to in the old adage, “What comes around goes around.” The results of this foundational research brought to light themes tied to understanding the challenges and opportunities of education as seen by the participants themselves in the interviews and observations, yet time also played a role in every aspect of the research process. The foundational study purposely allowed phenomenological events to emerge naturally as the process and stories unfolded, thus allowing for immediacy and change, and

giving participants the time and space to find “voice” in the presence of someone willing to listen.

In addition to describing how I planned and conducted a series of pilot interviews conducted at Native schools and took my own field notes, I also reviewed scholarly literature related to phenomenological involvement with people, especially people of color, in their lives and educational processes. The literature pertains to educational phenomenology relevant to integrating tribal communities’ stories as part of the curriculum and for the sake of Indigenous learning and developmental theory.

The literature reviewed includes articles, books, and non-published dissertations relative to tribal community involvement in the learners’ education process. I also reviewed the phenomenological events connected to tribal members’ efforts in their educational journeys. The portraits were produced not only through observations, but also served as a basis of interviewees’ observed perspectives as I listened to their story.

The Sioux term *mitakuye owasin* (all my relations) encompasses a broader context and reflects a global Indigenous belief that interconnectedness developed from where we as people who have existed in harmony with all forms of life with all nations of human, animal, bird, insect, tree, plant, mineral, river, mountain, and valley. A traditional honoring of all is evident in the statement:

To the mineral nation that has built and maintained my bones and all foundations of life experience, I thank you. To the plant nation that sustains my organs and body and gives me healing herbs for sickness, I thank you. To the animal nation that feeds me from your own flesh and offers your loyal companionship in this walk of life, I thank you. To the human nation that shares my path as a soul upon the sacred wheel of Earthly life, I thank you. To the Spirit nation that guides me invisibly through the ups and downs of life and for carrying the torch of light through the Ages, I thank you. To the Four Winds of Change and Growth, I thank you. You are all my relations, my relatives, without whom I would not live. We are in the circle of life together, co-existing, co-dependent, co-creating our destiny. One, not more important than the other. One nation evolving from

the other and yet each dependent upon the one above and the one below. All of us a part of the Great Mystery. Thank you for this Life. (White, 2013, para. 5)

This interconnectedness is a demonstration of how one affects the other, not only from the physical realm, but also within the mental, emotional, and spiritual realms.

The interconnection between all things in the Indigenous world, as noted by Kenny et al. (2004), provided a framework for Indigenous research that includes important tenets embodying Native belief systems by:

- Honoring the past, present and future in interpretive and analytical research processes, including historical references and intergenerational discourse;
- Honoring the interconnectedness of all life and multi-dimensional aspects of life on the Earth and in the community in research design and implementation;
- Honoring the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of the person and the community in research protocols, methodologies, and analyses. (p. 8)

Concerning “Indian Time,” an old traditional teaching recognizes that with time comes wisdom. Verbos, Gladstone, et al. (2011) noted that Indigenous values form a circle of wisdom, citing as an example a Lakota value that comes from life experience and the implementation of an individual’s life and work: “We may teach with greater wisdom if we critically examine how to expand values in management education beyond the dominant paradigm” (p. 20) recognizing time. We can thus gain from our individual stories accrued over time to comprise a unique threshold of collective wisdom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine how to create a better learning environment for Indigenous students through leadership at all levels through providing a meaningful and relevant education. “In the Indigenous world, there is a principle called the seven generations. It instructs us to reflect on our actions and to be aware of the consequences of these actions seven generations” (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 3).

To lead is to guide a family or community to be successful in ways that develop a self-pride in identified strengths and weaknesses and an overall “good life.” The motivation for this dissertation finds its source in my own sense of personal responsibility for reaching back to my Indigenous ancestors’ knowledge and promoting culturally responsive education that serves students today as well as the grandchildren of the future generations. Lavallée (2009) stated, “Traditional teachings encompass knowledge that has been passed down through generations. Knowledge acquired through revelation, such as dreams, visions, and intuition, is sometimes regarded as spiritual knowledge, which is understood as coming from the spirit world and ancestors” (p. 22). In order to mend the wounds of historical misrepresentation of Indigenous people Native knowledge and voices must be heard through representative leaders and educators.

A secondary goal of this research is to identify, in the broadest terms, applicable curricula and teaching philosophies geared toward Indigenous successes that bridge cultures of learning and leadership. The inquiry should draw out the differing educational philosophies around relevant learning to incorporate traditions such as the Medicine Wheel. Approaching my topic from this perspective provides a conceptual framework and opens up an educational arena for understanding Indigenous people’s history in a way that contributes to the perseverance of a culture that has much to offer the world today.

For Native people, learning occurs everywhere: the home, the community, and the school. Cordova (2002) asserted, “One is encouraged to learn about others—not *as others*—but as reflections of our imagined former selves” (p. 1). While many Western, non-Native ways of thinking about learning may separate the world into *learning* and *non-learning* spaces, the Native tradition sees no such boundaries; learning comes in many forms and from many places, which utilize all sensory methods (Cajete, 2000; Pewewardy, 2002b). One of the purposes of this

dissertation is to uncover and make visible Native people's experiences of learning, and have their stories told. The research explores how the experience of holistic and personally transformative learning brings interconnectedness into classrooms with Native and non-Native youth.

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) consider mindful inquiry as research philosophy and view phenomenology as an "analysis of consciousness and experience" (p. 6). Some of the ideas demonstrated include an awareness of self with toleration and integrating others' perspectives, especially cultural perspectives. "We are always shaped by historical, social, economic, political, and cultural constraints," wrote Bentz and Shapiro (1998, p. 6). They also note a respect when studying other cultures and life and defined phenomenological "bracketing" as eliminating everything within our own worlds and constructing research protocols as a mindful inquirer by stepping aside of what is taken for granted and viewing things from a different or outside perspective. Giorgi (2008) claimed the Husserlian tradition of phenomenology must bracket individual and speculative understanding, and abstain from assertions about the reality beyond what is actually experienced, thus clearly "withhold existential affirmation" (p. 3). Freire (2005) emphasized that "looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future" (p. 84).

A Philosophical Approach

The portraiture methodology is strongly associated with phenomenology. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) offered the following as an example of the flexibility of phenomenology "there is no such thing as a tree, pure and simple; it is always tree-as-perceived, a tree-as-remembered, a tree-as-dreamed, a tree-as-conceptualized, and there are identifiable differences among all of these 'trees'" (p. 97). Phenomenology allows us to step outside of the box and broaden

viewpoints without “commonsense of defining things” and the “cultural assumptions built into people’s underlying experience of ways of experiencing reality” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 97). Describing phenomenon with enabling bias as opposed to disabling bias (Gadamer, 2004) is an essential component of phenomenology. Husserl’s phenomenology is classified as a descriptive phenomenology.

Juntunen and Cline (2010) conducted a case study with a single Lakota woman who wanted to attend college to further her education so she could be involved in the community as a healthcare practitioner. Even with a partial scholarship and tribal stipend for some of the living expenses, the tribal council offered to pay tuition if the career served tribal needs. For many Native students seeking a higher education brings apprehension (Kenny, 2002). In her case, the postsecondary institution was miles away, her father was ailing, and she needed childcare for her son. There is culture shock when universities have larger populations than the tribal communities themselves. Close-knit communities typically offer a safe area where everyone knows everyone versus leaving and knowing nobody. Large universities intimidate most Native people, especially when they are far away from their tribal homes, as they feel different and may feel “ignored” or just want to “blend in” without being seen (Kenny, 2002). In her case, the tribe offered a job with benefits and few community or family members encouraged her to further her education. The majority of people wanted her to stay home to be near them, and not “be white.” Juntunen and Cline (2010) identified the following five factors as hampering the decision of many Native students to pursue an education:

- (a) Cultural identity
- (b) Cultural explanations of career
- (c) Cultural factors related to psychosocial environment and levels of functioning
- (d) Cultural elements of the relationship between tribal community and education
- (e) Cultural assessment for diagnosis and care of self and community. (p. 393)

Tribal leaders and postsecondary administrators need to encourage students to “live in two worlds” (p. 396). Students need to feel supported with all their efforts recognized, and employment available for them upon their transitional return from a postsecondary institution and back in to the community (Kenny, 2002). The Native students’ expertise needs to fit into the community’s vision of growth.

Phenomenology and ethnography are the grounding traditions in portraiture. Therefore, phenomenology will be primary in this research as it coheres with the lived experiences of individuals and aligns with the intent of this study and the nature of Indigenous knowledge, which springs from direct experience. Also, as an ethnographic approach the observations of the researcher are very important. Contributions from Indigenous people promise to be highly effective for the creation of the portraits and themes to shed light on the development of culturally aligned pedagogy, documented in the literature as the most effective approach for First Nations students (Kenny et al., 2004). Across the nation, Native people are apt to drop out of school at nearly double the rate of any other ethnic group. The dropout rate for Native students is significantly higher than the rate among any other group. Christman et al. (2008) identified the Native student dropout rate as between 50-65% in high schools compared to other ethnicities, noting that this is the highest in the nation. Christman et al. further claimed that the high percentages are due to a lack of cultural support, culturally based education, mentors, role models, preparedness among school leaders, and professional development for school administrators. This research emphasizes the importance of Native leadership in the school system. In order to appreciate the success of schools and others working with Indigenous cultures, it is also important to provide a brief sketch of how the United States governmental structure and formal education became a vehicle of destruction of Native culture.

Research Question

My research question asks, “How can we create the best learning environments for Indigenous students through good leadership at all levels?” Against this background of problematic impacts in education on Indigenous communities, I wondered about alternative ways of schooling and supportive leadership engagement that would better reach Native students in mainstream academic institutions. Through my research I identified teaching methodologies and strategies that are most effective with Indigenous students in terms of keeping them in school and encouraging them to pursue post-secondary education by utilizing a portrait of a model school and two portraits of Indigenous education leaders. Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010) identified a continuing “dropout and graduation crisis among [Indigenous] students” that is intensifying (p. 6), and concluded that mainstream academic institutions need to adapt since “Failure to respond to this crisis will have disastrous consequences” that threaten the future of Native peoples” and their sovereign Nations (p. 36). My pilot project offered a prelude for the answers to my question and taught me a great deal about how to conduct my remaining formal research study. The schools I visited primarily educate Native students from their communities. My ethnographic observations demonstrated some educational change with measurable student progress. These educational institutions have slowly adopted Indigenous standards carried on from tribal history to governance today with tribal and local student support systems in place. A *Seattle Times* (King, 2008) article observed that,

Lost parenting skills are believed to be a key factor in why the damage endures, so at least one group with the local tribe is weaving lessons about the boarding school era into child-rearing programs for parents and into decision-making classes for teens. “It’s a miracle that Native peoples have survived at all,” said a cultural-trauma expert. It reflects their unbelievable resilience. (para. 17-18)

The history of Indigenous peoples must be revised to include the story of Indigenous leadership and life in an authentic manner that becomes part of mainstream educational pedagogy.

This leads to the primary research question, “How can we create the best learning environments for Indigenous students through good leadership at all levels?” In addition to several Indigenous school visitations, observations, and focus groups with children, I interviewed two high profile Native leaders, one a tribal education director, and the other the State Indian Education Director under a federally funded program.

Research Design

As the recognized founder of portraiture, Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described portraiture as a combination of phenomenology and ethnography. I have chosen to use portraiture in order to observe and listen to detailed stories and events of participants. Personal knowledge gained through interviews, observations, and from literature should reveal emergent themes and the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences that lead people along life paths on their living journey. This qualitative research methodology merges “the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4). Phenomenology and ethnography are the foundation for portraiture.

The research findings offer important knowledge that will benefit Native people in Native communities, educational fields, and professional development of educational personnel. Additionally, participants in the pilot and formal study have the assurance that their responses will be completely confidential with no first or last names appearing on any of the collected materials. Multiple conversations with individuals and groups thus serve as an iterative form of the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

As mentioned above, the philosophical and methodological literature review focuses on phenomenology and ethnography so that I can understand the foundations of portraiture as a methodology of inquiry. I include viewpoints of Native and non-Native philosophers, researchers, and authors. Freng et al. (2007) researched Indigenous people's cultural inclusion in the learning process using a qualitative methodology based on phenomenology to construct an inquiry focused on the "individual experiences through their own words" to illuminate the "wholeness of experience, while trying to capture the essence" (p. 46). The authors explained that they chose to use phenomenology because it, "allows for flexibility" (p. 46) with information, gathered about each individual involved. Freng et al. (2007) further presented comparisons of the respective methodological philosophies and identified similarities in a phenomenological approach incorporating portraiture between Western philosophers and Indigenous philosophy. Kegan and Lahey (2001) characterized these intersections as:

Philosophical distinction between phenomena (shaped reality, our experience of a thing) and noumena (the essence of the thing itself). It is the distinction underlying the contemporary idea of *constructionism*, that human beings are actively making sense, shaping reality, organizing experience. (pp. 71-72)

I believe a lot of the "making sense" is through researcher observations, reflections, and connecting an individual's stories with the experiences that define the person.

The philosophical theory of phenomenology addresses a conscious experience by opening up the concept of a "lifeworld" that describes the world in which an individual lives in the present.

Husserl (1983) suggested that in seeking to understand the embodiment of experiences we must draw on understanding of empathetic ranges within individuals' sensors of perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, bodily awareness, and social activity (Woodruff, 2008).

Transcendent theory establishes the religious identity of a God or presence as evident in the world, whereas epistemology recognizes the "knowing" or "understanding" of experiences and

their meaning on an individual's life path. Although we all have differing lives based on a range of factors affecting our existence, whether environmental, demographic, or circumstance, we are also different in terms of the unique development of each individual's consciousness.

A phenomenological portrayal focuses on "intrinsic features of consciousness or simply the study of human experience" (Zahavi, 2003, p. 57). Traditional phenomenological thought incorporates the senses of hearing, seeing, tasting, etc., as part of the philosophy of phenomenology, but currently includes content experiences of the "significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'lifeworld'" (Woodruff, 2008, para. 6). This phenomenological attitude contrasts with the natural attitude. Rehorick and Bentz (2008) noted, "Phenomenology directs us to the fullness of experience rather than a remote or pro forma accumulation of information and facts" (p. 3). Cajete (2000) stated, "Knowing the origins of their people, their place, and the all-important things the place contains is considered essential orientation for a tribal person. A people's origin story maps and integrates the key relationships with all aspects of the landscape" (p. 46). Each individual interviewed from the preliminary pilot project shared and reflected on their "lived experiences" with their comparative placement of where they are today on their life journey, building understanding or the connective piece, the "why."

Phenomenology posits that individuals behold their personal experiences in light of the development of their life story. "Literally, phenomenology is the study of 'phenomena:' appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience" (Woodruff, 2008). In discussing phenomenological research, Giorgi (2008) pointedly noted the various interpretations of the research methodology, stating,

On one hand, this awareness and usage is good, but on the other hand, it is not often realized on the part of the users that a proper understanding of how to employ the phenomenological method in the social sciences is not something about which a consensus exists. (p. 1)

I reflected on this as I wrote this paper and noticed the different interpretations of phenomenological research in line with Vaill's (1996) assertion that, "Learning to reflect on our own learning, therefore, is an enormously important part of learning as a way of being" (p. 85). The learning within the project itself was like a holistic learning project, as I was compelled observations of those interviewed and sought to identify my role or place in the learning as a "way of being."

Understanding Native ontology as a foundation for qualitative research. I was pleasantly surprised and humbled to discover actual discussions and viewpoints of Native philosophy in the research literature. While researching the work of Native philosophers about research, I found there was a small but emerging literature on Indigenous philosophy. As one of the non-Native college administrators commented,

What bothered me in graduate school in philosophy was so little about Native Americans' philosophy. They do not have a philosophy. That really pissed me off. I grew up with a respect for the environment and having some kind of coexistence with the environment and an understanding of that. Just as [another administrator] was alluding to how our Indigenous peoples to have such a sustained relationship with the environment and go through thousands of years in a fairly harmonious accord with it then to find nothing in philosophy about it. So, that is what I did my master's thesis on and compared Lakota thinking to that of the famous philosophers of Western Canada. (Personal communication, October 1, 2012)

Nevertheless, I did discover a few philosophers who sought parallels to methodologies and Native philosophers (Cajete, 2000; Kenny et al., 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999; Waters, 2004). This phenomenon sparked a curiosity within me to further the research to find evidence of other philosophies with Indigenous cultures. McPherson and Rabb (2011) identified phenomenology

and the Native American Vision Quest, where one seeks meaning of him or herself through being alone and independent on a journey with nature. The vision quest traditionally transitions youth to adulthood as they search for their true meaning of individual strengths for the future. The phenomenon of the vision quest seeks the individual's "story" in helping him or her to seek their future based on their past and present (McPherson & Rabb, 2011).

Native American ontology builds on the premise that the Indigenous transformative philosophy of each individual and community is unique and has its own story, or what some claim as their "creation story" (McPherson & Rabb, 2011). McPherson is an Ojibwa and band member of the Couchiching First Nation in Ontario. McPherson and Rabb explained how they learned from each other, "This was truly a case of the student teaching the teacher" (p. 6). McPherson and Rabb quote Overholt and Callicott's (1982) claim that Native people's philosophy of an interconnectedness of knowledge with Earth within their environment is important. "Save-the-savages may well possess an ancient wisdom which might just save neo-Western civilization from its own self-destructive tendencies" (p. 7), but the innate wisdom needs studied for today's use. The authors noted that the wisdom of the "savages" with their connection to Earth and the past, present, and future considers the full circle philosophy, which accounts for an abundance of phenomenological stories.

American Indian history professor Donald Fixico (2003) is of Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole ancestry. He shared details about how he felt "different" as the only Native child, besides his younger brother, in a public school system, stating,

Thinking Indian or Indian thinking is the native logic of American Indians, based on their tribal cultures, and how they see the world, and the universe. Traditionalists view the world according to relationships with the natural environment and a circular philosophy based on cycles of seasons, migrations of animals, and the rotation of the Earth and the stars. (p. xii)

He noted that Native philosophy is visual, metaphorical, and circular. This “ethos is a combination of the physical reality and metaphysical reality; listening to and observing the natural environment is essential to the Indian mindset” (p. xii). The research methodology of phenomenology/ethnography and portraiture seem to be a natural for Native learners and researchers.

Waters (2004), a Seminole tribal member, cites Gregory Cajete’s (Tewa from Santa Clara Pueblo) description of “systems of relationships and their applications to the life of the community” whether human or environmental (p. 52). Many Indigenous cultures make “connections” through observations of the natural environment where they reside. Cajete drew upon the philosophies of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and other phenomenologist’s in stating the “‘lifeworld’ was the ultimate source of human knowledge and meaning evolving through experiences from birth to death and forms the basis of our explanation of reality before we rationalize it into categories of facts and apply scientific principles” (p. 45). Relationships demonstrate how all relates in the world. Cajete pointed out that Indigenous people view phenomenon in terms of ecological systems thinking (as cited in Kenny & Aigen, 2006). In the spirit of Husserl, Cajete (as cited in Waters, 2004) further stated the “lifeworld” philosophy is “culturally relative, diverse, and different for each culture and each person because it is based on the experienced world of distinct peoples who evolve in distinct places and describe themselves and their surroundings in distinct languages” (p. 45). He went on to say,

Yet, there is a unity in such diversity derived from the fact that humans share a species-specific experience and knowledge of nature. Humans also share an experience of nature with all other living things, although our perceptions are different from those of other species because of our unique physical biology. Metaphoric for a wide range of tribal processes of perceiving, thinking, acting, and “coming to know” that have evolved through human experience with the natural world, Native science is born of a lived and storied participation with natural landscape and reality. (Waters, 2004, p. 45)

Each individual beholds their own “story” as an elder once stated, “We are made up of stories, and ours is our own unique book of experiences, observations, and perspectives.” L. T. Smith (2008) quoted Vine Deloria, Jr., who characterized relatedness as “a practical methodological tool for investigating the natural world” (p. 34). Like other Native researchers, Deloria shared the viewpoint that “all things are related,” commenting, “However, I suggest here that such relationships in the American Indian world version are constructed rather than discovered—that relatedness is one way that Natives order sense experiences” (as cited in Waters, 2004, p. 10). Waters (2004) referred to Deloria’s advice to Native authors and researchers to “pay close attention to metaphysics and epistemology, in addition to ethical and legal issues” (p. xiv). Much discussion centers on the research of Indigenous people and the perspectives delivered as authentic or misconstrued.

Waters (2004) pointed out the similarities of Native philosophical thinkers in the phenomenological traditions explaining their perspectives, citing Marilyn Notah Verney’s (Diné) utilization of Heidegger’s philosophy to “elucidate aspects of her thought about the losses accrued by acculturation characterizing Euro-American philosophical methods as built on analyzing and distinguishing, with the attendant danger of losing context” (p. 133). Diné philosophy includes connections and interdependencies apparent in “Mother Earth as the central philosophical concept” and calls for all people to “walk in beauty” are addressing all experiences and observations surrounding the individual at any one moment (Waters, 2004, p. 133). Kenny and Aigen (2006) also emphasized the notion of walking in beauty in her title, quoting the Navajo Blessing way:

With beauty before me, I walk;
With beauty behind me, I walk;
With beauty above me, I walk;

With beauty below me, I walk;
 From the East beauty has been restored;
 From the South beauty has been restored;
 From the West beauty has been restored;
 From the North beauty has been restored;
 From the zenith in the sky beauty has been restored;
 From the nadir of the Earth beauty has been restored;
 From all around me, beauty has been restored. (p. 79)

This blessing identifies the phenomena with the Diné, demonstrating a circular and interconnected environment that is spiritual in nature.

Waters' (2004) selection, "Phenomenology of a Mugwump (Algonquian meaning 'war leader') Type of Life in an Autobiographical Snippet," by Leslie Nawagesic (Ojibwa), described how American Indian philosophy resulted in a phenomenological study of experiences at St. Joseph's Residential School, Fort William, Ontario. Nawagesic shared examples of disparity and subordination with educational practices in "relation to the dominant culture" (Waters, 2008, p. 140). Waters' essay bridged V. F. Cordova (Apache), the first Native American woman to receive a doctorate in philosophy, who passed on before grasping all she wanted to say in her work and perspective stories of experience. In "Ethics: The We and the I," Waters (2008) outlined Indigenous people's knowledge, taking "considerations in light of a reading of Aristotle's ethics. The distorted understandings of individuality characterizing most Western ethical models" with traditional and contemporary thought one considers that "Native ethics improves upon Aristotle's understanding of social being in far more extensive and non-hierarchical terms" (p. 27). There are many philosophical ideas based on cultures meeting and bridging thoughts as a "West meets the East" type of ideology. There are various similarities and differences, yet both perceive life as the perspective of "direct experience."

With Indigenous philosophy, stories typically teach the listener a range of learning lessons related to differing events. The story can be recreated based on the experience of the people or storyteller, allowing individuals to “create their own story” relevant to their environment. Vi Hilbert (Upper Skagit), a Native Elder who has since passed on, shared a story, *Lady Louise*, during a professional development session for educators. The audience of educators was “given” the story to create ownership and use it as a teaching tool through sharing for others to listen, create, and to learn. The story has a beginning set in a location known to the storyteller. The story begins, and then stops with no ending. The listener then needs to pick up the story and carries it with the creation of an ending based on their desired perspective.

Stories bring on the phenomenon of educational knowledge while the story developed as a gift to others. Authors Amy Klem Verbos (Pokagon band of the Potawatomi), Deanna M. Kennedy, and Joe S. Gladstone’s (Blackfeet and Nez Perce) article “Coyote Was Walking” (2011) demonstrates the Native American perception of time, teaching, and learning. Indian Time, a traditional Native American awareness of time, progresses through events instead of minutes on a clock. Coyote stories offer inspiration to be creative and reflective when learning about and understanding self. Whereas education typically employs temporal perspectives with clock time, “wisdom is gained in nonlinear Indian Time and reflective learning through timeless stories,” (Verbos, Gladstone, et al., 2011, p. 51). Verbos, Gladstone, et al. (2011) related storytelling to cultural concepts of time:

Native American storytelling is a traditional way by which grandfathers and grandmothers (Elders) pass wisdom to the young. Although storytelling itself is ubiquitous, Native American stories differ from Western norms in temporality and pedagogical utility. Specifically, we discuss Coyote stories. (Verbos, Gladstone, et al., 2011, p. 52)

Verbos, Gladstone, et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of Indian Time, which “encompasses past, present, and future into event time. Coyote wanders about through each story; investigates sights, sounds, or smells; comes from no place in particular; and goes toward the same without an endpoint to his journey” (p. 61). McNally (2005) used stories to promote service learning in the classroom as a way of uniting Indigenous communities, especially revitalizing traditions such as “Anishinabe and their regard the sacred food—some call it medicine—known as *manoomin* or wild rice” with communities growing and selling their wild rice with the creation stories (p. 616). The “being” as an individual brings back the Indigenous knowledge to the forefront. “Being open to long-established Indigenous ways of knowing is a relatively new phenomenon in Western society” since “this openness is refreshing and welcome” (Verbos, Gladstone, et al., 2011, p. 61).

Portraiture. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) pioneered portraiture as a qualitative research methodology in the social sciences rooted in the traditions of phenomenology and ethnography. Her focus on context includes voice, relationships, emergent themes, and the “good” within an aesthetic style. The methodology “blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). I chose portraiture as the methodology for this study because it permits me to be an “observer” of all that happens around me. I “listen” to everything and find meaning through a methodology that combines phenomenology and ethnography.

Portraiture as a methodology primarily based on direct experience and observation, thus providing “a fitting frame for articulating the role of researcher” (Carroll, 2007, p. 148) while at the same time enabling the exploration of participants’ phenomenon ethnographically and

through interview material. The portraiture methodology allows me to reflect and place myself within each of the differing Native societies to view the “whole” picture of the community that surrounds the schools and participants. English (2000) stated, “Portraiture is a creative approach to engaging in research of leaders and groups in action and in telling the stories of the individuals in life” (p. 21). He also stated that seeking “the ‘essence’ of the subject (participant) is implicitly a quest for a foundational and stable truth, which in turn requires the portraitist to become omniscient or else the resulting verbal canvas contains only a half or three quarters truth (English, 2000, p. 21) thus placing “self” within the community structure. In many traditional cultures, observation and “listening” to others speak about their experiences delivers an instinctual, holistic knowledge as a lot is “said” through body language and “essence” of location (English, 2000, p. 21).

Cowin (2006) identified three interconnected themes that “emerged in the creation of a supportive mentoring environment for beginning teachers drawn from the individual stories and themes: relationship, invitation, and time” (p. ii).

Storytelling and story sharing about professional practice can provide a way for the mentors and mentees to develop and enhance their mentoring relationship, to their mutual benefit. Time for a mentoring relationship to be developed and an emphasis on allowing the beginning teacher time to discuss, reflect and share stories with their mentors can contribute to the success of beginning teachers and to the retention of teachers in the profession (Cowin, 2006, p. ii).

Cultural protocols require listening to the voice of the stories told and sharing the experience provides lessons to everyone, both the listeners and the storyteller.

Chapman (2007) discussed portraiture as capturing “the voices, relationships, and meaning making of participants, as individuals and community members, in one fluid vision that is constructed by researchers and participants” (p. 157). Chapman (2007) cited Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) to suggest that the portraiture methodology is optimal when a

researcher wishes to produce a full picture of an event or person that tells as much about the participant as it does about the researcher, or portraitist. Even though this methodology is, formally speaking, a recent technique, Lawrence-Lightfoot introduced the practice in 1986 for teachers in the education field (Chapman, 2005; English, 2008; Hackman, 2002) as one that incorporated observations utilizing the senses during the observation period. I have chosen portraiture as a research methodology because it is a natural fit for both myself as the researcher and the context of my research in Indigenous communities. It allows participants an opportunity to have their “voices” heard with little if any interference.

Researchers must take care with certain elements of the portraiture methodology to ensure an optimal experience for all. As Hackman (2002) suggested, “the line of demarcation between researcher and researched...does become a bit more hazy” (p. 53). Because individual perceptions come into play on both sides, it is essential that the “portraitist” listen carefully. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) noted that portraiture “invites response and criticism” because “the external wide-angle view of the portraitist may contrast sharply with the various perspectives of insiders” (p. 378). Chapman (2007) further cited Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (2005) as follows,

We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silences, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This provocative work can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter. This exciting work can instigate positive and productive change. (p. 12)

Chapman (2007) continued, “Our ability to provoke readers, participants, and ourselves into reevaluating our respective points of view is a small but meaningful form of social justice” (p. 159). This combination signals the importance of accepting that we are all learners in the

educational field and classroom environments enrich learning and empower Indigenous students and their communities to have a voice in their education.

Ethnography. Ethnographic research consists of participant observation with the researcher visiting the community where the people he or she studies reside to explore cultural phenomena, interviews, and archival material. Total immersion in the communities' cultures allows the researcher to "experience" the "culture." Researchers often record or write down their observations from the experience encounter at the location of the participants (Genzuk, 2003; Kenny et al., 2004; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). The qualitative social science research methodology used in my pilot project included ethnography research, which explored the cultural phenomenon of the communities and people I visited to conduct interviews. My presence in the tribal educational communities allowed for a holistic gathering of empirical evidence based on the cultural traditions observed from their respective schools, or land that the Native people call "home." Traveling to many of the locations allowed me to experience sacred areas only Native people are allowed to enter, adding to the research.

Through observations of participants, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) believes in bridging "the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature" (p. 6) from the humanistic perspective. Especially with Indigenous cultures, story and storytelling about shared experiences incorporate the oral tradition. Lawrence-Lightfoot cites Welty (1983) as identifying "one of the key contrasts between ethnography and portraiture: ethnographers listen *to* a story whereas portraitists listen *for* a story" (p. 11).

Genzuk (2003) characterized ethnography as a "writing culture," and referred to Harris and Johnson's (2007) idea that "Ethnography means literally 'portrait of people'" (p. 1).

Johnson (2007) believes we “must consider ethnography in slightly different terms. Rather than reading a modern ‘cultural trait’ back to its ‘dim ancestor,’ we should interpret past practices *forward*, according to the circular intellectual systems of which these practices are a part (p. 29). This fits into my preferred methodological approach culturally as a Native researcher holistically gaining a deeper knowledge balancing qualitative methodologies. Johnson (2007) cited Vine Deloria’s (2001) assertion that,

The key to understanding Indian knowledge of the world is to remember that the emphasis was on the particular, not on general laws and explanations of how things work. . . . Keeping the particular in mind as the ultimate reference point of Indian knowledge, we can pass into a discussion of some of the principles of the Indian forms of knowledge. Here power and place are dominant concepts. . . . Power and place produce personality. (pp. 22-23)

Cultural learning merges and utilizes historical, documents, observational, and interview methods with a foundation developed through “roots planted in the fields of anthropology and sociology” (Genzuk, 2003, p. 1).

Van Maanen (2006) believed ethnography is a more flexible research methodology suitable for participant observation rather than the participants presented with questionnaires. Agar (1986) noted how ethnography accounts for the social actions of people who live in different worlds and provides a premise for each to make sense from the point of view of the others. “Such work requires an intensive personal involvement, an abandonment of traditional scientific control, an improvisational style to meet situations not of the researcher's making, and an ability to learn from a long series of mistakes” (p. 72). Ethnographic methodologies are thus suitable for my research as a way of understanding develops through being in the environment the participants call home.

Pilot Data

My pilot study, classified by the IRB as a “continuous” review, facilitated the collection of preliminary data including interviews and observations of Native and non-Native people involved in the education processes of Native students. I have always been interested in other people’s perspectives as I have also developed my own through personal experiences as a Native female, student, and administrator of Indigenous cultures and educational practices.

Participant selection criteria. The pilot project included a random invitation to several tribes and school partnerships. I contacted three tribal schools in two states and Canada with an invitation asking for a visit. I was familiar with two of the schools and the third was based on my interest in seeking comparative information from another country. Interested tribal participants received a contract (see Appendix B) outlining previous conversations regarding implementations of this project researching Native alum students and school administrators at one elementary and two high schools. The contract included instructions, goals, and objectives of the project with permissions to interview and use information. Tribal education departments or school tribal programs offered gifts to assist with potential expenses to proceed with the project and research partnership. The contract also served as an avenue to determine if an IRB was necessary at the site to conduct research. In this manner, collaborative open communication worked with the needs of the tribal communities in determining best efforts and practices of educating their youth based on authentic data that would honor the intellectual property rights of the people. In particular, it was important that the work be open and transparent while working deliberately with tribal communities to develop trust, something not done in the past by many researchers. There was a history of working with these sites, which could open an avenue for potential continual research opportunities.

The tribal education department randomly selected Native educators and administrators reviewed the interview questions previously sent to tribes and tribal organizations and distributed by the tribe, unbeknownst to me. A tribal newspaper article notified Native communities, and flyers sent from the schools and tribal education departments who distributed to families with high school minor students (see Appendix A). Each participant was encouraged with a gift. Gifting is a cultural tradition and can range from traditional tobacco to what was requested, gas cards and grocery.

The interviews aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of cultural infused curriculum at partnered high schools and postsecondary institutes, dual-credited programs, among primarily Native alumni. Due to concerns about potential participant's age qualifications, an IRB identified and provided support for working with minor subjects in high school between the ages of 16-18. Focus group interviews and research collected also included high school students, as well as alum, tribal members, and school and tribal administrators. Participant informed assent and consent was required for minors. With parent permission, the high school principal signed consent forms for each of the minors. Each student signed assent forms, and the adults consent forms. The schools and/or tribes on the preliminary project approved the ethics process. The Antioch IRB supported this process.

This study proved different from previous work with Native-focused schools where the school administrators were the primary focus because the tribes and tribal organizations were also contacted, which took priority as means of communication for establishing partnership with this project. Communication with administrators at the high school sites who had established the partnering tribal education departments confirmed their understanding of the project's purpose, procedure, and human participant requirements and answered project-related questions.

One of the Native educators interviewed demonstrated a common mistrust among Indigenous peoples, stating:

People have been studying to death Native American people, which are a concern. Someone comes into our community and says, "Can I ask you some questions?" Right away, we say "no" because all of a sudden it is going to go in a paper for somebody's research project to be placed on a classroom shelf.

Many tribal people have been unable to trust researchers, especially due to concerns over how personal published information is perceived and interpreted (Kenny et al., 2004; Lavallée, 2009; L. T. Smith, 2008).

Tribes have a history of collaborating on the education of their people with regard to their tribal customs, traditions, and values. Tribes are leery of failure within tribal structures of education and thus want to manage outcomes. Many times researcher perspectives gloss over the true meaning of words spoken by tribal people (Lavallée, 2009; G. H. Smith, 2003). The essence is hard to capture or misunderstood leading to inaccuracies based on not understanding tribal customs and traditions. Tribes establishing their own IRB's can oversee and take ownership of the research conducted about them.

Before the interviews started, informed consents were obtained from the schools and their tribal communities. The study purpose and procedure presented to tribes included study benefits and potential risks/discomforts. Furthermore, this correspondence included strict assurances of the confidential nature of the study, as well as guarantees that the participants could quit at any time. Possible reasoning for why participants may remove themselves from participating in the study included: (a) discomfort in self-reflecting upon sensitive information regarding their educational experiences; (b) violation of anonymity or confidentiality in the processing of data; (c) time commitment; (d) non-interest. All four pilot focus group discussions and the single pilot in-depth interview were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes.

Participant recruitment. Participants recruited for focus groups included those involved with academic change among Native communities and their school systems. The participants in my pilot study were unknown since the directors were unaware of availability of their people. There was a sense of who would attend, yet names were unavailable until I showed up and introductions were delivered.

Before beginning the pilot interviews, schools and tribes encouraged participation for input. Tribal newspapers were another recruitment strategy detailing specifics of the research. Most of these organizations lacked a specific Native research policy. One tribal nation with an on-site tribal charter school, and one urban Native American focused education in a public school setting, returned contracts to create two focus groups each: one student group and the other made up of secondary and postsecondary administrators and teachers.

Permission was granted to interview six high school seniors, who were taken out of a class. Most of the students were graduating this academic year. The adults were introduced upon arrival. There were two alum students, three college administrators, three high school teachers, one high school principal, two tribal council members, and one parent/school counselor. Two of the college administrators, high school principal, and two teachers were non-Native, but had worked and conducted research in Indian Country for several years.

Participants. Upon securing the required research protocols such as ethical procedures and community consultation, I interviewed five Native high school students and alum ranging in age from 17-21 year olds, and a mix of Native and non-Native adult educators from teachers to administrators and parents ranging in age from 30-80 years old. These pilot study interviews and observations took place on school campuses within Native communities in Canada, Washington State, and Oregon. I structured the interviews in a manner that led participants to reflect on the

phenomenological circumstances of their current situation in the education field. Participants defined their educational experiences, adding how it led to their present situations today. This allowed their individual stories to develop in a process in which I remained an observer, “listening” to their body languages and using a range of sensorial methods to assimilate participants’ feedback.

Among the students interviewed, there were three boys and five girls, all either high school alumni enrolled in postsecondary education or current high school students. Additionally, I observed students at a small K-7 elementary school with five classrooms. The college and high school administrators interviewed included three males and two females. Teachers included one male and three female, while the parents, grandparents, tribal administrators, and counselor incorporated one male and two female, who had many roles within their communities. All of the adults had been in the education field from 10-30 years, and even the elders were involved in the classrooms at the elementary school as part of the learning process.

Interview protocols. I conducted preliminary interviews using an iPhone recording device at the interviews. Consent forms included permission to use a recording. At one high school, a secondary school student backed out and chose not want to participate. In the interviews, each participant received copies of the questions as I also read each question aloud to engage conversation as we progressed through the interviews. For recording purposes and voice recognition for transcription recognition, participants stated their names as we went around the table clockwise, until near the end of each interview where conversations were random. Each participant received a \$50 gift card to a travel plaza or grocery store in his or her local area.

Reflection on ethical issues: Researching Indigenous leaders and cultures. Tribal Education Department administrators contacted their tribal government’s internal review board

to obtain approvals from interested tribal governments. This process took longer than anticipated, as most tribal administrators were unaware of any research policy enacted with their people. Tribal education departments became engaged in learning about established, drafted, or non-existent policies of conducting research within their communities. Many were unaware and learned about their own stance of obtaining research policies to protect their rights. Tribal administrators explained that they needed to approach their board of directors and tribal councils for research approval. Many potential participants were lost at this stage for undisclosed reasons, a fact that revealed a potential additionally needed area of research outlining a policy for conducting research among tribal communities. This dilemma was also an important aspect of my learning from my pilot study.

With this research, there was awareness of a large push toward tribal policies within the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) regarding research with and or of the tribal sovereign nations and their people. Established in 1944, “NCAI represents intertribal interests, especially legal aid, legislative action, education, and special training for Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, also known as the BIA” (Christopher, Watts, McCormick, & Young, 2008, p. 194). Just as these sovereign nations have different languages, they also often have different governmental structures, child-rearing practices, educational structures, and diverse values and beliefs (Christopher et al., 2008). Tribal groups have traditionally not been able to determine the educational efforts of their students. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Act passed in 1975 gave Native tribal governments more control over their affairs while appropriating more money for educational assistance. Generations of Native people were educated and had to adopt a Western Euro-style culture, religion, and values, yet none of their own culture and values became part of the implemented processes (Wilkins & Kiiwetinepinesiik-Stark, 2011).

I have worked with schools, school districts, and tribal communities as a Title VII and Johnson O'Malley school aid, high school teacher, project officer, and program director planning and implementing processes, tools, and procedures to help sustain cultural curriculums blended within secondary and postsecondary courses. In order to improve the continued realization of an academic initiative bridged within a transparent partnership with Native populations, whether reservation based or urban Indian, tribal education directors and school and college administrators offered support for this project in conjunction with an acquired knowledge of their progress and alumni achievements. The research project addressed (a) outlooks on high school administrators, students, and alumni with plans to attend postsecondary institutions; (b) extent of their postsecondary attainment and other related outcomes; (c) reflections of Native alumni and administrators about their educational experiences; and (d) personal and social resiliency factors influencing Native people's success with cultural infused curriculums.

The research began with an effort to contact participants through phone calls, email messages, and letters to selected tribal leadership and school administrators. Tribal and school participants were enthusiastic to learn how Native students were fairing in their life journeys after their completion within culturally accredited programs. Topics between the schools and tribes reflected an added awareness of the independent sovereign nation's rights regarding research of Indigenous peoples, tribal governance growth to accommodate growing numbers of educated members, and educational methods for students.

Another topic included reports and policy on research of Native groups and individuals to protect the authenticity of tribal peoples. Many tribes are establishing their own Internal Review Boards (IRB) to review material. This is a new area for tribes as they take ownership of research among their people. To my amazement, there were no Internal Review Boards in the education

departments of the tribes I worked with, yet there were a few in the environmental departments. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Indigenous peoples are moving toward establishing protocols for research on their cultural standards and people's stories. Community engagement is critical in honoring the respect of the people. When Indigenous people conduct research, there is an underlying reciprocity of giving back to the community and somehow return to the community's portrayal in an honest knowing manner. This document represents an Indigenous awareness of respect to all of the communities and individuals involved in the research process.

Data collection procedure. For my foundational research on the continuous IRB to obtain initial information, I interviewed people individually or in small focus groups of four to five in closed offices or in their Native communities. Kvale (1996) stated, "Interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art" (p. 15). Interviewees shared their stories of experiences as part of an Indigenous community reclaiming cultural customs and traditions. The transcription was bracketed, which Holroyd (2001) cites Giorgi (1997) as "consisting of suspending ones 'natural attitude,' or our taken-for-granted approach to everyday living informed by culture and education, including our past knowledge of phenomenon encountered" (p. 3). The observation and interviews created a solid basis of cultural infused curriculum and Indigenous traditions in the learning environment as tribes and tribal organizations become empowered in the teaching of their people, and others establish cultural respect in a process of reclaiming and maintaining their cultures.

Individual participants had the chance to revise and approve the transcription recordings. Established themes for this project emerged from the portraiture. The dedicated work from each individual was awe-inspiring and demonstrated the sheer resilience of Indigenous traditions, in

particular the value of hands-on experiential, place-based, relevant learning environments. Projects could range from skinning a deer or animal in a traditional manner without chemicals since tradition knows “every animal has enough brain to tan its own hide” to hiking the land in their communities in search of identifying edible and medicinal plants and herbs.

The process of transcription and observations revealed specific themes based on the individually known or unknown phenomena of each individual, group, and community context. Perhaps most vital among these was the theme of cultural preservation in the sense of creating an environment where students felt “safe” to learn and share their traditions and knowing. In contrast are the experiences of their parents, grandparents, and/or great grandparents, whose own educational stories reflected a school environment that berated the use of their Indigenous language or culture in schools. Students also expressed that they felt the support they received from family, community, peers, and educators opening avenues to expand their knowledge with confidence. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) emphasized the significance of “phenomenological reflection on the nature and structure of consciousness, “taking into consideration the educational history of Indigenous cultures and “the notion human beings and civilization are on a course of progress to a better freer, more knowledge-based, peaceful society based on science and the recognition and valuing human rights” (p. 22). The unique Indigenous models encompassed an understanding of a student’s self, culture, community, stories, and world, creating a sense of belonging where students, especially in the Native communities, were open to mastering their own environment and knowledge through comparisons of other cultures globally.

Another significant theme that emerged was the passionate partnerships of trust that built student graduation rates between the people involved in the educational process with transparent communication and vision with community. With this said, there were times where there were

months of waiting so that I could communicate with all community members to ensure they were kept in the loop. This meant an open and transparent communicative structure on the part of both the researcher and researched. There was nothing expedient about the process.

As the groups came together, I noticed where academic opportunities abounded for all parties in the Native communities when solid partnerships were passionately strong with flexible visions. Work on their life path began from their learning experiences and developed from their identifiable and differing personal and community histories. These synergetic experiences revealed that educational opportunities bring forth issues in the present to plan and prepare for the future, all based on their past. I saw the group commitments moving forward to where they were all learning the potential of growth within themselves, for the schools, the community, and beyond. Tribal communities noted the importance of academic preparation for the establishment of an educated future in leadership, as one Native council member stated,

We are starting to see more students go on to college and now are thinking about what happens to our students once they graduate. Tribes exercise to maximize a degree of self-determination. In order for that to take place, we have to have our educated tribal members in the decision-making positions within the tribal infrastructure. This is now creating opportunities for us to discuss this on a legitimate level meaning we have more students going on to college, gaining that education and wanting to bring those expertises back to the reservation. Now that we have more students going off and receiving a higher education we have to plan for them to return to the reservation and in order for that to take place; we need bigger buildings, we need to house them, we need to have them working within each of our departments depending on their chosen areas of expertise.

Tribes supporting their people's postsecondary educational opportunities find value as it becomes necessary to grow the community's infrastructure to fit the goals of the educated people.

Rehorick and Bentz (2008) noted that, "phenomenology transforms and enhances personal life and professional effectiveness" (p. xv). As tribal communities embrace their

educated people, changes happen individually and for the entire community. As Native people receive professional degrees, employment opportunities rise, not only for Native people, but also for the surrounding non-Native communities. Additionally, because of tribal growth, certain tribes are now among the largest employers not only in their respective counties, but also in their states. A tribe in Eastern Oregon is the second largest employer in the state.

Lessons Learned From Foundational Research

As a former high school teacher, I engaged students by receiving and respecting their perspectives on most issues, which many times differed from my own as an older adult with experience. I learned that allowing students to express their own voice was imperative to the development of “fresh” thoughts and ideas. I noticed other teachers often had a difficulty with trusting students to accomplish work. The local chamber of commerce requested once, “Please teach students to think for themselves and to find solutions to issues.” This is important because the students need to own of their own life paths as part of the development of their own lifeworlds and to lead their Worlds. I heard once that, “Every leader finds solutions to issues.” As an educator, I made sure my students were able to “find solutions” without asking me, their teacher, but to seek other resources to find answers.

For years, observations of student curiosity developed in line with students’ guided method of learning based on their interests. Each person has developed a curiosity, which is different among groups or individuals. Many successful students spend time developing and knowing their own individual story. Students’ self-understanding, an awareness of their core values based on the relationship of their own experiences, can bring them to a position of continued development with curiosity as the driving force.

Just as a two year old learns to talk and asks the proverbial “Why,” students also need to continue to ask questions and approach the world as lifelong learners. Sometimes the question does not necessarily need to be asked outright when the student experiences the unexpected “ah ha” moments that can arrive unexpectedly in the mind. Sometimes students simply just need a little time. I have taken to heart my experiences and encapsulated them into lessons for others while remaining mindful of others stories or life experiences.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter described the rationale for my choice of research methodology with Indigenous methodology as the overall frame to research methods of phenomenology, ethnography, and portraiture with the schools and community of people, Native, and non-Native, involved in the education process of Indigenous students. The next chapter presents three portraits and briefly articulates the emergent themes discovered through analysis of the portraits. In Chapter V, I will offer a thorough interpretation comparing and contrasting these emergent themes, concepts and theories from the literature and my own perspective as a seasoned practitioner in Indigenous education.

Chapter IV: Portraits and Emergent Themes

Plants and animals are our relatives who speak to us. We can hear them if we listen. Respect all living things and they will respect us. -Arapaho

As I gaze out the large picture windows, north of Seattle at the office, a redtail hawk glides over the grassy fields and an occasional Raven hunts in the same field. The Cascade mountain range looms in the backdrop against the blue sky dotted with an occasional cloud in the midst of Mount Pilchuck layered in white snow. The snow elevation dropped low in the highlands. With deciduous tree branches barren, the picturesque scenery breathes of fresh cool crisp air as the winter season approaches. The scenery helps breathe life in to my writing of this chapter.

Portraiture Introduction

I will be presenting three portraits in this chapter. First, I share the observations of one school on a remote tribal remote reserve. The two other portraitures consist of leaders who are very high profile and well known in Indian Country. The interviews and the experience brought in a wealth of knowledge and perspectives from important positions. The second portraiture details the story of a large federally recognized tribes' education director. He has a broad perspective on a leadership, not just in his current position, but also as another tribe's tribal council member and as a government-to-government liaison between United States tribes and local, state, and federal government entities. He has acted on the behalf of tribes across the United States, Canada, and overseas. The third portraiture is of a current Indian education director who has been heavily involved in federal government systems, and was appointed by the United States President, Barrack Obama and received commendations from the federal education secretary, Arne Duncan. Her history involved the Bureau of Indian Administration, and the current Bureau of Indian Education at the federal and state levels.

Two interviews incorporated highly experienced people in diverse occupational Indigenous leadership positions. Appendix C and D refer to the IRB approved participant's informed consent forms and the interview questions asked of each interviewee. Each interview evolved from my initial pilot research that included secondary and postsecondary educators, administrators, and students in small focus groups of four to five in closed rooms or in their Native communities. As I continued on this research path, I kept in mind Kvale's (1996) statement, "Interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art" (p. 15). I note this because Indigenous research methods are including a culturally respectful manner in which to conduct interviews, which were adhered to during this dissertation. During each interview, I intently listened as respondents' stories unfolded to shed light on their experiences and perspective. The interviews wove individual stories of experiences as part of an Indigenous community reclaiming cultural customs and traditions. Chapter V includes the transcription placed in categories and analyzed, as Holroyd (2001) stated, "consisting of suspending ones 'natural attitude', or our taken-for-granted approach to everyday living informed by culture and education, including our past knowledge of phenomenon encountered" (p. 3). Many interviewees started in a traditional manner of sharing their personal history first. Initial findings from these observations and interviews indicated a solid basis of critical culturally relevant learning through Indigenous traditions. Tribes and tribal organizations became empowered in the teaching of their people, while non-Native students established cultural deference. These portraits reflected deep passions expressed by the adults of reclaiming and maintaining their culture's relevancy within today's Eurocentric societal norms.

Themes developed for this dissertation emerged from the portraits. The dedicated work from each individual was awe-inspiring and demonstrated the sheer resilience of indigenous

traditions, in particular the value of hands-on experiential, indigenous place-based, culturally infused, and relevant learning environments through thematic education based on individual student interests within core courses. The observations range from skinning and tanning hides of a deer or animal in a traditional manner, bridging core knowledge with cultural customs, to establishing policy within the local and federal governments systems. These portraits reveal stories from the individual people themselves. These are their stories from an outside perspective.

Leadership Portraiture: Tribal Community Leading Academic Opportunity

When I visited a Canadian tribal elementary school located on a First Nations reserve in British Columbia, I was impressed with the scenery and envisioned indigenous people living on this land for generations, surviving with what their environment provided them. Native foods indigenous to the land included migratory salmon from the immense Fraser River feeding the salt water of the Strait of Georgia tidally into the Pacific Ocean. Mysteriously, I felt at home, overwhelmed by a loosening peace embodying my soul, as if the land had been traversed previously in another life before my present one. The six-hour drive embraced scenery that was diverse in nature. Northern Washington State was dotted with green farmland punctuating the landscape with scrub bushes and cottonwood trees. An occasional cedar or fir tree stood tall along the level landscape with the Cascade Mountain Range looming closer as the road changed direction. Crossing the political border showed no change in the scenery; but change was subtle in measurement as the speed limit signs changed from 60 miles-per-hour to 100 kilometers-per-hour. Crossing the mountain range, the terrain showed change of a more arid nature. I observed the high plateaus with few roads as my car wove along the black pavement beside the expansive Fraser River north and east. The closer I got to my destination; the emotion of going home grew.

I remembered reading somewhere a Cree elder stating, “One day our people will come back home, and when they do, our arms will be open to greet...” and reflecting on what the rest of the statement was and where I had read the statement. In Canada, I knew I was getting closer as the plateaus grew and the river carved its life path in the land.

My observations at this particular school were made respectfully with open eyes, ears, and other communicative sensors. A goal was to observe tools and resources to identify innovative learning opportunities for indigenous people and communities by sharing their story based on a particular perspective and experience. Fixico (2003) stated, “Listening as a part of oral tradition is essential for understanding relationships and their multiple meanings...silence is the test for patience” (p. 5). I believe education is everywhere and everyone is an absorbent lifelong learner. Kenny (1998) expressed these values in her article, “The Sense of Art: A First Nations View”:

As First Nations peoples, we experience and define beauty in relation to the way we live. Our relationship to Mother Earth and to each other, the way we live together in a place, our appreciation of holistic aspects of life all coalesce to give a sense of coherence to our worlds. It is our ability to sense the coherence that can give us the confidence to express ourselves fully, define ourselves authentically, and assist us in the creation of our own stories. (p. 77)

Personal values reflect the collaborative approach that assumes everyone, young and old, has an equal voice in an authentic learning process with both students and teachers equally learning from the experience. Such mutuality was evident at this school.

As a certified instructor, I take a guide-on-the-side approach, maneuvering learners to experience and take ownership of their academic journey. Students need time for reflection as part of the learning process allowing them to have an outward and inward insightful experiential education opportunity, which builds on their personal story. What I find most important is self-

reflective practices so individuals can find their own balance in discovering and knowing “who they are” as a learner and educator. As a master high school teacher and administrator, I mentored teacher candidates and new-hire teachers. I take great pleasure in guiding veteran and prospective teachers to become skilled in supporting all learners in their classroom environments and engaging in culturally responsive pedagogy. The students are our future leaders and community members. We are building their story, as they also hone our own in traditional intergenerational ways.

This Northern tribe and school had similarities with the majority of sites I have visited over the years. To reach the reserve and school, one had to cross a structural bridge as the division was with the water separating cultures. A structural bridge often divides tribes, almost symbolically, from non-Native communities in many areas. Crossing the bridge, I reflected on visiting another school where I offered professional development to the entire school district. I used the bridge analogy, challenging the administrators, teachers, teacher aides, custodians, secretaries, cafeteria workers, school bus drivers, and other district personnel to, “Cross the bridge” and open up learning to cultural knowledge. One teacher spoke up, sharing her story as a teacher needing to return a perfect paper to a sick child who had missed a few weeks of school. She “summoned up her courage,” got in her car with the student’s paper, and drove across the bridge. She admitted being intimidated as a non-Native person. She reached the tribal community when several students playing spotted her and ran to her vehicle. Rolling down her window the students were questioning why she was in their community. She shared her story about the student’s perfect paper, and she wanted to give it to him. She shared that she had felt like a rock star and the paparazzi of students escorted her to the sick student’s house. She enjoyed her experience and then stood from her seat so all participants could make eye contact

with her, and she looked at each one of them, stating, “Cross the bridge.” As mentioned, the structural bridge over a waterway symbolizes an honorable crossing between cultures and knowledge as one recognizes the significant teachings of “we are all related.”

Through this research and other studies, I have gathered information on tribal community and leadership’s involvement in students’ educational processes with particular emphasis on cultural responsiveness and relevancy relative to incorporating a cultural learning standard. I pursued this research with an awareness of the fact that many indigenous learners have shown low academic success rates in the educational process for generations. I chose to focus on tribal community and leadership involvement in developing academic responsiveness and applications that would better serve Native student achievement. I support tribal involvement and the culturally responsive alignment of the curriculum with state standards. I observed Native teachers from various tribes at particular schools demonstrating cultural strategies of relationships and relevancy. One Native teacher stated,

Well, but with me (looking up reflecting, “Forgive me grandmother”) I have the educational background and the knowledge and the certification and the paper trail. However, I also have the cultural traditional teaching that my mother, my father and my grandmother and elders that I have been so fortunate to have in my life.

This instructor touched on the critical need for hands-on experiential learning and “getting outside of the book,” noting that “Taking the book learning and the cultural traditional life learning and showing the students, they go hand in hand.” All of these relate to seeking balance in the learning process.

I drove up to a natural colored brown one-story building on the First Nation’s reserve. I walked in the front doors and noticed a sign with guiding principles of understanding by the indigenous people in their tribal language translated as, “We are All Related; Help Yourself;

Take time for you; Develop Wisdom, Honour the Spirit.” The community has values, but each individual must also have their own, which develops a sense of inner strength.

I went to the office, where the teachers also gathered next to their cafeteria. The principal’s office was in the back of the staff cafeteria with a group table. Elders trickled in as I waited at the table, and introductions were made. The elders were interested in my story and my own lineage, noting my ancestors were their Cree neighbors to the East, and coastal Salish to their South. I comfortably shared my stories as they did theirs. I felt an immediate strong connection two of the elders. Both of them spoke their language fluently. They attended the same government forced residential school along the Fraser River that my grandfather attended. Their credentials were that they had gained wisdom, without the formal postsecondary degrees. Some had been teachers in the public school system, but quit to work at this school. The elders were all grandparents between the ages of 70-90 years. They worked 20 hours a week in the classrooms as co-instructors alongside the classroom teacher. They mentored and modeled an intergenerational approach of learning.

The elders got their sack lunches out and one elder woman commented as she peered into her bag, “Hmmm, I must have known you were coming. I mysteriously brought two pieces of smoked salmon. I typically only bring one. Your family eats salmon, so you must eat salmon with me.” With that, she handed me her second piece of smoked salmon. This elder was instrumental in helping to start the school in 1987 with her daughter, who is one of the teachers. There were only a few tribal elders remaining who spoke the language and the community realized the language was going to be lost if something was not done soon. One of the elders is gone; so is their language, which was nearing extinction. The elders assist the teacher as a

language mentor, and interpreter of the English language. If the teacher needs to learn the language, the elder is there to guide, often speaking into a computer to record the words.

When the principal completed working with one of the students, he took me on a tour of the school. The staff and faculty educate at a building constructed in 1991. The school's mission and structural components reflect the tribal community's cultural values. The tribe garnered support from a local school district to establish a tribal school for their students. The school is unique in its level of the community involvement and cultural values, especially with language immersion and is based on the Maori immersion model. The tribal community has an incredibly innovative commitment to the education of their people with language and preservation of traditional culture.

The community, primarily parents, manages the school through a school board. Parent participation includes evening classes where elders teach them the language, too. Parents meet several times a year with the school faculty, as they are an integral part of the process, and discuss the vision to ensure they are on the right path. They help with the fund-raising for continued school operations. Most of the funding comes from fundraisers sponsored by parents and some grants. With these gatherings, Elders also teach the community the songs and ceremonies in their Native language.

Currently the school houses grades kindergarten to 7th grade with just over 50 students. There were five classrooms with some grade levels doubled up. There was a common area for gatherings of larger groups. In the front of the school is their smokehouse constructed from woody branches or logs, in a process called cordwood. Wood is stacked together and gaps filled in with concrete, which binds the wood. The structure is circular in shape for equally dispersing the heat when smoking.

There was a large playground area with a structure made from logs for swings, climbing, and sliding. I looked around and saw many residential homes scattered about the school, but not too close like in many urban areas. It was easy to see that the land held a vast history with many stories to share. Storage sheds housed wood for building craft items and tools.

The principal shared that their students move on to the local public high school and need tutoring in the English language as they fall behind fluent students. However, what the community finds as important is ensuring students know whom they are, and how they got to this present time. Students know the history of their parents, and the location as to where they live. The students seek the answers of “Who am I?” at their school.

I was led to a small room in the back of a separate building and introduced to two young, former students who returned to their community and school in order to assist the program. The technologically perceptive girls prided themselves with their knowledge in assisting the communities near extinct language. Indigenous languages are oral traditions, and this tribe was no exception. The young people documented the stories, lessons, and wrote everything down, recording everything from traditional to present knowledge in their language. The curriculum developed over time as tests, books, and other necessary materials detrimental for the classroom teachers became published for future generations. Textbooks and handouts for the core courses of math, science, social studies, language, and electives were no exception when it came to creating necessary materials with each translated into the cultural language.

I was given the honor of observing and assisting in one of the classrooms with the elder who shared her smoked salmon. Her daughter was the instructor. Students were painting with watercolors on large pieces of paper, using oranges, yellows, greens, browns, and other fall colors. Another class observed was the principal teaching crafts outdoors with the older students

as part of a core curriculum. They were in the process of constructing birdhouses using math skills. The student learning was relevant to their customs, which included drum making, basketry, smoking salmon, with other traditional customs as part of the learning process.

This tribal school was similar to several other Native community schools I have witnessed beholding a tireless commitment to establishing a culturally authentic vision of their own school and creating tribal cultural curricular philosophies. The school, named after one of their ancestral leaders, regards the collaborative synergetic work appearing seamless as the participants structured the school's cultural mission of language immersion so that students speak the tribe's Native tongue. The students were mostly bilingual with some trilingual if there was a Hispanic family member. The school placed a high standard for student achievement, and with qualified teachers having a passion with commitment since their salary was much less than public schoolteacher counterparts. The salary decrease was due to the school's policy of having a tribal elder in each classroom working 20 hours a week. These considerations identified the blood, sweat, and tears required to establish a tribal dream-come-true school based on cultural standards.

I have been in contact with several schools that have adopted the New Zealand Maori plan of initiating language nests (Kohunga Reo) that begin with the young people between birth and five years old. In the 1980s, I heard of a family revitalizing their Northwest Coast language with a young adult only speaking to her child in their traditional language. The community involved in the language programs introduced children to the English language at the fourth grade level. The school and families created the curriculum infused with their customs. The learning is hands-on, experiential, indigenous place-based, and relevant to the tribe's traditions. Students and their families collect medicinal plants, fish, and smoke fish. While I was visiting, I

explored the area and noticed the rivers teeming with the red-backed salmon spawning for the next generation. Looking at the rivers, I remembered the stories in the history textbooks detailing settler stories heading west commenting out of astonishment that the salmon were so thick in the rivers that one could walk across the backs to reach the other side. I saw this here at the northern school and one other time while visiting Soldotna in Alaska. The natural resources of fish were bountiful enough to sustain families. Other resources have become scarce due to non-traditional land practices. An example is the traditional use of control burning the land to control understory. One of the elders spoke of balancing the nutrients for healthy berries and roots, which also feeds parts of the ecosystem. This custom is lost based on fear of fires of losing control.

Another experiential custom I noticed were the animal hides stretched across frames outside drying, which allowed me to reflect on indigenous methods of using animal brain, beholding a natural chemical processes to tan hides. The mantra of my ancestors recognizes that “every animal has enough brain to tan its own hide.” As I drove around, I saw many hides beside the homes of many indigenous families. There are numerous steps in hide tanning, which is an art. Hides have many uses for the indigenous families. Large frames are required for the larger animals such as buffalo and elk. Many of these customs are being lost with modern conveniences.

My overall interest in pursuing this research is to assist the educational needs of Native people at the secondary and undergraduate degree level and understand the types of leadership that will support these initiatives. By extension, this goal also involves identifying successful educational paths at the elementary level. It is my hope that this line of research will help develop a cultural pathway to guide Native students and their communities toward academic

accomplishment through postsecondary knowledge based on a simple theory, namely: “Communities for Native Education: Envisioning Educational Opportunity Focus with Today’s Indigenous People” (see Figure 1.2).

Statistics and history demonstrate that Native people continue to fail at academic institutions, thus affecting the leadership and sovereignty of tribal nations. The need for leadership strategies to enhance learning and most importantly keep Native students engaged in completing and furthering their education and experiences is profoundly evident. Educated Native role models are essential as tribes work to continue efforts at building their knowledge as they further develop their self-governance. The benefit of observing educational Native-based concepts concludes in the wider promotion of community and education processes identifying everyone is a learner.

The visit was special and introduced me to tribal members who included the school principal, teachers, classroom elders, and staff. Other schools previously visited had very few, if any, Native teachers. I was impressed to see this model school embracing their culture, traditions, and the people involved in the intergenerational learning process. As I left, I crossed the bridge and found a wide spot in the road with a trail down to the water. I walked down to view the metal bridge and took a photo, thinking of all the bridges that I have crossed in my journey, and life.

Two Portraits of Indigenous Leaders in Native Education

My pilot research led me full circle to the leadership of the previously mentioned tribal education director and state Indian education director. My employment journey began as a young mother hired as a 27-year-old Indian education tutor and educator in 1987. It was an honor to interview these two leaders and listen to their stories. Each received a gift in a

traditional sense with the book, *Living Indigenous Leadership: Native Narratives on Building Strong Communities* by Carolyn Kenny and Tina Ngaroimata Fraser (2012). I had not been officially introduced to the state Indian education director, therefore upon meeting for the first time face-to-face, I offered *Native Spirit* blend of smoking tobacco, and requested an interview. A Native tradition is to offer smoking tobacco when asking permission to interview or ask a favor of a Native person, especially an elder. I was ecstatic to have an interview scheduled for the next day over lunch.

Leadership Portrait: Tribal Education Director

The gray day was beautiful after the wind placed the leaves on the ground leaving bare branches telling a story of another season's end, and another soon to begin. Reflecting on my first interviewee, we have met several times over the years, professionally and educationally. I totally respect his leadership and general philosophy as well as that of his wife as they bridge governments, cultures, and educational opportunities. Our children are similar in age and attended the same high school, where I taught social studies. Our ancestral history links us to the same tribal affiliation. When I was told to conduct two interviews, my thoughts went directly to him based on my goal to have this research come full circle.

According to his website, he has been a consultant and trainer for over 20 years. Colleagues, community organizations, and government agencies have established relations while he has educated employees of the State of Washington, school districts, and municipalities, among others. Agencies consider him “a world-class human development educator” enlightening “audiences using wit and laughter to teach key leadership skills and strategies for achieving successful personal and professional relationships.” He is a published writer and co-author of books and curriculum. He has served eight years as chairperson of his tribal council,

been on the board of directors for various nonprofit organizations, and is currently a member of the Skokomish Gaming Commission.

I turned off the state highway and drove down the road beyond the tribe's casino and toward the village where tribal members live. All the leaves had fallen off the immense maple trees onto the road, and vehicles created tracks as they passed over them on the pavement. At the top of the hill, I turned in to the village past the myriad of mailboxes and bus stop for students. Here is the tribal administrative office where my daughter works and the tribal education department building that also houses the tribal gym and gathering place for larger events and ceremonies.

I parked the truck, waved at my daughter from afar, who works for the same tribe but in an executive associate position in the tribal administration building. I walked up the ramp to the second floor double doors. Nobody was sitting at the receptionist desk, but a woman from a back office asked if I needed assistance. I shared my appointment with the director and she rose from her desk and led me to his office where he was on the phone. He placed his fingers to his lips signaling quietness. I walked back out to the reception area and looked around.

I noticed college pennants hanging across the upper wall near the ceiling, inspiring students to follow an academic dream. Each of those areas was far away from the tribal community from where I sat. I reflected on the concerns of many tribal leaders fearing that students will attend universities and not return with their acquired skill-sets to their communities. I noticed a small library of indigenous authored books for several age groups. I identified this area of need of resources.

The director greeted me in the reception area. I followed him to his office and sat at the long table in the middle opposite his desk. He wore a sweatshirt with khaki slacks. He had his

long salt and pepper hair pulled back sporting a ponytail, longer than my granddaughters hair. I say this because of the conversational comparisons between four generations of beautiful women; my mother, daughter, my granddaughter, and myself. Our hair is always a topic of delightful comparison.

We introductorily chatted to catch up on the past several years about our children. This led our conversation into the philosophy of Native leaders and the education of Indigenous students, noting the continued lack of interconnectedness or cultural relevancy in the academic system. He put a lot of thought in this, considering his “working in education is really based on principles that seem to come out of the old village setting.” He offered comparative reflections on the tribal villages visited throughout North America and his tribal community. The conversation sparked my own collective thoughts of the roles of the whole village, especially the aunts and uncles, watching and “playing such a significant role in helping to monitor model behavior as much as parents. Grandparents are intricately involved as teachers for children.” Family and community roles in raising children are to seek, as guides-on-the-side, the individual’s talents that need enhanced. On the individual level, each child has a unique skill-set to develop, while on the community level “The people of each generation have a responsibility.” This responsibility involves passing on knowledge with a learner where there are connections. “If you are a weaver then you have to look amongst the children of that next generation and find those who have the talent for weaving. If you are a carver then you have to find those carvers, if you are a storyteller then you have to find storytellers.”

Humorously, to myself, I thought of my own two children growing up and how their unique and individual strengths were apparent from the beginning. My active son was constantly on the move at an exhausting pace. Born late in the evening, he had days and nights turned

around for years. I learned to channel his energy with shovels, hammers, buckets, and other tools that allow him to vigorously dig into the earth with his physical endurance. As a firefighter, paramedic, and construction worker on the side, he is constantly on the go working to assist others in any manner. He is a Warrior, Elk stands with head held high showing antlers with great pride. He will be there with force to protect.

My daughter is opposite, born early in the morning she has slept all night since birth. She was the observer utilizing all sensorial forces to encapsulate all knowledge around her, remembering everything, literally, down to a great deal of specific details. Her strength as One Who Remembers was to keep history, especially the oral traditions, and bring events to the forefront when necessary. In her early 30s today, she can share long ago events, down to specifics of what someone was wearing and color. Frog informs on the state of the environmental and keeps knowledge. A healthy balanced environment has many Frog people.

The tribal director observed that “old village you have a circle of inter-related families” where everyone works together “taking care of each other, watching out for each other, and doing those things that are needed in the community to help each other. I mean that is what they call service learning today.” We both confirmed this type of knowledge was the traditional way of “hands-on experiential learning.” To weave a cedar bark basket requires knowledge surrounding,

Which cedar trees do you pull the bark off of? How do you determine which side of the tree you are pulling the bark off? What time of the season are you pulling that bark and when you pull that bark and you are preparing it for your cedar basket, which of the materials in that natural world are the dyes that make the various colors of baskets? Which of those dyes are good for 3 or 4 years, which are good for 3 or 400 years? Even when you are looking at the patterns that you are weaving into the basket, each of those patterns has a story behind it. Therefore, it is a symbol of something but that symbol represents the rest of that story that has to be learned.

We agreed learning is thematic based on student's interest noting, "It is very thematic in recognizing one simple basket has all of this other learning built in."

The tribal director discussed academic methods that work for Indigenous students and how they relate to traditional learning methods. Noting how many methodological approaches to learning have come and gone, he noted,

So, in that way when I look at these concepts of progressive education today and I realize there are a lot of similarities between how people lived day today and what they call progressive education now. But, when I realized that every single person if you go far enough back in their family history they came from one of those kinds of villages. So, what we term progressive education today is really just a return to the roots of how people had always been.

The director approaches traditional processes when working with students on the reservation, ensuring "kids have a breadth of opportunities to learn new things."

Granted there are certain kinds of learning that you just have to do in a modern day. You got to learn your math, you got to learn your science, you got to learn something history and how to write a proper sentence. However, there are so many other things that they may not have had a chance to experience and we try to do that in our programs here. So that we can give them an opportunity to determine which of these things might be intriguing, exciting and motivating for them to want to learn more. In the limited experiences, they may have had so far, they maybe just have not discovered what that motivator is.

He makes many presentations across the country identifying innate abilities within all communities and the people survive based on their collaborative individual knowledge foundation. He embraced the knowledge of peoples inhabiting this land noting the awareness and living with their traditions.

The discussion moved to colonization, prompting the question, "What is there for them [European colonizers] to settle if there were already 100 million people living in North America when they got here?" The tribal director identified a focus of his work with tribal communities

and organizations on relationship building and seeking truthful awareness of individuals. He shared,

[My wife] and I were doing some work with the Blackfeet and we were staying in a little hotel in East Glacier Montana. There are not a whole lot of places to go for breakfast or lunch so we pull into this little restaurant it's a really, really, old log facility. You can see that it is really, really, old and I am reading the back of the menu and there is this history of the person that originally built this structure and they are saying that this person was one of the early explorers of this area known as Glacier National Park today. And there was a time, years ago when I would have thought wow that is so cool, but as my eyes are a little more open I realized how could it be a early explorer if there were already people living there? There is a lot of that kind of thinking when you get into your other questions that it is just kind of been ingrained into us over time that we have to open our eyes and see beyond.

The work he accomplishes in his current position is complemented by the work he does outside of his job by educating “on the elements of shame, blame and guilt, historic drama” and other areas that fight colonialism viewpoints. He agrees with many other scholars that the “long and well documented history of discrimination and oppression has been experienced by many different native peoples in many different ways” with colonization practices. He mentioned the differing perceptions of individual peoples when identifying colonialism, noting many believe the attitude was from the past and do not see its effects today. Tribes and tribal organizations are trying to buy back the traditional lands, revitalize languages, and honoring ceremonies, while “ultimately the impact is felt in these communities” in differing ways. “These elements of oppression, being traumatized in a number of different ways as a result of that acculturation and forced simulation” happens either by choosing to eliminate cultural standards from their family’s lives, or to protect the heritage and teach their youth, with some teaching done in secrecy. “Now you take those two families [perspectives] and move them forward generations in time and those are the people that are battling each other in our tribal communities today. Those people are all sitting at the tribal decision-making tables within tribal government.” Here there are differences,

and the differences are tapping into tribal leaders spending “a lot of time battling each other over what is the best future of this community?” The tribal director commented that the majority of the tribal communities from where has worked do not even see the connection or effects from history to today, stating,

So they are not even adequately prepared to protect themselves culturally moving forward. They just simply expect that this is where we are now and don't realize that the people who have been forcibly assimilated will have a different concept of what the future of the community is than the people who are still holding onto those traditional concepts. As your elections continue to ebb and flow it depends on who is sitting in those seats. Those are the folks fighting over the future of 100's of tribal communities across the country.

This has become a root of issues, thus becoming a dilemma for tribal nations that affects the tribes' future sovereignty. “So when I think about that colonization practice, it goes to every aspect of life even down to the root of whom we are.”

The tribal director brought up the decades-old argument of measuring blood quantum within Native communities to determine who is eligible for tribal enrollment, noting many do not realize the actual history:

Its roots are in the early 1800s as States in the South were passing laws that would not allow tribal people and colored people whose grandparents were tribal or colored from testifying against white people in court. That is where the idea of measuring tribal blood quantum begins. You pass that over for a few generations, most people don't understand that that's where their roots of this concept came from and they latch onto this idea that no we have to measure each other's blood quantum today because otherwise how are we going to know who is who?

He discussed that many tribes try to justify the use of blood quantum for identification not knowing the number is primarily “just a made up number anyway because your family has been inter-marrying with other tribes for untold generations.” I had to agree in the sense of trying to figure out my father's blood quantum, let alone my own, and realized through genealogy records

that we are definitely indigenous, nearly half blood. I traced our blood quantum through a series of formulas and percentages determining that we are Native. The tribal director commented, “So at the very root of who we are as individuals or as Native persons in our community we are already accepting someone else’s standard for how to measure [our Indianness].”

There has been a lot of change viewing self-empowerment among Indigenous peoples as they reclaim their traditions and self, no matter the blood quantum or appearance, but knowing who they are in the heart. “There are so many family community support systems that would have existed in the traditional village that have been broken down through these elements of discrimination and oppression to these communities over time.” There are the reflections of historical customs nearly lost with “children forcibly removed from their families and their communities, and put into State and private systems of foster care, guardianship, and adoption” where reports to Congress showed some states had “Up to 35% of tribal children being removed from their families and being put in these systems.” This stated, the tribal director mentioned the boarding school era stating,

From the late 1860s when that officially becomes US policy these kids are being forced to leave their community, forced into these off reservation boarding schools. But, you come forward a few generations in time and now you have families who are sending their kids off to the boarding schools because you think that that is the way it is supposed to be.

I heard this same comment at one of the reservation-based schools in New Mexico as the pueblo was establishing their own school, noting what the director stated, “That is what I did, that is what my mother did and yet how many tales of abuse have come out of those situations.” He continued,

How many times have people not gotten academic educations but certainly have gotten lessons in forced assimilation and how many family systems were disrupted because they didn’t teach anything about being a part of being a family—a healthy family in these

boarding schools. Yet when these kids come of age, they go back to these communities and you have already disrupted that process of teaching from one generation to the next. Now you have dysfunctional family systems that are raising more and more generations beyond that and yet you have lost contact with the values that you had as a community that kept you whole and safe for untold generations.

I have heard this same story repeatedly from my research, as the tribal director commented, “Too many tribal communities are ill equipped to understand that that is what has happened.”

The tribal director discussed that many Indigenous nations have internalized oppression without knowing. He shared the history with boarding schools on the reservations, when educators explained to their administrators that in order to “Kill the Indian” they recommended all indigenous students removed from their homes and communities, and not allowed to go home at night. In 1865, Indigenous boarding schools were located on the reservations. I was glad to have the director share a story. I reflected on my grandfather’s story of attending the Fraser River Residential School. His father canoed him from Vancouver Island to the mainland where the school was located. The tribal director shared,

My wife wound up being raised much of her growing years by her grandmother. Her grandmother was born in 1899, so we are only talking 10 years after Washington Statehood. We are not talking modern Washington. In that period the practice is when you turn 8 years old you get sent off to boarding school. So at 8 years old, we are talking 1907 she is sent to a boarding school in Montana. She is 1 of 9 siblings that were sent to 5 different boarding schools. So not only are you disconnecting them from their community but from each other.

It was at this point the director leaned forward with a passion of knowledge that prompted many stories of my own when I was teaching high school Native students. Students knew me as the “Indian teacher,” the only one out of a school of 70 teachers situated between two large reservations. Listening to the director, I started to see the infamous circle as he continued the story:

In doing that, now you put them, there is far too many horror stories of what conditions Native youth experienced in those situations. So kids were being abused, beaten, killed, kids were running away. So today, generations of Native people who survived through those experiences – many of them have come away from that with the view not necessarily that the boarding school was bad but with the emotional baggage that says *the education was bad*. Now, that is what they are passing down through their families. You come a few more generations into more modern day, and clearly today education, the rest of the world is going to leave you behind without some kind of an education. It does not necessarily have to be an academic education. It could be tech school. It could be any number of things but you have to learn something.

This led me to think back to my own experiences with teaching. I once had a beautiful and very intelligent Native student who was beyond her years. This girl passed college exams in the sophomore year of high school. She lived on one of the reservations and was very close to her family. For many high school students, that is not the case as they rebel against parents. One day, this female student approached me for guidance, as did many of the Native students. She shared that her grandmother needed 24-hour care, and not only approached but also insisted that her granddaughter be her caregiver. Culturally, I was torn, because family comes before your own needs and aspirations. There were futile attempts to discuss the situation with the grandmother as she claimed, “I did not get a high school diploma and was successful in life, so my granddaughter does not need a high school diploma.” The grandmother was a product of the boarding school era. The tribal director mentioned,

If you stay away from those systems because that is the teaching that was passed down in your family, that system is bad. You are going to be ill prepared to be successful in a modern world and your tribe as a modern government gets left behind. Therefore, there has to be some way to have to try to figure out some way to bridge those two roads, but again you are talking about participating in a formal education system. If you have generations of your family or your community that have experienced that, that have run away or did not finish school—I have met people my age who never made it passed 3rd grade based on other circumstances in their lives.

The stigma remains with Indigenous communities and families today. What the tribal director said next was another area I saw while teaching. The vicious cycle continues as students become educated in mainstream education systems today with parents lacking formal education. The director commented,

So even if they wanted to help their children be academically successful in a modern world, they weren't prepared to help their kids even do their homework because the kids are in the 3rd or 4th grade and they had already gotten past where mom and dad were. So now, you have tribes as governments trying to figure out how we bridge that gap.

The Federal Indian Education system, tribes, and their education directors have hired tutors to work in the schools and on the reservations; however, the “drop out numbers in Washington State are incredibly high for Native Students.” The leadership is not identifying the continued dilemma at their source, but rather the dropout is a reflection of “elements in those school systems that they may not understand, but they are forcing Native kids out of that system.” I remember the data calling the system a “Push-out–Pull-out” education system for Indigenous students.

I heard the compassion as the tribal director identified the continued need for tutors and student assistance with intensive tutor and afternoon homework programs within the tribal community, “just to get the kids through high school.” As a leader in his community and consultant for others, he knows “if [students] really want to be competitive with the rest of the world then we're going to encourage them to go to college.” Many of the families have not had postsecondary experience and unfamiliar with the process and stories. The tribal director observed that college is a “dream” and families need to overcome other obstacles such as historical trauma, but,

Most of them come from the lower end of the economic scale in this country anyway, so they are not prepared as individuals or families to go to school. So we have to figure out

other mechanisms, how do we apply for scholarships, how do tribes create financial mechanisms to support the kids going to school.

The tribal director continued to weave the circle between sovereign nations and student achievement, bringing up the next issue that was relayed to me in my pilot research of interviews and has stood out for me ever since. This has opened my eyes every time I travel on to the reservations and either see growth or not, especially with the casino tribes. What are the main source of economic development and the future of tribal leadership in a growing global market?

I watch tribes around the United States as some find their niche, and others struggle. I felt the emotion as the tribal director fervently stated,

Even if the tribe steps up and says we are going to support these kids they are going to go off to college and let's say the tribe supports them through their 4 year degree; when these kids get that 4 year degree then what choice is facing them. Because until the last 10-20 years when they got that college degree, they turn around and look at the community they come from and there is nothing for them to come back to and use that degree for. In so many cases, which means if you are a community that can teach this kid how to be successful in a modern world you are also telling them goodbye.

Tribes become emboldened to grow their community's infrastructure so their students can return home; "that emotional disincentive that has been built into communities for generations" forces tribes to find viable solutions. Tribes have been creating "mechanisms for being successful" with "experience in the rest of the world, and bring that [knowledge] back and do something within the tribal communities" that moves the community forward with today's standards.

There are many tribes providing fiscally sound enterprises, but "There's a number of our tribes that aren't, so even if those tribes that aren't at that economic place—that economic diversity—you still have to do two things very well." A big part of that growth is to "create a diversity of employment opportunities," but also "create housing." He shared that many tribes have been successful but "a number of tribes are not there yet" when it comes to both

successfully sending their people to further their education, and then to have housing upon their return. He added,

Functionally, if you are in that community right now and you're creating these younger generations to go out and get that college experience, have that degree, have that advanced degree, that real world experience, working in corporate America or academic America or whatever that is, those folks come back to the community. Now you have created the people who are more prepared to do the work than you are. Again going back to that old village, they would have been in that circle together anyway. Aunties, Uncles, Grandmas, Grandpas they were all there to make sure that they got the lessons that they needed.

I noticed the need for intergenerational academic situations within the communities, where everyone is a learner. The younger people behold a technical awareness while the elders have the gained experiential wisdom. One is not better than the other to be successful as they fulfill their happiness of finding their own balance and respecting all peoples.

When viewing the spirit of education from community traditions to institutional, I premise that Native people need to participate in a formal education system. The tribal director feels there is "a clear recognition of the need for both. It is what I would look at as the difference between culture and tradition. Culture evolves, culture changes—you have a way of doing things but you found a better way and you go with it." I must have had this perplexed look on my face as he furthers with, "My ancestors used to chase mountain goats around trying to gather the fur that they scraped up from the rocks so that they could weave some clothing, but I can go to Wal-Mart and buy a pair of pants now." He continues by stating, "That is an element of culture that just changed, but tradition is always what it was and part of what tradition includes understands at the root of who we are spiritually."

There is a fragment of change within societies, "Part of being more successful as a person, as a family, as a community, as a government means that we need to take the best of

what's out there and bring it in to what we do as well, as educationally, economically, business development or opportunity development in our communities.” The tribal director is aware of the importance of participating “in a formal education system because we need to learn the best of what is there because the world will continue to change around us.” He speaks with conviction when it comes to working with indigenous communities, their families, and extended families. He talks about the balance of the past, present, and future stating, “We can't go there and lose sight of who we are and where we came from because otherwise there is not a reason for us to come back [home].” The tribe where he is enrolled has a word for it meaning that, “we have to keep the teachings and the memories of our ancestors alive.” They have another word if they do nothing, which means, “We are an orphan of identity. We have lost that sense of who we are and now we are wandering around the world trying to find somebody else's culture to latch onto so they feel a part of something.” There is a belief to endure, as it is a “discouraging, frightening place to be because that means we have just lost another one of the people. We have to make sure our young people, all of our people understand what it means to be one of us, encouraging them to go into the world to get that formalized education.”

The tribal director discussed the needs of the community with educated people who understand grant writing, noting “a recurring theme in the experiences” of tribal people “in so many different programmatic areas” is a questioning of “how many tribes, how many different programs apply for federal grants of any kind?” Federal and philanthropy programs offer grants, but they “want evidenced base programs that are going to guide where your program is going to go. Well when they say evidence-based programs, they are literally saying who has a Ph.D. [and] has done the research to say this works?” Well, there are no Native Ph.D.'s who have the research behind them to show that the traditional practices worked.” He went on to say that, the

experience is not “evidence based” and discussed programs that need evidence-based comparatives, noting there is a need “to have somebody with the proper credentials to formally evaluate their work.” He also mentioned, “All the evaluation tools are Eurocentric based in a whole different way of looking at the world.” Indigenous peoples realize “they needed to create their own evaluation tool based in more traditional Native culture for the peoples here and that is how they came up with the relational world view model.” Therefore, there are questions on how the research “evaluates its projects based on how did this project affect the social fabric of the community?” He identified the serious need that, “we have to get more of our Native peoples to get those letters behind their names so that the rest of the world is willing to accept that what we say actually has meaning and value.”

The tribal director is familiar with grant writing and has had success obtaining grants. He has dealt with cultural differences and perspectives when it comes to identifying necessary terms of evaluation that is “evidence-based” but has varied issues noting in their grant “we were not going to be successful bringing some Western-style evidence base that has no meaning to this cultural community.” He shared, with a twinkle in his eyes, “Our grant approach was to say we have an evidenced-base and our evidence-base is that after how many hundred years before assimilation forced an acculturation [and] our communities are still here.” He noted their “practices have proven that it will keep the community as a whole.” He stated, based on his argument, “They funded us.” The tribal director shared the “rarity a federal agency was willing to accept that definition of evidenced based,” identifying, “In most cases, they are going to look for ‘where is all the scientific research?’ ‘Where is the literature?’ ‘Where are the Ph.D.’s that said this practice really worked?’ If we do not have enough Native Ph.D.’s in all these varied fields, then we are stuck with someone else’s model.”

When asked if mainstream academic systems are safe for the Native students, tribal communities, and their cultural traditions that acknowledge their diversity, his comment were, “It depends.”

I have certainly come across a number of higher education institutions that are better now it seems that they are more open to that kind of diversity but are putting action behind it. I see a continuing evolution of native student organizations on campuses, of support services that are in so many of the colleges, it has typically fallen under Diversity Programs. As if the Natives could just fit into that, catch all of all these other elements of gender, sexual orientation, and economic background and that kind of thing.

The tribal director sees where there are more postsecondary campuses creating student services to address their diverse needs. “They are recognizing it is not just the issue of diversity but there is cultural inclusion that needs to be a part of supporting Native students going to those colleges.” I chuckled to myself when he put himself down academically, but I had to reflect on his vast knowledge of experience and work within tribes, governance, and culture. “I don’t have anything to quantitatively back this up but it seems to me that there are certainly an increasing number of resources to academically or financially support Native Students as they are going into these institutions.” He noticed that the “Tribal college system has grown across the country a lot of options that are available to tribal folks who want to go off to college, but want to be even more or continually immersed in that kind of a culturally appropriate facility.”

He mentioned one of his “pet peeves about that whole system is that there are so many elements of it that really aren’t founded in education.” He finds that many of the building architectural concerns are for the potential awards for the design. The tribal director mentions,

When you look at the inefficiencies and how much waste is built in those systems, it is no wonder that tuition has to continue to rise at crazy rates, which also means that the door of opportunity becomes ever more available to other groups who want to make a more efficient education system.

Some of the administrators look after their interests and not that of the student, let alone the indigenous learner.

He criticized the courses that are primarily online with virtual support without physical face-to-face human contact. “When you are creating a virtual system like that or when you are creating a really efficient classroom experience there is not going to be any interest in creating student clubs or Native student organizations. They are down to the business of educating.” He can see why the online courses can be difficult and not lasting. “The college systems as we know them are going to have to figure out how we adapt. Otherwise, the business world overtakes us.” This brought discussion towards another concern.

When working with tribal communities, there has is always the circumstance of first-generation college students. “Many non-tribal families [with a] history” of postsecondary attendance know they are “sending their kids off to college.” He noted that when these students are in grade school, they already know or expected to attend postsecondary institutions. “Those kids in grade school are going to school knowing that is the norm, the expectation, which is what they grew up with.” There have been struggles with advocating to Indigenous peoples for the importance of attending college for the future of tribal communities and leadership. “Whereas many of the tribes are just getting to that point where we are fighting tooth and nail to try to get some of those people to go to college. Yet maybe college is at that tipping point where these online experiences start to become more and more of the norm.”

There needs to be opportunity for culturally appropriate postsecondary education so tribes can establish the norm of college attendance and student expectations when attending college. He mentioned the school’s district Indian education programs in the area are taking youth to visit colleges. “We want to show them different kind of colleges so they can realize

there is a whole bunch of different opportunities out there.” For the first time this year, there is the prospect of allowing students in the local junior high school to visit colleges and universities, “because we want them to be thinking about that before they get to high school, before their grades are actually going to track towards college.” There is change happening at the tribes based on the realization of education. The director stated, “In all of that, it is hard to see where that future is going, but a lot of people are starting to predict that that transition is already beginning to a more efficient system, and it is not going to care whether it is culturally appropriate or not.”

The tribal education director sees his role as a Native leader in advancing indigenous education more effective in creating “an efficient system within this department so that people who are actually carrying out functions of that educational support would be freer to do that work.” He sees his role as ensuring “we incorporate the more efficient systems that we also don’t lose sight of what it means to be a native person and to be a Native person in that educational system around us, [without assimilating] and at least be unaware that that is what we are doing.” The director keeping to traditions sees, “Here is who I am and what is the best that I can take from that system and add to who we are.”

Many Indigenous people have commented on “Living in two worlds” as did the tribal education director. He sees himself as, “In many different ways of being a role model in terms of how a person can balance those two things.” He shares and confirms the research that, “You have that Native community that you are growing up in and being a part of and you have that other world outside of your native community that you are trying to be a part of.” Yet “I have actually seen from Native people who talk about that experience is that they’re not walking in

two worlds because they're not successful in both of those worlds" and find themselves "stuck somewhere in between."

The tribal education director identifies with his indigenous culture and promotes that, "Part of being a Native leader and encouraging their education is helping people to find that place where they can be successful where you don't have to lose sight of being Native to be successful in that educated world." He opens up with the bigger picture stating, "As far as the modern world academia views education you don't have to shy away from getting highly educated and worry about losing that sense of who you are. To help people understand you can do both and to support other people to recognize themselves as emerging leaders."

The tribes are struggling in mainstream educational systems with issues such as truancy, dropout rates; low academic achievement at all levels; people heading off to college; and remedial courses because indigenous people not adequately prepared for college. The director observed that people are stepping up individually and understanding that "their own choices and the work [allows] them to be successful." I was impressed with the voice of the director as he remarked, "We're putting ourselves out of work on the one hand, and just changing the focus of what we do to create a much bigger opportunity on the other." He became reflective in the sense of not addressing his own successes, but meeting the needs and placing others first. He stated, "In so many ways what I have just been describing goes back to that traditional village again. I should not be trying to teach a child who is a talented singer; I should be teaching them to be a singer."

When asked about one success story in his endeavors in indigenous education, he stated, "Based on my own personal philosophies of how I look at what I do in life, I don't really have a meaningful answer here." Again, I reflected on a tradition of taking the focus from self, but try

to redirect toward someone, or something else. He spoke of changes that were short-term influences, and even stated, “I don’t know if I can define them as successes until I have seen what has happened down the road,” but his story held true to the many I have heard across several Indigenous peoples. He spoke about a successful community curriculum developed about healthy relationships. He described the circumstances, but I noticed his comment on, “I may not know what that change is in my lifetime. That may be something that 100 years from now may change into something beautiful, but I will not be there to see it. I helped them to plant the seed and I hope that it grows.” I understood the awkwardness of the question as traditional indigenous people will not “toot-their-own-horn, and will down-play their importance.

He shared, “Many years back, I was brought in to create a curriculum for the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs to teach people, particularly state agencies how we can do a more effective job of relationship building with the tribal governments.” He mentioned, “I created a curriculum, and it is very well received” based on participant surveys. He mentioned that sometimes change does not happen for several years, stating, “As those changes get implemented little by little in so many areas of that government relationship, 10 years 20 years maybe a couple generations from now maybe it’s an entirely different world.” I agreed, noting his comment, “On the side of the social fabric of the community, maybe I have planted a good seed. On the political fabric of the community, I think I have already planted a good seed but in my lifetime, I may never know.” However, he reflectively went on, stating, “But on the short-term side of things in terms at trying to look at successes here are a couple of examples here at [the reservation community].”

The tribe and he, as the tribal education director, know there are challenges to be conquered, which includes truancy laws, especially the Becca Bill.

One of the challenges we started to recognize in this community was the parents started to realize that the rule did not start to take place until the kid was 8 years old. So, if I have a kid that is 5, 6 or 7, kindergarten, first or second grade they really don't have to go to school if I am not up to taking them today.

Again, he mentioned the students taking advantage of the tutors in the school. He commented that the elementary school the majority of their students attend "was coming to us and telling us there is a whole bunch of these kids who are here only half the time and they are falling under the radar because the Becca Bill doesn't apply in this situation." He was aware based on experience that "if not being successful in kindergarten academically then likely you are not going to be successful in first grade without a lot of struggle. In addition, you are not going to do any better in second grade, triggering how well you do in third grade going on up the chain."

The tribal government revised their tribal codes to give the tribal Public Safety and Education Department authority to monitor and enforce attendance of the youth between the ages of 5-7 years old. He mentioned, "If we can be successful for those kids [the] first 3 years then by the time they are in third grade we are not struggling as hard to tutor them to catch up." He shared that "two people in [the education] department have been in their roles for more than 2 years, [with] half of my department has been here less than 6 months." He is deep in mentoring and training as the people learn their roles within the department, and optimistic his department in "a year from now is going to be a world of difference from where we are now, and where we were a year ago." He closed on a cheerful note,

As more and more people become familiar with their roles and responsibilities, of leadership and accountability for what they can accomplish, then we will have a whole department of people who are creating new ways to be more effective; new ways to be more supportive; new ways to get this community excited about education to "work ourselves out of jobs."

I was impressed with the tribal director because of his determination to build successful opportunities for a tribal community.

Leadership Portrait: State Indian Education Director

My morning began with a visitation of the Raven family to my home. They shouted from the coniferous trees in their sagely voices what a good day it was going to be. I took comfort knowing from their wisdom that all was going to be well. In the late 1980s, I formally met the current Washington State Indian Education Director when she was also associated with the Washington State Indian Education Association. She is an enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe with an honorable political stance with indigenous communities in the nation. She coordinated the Salem-Keizer Indian Education Program in Oregon; as well as serving in the position of Indian Education/Civil Rights Specialist for the Oregon Department of Education. U.S. President Barrack Obama appointed her to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE), and Senior Liaison within the Minority Community Outreach Department of the National Education Association in Washington, DC.

As the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Vice President, and NACIE member, she received a commendation from Education Secretary Arne Duncan. I learned she took over the Washington state position when I was trying to contact the director from the last 12 years, yet learned he retired. I scheduled an appointment to meet the new director with the 41-year associate director, a warm familiar face in the office.

On my scheduled day, I brought with me Native Spirit blend tobacco, a tradition when approaching a Native person to interview. The sun was shining as I drove to the state capitol. The state Indian Education Office is under the umbrella of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) housed in the Old Capitol Building since 1906. The stone building

constructed in 1892 as a courthouse, and became the state capitol from 1905 through 1928. The copper roofs of the conical turrets were green against the large evergreen trees in the front courtyard. I strode up the marble steps, feeling somewhat woozy because of the height, something I am not fond of. I checked in at the security system and was instructed to go up the spiral staircase to the third floor. I ran into the Indian Education Assistant Director as she led me to the directors cubical. Years ago the state Indian Education office had its own room, now they are in a large area with several cubicles shared with Title I, ELL, Migrant Education, and other federal and state education programs.

I was introduced to the director, who appeared to have the same curly hair as myself. Her first comment was, "I like your hair, is it natural?" We discussed the issues we have with our unruly curls and solutions personally found to tame the wildness. She was busy with deadlines that day and agreed to meet me the following day for lunch. I left until the next day. On my way out, I noticed the bathrooms were all marble. When I arrived the next day, the sun shone in the south sound area of the state capitol city. I gathered my things and walked the distance to the Old Capitol Building. As I neared the large grey rock behemoth structure, I noticed workers in the park erecting a large Douglas fir tree with heavy equipment in the park across the street. The holidays are approaching. I hesitated, looking at the narrow steep marble steps and started up, thinking about the many footsteps that traveled up and down before mine.

I checked in with security, and got my visitor badge telling them I knew where I was going. I bounded up the spiral staircase and walked into the room of cubicles toward the back. The director was at her desk on the computer when I arrived. I gave her a gift of my dissertation chairperson's published book. We walked out through the basement to a side street and went to the nearest teriyaki restaurant. We chatted about our personal life paths regarding education for

indigenous students, our children, and grandchildren. We have a lot in common and leadership passions of seeking academic success for Native students in the school systems.

The director is a beautifully strong charismatic force with a definite voice of knowledge. When she spoke, it became obvious, almost intimidating, her extreme knowledge based on a high profile experience in education. I was enormously honored to have time spent in her presence. There are a few people met on one's life journey where you reflect and think, "I want/hope to be like them." This moment was a force of deep female philosophy similar in experience and nature. This process gave me goose bumps, known in many indigenous traditions of a spirit touching you. I was in total emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual awe.

In reflecting on my meeting with the state Indian education director, I thought of the following comment about traditional perspectives of indigenous women, "Women were respected, and were believed to be the foundation of the Nation. The people knew that strong women made strong Nations. The social structure was built on the complementary roles of its male and female members" (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 4). This is exactly how I perceived the state director. This differs from European viewpoints. In keeping with indigenous customs, especially upon meeting for the first time, the state director wanted to share a little bit about herself and her family from the past, present, and future. She is an inspiration to all indigenous people, especially the women.

The state education director saw her education philosophy as starting with her family. She has been involved with Indian education for about 43 years. She is Ho Chunk, Winnebago, and Chippewa, mostly identifying with the Winnebago side "because I lived and worked in that community the most." Impressively, she shared that her grandfather was very atypically, as he was "the first American Indian to graduate from Yale in 1910." Her grandfather "was born in a

wigwam on the Missouri River in Nebraska, and sent himself to Santa Fe Indian School, and then off to Mt. Herman, a Prep School to Yale.” He met and married her grandmother who is Ojibwa from White Hood Minnesota. Her grandmother had also been to college,

Attending Carlisle about the same time [as] Jim Thorpe. They were colleagues and friends, [and participated in] a group of people that people rarely know much about. It is sort of like that post reservation emerging into contemporary society group. They created an organization group called Council Fires. It was sort of out of the Chicago area.

With both of her grandparents graduating from college, a strong understanding of academia developed for generations. They raised their four daughters with their “belief that education was the way out of poverty and oppression and that Indian people needed to become more adept at understanding the systems that impacted their lives.” The girls went to Vassar, Wellesley, and Mills, with her mother going to Vassar at the age of 16 years, skipping a couple of grades in school.

The state director commented that at a young age, “I was a voracious reader, was interested in art history and graduated from Vassar and started some graduate work at Mills at the end of World War II.” Her first job was in “Honolulu, Hawaii right at the end of the Pacific Campaign right at the end of the war.” The state director had a many family role models to guide the postsecondary path. She shared, “My Uncle Bob, married to my mom’s sister, ended up being a Professor at Stanford [University]. My mother as well as all Native women had these huge expectations placed on them.” There were remnants of oppression with the expectations of the Native women, inside and outside of her family.

All 4 of my aunts had issues with alcoholism. My mother died at age 53 but she was on the Dean’s List at Willamette Law School. Intelligence does not necessarily mean that you do not have the effects of oppression and societal views on things. I remember her saying that I do not have an alcohol problem because she did not picture herself with those kinds of people. So she was in huge denial. Yet she still raised all seven of us. I am the second oldest of seven.

With those high expectations, the state director was raised with the notion “that we were going to college, it was not ‘if’ but it was which one. Of course, she had extremely high expectations because she thought we were all going to go to Vassar, Wellesley, and those kinds of institutions.” She stated that her mom “did extremely well, with what they had to deal with but I have often thought how isolating it must have been to be my mom at Vassar in the 1930s.” A time when not many women, let alone Native women, went to college.

The state director was one of seven children with all but two impressively going to college and obtaining a master’s degree or better. She has one brother who is a lawyer, and another brother received his doctorate and is currently a school district superintendent in Alaska. Both of her sisters hold master’s degrees, with one of them having two master’s degrees. Her youngest brother passed away at the age of 30 years old. She feels that “Even though there was some kind of exceptional things in my background, I also share a lot of other things in common with other Native folks.”

Her parents moved to Alaska when it was still a territory. She was in the 2nd or 3rd grade when the state achieved statehood, at which she commented humorously, “I am starting to sound old as dirt!” They lived in Anchorage and left the year before the big earthquake, when their house burned down. Like many indigenous families, moving to a relative’s house is common.

We piled into a Volkswagen bus and we drove the AL-CAN Highway in 1963. All nine of us in a Volkswagen bus. We relocated to Portland, which is where one of my aunts was living. We also went all the way down to Palo Alto where my other aunt and her family were living. That is where Stanford is. My Uncle Bob was living there.

Her aunt received her doctorate, “but that was like years after my five cousins had gone onto school. They are all very high achieving. They all went onto Stanford and stuff like that.” The

family has high expectations stating, “Education in terms of my family’s expectations is off the charts—high—everybody does well, you do it on your own merit, and you have to work hard.” During the high school years her mother made sure her children completed, “four years of science, four years of math because we were poor. She said the only way you’re going to get there is that you are going to have to do it on your own merits.” She mentioned that her and her siblings were,

Highly competitive, my brother was very athletic and my sister was a student body officer. This was in Portland, [OR] a big big high school. There were like 700 students in my graduating class and my sister was a student body officer. My brother excelled 4 years in 3 sports—baseball, wrestling and football. So, he went to Willamette as an undergraduate on a football scholarship.

I am always impressed hearing people’s stories, and hers was no different as it shared an academic competitiveness, yet seemed respectful and honoring everyone’s accomplishments of academic success that delivered a success for the family.

After her introduction to her upbringing, she shared that her educational philosophy is “lifelong.” She stated, “So I distinguish between education and formal schooling. I think that too often lifelong education is not given the credence that it deserves.” The state director also believes from her vast array of experience that “Although, I also think that there are very low expectations on the part of Native People in education. I think our people are brilliant.” She went on to say,

The fact that they are not doing well in school is a matter of socialization, low expectations, lack of belief in their own individual capabilities. I think people tend to make excuses for why we’re not performing the way we should as an entire community. Yes, we are burdened with poverty, lateral oppression and discrimination and all the diseases—alcoholism, drug abuse and all of that stuff but I think those are all byproducts of oppression.

She was not one to focus on excuses, claiming, “I think people have to actually believe there is a way out. I am very much not into complaining. I am into throwing up our sleeves and figure out what else can be done to make a difference.” Her family developed a strong sense of accomplishment, one that was fighting for success. She shared that her,

Philosophy is that education is based on high expectations and a solid belief in the resilience of our people and the intelligence of our people. We can make choices. If you do not like formal schooling, great there are many other things that you can do with your life.

I felt a deep sense of extreme pride as she spoke often of her grandfather, and his legacy to his future generations, something that colonization and oppression have nearly eliminated as more tribal people return to their heritage. She shared,

My grandfather not only was a graduate of Yale—he majored in 5 languages. He was a fluent speaker and orator. He believed that other Native People had the same capabilities. He was the first speaker of Ho Chunk language and he spoke it his entire life. I just do not believe that Native people cannot also have their traditions and earn a decent living. With the onset of gaming, it has brought huge economic development to highly impoverished communities over a short period. It is wonderful to see that. I guess that kind of captures most of my philosophies of education.

Here I reflected on the intergenerational impact people have on each other and especially family. I was proud of her accomplishments and honored, again, to be in her presence.

She believes colonization practices today are “in the hearts and minds of our people. They just don’t believe in themselves, well not enough of them do.” She shared her story as an educator stating,

I do not want to over generalize, but when I think of our youth—I taught on the Menominee Reservation— actually, it was terminated when I started and it became restored in the 4 years that I was there. I can see the psychological effects of being told by ‘the other’ that you are not good enough, you cannot make it. Actually, it was a Civil Rights suit filed against the Menominee—actually it was the Shawano School District which borders the Reservation because Counselors were basically telling kids you’re

never going to make it you might as well not even finish. So, we have that horrible history and I think that is all part of colonization.

Her experiences with work and family have led her life path to the work that she is accomplishing today.

She shared, heavily, on not only her activities but also perspectives in many areas of the education system.

I also see some of the specific things that right now I am working on, I was telling you about House Bill 1134 earlier. One of our arguments with the tribes that are thinking about creating their own Tribal Compact Schools is their thinking about whether or not they should have to take the State Assessment. I am thinking why is that such a big deal? Do you really think that our kids cannot take the State Assessment and do well? I think they can [do well on the state assessment], even if they do not [pass] for several years [never give up].

I was impressed with her fight to develop a more positive environment within the Indian education program and here efforts to eliminate the notion of historical oppressive thinking. I began seeing from her perspective the mental hole dug by many Native families, let alone many communities.

Tribes and tribal communities have been gaining freedom from many arenas, struggling to voice and remove shackles of colonialism and its meaning. Her understanding of tribes wanting to educate their people, especially the youth, is reflected in her passionate description of her work,

Then you have a new program that you are putting together that is going to imbed your language, history and tribal traditions, then great. It may take 3 to 5 years before you might see some significant improvement. Let the kids take the [state] test along the way and measure success. To me that is colonized thinking, that our kids are not capable of doing that or somehow our program will be jeopardized and that might be a legitimate fear that if our program is judged against the performance of the students then we will yank it out from under you. So, that is also colonized thinking, that fear of building your hopes and then having them bashed. I can see multiple sides to that, but I think that is a direct example of colonized thinking.

I reflected, again, heavily, thinking back to my education years seeing those teachers and others unable to have trust in the Native student. I understood those kids, and embraced their innate knowledge. I empathetically understood the dislike of testing based on a lack of confidence. A good leader, like the state education director and the tribal education director, understand their communities as they are in the trenches, so to speak. Both have had extensive experience and seen many issues in their leadership positions.

As a leader, the state director has programmatic knowledge based on her experiences in federal government educational programs. In this capacity, she brought up another current issue in the education system,

Another example was during No Child Left Behind,—all the Title VII programs had to start looking like Title I when the intent of the original statute was to create opportunities to do more language and traditional knowledge in the schooling process for kids. So that all got pushed to the side when we were emphasizing you have to do well in reading and math. My friend David who you and I was just talking about who said if it looks like a duck, it walks like a duck and it quacks like a duck—pretty soon everyone is going to think it's a duck. So if Title VII looks just like Title I then why do we need it?

The state director had a lot of knowledge and understanding of programs, again identifying oppressive, and colonization properties with the lives of indigenous students. She shared these examples:

This is another example of the pressures that even on a policy level our communities experience and they try to conform because they want the resources. What they are doing does not match what is really thoughtful and best in terms of practice. That happens to us all the time, especially when we accept the funds for the things we really want to do and we feel is right. So, yeah it's everywhere.

She went on to mention the change in state standardized testing from what I was familiar with, now known as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Washington state students needed to demonstrate proficiency in specific requirements in order to graduate from

high school. With the new state superintendent of public instruction, there is an incorporation of the new “Common Core” Standards, which schools are beginning to test in accordance with state policy. She shared,

That is another thing everyone is so afraid the Common Core will not be reflective of Indian History and Culture and to me that is an example of not being well informed. I think that there is an assumption that common means standardized. Well there will be an assessment on the Common Core but in the instruction, if you look at what the Common Core actually says it’s things like, I don’t know the exact wording, but for example in Social Studies it would be given an example of how cause and affect plays out in a historical context.

As a leader, she endorses state assessments, and encouraged by the changes associated with Common Core; namely, teachers can educate with freedom that is more professional. For example, using Indian reference material and utilizing a more process-oriented form of assessment. She mentioned that people in general “don’t even know what it is, I think in Indian Country that they are so suspect of institutionalized education imposing things that the immediate reaction is that it is going to harm us.” As the state Indian education director, she stated that “I’m always of the thinking that let’s see what we can create to show that it won’t harm us.” She mentioned a cultural appropriate online curriculum, titled, “Time and Memorial Curriculum” is already aligned with the Common Core stating, “It shows the cultural based assessments that you can use for it. Sometimes it’s just fear itself of something new—that change.”

She thinks Indigenous Nations have internalized oppression by “just living in Indian Communities.” She shared a story about her values and philosophy from what I felt was heartfelt.

One of my life experiences as being the Indian Ed Director in Oregon for 9 years. I always felt that I had a nemesis in one person who was constantly; I guess she just needed to have the spotlight. I guess at first it really hurt my feelings because I am—I think of myself as just a servant. I am here to help people. It is not about glory or recognition, [knowing] that is a very corruptible sort of value. I also see that when

people are feeling repressed they are almost starved for support and being acknowledged and recognized for what they do. I see in individual behaviors there are some people that I just have a really hard time with as they may do good things but they do it for the wrong reason.

She believes such behavior “is very much self-serving and because I’ve spent so much of my life just trying to find solutions. I am very interested in policy.” She has kept to her values throughout her work. She was known for her good work while helping to establish policy at the National level while on the National Advisory Council on Indian Education Board (NACIE). She shared, “It isn’t promoting me, I think that is an example of sort of a lateral oppression because we’ve been oppressed then we oppress each other, rather than celebrate each other and acknowledge or give away accolades.” She just finished her 15th year serving as a board member stating “that is about 23 years of my life because you have to wait out a year before you run again. I ran each time because there was more work to do.” She stepped off the board and felt good about it sharing,

We have totally revised all of our organizational documents, our board policies, our personnel policies, our fiscal policies, our constitution and by-laws, convention and guidelines, our instrument to do an effective evaluation and feedback system for our executive director. We did all of that. It was a huge amount of work. At least now, I can leave. I want an infrastructure, I worry about the organization. I have seen individuals come in and in one year they just spend wildly and kind of fly themselves all over the place and that is not serving the organization well. I always feel like a mother hen protecting her egg or something.

The director feels the program will remain with a solid foundation “because we have just hired a really effective individual [who recognizes] our success stories [knowing] programs that work are fragile, [and once] a leader leaves, it feels like things [may] implode, that an example of lateral oppression.”

I had to laugh inside myself as the director, who I really began to adore more, mentioned this, because, yes, this was how I felt with her during our lunch. She stated,

I think that sometimes people on the outside looking in think like even in my job, oh wow, that person is in a position of prestige and they have no idea of how hard it is to work in an institution, or be the only one like you have said before. I've always been in institutions and which is great for me, even though I feel really inadequate in the beginning, you start to learn there is a structure here and there is people who will support you here and there is people who mean well. They may not do the right thing but they often are good intended.

As an experienced leader, she identifies with the diverse personalities of people, and acknowledges how to deal with each one. She mentioned that people do not understand the challenges that present themselves from the inside and outside of organizations. She feels confident in her abilities to juggle the many different opportunities brought to her.

An example was while she worked at the office within Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Professional Development. "I got handed the job of overseeing contracts for 13 tribal colleges and universities delivering professional development throughout the whole Bureau of Indian Administration (BIA) system—with 183 schools spread over 23 states." She commented on the BIE, "So, they call it a system but it's ridiculous. It is not a system. It is just all this fragmented activity so we were trying to create an infrastructure to deliver professional development." I understand her as someone a lot like me, organized and disliking waste, especially from a bureaucracy where one affects a minority of people. Again, my admiration was profound. She shared,

Prior to that, I had been working out of the Portland area office and I oversaw the school reform work for 14 BIA schools in the Northwest. So I went out to them and I went out at least 3 times a year to every school and I went out more than anybody in the office. At least 3 times more than anybody in the office and I said how do you know what is going on in those schools if you're sitting in an office. Sometimes things that are so logical to me are not logical to other people. So I had a sense of what some schools were doing in the system.

Her familiarity with bureaucratic organization developed her organizational skills. I enjoyed listening to her weaving of a lifelong journey of establishing a certainty in the Indian Education System.

The web continued as she experientially worked her way in a system establishing a philosophy of organization and unity. She continued,

I had done some work for the University of Idaho who was also delivering support to the 14 schools in the NW. I knew what they were trying to do so I said you have to get out to those schools. I went out to each of the Universities that were delivering service and they told me that I was the only person that ever went out there. How could you know what Oglala Community College could be doing when they have a land base that could take hours and hours to travel to take classes?

She shared an observation of a student mentioning,

I was thinking of this one guy, I can't remember the name of the school, he was taking classes and once a week he was having to drive over those snowy hills to get into a class and then driving back like once a week. I was like in such awe of the efforts that people would have to go to advance their education given their real life circumstance. But, I would not know that if I never went out there. You just get such a different perspective of what people do to make a difference.

I reflected on some of my travels to remote reservations. One school in particular was quite a drive; in fact, I rented a four-wheel-drive since once in the mountains I encountered snow. I enjoyed the trip and drive through the two foot deep snow on the plowed roads. I stopped to take in the scenery, especially coming across the reservation horses. The horses of deep browns and black were playing in the snow banks. Running, rolling on their backs, like children on their first snow. I started snapping pictures to capture the moment. As I drove on, I came across rez dogs running around near the administrative buildings. One was black with three legs and maneuvered in the snow quite well. I thought how our animals are our teachers. To have physical disabilities should not slow us down, but enjoy the moment with companions. At the particular school I visited, there was a separate area near the school for educational staff to live

due to the remoteness. Teachers lived in nice singlewide mobile homes, while the superintendent lived in a doublewide mobile home on a small knoll.

The state director had been to the school, and acknowledged many of the tribal schools are in remote locations.

I have been through Wellpinit a lot because I worked with Pascal Sherman so I drove through that area. All the schools, the BIE schools in this area of the country are in beautiful places. Whether it is on the Puyallup River or on the Ocean out there at La Push, it was like wow. I loved going out there, going out to Flathead Lake to work with the Flathead people, yah, internalized oppression—yeah.

The perspectives we behold on life encounters reflect our mindsets and our philosophy on life.

While we sat in the restaurant and enjoyed our teriyaki, the waiter kept returning to refill our water glasses. He had no idea the conversation, including him interrupting, was being recorded until I said something. He was astounded and began returning without speaking. The state director continued without missing a beat her conversation and expressed the feeling of being overwhelmed, “being the only one in certain institutions. So I was handed that body of work and I thought geez I don’t know anything about contracting or anything.” The organization trained her as she maneuvered in to her position to do what best to improve teaching and learning in the BIE schools. She explained,

You know when I was up here, I was appalled because when I was out in the schools I would talk to the administrators, and I would say how do you if there is good instruction going on in those classrooms? Do you have an instrument that you use for feedback? How do you know that you got good teaching? I was kind of thinking about instructional leadership and I had everything from checklist that was elaborate to one administrator who just had a chat. His teachers had no goals or they would just verbalize them, nothing in writing. He had nothing it was just all over the map in terms of quality.

At many of the schools, she was appalled at the “lack of quality” noting the problem was not with the students and the communities, but the administration of the schools and teachers. She

stated, “It’s just appalling, I always wanted to say to a legislator, ‘would you send your children to that building, knowing what I know. No, you would not.’”

I felt her passion when she commented, “Don’t tell me our [Native] kids can’t succeed. They could if they get the chance at it.” She left the bureau and then took a job at the National Education Association in Washington, DC, where a new office branch was established called the Office of Minority Community Outreach. She stated,

It was our job to do outreach and build a bridge between this national and very political ethnic minority communities in support of teachers and communities of color. So we were supposed to take NIEAs issues like anti voucher campaigns out to the community to gain support. Then we were supposed to take the communities issues into NIEA and try to leverage their access into DC to try to have impact policy. What NIEA used to do they would send money to organizations and attend functions. What value added is that really?

She shared that the experience included a “hard driving boss” as she “worked myself to death.”

She did many projects with NIEA. One project developed,

A little publication called Native Education 101 because we could take that to our NIEA members. Regular classroom teachers don’t know much about the whole arena of Indian Education but we could also take it to staffers on the hill who might be supporting funding cuts or changes in legislation that would be detrimental to Indian Ed. They had no idea from [Federally funded] Johnson O’Malley and Title VII. We needed just basic background information for them.

The publication included parent engagement across all the ethnic communities, policy recommendations implemented at the state level, and “some really interesting stuff but it was really hard work.” She worked there for 6.5 years thinking she was nearing retirement. She shared, “I wanted to kind of cruise in rather than ratchet it out like tenfold.” She enjoyed the aspect of being in Washington, DC, during the Barrack Obama election. She returned to the Pacific Northwest a year ago, taking her current position with Washington State, and being closer to her family and a newborn grandson.

In the spirit of education from community traditions to institutional, her thoughts on indigenous people needing to participate in the formal education system aligned with my own philosophy. She does not want to see indigenous peoples as “victims of an education system that they do not understand.” She stated,

I totally agree with your opening line. Native people need academic experience to be better able to not just cope with the outside contemporary world but to manipulate to their own advantage. Yeah I think it is critical important to get a formal education. You can do with it what you like. But, I also believe in the value of hard work.

I was impressed with her motivation and desire to see indigenous people stand on their own two feet. She recalled an example from when she was working in Portland, Oregon, as the Title VII program director and she and a colleague created a Native student leadership program. She shared a story at one school,

I remember being called to a High School, there were two girls that had missed almost the whole first month of school, and we were trying to get them engaged in getting back to High School. I had this conversation with kind of a young intern counselor because I said, “Could you please walk these girls around to each of their classes that they’re going to be assigned to and talk to their teachers to see what it is to be realistic to make up at this point.” And, this young lady just said, “well (and I could just hear it was a script) in our school we are trying to teach students to be responsible.” I said, “Are you saying you are not going to go with them?” And, she said, “well I think they need to do that for themselves.” I said, “listen these two girls have already shown they are not responsible and they dug themselves a hole and they know it. They need someone to hold them by the hand and pull them out to a place where they think they can soldier on but they need that shoulder and that support. And, I thought you’re that counselor.”

I wanted to die laughing with such heartfelt pride in the state director as she stood up for the Native students. I had heard and seen many similar stories myself as an educator. She went on to say, “A lot of our kids have made very bad choices, and in that leadership program that we had, I wished we had videoed this one session in particular.”

Her program brought together students from Chemawa Indian Boarding School, Salem Indian Education Program, Portland Indian Education Program, and the Grand Ronde Tribe. “We started with 60 kids the first year because we did not have Grand Ronde kids the first year. We started with 20 kids from each one of the schools. [The second year] we had 80 kids, then 100 kids [the following year], and then 125 kids [the fourth year].” The program took students out “for one full day a month for about 4 or 5 months.” The state director reminisced about taking the students on a journey because she had not heard or read much on youth development programs, so she helped create the successful program that influenced the youth. She was familiar developing professional development for adults, so she was surprised to hear the student voice stating:

What the kids said at the end I remember there were about 70 kids in this grade. They said things like, “I never knew that school was so important.” “If I had a known I could have done so much better.” “I now know there is a community of people who care about me or that I can look to for example.” “I didn’t know much about my Indian Culture but I really want to learn more now.” “I know what I want to do with my life” or “I want to be a teacher.”

The state director commented,

All of them with their knees knocking said they never thought they could speak in front of a group this large either. I know there are really powerful things you can do with young people and with adults. If you put in effort, you can get something out of it. Why would you do something if you do not think there is going to be a pay off so I think until people believe in themselves they have to know somebody else believes in them. Sometimes it is hard to get people to believe in themselves if they have had a lot of oppression in their life. It takes a lot.

She believes that some community systems are not safe, observing, “Sometimes we idealize our communities. We would like them to be safe. If we look to real traditional aspects of the community like when I was on the Menomonie Reservation alcoholism was pretty widespread.”

She shared, “It seemed like every week somebody died from something. It was usually violence, accidents, or stuff like that.” A story she recounted referred to traditional customs:

There was this one aspect of the community up in Zoar, was the real traditional Old Religion. You go up there and spend some time with those people, they were so peaceful and somewhat calm, and there was that sense of comfort and who they were and the environment in which they lived. Even in my tribe, I have been to like these lodges and I am sorry to say that some of my Ho-Chunk relatives are very mean to each other. Just mean and I just do not get it.

The state director felt that there are unhappy people who make themselves feel better by bullying or shaming others. With an internalized oppression, one dislikes to see other people become successful. She had seen this happen to herself and others in organizations and school systems, especially with non-Native peer groups. She mentioned the difficulty “to help our kids navigate both of those systems and they don’t feel safe. One of the things that we did when we did that leadership program was not to set up rules. We said we had discussion groups.” The program initiated guidelines based on asking students, “What does it take for you to feel safe in a community. With 125 kids in the room there was no bullying, no put downs, because that was one of the guidelines. You can’t put people down.” The program capitalized on diversity emphasizing on possibilities and positive interactions. She spoke with pride sharing, “It was just amazing to me how the students owned it.” She used traditional leadership philosophy where students worked together, and nobody was better than another student, young or old. Each had to assist others. The students followed their own guidelines and “they owned them.”

The state director sees her role as a native leader in advancing indigenous education as “helping people advocate for themselves.” She had learned of a resolution considering the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was “asking to take Title VII funds and create a formula grant program for [Indigenous] language immersion, which on the surface is what everybody wants to support.” However, as she pointed out, it is at “the expense of those meager

dollars that are going into the support systems that those 1200 formula grant programs have currently.” She stated the resolution passed NCAI,

In my mind if as the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs was looking for some advice on the reauthorization would they think that because of that, they should redraft Title VII and make it a formula grant for just language immersion. It is great if they are going to expand the dollars, but if they are not going to expand the dollars. So, we introduced a resolution at NIEA to sort of counter that resolution that said we are in full support of language immersion but not at the expense of taking money from other programs, yet we would do whatever we could to seek additional funding in other sources.

She figured the language program could come out of Title III, which specifies an English language learner section that includes a competitive grant program funding language immersion, and language revitalization. She held many meetings before the resolution session. She was described how she was mesmerized,

I thought they were going to stand up and speak for themselves. Nobody, not one person went to the microphone, and I went over and talked to some of the people that I know here. I said, “What is the matter with you people? This is your issue. Why didn’t you stand up and say something for yourselves?” I had to. I stood up and I spoke to the issue. No, I wanted to see 20 people standing up behind those mikes, even if you did not get to the mike that is a show of force. You have to be gutsy. You have to go out and talk for yourself. I was just floored.

She plans on working with the organization and communities to empower them with confidence. I have heard this story with one of the focus group participants in the pilot study. His story, too, was amazed at community members not speaking, yet allowing a non-Native person to speak for them.

The State Director discussed the issues tribal people claim to need, yet sees at the Title VII District level, “I see parents getting bullied around.” She tries goes in to meetings and advocate with parents. “I don’t know I just think that as a leader it is about helping people find their voice so that they can advocate for themselves and help their kids advocate for themselves.”

She mentioned, “The research on the individuals who have a high level of self-esteem says that they have four key characteristics. They have a sense of connectedness, a sense of uniqueness and a sense of power, and they have role models.” Other areas to consider for effective leaders are having solid connections. She explained that many leaders might feel alienated because they are not Indian enough, or not competent enough. “I always see people who think that all you know is Indian Ed—no, I know a little about assessment, I know about content, I know about professional development, and I know a few other things.” She mentioned the importance of a leader is to “help people believe in possibilities.” She shared a fifth element of elements toward self-esteem, namely, safety.

The leadership program she helped develop in Portland reinforced those characteristics and enforced connectedness and cultural identity, as the director noted, “80% of the students’ self-esteem comes from their peer group, so [she] had to create a peer norm that was reinforcing for everybody that created a safe community.” Leaders discussed topics with comparisons “That sort of reinforces that group think; you know that in groups people tend to want to conform. They want to be part of the group.”

She spoke about a story of a teaching experience while she taught a 4th grade class that had a natural leader in the class whom she respected. When she was a new teacher, a boy refused to finish a classroom assignment, and chose instead to horse around. She mentioned to him that if he finished, the entire class could go to lunch early. The classroom watched as he finished the assignment with time to spare. She releases the class and the other students “They all were like patting him on the back. He was like this class hero or something.” The state director reflected on what had just happened.

After they left and all the dust cleared, I was thinking what just happened. I thought about it and I thought you could reward the group for the success of one. Usually what

happens is people flip it and they punish the group for the failure of one. So, everybody then scapegoats that person. They take them down further. In this instance, they kept building him up. I thought that is a transferable idea. Reward the group for the success of one.

She made a great point demonstrating what I had labeled “positive peer pressure.” Students, like adults, should cheer each other on to be successful because everyone benefits from the experience.

She had many stories to share based on her experiences in leadership positions. This one demonstrates the strong will students can hold to be successful. One highly gifted 8th grade student who loves to read shared that he wanted to drop out of school. She became involved and learned from him that “he sort of self-proclaimed his confusion about his father. His dad was the Native between the couple and he had a drinking problem.” She empathetically shared her experiential story and the student began confiding based on trust. In a group, “He forced himself to stand up and he said, ‘up until today I was embarrassed and ashamed of my father,’ and he just broke down emotionally.” Based on her leadership guidance, the student realized, “that he could love his dad [even though] his dad had problems.”

The state director mentioned the power leadership camps could have for Indigenous students. The statewide diversity camp for students is an emotionally powerful experience. Students grew emotionally, mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually. Students displayed talents in many areas. “It was just unreal all the things that the kids could do.” She had many Native students overcome fears and stand up to share their voices from perspectives deep within. “You know that there is that brilliance out there but somebody is stifling it. I didn’t want him to fail.”

The state education director shared many success stories in her efforts to work as an indigenous leader in education. She reflected, “I think that the American Leadership Program

just rocked. It was so great to see the transformation in the kids in just a really short period of time. They were just—that was life changing.” She stated that her involvement in everything “had been successful in some way.” She began as a classroom teacher, which she loved, feeling “like I helped them grow.” From there she went to the “NW Regional Lab [while] they were doing the Indian Reading Series.” It was during this opportunity that she “learned a lot about the use of traditional knowledge in teaching reading.” They wrote 137 stories with the assistance and illustrations of Northwest tribes. These stories became supplemental reading. She then “went out and was doing lots of integration on Indian stories into science and math. This was in 1979 and now people are still saying let’s create some stories.” From there she began doing professional development called “Effective Practices in Indian Education” piloting “three monographs on effective teaching practices for Native students.”

People she worked with offered professional development on teaching practices, infusion of culture and curriculum, and administrators as instructional leaders. A dozen NW schools saw change in over a year due to several visits during that time. She mentioned the key aspect was “accountability.” Working with the state, she “developed a state-wide Indian Education Plan and so every 6 months we went before the state board and had to give an accounting for what was actually being done.” She has heard people claim the need for “more Indian teachers, graded curriculum, we need such and such but other than that there is not accountability for how are you going to move the needle on each of those things?”

Since in office, she started holding people “accountable.” As a leader, she is creating steps with work called the Sovereignty Program. She claimed frustration, “but one of the first steps was to actually create more engaging workshops. When I started we were already walking people through the website.” With pride she shared, “Now our training includes some guiding

principles on how to teach effectively.” The instruction program’s goal is to “model lessons so we can give some good examples of what we think are quality.” She discussed an issue on “what to do about the attitudes that the mainstream schools have right now. I almost feel like you have to have mandated stuff for people.” Her parting words of wisdom from the dedicated work she has accomplished over the years as a leader for the betterment and awareness of education is part of the path blazed for the louder voice of Indigenous peoples as they climb out from oppression and colonization acts of European culture. “It is not necessarily about people being bad educators, they have priorities, and somebody just said yesterday an evaluation system for teachers.” The policy makers are just blitzing the state with all these requirements, combined with Common Core standards.

When I started NIEA they had two national partners when I left they had nine. Who knew there was a National Conference of State Legislators and there were 80 Natives and 80 State Legislators across the Country. Stuff like that was WOW! We did a whole publication for NCSL Indian caucus on Policy recommendations for State Legislation.

The depth of results from this interview provided me with a remarkable story of success by a true leader of accountability and change.

Conclusion

The process of transcription and observations revealed specific themes based on the phenomena of each individual, group, and community context. Perhaps most vital among these was the theme of cultural preservation in the sense of creating an environment where students felt “safe” to learn and share their tribal traditions and knowing. In contrast are the experiences of their parents, grandparents, and/or great grandparents, whose own educational stories reflected a school environment that berated the use of their indigenous language or culture in schools. Students also expressed that they felt the support they received from family, community, peers, and educators opening avenues to expand their knowledge with confidence.

Each interview identified emergent themes of needed indigenous community voice in educational opportunities; cultural history knowledge detrimental in all accounts of policy, organization, and education; and policy awareness toward the proven educational success of Indigenous students, whether in elementary, secondary, or postsecondary educational institutions. Every person likened the notion that indigenous people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs indigenous people to their own endeavors. These themes will be further developed in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings

If human being possessed endless possibilities, then cities contained exponential hopes (Sherman Alexie, *Ten Little Indians*, 2004, p. 27)

My travels have educated me in diverse environments from New Mexico, Arizona, Oregon, Western Washington, Eastern Washington, British Columbia, to Alaska, as well as Japan, Singapore, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Florida, New York, Ohio, New Hampshire, and Vermont. All areas embrace a diverse community of species embodying different assortments of trees, shrubs, grasses, animals, and insects. Global locations dictate the range of climates with their land. The diversity is like the people surviving in the environments from where they live. All people are different like the land. The environment teaches us the unique care needed to survive. The cactus will not survive in Alaska, or the Sitka spruce in New Mexico. Each species has a community to rely on for survival. Take one community member away, and the remaining community may suffer. People are not that different. These are my observations as I go out in to the world and experience life as an adventure touching me emotionally, mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually.

These musings connect to my interpretation of Bentz and Shapiro's (1998) notion of "phenomenological reflection on the nature and structure of consciousness" as it applies to the educational history of indigenous cultures. The unique indigenous models encompassed an understanding of a student's self, voice, perspective, culture, community, stories, and world, creating a sense of belonging where students, especially in the Native communities, were open to mastering their own environment and knowledge through comparisons of other cultures globally.

Dissertation and Pilot Research Themes

The dissertation and pilot research interviews revealed many themes from among the participants and helped me to cultivate a greater awareness of Indigenous voice in the research

process. The results are comparative since there were similarities and differences between the focus groups at two schools in the pilot research, which led to the observations and interviews of the school and two tribal leaders. On many occasions, Native people do not speak based on custom, little confidence, or not having opportunity. I say custom, because many traditions find it proper to listen intently to the communicative language of voice pitch, tone, facial expressions, body language, posture, and other energies being expressed (Fiddler & Heather, 1999). A good leader understands sensory awareness and builds toward confidence for drawing out participant voice.

Themes first emerged from the pilot research that categorically viewed Native communities as educators, indigenous learning styles, and teaching in indigenous classrooms. These areas were necessary for successful indigenous learners. These themes guided me in focusing my research on the topic of leadership philosophy through developed portraits of highly effective leaders in the education realm. In particular, this focus emerged from comments by Native people needing educational leadership opportunities. My research provided details on the need for tribal structures to grow by encouraging more of their members to graduate in higher education arenas through portrayals of a tribal immersion school and two Native individuals who currently hold leadership positions and are engaged with national indigenous networks.

With the portraits, several themes emerged beyond the scope of the pilot research that added to the wealth of the study. I categorized the themes into two areas: Indigenous communities bridging cultural empowerment in the educational processes and governmental policy with academic institutions establishing cultural responsiveness and relevancy. I considered the three pilot research themes and if they fit in these two areas. With the viewpoint of two themes, I determined the three fit nicely within the dissertation as sub-themes. I

contemplated either way how the themes are interconnected in many areas, but determined the leadership philosophy establishes empowerment and provides policy needed for tribal communities and students to be successful in their endeavors with change. The main difference was the need for governmental policy to ensure indigenous students are successful in their education and bridging their involvement between cultural traditions and mainstream social cultures. Every person I spoke with expressed in some manner the notion that “indigenous people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs Indigenous people” for their own endeavors.

Findings and Implication

With the pilot project, there were times on my end where there were months of preparation and expected waiting as communication was maintained with all tribal community members ensuring they were kept in the loop. I had to remain patient, waiting on groups of people and logistics to confirm I would be permitted to conduct my research. I used Indigenous Research Methods to pave my way with both the pilot and dissertation research, adhering to an open and transparent communicative structure on the part of both the researcher and researched. There was nothing expedient about the process with the pilot project, yet the dissertation research fell in to place within days, sometimes just hours. I felt there was apparent phenomenon as I kept walking the path of what was supposed to happen as it was meant to be.

As the groups or individuals came together, I noticed where academic opportunities abounded for all parties in the Native communities when solid partnerships were passionately strong with flexible visions. Work on their life path began from their learning experiences and developed from their identifiable and differing personal and community histories. These synergetic experiences revealed that educational and leadership opportunities bring forth issues

in the present to plan and prepare for the future, all based on their past. I saw the commitments moving forward to where they were all learning the potential of growth within themselves, for the tribes, administrators, schools, communities, and beyond. Tribal communities noted the importance of academic preparation for the establishment of an educated future in leadership, as one Native council member stated in the pilot research,

We are starting to see more students go on to college and now are thinking about what happens to our students once they graduate. Tribes exercise to maximize a degree of self-determination. In order for that to take place, we have to have our educated tribal members in the decision-making positions within the tribal infrastructure. This is now creating opportunities for us to discuss this on a legitimate level meaning we have more students going on to college, gaining that education and wanting to bring their expertise back to the reservation.

As Native students obtain degrees, their shared experiences encourage others to complete formal education. The tribal education director commented on the educated ones coming back to the tribes and taking over the positions. These students bring back with them a broader perspective reaching out to widen the spectrum, especially through entrepreneurship.

Now that we have more students going off and receiving a higher education we have to plan for them to return to the reservation and in order for that to take place; we need bigger buildings, we need to house them, we need to be have them working within each of our departments depending on their chosen areas of expertise.

Tribes supporting their people's secondary and postsecondary educational opportunities find value as it becomes necessary to grow the community's infrastructure to fit the goals of the educated people. I saw this as a phenomenon for the tribes and their communities.

The tribal education director and state Indian education director, who both shared their experiences working for federal, state, and tribal governments, mirrored this issue during their interviews. As Native leaders, both have had a long history working with indigenous people, which has expanded their knowledge on education and leadership connections. I have viewed

experiences as phenomenon of our life path in accordance with Rehorick and Bentz's (2008) view that "phenomenology transforms and enhances personal life and professional effectiveness" (p. xv). As tribal communities embrace their educated people, changes happen individually and for the entire community. As Native people receive professional degrees, employment opportunities rise, not only for Native people, but also for the surrounding non-Native communities. Additionally, because of tribal growth, certain tribes are now among the largest employers not only in their respective counties, but also in their states. As an example, the Umatilla tribe in Eastern Oregon is the second largest employer in the state of Oregon.

The state Indian education director alluded to the fact that many Native people are positioning themselves to be the future leaders, if not for the tribe but for their economic foundations. Socioeconomically, many tribes in the Nation are the largest or nearly the largest employers in their respective states; for example, the New England tribes in the state of Connecticut (see <http://www.umb.edu/naisa/tribes>); Minnesota's tribes collectively (<http://latestmiganews.blogspot.com/2011/10/state-shouldnt-mess-with-states-6th.html>); the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d' Oreille Tribes on the Flathead Reservation in the State of Montana (see <http://therezweliveon.com/largest-employer/>), with others growing. Tribal infrastructures, especially in leadership, require relevant education and leadership training. Academic institutions need to establish accountability in ways such as the example of Arizona State University, which took the responsibility to increase attention to Indigenous issues as it has one of the largest populations of Native students. Student support systems for Indigenous people help learners to be successful academically. Battiste and Barman (1995) identify five different meanings for "Indian Education" relating them "currents in a river, [whereas] it is not always

easy to identify the edges of the currents but some currents are stronger than other in a particular time of place” (p. 8). The authors state the five meanings as:

1. Traditional Indian education,
2. Schooling for self-determination,
3. Schooling for assimilation,
4. Education by [Indigenous people], and
5. Indian Education as a thing of its own kind. (p. 8)

The pilot research helped establish a foundational focus of study, one urban Indian school located in a city, and one reservation-based school found a mix of people involved in all aspects of the schools, from sitting on the school board, developing culturally infused curricula, and volunteering, or working part time. Native communities support their culture, but feel many students will not return to the reservations if they attend postsecondary institutions outside of their community. In an urban Indian school, a Native administrator commented on an issue,

You might have a classroom of about 20 [Native] students, but of that 20 maybe 5 or 6 have similar tribal associations, such as Spokane or Kalispell. The other 15 students or so, maybe mom was Nez Perce and dad was Lakota and here they are in Spokane separated from either tradition. That is a common experience for students.

Most tribes have initiated a federal blood quantum principle where enrolled members need to have a certain quantity such as a quarter-blood or more of that particular tribe in order to be an enrolled member. Therefore, a student may be full-blooded indigenous, but the government classification is null if the blood quantum is from several different tribes not amounting to enrollment in one particular tribe based on blood quantum qualifications.

The tribal education director shared his concern regarding blood quantum. The governmental system uses terms like “blood quantum and Federally Recognized Tribes” to

control and eliminate as another form of genocide. The government continues to structure oppressive methods of quantifying who is “American Indian” in today’s tribal governments.

These methods are troubling while “Federally Recognized” tribes configure their place as self-generated monies filter in from casinos and other entrepreneurial activities. There are 566 Federally Recognized tribes in the United States and over 400 non-Federally recognized tribes. Many of the tribes based their membership on ancestry, yet the majority vies for the blood quantum limit in order to be in control of who receives tribal services like health, benefits like hunting and fishing, and potential monies from tribal enterprises like gaming at casinos. Both directors mentioned that these practices were adopted from the oppressive behaviors of dominating societies.

One of the public schools serving urban Native student populations from the pilot research works with a representation of 280 different tribes within their district. Contrary to popular belief, not all tribes have the same language, customs, traditions, ceremonies, dress, dance, and other cultural elements; therefore, not all cultures represent the learning process, yet the core traditions demonstrated are with the local tribes in the area and their customs. Most of the curriculum uses the shared cultural elements expressed in all tribal traditions, such as respect of elders and the circle concept. Each student is encouraged to learn about their own tribes(s) places of origin. As a Native administrator commented,

[We] in a sense bridge [Native students] to let them know the importance of education but also the importance of their knowledge where ever they were at that moment in their life. Also, let them know that [Native students] that it is okay to have the culture to have the tradition or not, but to be able to see the importance of it and value of the education that they are going to receive based on knowledge that they previously have for them coming into the classroom.

Not every Indigenous student knows his or her culture. Students need an opportunity to explore who they are and know their self-identity and not another's identity from where they are not from historically. The Native educator remarked on self-identity and learning another's culture stating,

Take it or leave it you know that is okay. I am not here to convince you. I am here to say, "Hey grandmother you were right," this is who I am and that's what our students need to have. They need to feel this is whom I am, this is what I have, and this is what I can get. If that means a piece of paper that says an A, that means a B, I can go to college. I can do it, but I will go as me, not what you think I should be. I think that is the biggest thing.

Her comment speaks to the dire need for more Native educators to share their knowledge and assist Native students to "listen" and "see" their ancestral customs. I was different, and thought differently than my non-Native peers in a public school system. I did not exert effort to be heard and never raised my hand to answer a teacher's question, or place myself in a situation to "be noticed." I was what some identify as a "wallflower" in hopes of just blending in to the crowd. Yet, I had an extraordinary keen sensory scope of my surrounding environment and energies of other people, sensing every emotion, but mostly, I heard my ancestral voices as they have guided me in life since eight years old, something I never discussed with anyone. A Native elder shared and showed me when I was in my early 20s that I was not "weird or abnormal" but rather normal in my Native knowing.

Another big issue with Native students and their respective communities may be the education itself. A Native instructor from the pilot research stated, "If you start doing well in school and I mean this is 2012, I have heard this since the 1960s, 'Why [are] you trying to be white?' I get good grades and I get that I am Indian." Sometimes Native students and tribal communities feel pressure from family, peers, and community if they choose to further their

education (Kenny, 2002). Communities need to know that becoming educated is to educate their families and communities behold their past, present, and future without fear to speak. A Native administrator in the pilot research remarked,

I think that offering any student an opportunity to go to college, successful or not, it puts in their head, it gives them the experience of learning that there is college for them, that there is an option for them. That they can get out of the cycle of poverty, that education is the way, even if they do not take it because of circumstances or because of whatever. They had that option to know that they had the opportunity.

I have seen and personally experienced this unfortunate phenomenon of “being white” or even just a having family member state, “You must really hate your family.” To walk in both worlds bridges the knowledge so that one understands the other, whether it is culturally in line with traditional customs or not.

The state education director commented on the need for sovereign Nations to become leaders in the educational aspects of informing governments to mandate and hold accountable education institutions accommodations to keep indigenous students in school. As a leader herself, she holds people accountable to do their jobs efficiently and effectively realizing the state of students, tribes, and future leaders are at stake. She identified a needed change in professional development as tribal Nations give voice outside of the oppressive European mindset.

A Native teacher spoke of the lessons a grandmother taught him about psychology and sociology encountered in life in regards to living in “two worlds,” sharing

I ask her about that when I was about 14 years old when I first heard about [living in two worlds]. I had a psychology book that talked about it. Therefore, I took to my grandmother (not the book but the idea) and ask her about if she believed in the two worlds [theory]. It was really beautiful, I could still see her, she was a tiny thing, she sat there and she put her head down and she looked up and she looked around and then she looked at me and she said, “no grandson there isn’t two worlds there is only one. That World is right here” (he pats his chest over his heart). She said, “If you going back to

what I said at the beginning,” she said, “if you can accept and acknowledge this world here” (patting the chest over the heart), she said, “you can go visit any world you choose because you can always come home because you know where it is.”

Much of the learning for Indigenous youth, and many non-Indigenous youth, is experiential, having its source in the conversations or “stories” from the elders or adults, and even peers. Place-based education has student learning from the location studied out in the environment. The hands-on, sensory learning stays with the learner more than just the book learning from chapter to chapter and section testing and chapter testing of knowledge. Students need relevance as phenomenological experiences “direct experiences” take hold based on individual perspectives.

The tribal education director noted the importance of balancing the notion of “living in two worlds.” His perspective draws from Native people who feel “stuck in the middle” and find difficulty being in one or the other. Outside perspectives need to develop a perspective that is open to Indigenous people’s differences and differing traditions. This, too, draws on educational needs where these issues address awareness through professional development of struggles Indigenous learners’ fight, especially when coming from a traditional upbringing. He mentions that good leaders understand and support both perspectives and can move entire communities to be centrally balanced in both worlds.

Indigenous Leadership Bridging Cultural Empowerment in Educational Processes

For many Native leaders and students, education applicable or relevant to their field of study is vital. Tribes should bridge their traditions with Western culture to work in unison in order to establish understanding of both and create such policies between academic institutions at all grade levels. The tribes create positions so graduates could come back to their community and be the future administrators. These leadership perspectives provide indigenous educational

opportunities for Native students to come back and help their communities grow in to the future. To have education systems bridge cultures, educators and tribal governments may be part of the education process with their voiced confidence to boost indigenous people. This discussion is part of my second theme, government policy.

Community leadership involvement in student education. The schools in the pilot research empowered students through choices developed from their personal paths of interest in construction, medicinal practices, dance, music, linguistics, science, and history preservation, among others. The observations involved active listening and seeing what was happening in the classrooms and schools holistically. In one urban school where there was a mix of Native and non-Native students, I observed an odd phenomenon of an elder dressed in a Pendleton woolen vest of bright oranges, blues, yellows, and reds, blue jeans, and long white hair braided down his back with a tan leather thong. He had a dark complexion with a weathered look of wisdom. As he strolled along the sidewalk on the outdoor campus, the passing non-Native students and teachers stopped and observed in respectful awe as he entered in to a classroom. I, too, was in that classroom, watching him cross campus from a window. When he entered the class, all the Native students sat up with straight backs beholding a pride of being Native just like this elder. The non-Native youth were the intimidated ones. I have seen this phenomenon countless times. I have spoken to Native people about this prideful need to stand tall while walking, as others will take notice.

Community members involved in the education of Native students, whether they are from a different tribe or not, contributed to a Native pride that overwhelms many indigenous students with wonder. These community members are the mentors, guides, advisers, counselors, and educators of many Native students. I have observed the reverse effects, too, if a Native

community member is at odds with one or more of the Native families. In my observations, many times community engagement is easier if the tribal speaker is from another tribe, and not from the community.

The tribal education director commented on the experiential wisdom elders give to the young people. He commented on how the interconnectedness of intergenerational knowing bases itself on learned experiences. He shared that each one has a knowledge that can educate the other. He and the state Indian education director agree that all people are teachers from the smallest of infants to the eldest of people.

During my visit at another tribal school, a Native administrator shared that not all tribal community members are sending their youth to the school because of a certain teacher or attendance of a student(s) from a questionable family in their perspective. The administrator commented on the politics grasping the families within the tribal community itself. He mentioned the occasional student pulled out of the school due to having a friend in class whose parents are quarreling. When communities are close knit as on reservations or tribal communities, sometimes disputes erupt and the effects ripple through families, which affect the students and their learning.

Individual experiences in the education processes. My pilot research identified tribal communities focusing on infusing cultural traditions in the learning process of their Native learners, and non-Native learners if they choose to be a part of the education process in a manner that is respectful of their environment. One of the interviewees was a Native educator in a public school system located in an urban area. Many times, he felt disheartened in the education about where cultural infusion of the curriculum was to occur. He stated that many of the Native students,

Have a cultural traditional background from their respective tribes and I am sad to say and on the other hand there are those who do not have any of that based on some of the historical stuff. My intent was to come in and in a sense bridge that to let them know the importance of education but also the importance of their knowledge where ever they were at that moment in their life. Also, let them know that [the students] it is okay to have the culture to have the tradition or not, but to be able to see the importance of it and value of the education that they are going to receive based on the college and knowledge that they previously have for them coming into the classroom.

Many students do not come from homes rich in indigenous tradition as they have more or less assimilated in to the mainstream culture. Students in a few public school systems in urban areas have an opportunity for individual empowerment to attend programs geared toward teaching Native traditions and cultural customs relative to their own tribes. This awareness awakens the notion that all tribes are unique and not standardized into the knowledge the dominant culture brandishes in the learning process.

One Native instructor spoke from the viewpoints of many indigenous teachers who view partnerships in the classroom in terms of how a learning environment establishes itself when all people learn from each other as the educator. He stated, "Having somebody with Native American background, plus the education, plus the experience, plus the knowledge, plus the culture come in with the instructor and in a sense dual instruct." However, difficulties arose when an occasional non-Native instructor comes who is in unaware of cultural sensitivities.

I came across a thought on the true definition of community, as I reflected on the people I was observing and interviewing. The term could be used largely from a city, suburb, small racially connected like a reservation, or even in a classroom of learners. Holroyd (2001) discussed Giorgi's existing psychological or mental method of inquiry for clarification of experiential "being-in-community," whether within an organization, social group, or family.

Holroyd identified Peck's four-stage pragmatic model citing Jason's (1997) categorization of the developing authentic community as follows,

- *Pseudo-community*, where people avoid disagreements
- *Chaos*, healers attempt to heal and convert others; this is a time of considerable fighting and struggle
- *Emptiness*, where people remove barriers to communication, such as expectations, prejudice, and ideologies
- *Community*, with peaceful, soft sense of quietude descends. People feel safe to share their vulnerabilities, their sadness, and their joy. (p. 2)

Community represents a social norm where many perspectives are developed and determined by an individual's own unique "being" within each moment. Each human is different, yet is there a difference for human and the "natural" organic environment? Indigenous communities view relationships with all environmental "communities" taken into consideration.

Fixico (2003) stated, "Perception is nature's way in which humans and animals see things" (p. 2). He described how traditional thought is about seeing relationship in community, so that the community encompasses "plant, animal, human, and all things within the natural environment," with inclusion of the "metaphysical world of dreams and visions" (p. 2). A Native instructor shared an interview experience for a principal position near the community where he graduated from high school. The non-Native superintendent held control of all discussions among the tribal members on the interview committee, all of whom sat in total silence. The educator was appalled and asked,

What you are saying is when the students come in from the [tribal] community to come to this high school to leave their creation stories, to leave their language, their culture, tradition, and their ceremonies out by the gate? Then have those [Native students] come in and we educate them to the real world." I quote, what [superintendent] said, "Yes, much like you."

Experiential phenomenological stories can signal how events focus our futures. The job interview included members of a Native school board where the Native teacher looked at them and stated,

This is your community. These are your children and your grandchildren and you are not saying anything. This person [superintendent] is going to be gone eventually. He is not from here he is not Native. I turned to the superintendent and I said, "I got my education because of, not in spite of, all those things I mentioned."

The teacher used this story to address what many Native students face daily in their life experiences. I observed the compassion of the Native adult educators with Native and even the non-Native students beholding an indigenous respect for learning styles. A Native teacher stated, "When the students come in, one of the first things I have done throughout my life is, [letting students know that] when you walk in [to class] I respect you because you got here." The teacher honored all of the students for being in school and coming to class, regardless whether the student was on time or late.

Many students' "learning style" consists of observation and listening using all of the senses. Many secondary and postsecondary educators are unaware of cultural traditions when working with Native communities and students. One non-Native administrator commented,

It is ironic but in higher education that the students are last ones to ask [questions]. However, their opinions even though they are the audience, and so I think we need to know [cultural traditions]. Sometimes it is hard to get the students to be candid because they have spent a lifetime learning how to be respectful. Sometimes candor can feel like disrespect even when it is what you want.

Many times, and this has happened to me, Native students listen and learn using all senses. Some instructors from all grade levels and postsecondary institutions believe the indigenous youth do not know the content. This perspective derives from Native student's different learning style oriented toward observing, rather than speaking out. Native students aware of traditions

apply their cultural knowledge of respect and prefer to “blend in” and not “stand out” in social circles and classrooms. Several Native students have been deemed “stuck-up” or “better than” others, or just classified as “shy.”

A Native educator from the pilot research spoke from the heart about the guidance and wisdom of his grandmother, sharing,

I believe from some of the people I have met in the last 30 years especially a lot of the younger people, they are becoming what my grandmother said. What she told me is when you get an education don't become less of who you are but more of who you are. Whatever that more is if you are, more tribal if you are more whatever, she never said get an education and leave home. She said if you understand who you are, and you accept who you are, everyone will mirror who you are.

Our stories transform us and create who we are in our lifeworld. There is also the other perspective of the transformation of who we are with our stories. The same Native educator commented, “The director of the university program that I was in put it point blank; what he said to me was, ‘I don't want to hear about your grandmother anymore.’ He said, ‘you are here to get an education like everybody else.’” In the face of this type of treatment, Native individuals must learn to stand tall, and walk with their head held high, and the world will stand tall, and walk along with you, that is what my grandmother said.

I had a professor who got up and he did a 5-minute monologue on men who wore earrings. I am sitting in class there with my earrings. There were two other Natives and there was a black gentleman, and the rest were white/European whatever. Moreover, two friends looked at me, and everybody was laughing because this [teacher] was making some good comments about men in earrings and he was questioning if we were men or not. I am sitting there, he went on and on, and I was watching the class. All of a sudden, I saw him going so the laughter started dying except for the ones in the front. Then [the professor] went on more, and the others kept laughing and finally [he] was done. Then my one friend, who was Sioux, said, “Why don't you say something?” I said, “Oh he was saying enough” and I just sat there. I was not offended because again I know why I wear earrings. I know that creation started from my childhood and why the earrings came to be.

The next day I write this three-page, legal size letter to the professor. [Transformative experiences] is really complex, I wish it was simple and we had all the answers. So, my friend, who was Sioux said, "Why didn't you say something?" I take the document to him and say, "I want you to read this." He reads it and says, "What are you going to do with this?" I said I was going to hand it to the professor. He said, "Now if you do that, you know how they work around here, they will have you out of school in no time!" I look at him and say, "What are we going to tell our children and our grandchildren? If the same thing happens to them in the same classroom and the same campus, you and I look at them and say well that happened to us back in 1982." I said what are we going to say when our children and our grandchildren look at us and ask, "What did you do grandpa?" What are you going to say when you say, "I didn't do anything?" The same guy, who said, "Why don't you say something?" He looked at me and said, "It's your education!" Then he walked out.

I took [the three pages, legal size letter], and went down to the [program] secretary, and said, "May I?" She said, "I will take this." I said, "No I want to take it in myself." So I walked in [professors office], handed [letter] to him, and I walked out. Next week in class he says, "I was given a letter," and said, "with the authors permission I would like to read it verbatim." He looks over at me, I just nod my head, and even when I called him 'ignorant', he read it word for word. When he finished he looked down and he said Mr. [interviewee's name], would you please stand up. I stood up and he said, "To you, and to your people, all people who have a story, and understanding of why they wear what they wear," he said, "I apologize." Well bless his heart, he was the only one I had any respect for out of all the professors I had down there.

Our stories are unique to the individual with each having a unique perspective becoming the make-up of who we are. Indigenous students are also the instructor, whereas the instructor is also the student in true learning communities in safe respectful environments.

Tribal community experiences in the education processes. As the previous story indicated, participation in the pilot research became emotional for some of the Native adults interviewed, as they voiced their feelings and vision of educational opportunities for Native people, and the fact someone was there to listen. In the sentences to follow, there are large excerpts of the actual conversation as requested to present the authentic voice of those who spoke out.

Team efforts between tribes, or tribal organizations, and secondary and postsecondary institutions designed to encourage academic success were essential to promoting educational

opportunity for Native students. Participants in such efforts needed to have passion for working together and building trust. Each participant interviewed saw a need to establish student successes for growth of all types of institutions involved. Students are the future of all tribal establishments as builders of the future. A college administrator commented,

We do our best to cherry pick instructors that we think are going to be the most likely to be able to work with students in a way that we think it is going to be helpful. We do not want to pick instructors who are draconian in accordance to attendance policies and that sort of thing, but it has been difficult to find instructors who are both good at their discipline but also capable of combining that with the appropriate degree of cultural sensitivity. I think that is a fair criticism and one I confess I do not know the solution to other than dialog and continued conversation.

Alum students enjoyed the fact that college teachers came to their high school. This was due to the school only having a few qualified teachers of their own to teach college courses. The college partner supplemented the faculty offering by providing teachers to travel to the high school. This helped to overcome the student's lack of access to transportation. This was a theme at each school. One of the Native alum mentioned,

I appreciate the courses we did take, specifically the psychology and sociology. The sociology prepared me for the class I am in right now. I am in a learning community where I am doing geography, philosophy, and sociology. Many people think that is a lot to do since it is 15 credits instead of 12. However, taking these classes prepared me for what I am learning. I appreciated we were given the opportunity to take not just simple college courses but we could take hard ones. We could take ones that could relate to ourselves. We could take psychology and sociology and you know that is completely about us. I was able to see different perspectives on things and how I lived my day-to-day life. In all the other classes, I learned so much from all of them, which helped me understand what I want to do when I get older.

All of the students interviewed discussed their lack of transportation to a postsecondary institution and appreciated the dual courses on their high school campuses. The classes were small and not feasible for the community, schools, districts, parents, or students to attend dual-credited courses on a college campus. One student commented,

My sister goes to a different high school. She is a senior now; she could not do Running Start [on the college campus] for the dual credits because she did not have a car. Students at the school had to go to the community college themselves. Here, with the Early College, we got the opportunity to have the teachers come here. My sister did not go and missed out. I thought she would have been good at college. Her friend went to the community college because she had a car and she loved it, but it left my sister out. As a Native American girl, she did not miss out because she did not have a car. That is nothing you can improve, but we got the teachers to come here.

Community and family were imperative for all as there was a need to embrace cultural traditions noting relevance of learning, which helped students to find their life path or passions.

The tribal people felt strongly about students discovering their story, which often became one of the defining moments of their life. A tribal administrator from the pilot research commented, “Our teaching philosophy is based on experiential learning. We want to expand the students’ horizons and have them see what is possible. We want them to see they are not limited and can have success in whatever they choose to do.” Many Native youth need to be aware of this sense, or grow to understand their ancestral knowing. One college administrator mentioned,

You might have a classroom of about 20 students, that’s about the average size class, who checked the box Native American when it comes to their ethnicity but of that 20 maybe 5 or 6 have a very particular tribal association or identify strongly with one tribe or another, or whatever it happens to be. The other 15 students or so, maybe mom was Nez Perce and dad is Lakota and here they are in a big city separated from either tradition. That is not an uncommon experience for them as students.

Native students are facing challenges as they seek a balance between sustaining a traditional community in a global age and seeing the importance of an advanced degree while maintaining their culture, traditions, and language. The tribal education director mirrored the comment and the injustices of identifying who was “Native” and who was not. He cited the oppressive determination of the government system and other organization not taking into account indigenous people as a whole.

Community building reached out beyond the tribe as future leadership developed from the passions of students. Tribes wanted their youth to return to the reservation or tribal organization, their family. Unique models encircling understanding of students' self, culture, community, life stories, and world were evident. Whether inside the self, the spiral integrates tribal community, which was part of a larger community and world. One tribe in the southwest sent their senior high school students to another country of choice in which the student had spent time studying the local culture, language, customs, etc.

The historical significance of tribal recognition as original inhabitants on a land provides particular awareness that learning can have an impact on the future. A non-Native college administrator recognized that,

Native Americans are the invisible minority. When you get to know Native folks in our community, and their stories and telling the effects of poverty, alcoholism, the drug use, and the impacts it has generationally. The impact of institutional racism and just out right bigotry and this entire tragedy affects student learning. The thing that astonishes me is that these kids are not more pissed than they are. I would be angry as hell if I were on the receiving end of all of that. It is remarkable to me that the amazing thing is they are still coming to school. They come to school three days a week instead of five, they are still coming to school three days a week. Given the stories that some of these kids tell is that is amazing, that they had any investment or interest in these institutions that have served them so poorly over the years.

Two non-Native college administrators cited the emphasis in their respective graduate level theses on a passion for Native communities and a realization of the beauty of Native American philosophy. Both grew up with a respect for the environment and observed Native American people beholding a coexistence with the environment. One of them noted "an understanding of how our indigenous peoples have such a sustained relationship with the environment and go through thousands of years in a fairly harmonious accord with it then to find nothing in philosophy about it."

I was impressed with the developed empathy and awareness of the historical past and for the leadership to recognize and acknowledge the people. The college administrator reflected,

When I look down where the people's park is and reflect that the native peoples have gathered there for we know at least 8 or 9,000 years. Well, civilizations that last for 8 or 9,000 years are rare and we tend to celebrate them. We talk about Mesopotamia and make a big deal about that. Here are these remarkable civilizations here in our continent and their descendants are still here. You know they are still with us. Trying to celebrate that and to get that to be more of a common theme in our academic literature is an uphill struggle. I suppose we could take a page from one of Vine Deloria's books and we talk you listen. We could do a better job of listening.

The administrator had the awareness to step outside of his culture and view the perspective of the Indigenous people from whom he educated and provided professional development.

Key to all participants was the establishment of "safe" learning environments. Students needed to feel safe to express themselves, embrace who they are emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

What I was hearing was from many youth from the reservation. They were getting past the first encounter at that institution. They would come in they would talk with financial aid, they would talk to admissions, the way they were spoken to, just the foreignness of that experience—they would go home and say college is not for me. I was elated when I heard about the early college High School program and what its' aims were and to be able to offer that in a location that they already had a feeling of safety and where they were maybe exposed to Native American educators they could associate with. I thought that was a very good thing.

This holds true for any student working to develop healthy growth in all components of their psyche.

The focus groups, state and tribal directors all agreed that cultural infusion was an important part of the learning process to bring greater relevancy to student learning. One focus group of high school students living on the reservation included the only participants who discussed the possibility of culture as an elective. I pondered the fact that they lived their culture every day. This idea merits further research as to why they felt this way as young people. Two

alum Native girls did not live on a reservation but in an urban setting in a city. Both girls felt it was very important to include culture and tradition in high school and postsecondary learning, stating,

It is whom you are and to understand where our ancestors come from is important to hold on to and not let go. If we let go of our culture and traditions then we will not have that in the future. We will not be able to pass that on. You have to understand that not too many people know about Native Americans. It is important not to forget whom you are and stand up for who you are as well; but also learn about others too. Understanding each other; your ground, my ground. You have those beliefs to tell them, and make sure they understand it and respect it. That is where I come from even though they try to teach you a completely different thing because that may be stereotypical. Different tribes have different traditions but we all have respect for each other. It is important in high school because in high school you do not know about us.

The alum is now continuing their education at the same community college that offered them the dual-credited course work at their high school. One of the girls has a focus in journalism and plans to spotlight Native American studies at Eastern University. She plans to publish her own Native American magazine and travel “to different reservations having the people that work for [her] get a wide perspective of the reservation and talk to elders, learn their traditions, stories, people and what they are doing for their future.” She wants to include “a section where people can see the different scholarships offered to Native Americans” because “I never got that chance to apply for scholarship.”

The other alum is working at an urban Indian organization in Native health full time. She has been working there since the ninth grade. They have offered her a full-time job after graduating high school and training. She plans to go back to college as soon as possible. She feels “pretty jumbled about what [she] wants to do and is leaning toward a career in clinical health, possibly in dental.” A supervisor is coaxing her as she envisions “Native Americans, they need more dentists.” One of the students mentioned wanting to help the Native community and has considered a career in human resources, office, or business administration, commenting,

“I have some doors I just don’t know which one to walk through yet.” Dreams have stepped toward reality for many students due to the educational opportunities provided by educators willing to sacrifice time and culturally care. I reflect on the state Indian education director identifying the need for Native students to start working. I think she would find pleasure in these two girls and their maturity to consider their education as a way to seek success for themselves and community. The two girls “rolled up their sleeves” and saw success in them, yet knew there were challenges ahead of them.

Educational systems hold negative historical connotation among Native communities because of the forced boarding and residential school systems (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Walker, 1992). In fact, the boarding and residential school systems presented an ideology that deemed it necessary to separate the learners from their own communities and their ways of knowing. Identifying a solution of change will have slow effects, as two worlds need to embrace the relevant teaching. Freire (as cited in Frankenstein & Powell, 1982) observed, “our task is not to teach students to think—they can already think; but to exchange our ways of thinking with each other in addition, look together for better ways of approaching the decodification of an object” (p. 1). All of the participants identified and commented on boarding schools as a part of indigenous history, and noted that it had many long lasting effects.

Governmental Policy

Another theme I heard and observed from individuals, groups, or entire communities was the need to consider governmental policy in establishing cultural responsiveness, which led to a related theme of building confidence enough to boost indigenous voices in areas of need. Cultural preservation needs taught in a manner in order to present all historical truths. Creating avenues for the expansion of indigenous knowledge builds confidence and awareness, especially

among Native learners. Access to effective education will provide indigenous people with knowledgeable voiced perspectives with which to build experiential confidence toward leadership positions inside or outside of the tribal communities. This has become a major development with the growth of tribes as their people become educated.

In encouraging youth to pursue higher education, tribes often create positions so graduates can come back to their community and be the future administrators. These leadership perspectives provide indigenous educational opportunities; a cultural understanding of how the lessons of the past can be considered in establishing policy toward the future, community, organizational, and educational; policy focused on the educational success of Indigenous students, whether in elementary, secondary, or postsecondary educational institutions; and strong partnerships between tribes, governments, and nongovernmental global organizations.

Indigenous people continue in many areas to be beaten psychologically, and need confidence to be successful and overcome historical bullying through oppressive policies. The state education director mentioned the lack of trust with many academic institutions fearing harm. Often oppressed populations will internalize the oppression they have experienced and in turn take out their frustrations out on others. Both directors had seen this happen in tribal communities, and I had to agree, all people need to feel safe, especially students entrusted an educator or an academic system.

Feeling safe in any environment is critical, especially if indigenous people want to stand up and have voice on significant issues. Both directors mentioned advocacy and the need for mentors to pass on perspectives that take into account actions affecting future generations of leaders and tribal nations. Native people need to have the confidence to speak up and detail their perspectives. The state director asserted that Native people “need the sense of connectedness, a

sense of uniqueness and a sense of power, and that they have role models, demonstrating solid connections to move groups forward from the then and now.”

Both directors spoke of oppressive behaviors and felt confident in their experience with establishing policies, whether board, personnel, fiscal, constitutional or bylaws, evaluative, and other organized and sustainable infrastructure. The state Indian education director discussed a lot of “lateral oppression” where people model what they deem as “normal.” What is important to her is ensuring programs are aligned and operating purposefully like the identified BIA or BIE (Bureau of Indian Administration or Bureau of Indian Education) programs. The directors believe in adhering to a philosophy of organization and unity.

The state education director noted that leaders at many of the schools have often been the issue behind dysfunction, explaining that problems did not derive from the students or Native communities. She believes all students can and want to succeed, especially if given the chance. Leaders who find it difficult to take responsibility for their actions often see others as the problem. I have seen this on many instances. Yet, as the state education director expressed, “Leaders find solutions to issues,” which necessarily includes accepting personal responsibility for how issues are addressed.

Native people who establish educational programs are establishing the stepping-stones toward creating policies that work for students and other indigenous peoples. Education creates the leaders of the future, providing the wisdom to guide them to be effective. In order to establish these types of policies, leaders need to look beyond the Native community to also understand the big picture perspective in terms of both sovereign nation and the local government structure, with state, federal, and global considerations.

Observations: Literature Compare and Contrast

I found many conceptual similarities between the interviews and observations and the literature from indigenous scholars. They both identified issues in Indian Country between education and finding successful measures that work to educate Native people. Both historical and current literature aligned with the path of awareness toward culture, government, and community empowerment as to develop successful tribal nations and educational opportunity.

I have continually been amazed at the importance education has in the tribal communities, especially among the leadership. I previewed high school dropout data from one community that boasted tremendous change in their Native student dropout rates. Students at this school were at one time part of a larger public school in the local town. I observed the teaching practices and felt compelled to present their successes and stories in keeping Native students in school. I reasoned that this would ensure a variety of perspectives, from teacher to student, and to the community.

In constructing my research, it was my intention to include groups of all Native people. My reasoning was that those best qualified to address issues related to Native education were those most directly affected by it—Native peoples themselves; however, upon arriving at the interviews with Native people, I discovered a mix of Native and non-Native people. All agreed to share their stories for research purposes, and to learn about successful practices in education. During this discussion, they learned a lot about each other and what each does that contributes to student success. The groups included teachers of all disciplines. I was impressed with the yearning to collaborate in terms learning practices and academic themes within the different content areas.

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) suggested interviews allow participants to find solutions through discussion. I felt compassion with the instructors in our mutual effort to seek a solution to what has been a problem in the educational system for years among indigenous people. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) describe this as “putting the person at the center” (p. 4) while conducting interviews. I empathetically kept my experiences in mind as Bentz and Shapiro (1998) mentioned the term “*lifeworld*” in comparing information as there were similarities in nature as instructors, Native people, high school educators, college degrees, even as a Native student. Bentz and Shapiro defined the undertaking of research as “Intimately linked with your awareness of yourself and your world,” which should “contribute to your development as a mindful person, and your development as an aware and reflective individual” (p. 5).

When I arrived to observe the school, the students were in classes with tribal community members while the teachers were in a meeting. During this trip, participants expressed the importance of relationship, both relationships between teachers and students and the relationships among the teachers themselves. Community involvement is essential to building relationships. There was also an emphasis on curriculum engagement and relationships. Relationships were an important factor in teachers’ ability to reach the student and understand their cultural needs. The literature considered relationships as culturally relevant when applied to education.

The participants further suggested that learning outcomes were secondary to understanding the student, especially finding out each student’s interest, even knowing what they are reading, so that learning includes an individual theme of meaningful subjects, and finding out what it is the students want to learn and their strengths. The literature on Native students identified the importance of noting unique interest areas to help the student gear learning toward

their own interests. All of this takes time and the educators assured me that the learning became easier when there is student understanding. Community members echoed the importance of developing relationships in student success. Students alleged that when this component was established, they felt a security, which in turn brought confidence to their learning. I observed the importance of their relationships with each other in terms of support, whether for the educators or students. This was evident when it came to offering culture in the classroom.

My research uncovered proprietary conflicts over who does the teaching of indigenous culture. There is often a lack of understanding and trust regarding cultural aspects among non-Native people, especially if a non-Native person is doing the teaching (D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005). In the United States, conventional learning demonstrates a European style of education. Instructors who use primarily knowledge delivered from books do not always convey the bigger picture, which is important to Native people (Ascher & D'Ambrosio, 1994; Bishop, 1988; D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Hankes et al., 2008; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005). Most textbooks focus on single subject methodologies and do not make connections with other content or establish relevancy and illustrate associations with other content areas.

Participants mentioned the need for establishing understanding between cultures. There are many differences in values relative to education. Indigenous methods develop a relevancy toward life of a learner within their environments, whereas Euro-style learning establishes a one-size-fits-all concept through memorization. The European style of rote memorization based on a textbook fails indigenous learners by disregarding Native ways of learning due to a lack of relevancy. Many Native students have struggled in the school systems where there is very little applied learning. As an example, the traditions of their culture demonstrate mathematics

knowledge enveloped in other academic content fields such as science (D'Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005). Relevant learning is crucial to Native American students. Little Soldier (1989) stated, "Cooperative learning appears to improve student achievement. It also matches such traditional Indian values and behaviors as respect for the individual, development of an internal locus of control, sharing, and harmony" (p. 161).

Native teachers described how they were able to bring in differing tribal perspectives because they are not all from the same tribe, and how they create cultural events as a natural part of their jobs. Student's behaviors changed and sat tall and attentive when indigenous people visited the school. I had seen this when I taught high school. Important was the emphasis of elder participation in the classrooms. The students equally seemed to feel that the presence of the elders was important. This was evident in the literature and observations of the pilot and dissertation research.

Former students frequently returned to help the teachers, especially on days where the community engaged in cultural activities. From my observation, the school seemed rich in community projects that bring in a wealth of tribal community people. Theme-based projects are also critical, especially those that were related to Native culture. There was a discussion of art with creating traditional canoes and totem poles demonstrating language, math, science, history, stories, community, and other key aspects in core courses.

Native communities and leaders have wanted to incorporate their cultural values into the everyday learning of their youth. Native people are bringing back their traditions and knowledge through the education process. This is uniting culture within the public education system. There is little cultural integration for the schools within Indian Country, with the concept absent even in

“successful” schools. The natural environment and culture demonstrate an indigenous method of knowing (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Native knowledge merges several content areas to include mathematics, natural sciences, history, language, humanities, and physics. These traditional approaches bring a bigger picture or breadth to applications of knowing how life is interconnected.

Native people have used a traditional means of knowledge that is demonstrative, with applied hands-on and experiential learning (D’Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Lipka, 2009). There is a need to bring together and bridge different worlds of education to build understanding between conventional Western and traditional Native ways of knowing and learning in view of change (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995). The research on Native student learning styles, in conjunction with students failing in the current school systems identified in numerous studies, suggests failure is based on a lack cultural relevance of content (Ascher & D’Ambrosio, 1994; Bishop, 1988; D’Ambrosio, 1985; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Favaiilli, 2004; Hanks, et al. 2008; Lipka, 2009; Zaslavsky, 2005).

Interconnected Phenomenological and Transformational Leadership Philosophy

The approach with this dissertation and research took in to consideration differing perspectives of leadership and philosophy of learners as Bentz and Shapiro (1998) stated, “a focus on others involves listening, watching, and engaging in empathetic understanding of another person” (pp. 98-99). I went with the flow of energies on all accomplishments during the process, trusting in the phenomenon of events. Views of a lifeworld take on a commonality of knowledge as a lived experience (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Schutz, 1970). Identification of philosophical values brings together two worlds of cultural blending of a traditional perspective

with conventional textbook methods. Husserl believed phenomenology presented a foundation for human comprehension, which included a scientific familiarity (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008).

I searched for practices showing leadership and philosophy of Native student achievement to share with other leaders for implementation. The experience incorporates “elements of an idea, feeling, or situation” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99). The process reflected an, “Understanding to be gained by a study that includes empathetic immersion, slowing down and dwelling, magnification and amplification of the situation, suspension of belief, the employment of intense interest, turning from objects to their lived meaning, and questioning” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99). Bentz and Shapiro identified the “surrender and catch” posited by sociologist Kurt H. Wolff, referring to a “process that is cognitive-intellectual on the one hand and existential on the other” (p. 164). Bentz and Shapiro also cited the Husserl motto, “To the Things Themselves” (p. 165), in light of the need “to focus on our actual experience of things rather than on received ideas or mental models or cultural prejudices that we have about them” (p. 165).

In mobilizing adaptive work, Heifetz (1994) commented on a sense of urgency on issues needing a leader to step in and seek change. The tools identified by Heifetz (1994) include five leadership strategic principles:

1. Identify the adaptive challenge,
2. Keep the level of distress within a tolerable range for doing adaptive work,
3. Focus attention on ripening issues and not on stress-reducing distractions,
4. Give the work back to the people, but at a rate they can stand, and
5. Protect voices of leadership without authority (p. 128).

Sinclair (2007) mentioned, “Leadership is a relationship, in which leaders inspire or mobilize others to extend their capacity to imagine, think, and act in positive new ways” (p. xvi). Sinclair (2007) noted transformational leadership as “tapping into and inspiring the higher motivations of followers” (pp. 22-23).

Through the communicative work of leaders and educators, I acknowledge criteria aligned with state standards and propose ways that Native knowledge can serve them. I presented a narrative of observations as a way to provide a framework and a practical example for collaboration. When people from two different cultures communicate effectively, much can be learned as an observer, let alone the two communicating. Communication is not only oral, but also incorporates the senses of listening, visualization, and the environment around us. This level of engagement builds understanding of the other person, and encourages effective dialogue. The learning experience and stories shared with other educators and leadership brought an awareness and importance of integration of two world concepts and relevancy. This process was sometimes not easy to accomplish as language and viewpoints were dissimilar from vast experiences.

This understanding will lead to other connections in cultural traditions demonstrating relevancy with learning and voiced perspectives. “The culture of Native students [and people] refers to the worldviews that encompass complete ways of being in the world like bundles of relationships” (M. Jennings, 2004, p. 13).

Conclusion

Student engagement in learning from two worlds of perspectives, Native and non-Native, will build understanding among leadership of how the learning disciplines work together from a traditional big picture method. Stagich (2001) discussed leadership as collaborative from global

perspectives transforming future generations. He identified Indigenous people's contributions in leadership as survivalists who are diverse in customs yet also display a commonality or interconnectedness in their gratitude for the environment. Moving the theory into practice within a learning environment or classroom at the school, the technique can bring together a community as traditional and conventional educators work together to teach everyone in a culturally suitable learning style.

This study was founded on a phenomenological approach to seeking the conventional and traditional knowledge as viewpoints of lifeworlds included individual change. Individuals develop their own individual skill-sets through life's experiences (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). Identifying and working with different people from different cultures showed me how each had taught and demonstrated their admirable differences and similarities. I noted an important difference in whether the communication was linear, or approached from a worldly perspective, like my perspective. This was important for me to understand and develop for future reference and other schools and leadership styles that need to initiate change for their Native students.

This dissertation shed light on the need to understand two worlds of culture and perspectives. I learned the educational process of teaching the differing perspectives is paramount in teaching all learners. As the old adage goes, "one size does not fit all" when it comes to learning. Adult educators need to learn there is an educator in the young as well, as we are all learners and teachers.

I maintained a positive perspective on my research, noting nothing has failed. The Native ancestral perspective reveres all forms learning and experiences in a positive way. Throughout my academic experience, especially in pursuing a doctoral degree, I embraced learning and challenges as they came, thus enduring the journey one-step at a time to create my own unique

experiential story. Adjustments made along the way, which a leader or a change agent should expect, prepared me for any changes in the proposed model so that I was able to take all principles in stride like riding a raft down the river, just going with the current's flow, seeing where it will lead.

The interviews brought community and people together, built an understanding of the need for student and community success, and opened communication. In the pilot research, high school and alum students were able to voice their vision, offering fresh perspectives for adults. The Native students who participated have academic choices guided by community members who care about them. A Native college advisor stated,

I think that offering any student an opportunity to go to college, successful or not, puts it in their head; it gives them the experience of learning that there is college for them, that there is an option for them. That they can get out of the cycle of poverty, that education is the way, even if they do not take it because of circumstances or because of whatever, but they had that option to know that they had the opportunity.

With tribal communities moving toward student success and cultural responsiveness, one of the issues emerging among schools and postsecondary institutions is teacher professional development. As a personal observation, the need for two certified instructors, one Native and the other most likely non-Native, is unjustified, however, if a partnership is necessary, then a possible solution may be to double or triple the available courses in which students can earn several credits. This will require further exploration.

Many researchers, administrators, and community members often forget or neglect to ask the young people their perspectives. Youth behold opinions and knowledge that, although different generationally, can be considered as equal to that of adults with life experiences. A unique aspect of this project was the lessons learned from the young people based on their experiences and vision. A college administrator commented,

I think you need to talk to the students and find out firsthand from them what has worked and what has not worked. It is ironic but in higher education, the students are last ones to ask about their perspectives. But, their opinion even though they are the audience, and so I think we need to know. Sometimes it is hard to get the students to be candid because they have spent a lifetime learning how to be respectful. Sometimes candor can feel like disrespect even when it is what you want and so that would probably be my number one recommendation.

Listening to voices from all age groups establishes a rich dialogue and research outcome. I was amazed at the camaraderie when different generations come together as equals to seek solutions for an innovative academic program.

Many students who naturally go on to college have one or more parents who have attended or graduated from college, where most of the underrepresented youth are first-time college students. Cultivating confidence and offering guidance to students assists Native communities in encouraging their students to further their college education. In an interview with Native alum, one participant commented on how college readiness “motivated me to become a college student while in high school. The [college] teachers acted and treated you just like a college student.”

When communities come together academically, cohorts form. I equate this to young sport groups such as little league, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. Like these groups, peer cohort groups should be established for educational purposes, which act as a student support system. We create our own support systems, as we all want to find our success along our life path.

Students need to be aware from leadership that college is different from high school. One student expressed this aptly, suggesting that Native students need to know, “when students actually go to college, teach them to be secure about whom they are and things like that.” On an actual college campus, students need to be prepared they may not have their friends and family nearby. As one interviewee responded, “I was around more Caucasians than anything else and I

didn't feel like I could say anything that would help me understand the class and say my own point of view of what we were talking about." Students need to be mentally prepared for what to expect at the campus, and not just in terms of the coursework.

An academic establishment needs team participants consisting of tribal leaders, and other community leaders on the same page with vision, goals, and path to reach success for Indigenous communities and their students. One Native instructor discussed the treatment of Native people as subordinates within the educational processes regardless of education and experience levels. "I have the educational background, knowledge, certification, paper trail; but I also have the cultural traditional teaching of my mother, my father, my grandmother, and the elders that I have been so fortunate to have in my life." There is still a disconnection between the philosophy of culturally infused courses with the placement of trained instructors, staff, and administration. The instructor commented further, "Taking book learning and the cultural tradition of life learning and show students they go hand in hand, yet there was separation because students were told to leave culture and tradition at home, come in, and get a real education."

Teams of student support contributors need to be on the same page with a vision, goals, and path to reach success for Native leaders, communities and their students. Collaboration between all parties and communities will build trust and understanding of each other's ideas and aims benefitting all involved. Open and honest communication keeping in mind basic relationship techniques will build comprehension and appreciation of cultural differences.

One Native instructor discussed the treatment of Native people as subordinates within the educational processes regardless of education and experience levels. "I have the educational background, knowledge, certification, paper trail; but I also have the cultural traditional teaching of my mother, my father, my grandmother, and the elders that I have been so fortunate to have in

my life.” Nevertheless, there is still division between philosophies of courses offered with infusion of cultural knowledge with college instructors. Non-Native participants need to listen to the elders.

In most tribal communities, looking toward the future is part of the tradition, especially with leadership. With decisions and the impacts, indigenous cultures look seven generations in to the future. There is still a need to focus education on Native traditions and not the Eurocentric norm established in many institutions. There needs to be a continued awareness of the tribal community’s cultural traditions, looking toward the future is part of the custom with decisions made by always looking ahead seven generations. In addition, future educational and policy research must include respectful consideration of culturally relevant methodology as academic attendance continues to be a great challenge compared to other racial/ethnic groups. An education geared toward the bridging of cultures will demonstrate that indigenous peoples have always been (and still are today) the original leaders, physicists, environmentalists, scientists, philosophers, authors, researchers, mathematicians, linguists, storytellers, singers, dancers, musicians, technologists, meteorologists, astronomers, medical providers, herbalists, counselors, naturopaths, historians, biologists, artists, and keepers of wisdom in the past, present, and the future.

Globally, Indigenous cultures nearly lost their traditions, culture, customs, land, language, and the essence of a belief that reaches deep in honor of the past, present, and future of peoples. Today young people are able to take courses in schools seeking interconnectedness of the traditional lands and realizing they are our future leaders. Traditions once feared lost come forward through education and traditions.

This research brought humility as I learned about my ancestral history along with the diverse indigenous cultures, countries, and customs. In an effort to extricate themselves from dominant Western views, many Indigenous cultures are revitalizing their cultures and languages by introducing their traditions into methodologies in the educational systems. Elders, parents/caregivers, and other community members are turning the tide in the educational process and constructed pedagogy. Indigenous people utilized as the teachers or co-teacher in classrooms and unique institutions specializing in their wisdom educated teachers as well as the students. All the articles brought forth an emotional reality for me that “my ancestors spoke eloquently in my visions and dreams” conveying the true meaning of education and learning in learning institutions. This dissertation focused on authors who spoke in a manner parallel to my ancestors, reinforcing for me the purpose of an education philosophy in leadership.

The research proved fruitful in terms of finding many indigenous authors whose studies reflected the effects of cultural oppression based on dominant Western or European “civilizing ways” and leadership hierarchies. The age of globalization and indigenous knowing may just find its way in to the historical textbooks as educators increasingly look at indigenous “civilization” as a natural “way of being.”

Chapter VI identifies the implications for leadership and change from a practitioner perspective and proposes how we might influence change for future endeavors, noting how the potential for change fits in to the bigger picture.

Chapter VI: Implications for Leadership and Change

Walking, I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands (Hogan [Chickasaw], 1995, p. 155)

As I sat in the warmth of a home in Juneau, Alaska, a year ago, I viewed the serenity out the large picture windows facing North up the vast Lynn Canal with the Chilkat and Chilkoot Mountains in the far distance covered in snow. I am at the same spot from a year ago, here now in Alaska during the last stages of my dissertation. The dissertation committee will receive this document in two days. Snow falls from the dark sky and covers the Earth with a blanket of silence. The white mounds reach a depth of two feet to wind drifts of six feet. An occasional Raven and Eagle glide past against the gray sky backdrop of falling snow. They hunt with keen vision and are prepared to share their catch with family. The long dark days of the Winter Solstice approaches nearer as daylight is scarce here in the north. A solitude like this demonstrates the peaceful observations and listening to voices within from the ancestors. This is the time for storytelling and reflection, which is fitting as the phenomenon of completing my dissertation story rejoices in the spirit of peace and contemplation.

This chapter embraces my research on the title, *Knowing the Indigenous Leadership Journey: Indigenous People Need the Academic System as Much as the Academic System Needs Indigenous People*, reiterating Cajete's (2000) conviction that "Cultural revitalization and restoration has resulted from education from a Native perspective" (p. 135). This has been one of the positive aspects of the educational emphasis on Native language and culture, which has remained vibrant despite all efforts to change our institutions (Medicine, 1981). The purpose of my research was to explore how to create better learning environments for indigenous students through leadership at all levels while also providing them with a meaningful and relevant

education. In acknowledging Cajete's (2000) statement, "Understanding the nature of the Native American learner must guide efforts to improve the education of Native Americans" (p. 135), I questioned through this research how to create such learning environments through effective leadership at all levels? Indigenous communities have collaboratively attempted to implement successful educational practices for Native learners at a range of academic institutions. Some tribal locations successfully collaborated to establish strong partnerships between tribal communities and educational institutions in pursuit of cultural solutions, while other locations struggle with continued colonization practices of domination of one culture over another.

This dissertation speaks to the Indigenous voices sharing the stories of experience. Cajete (2000) identified Indigenous "science" as "knowledge" and merged the two into one meaning, and acknowledging, "Some students are rediscovering their tribal identities, [while] others are truly bilingual and bicultural" (p. 136). As this dissertation has emphasized, there are great variations among indigenous students based on ancestral family history and experiences.

Such students generally want to continue to learn and live within the context of both cultures. Instruction in bicultural science for these students can result in a positive attitude toward science and reaffirmation of their tribal identity. Another reason to use a bicultural approach to science instruction is that it provides a way to bridge differences in worldview concerning natural phenomena. (Cajete, 2000, p. 136)

There is a large disconnect between education in mainstream academic systems and the Native students they serve, who still endure high dropout, or "push-out," rates as they struggle to conform to institutions created by a Eurocentric population who displaced them from their indigenous lands. Indigenous leaders and educators are seeking solutions realizing the necessity of traditional methods to teach indigenous students in all grade levels.

This dissertation captured the stories of Indigenous and non-Native people in leadership and educational positions by "learning" their story and sharing the perspective and knowledge. I

focused on revealing Indigenous scholarship during the process. The literature embraces Native researchers and scholars who opened up a world of knowledge to pass on to the next generations. I find myself in this category and honor their wisdom to further embrace and share. Throughout this learning journey, my focus took me to many locations, emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually, in seeking a narrative on better learning environments for indigenous students amid the leadership perspectives of Native and non-Native educational philosophy. The journey introduced me to indigenous leaders and tribal communities of dedicated people who know their future rests on the education of their youth. The stories shed light on how to create the best learning environments for indigenous students through good leadership at all levels. My world opened when I found a few books and journal articles in the area of Indigenous leadership, philosophy, and education, especially in the journal *Wicazo Sa Review*, feeling that I hit gold knowing the importance of this topic. I became fixated on seeking additional information like a sleuthing aficionado seeking answers to a myriad of questions and Indigenous perspectives. I know there is more information waiting to be found as the study results influence practice.

Taking a Philosophical Stance

This research has reinforced the importance of identifying the bigger picture when sharing the voices of indigenous peoples, and using this precedent to initiate further research geared toward listening to Native voices, especially of the younger people. This level of attention to Native educational leadership is tantamount to success, or “living a good life.” I agreed with Fixico’s (2003) suggestion that the “Indian mind” understands relationships as seeing associations in non-linear perspectives, noting, “The center is about balance of well-being and beauty in life, and it is not the human being, but how the human being feels” (p. xiv). Cajete (2000) noted, “Natural phenomena are presented in the most appropriate context by using

symbolic vehicles such as art, myth, or ritual. Relationships among natural phenomena are observed and symbolically coded in a variety of forms based on experiential knowledge of the phenomena (p. 147). Individual experience beholds a phenomenon of events, whether perceived individually or in groups.

Many Native American students from traditional backgrounds have gained relatively rich experiences through a variety of cultural and practical encounters with the natural environment. However, the sources of knowledge of nature and the explanations of natural phenomena within a traditional Native American context are often at odds with what is learned in "school science" and proposed by Western scientific philosophy. Herein lays a very real conflict between two distinctly different worldviews: the mutuality/holistic-oriented worldview of Native American cultures and the rationalistic/dualistic worldview of Western science that divides, analyzes, and objectifies. (Cajete, 2000, p. 146)

As I conducted my interviews and wrote my observations, it became apparent to me how learning comes full circle, as not only the participants engaged in personal learning journeys, but I also learned about myself through their stories. The experience of traveling and visiting very different schools, and their tribal communities was an overwhelming honor. In my research journey, I discovered the power and significance of a phenomenological lens. I felt compelled to include the comment from Öktem (2009) defining phenomenology "as a method of grasping essences" noting that this is in contrast to many philosophers' view of "evidence as 'seeing' or perceived by the mind" (p. 2). Traveling to the Native communities helped me grasp the "essence" of the community well blended within their own natural environments. I believe that as a practitioner, I developed an expertise during the pilot research, and then the interviews and observations with the tribal and state leadership made me feel both equal and honored to learn from their wisdom and direct experience.

Robbins (2006) discussed Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's parallels to phenomenological science as, "holistic perception is a matter of preserving the organic unity of phenomenon...our

customary, sedimented cultural understanding of ‘unity’ is based on our entrenched habit of thinking in the abstract rather than concretely dwelling with the phenomena” (p. 7). Waters (2004) portrayed Cajete, Deloria, and other indigenous scholars who have the same or similar views of the critical importance of a phenomenological lens on direct lived experiences. Cajete (2000) stated,

The Indigenous “physicist” not only observes nature, but also participates in it with all his or her sensual being. Humans and all other entities of nature experience at their own levels of sensate reality. The Indigenous experience is evidences not only through collective cultural expressions of art, story, ritual, and technology, but also through the more subtle and intimate expressions of individual acts of respect, care, words, and feelings that are continually extended to the land and its many beings. (p. 20)

All things behold their own energy and something to teach the human population if they listen.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the positive and yet challenging experiences encountered in my research journey, I now recommend areas needing further research and discussion. There is a great need for policy considerations, community engagement, and cultural responsiveness in the education process. In addition to leading these initiatives, Native leaders must be present in the education systems as role models. On too many occasions, indigenous people are portrayed as “dead” and something from the past. Stereo types are abundant with drunkenness, drug addiction, poor, impoverished conditions, greedy toward rights such as fishing, receiving “Indian money” or lacking pride in what they have that was given to them by the federal government. The negative aspects continue to glare at a population of many Euro-descendant people stifling a vision of true beauty and cultural awareness. When given the opportunity to grow and develop with a confidence and pride, one grows and develops those positive aspects and embodies the feeling inside. In summary, further research needs to

- Recognize a needed bridge between cultures for learning opportunities.
- Create model schools with engaged Indigenous communities utilizing traditional learning methods of relevant and cooperative learning “...respecting the individual, development of an internal locus of control, sharing, and harmony” (Little Soldier, 1989 p. 161).
- Heed leadership voiced approaches supporting education.
- Know the Journey; Indigenous people need the academic system as much as the academic system needs Native people.

Policy Considerations

The state education director’s description of her experiences and my observations at the schools pointed to the need to establish strong student support systems primarily at the postsecondary and secondary academic institutions. As tribes grow, many have the largest employers in their counties, states, or regions. This growth should be reflected in academic institutions. Education needs to embrace indigenous cultural knowledge and incorporate an awareness of the environment and living in balance. In the last several years, time has made evident the notion of not race wars, but that of human and corporate wars. As tribes develop exponentially, state and federal governments need to make accommodations.

To summarize, policy needs to focus on

- Establishing strong student support systems primarily at the secondary and postsecondary academic institutions
- Growing academic institutions to reflect tribes as the largest employers in their states, regions, or counties.

- Embracing Indigenous cultural knowledge and incorporate an awareness of the environment and living in balance as part of the education process.
- Identifying the receding “race wars” toward the developing “human and corporate wars.”

Community Engagement

Communities need to reach out to schools and engage in the educational process through leadership on school boards, council members, and school board meetings and work toward establishing common goals. Communities need to embrace cultural responsiveness with designated people offering classroom support or guest speakers on core applications such as relevancy in math, social studies, sciences, and the arts. The state Indian education director commented on the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) education projects. She shared content regarding tribal and educational leaders consisting of elders, and experts gathering to frame, guide, and discuss policy towards Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Briefly, communities need to

- Embrace cultural responsiveness with designated people offering classroom support with core applications of relevant math, social studies, sciences, and arts.
- Promote innovative programs to create avenues of interconnectedness and relevance.
- Initiate communication and implementation between key leadership as decision makers with successful programs manifesting positive awareness toward change.

Communication and implementation between key leadership as decision makers is essential to successful programs manifesting toward change. The director gave me a handout that acknowledged leaders using Indigenous Knowledge Systems to identify differing “ways of looking at and relating to the world, the universe, and to each other” (Barnhardt & Kawagley,

2005, para. 9). The handout further quoted the Director General of United Nations Education defining traditional knowledge as

The Indigenous people possess an immense knowledge of their environments, based on centuries of living close to nature. Living in and from the richness and variety of complex ecosystems, they have an understanding of the properties of plants and animals, the functioning of ecosystems and the techniques for using and managing them that is particular and often detailed. In rural communities in developing countries, locally occurring species are relied on for many –sometimes all – foods, medicines, fuel, building materials, and other products. Equally, people’s knowledge and perceptions of the environment, and their relationships with it, are often important elements of cultural identity. (Nakashima, Prott, & Bridgewater, 2000, p. 12)

So much information is still available from the stories and knowledge of Indigenous people that it is only natural to tap into these valuable human resources before they are gone. Primarily, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities need to

- Present Indigenous leaders in the education systems as role models.
- Engage in the education process through leadership on schools boards, council members, and school board meetings working toward common goals.
- Help eliminate archaic stereotypes based from Hollywood and media.

What I Learned and Keep Learning

I reflect heavily on a vision that came to me one night. I awoke to ancestors speaking and heard the statement, “a focused education realizes the academic system needs Indigenous people as much as Indigenous people needs the academic system.” On my academic journey, my eyes and other sensors opened to perceive in particular the interconnectivity between this research and my education in general. Cajete (2000) explained, “We experience the world, so we are also experienced by the world” (p. 254). Identifying that nature is a reality as we see, hear, smell, and taste the natural world.

In the course of this research, I learned about the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and Native philosophers. “The locus of phenomenological research is human experience, and it approaches the topics of interest to psychology through their presence in conscious awareness” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45). Yet Polkinghorne also regarded phenomenological experiences as only human and did not consider the “organic life” surrounding the experiences.

Many Indigenous people are learning in academic institutions by means of Eurocentric standards not consider indigenous values. I have been amazed at the stores of Indigenous knowledge and philosophy waiting to be discovered and interpreted by more peoples that are indigenous. The “seeing” concept nicely reflects in portraiture research methods. To consider a Native norm of “watching and feeling” as a research method embodies a spirit in a manner that is quite familiar to me. It is, perhaps, the “phenomenological attitude” instead of the “natural attitude,” as described by Stewart and Mickunas (1990, p. 25) in considering philosopher’s Husserl’s visions about natural and phenomenological attitudes in which “natural attitude” is the state a human, things, and other beings are in without question depicting he or she is naturally without question. The phenomenological attitude considers what one knows, based on experience of “the recognition of the fact that the basic structure of consciousness is intentional” (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. 37). Dahlberg (2006) explained, “Human science researchers, based in phenomenology, can use ‘observation’ as a means to find implicit and bodily-embedded knowledge, instead of practicing only ‘chair interviewing’” (p. 2). Phenomenology is not just a human approach but also a social engagement. Dahlberg (2006) stated,

What is implied is that answering questions about observation at the same time means answering questions about how we as humans relate to our world. And answering questions about how we as humans relate to our world means answering questions about observation. (p. 2)

This was profoundly apparent in my interviews and observations as the responses reflected the perceptions of those interviewed. I listened to their stories of the changes in their respective communities, individually, socially, and within them, too, as a meaningful purpose was found within the academic system. The participants contributed their stories delving into a phenomenon of their life journeys reaching passions taking them towards their education and academic fields. Their real life stories bring to existence the reading within the literature reviewed identifying portraiture and phenomenological events as they encircle a parallel between researcher, interviewer, interviewee, observer, observations, and the stories of all.

The “observing” of others and the environment brings in the six senses experienced as one “sees” through filters of individual perception. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) asserted, “Portraiture work is not intended to be generalized or replicated” but rather determined “to communicate a meaning that can have an effect on the understandings, attitudes, and actions of its viewers” (p. 877). The make-up as human people is to “know” our creation stories, and to “recognize” who we are within our own lifeworld as we continually experience and perceive.

Reflections

As a reflection of the people who affected the key aspects of my life, encompassing a vital role as mentors, role models, and heroes, I have cultivated leadership capabilities within myself. Life is full of stories, as they are the phenomenon that creates our identity, transforming lifeworlds and ourselves. These experiences are the source of the meaning that makes up who we are in our everyday lives and the perspectives constructed around such meaning (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). I dedicated my stories to my grandchildren in hopes that they approach their lives as keepers of emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual balance along their lifeworld path on Mother Earth.

The Medicine Wheel establishes interconnectedness to all things on Earth, which identifies balance and circular motions, such as life cycles. Life comes from the Earth with roundness with an equitable configure of fours. Many tribal systems have their own Medicine Wheel with similar philosophical meaning. Many aspect of life embodies the Medicine Wheel based on senses relative to science, physics, psychology, social studies, and other aspects (see Figure 6.1).

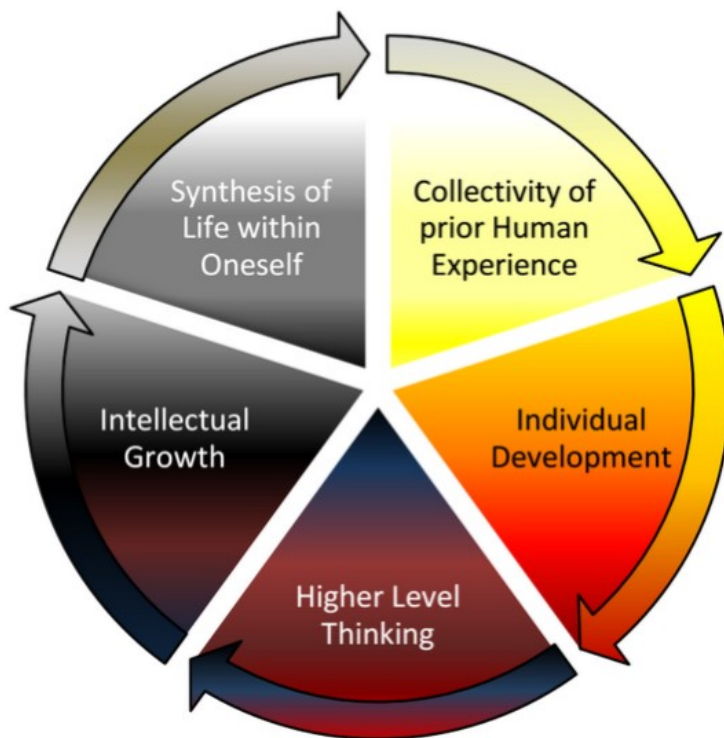


Figure 6.1. Medicine Wheel: Balance of oneself on an Indigenous philosophy of interconnectedness based on Cajete (2000) identifying an important role processing human assessment.

The Medicine Wheel in Figure 6.1 embodies the balance of oneself and their experiences within their lifeworld (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). Pewewardy and Frey (2004) view learning as lifelong, especially for the educator and leaders of any community.

Cajete identified traditional Indigenous values and behaviors, especially individually, within communities, students, and within leadership. The make-up of these values includes: “respectful personal differences; quietness; patience; open work ethic; mutualism; nonverbal orientation, seeing and listening; time orientation; orientation of present; practicality; holistic orientation; spirituality; caution; classroom discipline; and field-sensitive orientation based on group orientation, a sensitivity for field of social relationships” (Cajete, 2000, pp. 140-144). All of these elements become parts of the Medicine Wheel.

I am honored to rise on the horizon, like the sun dawning its morning light. Phenomenology is often translated as “shedding light” as the direction of east on the Medicine Wheel. Therefore, this is more than an analogy for me, as a Native person. It is a metaphor as the sun is a part of me, as is the forest. When walking in a forest or on any land, I, like many Indigenous people, experience the teachings that embrace:

- Hands-on experiential learning as one can touch and not break teaching we as human people can heal;
- Breathing the fresh air as trees extract pure carbon dioxide;
- Observation of the diversity and differences each species beholds in a healthy environment like that of us as a human people;
- Storytelling as lesson teaching life’s education;
- Instruction and the transmission of knowledge as the knowing is passed down from generation to generation;
- Witnessing life that comes on the life path for observation and reflective purpose;
- Listening to the whispers wind brings traveling through the branches and leaves telling us of change;

- Patience and persistence in practicing new skills as they stay with us forever;
- Perseverance in all things we do as human people;
- Generosity in all that we can give from knowledge to possessions;
- Culture that gives us our understanding and foundation as to who we are as a collective people; and
- Heritage honoring our ancestors, those who walked before us.

I watch, listen, breathe, taste, touch, and sense many things around me and learn. Hogan (1995) reminds us to include all life, wherever you are, in presence of a human, forest, animal, desert, one can find peace in just listening.

In privileging Indigenous scholars, many of those cited here are people I had met through various circumstances in my life, and those I have not yet met, and hope to in the near future. The circle is small, yet passion rings out like a tree's rings telling stories through the varying degrees of generational perspectives in development. With the heritage resonating with the teachings of the Tree people, I recognize a tribal elder, medicine man, and distant cousin named Subiyay, keeper of wisdom and friend who *Walked On* from this life, but left a legacy of philosophy and stories. The Seattle Art Museum website shares that Subiyay (aka for Bruce Miller, n.d.) applies lessons as,

Metaphors or concepts of the umbilical cord, the living breath, and tree rings to describe the process of creating a legacy from one generation to another so that the teachings live on. The “umbilical metaphor stands for the intimate connections that students are creating through the weaving – connection to the cedar, to the creative process, to the other participants, and to the teacher.” The “living breath” is the spirit or the essence of each person, which is left behind in their work and their interactions with others. As tree rings tell the natural history of the environment (rainfall, drought, sunlight, chronological age) and of the tree itself, the practice of Native traditions from one generation to the next creates a human history. If humans are [harmonious] with their environment, their histories, or their “tree rings”, overlap and are integrated. (para. 17)

These “tree rings” remind me of the ancestors. My visions with the ancestors inspired the title of this dissertation. The expressions kept me moving forward with a purpose and allowed me to build research and study experiential stories from the perspective of Indigenous philosophy. To learn to “listen” is the difficult part when including not only human-to-human interaction, but also all peoples on this Earth and our lifeworld of the past, present, and future.

The learning during this period relates to my professional practice and interest of Indigenous knowing compelling to address Native educational applications supported by indigenous philosophy and leadership involving respective Native communities, culture, and customs. The experienced personal growth gained a confident self-awareness as a Native educator and woman learning the empowerment and wisdom of Native knowing. I envision presentations sharing knowledge bridging Indigenous communities and education systems linking academic and cultural opportunities through professional development encouraging enrichment of individual experiences and ‘knowing’ to flourish in scholarly realms.

I am honored to help provide the Indigenous people who have walked before me and presently with me the ability to “hear” their stories in their academic research. These articles of personal investigation, knowing, and narratives brought a new and wonderful light that rose before my eyes. I have learned about my significance as a passionate teacher and as an Indigenous individual needing the academic system as much as the academic system needs me as a Native woman. I am grateful to become one of them and pass on the knowledge from the ancestors, present academics, and future generations so that the world will hear these valuable legacies.

I stand solid and tall observing the world with arms outstretched embracing all those around me in this lifeworld. I now know who I am and with each season, I will continue to

provide story, educate, grow, and comfort for all. I thank all of the people for their time, opening their communities, offices, homes, and reflections, the will to be innovative agents of change in the education of Native students and cultural responsiveness. Each one respectfully acknowledged a benefit of having their “voice” heard for academic innovations and opportunity to grow their schools and community. There is an importance in “bridging” thoughts from all cultures and identifying the parallels with each one. Thank you for this tremendous honor of opportunity.

Appendix

Appendix A

Alumni and Student Focus Group

Student Participation in Research Project Parental/Guardian/Principal Consent

Knowing the Story: Student Educational Journeys towards Career and Postsecondary Education

Introduction. Early College and dual credited course designs provide academic opportunities for participating high school students to earn college credits while they are taking high school credits.

Your student is cordially invited to participate in a focus group of four-six selected students conducted by the Center for Native Education at Portland State University. This invitation extends to your student because of his/her participation in an Early College designed high school where they participated in college and high school dual credited courses. The student(s) voluntary and anonymous participation in this survey offers an opportunity to be part of the educational improvement process across our Nation. Their input is very critical to evaluate the dual credited Early College design model with focus group discussion results assisting to improve the quality of education, and help transform learning opportunities for future generations. The combined results will be used for publications and additional research. The student's efforts are encouraged with grateful support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and developed jointly by the Center for Native Education and Regional Research Institute for Human Services at Portland State University.

Directions. The focus group is comprised of four questions of which will be recorded and take about 30 minutes. Participation is voluntary and responses will be anonymous indefinitely with recording deleted upon completion of typing transcripts. Students insure transcription accurately of which portrays their accurate beliefs. Transcripts will be kept in a safe and secure location indefinitely. Participation will not affect relationships with the high school, tribal government, Center for Native Education, or Portland State University.

Consent. Student's of the focus group, have an option to provide contact only information to obtain a copy of the final report. Participants will be awarded a \$30 gift card to the plaza. Help us by inviting alumni, students, and friends by posting encouragement through 'Liking' us on Facebook under *Center for Native Education*.

For any questions or comments, please contact Dawn Stevens, Project Manager, at Center for Native Education (dawn@centerfornativeeed.org) or Human Subjects Research Review Committee at Portland State University at 1-877-480-4400.

Confidentiality and Privacy. All data from the survey and anonymous participation will remain in a secure location indefinitely.

Please keep this portion of this consent form for your records.

If you approve of your student's participation in this project, please sign the following signature portion of this consent form below and return to the school. Thank you from CNE & PSU!



Signature(s) for Consent:

I give permission for my child to participate in the focus group conducted at the school entitled, *Knowing the Story: Student Educational Journeys towards Career and Postsecondary Education* during the week of _____. I understand, in order to participate in this project, my child must also agree to participate. I recognize my child and/or I can change our minds about participation, at any time, by notifying the researcher of our decision to end involvement.

Name of Child (Print): _____

Name of Parent/Guardian/School Administrator (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

2012 EARLY COLLEGE SCHOOL ALUMNI AND PARTICIPANT RESEARCH GRANT Knowing the Story: Student Educational Journeys towards Postsecondary Education

With tribal permission, the Center for Native Education would like to collaborate in grant-funded research surveying native alumni students who experienced the dual crediting design of Early College. We are eager to continue the development and expansion of dual credited designed education with tribal communities having great input and control over development of holistic academic models. Using a community-based participatory model, we would like to invite alumni students and adults involved in the project to have voice in the development of the educational models for dual credited academic opportunities.

We are determined to support innovation between Native knowledge and educational practices. This study premises a community approach to build knowledge contributing significantly in student's academic success. The project incorporates documentation of alumni and participant knowledge through their experiences so schools and tribes continue to generate curricula focus on native learning methods as well as teacher training. Interviews and the research should enhance transformational relationships necessary to apply native curricula in the classroom, school system, and work with Indigenous communities.

Your assistance is needed in contacting alumni students who participated in dual credited programs. Participation includes a drawing for gift cards in appreciation of participation. Please e-mail this completed application as a scanned PDF to Dawn Stevens. If you have any questions, please contact her at dawn@centerfornativeed.org or (360) 490-9813. *Please complete the boxes below that apply:*

Yes, the _____ Early College tribal partner would like to apply for up to \$ 500 towards the dual credited research activities in order to align the program with the Indigenous core principles as described by the tribal community. Funding will cover expenses incurred in seeking alumni student input and stipends. Please accept this signed document as our approval.

Yes, our tribal community is interested in collaborating with the research team and seeking results for our school's promotion of innovative opportunities for Native youth. The _____ tribal community:

_____ **Requires** our own Internal Review Board (IRB) policy for participation in this survey and survey results. The tribal IRB will collaborate with CNE at Portland State University and their approved IRB. *(See attached CNE/PSU approved IRB)*

_____ **Does not require** our own Internal Review Board (IRB) policy for participation in this survey, but still wants to be included collaboratively in the researched results. The approved CNE/PSU IRB is sufficient.

Dawn Stevens, Director
Center for Native Education

Date

, for ECS Tribal Partner,

Date

Appendix C

**Antioch University
PhD in Leadership & Change
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Human Participant Research Review**

Participant Informed Consent Statement

The researcher (Dawn Stevens) is conducting a research project for her dissertation at the graduate school of Antioch University. One of the primary purposes of this research titled, *Knowing the Story: An Indigenous Leadership Journey in the Philosophy of Native Education*, is to examine tribal community and leadership involvement in their student educational processes and philosophy. The data and results of this study will be part of a dissertation and other scholarly presentations and publications.

Study overview: This research will gather information to study tribal community and leadership involvement in the education process of their students relative to extending a cultural learning philosophy. Evidence suggests Native people show low academic graduation rates in the educational process. The study will focus on tribal community and leadership involvement in developing academic solutions and application for positive Native student achievement noting a learning equality with *Indigenous people needing the academic system as much as the academic system needing Indigenous people*. The research supports tribal involvement in strategies educators can apply towards pedagogy indicative of relationships and relevancy. I will review the culminating experiences and the participants as a whole to ensure the concepts are appropriately applied.

I (the interviewee) understand there are no risks perceived and that I will not share confidential information from the interview. This risk will be minimized by

1. review of any transcription to check for accuracy or misunderstandings;
2. confidential handling of the interview information;
3. removal of my name or organization's name prior to publishing the final report; and
4. assured storage of any electronic recording and transcripts is in a safe place, indefinitely.

I am aware that my opinions may be utilized for research purposes, but no one will be identified by name in any final written documents.

I understand the research findings may benefit Native communities, tribal leaders, Native people in the education process, and future professional development of educational personnel.

I understand participation is voluntary and I may discontinue involvement at any time. I have the right to express any concerns and complaints to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Participants at Antioch University. If I have any ethical questions or concerns about this project, I can contact Dr. Carolyn Kenny, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Antioch University PhD in Leadership and Change (ckenny@phd.antioch.edu, telephone: 805-565-7535).

I am aware no first or last names will appear on any materials that are collected. Conversations will serve as an iterative form of the process. This form will be used to document permission for the use of these materials.

I understand if I have any additional questions regarding my rights as a research participant, I can contact the investigator, Dawn Stevens or her advisor, Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D. Professor, PhD in Leadership and Change, Antioch University (ckenny@antioch.edu).

Sincerely,

Date: _____

Signature

Informed Consent Permission

Name: _____ Date: _____

Knowing the Story: An Indigenous Leadership Journey in the Philosophy of Native Education

- I DO** give permission to include my interview and assured names will not be used in the research. I am aware participants have the option to withdraw from the research at any time.
- I DO NOT** give permission to use my interview for the research.

Appendix D

Knowing the Story: An Indigenous Leadership Journey in the Philosophy of Native Education

Dawn Elizabeth Hardison-Stevens
Dissertation Interview Questions
Antioch University
Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

Interview questions identifying Native leader perspectives:

- Talk about your philosophy of education.
- Where do you see colonization practices today?
- Has Indigenous Nations internalized oppression?
- In the spirit of education from community traditions to institutional, what are your thoughts on indigenous peoples needing to participate in a formal education system, and why?
- Are these systems safe for Native students/tribal communities/cultural traditions to acknowledge their diversity?
- What do you see as your role as a Native leader in advancing indigenous education?
- Share one story about a success you have seen in your efforts to work as an indigenous person in education.

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