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Mending the Sacred Hoop: A Successful Indian Education Program Increasing Native American Graduation Rates

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Mending the Sacred Hoop: A Successful Indian Education Program Increasing Native American

Graduation Rates

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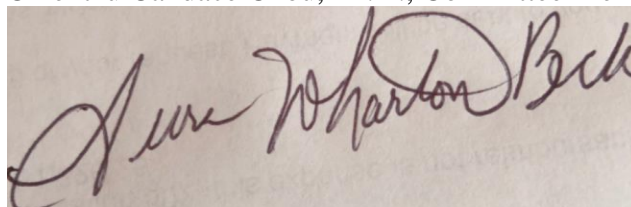required by the final examining committee have been made.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the contributing factors which increased retention and a 90% graduation rate for Native students enrolled in a single Midwestern school district. A large disparity exists between the graduation rates of White students and American Indian/Alaskan Natives enrolled in public schools nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). I investigated how an Indian Education program in partnership with a local school district provided a comprehensive plan to serve Native students. Interviews, documents, and observations were used to collect data. Native students navigated racism and historical trauma. The program components addressed historical trauma and the types of educational support needed to ensure higher rates of student success. The Indian Education program implemented strategies to counteract negative experiences of Native students in school. The components included: (1) fostering relationships and communication; (2) providing tutoring; (3) placing liaisons in schools; (4) providing summer programming and culture camp; (5) encouraging communication with Tribal elders, family, and Community members; (6) providing advocacy; (7) offering professional development; (8) supporting an alternative high school program; and (9) providing graduation incentives. Some of the implication and recommendations for improvement included an emphasis on Native history and culture; knowledge of boarding schools and its effectives; recognizing and adopting trauma-informed practices; offering professional development on race, racism, and bias training, improving curriculum, and providing direct support to Native students inside the classroom. Program initiatives increased Native graduation rates from less than 20% to over 90%.

Keywords: historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, Native American graduation rates, Indian Education programming, Indian Education

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DEDICATION

For my parents

Sam and Sammie Dupris

and for my beloved brother

Sam

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I am a proud member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. As a Native student, I attended private schools due to the hard work and sacrifice of my parents. In contrast, my parents, raised on the reservation, attended American Indian Boarding schools. They later graduated from a reservation high school operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The youngest of four children, I was the first child in my immediate family to graduate from high school, and the first throughout my extended family to graduate from college and receive a master's degree. While education is prized and admired in the Native American community, I never considered why higher education proved unattainable for some. This knowledge motivated me to make a positive difference for disadvantaged students.

Before I became a teacher, I was involved in my nephew's education. Seeing the educational system and the advantages afforded to some students with privilege caused me to see more clearly the inequities in public schools. For example, advantaged White students use their family resources to pay tutors – something not available for economically disadvantaged students of color. I made a personal career change to become an elementary teacher in a public school to address the achievement gap for students of color.

As a Native educator, I hoped to make a profound impact on students of color by teaching them how to navigate the educational system to ensure their academic success. After my sixth year of teaching, I was distraught, feeling I personally failed my Native American students. I felt this way as I watched Native families leave my school district and return to their reservation. This feeling of inadequacy led me to sign up for a Native American pedagogy conference with Anton Treuer, a Native American author, scholar, and professor at Bemidji State

University. I felt if anyone could help me solve my professional and personal crisis, it would be him.

I took two things from that significant day in 2014. First, Treuer told me I was planting seeds, even though I may not witness how my teaching helps my students to blossom. Secondly, he advised me about learning more about Native culture. He said to me, "If you don't know your culture, learn it." I left the conference feeling reassured that my efforts were meaningful. But I also questioned my personal identity and assimilation. I wondered if my privileged education and my identity as a Native American educator was enough to serve as bridge between Native American families and our public school system.

White students disproportionally benefit from dominant Western cultural perspectives, this and other factors continue to disadvantage students of color (McInerney et al., 1998). As a Native American teacher, I served on leadership committees to change policies and practices marginalizing students of color. I want to discover ways to support Native students. My role as an educator requires me to meet the needs of a highly diverse population with various economic, academic, and social-emotional backgrounds. These concerns led to me seek programs and practices to address the obvious achievement gap between Native and White students.

During my search for knowledge about Native pedagogy and ways to raise retention and graduation rates, I learned about a successful partnership between a school district and a Tribal Council. A close study of their graduation rates revealed steady and substantial progress in supporting the education of Native students over a period of 30 years. I examined how one midwestern school district changed a pattern of low graduation rates – ensuring a better future for Native students in post-secondary education and employment. My case study involved a

discovery of how an effective program helps Native students stay in school and graduate in one school district.

Statement of the Problem, Purpose, and Significance

A large disparity exists between the graduation rates of White students and American Indian/Alaskan Natives enrolled in public schools nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). For example, the national average of graduation rates for Whites students attending US public school is 85.8% compared to 74.3% of American Indian/Alaskan Natives (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

Although behind their White peers, Native student achievement rates in 2005 for 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics was higher nationally than the rates achieved by Black and Latino students. These achievement rates show the capability of Native students. Unfortunately, Native student achievement rates plateaued despite educational reform efforts. By 2011, Native students fall below Black and Latino students in reading and mathematics, widening the achievement gap between Native and White students (The Education Trust, 2013). The midwestern state involved in this study continues to be one of the highest underperforming states in the United States with regard to the graduation rates among American Indian/Alaskan students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), Native students in this midwestern state have the lowest graduation rates in the state (51%), falling behind Hispanic, Black, and economically disadvantaged students, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. Despite these odds, American Indian students experience greater levels of success in schools dedicated to serving them (Jeffries et al., 2004). I investigated an effective program with a successful track record of serving Native students. In 2015, American

Indian/Alaskan Natives in this midwestern state comprised 1.7% of the student population
enrolled in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) with 150 American
Indian/Alaskan Native students attending the Midwestern school district (Boese, 2015, June 27).
Native students enrolled in this program experienced a stunning 90% graduation rate (Boese,
2015, June 27). A program/partnership raising achievement rates deserves attention. I examined
the major components of this program to determine the factors favorably influencing the
graduation rates of Native students. The importance of understanding the educational factors
contributing to higher high school graduation rates for American Indian/Alaskan Natives cannot
be underestimated.

Research Question

I adopted the following question to conduct my study: What factors contributed to the
increase in retention and graduation rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native students in a
Midwestern school district?

Overview of the Chapters

My study begins with an introduction to the research issue concerning Native student
experiences in school and graduation rates. My background as a proud member of the Cheyenne
River Sioux tribe compelled me to investigate and report successful learning environments for
Native youth. A large disparity existed between Native student graduation rates and White
students nationwide. I discovered a successful program between a Tribal Indian Education
Department and a school district. My research investigated successful programming increasing
Native student graduation rates.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature describing Native student experiences in
schools. I organized the literature in 5 themes: (1) history of American Indian Education; (2)

systemic and cultural racism; (3) factors affecting dropout and graduation rates; (4) resiliency

factors of American Indian/Alaskan Native students; and (5) culturally responsive schools and

practices. Gaps in the literature addressed the need for narratives, intersectionality, professional

development for teachers, and examples of effective interventions and strategies. I conclude the

chapter with an analysis of the literature using Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy.

In chapter 3, I describe the qualitative research and approach I adopted for my study. I

discuss the types of data I collected and the methods I used for data collection. I examined my

role as a researcher and discussed ethical considerations for my study.

The data I collected from my study is separated into two chapters. Chapter 4 explains the

effects of historical trauma on Native students. I begin the chapter describing the Tribal

community and offer a comparison of the adjacent town Native students attend school in. Three

major themes of historical trauma were found in the data: (1) racism; (2) implicit bias; and (3)

loss of identity. Chapter 5 explains program initiatives the Tribe implemented to counteract

historical trauma. I outline 7 themes: (1) financial incentives; (2) history; (3) affirming cultural

traditions and values; (4) wrap around academic support; (5) relationships and advocacy;(6)

professional development; and (7) an alternative high school. I conclude the chapter by

discussing a change in the value of education and Tribal legacy.

In chapter 6, I analyze data from the study using Critical Race Theory. Critical Race

Theory (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011) is comprised of 5 tenants: racism as a normal

construct, historical context, narratives, interest convergence, and intersectionality. I applied the

four tenants from Critical Race Theory to explain systemic racism experienced by Native

students in this school district. I excluded intersectionality as it was not presented as a data point.

I conclude the chapter by identifying 9 program initiatives implemented in the Tribal program to

counteract racism and historical context. These 9 initiatives included: (1) fostering relationships and effective communication; (2) offering tutoring; (3) placing liaisons in schools; (4) providing summer programming and culture camp; (5) encouraging communication with Tribal Elders, family, and community members; (6) providing advocacy; (7) offering professional development; (8) supporting an alternative high school program; and (9) providing graduation incentives. Interest convergence and narratives were used to counteract racism and historical context.

Finally, chapter 7 provides a summary and discusses implications for schools and Native families. These findings may be beneficial for other school districts to adopt. I conclude the chapter by providing limitations of the study and provide recommendations for further research.

Definitions of Terms

To ensure consistent use and understanding of the terms found in the text, I adopted the following terms and definitions:

"Alaskan Natives," "American Indian," and "Canadian Natives:" terms used as geographical references of the indigenous population. Research using the terms Alaskan Natives and Canadian Natives refer to the indigenous population studied in Alaska or Canada.

"American Indian/Alaskan Native:" a term typically used to capture race and ethnicity. Schools use the term American Indian/Alaskan Native regarding their indigenous population as a whole. The term American Indian/Alaskan Native is not an indication that Alaskan Natives are enrolled in the school district.

Critical Pedagogy: a teaching approach inspired by critical theory and other radical philosophies, which attempts to help students question and challenge posited 'domination' and to undermine the beliefs and practices that are alleged to dominate.

Critical Race Theory (CRT):" a theoretical framework in the social sciences that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power.

"Indigenous," "Native," and "Native American:" terms used to define the indigenous population in America prior to European contact. I use the terms "Native" and "Native American" to speak about indigenous people, and adopt the term used by the study when appropriate.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I conducted a review of the literature to discover factors contributing to Native student graduation rates. I wanted to find reasons why Native students experienced a lower graduation rate than their White peers. I organized my findings into five categories: (1) history of American Indian education; (2) systemic and cultural racism; (3) factors affecting dropout and graduation rates; (4) resiliency factors of Native students; and (5) culturally responsive schools and practices.

My review begins with a brief history of American Indian education, including the initial colonization policies to educational reforms in the 1970's. After introducing different forms of American Indian education, I consider the current Native educational experience. Finally, I turn to a description of resiliency factors for Native students and describe Culturally Responsive schools. The literature describes programs and "best practice" associated with supporting Native Students. The history of American Indian education tells a story of dominance by White society. Because the history of American Indian education provides a schema explaining in part the current low graduation rates among Native students, I begin my review with this topic.

History of American Indian Education

Colonial education in the seventeenth century served several purposes: maintain governmental and religious authority, preserve the separation of social classes, and increase the prosperity of the nation (Spring, 1997). Colonial education adopted an authoritarian approach modeled after an authoritarian patriarchal society prevalent in English colonial society. The ideologies of English colonists differed greatly from Native American tribes operating within a matriarchal society with a universal approach to land (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). When Native Americans resisted colonization, English colonists used education as a primary tool for

colonization and land acquisition. Throughout the history of education, from colonial times to present day, the methods adopted to educate Native Americans have changed to colonize and assimilate Native Americans (Spring, 1997). I now explain the four key pivotal moments in Native American education and describe how each movement impacted Native American cultures.

Deculturalization through Education

The general societal attitude of racial superiority by the English colonists described Native Americans as "savages," a term once given to the Irish (Spring, 1997; Takaki, 2008). The cultural disconnect between English colonists and Native Americans resulted from Native Americans' worldview valuing a matriarchal society with Native women as leaders, and a communal society that shared land, possessions and educated the youth (Spring, 1997). The continued resistance to colonization by the eastern tribes led to an increase in frustration by the English colonists in the seventeenth century. As a result, Congress approved the Naturalization Act of 1790 excluding Native Americans from citizenship (Spring, 1997; Takaki, 2008).

After defeating the Cheyennes in 1867, General Philip Sheridan commented, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead" (Brown, 1972, p. 171). This turned into the infamous expression, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" (p. 172). Thomas Jefferson, concerned with the monetary investment of war, felt it would be more efficient to colonize Native Americans and acquire lands through education by teaching them agricultural and industrial work as means for dependency on the economy (Spring, 1997). Jefferson hoped to begin cultural transformation of "Native Americans values regarding the economy, government, family relations, and property, and manipulate desires regarding the consumption of goods" (p. 42).

Reservation and Boarding Schools

The focus of educational policies in the 19th century centered around stripping Native Americans of their native languages, eradicating Native American traditions, and forcing Native Americans to pledge their allegiance to the United States government (Spring, 1997). Thomas McKenney, the superintendent of Indian trade, believed in the cultural transformation of Native Americans through schooling (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Spring, 1997). In 1819, McKenney convinced Congress to pass the Civilization Fund Act which provided money to schools to educate Native Americans in reading, writing, and arithmetic by White teachers. Reservations and allotment programs (land and compensation) for Native Americans were established as White settlers began their expansion to the West to acquire more land.

The first off-reservation school, Carlisle Indian School, was established in 1879 as a means to remove children from tribal and family influences to civilize Native Americans resisting prior colonization efforts (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Spring, 1997). Native American parents were required to send their children to boarding schools under the duress of facing jail time or a decrease in their allotments. Boarding schools operated in a para-military structure requiring students to wear uniforms, perform manual labor for half the day, and receive instruction the remainder of the day (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Spring, 1997). In the 1920's a variety of investigations were published indicating the deplorable conditions and abuse Native children faced while attending boarding school (Spring, 1997). The most famous reported, called the Meriam Report, revealed how underfunding of boarding schools contributed to student death from malnutrition, tuberculosis, and trachoma (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

Termination and Relocation

In the 1940's and 1950's the United States government established termination and relocation policies to provide freedom for Native Americans under governmental control. However, termination and relocation policies meant eradicating tribal status and moving Native Americans to urban cities (Spring, 1997). These actions were similar to previous governmental practices of denying citizenship and forcing Native Americans to reservations during the 17th century. Resisting termination policies, Native Americans began to demand self-determination (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Spring, 1997). In 1969, the report Indian Education, A National Tragedy-A National Challenge, stated, "A careful review of the historical literature reveals that the dominant policy of the Federal Government toward the American Indian has been one of forced assimilation…[because of] a desire to divest the Indian of his land" (p. 9).

Responding to greater self-determination, the report called for Native American participation in educational programming in federal and local public schools, including early childhood education, adult programming, work-study, and vocational programming (Spring, 1997). Another result of greater self-determination resulted in the Bilingual Education Act (1986), allowing Native American language back in schools. The final movements in Native American education occurred in 1975 with the Tribally Controlled Schools Act, giving tribes lawful rights to operate their own schools (Spring, 1997). In 1978, the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act gave Native American students the right to practice their religion and culture (Reyhner & Eder, 2004; Spring, 1997). This dismal history of American Indian education affected generations of Native students and carries a high cost to the student and society today.

Systemic and Cultural Racism

American Indian/Alaskan Natives experienced two types of racism while navigating school systems: systemic and cultural racism (Field, 2016; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). Systemic racism exists through the structuring of school systems by teaching dominant White values, history, viewpoints, and/or narratives, and ignoring the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; IKS; Cerecer, 2013; Jester, 2002). Teachers and administrators experience more pressure to present dominant ideology as reflected in the curriculum due to the existence of high stakes standardized testing (Thornton et al., 2006). This sometimes prevents teachers from offering culturally relevant curriculum likely to engage Native students (Freng et al., 2007; Jester, 2002; Thornton et al., 2006; Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012; Wilcox, 2015).

Education was historically designed to assimilate Native students, and this practice continues today as schools ignore the needs of Indigenous students (Cerecer, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Some American Indian/Alaskan Native students are subjected to uncaring, complicit teachers (Cerecer, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011) leading students to characterize "their identity as deficient student learners" (Cerecer, 2013, p. 603). Some schools target American Indian/Alaskan Native students, requiring a dress code which marginalizes them even further (Cerecer, 2013). Explaining the effects of policy, Cerecer (2013) stated:

> For many, these policy changes at Hilltop High were subtle yet covert waves of camouflaging prejudice toward Indigenous youth by requiring them to assimilate into the dominant culture's construction of what it means to be a youth and a student. (p. 606-7)

The second type of racism impacting American Indian/Alaskan Natives experiences in school and graduation rates is cultural racism, which occurs through interaction with peers and teachers (Cerecer, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017).

Unwelcome environments, derogative statements from teachers and administrations, as well as racial tensions between students create hostile and unsafe learning environments (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Jester, 2002). Hare and Pidgeon (2011) interviewed American Indian/Alaskan Native high school students and found some students felt their teachers and peers did not like them. One student suggested it was "because I was brown" (p. 100), while another student said:

> I found the teachers were kind of biased. I just didn't like that. Because some of them just wanted to see me, like, fail kind of thing. And I didn't know why, but I just had that feeling every time I was around a few of them. (p. 100)

Administrators are also guilty of cultural racism toward American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Jester (2002) discovered an Alaskan school district that created an "unhealthy Native construct" (p. 10) to explain why Alaskan Natives were failing in their standards-based school system. The study found the existence of a tracking system and an alternative school path emphasizing life skills for Alaskan Native students, while purposefully denying their basic educational rights. Teachers' and administrators' beliefs about American Indian/Alaskan Natives construct Native students as culturally deficient as compared to White students. Systemic and cultural racism left unchecked affect dropout rates.

Factors Affecting Dropout and Graduation Rates

Native American students enter elementary school academically comparable to their peers (Powers et al., 2003) and yet many Native students do not graduate. By the time Native students enter middle school they are academically behind peers and have one of the highest dropout rates. The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) reported that Native students have a 15% dropout rate compared to Black (12%,) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (7%,) White (7%,) and Asian (3%) students. Students dropping out of high school decades ago could support families through employment or military service (Jeffries et al., 2004). Currently,

students without a high school diploma experience unemployment (Jeffries et al., 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), may earn less when employed (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012) and/or engage in crime or become imprisoned (Jeffries et al., 2004).

Trends in graduation and dropout rates are not predictable by state (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Some schools report success with Native students in states with high dropout rates. However, Native students report similar factors influencing their decision to leave high school. Next, I explain reasons Native students drop out of high school. I first describe three types of microaggressions, including microassault, microinsults, and microinvalidation (Sue et al., 2007). This section ends with a description of how poverty-related factors contribute to dropout rates.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are events, actions, and comments degrading marginalized groups unintentionally, indirectly or subtly. Sue et al. (2007) defined microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 273). Subtle forms of microaggressions create stress and self-doubt in students. Most importantly, Native students experiencing microaggressions in schools question their belonging (New, 2015). Native students are expected to assimilate into the dominant White structures of schools (Cerecer, 2013). An understanding of microaggressions and how they affect Native students is needed to reduce the demoralizing effects of racism in school environments.

Microassault

Native students experience microassaults, or overt racism, in schools. Sue et al. (2007) defined microassaults as "explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or

nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim" (p. 274). Microassaults are evident at school sporting events and in student interactions with peers (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) interviewed 42 Native community members and 53 Native youths and found obvious microassaults. During their study, they observed a Native athlete enduring racial tweets during a game. The tweets, "it was the squaw creek massacre [sic] in the OHS gymnasium" and "[student] recreated the trail of tears tonight," (p. 36) were liked and retweeted before being deleted (Boese, 2015, February 20). Similarly, an Alabama school cheerleading team posted a banner reading "Hey Indians, Get Ready to Leave in a Trail of Tears, Round 2" (Educational National, 2013, visual image).

The large disparity between the discipline rates of Native students to White students (Field, 2016; Johnston-Goodstar &VeLure Roholt, 2017) is another example of microassault. The US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) reported American Indian and Native Alaskan students represent less than 1% percent of the student population. And yet Native students account for 2% of suspensions and 3% of expulsions. Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) considered the expulsion rate may be even higher than reported. They found Native students were encouraged to enroll in a different school district instead of being expelled. American Indian and Alaskan Native girls are at a greater risk of being disciplined (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Seven percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native women are suspended compared to 6% of White men and 2% of White women.

Microinsult

Another type of microaggression is microinsult. They are "often unconscious and characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). Examples of

microinsults include the invisibility of Native students (Power et al., 2003), tracking and labeling Native students (Jester, 2002), and assuming Native students are deficient (Cerecer, 2013). Ninety percent of Native students attend public and private schools outside their reservation (Gallagher, 2000). Most Native students are taught by White teachers (Kanu, 2006). Studies show a cultural discontinuity between teachers and Native students (Freng et al., 2007; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017).

Cultural discontinuity involves a belief that Native students are deficient as compared to White peers (Cerecer, 2013, Kanu, 2006; Powers et al., 2003; Wilcox, 2015). Native students are often categorized with stereotypical generalizations, unemployment status and participation in violence, and/or substance abuse (Gallagher, 2000). Instead, teachers should see Native students as individuals with deep cultural histories and values (Wilcox, 2015). One Native educator said, "The culture is the base. If the kids feel bad about themselves or can't deal with their own history or who they are, then school is real difficult" (Gallagher, 2000, p. 36). When not addressed by schools, administration and the community, microinsults perpetuate systemic and cultural racism.

Microinvalidation

Microinvalidations are "often unconscious" and "relate to communication that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017, p. 40). Microinvalidation includes historical trauma, invalidating native voices, and invalidating sovereignty. Jester (2002) explained colonial educational reform framed Native Americans as an inferior race. Jester (2020) said:

> When a paradigm is institutionalized in schools, central aspects of the paradigm continue to flow through the system long after the innovation was developed and implemented. The underlying ideologies become infused within the culture of the system and define the norms and expectations that are seldom questioned and noticed. (p. 7)

Native community members believed teachers were inadequately prepared to educate Native youth (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). Some educators think lack of parental involvement means Native families disregard education (Field, 2016). Teachers were often unaware of the historical trauma caused by boarding schools (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). This lack of cultural knowledge causes teachers to misinterpret parental distrust of schools. Many teachers fail to teach complete Native histories (Cerecer, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). Students are not taught about tribal sovereignty rights and tribal citizenship in mainstream curriculum. Gallagher (2000) emphasized Native student populations are comprised of multiple tribes with their own language, customs and history. And yet schools typically ignore or generalize Native curriculum.

Poverty Related Factors

Poverty related factors contribute to Native graduation and dropout rates. Educational reform allowed tribes to operate schools (Field, 2016; Spring, 1997). However, tribally operated schools receive inadequate funding. Field (2016) reported:

> Yet even today, so-called bureau schools have some of the nation's worst graduation rates. One-third of the buildings are listed by the government as being in poor condition, with leaking foundations and roofs, rotten floors, fallen ceilings and broken water heaters. (p. 33)

Additional challenges include hiring and retaining teachers and administrators (Fenimore-Smith, 2009; Field, 2016). Field (2016) recounted the turnover of five administrators in ten years and 22% of new teaching staff within a year for one tribally operated school. Similarly, Fenimore-Smith (2009) described how one tribally operated school hired teachers who were not licensed. Teachers working on reservations felt uncomfortable participating in community events. Unfortunately, true educational reform will occur only when we deal "with the poverty and disenfranchisement those policies have left behind" (Field, 2006, p. 15).

Native youth living in rural reservations experience a high degree of stress and challenges than their peers (Field, 2016; McMahon et al., 2012). They ranked substance abuse within families (Field, 2016; McMahon et al., 2012), lack of parental support (Jeffries et al., 2004; McMahon et al., 2012), and financial concerns as key indicators of stress. One Native youth said the hardest challenge of reservation life was "watching everybody drink their lives away" (Field, 2016, para. 81). Native youth under extreme stress have an increased rate in alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and suicide. Despite these findings, studies reveal ways American Indian/Alaskan Natives are in fact resilient.

Resiliency Factors of Native Students

Studies focusing on American Indian/Alaskan Native graduation rates have the tendency to concentrate on culturally deficient traits like high absenteeism (Kanu, 2006; Powers et al., 2003; Wilcox, 2015), lack of parent participation (Powers et al., 2003; Thornton et al., 2006; Wilcox, 2015), irrelevant curriculum (Powers et al., 2003; Thornton et al., 2006; Wilcox, 2015), and at-risk behaviors (McMahon et al., 2013). And yet, American Indian/Alaskan Native students have a strong connection to family, including the support of extended family members (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; McMahon et al., 2013; Wilcox, 2015). In fact, Hare and Pidgeon (2011) stated the support of family and community was a contributing factor to American Indian/Native Alaskan perseverance in hostile school settings. Students learned how to navigate school systems because of familial and community support.

> 'We're really, really close with my grandpa…And he always stressed how important education is, like you know, you can't do anything without education, like it's a really big important thing. And that's what I really think about too when I'm at school because I know he would be really proud.' (p. 102)

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) contributes to the resiliency found among American Indian/Alaskan Native students. IKS guide Indigenous people into making decisions

which honors their connections to "living and non-living things" (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 105). In a study examining American Indian/Alaskan Native youth, Hare and Pidgeon (2011) found students advocated for alternative schooling and a culturally responsive education because the mainstream high school lacked this type of programming. Freng et al. (2007) reported how some American Indian/Alaskan Native students took the initiative to teach themselves their indigenous language or research their tribal history for school projects in mainstream high schools. Another study of American Indian/Alaskan Native youth found students reported their love for their family, community ties, and cultural traditions (McMahon et al., 2013). This occurred even though substance abuse, violence, and the overall physical appearance of their community were upsetting to them. The optimism and resilience of American Indian/Alaskan Natives continues to thrive in less than desirable environments. Many advocated for Culturally Responsive Schools to address Native students' needs.

Culturally Responsive Schools and Practices

Culturally Responsive Schools for American Indian/Alaskan Native students incorporate culturally relevant education, tribal values, language, and community support (Demmert et al., 2006; Fenimore-Smith, 2009; Freng et al., 2007; Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012). Wilcox (2015) found American Indian/Alaskan Native students thrived in educational settings offering curriculum focused on "relationships, relevance and rigor" (p. 345). His study found a school district decreasing dropout rates from 15% to 2% after the second year of implementing a Culturally Responsive school. Culturally Responsive practices include interdisciplinary units of study, lenient policies toward absenteeism and a shift away from traditional scheduling. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) found small class sizes, flexible scheduling and culturally relevant curriculum offered a supportive learning environment allowing Native students to thrive. In fact, schools

resembling "the First nations communities in which they lived" contributed to a sense of "friendship and kinship within the schools that created a sense of belonging, support and respect" (p. 106). Creating Culturally Responsive schools improve Native students' morale, sense of identity and belonging while increasing graduation rates.

For example, Kanu (2006) conducted a comparative study between two ninth grade social studies classes in the same school. Fifteen Native Canadian students received a culturally responsive curriculum in one classroom as compared to 16 Native Canadian students who received an Anglo-Canadian instruction in the other classroom. The culturally responsive social studies curriculum integrated Native literature, taught Native government prior to European contact, and promoted Native identity and values. Students enrolled in the Culturally Responsive classroom outperformed their Native peers in the traditional classroom on exams and assignments. Findings showed that Culturally Responsive curriculum gave Native students higher conceptual understanding, confidence, and increased classroom participation.

Similarly, the Native American Indian Center of Stockton Unified School District in California teaches engineering, mathematics, and biology from a Native perspective (Gallagher, 2000). The school reports their Native students were close to a 100% dropout rate in 1986. Their dropout rate changed in 2000 to an astonishing 7%. The Santa Fe Indian School in New Mexico responded to their 50% dropout rate in 1976 by involving community members (Gallagher, 2000). Native elders teach engineering projects incorporating oral history. Culturally responsive curriculum decreased the school's dropout rate to 2% with 80% of graduates attending college. Despite student success, Kanu (2006) found no correlation between culturally responsive curriculum and attendance rates.

Summary, Gaps and Tensions in the Literature

A review of the literature revealed a high disparity between the graduation rates of Native students and their White peers. Racism, cultural discontinuity, and curriculum adversely affected Native students' educational experience. Native students living on reservations are subject to systemic issues, including underfunded tribal schools, the inability to retain qualified teachers and administrators, and poverty related factors. Poverty related factors, on and off the reservation, include financial stress, substance abuse, depression, and suicide. Studies also indicate Native student resilience despite their challenges. Culturally Responsive schools engage and benefit Native students. However, Culturally Responsive schools did not affect high absenteeism. Consideration of flexible schedules and absenteeism is integral for a Culturally Responsive school.

Gaps in the literature include a lack of Native student voice. Counterstories, a component of Critical Race Theory, is necessary to validate and recognize the needs of marginalized students (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Studies focus on race and exclude intersectionality. Intersectionality accounts for race, class, gender, sexuality, and national origin and provides a complete picture of oppression (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2009). Specific professional development for teachers to increase their racial awareness and racial pedagogy is not addressed in the literature. Detailed examples of effective interventions and strategies increasing Native graduation rates is not addressed. An in-depth analysis of Native students' issues is required to dismantle systemic and cultural racism.

Analytical Theory

I analyzed the literature through a critical lens and found applications of Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy. Both theories offer schema explaining the historical and current inequities in Native education. These theories also offer solutions and/or guidance to change Native student experiences. I begin by describing the origin of each theory, the components, and its relevance to the literature. Because Critical Race Theory acknowledges education as a tool for dominance and oppression, I begin my review with this theory.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) founded by Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado, began in the 1980's (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). CRT originated from Critical Legal Studies (CLS). Hostility toward racial reform, including affirmative action, school integration and housing escalated, and racial equality stagnated. Scholars, including Bell and Delgado, developed CRT to explain racial inequities and offer transformative solutions. In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate urged scholars to use tenets of CRT to address the racial inequities in education (Zamudio et al., 2011). Thus, CRT in education was born "to spur a new educational movement" (p. 9).

There are five tenants framing Critical Race Theory: racism as a normal construct, historical context, the importance of narrative, interest convergence, and intersectionality (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). In the following paragraphs, I explain the tenants of Critical Race Theory. Then, I analyze the content literature findings and show how it applies to the tenants of CRT.

CRT begins with the assumption that racism is a normal part in our society (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). White supremacy permeates legal, political, and educational

systems. Taylor et al. (2009) asserted discrimination is evident in "hiring, housing, criminal

sentencing, education, and lending… [and is so] widespread as to be uninteresting and

unconcerning to most Whites" (p. 4). Whites operate from a position of power and privilege that

does not require them to consider the position of the oppressed. The political, economic and

educational advantages granted to Whites make it hard for them to understand the lived

experiences of people of color. CRT uses the knowledge and experiences of people of color "to

challenge and subvert White polity" (p. 4).

The United States touts an ideology of meritocracy. Zamudio et al. (2011) described

meritocracy as a politically constructed "image of society as fair and egalitarian where

individuals rise and fall based on their own merits" (p. 15). This is the premise of the "American

Dream" where anyone can achieve any standard of living as long as they work hard for it.

"Colorblindness" defines meritocracy (p. 21). It is the idea that everyone is equal regardless of

race. Colorblindness refuses to acknowledge racism by suggesting racial discrimination within

political rights or social inequalities are non-existent.

Meritocracy and colorblindness oppress people of color. The ideology of meritocracy and

colorblindness suggest that if people fail it is because of their own merit. They simply did not

work hard enough. Meritocracy and colorblindness fail to recognize systemic racism in political,

legal, and educational systems designed purposefully to oppress people of color (Zamudio et al.,

2011).

Multiple studies show racism is a normal construct in our schools nationwide. Jester's

(2002) study described how one school denied basic educational rights to Alaskan Native

students. The school created a construct of Alaskan Native learners as deficient to justify placing

them in alternative schooling emphasizing life skills. Gallagher (2000) reported how Native

students are often stereotyped. Unemployment, violence and substance abuse were common constructs identifying Native students.

Meritocracy and colorblindness suggest that Native students could achieve academically if they work hard enough. In fact, Field (2016) reported that tribally operated schools account for some of the worst graduation rates in the nation. However, Native students are failing due to systemic racism. Educational policy affects academic achievement for Native students. The simple excuse of Native students not working hard enough ignores the effects of racism on student performance.

Field's (2016) research exposed deplorable conditions. Some Native students attend school in dilapidated buildings due to lack of government funding. Native students also lack exposure to qualified and consistent teachers and administrators. Field (2016) documented the turnover of five administrators in ten years and 22% of new teaching staff within a year for one tribally operated school. Fenimore-Smith (2009) recounted how one tribal school hired unlicensed teachers. Native student success in school is contingent upon school conditions and the perceptions of teacher and staff.

"Whiteness as property" is a concept of CRT (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 31). Historically, the role of race was equated to property rights. Enslaved African Americans and Native Americans stripped of their lands were denied basic property rights. Harris (1995) referred Whiteness as property to White claims to land and labor:

> [R]ace and property were thus conflated by establishing a form of property contingent on race: only blacks were subjugated as slaves and treated as property. Similarly, the conquest, removal, and extermination of Native American life and culture were ratified by conferring and acknowledging the property rights of whites in Native American land. Only white possession and occupation of land was validated and therefore privileged as a basis for property rights. (p. 278)

Property rights, once relegated to White claims to land and labor, morphed into White claims to political, social and economic rights. Zamudio et al. (2011) explained that being White qualified one to enjoy the benefits of a liberal society. The laws and protection of being White created White privilege. Value was tied to being White: "the value of obtaining an education, of working in a trade without exclusion, of organizing politically, of taking part in the social and civic community, and of providing a future for children free of state sponsored violence" (p. 33).

Whiteness created the classification of race, White and non-White. White privilege is only valuable if people of color are not entitled to the same benefits. Therefore, being White was desirable and people of color were viewed as inferior. Zamudio et al. (2011) argued that "the benefits of whiteness, all whites from the wealthy to the poor guarded this right at all costs, and often with the use of deadly violence" (p. 33). White privilege justified Native American colonization and portrayed Natives as an inferior race.

Literature attributes Native American colonization to whiteness as property. Spring (1997) argued American Indian education maintained the separation of social classes and was used as a primary tool for colonization and land acquisition. Spring (1997) and Takaki (2008) reported Native resistance to colonization prompted the approval of the Naturalization Act of 1790. This act excluded Native Americans from citizenship and maintained White privilege.

Literature shows White political and capitalistic interests in the 19th century. Brown (1972) described White sentiment toward Native Americans. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" (p. 172), reinforcing societal views toward Native Americans as an inferior race. Reyhner and Eder (2004) and Spring (1997) reported on how boarding schools and relocation policies continued colonization efforts. White political and economic interests elevated, and White status dehumanizes people of color. Literature provides the historical context of American

Indian education giving us a critical lens to examine the impacts of Native American education today.

The second assumption of CRT is historical context (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). The colonization of Africa and America provides a schema for racism today. Historical racial divides continue to form our social constructs today due to "colonial processes:"

> These colonial processes divided the world between conquered and colonizer, master and slave, white and non-white (i.e., other). It included the development of an ideology, and processes of spreading that ideology (mostly through education), to justify colonization. From these past relationships, legal practices, ideologies, and social mores emerged the construction of racial difference as natural and fixed. Law upon law, practice upon practice, and construction upon construction has brought racial inequality to its current state. (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 4)

Curriculum in the United States highlight the colonization of people of color. Students learn about the enslavement of African Americans and how Native Americans were forced to live on reservations during Western expansion. The US curriculum fails to recognize the uprising and resistance of people of color during colonization. Additionally, students rarely learn the many accomplishments and contributions of people of color from historical to modern day times. Native American government, treaty rights, and cultural heritage are often dismissed or given a cursory glance in US curriculum. As a result, students view Native Americans as a relic of American past and create a social construct about Native Americans as an inferior race.

The historical context of Native Americans continues to dominate school curriculum. Cerecer (2013), Hare and Pidgeon (2011), and Jester (2002) argued school systems focus on dominant White values, White history, and White viewpoints. Narratives and Indigenous Knowledge Systems are often ignored. Furthermore, Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) reported many teachers are unaware of the historical ramifications and impact of boarding schools.

Field (2016) attributed teachers' personal lack of cultural knowledge to creating a false narrative about Native American parent participation in schools. Gallagher (2000) highlighted Native student presence in schools nationwide. Student populations are comprised of Native students from multiple tribes, each with their own language, customs, and history. And yet Native students and parental needs are often ignored and misunderstood. School systems do a disservice to students of all races by generalizing Native American history and ignoring Native presence in today's society.

Narrative is the third assumption of CRT (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Narrative is critical to CRT because it provides an alternative perspective to truth. Banks (1993) explained knowledge is constructed based on personal realities experienced by people. Knowledge is "heavily influenced by their interpretations of their experiences and their positions within particular social, economic, and political systems and structures of a society" (p. 5). Whites operate under a position of power and privilege. White privilege discounts other people's perspectives because they view their own perception of reality as truth. Counterstories from people of color question and challenge the dominant narrative.

Meritocracy and colorblindness refuse to acknowledge systemic racism. Traditional forms of research promote meritocracy and colorblindness using statistics to explain the conditions of people of color (Taylor et al., 2009). As a result, people of color are often blamed for the conditions they live in. CRT scholars use narrative to counteract a dominant narrative. Personal narratives, autobiographies, and storytelling provide truth experienced by people of color (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). People of color name and provide examples of systemic racism often ignored in traditional research.

Literature accurately reflects the Native student experience through narrative inquiry.

Hare and Pidgeon (2011) used Native students voices to document teacher bias. Teacher bias cannot be denied with statements of "because I was brown" (p. 100) and "some of them just wanted to see me, like, fail" (p. 100). Additionally, false narratives concerning Native families' values are counteracted through statements like, "My grandpa…he always stressed how important education is, like you know, you can't do anything without education, like it's a really big important thing" (p. 102). "Watching everybody drink their lives away" (para. 81) exposed the stress Native students experience living on reservations (Field, 2016). Systemic racism impacts Native students personally and academically. Traditional research creates a misconstrued reality without literature highlighting the personal truths of Native student life.

Another concept of CRT is interest convergence. Taylor et al. (2009) compared Marxist theory to interest convergence in "that the bourgeoisie will tolerate advances for the proletariat only if these advances benefit the bourgeoisie even more" (p. 4). In essence, interest convergence builds upon White privilege. Racial equality occurs when it benefits Whites. Interest convergence heavily influences educational policies and practices.

Bell (1980) cited interest convergence as a decisive factor for school integration. *Brown v. Board of Education* advanced the interests of Whites by promoting democracy during the Cold War era. Many believe *Brown v. Board of Education* supports racial equality. CRT scholars argue that *Brown* disguises White political interest to regain favor from countries criticizing the United States for its social and political philosophies in the 1950's (Bell, 1980; Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Although *Brown* integrated schools, literature documents school segregation existing today.

Zamudio et al. (2011) described White flight toward suburban schools as segregation. Schools purposefully increasing student body diversity is an example of interest convergence.

"Evidence provided described how white students were advantaged, both during school but even after they had graduated, as a result of their close academic interactions with students of color" (p. 36). The responsibility of providing this beneficial experience fell on the shoulders of students of color. Diversity in schools is an example of interest convergence. Diversity provides a benefit for White students and marginalizes students of color even further.

The literature I reviewed provided more examples of interest convergence. Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) reported expulsions rate for Native Students may be even higher than reported. Native students were encouraged to enroll in a different school district instead of being expelled. This exemplifies interest convergence because it serves the interest of the school district. School districts discipline Native students while disguising their disciplinary rates for Native students.

Thornton et al. (2006) found teacher and administrator dismissal of culturally responsive curriculum. High stakes standardized testing influences advance placement classes for students and reflect school performance. Standardized testing therefore reinforces a Western canon curriculum. In contrast, Kanu (2006) reported most Native students are taught by White teachers. Jester (2002) reported the tracking and labeling of Native students. Interest convergence suggests these educational policies and practices will continue unless proven beneficial for Whites.

Intersectionality is the final concept of CRT. People are multi-dimensional and cannot be classified by race alone. Zamudio et al. (2011) stated "[T]here is nothing essential about one's race…in other words, there is not a set way of being black or Chicana or American Indian or a woman" (p. 37). Intersectionality accounts for race, class, gender, sexuality, and national origin. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) described the implications when a person, for example, "is both gay and Native American, or both female and black" (p. 57). Delgado and Stefancic (2012)

explained, "individuals like these operate at an intersection of recognized sites of oppression" (p. 57).

The Civil Rights movement and Women's movement did not address the needs of women of color. "The anti-discrimination laws that emerged as a result of these movements tend to privilege either men of color (over women of color) or white women (over women of color)" (p. 37). Delgado and Stefancic's (2012) example of a black, single, working mother discriminated at work by her White male boss experienced many forms of oppression. She may be oppressed by her race, gender, and class. Taylor et al. (2009) asserted "an intersectionality analysis forces us to see the relationship between sexism and racism as symbiotic" (p. 146). A review of literature focused on student's racial experiences in school and failed to consider gender, class and sexuality. The need for intersectionality when researching Native student experiences is imperative.

Critical Race Theory (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011) is useful in qualitative research. CRT provides a historical construct explaining bias in education. CRT also provides a framework for understanding educational policies and practices. I chose CRT to explain the root causes of low Native American graduation rates. CRT fits my review section of literature. Most studies focusing on Native student graduation rates report systemic and cultural racism in schools, explain factors contributing to Native student dropout and graduation rates, and describe the resiliency factors of American Indian/Alaskan Native students. I next review Critical Pedagogy and its relevance to the literature.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy originates from critical theory. Rooted in Marxism, critical theorists analyze social conditions that oppress people. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated critical theorists

"are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class and gender" (p. 29). Critical pedagogy, therefore, is an educational philosophy concerned with liberating oppressed people through an awakening of consciousness. Noddings (2012) stated:

> Paulo Freire is one of the educational theorists who have emphasized the necessity of raising consciousness in the newly literate. Oppressed populations need to know something about the forms of oppression and the ways in which the dominant group will try to exploit their literacy. (p. 73)

Critical pedagogy is attributed to Paulo Freire's book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Freire was an innovative literacy educator in Brazil. His pedagogical approach stemmed from building authentic relationships with indigenous people. Freire resisted the traditional approach of teaching literacy. Instead, he began literacy instruction with generative words, or meaningful words, to the indigenous community. Freire believed generative words gave oppressed communities the power to command language and ideas. His powerful approach liberated oppressed peoples by giving them the ability to liberate themselves (Crotty, 1998).

Freire's critical pedagogy philosophy is vital to understanding Native students' educational experience. Freire believed humans become dehumanized when they believe they have no power to change their current reality. "Such dehumanization is the characteristic of exploitation, oppression and all other forms of injustice, marking both those whose humanity is stolen and those who have stolen it" (Crotty, 1998, p. 152). Literature demonstrates how Native students are dehumanized through educational policies and practices. Spring (1997) documented how colonial education stripped Native Americans of their language as a tool for civilization and oppression. Cerecer (2013) and Hare and Pidgeon (2011) reported how education, once historically designed to assimilate Native students, continued to ignore the needs of Indigenous

students. Cerecer (2013) and Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) described overt racisms in schools toward Native students.

Freire (1970) believed liberation occurred through action and reflection through dialogue. Dialogue was a critical component of Freire's literacy programs. Freire considered students and teachers as equal, mutual partners in critical thinking and reflective dialogue. He challenged pedagogy of the oppressed by validating students' ability to educate teachers instead of teachers being the sole educators.

Literature supports the need for a collaborative relationship between teachers and students. Wilcox (2015) argued that teachers should see Native students as individuals with deep cultural histories and values. Gallagher (2000) documented a Native educator's perspective on critical pedagogy. "The culture is the base. If the kids feel bad about themselves or can't deal with their own history or who they are, then school is real difficult (para. 13). In fact, Hare and Pidgeon (2011) found schools resembling "the First nations communities in which they lived" contributed to a sense of "friendship and kinship within the schools that created a sense of belonging, support and respect" (p. 106).

Freire acknowledged human's capacity to create (Crotty, 1998). He believed humans can see and respond to experiences. "In constantly transforming the environment, women and men are shaping the very conditions for their existence and their life. They are changing themselves" (p. 150). Freire's philosophy is further defined by reflection and action. Humans must develop critical consciousness and see themselves as catalysts to transform their current reality.

Studies show how Native students' cultural history is ignored in curriculum (Cerecer, 2017; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017). And yet, in some instances, Native students were catalysts for change. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) found students advocated for a culturally

responsive education since their mainstream high school lacked critical pedagogy. Freng et al. (2007) reported how some American Indian/Alaskan Native students took the initiative to teach themselves their indigenous language. Students also researched their tribal history for school projects.

Multiple studies attribute critical pedagogy to dismantling systemic and cultural racism. Culturally responsive schools adopting a critical pedagogy approach increase Native student achievement and lower dropout rates. Kanu's (2006) study reported students enrolled in the Culturally Responsive classroom outperformed their Native peers in a traditional classroom on exams and assignments. Kanu's findings showed culturally responsive curriculum gave Native students higher conceptual understanding, confidence, and increased classroom participation. Gallagher (2000) found one school district taught engineering, math and biology from a Native perspective and decreased dropout rates from 100% in 1986 to an astonishing 7% in 2000. Gallagher (2000) documented a similar school decreased dropout rates from 50% in 1976 to 2% by having Native elders incorporate oral history in engineering.

Critical pedagogy is useful in qualitative research (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy provides a construct explaining how education can oppress people of color. Critical pedagogy also provides a framework for understanding best practices for Native students. I chose critical pedagogy to explain the root causes of low Native American graduation rates. Critical pedagogy fits my review section of literature. Most studies focusing on Native student graduation rates report how critical pedagogy impacts student success.

I adopted a transformative framework in research methodology to see how Native students achieve in schools. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted transformative frameworks are critical when studying marginalized people. "Knowledge is not neutral and it reflects the power

and social relationships within society; thus, the purpose of knowledge construction is to aid

people to improve society" (p. 25). CRT and critical pedagogy are two transformative

frameworks I adopted in my case study. My main focus was on CRT as it explained the culture

of the school allowing or preventing critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the contributing factors associated with increased graduation rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native students enrolled in a Midwestern school district. Because my study involves one school district in partnership with a Tribal Council, I used a pragmatic approach (whatever works; Patton, 2015) for data collection and analysis. I used program evaluation methods recommended by Patton (2015) to not only describe the efficacy of the education programming but also the process used to establish and sustain the changes leading to significantly higher graduation rates of Native students. In the following section I explain the overall research design and methodology, including recommendations for conducting Indigenous Peoples research.

Qualitative Research

Researchers use qualitative research to address political, cultural, and social issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative researchers study "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative researchers observe participants in their natural setting. Data collection includes open-ended interview responses, observations, and document review (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Qualitative researchers may adopt a mixed method approach offering fixed choice questions and open-ended questions. The open-ended approach to questioning allows participants to share their perspectives and personal narratives. The researcher acts as the key instrument designing questions, collecting data, and interpreting any patterns, categories or themes stemming from the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research relies on inductive and deductive reasoning to interpret data (Creswell &

Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Research is conducted within the setting of the participants to provide context of "how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur" (Maxwell, 2013, pg. 30). The qualitative researcher finds and analyzes reoccurring patterns and allows participants to review their personal narratives to shape themes. Qualitative research begins with an overview of how the research will be conducted but may change due to the emergent nature of this method (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). In data collection, interview questions may change, and the number of participants may expand to gain a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained the reason for change in qualitative research: "researchers are bound not by cause-and-effect relationships among factors but rather by describing the complex interactions of factors in any situation" (p. 44). Finally, qualitative researchers disclose how their personal background may influence the interpretation of the study and what personal benefit they will derive from the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Approach

Pragmatism is a component of qualitative inquiry. It seeks concrete solutions to address a social problem. It is "action research questions, seeking practical and useful insights to inform action" (Patton, 2015, p. 152). A pragmatic approach to qualitative inquiry research uses multiple methods and sources to collect and analyze data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pragmatism investigates diverse perspectives while being aware of time constraints and resources (Patton, 2015).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described pragmatism as a whatever works approach to research. Researchers have freedom in choosing "the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes" (p. 27). This whatever works approach complements

evaluation and case study research. Multiple types of data will be collected to answer my research question. Many program elements were analyzed to determine how Native students are supported. In essence, my research study provided factors which contributed to Native student graduation rates.

Program evaluation studies the characteristics of a program, explains how it works, describes why it is effective, and provides recommendations for future use (Patton, 2015). Program evaluation goes beyond reporting achieved results by including unanticipated effects. Patton (2015) explained, "[G]etting into case details better illuminates what worked and what didn't work along the journey to outcomes-the kind of understanding a program needs to undertake improvement initiatives" (p. 181). Program evaluation seeks to find the answers to the following questions:

> What was the model being implemented? To what extent was the model implemented as designed (the fidelity question)? What are the variations in participation, and what explains those variations? To what extent can documented outcomes be attributed to the intervention (the attribution question)? What, if any, unanticipated outcomes and impacts occurred? (p. 179)

Pragmatism and program evaluation methodology were necessary approaches for my research. I sought to understand what/why/and how specific educational programs contributed to Native student success. I approached my research through an inquiry lens, determining what works and what does not work. Critical Race Theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015) and Critical Pedagogy (Patton, 2015) complement pragmatism and program evaluation.

Critical change criteria examines "situations of social injustice," interprets the "findings as a critique of the existing situation," and uses "the findings and critique to mobilize and inform change" (Patton, 2015, p. 692). Critical Race Theory is an example of critical change criteria. Critical Race Theory seeks to understand the "relationship between race, racism, and power"

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). Researchers using Critical Race Theory methodology keep race and racism at the forefront throughout the entire research process. The researcher "challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color; and offers transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in our societal and institutional structures" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 30).

Critical Pedagogy is another example of critical change criteria. Paulo Freire's "philosophy of praxis and liberation education" gave birth to Critical Pedagogy (Patton, 2015, p. 692). Davis (2008) explained it as a research choice providing voice to marginalized people. It also "takes the concept of knowledge as power and equalizes the generation of, access to, and use of that knowledge" (p. 140).

Critical Race Theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015) and Critical Pedagogy (Patton, 2015) align with the pragmatism and program evaluation methodologies. Critical Race Theory provides personal narratives from people of color offering a diverse perspective. Critical Pedagogy describes successful teaching practices and curriculum for American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Essentially, people of color critique their own social injustice and provide solutions. Critical Race Theory and Critical Pedagogy allows Native staff, students, and families opportunities to voice what they need from educational systems and programs. The findings from my case study of a successful school program may serve as an exemplar of successful American Indian/Native Alaskan pedagogy and programs. Before beginning my study, I submitted and gained approval to conduct a study involving human subjects research.

Role of the Researcher

I am an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. My parents are members of the same tribe which is uncommon these days. It's pretty rare to

trace your entire ancestry, cultural traditions, and family stories to one plot of land. My parents left the reservation when they were young and newly married, so I was never raised on the reservation. We would however go back to the reservation every summer to visit. My parents taught me about my cultural heritage and identity at an early age. It was important to my parents that I knew how to act and could blend in when I returned to the reservation.

These early experiences, combined with attending all White schools, formed the basis of my cultural identity. Attending White private schools most of my life exposed me to a Western canon of curriculum and instruction which can be attributed to my assimilation. Having strong connections and family ties to the reservation ensured that I knew what it felt to be Indigenous. Being an enrolled member of a tribe affirms my cultural identity to Whites and Native Americans. The fact that I am an enrolled member of a tribe gives me the credibility to speak about Indigenous issues. It also serves as a natural way to connect with students, families, and people of color.

During my research, I interviewed the Tribal Education department staff. My cultural heritage and tribal enrollment helped me to establish a rapport with the Tribal Education staff. Their assistance with providing me the knowledge of their program provfed imperative to my research. Tribal Education Department staff also served as the gatekeepers of the Native families they partnered with. The choose to provide me access to their Native community and families and I felt grateful for their candor and willingness to participate in the interview.

My educational background served as a benefit and a hindrance. I am an elementary teacher with training in differentiation, classroom management practices, and racial equity. I was an assistant principal for four years and oversaw teacher performance reviews. I also handled student discipline. My background enables me to observe classroom instruction and determine

effective pedagogy. I examined curriculum through a racial lens but do not have significant curriculum experience using Indigenous knowledge systems. I relied on the Tribal Education staff to assist me with the Indigenous knowledge systems they use and value.

As a Native student and educator, I experienced racial bias from my teachers, my classmates, my teacher colleagues, and through educational policies and curriculum. I know what it is like to be marginalized and immediately identified with students of color in the classroom. When I previously observed Native students in their classroom interacting with their teachers and peers, I can pick up on subtle racial nuances indicating the teachers' comfort level and safety of their environment.

Institutional Review Board

My case study involves a Midwestern school district with substantially higher graduation rates than other districts. To protect the privacy of the research participants, I changed the name of the school district and the Native American community partnering with the district. I renamed the school district to East River Bend. I renamed the Native American tribe to Eagle River Indian Community. During the 2018-2019 school year, East River Bend school district reported a 90.8% graduation rate compared to the state average of 82.7%. American Indian/Alaskan Native students represented 3.4% of the student population or 92 of the 2,690 students enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.).

Eagle River Indian Community has partnered with East River Bend school district for 30+ years. This successful partnership increased graduation rates for Native students from 20% to 90% (Boese, 2015, June 27). The partnership focus is on the achievement and graduation rates of Native students. Cultural liaisons partner with students and families in the elementary schools, middle school, and high school.

My application for research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board. My IRB tracking number is 1284612-2, see Appendix A. I also completed the CITI program requirement, see Appendix B. I contacted the school district, Appendix C, and the Tribal Education department, Appendix D, and received permission from both to conduct my research. I honored the guidelines of IRB by getting consent from each participant, see Appendix E. As the primary investigator, I protected participant privacy and kept my data in a secure place. I interviewed 17 adults 18 years of age and older.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

The Eagle River Tribal Education Department has an education manager who initially implemented the partnership between East River Bend school district. The Tribal Council employs three cultural liaisons who work directly with Native students and families at the elementary, middle and high school level. I started my research with the Eagle River Indian Education department. Interviewing staff members provided a schema for the overall program. The Tribal Education department served as an important way to learn about the Indian Education program. I also asked for recommendations regarding who to interview.

I interviewed five administrators. These administrators were important gatekeepers because their cooperation allowed me access to teachers and classrooms. Administrators provided insight into which teachers have a high Native student population in their classroom and were appropriate candidates for my research. The administrators also described the overall school culture and explained the discipline rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native students.

I asked the Tribal Education department to nominate Native families who would discuss the student's educational experiences at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

Due to the qualitative nature of my research, I did not recruit participants through flyers.

Rather, I relied on purposeful sampling. The Tribal Education department and district and school administrators provided the names of the initial teachers to contact for my research study. After speaking with a teacher, they recommended I speak with another teacher who can aid in my research. Creswell and Poth (2018) highlighted the importance of "snowball or chain" sampling where research participants identify other potential participants who "are information-rich" (p. 159). Teachers and families served as a compass guiding my research in a new direction.

All research participants signed a general consent form describing the purpose of my research. Participants understood their participation was voluntary and involved compensation. The also knew they could withdraw their participation at any time. Additionally, all participants were over the age of 18 years old. I received permission from the superintendent of East River Bend school district to interview teachers and staff during or after the school day.

Table 1 is a list of the participants I interviewed with their corresponding pseudonyms.

Table 1

Participants in study

Name	Role	District Experience
Smith	2nd Grade Teacher	< 5 years
Miller	Kindergarten Teacher	> 10 years
Anderson	Kindergarten Teacher	> 10 years
Jordan	2nd Grade Teacher	> 10 years
Kennedy	Alternative High School Teacher	> 10 years
Nelson	Elementary Administrator	> 10 years
Hanson	Elementary Principal	> 10 years
Peterson	Former High School Principal	5 years
Moore	High School Principal	> 10 years
Clark	Alternative High School Principal, Director of Support Services	> 10 years
Maynor	Native American Parent	> 10 years
Martin	Elementary Liaison	5 -10 years
Thomas	Middle School Liaison	5-10 years
Taylor	High School and Alternative High School Liaison	< 5 years
Kingbird	Indian Education Program Director	> 10 years
Crow	Tribal Council President, Parent	> 10 years
Parker	Resident	> 10 years

I now describe the data collected during the initial phases of conducting my research study.

Data Collection

Interviews, field notes, and documents (refers to any type of media) were collected throughout my research. Case study research uses multiple sources of data to ascertain a complete picture of the event being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I first describe each type of

data I collected, including the procedures used and the steps taken to ensure the methods for

conducting qualitative research were followed. I discuss ethical considerations followed during

the data collection process. Brickman and Kvale (2015) described interviews as an attempt "to

understand the world from the subjects' point of view" (p. 3). For that reason, I started my

research study with interviews.

Interviews

I interviewed 17 participants to learn how a successful partnership between the East River

Bend school district and the Eagle River Indian Community increased Native student graduation

rates. Interviews assist qualitative researchers with an insider's perspective of events and

programs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Brickman and Kvale (2015) elaborated that "knowledge is

constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 4).

I started by interviewing members of the Eagle River Tribal Education department. The

Tribal Education department staff created the partnership with East River Bend schools and

provided a schema to the overall program. Additionally, Tribal Education staff acted as

gatekeepers, the initial contact for qualitative researchers who name vital people to interview

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inclusion of gatekeepers in Indigenous research is critical in

addressing cultural mistrust (Creswell, 2016).

I followed IRB protocols when interviewing Tribal Education staff, East River Bend school

administrators and teachers, and Native parents in the district. I audio recorded each interview

and transcribed interviews using a combination of listening and transcribing and used a software

program which converted speech to text. I then listened to the recorded interviews to check for

accuracy on the transcript before completing the transcription process. I kept the files on a

password protected computer which was not accessible by anyone except me.

Participant confidentiality was maintained by removing all identifying information from the interview files. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant and kept the master list documenting the assigned aliases in a locked cabinet separate from the transcribed interviews. I kept the audio files until my dissertation defense. I will destroy them six months after the approval date.

Interview questions should be "open-ended, general and focused" on understanding the phenomenon in the case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 165). Adopting a program evaluation approach (Patton, 2015) to my research, I asked each participant the same six open-ended questions: What is the partnership between Eagle River Indian Community and East River Bend schools? How is this program implemented within the district? What challenges do Native students experience in school? What do you contribute to Native student success? What program changes would you like to see implemented if any? Who should I talk to in order to learn more? See Appendix F for a list of my interview questions.

Using interviews as a form of data for my research supports the principles of CRT. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained three goals of CRT during qualitative research: present social injustices from the viewpoints of the oppressed, eradicate "racial subjugation" while acknowledging race as a social construct, and address intersectionality (p. 30). Interviews are an essential platform for gathering narratives from Native parents and Native staff. Interviews will also provide insight into intersectionality missing from literature.

I adhered to ethical considerations during the interview process. Being an avid listener is critical when conducting interviews. Moustakas (1994) emphasized how researchers should focus on the experience of the participant. Researchers should not interpret. This allows "a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). As a Native researcher I considered my personal biases and allowed the participant to describe their

own experiences. I protected participant privacy, taking great care to secure the data collected, and removed all identifying information from the data.

Documents

Documents support interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I examined purposeful documents including discipline rates, graduation rates, news articles, and school board meetings posted online. Documents apply to CRT because it expresses school culture and climate. I used state based disciplinary reports, graduation rates, and online news to provide additional perspectives to interview data. I adhered to ethical considerations while collecting documents. State based documents, school board meetings, and online news sources are available to the public. However, I did not collect any documents that contain confidential information without permission and consent from the school or Tribal Community.

Observation and Field Notes

Creswell and Poth (2018) described two observation types I used during my research. The researcher subscribing to a "nonparticipant or observer as participant" role "watches and take field notes from a distance" (p. 168). "Participant as observer" describes the researcher participating in the activity to "gain insider views and subjective data" (p. 167). Observations of the Tribal community and of the school buildings provided importance evidence for Native student experiences. For example, the alternative high school facility and its location provided a stark contrast to the traditional high school. The comparison of the idyllic river town was compared to Tribal pride evident with all their Tribal flags displayed throughout the community. The bus route from the reservation to the five schools helped me to understand Native student experience.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is critical in qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data" (p. 233). Analyzing data begins with the first piece of data that is collected. Data analysis continues throughout the research process. As themes occur and/or change, data analysis points the researcher in a new direction for collecting data. Data analysis primary purpose is answering the research question. Data collection is complete when no new themes emerge.

I began the process of data analysis by reading the first data I collected. I made comments, observations, and notes in the margin. Since this was my first analysis I wanted to identify any portions that might be useful. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified this process as "open coding" (p. 204). Next, I reviewed my open codes and grouped the codes that went together. This process is called analytical coding. Analytical coding helps the researcher to reflect and interpret the meaning of the data.

I then moved on to my next piece of data and determined if any segments of data fit the first grouping of data. I made a new list of codes for this second piece of data as well. Merging the first set of codes with the second creates themes forming my research. In the initial stage of coding, I was inductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I looked for any themes I identified in the next piece of data. As I continued analyzing data, the themes were stronger and less in number. Closer to the end of my research, I was deductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016,) finding evidence that support my final themes.

Patton (2015) said, "since as a qualitative analyst you do not have a statistical test to help tell you when an observation or pattern is significant, you must rely first on your own sense

making, understandings, intelligence, experience and judgement" (p. 572). As a qualitative researcher I interpreted data into corresponding themes. I used NVivo, a software program, to help me organize my analysis. This software helped me assign codes to data and allowed me to retrieve all data points assigned to a particular code. Although I used software, I was still responsible for analyzing the data. Software organized the data efficiently, giving me more time to construct meaning from the data.

I took precautionary efforts to secure my data analysis. I made a duplicate copy of my data and stored it in a locked cabinet. This provided an emergency backup in case my data was lost or damaged during my analysis.

Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

Reliability and validity are critical in qualitative research. Reliability and validity provide confirmation that the study is accurate and complete. Case studies are considered reliable when they are complete, consider alternative perspectives, display sufficient evidence, are significant, and are composed in an engaging manner (Creswell and Poth, 2018). I worked to ensure my study met the criteria for reliability.

I approached validity through a researcher's lens. There are multiple methods for this approach. I used corroborating evidence through triangulation and clarifying researcher bias. Corroborating evidence through triangulation means I collected multiple types of data and looked for confirmation of themes. Finding a particular theme from multiple data sources provides validity.

Parkers and Roberts (2011) stated:

[Adopting] "a critical race theory approach requires a theoretical sensitivity to race as a personal quality of the researcher…. [Researchers] acknowledge an awareness of the various meanings of the data, or situation, or reason where race and ethnicity are central to the study of the issue. The research process involves reviewing the existing research on race and ethnicity, looking at one's own professional experience with race, and one's personal experience with race (p. 80).

As I conducted data and reported themes, I ensured my personal experiences and biases did not influence the data. On the other hand, I used my knowledge as an enrolled member of my tribe for cultural interpretations that White researchers may lack. This allowed me to gain trust and creditability with Indian Program staff and Native parents.

Ethical Considerations

There are strong ethical implications with Indigenous research. Indigenous people have a long history of being colonized. Researchers marginalize Indigenous communities when they use cultural information from Indigenous people for their own advantage. Traditional research often dismisses Indigenous narratives and provide a Western canon approach to interpretations. Indigenous research methodologies protect Indigenous people from colonization.

Indigenous research is similar to a Western approach to research with a few caveats. Typically, research is conducted by an Indigenous person who understands the culture. Indigenous research is similar to CRT in that narratives from Indigenous people are included in the research. Research is concluded by presenting the findings to the Indigenous community. Instead of taking knowledge from Indigenous communities, Indigenous research brings the knowledge back to the Indigenous community. As a Native researcher, I adopted Indigenous methodology to my research.

CHAPTER FOUR – THE EFFECTS OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA ON NATIVE
STUDENTS

"Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children."
-Sitting Bull

Eagle River Indian Community

Like most midwestern Tribal reservations and communities, entering Tribal lands would be indiscernible if it were not for the signs. At first glance, midwestern Tribal reservations tend to depict their neighboring towns. The architecture of the homes, businesses, and buildings mirror the architecture of most midwestern communities. Tribal lands could go unnoticed, if not for the signs. For outsiders, the signs bring a level of awareness.

Some midwestern Tribal reservations and communities have a billboard-sized sign welcoming people to their Tribal nation as they enter. Others notify that their land is closed to hunters, trappers, or even closed to outsiders due to COVID. Non-members are asked to turn around. Approaching Eagle River Indian Community is an event. Billboards advertising the casino and promoting recent high dollar payouts remind visitors the purpose for their visit. Crossing over and entering Tribal land, it is easy to miss the Tribal community welcome sign. The casino and hotel sign commands attention and beckons adventurers to come and play.

Eagle River Indian Community has the standard baseball field and convenience store that most small midwestern towns offer. The small, hometown feeling echoes surrounding communities. The fact that this town is on designated Tribal land might be forgettable, if not for the constant reminders posted throughout. Building signs, including the water tower, proudly display the Tribal name or Tribal flag. Even the residential road signs bear Native names. All these signs serve as constant reminders that non-Natives are guests on Tribal land. As a guest, you have no incentive to stay beyond the casino trip.

For Natives, however, the Tribal signs represent home, a place of refuge. Tribal nation and Tribal flags represent Native pride. The signs speak to the Tribe's resilience. The signs also serve as a teaching point to Native youth and as a constant reminder to Tribal Members that they are, in fact, sovereign.

Throughout history, the U.S. government imposed genocidal efforts to extinguish their Tribal ancestors, including forced relocation, war and imprisonment, stolen lands, broken treaties, poverty, and starvation. This Tribe was able to buy back their stolen land and eventually flourish, even though the U.S. Government preceded to flood livable Tribal land and burial mounds. Tribal flags posted throughout the community are indeed significant. For you see, the Tribal signs proudly represent survival, strength, ancestry, cultural values, and an inextinguishable resistance to colonization.

Living in Eagle River Indian Community is comparable to other midwestern Tribal reservations. It is not a place without devasting consequences. Historical trauma has placed a heavy toll throughout Indian Country (Brave Heart et al., 1998; Brave Heart, 2000; Brown-Rice, 2013; Evans-Campbell, 2008). Tribal nations throughout the U.S is lovingly referred to as "Indian Country" among Native Americans. Some families in the Tribal community thrive, while other families have their own personal challenges resulting from historical trauma.

Stories about substance abuse, teen suicide, poverty, and defeatism provide the narrative for what plagues Indian Country. Poverty and trauma serve as a common and an unfortunate communal experience. Eagle River is not exempt from the impacts of historical trauma. However, tragedy is like storm clouds covering the sun. When the storm clouds part, the sun shines brightly. The beauty and reverence in the Tribal community can be fully seen and appreciated, despite its areas of hardship.

One of the most beautiful components of Indian Country is that our youth are born and raised within a community with strong ancestral ties to the land. Tribal Members are raised knowing their culture and family from birth. They can trace their ancestry and connection to the land.

In Eagle River, like every Tribal nation, everyone is related and connected to each other. This connectivity is a highly regarded cultural norm in Indian Country, so much so, that our youth introduce themselves by their individual name, the name of their parents, and their grandparents. Elders will often ask Native youth who their parents and grandparents are, if not properly introduced. Ancestry, but most importantly, connectivity is critical. Elders may not be acquainted with parents, but often recognize the names of grandparents.

Connectivity, a valued cultural norm, played a crucial role with survival. Native Tribes survived, prior to colonization efforts and after, by communal principles of taking care of each other. Elders and youth are held in high regard. Elders hold the key to sacred traditions and teachings. The future relies on Native youth to continue these traditions.

Eagle River is not an exception. This cultural norm has been passed down from generation to generation. Eagle River resisted colonization and flourished because they care for one each other and have passed embedded cultural norms as a survival tactic.

Kingbird, the Indian Education director, who has worked with the Tribe for the past 30 years, described how cultural values and sacred knowledge were passed down from elders to the next generation. Kingbird described how one of the spiritual leaders imparted their wisdom to multiple youth and tasked them with the cultural knowledge of the Tribe. Although this Tribal elder passed, the sacred, cultural teachings were preserved. This illustration provided an example of cultural survival.

Kingbird reflected:

> One of our spiritual leaders in our community…[an] unbelievable wealth of information like many of our elders…but he had taken the time for those young men and women in the community to really task them or teach them certain things about our culture and our traditions…so even though we were all sad when he walked on, and everyone was like what are we going to do now that [he's] gone because he was such a huge resource, and an elder, a veteran, and all those things…So again, our elders really having that foresight, and believing in those traditional teachings of passing it on and forward…When we're going through really hard times and challenges in all of our Tribal communities, it's comforting to know that we have those people that are there and are going to carry that to the next generation.

Crow, the Tribal Council president acknowledged the importance of honoring and continuing Tribal wisdom. Crow spoke about Tribal elders imparting the importance of education. Crow stated:

> Councils before me realized years ago that the only way we were going to succeed was to invest in our education; and educate our kids in the White man's world. So, it started way before me, but I am very strong on education.

Crow reflected, "It's amazing what our kids can do so. Yeah, I'm proud that we were able [to continue] that. My predecessor had the foresight to invest in the education and we just continue to do that."

Eagle River Indian community has not only survived but thrived. Cultural norms and teachings have preserved their identity. Despite all odds and historical oppression, Tribal Members have shown an incredible amount of resilience and have been able to retain their rights to Tribal sovereignty. The Tribal flags serve as a reminder for the community.

Eagle River Indian Community differs from other Tribal reservations across the U.S. Eagle River does not have their own Tribal school. Native youth are bussed to a neighboring school district that serves a predominately White population. Education is a highly regarded cultural component to the Tribe. As a result, Native youth are asked to succeed in a White

educational institution. Native youth leave the safety and refuge of their Tribal community and are asked to adhere to and compete within White cultural norms.

Leaving the reservation to the neighboring White suburban town is momentous. The bus commute takes less than ten minutes but leaves a lasting an impression on Native students. Siblings and neighbors from kindergarten through high school are crammed three to a seat. The bus leaves the reservation, situated within a river valley, and climbs up the curving, canyon roads to the adjacent town. The students' ears pop as they make the ascent to the school that may not honor their Native cultural norms. This serves as a physical sign that they are about to become an outsider. Native student safety nets are no longer securely in place.

High schoolers watch their younger siblings depart at the elementary and middle school. Siblings are now separated and will not reunite until the end of the school day. Older siblings have no control of what lies ahead for their younger siblings. They can no longer protect them and provide them a sense of comfort and security. This feeling is reminiscent of boarding schools. Young Native children were forcibly removed from their homes to attend state run boarding schools or religious affiliated boarding schools.

Although Native youth in Eagle River Indian community attend public school and did not experience the trauma of boarding schools, some of their parents and grandparents certainly did. Native families are consoled knowing that reunification occurs daily after the school day. The last school bell finally rings. It is an auditory sign that Native siblings will once again reunite.

The trek is made back to the reservation on the yellow school bus. Once again, Native students' ears pop as they descend into their Tribal community. This physical sign is a representation that they are almost home. The Tribal signs and flags welcome their safe return. Students are back within the confines of their community, back to their place of refuge.

East River Bend

East River Bend, a quiet, Midwestern town of approximately 16,000 people, provides the backdrop to this study. Situated along a major river, East River Bend offers breathtaking views of surrounding bluffs, lush greenery, and majestic eagles soaring in the sky. Driving into the town itself presents quite a scenic view. Nestled between pristine farms, it is common to see horses grazing among picket fences and towering rock formations. The scenic highway dips down and curves to the left and right as it approaches the town. Directional signs advertise biking trails, canoeing, tubing, and kayaking along the river.

Best described as a quaint, historic, river town, East River Bend succinctly blends trendy, boutique-style shops with small-town living. The architecture on main street comprises of two-story brick buildings. A historic hotel, a brewery, pottery shops, and antique stores beckon tourists to spend the day exploring this charming town. Two marinas are available for boating and fishing enthusiasts. A large park near the river offers even more places for visitors and townspeople to gather.

Like most towns along the river, the landscape of East River Bend is terraced. Smaller, older homes line the streets surrounding the historic downtown. Further up the hill, away from the river, mid-size, middle-class homes create a residential feel to the town. Playgrounds, parks, and hiking trails are sprinkled in between these homes. Multimillion-dollar homes, with walls of windows, sit on top of the hill overlooking the river. Although the town feels economically diverse, the population is mainly White.

East River Bend offers two elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and an alternative high school. The alternative high school presents itself at the edge of town. Located inside a cultural center, the alternative school shares space with art galleries and studios, a

theater scene shop, a music center, and a photography shop. The building is simultaneously artsy, eclectic, and inviting. Approximately 60 students attend the alternative high school.

A mile up the road, still close to the outer edge of town, one of the elementary schools sits pristinely. A sprawling, one-story brick building, this elementary school educates approximately 350 students. The second elementary school and the nearby middle school are only seven miles away; a short drive through town. Both schools are neatly tucked into their middle-class neighborhoods. The second elementary school, which is not as large, serves approximately 300 students and the middle school 500 students.

The high school is another mile up the road at the outer edge of town. The high school houses approximately 1,150 students from eighth to twelfth grade. The sprawling campus, an athlete's paradise, offers a hockey arena and separate fields for softball, baseball, soccer, and football. Its brick architecture matches the design of the elementary and middle school. In fact, all the schools in East River Bend have a similar, almost uniform design and architecture. The alternative high school, with its unique style, presents itself as the only outlier.

East River Bend provides a small-town lifestyle to residents. Smith, an elementary teacher in the district, stated they loved East River Bend "because it's just a great small-town community feel." Nelson, an elementary administrator, agreed and described it as "the best small, large-small town you'll find in the state." Similar to typical small towns, people in East River Bend know each other, their families, and even their business. Hanson, another elementary administrator in the district said, "It's a fishbowl like a lot of small towns. I didn't expect it to act as much like a small town as it does." Nelson stated, "It's small enough that you know everybody, or you know a lot of people, or you know somebody who knows somebody, but big enough to have a Target and a Walmart."

It takes time to transition from a newcomer to a local resident. Hanson elaborated, "The people here are very friendly, like a lot of small towns. It can be a little tough to break in when you're from the outside. It's taken me 13 years, but I would say by and large, people are very friendly." The close-knit community appeals to the town's residents and is an ideal town to raise a family.

I asked what made East River Bend an ideal place. Nelson responded, "Everything. I'm raising my family here." Clark, a high school administrator and support services director, reminisced, "I grew up in… [East River Bend and] I graduated from…[East River Bend]. And I was truly raised by that community. If I did anything wrong, I was toast because everybody knew…my dad." After working in a metropolitan city, Clark chose to come back to East River Bend. "I was raised by a community and just felt drawn back there."

Relationships and connections are valued in East River Bend. Like Nelson, Anderson, an elementary teacher, described "family" as what they love about East River Bend. "It's fun to see so many kids that I've graduated with, or parents, of kids, that I've graduated with, go through the public school where I teach."

Likewise, Smith recalled, "Since I'm not from there, it's been really nice to now have siblings of students… [-] the connections with that and just building relationships as they go through." Connections allowed for shared experiences. Miller, an elementary teacher in the district, agreed. "I really like that all the kids go through the same buildings. Everybody for the most part cheers for the sports teams and cheers for the same elementary school. I just think that it is a cool shared experience."

Although small in stature, East River Bend supports an active art community. Hanson illustrated, "We've got the…[Davis] theater in town. My own kids, and our students… have

opportunities to really be exposed to…musicians and actors and all sorts of performance artists from all over the world." Kennedy, a teacher at the alternative high school, added, "There's a lot of culture around here" with "good cultural opportunities."

East River Bend's rugged beauty and proximity to the river appeals to the town's residents. Hanson stated, "It's beautiful. You couldn't ask for a prettier place to live. Physically, there's a lot of outdoor options and I love that." Kennedy agreed. "It's a good size community for what we want to do. There's a lot of different outdoor options here." Although East River Bend seems like the ideal small town, Native American students experience the town differently.

Approximately 80 Native American students from a neighboring reservation attend the East River Bend school district and comprise 3% of the school district's population. Native students navigate the school and town with effort in contrast to their White peers. Hanson explained that East River Bend is "not unlike a lot of small, fairly rural [Midwest] towns and that there aren't some underlying issues of racism and some underlying closed-mindedness. Those exist here as well, but I would say they tend to be more hidden."

Nelson spoke about Native youth. "They're all walking in two worlds. The code-switching they have to do." Hanson added, "I think they're a little more cautious when they're out and about town." Native students experienced challenges unlike their White peers. These challenges appeared within the school district as well.

The Native school experience serves as an entry point to a study of why and how Native student graduation rates exceed state averages in a single school district. I begin with the first major theme, historical trauma, because Native students bring their Tribal and family experiences of trauma with them as they enter a predominately White community of East River Bend. After describing the effects of historical trauma on Native students, I then describe the

Indian Education program elements and an alternative high school program favored by many

Native students.

Historical Trauma

From a bird's eye view, East River Bend seems like any typical midwestern school

district. The well-manicured lawns and kempt buildings on the school grounds suggest affluence,

pride, and the value of education. These values are affirmed by school district achievement data.

Rightfully so, the district boasts a 90 % graduation rate. And over 50 % of the student population

met standards in reading, mathematics, and science.

From an outsider's perspective, students easily thrive. Native student success, however, is

not that easy. Native students in this district must overcome seemingly insurmountable

challenges stemming from historical trauma. These obstacles include racism, implicit bias,

educator's resistance to building relationships, and a loss of identity. Additional challenges for

Native students in this school district are intergenerational trauma. Examples of intergenerational

trauma include boarding schools, lower family cohesion, substance abuse, and the impacts of

mental health issues. I begin with racism experienced by Native students.

Racism

Native students in East River Bend either witnessed or were subjected to racism within

the school environment. In recent years, newspapers documented three racist events. Two of

these incidents revolved around homecoming events and made national news.

In 2011, a former student sued the school district for an event called "Wigger

Wednesday" during homecoming in 2007, 2008, and 2009. "Wigger" is a derogatory word

combining "White" and the "N-word." To celebrate, students wore clothing mocking African

American culture, such as low-slung pants, over-sized jerseys, and du-rags. The school district

"acknowledged that 'Wigger Day' took place in 2007 and 2008 but neglected to prevent the event from happening in 2009" (Hoffer, 2017, para. 10).

The student's mother "attempted to reach out to the school board, the superintendent, and the principal, but [East River Bend's] response was essentially to sweep this under the rug and act like it didn't happen" (para. 7). The lawyer representing the student said, "The students shouldn't have felt empowered to hold 'Wigger Day' in 2009. These students were not disciplined, they were not counseled [,] and they were not punished. This could have been a teachable moment" (para. 15). In response to the lawsuit, the school district denied "allegations that it has created a racially hostile environment" (Serwer, 2011, para. 2) and "committed to creating a learning environment free from discrimination" (Hoffer, 2017, para. 11).

Two years later, the school district was put to the test. In 2013, seniors petitioned for a homecoming event called "Merica Monday" (Fields, 2013). The school district denied their request "because of racial connotations underlying the slogan" (Fields, 2013, para. 8). The students then agreed to change the name to National Pride Day.

What seemed like a successful teachable moment was not the case. Students who were still upset about not having "Merica Monday," trespassed on campus and painted the doors and windows with patriotic slogans (Fields, 2013). One student, who spearheaded the incident, failed to show accountability. The student said, "They were treating it like the crime of the century. They're labeling it as vandalism. The word 'terrorism' was being thrown around. The doors needed to be repainted anyway" (Fields, 2013, para. 12).

The school district followed through with its discipline policy with this incident. The student self-reported the disciplinary action the school enforced. And while the school district attempted to rectify past mistakes, students and families received mixed messages. The

superintendent reported, "[S]tudents 'appropriately celebrated a day of national pride,' but overall their behavior was unacceptable, 'regardless of their intentions or the content of their messages'" (Fields, 2013, para. 17). Two years later, another overt act of racism occurred, this time involving a Native student. Interesting enough, this event did not make national headlines.

In 2015, the East River Bend boys' basketball team played against another high school team. The East River Bend's most valuable player was Native. At the time, the student's father was the assistant coach and the student's uncle sat on Tribal Council. The opposing team defeated East River Bend and two players boasted racial remarks about the Native student over social media. One student tweeted, "It was the Squaw Creek Massacre at…gymnasium tonight" (RE Sports, 2015, para. 5). Another student tweeted, "[Student's Name] recreated the trail of tears tonight" (Boese, 2015, February 19, para. 4).

Local news reported that the two students involved received disciplinary action according to school policy and the state's high school league bylaws (Hyatt, 2015; RE Sports, 2015). However, coaches from both teams gave differing perspectives on the matter. The East River Bend's Assistant Coach, and father of this Native student, said:

> I don't think everybody realizes or understands the story behind the Trail of Tears, or what the definition of 'squaw' means. It's horrible. The first thing that came to my mind when 'squaw' was mentioned was my mother (and) my grandmother who raised my older brother and myself. (My grandmother's) full-blooded, born in the early 1900s, she dealt with a lot of these issues. It hit home. (RE Sports, 2015, para. 11)

In contrast, the opposing team's coach was more casual. They stated, "It's just moving on. It's a situation where hopefully for future years, it hits home with the guys we have and we can reference down the road. It's just one we have to move on from right now" (Boese, 2015, February 19, para. 7).

Although the school district has not made national news since 2015, Native students continued to experience racism. An East River Bend resident, two administrators, and a Tribal liaison provided their perspectives on racism in the school district. Eagle River Tribal Members included the Tribal Council president, Indian Education director, and a parent. They shared their experiences with racism from a district perspective and their personal experiences as a parent or student.

While participant experiences differed based on their role and perspective, they agreed racism occurred. Parker, an East River Bend resident, reflected that East River Bend "is not without racism. It is not always smooth. I haven't seen it personally, but I have heard about it." Hanson agreed. Hanson commented that issues of racism were "not as open as I've seen in some other places, but I think, they're certainly still there."

Kingbird reflected on racism occurring within all schools. "I could use ten really inappropriate words on the blatant racism that's happening in a lot of public schools I've been a part of." As a result, Kingbird's efforts for Eagle River Native students focused primarily on historical trauma and racism. Kingbird felt that vast improvements toward racial equality were made. "Even though you may say it's hidden now, I don't think the racial issues are as bad as they were when I started 30 years ago."

Maynor, a Native parent, a former student in the district, and a former Tribal liaison, disagreed. Maynor countered, "As a parent and as somebody that's worked in those buildings, I actually feel like it's worse today than it was." Peterson, a former high school administrator, summarized, "I think it's safe to say that from a system there is no doubt institutionalized racism in all of our K-12 systems no matter where you go."

Native students in East River Bend have been subjected to racist slurs from their classmates. Peterson elaborated, "There were points of prejudice and racism that our kids face from some classmates, not all classmates, but sometimes kids that are not as well versed in social skills start to use some very racist derogatory names." Peterson added, "I would dare say that we probably had more incidents with a White student using a racial slur with the Native students than we did with a White student using a racial slur with an African American student."

Thomas, a Tribal liaison working in the high school and alternative school, reflected on racial incidents within the high school. Thomas recollected, "I've had problems with teasing and racism. But that might be because they're older and more aware of the stereotypes and racist terms."

Describing one occurrence, Thomas remembered how a Native student had their long hair pulled and was called a "prairie N-word" by a White student. The Native student responded back by pushing the White student. The White student retaliated by stabbing the Native student in the hand with a pencil. Thomas tried counseling the Native student, but the student wouldn't reveal the name of the White student. "They just shut down because they didn't want to give any information, so the school couldn't really do anything because my student wouldn't talk." No one witnessed the event and camera footage did not exist. Thomas surmised the incident occurred where it did because of the lack of cameras in that hall.

Another incident involved a White student receiving special education services and a Native student. The White student told the Native student, "Scalp me, daddy." Thomas mentioned that the school could not take any disciplinary actions due to the student's disability. Thomas sighed, "They had him talk with different people in the building about what's acceptable and what's not, but yeah."

Native students who have lighter skin or who may not vocally represent their identity as Native, navigated school easier. Maynor asserted, "For me, as a student, because I'm light skinned, White passing, I didn't have major issues when it came to my race. But I did watch my relatives struggle with some of the racism and things that were present there." Maynor added that their own children are also light skinned and White passing. As a result, they do not experience the same racism as Maynor's nieces, nephews, and cousins attending the same school.

Racism is a learned behavior. Crow emphasized how the school district needs to protect Native kids against racism. Crow said:

> Some kids…have said things to my nieces and nephews that they shouldn't be saying. And the only way they know those things is because they've learned from their parents. The school district needs to be willing to step in and hold those children accountable who are saying negative things to our kids. They just have to be willing to stand up for those kids.

When school districts failed to protect Native kids from racialized trauma, the impacts were devasting. Kingbird remembered the time their child was threatened in class. "Three White kids came into [the] classroom and said, We're going to kill you, you prairie [N-word].'" Kingbird continued to say that the school did not call home to report the incident. "The superintendent didn't think it was a big deal." After Kingbird reminded the school that "there's all these laws to protect our kids," the school took disciplinary action.

Kingbird was unsatisfied. "Part of the suspension was that they had to write letters of apology. Only one parent had their child write a letter of apology. The other two never did. That was ridiculous." And although this incident did not happen in East River Bend, the racialized event affected Kingbird.

Peterson empathized, "I mean the hardest conversations are the ones where you have to look across the table at a parent to talk about why their child was called some bad names and be

able to see that pain." Peterson reasoned, "When those things come up, they come up big. Because you have a people that have historically been oppressed and then their kids are experiencing something like that at school, where it's supposed to be safe."

I asked how Native students navigated racism. Hanson thought the distance between the Tribal community and East River Bend offered a reprieve. Hanson elaborated that Eagle River Indian Community is a 10-to-15-minute drive from East River Bend. "You can distance yourself, I guess, from some of that. Go home and distance yourself."

Hanson mentioned that Native students were vigilant while in town, especially given the recent racialized events nationwide. After a pause, Hanson countered, "I don't know that I have a better answer than that. I don't always know how they navigate that to be honest with you."

Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is a subtler form of racism. It is the daily unconscious oppressive acts superimposed on people of color. Critical Race scholars explain how implicit bias exists to uphold White supremacy (Zamudio et al., 2011). Perception Institute (n.d.) defined implicit bias as "a preference (or aversion to) a person or group of people. Thus, "we use the term 'implicit bias' to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge" (para. 1).

Native students and families in East River Bend navigated this racial hierarchy. An East River Bend resident, four administrators, three Tribal liaisons, the Indian Education director, and the Tribal Council president spoke about the implicit bias Native students and families experienced. Stereotypes, educator resistance to form relationships with Native students and families, and discipline rates were named examples.

Stereotypes

Three Tribal liaisons, employed by the Tribe, provide academic and emotional social support to Native students attending East River Bend. The liaisons explained how they supported all Native students during the school day. Enrolled members of the East River Indian Community received after-school tutoring. As individuals working directly with Native students, the three Tribal liaisons knew firsthand how Native students fell victim to stereotypes. They spoke about how teachers treated Native students in school. In addition, an East River Bend resident, the Tribal Council president, and Indian Education director provided input about stereotypes prescribed to Native students.

Some teachers demonstrated preconceived ideas of what Native people look like. For these teachers, darker skin and brown eyes categorized students as Native. Teachers used this racial classification to define which students qualified for educational support. Martin, a Tribal liaison working in the elementary schools, described occurrences when teachers falsely identified Native students. "I'll come in to grab a student and I say, 'I'm here to pick up John.' And, 'Well, he's not one of yours. It's this one over here; it's Larry.' And it's like, 'I think [Larry's] Hispanic.'"

Martin elaborated on how some Native students have blond hair and blue eyes, and "you can't tell by looking." Parker admitted, "I'm going to be super candid here. As a White woman, I didn't always know who my Native kids were. For instance, I would not pick [Kingbird] out of a lineup and say this man is a Native."

In addition to skin color, last names were used by some teachers for racial classification. Taylor, a middle school Tribal liaison, described teacher confusion when non-Native students bore last names common to Native families. Taylor explained their reasoning, "We have certain

students that have certain last names that everybody knows is a Native student." Non-Native students were falsely identified as Native if they shared a common last name from Eagle River Indian Community. Taylor recounted, "There were some other [Johnsons'] and they're like, 'Well, they're yours.' I'm like, nope.' 'But the last name?' Nope, not Native. 'But, why?' Because they're not born Native."

Furthermore, educators overgeneralized Native people and culture. Some educators assumed all Native students in East River Bend received the same educational support. While Tribal liaisons supported all Native students during the school day, Eagle River Indian Community provided after school support only for their enrolled members. Taylor said teachers continuously misunderstood why some Native students received after school support while other Native students did not. Tribal liaisons informed teachers multiple times which students belonged to the Eagle River Indian Community. Taylor lamented, "You know, I email them, I talk to them…and some teachers, no matter how many times we tell them, they still don't understand." Taylor reflected, "There are educators who, I think, lump all Native students together."

To further complicate implicit bias, some educators discriminated against Native students because the Tribe owned a casino. Some teachers assumed all Native students and families received per capita income, which is a share of casino's profits distributed monthly to enrolled Tribal Members only. Martin commented, "Because they're Native American does not mean that they all get per cap. And there's a few that feel that 'Well, they've got the money.'"

Martin countered, "Not everybody's getting money. Not everybody's a member of [Eagle River Indian Community.]" Native students in East River Bend represent multiple Tribal nations.

And yet, some teachers assumed all the Native students came from Tribes with abundant financial resources.

Crow defended Tribes owning and operating casinos. Tribes who practice economic diversity are not automatically wealthy. This false narrative allowed for Native students to be treated differently. Crow said, "I think especially in schools like [East River Bend] and I'm assuming the schools that [other Midwestern Tribes with casinos] kids go to, were viewed differently."

Crow stated that people assume they are rich. "'Oh, you're just those rich Indians.' Well, no, we're not rich Indians. We are very fortunate…we're comfortable Indians in [Eagle River.] So [we've] got to stop that mentality."

This false narrative affected some relationships between teachers and students. Martin illustrated:

> There is some jealousy with the teachers. Some of my students are in second grade and they have the latest cell phone. It barely got on the market, and they already have it. And well, 'I don't even have one like that.' Well, [it] doesn't matter. And it's not the parent that bought it. It's grandma that lives in California that wants to be nice. It doesn't matter…they're pretty excited about it, and you have to be happy for them.

Besides jealousy, some educators overgeneralized Native culture within curriculum. Some teachers assumed that all Native Tribes shared the same culture. Kingbird recalled:

> One time I got into a huge discussion with an art teacher that was doing totem poles out of toilet rolls. I mean, we hear this story all the time. I'm like, 'You are nine miles away from a Tribal nation, a Dakota Tribal nation. I have no idea why you are doing Tlingit, Haida, and Pacific Northwest totem poles. You can teach that. I can't tell you not. But why don't we look at something that's relevant to the three or four Dakota kids that you have in your class every single day?'

Thomas added that some teachers assumed all Native students were cultural experts. Thomas stated, "In terms of teachers singling them out, you know, 'Hey So-and-So, how do you

say this in Dakota?' and putting them on the spot. Or, 'What do you know about this topic?'"

These examples made Native students uncomfortable in class.

In another incident, Thomas remembered a teacher's refusal to honor sacredness within

Native culture. This particular incident involved a social studies teacher presenting a lesson on

Sundance. When a Native student asked their teacher to stop, the teacher dismissed the student's

request. Thomas recalled:

> One of my students, an 8th grader, said 'You can't show this.' And the teacher said, 'Why?' And he said, 'Because it's ceremony. It's sacred to us.' And she started arguing with the student [in] the middle of class. He cried and he left.

Even though an administrator and a Tribal community member asked the teacher to stop,

the teacher continued to show videos about Sundance. The teacher deflected, "The person

speaking about Sundance was Native, so it's okay." Thomas reasoned, "If the whole

community's asking you to stop, you probably should." Besides being stereotyped, Native

students reported feeling unwelcomed in East River Bend. I describe this next.

Educator Resistance to Form Relationships

Four administrators, two Tribal liaisons, and the Indian Education director reported

teacher discrimination toward Natives. They described teacher's resistance to building

relationships with Native students and families. Moore, the high school principal, listened to

Native student perspectives on being policed in school by teachers and staff.

> They talked about [how] our staff gets all uptight on them when they're walking the building and they're not doing anything wrong. It's during their lunch and they're just walking. They made a good point. They wanted time to walk, and they wanted time to just be students.

Moore added, "It was interesting to hear their perspective on wanting the responsibility

and the freedom to be able to walk about the building without feeling like you're going to get

called on the carpet."

Native students mentioned not feeling welcomed or liked by their teachers. Moore stated, "They don't feel welcomed all the time. They don't feel like the teacher cares about them. And there are some instances where I… kind of agree with them." Taylor endorsed this opinion. "I've seen that. Like, you're not going to do all the work because you're 'So-and-So.' I had your brother and I'm going to have it out for you too now, because he was so miserable."

Prejudice created hardship for some Native students. Some Native students had a hard time remaining in class. Moore explained why some Native students avoided class. "Sometimes they say it's because they don't like the teacher. Or the teacher hasn't treated them very well."

To illustrate, Moore remembered a Native student who had been placed in foster care. This student had trauma and attendance concerns. The student told Moore, "She doesn't welcome me into class. She doesn't want me there." Moore mentioned how smart this student was. Despite missing so much class, the student was passing. "I mean, enough well to be passing the class barely, but then…[at] semester time, she gave her an F with a 59.98%. Sixty percent is passing. Like I'm sorry, that rounds up anyway." Moore was able to help this student get their grade changed. Moore said, "Regardless of what type of student, whether it's a Native student or a White student, that's just wrong." Moore concluded that unfortunately, "There were other [Native] students [who] had similar stories."

Native students experienced discrimination from teachers for arriving late to school. Moore and Thomas described hearing about the bussing situation from Native high school students. The school district allocated one bus to pick up elementary, middle school, and high school students from Eagle River Indian Community. The bus commute is technically a ten-minute drive from Eagle River Indian Community to East River Bend. However, the bus dropped

off all elementary and middle school students first. As a result, Native high school students were consistently late for class.

Moore stated, "The teachers are marking kids late, and well, that's not their fault. Their bus was arriving late." Nelson added, "They send one bus to [Eagle River Indian Community] and they all have to sit three to a seat. It's those microaggressions that we don't know about." Moore elaborated on microaggressions placed on Native students. "The kids were coming right before school started. They had one minute before the bell rang and then we'd have our teachers saying, 'They're late every day.' Well, yeah, because some of them need breakfast when they get here."

Discrimination also occurred when Native parents and Native students behaved outside of White normalcy. Nelson spoke about the judgement placed on Native parents. I asked why teachers resisted forming relationships. Nelson responded, "The family piece. The scariness of the words on the streets. The rumors out there. The past histories of some of the families that are true. The intensity of them. It's always the family. They are reluctant to call home."

In addition, Native families with trauma are compared against Native families without trauma. Nelson alluded to the relatability of Native families who exhibited normalcy. To illustrate, an elementary student exhibited trauma-like behavior at school. Nelson stated, "His mom of course is in treatment. She's an addict and he hasn't had his needs met. So, it's hard to be as sympathetic with his mother as it is when [Maynor's] not going to give us a reason to not like [Maynor.]" Teachers showed resistance to forming relationships with Native parents who presented at-risk behaviors resulting from historical trauma.

Nelson added that parents now felt empowered to advocate for their children. In the past, historical trauma caused parents to have a passive relationship with the school district. Now Native parents feel economically secure and entitled to defend their children. Nelson illustrated:

> This generation I would say, so somebody has a third grader right now. So, his mom has had money I think her whole life. His grandma would have been extremely poor and then received money…So the generation of parents right now that have only known money, are very vocal about how the schools don't do anything. The grandparents play a little bit more of the game because they've been forced to play the game.

Native parent advocacy, presented differently than expected, affected teacher and family relationships. Hanson agreed and explained:

> An area we need to continue to improve is really understanding the deep impact of historical trauma. I think sometimes it's easy to look at something through White eyes and go 'I don't understand why you're so upset about this.' So, I think that is occasionally where it will sort of rear up. A teacher will be upset because a parent got upset and barked at them or about something. They are like, 'I don't understand. I was just trying to blah blah blah.' I think that's occasionally where it'll pop up. Just not understanding that there's some historical context here that is having an impact on this. It's hard.

Tribal liaisons were also used as an excuse for not having to build connections with Native families. Although Tribal liaisons worked to provide support to Native students and families, some teachers relied on liaisons to connect with families. All three Tribal liaisons reported teacher's unwillingness to call home for missing assignments and field trip permission slips.

The supporting role of Tribal liaisons also served to marginalize Native students and families even further. The liaison role created an "us" versus "them" mentality. Kingbird recalled, "The hardest thing is they always want to say, 'your kids." And you really have to stop them. It's 'our kids.'"

Kingbird referenced an argument they had with an administrator the previous year. The administrator said, "Your program is here to help your kids." Kingbird commented, "This isn't

about what we're going to do with 'your kids.' These are 'our kids.'" Nelson affirmed, "They

don't want [responsibility], they will often push that on the liaisons. They'll say, 'What are you

going to do about it?'" Taylor agreed:

> Sometimes teachers need a reminder about what my job is and what my job isn't. If they're misbehaving in your classroom, you don't send them to me. You send them to the office like any other student. And sometimes we have to remind teachers they need to treat Native students like they would a non-Native student.

When asked why some teachers resisted relationships with Native students and families,

Clark mentioned that high school teachers were responsible for more students than the liaisons.

Therefore, it was easier for liaisons to build those relationships. "[Thomas] might work with 30

kids, and the way the schedule was at the high school, our teachers are seeing 160 kids over two

days." Thomas argued:

> It is more beneficial when the teacher makes that connection as well…They can start to understand that there's people that care and want to help their kids and help them succeed. It's not just the person that's paid by the Tribe that's there for them.

Moore added, "My larger struggles come with the older staff. They just really struggle

with the, I don't know if it's the relationship building, but, also, it's just the way they run their

classroom. It's very old-school." Nelson disagreed and countered:

> If you're in the middle school and high school, you only have them for that one period and it's somebody else's problem. So, it must be their Native-ness. It must be their Black-ness. It must be their Hispanic-ness. That must be the problem.

Kingbird reflected on how educators misunderstood Native students. Cultural

misunderstanding prevented relationships between educators and students. Kingbird stated,

"Really understanding who our kids were in the classroom; downcast eyes, not directly

responding. Lots of cultural things that again teachers didn't validate or respect or acknowledge,

so not really understanding who our kids were." These cultural misunderstandings resulted in

some disciplinary action for Native students in East River Bend.

Discipline Rates

Very few participants mentioned discipline when asked about Native student challenges. As a result, anecdotal evidence concerning Native discipline was limited. Out of all the participants, only three administrators expressed concern about disciplinary practices for Native students. They all, however, agreed implicit bias was a contributing factor.

Clark responded to relationships between Native families and the district over time. Clark reflected:

> There is ample room for growth still in terms of relationships. And you know what? If we look at our data, and we look at the discipline of our Native kids, we have so many issues with implicit bias that we have to address.

When asked to elaborate, Clark mentioned that some educators perceived Native students as defiant or disrespectful when they avoided eye contact. White cultural norms differ from Native cultural norms. Most Tribal nations teach their youth to avoid eye contact while engaging in active listening. In Native culture this physical demonstration is considered respectful. For Native students in East River Bend, some White educators expected their Native students to assimilate to White culture. The district needed a reexamination of disciplinary practices to determine cultural appropriateness. Clark said:

> We as a district, we are looking in the mirror a little bit and saying we have got to look at how we define some of these behavioral consequences or behavior incidents and we've got to knock-it-off. Disrespect. Disrespect in whose eyes? The big D's-disrespect, defiance, what's the third one? And we're like no its all perception, its perspective. We have set these definitions from the White man's perspective, and they are just not appropriate.

Moore and Nelson described school climate and culture. Moore spoke about the high school and how they had very few discipline actions with Native students. Discipline of Native students typically resulted from attendance issues. Moore recounted a time a Native student had sage in their locker. White sage is a dried plant Natives use for smudging. Smudging involves

burning sage and sometimes sweet grass. The smoke from smudging cleanses the spirit by

removing negative energy. The smoke from sweet grass evokes positive energy.

One teacher mistook the smell of sage for marijuana. The teacher was adamant that the

Native student should be disciplined. A Tribal liaison stepped in to explain the cultural tradition

of smudging. Moore commented, "That would have been a disaster if that had…gotten pushed

the way that it was going." Moore elaborated:

> I think a lot of times our staff wants the students-I mean, they feel like we have these rules, and we have… to abide by them. And I'm not saying they can't, but are our rules set up to accommodate our students? You know what I mean? Like sometimes you got to look at what we're asking of them, and is that fair?

Nelson stated one of the elementary schools became misaligned with the district when a

new administrator practiced a lenient disciplinary approach. Nelson described the administrator

as liberal and East River Bend as conservative concerning views on discipline. The community's

response was less than receptive to this leadership style. Nelson said:

> So [they] don't like it when kids, kind of, you know-they like a little law or order if you will. That's a thing they say. When the buildings were working well and…the school climate is good for the White kids, the middle class; kids of color in [East River Bend] are going to struggle.

The pressing concern about disciplinary issues continued for three years according to

Nelson. Then, in February 2020, parents, guest teachers, and volunteers addressed the school

board. One parent reported to the board that their children received death threats, were "body

slammed," and broke a bone (Lambert, 2020, para.1). This parent also stated that teachers were

"threatened, hit and sworn at" (Lambert, 2020, para. 2). A substitute teacher described their

experience as the "worst in [their] career spanning a decade" (Lambert, 2020, para. 3). A

volunteer said they "had a deep concern for the lack of attention paid to student behaviors"

(Lambert, 2020, para. 4). After the listening session a board member told the superintendent, "I

think it's been a consensus of the board that whatever you have to do to get it under control, get

it done" (Lambert, 2020, para 18).

Although race was not explicitly named during the school board listening session, it was

implied that the mismanagement of behavior among students of color affected school climate.

Nelson considered, "Our African American population is by far struggling the most, more, way

more than our Native kids." When asked to compare the disciplinary rates of students of color to

other school districts, Clark, who also serves as the human rights officer for the district, said:

> Well, pardon me, we are dinged year after year after year after year after year for
> disproportionality and I am very sad to say that it is predominately for the African
> American population. But the Native American population is not very far behind. Yeah,
> our numbers suck.

The perception among staff, parents, and administrators is that students of color

accounted for the highest disciplinary rates. However, disciplinary data reported to the

Department of Education refuted this perception. White students, are in fact, disciplined at a

higher rate than any racial group.

Schools are mandated to report disciplinary actions at the end of each school year to the

Department of Education. Disciplinary actions include "out of school suspension for one day or

more, expulsion or exclusion" (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). If a student received

multiple disciplinary actions within the school year, that individual student is counted multiple

times in the school's disciplinary report to the Department of Education. Disciplinary actions are

broken down by race and incident types. The latest discipline data published on the [Midwestern]

Department of Education's website reported data for the 2018-2019 school year. Although I

conducted interviews in the 2019-2020 school year, I collected participant's anecdotal evidence

prior to the end-of-the-year school discipline report. For these reasons, I used discipline data

from the Department of Education for the 2018-2019 school year.

American Indians comprised 1.6% of the student population in this midwestern state for the 2018-2019 school year. American Indians had the lowest statewide student enrollment compared to Multi Race, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, and White students. And yet, American Indians accounted for the 5.1% disciplinary actions statewide, see Figure 1.

Figure 1

State Enrollment and Discipline compared to District Enrollment and Discipline
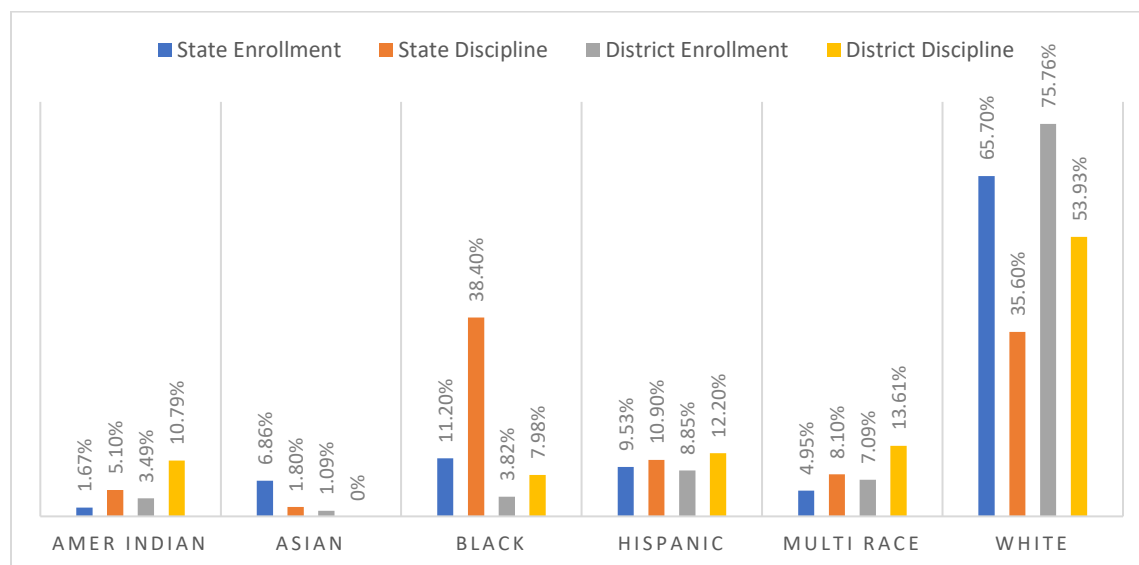
In contrast, American Indians enrolled in East River Bend for the 2018-2019 school year comprised 3.49% of the student population and accounted for 10.79% of the discipline rates, see Figure 2. Black students in East River Bend have a comparable enrollment rate to American Indians. Black student enrollment for the 2018-2019 school year comprised of 3.82%, and yet accounted for 7.98% of discipline, see Figure 2.

Figure 2

2018-2019 East River Bend Enrollment Compared to Discipline Rates by Race
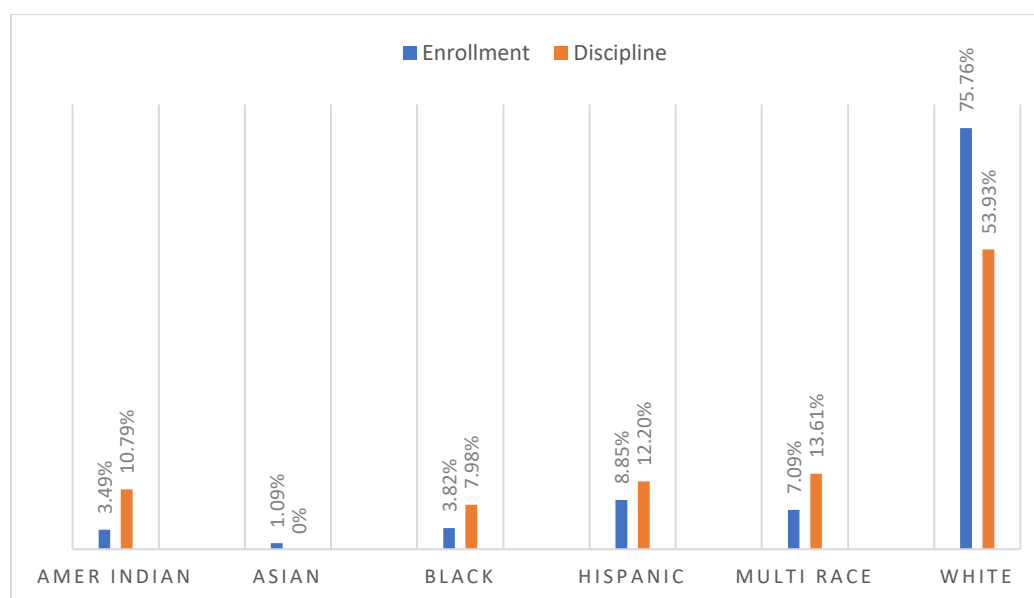
An administrator perceived Blacks students to be disciplined more than Native students. However, a close inspection of disciplinary data showed something else. School district data recorded higher disciplinary rates for Native students than Black students. Implicit bias defined Black students as problematic or highly disciplined. In contrast, implicit bias allowed Native students to be invisible compared to other racial groups.

To further illustrate implicit bias, White students were the predominant race with 75.67% of enrollment and accounted for 53.93% of the disciplinary actions. In contrast, students of color comprised 24.34% of enrollment and accounted for 44.58% of discipline. Although White

students had the highest counts of discipline, students of color were disciplined disproportionally to their enrollment rates. Although parents and staff did not explicitly name race during their arguments to the school board, it can be assumed that race played a role.

Discipline matters. Schools become unsafe spaces for Native students when schools discipline them disproportionately higher than White students. Native students are marginalized further when White students are not held accountable for harm they inflict on Natives. Although the discipline data reported the number of times a student received a consequence for their actions, the discipline data did not address the overall school climate. Narratives provided limited data on the Native school experience. Therefore, I used Native student experience reported to the Department of Education through an annual survey. The latest student survey published on the Department of Education's website reported data from Native 5th graders for the 2016 school year.

Out of the 5th graders surveyed, 75.4% of White students strongly agreed or agreed that their teachers cared about them. Only 56.3% of Native students strongly agreed or agreed. When asked how often during the last 30 days students harassed or bullied you about your race, ethnicity, or national origin, 1.2% of White students reported every day. In contrast, 17.6% of Native students responded they were harassed or bullied every day for being Native. In response to how often have students pushed, slapped, kicked, or hit you in the last 30 days, 8.5% of White students reported every day or about once a week. Conversely, 23.6% of Native students reported they were pushed, slapped, kicked, or hit in the last 30 days, see Figures 3 – 5.

Figure 3

2016 5th Graders Response: Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person
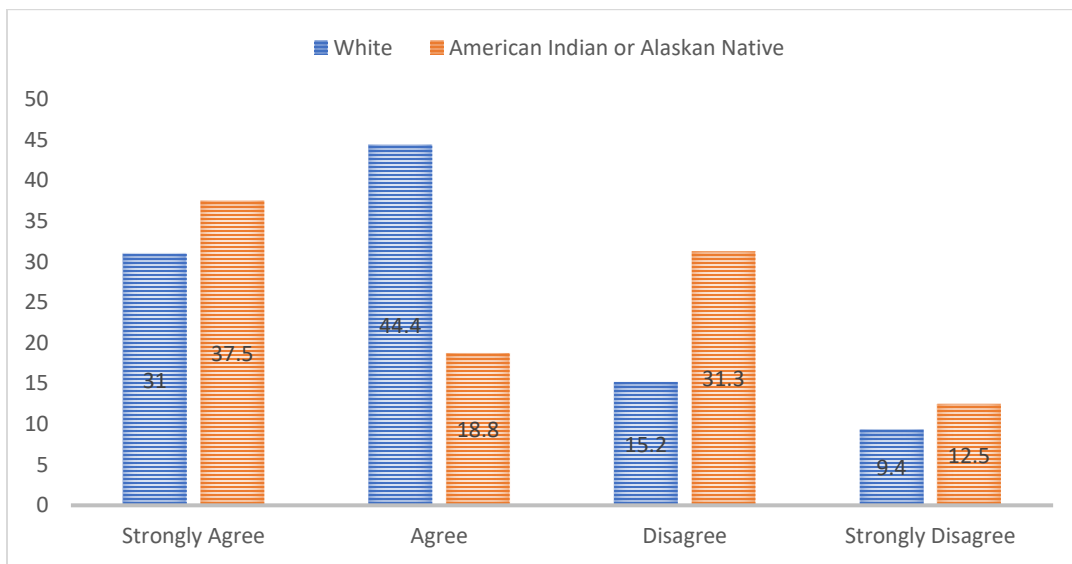
Figure 4

2016 5th Graders Response: During the last 30 days, how often have other students harassed or bullied you for any of the following reasons: Your race, ethnicity or national origin?
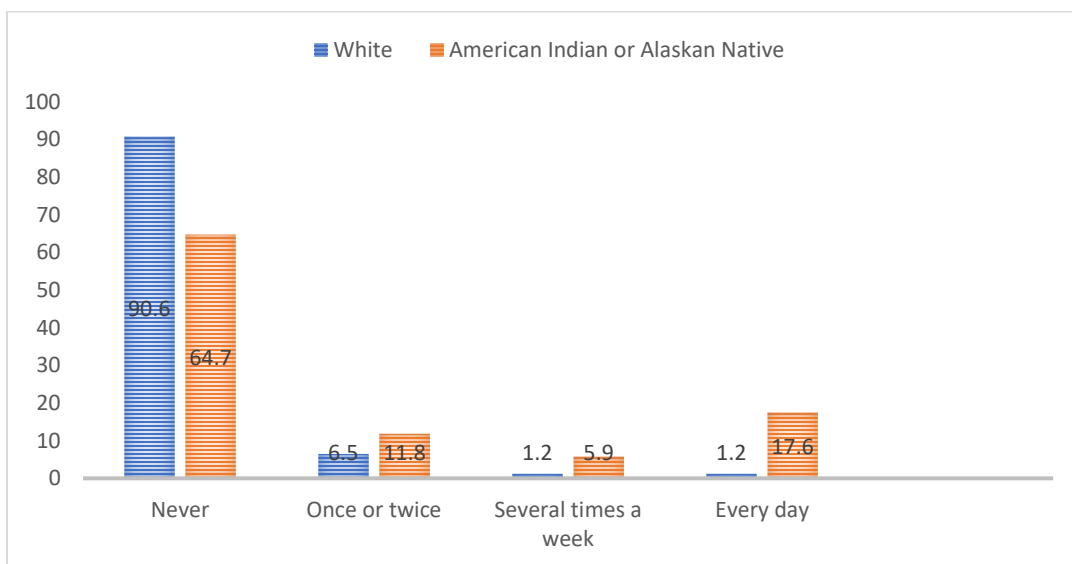
Figure 5

2016 5ᵗʰ Graders Response: During the last 30 days, how often have other students at school pushed, shoved, slapped, hit, or kicked you when they weren't kidding around?
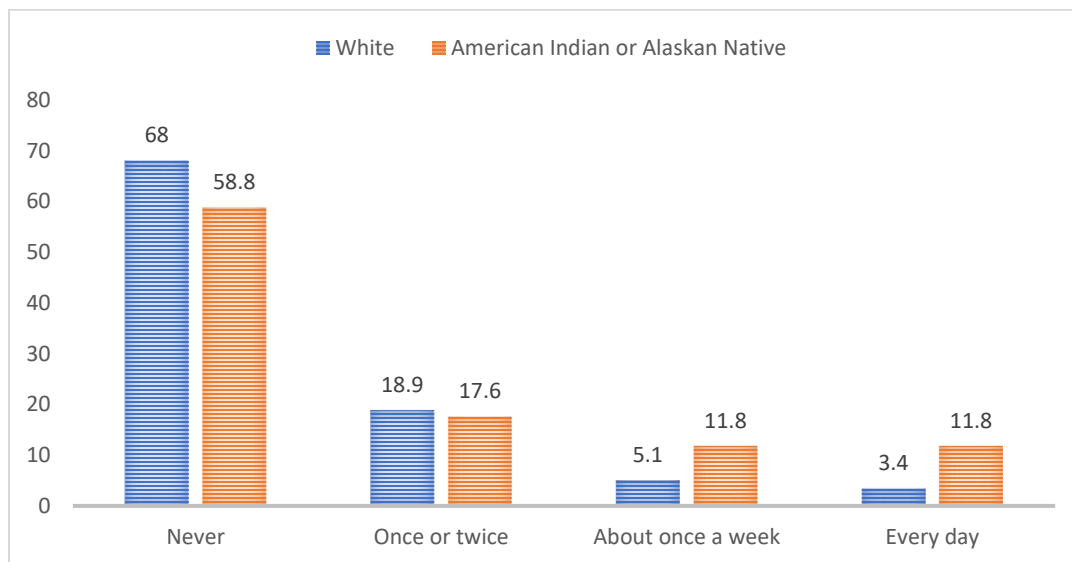
Racism and implicit bias impacted the Native student experience in East River Bend. Racism and implicit bias effected teacher-to-student relationships and student-to-student relationships. The school district readily admitted they needed to put more effort into eliminating racist practices. Discipline rates and a survey of 5ᵗʰ grade Native students support that racism and implicit bias is a major challenge for Native students navigating a White school district.

Loss of Identity

Navigating a systemically White school district proved challenging for Native students. Five administrators, three Tribal liaisons, an East River Bend resident, the Tribal Council president, and Indian Education director spoke about identity loss among Native students. Participants named code switching, an absentee narrative in curriculum, an underrepresentation of Native identities, and Whitewashing history as contributing factors for a loss of identity. I begin with an explanation of code switching.

Code Switching

Native students in East River Bend were often expected to code switch. Code switching is a term explaining how students of color demonstrate White cultural norms to fit in. Code switching placed an emotional toll on Native students and increased a sense of identity loss.

Nelson described code switching as a major navigational challenge for Native students. Nelson stated, "The biggest [challenge] is that they live in two worlds. There's no question in my mind." Nelson explained how East River Bend served Native students that belonged to multiple Tribes besides Eagle River. However, all Native students, regardless of which Tribal nation they represented, had to assimilate to the White, dominant narrative. Nelson elaborated, "So that's their challenge. They live in two worlds and figuring out how to live, to be honest, to be true to themselves, and, also learning how to live in the White man's society." Native students were tasked with pushing aside their own cultural identities and sense-of-self to succeed in the academic setting.

Absentee Narrative in Curriculum

An absentee narrative solidified a disconnect and loss of identity for Native students in this school district. Most teachers in East River Bend identified as White and taught content areas from a patriarchal, White cultural lens. Native culture, literature, history, and social issues were not explicitly taught or embedded in all content areas.

Clark acknowledged the absentee narrative. Clark said, "When we have to purchase a [sixth grade social studies curriculum] because it has that Native American piece right in there, it's pretty sad." Thomas stated, "classes that didn't include a Native curriculum was a big issue" with Native students. Moore agreed, "I mean, it doesn't matter if it's math class or if it's in

English, we could do a better job. They said, 'We don't ever hear about our history or our culture in these classes, and could we hear that?'"

Participants commented how an absentee narrative contributed to an identity crisis for Native youth. An absentee narrative existed in schools when the histories, cultures, and personal narratives of people of color are subconsciously or deliberately excluded from curriculum. Students of color lost the opportunity to see themselves and their culture represented within a prescribed White curriculum. Additionally, students of color failed to recognize themselves when their teachers and classmates did not look like them. Crow described the absentee narrative as the biggest challenge Native youth faced in school. Crow explained:

> I think not seeing themselves represented in anything. I know in [East River Bend,] there's no Native teachers. The subject matter obviously isn't geared towards Native American. There's nothing. There's no land recognition. There's nothing. They've lost their identity. And unfortunately, a lot of Tribal people have lost their identity through the years of government influence. And then you go into the school systems and unless you're on an actual reservation school you don't see that represented. And it's tough for our kids. I mean, they're already facing an identity crisis and then you go on to school and there's more lack of identity for them. So, I think it's tough for them. And I think a lot of times having that support; knowing that… support is there – they need to know that they have support both at home and in the school.

An Underrepresentation of Native Identities

Absentee narratives created an underrepresentation of Native identities. An underrepresentation of Native identities created insecurities for Native students. Native students did not readily identify with their classmates or teachers. Kingbird stated, "We're talking about a kindergartener here that really doesn't feel comfortable and is in a class of 30 other kids. And there's only one person, and that's a person when she or he looks in a mirror [they see themselves.]"

Kingbird added, "A lot of our kids [including] the boys have braids." Many Native boys braided their long hair. However, a Native boy with long braided hair in a classroom full of

White students created an anomaly. White students were not accustomed to this Native cultural

norm. An underrepresentation of Native identities and culture existed in classroom communities.

As a result, Native boys were often teased for their long hair.

Hanson reflected how Native boys continuously navigated this challenge each year.

Hanson stated:

> Some of it is especially with our boys, you know, those that prefer to have their hair
> longer in a more traditional way. That tends to pop up in my building. We have other kids
> that don't understand, you know, why would a boy have long hair? So that sometimes
> gets tricky to navigate, especially, because you know, obviously families are pretty
> sensitive to it. But the average five-year-old is not necessarily trying to pick on a kid.
> They just don't understand. So sometimes we'll have to navigate some of that.

Native students were expected to assimilate to White cultural norms. Native student

assimilation with behavior was not enough. Native boys were often teased when their physical

appearance deviated from the White cultural norm. Martin commented, "We'll have some issues

with hair from the boys [who] will have longer hair and then it's well why, why, why, why do

they do that? They just know they are going to get teased." Native identity was not explicitly

taught. Educators and administration responded to cultural harm instead of making Native

identity a cultural norm.

Participants described the tragic consequences of an absentee narrative. Marginalization

occurred when Native students lacked a social emotional connection to school. Nelson

contemplated if students felt marginalized in the primary years. Nelson wondered when Native

youth realized the odds were against them. Nelson stated:

> I don't know if our Native students at [the elementary school] know that they're at a
> disadvantage yet because of their age. Do you know what I mean? I don't know. I don't
> know when [the] age of reckoning happens, 'Like I'm different from other people.' I
> would hope that it wouldn't be that young, but I could be wrong.

Kingbird remembered a former Native student who dropped out of school. Kingbird said the student was "invisible, just invisible." Kingbird knew that low performance was a concern but described how the absentee narrative sealed the student's fate. To illustrate, some educators failed to see how Native students excel. An absentee narrative of Native identities allowed some educators to have a narrow mindset of a Native student. Some educators were often surprised when their Native students proudly danced in traditional regalia or sang and drummed with a drum group in front of their classmates. It was an unexpected side of Native students, far from the quiet, shy demeanors exhibited in class.

Kingbird mused:

It was always incredible to hear teachers and classmates say, 'Well Johnny and Susie, they don't say a single word all day, and don't raise their hand, and don't participate.' And yet here Johnny is out, a fancy dancer, or sitting at the drum taking leads. And you can't believe how this child is ignored in the classroom. Until we ask his classmates 'Do you want to come out and dance?' Or the teachers come out and they're like 'OMG!'

Parker mentioned the lack of representation of Native students in the Gifted and Talented program. Parker stated that Native students were surprised to learn they were selected for the program. Parker said:

I had a couple of Native kids in my programs over the years and I always think that they were surprised. And I feel badly about that. It felt like they were surprised when they were recognized by somebody, and I think part of it is cultural. You know, we know we know that it's a culture that values community over self. And so, the identification of anybody feels a little uncomfortable to some kids. We know there're gifted kids there. And I mean, I ran into them. I knew they were absolutely there.

Parker described a sense of humility among Native students. Humility is a valued cultural trait for Native Americans. However, an absentee narrative of Native students in Gifted programs existed in East River Bend. It could be argued that students were surprised to see themselves selected for a Gifted Program when it was against the school cultural norm.

Kingbird illustrated when educators were amazed to see their Native students shine. However, Kingbird knew of Native youth brilliance and never doubted Native students could flourish when given the chance. Kingbird said Native youth surpass standards when performing on the powwow trail and could exhibit the same behavior in class when educators gave them an opportunity to do so. The absentee narrative prevented Native students from thriving. Kingbird insisted:

> And to sit there and think, our kids, they could do that every week. Some of them do it every weekend when they are out on the trail. Our princesses get up and all a sudden in their language introduce themselves and are partially fluent, because you know we're not fluent yet, but introduce themselves and say what they are representing as far as elder's princess, veteran's princess, [Eagle River Indian Community's] princess. And all a sudden our kids, they have all that pride. And if our culture isn't recognized and validated and at least taught, then it's just silence. And I think that a lot of our kids, when they go to school, that's what it is. They don't see themselves there. They don't see their people there. They don't see their culture there.

Whitewashing History

Whitewashing Native histories proved to be another strong example perpetuating the absentee narrative in East River Bend. Whitewashing is defined as "to intentionally hide some kind of wrongdoing, error or unpleasant situation-or deal with it in a way that attempts to make it seem less bad than it is" (Vocab Builder, n.d., para. 1). Galeano (2020) argued American textbooks are notorious for whitewashing history. Galeano (2020) explained the importance of a truthful history, "The problem with whitewashing history is that it does not tell students the truth of the atrocities that Black, Indigenous and people of color have experienced" (para. 5). Students of color who learned their histories at home are not acknowledged and provided truth about their cultural histories during school. White students are taught a sanitized version of history that excludes other cultural perspectives (Janu, 2020).

Administrators, Tribal Members, and Tribal liaisons mentioned the devastating consequences of whitewashing history. Some White administrators and educators failed to fully understand Native histories. Their unawareness perpetuated historical trauma for Native students and families. As a result, educators continued to teach incomplete histories. Native students and families felt invisible.

Nelson remembered the first time one of their Native students wore a shirt that said, "Remember the 38." The shirt recognized the largest mass hanging of Native Americans ordered by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. Native Americans commemorate the 38 executed Native Americans with an annual horseback ride and run. Nelson felt embarrassed and wondered how this impacted their student. Nelson stated:

> I asked that student 'What [does] Remember the 38 mean?' And then they told me and how stupid I felt in asking them that question. Like how [did] that student feel when I asked her that? To say that you don't even know about that?

Additionally, annual field trips to a military outpost caused further harm to Native students. Educators, due to their unawareness of historical context, failed to realize how this military outpost served as a concentration camp for Native Americans. Crow pleaded, "Stop taking the kids to [the military outpost] on a tour and make it this wonderful place. That is a military fort, when that's not what it was originally even before contact. That area was so sacred to our people. And they need to first talk about that."

Taylor added, "The sixth grade, as a whole, goes every year to [the military outpost.] And every year I say, 'Please don't go…please don't go.'" Taylor emphasized that the tour whitewashed "what really happened there as a concentration camp for Natives." "They don't touch on that," Taylor said. Although a memorial is placed within the park, teachers continuously failed to address proper protocol prior to entering the memorial.

Taylor described:

> All of the sixth graders, which is like eight or nine sections of 30 kids, all go down to this sacred space. And they don't really talk about what a sacred space is before we go down there. So, the kids are amped up running around while one teacher is trying to talk about the importance of this memorial. And that to me is very frustrating.

Native sixth graders are forced into an uncomfortable position. Some Native families felt strongly about the field trip and refused to let their child attend. Their child was then excluded from a class outing. Other Native families allowed their children to go. However, Native students were exposed to another experience where their cultural history was not honored or acknowledged.

Crow remembered when their child wanted to go on the field trip. Crow was furious when their child did not show Crow the permission slip. Their child, instead, had their father sign the permission slip so they could attend. Crow emphasized the importance of considering whether field trips are culturally appropriate. Crow said, "If they're going to take them on a field trip, make sure the field trip does something worthwhile [and does] not do more damage. Have the kids talk about their experiences in school."

Teachers entering the East River Bend school district were not well versed with Native histories. Primary schools, secondary schools, and teacher preparation programs in this Midwestern state failed to prepare teachers in Native culture and history. Hanson said,

> I think a lot of our teachers probably come without a lot of understanding. The understanding I have is primarily just things I've done in my own, you know reading I've done on my own. I didn't learn a lot in school, you know other than just the usual unit on Manifest Destiny. And [it] turns out that wasn't a very equitable view of the situation.

Crow added, "With my kids going through school I saw what they were teaching, what the schoolbooks had, and I was disappointed."

Elementary classrooms nationwide perpetuated false narratives about Thanksgiving, Pocahontas, and Christopher Columbus. Crow remembered their children learning about Thanksgiving in school. Students made pilgrim hats while learning about a whitewashed version of colonialism. Crow recalled:

> Every year at Thanksgiving they would all dress up as Pilgrims, make those stupid hats and stop! My [children] when they start to make those hats, I'm like 'What are you doing?' 'Oh, we're making Pilgrim hats.' I'm like 'No, you're not. If you're going to do this, you're going to be natives. You are natives. You're going to represent natives.'

Author David Silverman was interviewed by smithsonianmag.com about his book *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*. Silverman spoke about the inaccuracies of the Thanksgiving myth taught in schools and stated:

> This mythmaking was also impacted by the racial politics of the late 19th century. The Indian Wars were coming to a close and that was an opportune time to have Indians included in a national founding myth. You couldn't have done that when people were reading newspaper accounts on a regular basis of atrocious violence between white Americans and Native people in the West. What's more, during Reconstruction, that Thanksgiving myth allowed New Englanders to create this idea that bloodless colonialism in their region was the origin of the country, having nothing to do with the Indian Wars and slavery. Americans could feel good about their colonial past without having to confront the really dark characteristics of it. (Bugos, 2019, para. 11)

Whitewashing Native histories continued false narratives. These false narratives, since they were so adeptly hidden within curriculum, harmed Native students and families. Historical trauma became intergenerational trauma. Healing never occurred.

Crow implored:

Don't make our children have to make a stupid Pilgrim hat tell the true story of the pilgrimage. Tell the true story of Pocahontas. Don't try to glamorize these things to make it better. Kids have to hear [how] Pocahontas was a kid who was raped. She was stolen. She was sex trafficked. You have to quit telling them the fun things. Tell them that kids were ripped away from their parents as young as five years old to go to boarding school where they were beaten for speaking the only language they knew how to speak, for dressing and having their hair the way they were. These kids have to understand this, as horrible as it is. They have to understand that these horrible things happened and will continue to happen unless *they* change it. So don't be afraid to tell the true story. Don't sugarcoat it. Don't whitewash it.

Culturally responsiveness and understanding Native histories challenged educators. Acknowledging Native identity proved critical to student success. Native students felt invisible when their identity was not recognized. Peterson commented how a social emotional connection to culture determined a sense of belonging. Peterson stated, "What was really interesting is that it isn't just the academics. It's about that social emotional and connection to culture piece…and many times it was beautiful to watch and other times whether there were these gaps- it was tragic."

Historical trauma caused three major effects for Native students. The cause and effects can be illustrated as a funnel. Racism created a catalyst for implicit bias. Implicit bias then led to a loss of identity for Native students. Figure 6 illustrates these effects.

Figure 6

The effects of historical trauma on Native students
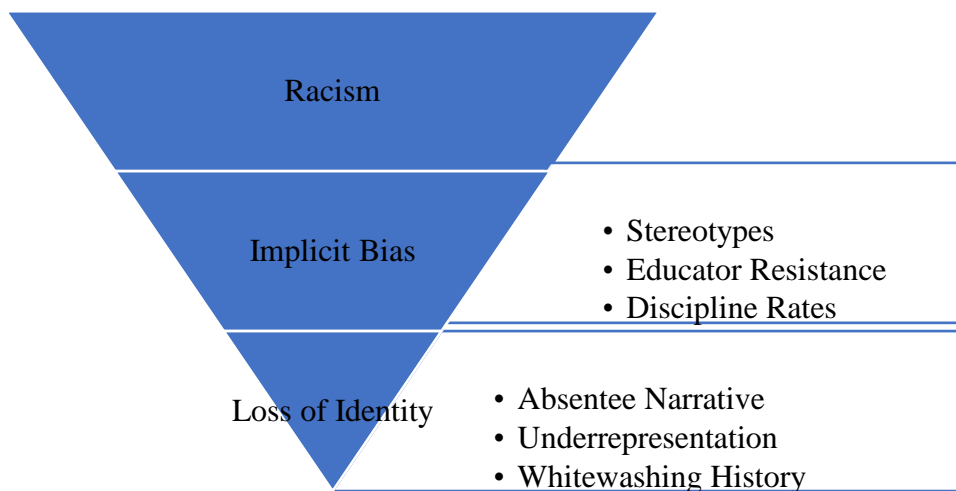
In the following section, I describe intergenerational trauma and its impacts on Native students.

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma is trauma that is passed down through multiple generations. Native students suffered from historical trauma experienced by their parents and grandparents. Participants described boarding schools as the antecedent of intergenerational trauma.

Historically, Native youth were taken from their homes and bussed hundreds of miles away to attend boarding schools (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). Native parents living in poverty could not access their children. Families were separated for the entire school year. Reunification often led to heartbreak as Native children were stripped of their cultural identity and assimilated to White cultural norms.

A loss of language prevented communication between Native grandchildren and their grandparents (Spring, 1997). Many Native students in boarding schools experienced physical

abuse, sexual abuse, malnourishment, and chronic disease. Some Native students died while

attending boarding schools. Their bodies were never returned to their families for proper burial.

Subsequently, Native families resented governmental authority and the forcible

educational practices imposed upon their children (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). Educational

institutions could not be trusted as it served as a weapon for colonization. Participants described

the lack of educator knowledge around boarding schools. Educators were either unaware

boarding schools existed or did not fully realize how boarding schools still impacted Native

families.

Peterson knew how important it was for educators to understand the ramifications of

boarding schools for Native families. Peterson wanted their staff to grasp how current boarding

schools really were. Boarding schools were recently dismantled and were not an antiquated part

of U.S. history.

Peterson reflected:

You look at the whole educational institution leading up to 1970, 1974 when the last
boarding school closed. And so, what was interesting about that was in having
conversations with the staff. Having the dialogue of '1974 there were still boarding
schools.' So that means that we had parents and grandparents who may have been
victimized by those schools. And so, to me, it was really important for the staff to
understand that. And I think they did to a certain degree, understand that that reality is not
a history of a 150 years ago. That was a reality within our lifetimes, of most of my staff at
[East River Bend.]

Kingbird reflected on the continued impact of boarding schools for Native families.

Schools never rectified racialized harm. Native students often felt mistreated while attending

schools. As a result, a lot of Native students dropped out of school. These former Native students

were now grandparents and parents to the current Native students in East River Bend.

The cultural mistrust between Native families and schools have been passed down

multiple generations. Consequently, Native parents in East River Bend exhibited resistance and

hesitancy to engage with teachers and administrators. Educators failed to recognize how intergenerational trauma affected Native parent engagement in schools. Instead, Native parents and their parenting style were blamed. Kingbird reiterated:

> Public school systems… [are] not a good place for our kids and our families. Grandma didn't graduate. Mom didn't graduate. There's no expectation. When anything happens in school, you know what the response is? It's 'the parents.' Parents were treated, I'm going to say poorly, and that's an understatement, in the school.

> Taylor agreed. Taylor added, "I think some of the families still have elders in their family

that have been impacted by boarding schools. So, they don't have the most positive outlook about public education." Hanson expanded, "You don't have to go more than a generation back. From time to time we'll run into situations where we have parents, or you know, sometimes grandparents, that their experiences in [East River Bend] were not nearly as positive."

Boarding schools were named as the precursor of intergenerational trauma. Participants defined broken homes, mental health, substance abuse, and violence as some of the lasting impacts of trauma. Trauma created a chain reaction that occurred throughout multiple generations. Mental health led to substance abuse. Infants with mothers addicted to substances were born with addiction and learning disabilities. Violence, whether physical or sexual, begot violence. Substance abuse and violence separated families. Children were removed from homes and families; the families which were previously victimized by boarding schools. This cycle continued for three generations, creating long term effects of intergenerational trauma.

Participants described how intergenerational trauma affected Native youth. Peterson recalled traumatic incidents Native youth experienced.

Peterson explained:

> Students that really struggled, that were from [East River Indian Community,] either had significant trauma, as a result of domestic violence, or significant trauma due to extensive chemical use in the home, or just general violence that was that was nearby. Sometimes they were with mom and dad. Sometimes they were with grandparents to get out of the home. Sometimes a parent, or both, were either incarcerated or deceased. It wasn't a lot…but at least 10% of the kiddos had that.

Trauma and abuse separated Native children from their parents. Native youth were either placed with grandparents, relatives, or in foster homes. Foster families were typically not trained to handle trauma and mental health concerns. Peterson remembered one of their Native students who needed more support than their relatives could provide. Peterson said:

> I can think of a kid right now. It would have been my first year. I got to know him and he qualified for special services because his behavior was pretty substantial. What I learned is that when he was three years old, he watched his father get murdered in their house. And that stayed with him. And at that time, when I was working with him [he was] 15. And Social Services was working with the families, [they were] living with Grandma. Grandma's a nice woman. She did her best, but she didn't have, she wasn't equipped to work with the deep trauma that that child had in his experience to help support him. So, I know when I was there, he was in at least one residential treatment for a period of time and then he went to live with another relative. And then, that's kind of the story too. Sometimes the kiddos will bounce between relatives, and not always in the same community.

Both Kingbird and Maynor fostered Native youth from East River Bend. Providing foster care changed the dynamics of their own families. Additionally, Native children experienced a multitude of challenges while under foster care. Kingbird, who was foster parent for seven years, spoke about when new foster children in their home sat down to family dinner. For many of their foster children, sitting down to a family meal was a new experience. Kingbird recalled, "You should see when kids have come from challenging homes and when you sit down for your first meal. I mean, and both the kids look at [my children, and then] will look at you like, 'What the heck? You guys actually do this?'"

Maynor described the challenges of fostering babies in the community. Some of the infants were born with addiction. Maynor said, "I've taken in babies from the hospital. When they're coming off drugs and they're withdrawing themselves, it's hell. It's hell."

Unfortunately, Eagle River Indian Community is like most Tribal nations and has battled substance abuse for multiple generations. Maynor commented about watching their family struggle with the intergenerational effects of substance abuse. Maynor said:

> When you talk about the generational stuff, there's also the drug and alcohol abuse, and kids coming deformed. My sister, all three of her children, came out with meth in her system. You know, she's 30 years old. It's still there. Watching them struggle to this day. My youngest niece is six years old. She has so many side effects that my sister will never acknowledge are from that. My aunt will never acknowledge that that's why her grandchild is acting like that. [It] is because her mother used drugs while she was in the womb. 'Oh she's just a kid, that's why she's acting like that.' No [it's] not.

Kennedy added, "Some of our students aren't coming into the school grade level ready and especially at the elementary level. I don't know if it's disproportionate to other students. But I mean, it's a major challenge I know for our elementary teachers." Nelson described an incident with a Native, elementary student. The student received in patient services half of the day and attended school the remainder of the day. While at school, the student experienced a trauma related episode. Staff were scared and felt unprepared to help the young student. Nelson illustrated:

> He's a second grader… He hid behind a huge partition, and we literally couldn't get to him. And he was safe, I mean doing his meltdown but he doesn't speak. They stop talking. I will notice that they stop talking. But he got a paper bag and he [you] know (makes motion of putting bag over his head to suffocate) right there. That was the scariest moment. And knowing [his]-the history of his family and his mom and the whole situation. It's systemic. This is something - he's screaming for help. But most of the time our Native students will, they'll elope first. We find they elope the most. And they really do stop talking to us…I really feel like there is something in them that says 'don't' when they get triggered. Whatever the trigger is, they say 'stop trusting anyone that doesn't look like you. Stop trusting them.'

Kingbird worried about the generational effects of substance abuse and trauma. Kingbird

stated:

> When I started 32 years ago: opioids, heroin, mental health. I'm open about this. [I'm]
> probably one of the very few people in Indian Country today that will talk about the
> cumulative effect of three generations of historical trauma, chemical abuse, [Fetal
> Alcohol Syndrome;] FAS…[and Fetal Alcohol Effects]; FAE. Where our little people;
> greatest gift the Creator gives us is our children. We're getting to this starting line in
> public education or private education; what their toolboxes look like. That is where one
> of my greatest concerns are right now. I'm at such a level of concern. What can we do?
> Can our families, can our Tribal nations, can we go to the fourth generation? What
> [does] the fourth generation look like? I don't know.

Maynor shared the same concern as Kingbird. Maynor knew firsthand how Native

students diagnosed with FAS struggled in school. Maynor reflected:

> I had a couple of kids that were diagnosed FAS. What was the other one, NAS? I can't
> remember what the other one is, but the narcotic one. I had a few students in high school
> that were dealing with that. And what happens when they go have kids? You know and
> they're bringing along to the next generation too. Where are our people in that too?
> We're not getting that much help from our Tribe from that unfortunately.

Participants pleaded for increased Tribal support. Maynor and Kingbird worried about the

intergenerational effects of trauma. Peterson showed concern for Native students who were not

enrolled members of the Eagle River Tribe. Native students from other Tribal nations suffered

from intergenerational trauma and required extra support.

Peterson recalled a particular family:

> The kids were in a boarding school, and the one boy was molested while there. The girl,
> we believe, had also been sex trafficked at some point. And then the other kiddo, I'm sure
> with everything else going on, he was struggling too. So when they came into our
> building, they were in the building, but they were rarely in a classroom, they would walk.
> And they would walk a lot. They would not respond to redirection. They would not work
> with the cultural liaison. But when you're looking at homelessness, and other kinds of
> things, it doesn't surprise me. But that's where we felt trapped. We didn't know what to
> provide because with [Eagle River,] the cultural liaison was there during the day. But
> when it came to [Eagle River,] they supported [Eagle River] residence. They do not
> support and provide resources to [non-Eagle River] families, to my knowledge.

Participants also described the current substance abuse among Native students. Kennedy said:

> There's some chemical health issues for sure that affect our teenage students, our high school students. A lot…of marijuana use. But that will often grow into amphetamines, and meth, and opioids. That's been a big struggle for some of our Native students [the] last couple of years.

Clark added, "We have kids who are chemically dependent. There's some that you're like 'oh please,' you know? And you call, and you reach and say 'please, please, please get back to school, and stop doing the damn drugs.'" Substance abuse was named as a contributing factor for interfering with school. Some Native students fell into a repetitive cycle of treatment, abusing substances again, and going back to treatment. This repetitive cycle of abuse devastated educators and families. Clark hated losing kids to drugs. Clark said:

> They just can't get their chemicals under control. And they go in and out of treatment and they come back to us. And then they fall back to the same friends, and they get back into it again. Some of them, I can just see them, and grandma is just fit to be tied and doesn't know what to do.

Increased Tribal wealth compounded the substance abuse problem within the community. Financial stability among Tribal Members provided easier access to drugs. Nelson commented:

> The lack of very real, I mean we could talk about historical trauma all day, right? But the very real immediate trauma from one generation…I've lived in [East River Bend] and all the time the Indians were the poor ones. And all of a sudden, they have all the money. And then now we have the drug problem. Well wait a minute. What did you do about addressing the traumas that we've put on them for all those years?

Clark and Kennedy named weapons and crime as an effect from drug use. Clark emphasized:

> The drugs and the weapons [in the community,] they need to be afraid. I know we are. There's a lot of money. There's a lot of access, and sort of a pipeline from the cities and it's scary. It's a real scary other side of the success that they're seeing.

Crime affected Native students and provided another navigational challenge among Native students in the district. Kennedy stated, "There's been some crime. That's been a challenge for some of our students."

The repetitive cycle of intergenerational trauma affected Native students. Kingbird remarked, "Mental health is huge. I've never ever, in all my years in Indian Education, I mean we've always had some kids that struggle, but that next level of mental health issues really has me concerned." Clark concurred that "seeing many, many, many more mental health issues" was "frightening."

Mental health affected students of all races, regardless of racialized or intergenerational trauma. Maynor worried whether students were able identify their issues as mental health to receive the help they needed. Personal experience allowed Maynor to see how their child needed more support. "Because I recognized it in her I was able to take those steps. And she knows those avenues." However, "as a parent" and "somebody that worked in the district multiple times," Maynor could not say what "was available for those kids" and how mental health was addressed in the school district.

Historically, Native students have been over referred to Special Education services. Mental health and intergenerational trauma have been miscategorized in Native children as learning disabilities (LD). Kingbird said, "I think it's, it was really easy for a long time, if a kid was falling behind, just to say they're LD and put [them] in special ed." Mental health is an area that requires significant attention. Addressing student needs will decrease over referrals to special education programs and provide student support. Kingbird stated:

> My concern is I think nationally and statewide yes, our kids are over referred. But I really think as the Director of Indian Education here I do have concerns - again it comes back to mental health. I just think… we have kids…[and] they have needs.

Native students in East River Bend seemed to have a heavy weight on their shoulders. Students navigated historical trauma in the school setting and in their homes. In school, Native students experienced racism, implicit bias, loss of identity, and the effects from intergenerational trauma. Despite all these odds, Native students in East River have a stunning graduation rate.

Student graduation rates for the last 15 years have averaged at or above 90% of the Native student population. This graduation rate exceeds the state and national average for Native students. The Tribal Indian Education Department has worked to help Native students overcome these systemic challenges. Kingbird summed this up by saying, "And we know…those families. Because those challenges are again mending that sacred hoop. Their sacred hoop isn't mended yet."

The sacred hoop is another term for the medicine wheel. It is used as a metaphor for breaking and healing the generational and systemic cycle of generational poverty, abuse, and trauma. Figure 7 illustrates the intergenerational trauma experienced by Native youth and families.

Figure 7

Intergenerational trauma experienced by Native families

Boarding Schools → Broken Homes → Physical Abuse → Mental Health → Substance Abuse → Broken Homes
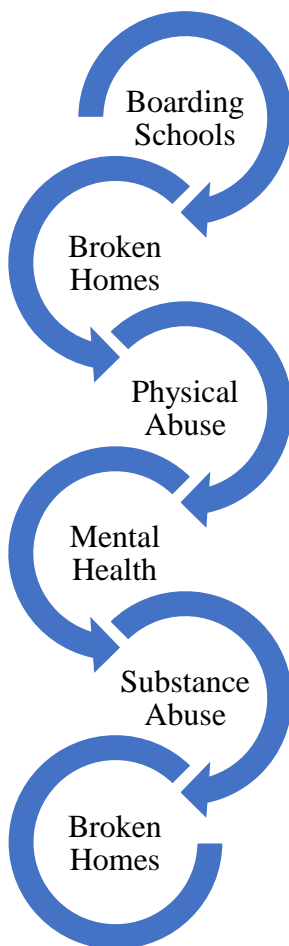
In the next section I describe the successful program initiatives that are working to help Native students graduate and for their families to mend their sacred hoop. One way the Tribe addressed the intergenerational trauma was establishing the Indian Education Program.

CHAPTER FIVE – TRIBAL COUNCIL'S VISION AND THE INDIAN EDUCATION

PROGRAM

Eagle River Indian Education Program

Eagle River Indian Community is a thriving Tribal nation. Once an impoverished Tribal

nation, families bought back stolen Tribal lands from the U.S. government. In 1936, the Tribe

reclaimed their Tribal sovereignty and the US Government awarded them approximately 500

acres of land. Tribal sovereignty allowed Eagle River to establish a Tribal government and

practice self-determination.

In 1984, Eagle River Indian Community began the process of self-determination and

opened a bingo hall. When Congress passed the 1998 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Eagle

River took advantage of expanded gaming and opened a casino. Indian Gaming provided the

economic relief and revenue for the tribe to become self-sustainable. Eagle River invested in

Tribal infrastructure, expanded their health care, and focused on education for Tribal Members.

Crow spoke about the educational disparities prior to the Tribe's economic recovery:

> Before casino, before any of that a lot of our people didn't even graduate high school. My
> father I think dropped out in 9th grade, so he obviously didn't graduate. I had an aunt and
> a couple cousins who didn't graduate high school who ended up going back and getting
> their GED. My aunt was probably in her 50s when she did that. So that was a good thing
> for her to do. And they just didn't see the value, and I mean they weren't valued as people
> in the area, especially in [the] county. So, they kind of just kept to themselves.

Once the Tribe became financially stable, their focus turned towards health and

education. Crow described the Tribe's biggest source of revenue and expenses are health care

and education.

Crow reflected on the cultural value of investing in their Tribal Members.

Then we started. We opened up the bingo hall, then it turned into the casino. And now we own it … along with a couple of other things. And we learned that, like I said before, the only way we were going to succeed was to educate our people in the White man's world. The only way we are going to be able to succeed and beat them at their own game. So, the tribe decided to spend a good portion of the revenues in the education system. The two biggest revenues are expenses that we have in our tribe, our health care, and education.

The Tribe now had financial discretion. With a cultural shift toward education the Tribe established the Indian Education program. Eagle River Tribal elders hoped for a better future and long-term sustainability for their Tribe.

In the next section I explain the financial incentives the Tribe put in place to motivate young adults to graduate. I explain the history of the Indian Education program and provide narratives documenting how the value of education began to change. I then explain how the Indian Education program implemented culturally responsive programs to affirm Tribal traditions, provided academic support, and advocated for Native youth in schools.

Financial Incentives

Several Tribal efforts promoting the value of education profoundly impacted the community. Educational programming over the last 33 years dramatically increased graduation rates to over 90%. Kingbird stated these graduation rates remained consistent for the past 12 years. The systemic cycle of low educational attainment eventually diminished. As parents graduated high school, the expectation for their children changed. Graduating high school was no longer optional.

One of the methods the Tribe used to promote graduation was offering incentives. Increased wealth meant the Tribe could now financially motivate youth. Tribal Council met and implemented two financial incentives to motivate students to remain in school. Students needed a

high school diploma to receive their per capita income and to gain employment on the

reservation. The Tribe believed in securing a better future for their youth and hoped this financial

incentive would springboard action. Kingbird spoke about how this financial incentive was

originally put in place:

> Our elders met and had a long conversation with Tribal Council because they could see our investments were growing. Especially as we look at diversifying here as a sovereign nation for business. The elders really put a high value on education especially for the future because we were coming from a completely impoverished community. As our elders met with our Tribal leaders, they decided to put some things in place; no financial benefits from the community unless you graduated from high school.

Participants differed with their perspectives on per capita payments. Three administrators

attributed the per capita payments as a motivating factor to graduate. Nelson expressed, "If they

have a per cap … that's how they're going to graduate." Clark mused, "If you can graduate and

get 1.4 million dollars or something, that's pretty motivating." Peterson added:

> For some of the other students where they may not have all the supports or the drive to do all that, they do know this much, that once they graduate with a diploma, they receive their per cap…it's a financial incentive to graduate.

However, per capita income became less of an incentive as the value of education

changed. Education became a cultural norm. One administrator and two teachers described

motivational factors to graduate beyond the per capita income. Hanson spoke about the changing

narrative of education. Hanson said:

> I had fourth graders tell me…12 years ago…they didn't see the value in education because… in their perception… all they had to do was turn 18 and they were rich… I don't hear that anymore… I think [there] was [a] much greater emphasis on the importance of getting an education.

Kennedy commented, "Our students, especially when they get to be seniors, are very

motivated to eventually graduate. I don't know 10 years ago that was in place. It was a much

bigger challenge." Anderson attributed the high graduation rate to the care teachers provided. "I

feel like our district does have a tendency to try and incorporate culture and really make

connections with kids."

Graduation rates increased through incentives, Tribal Indian Education programming,

and outreach. The Tribe recognized the need for Tribal Members to return to the reservation and

work for the Tribe. Crow explained Tribal Council's decision to increase financial incentives:

> You know, the high school was going pretty well. It's going pretty well. Let's [see] what
> we need to move them on to post-secondary. We need to get them educated even more,
> so we can bring them back to the reservation and work for the tribe and help us out.

The Tribe invested in post-secondary education for Tribal Members. Students who chose

college or trade school after graduation received full scholarships for their tuition. The Tribe

stipulated students must maintain at a 2.0 grade average while enrolled in post-secondary

courses. Crow mentioned if a student failed to meet the grade requirements, they had "to pay the

Tribe back a hundred percent, dollar for dollar." Crow added, "It's a great incentive."

Financial incentives motivated students to seek education. However, financial incentives

did not guarantee that a student remained in school. Students left schools that did not offer the

proper supports. Crow described their daughter's experience during college.

> I know my oldest daughter got accepted to Brown University and she was able to go a
> year. But because of her anxiety she had to come back and finish at the [state's]
> university … But that one year, just for tuition, not room and board, not food, or nothing
> was $50,000. So, you know, if I had had to try to come up with that on my own, that
> would have been a little tough. But because the Tribe paid for it, it really helped.

The Tribal Indian Education department implemented several strategies for students to

navigate school. Their goal focused on helping students remain in school and graduate. I describe

the program next and explain the supports the program implemented to increase graduation rates.

History

Well over 90% of Native youth in Eagle River Indian Community graduate high school each year. The academic success of Native scholars is attributed to the Indian Education Program. Kingbird described the program success "[It's] so hard to explain to people, because it was really, really, really, tiny steps. But there's not an expectation done here that you're not going to graduate. You're going to graduate." I sat down with Kingbird and asked them to describe the history of the program.

Kingbird was hired by the Tribe in 1989 as a post-secondary prep counselor. Kingbird stated, "It was almost, [I] want to say a joke, because the [East River Bend] school district had less than a 20% graduation rate for our kids." Historical trauma impacted Native family experiences within school. As a result, many Native students withdrew from school. Kingbird described the community impacts from historical trauma:

> It really was trust. Our kids didn't trust the school and lots of times non-Indian people and teachers don't get that. When they go home at night they're not going home to a college-educated grandpa and grandma and parents that went to trade school. They're going home to grandparents, and parents, and uncles and aunties, and cousins that the public schools-they didn't graduate from. It was a horrible place to go. So, you don't have that expectation. You don't have anyone saying, 'Boy school is really fun for me. You know, it was great. I was in glee club and 4-H.'

Historical trauma turned into intergenerational trauma. Kingbird knew the narrative on education had to change:

> And our families don't in many cases even today experience a whole lot positive in the public school system. And that's what we hope we've started to change. That's what we hope so. Because Grandpa and Grandma had a horrible experience, mom and dad had a horrible experience. So, if it's not a good place, why would anybody go?

These challenges needed addressing for movement to occur. Therefore, Kingbird turned his attention toward academics and started an adult education program. His focused determination helped approximately 22 adults graduate high school within the first two years.

Kingbird recounted a favorite story of theirs. A 72-year-old grandmother was dismayed with their two grandsons who had not graduated. To prove a point, the grandmother enrolled in the adult education program and made her two grandsons attend with them. Kingbird recalled:

> So, what happened was, the first son graduated within like two months. Well, the other one took like six months. And grandma, or mom, kept coming in. [Even though] those two boys graduated they [all] continued to come in until mom got her high school diploma.

At the graduation ceremony, Kingbird announced their pride. "Your two boys had their diplomas months before you did. But because you made such an issue of them getting it, they just continued to go." Kingbird described how adult graduates participated in the graduation ceremony for the high school. "So, think at that time, when they graduated, we had a grandma graduate, a dad graduate, and one of their kids graduate. So, you have three generations all graduating that year."

Concentrated efforts led to an increased graduation rate. Between 1980 and 1990 graduation rates were 19%. In the beginning, the adult education program provided services to a few adults. However, this small, concentrated effort had a lasting impact on the Tribal community. The value of education began to change. Kingbird emphasized:

> [It] should be noted that we're not talking about 300 seniors that we're trying to graduate. You know we're talking small numbers. At that time very small numbers. So, when you have 15 to 25 adults in a community that did not graduate, that were starting young families themselves, to come back and get that diploma, it's not a value. It becomes an expectation. Because even if they took this path to get their high school diploma, it becomes an expectation for their kids. So, when you talk to these parents, 'are your kids going to graduate?' It's not even a question.

Economic success for the Tribe increased their focus on education. Additional money was allocated to programming and staff. As a result, graduation rates skyrocketed to 70% between 1990 and 2000. Now, the Tribal Indian Education department boasts a 90% graduation rate. In fact, only five kids have not graduated within the last four years.

Kingbird explained:

> I didn't all of a sudden have a 90% graduation rate for the last 15 years. These were, and I will be the first one to tell you, I'm just taking the next step of what somebody else shared with me. This is a community. This is all of the elders that took the time to be patient with me.

The community effort broke the systemic cycle of low graduation rates and created a value and emphasis on education. Kingbird elaborated:

> It was kind of the last missing piece in those families that had had struggles in a public school system…And don't get me wrong, there's still struggles every day. You know this, I mean I don't need to…So what happened was, with those parents, and almost all of them were young parents at that time. Now that family had a value of education, and going back, and being successful. So that expectation, when the kids went to school, it has nothing to do with that. What happens when they graduate, it's become a value. [It] started breaking the cycle.

The Indian Education program has evolved throughout the years to meet the needs of the community. In the beginning, the program met with students one day a week in the afternoon. Now, after school tutoring is provided to Tribally enrolled students. Tribal liaisons are present in all the schools during the day and offer academic and emotional support. The Indian Education program accomplished more than graduation rates. The program passed down and instilled cultural values for their youth. I next explain how the Indian Education Program affirmed cultural traditions and values.

Affirming Cultural Traditions and Values

Typically, Native children learn cultural traditions from their families and within their Tribal community. The Indian Education program served as one avenue for Native children to learn about Tribal traditions and values. Kingbird offered another a Native program for at-risk students.

Students learned about the four directions. The four directions are Native teachings referring to the west, north, east, and south. Each direction has a prescribed color and represents

the four stages of life, the four seasons, the four elements of nature, animals, ceremonial plants, and values. The colors and values attributed to each direction vary among Tribal nations. Students attending the Tribal Indian education program learned about generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence.

Kingbird embedded cultural values and Indigenous knowledge within academic content. High school students were also given the opportunity to make up credits while engaging in stimulating activities that affirmed cultural values. "I've just had so much success with experiential ed[ucation], hands on learning, [and a] cultural-based curriculum." Kingbird tailored the program to meet student needs and interests.

Students learned games and participated in team building activities. The older students taught the younger kids these games, which affirmed the value of community and giving back. Winter survival was taught by building quinzhees, a snow shelter, and camping in the winter weather. "The coldest we were in was 32 degrees below 0. We stayed two nights out with the kids."

Students learned about spring ecology through the same cultural approach. "We talked about the circle of life, and we would do water quality. All of those things that we used to do, animal tracking; there was storytelling."

High school seniors culminated the program with an out-of-state trip building homes with Habitat for Humanity. Kingbird recalled, "Lots of our kids at that time had never been on a plane." The success of the program was two-fold: building community and providing a culturally rich curriculum absent in schools. Kingbird summed,

> So, if the kids were behind, we could kind of tailor what classes, science, math, biology, so they could catch up. And they were learning none of those in school. Oh heavens, no. It was all [about] doing things. And really in the end, was all about community and family.

In the summer, tribally enrolled students are invited to a culture camp. Students learn language, traditional foods, and medicine gathering in a garden created by the Tribe's medicine woman. Kingbird explained, "So now we do the medicine garden, we do the three-sisters, we do fishing, we do medicine gathering. So right after school, we have this unbelievable two-week [program.] Kingbird produced pictures of elementary students proudly grinning and holding harvested fruit and vegetables in their hands. Kingbird went on to say, "We have our nutritionist, we have our Dakota language teachers through all of this, gathering wild strawberries, all that." The success and joy from the Native kids in the pictures I saw was transparent.

More importantly, the power of the Indian Education program meant that Native youth were noticed. At the beginning of each year, Kingbird would take all the students to a local shoe store. Every student received a new pair of shoes to start the school year due to the Johnson-O'Malley Act. The Johnson-O'Malley Act is a nationwide program that provides financial support to Tribes to meet educational needs. Kingbird reflected on the importance of attending to Native youth. Without acknowledging students, Native youth were at risk for dropping out. Kingbird reflected:

> When I started, the highlight of the school year was Johnson O'Malley and going to [the local shoe store.] And everybody getting new school shoes for the year, which were wore out by Christmas. So really, you know those early years, there were our kids, in many cases, in lots of schools, our kids are invisible. And by 16 they are no longer there. And no one even recognizes they're gone.

As the Indian Education program grew, Kingbird was able to hire three Tribal liaisons. The Tribal liaisons were present in the schools and continued the advocacy Kingbird pioneered. In the next section I explain Native student support in schools.

Wrap Around Academic Support

The Tribe employed three liaisons to provide academic support for Native students. Kingbird approximated the number of tribally enrolled students and students self-identifying as Native as 180 students. The liaisons provided services to all Native students regardless of tribal affiliation during the school day. One liaison worked with elementary students and split their time between the two elementary schools. The high school liaison served both the traditional high school and alternative high school, while the middle school liaison attended to just one building.

All three liaisons are licensed teachers. Liaisons typically provided pull-out services, in that a student was excused from class to receive extra support in literacy or mathematics with the liaison. The format for each liaison differed because of the range in academic and developmental needs within grade levels. Martin explained how they worked with elementary students:

> We kind of have like a set time that I'll either go into the classroom or I pull the student out and work with them. And it varies. If they're excelling, we can just excel. If they're struggling then you know, whatever they need. You know if they're fourth grade and they don't know how to tie their shoe yet, then we work on that.

Taylor's process of working with middle school students differed than the middle school. Taylor talked about the importance of teaching accountability to older students. Taylor stated:

> I don't pull students during certain times. When they're at the middle school, I kind of make them more accountable and they need to ask their teachers to come see me during the day. I use math as an example. When there's math work time, if they need additional one-on-one help then they can come to my room, and I can help them with the assignment. They also come to my room for quizzes and tests. So, it's a quieter space for them. And then if a student [is] on an IEP, I will read them their tests or quiz if I need to, if it doesn't assess the reading obviously. When there's an IEP meeting, I'm invited to that, so that I know what's going on with the student. If there's a discipline issue, I don't discipline the students.

Thomas described working with high school students. Thomas spoke about attending two buildings and modifying his approach to meet the needs of each school.

Thomas illustrated:

> I spend about two to three hours a week [at the alternative high school.] I'll go out to alternative school and there I will ask kids if they want to come and work with me…So I do in a sense pull students there. But when I'm at the high school my job's pretty similar to [Taylor's] where I just kind of sit and wait and help kids when they come to me or wait for problems to arise. And then I'll go and assist admin[istration], or the student, or whatever, that way. But it's more of a reaction game compared to probably [the elementary.]

Kingbird explained the reasoning behind hiring licensed teachers for a liaison role. Kingbird stated, "One of the requirements is that those liaisons have to be licensed teachers because they speak teacher, they understand teacher." Kingbird elaborated, "It always comes back to academics. I mean we really monitor super, super close." Academics was a strong priority and focus for the Indian Education department.

To promote academic standing, the Indian Education program established after school tutoring for Tribally enrolled members. Tribal liaisons and licensed teachers from the district were hired as tutors. After school tutoring was offered Monday through Friday for an hour and a half. This time allowed students to catch up on missing assignments. Tutors also gave students extra practice with a difficult skill.

Jordan, a second-grade teacher in the district for 14 years, served as an after school tutor. Jordan reflected how after school programming compensated Native students who lacked parental support at home. Jordan said:

> What I see in elementary is there's sometimes something in the family that leads to a kind of a lack of engagement or parenting for these kids. And so, they don't have that support at home, which kind of leads them into falling further behind with their academics. So that's why we have the tutoring program. So [if] they have any homework or if they have anything that they're behind on they just stay after school. And there's probably a dozen teachers or so…where they just tutor kids… and just kind of make sure that they're on top of what they need to get done or if they're struggling.

Licensed teachers from East River Bend were purposefully hired for the after school tutoring program. Jordan commented on the benefits of having district teachers as tutors. Teachers automatically knew what skills students needed when they tutored their own students. Jordan stated:

> I like to do it because a lot of times I have those students and then I can, I know exactly what they're missing. I know if they were gone a few days during the week. I know what they missed. I know what they're struggling with, and I know what to focus on. So that's really useful when you have those students in your class, to be able to spend that extra time with them after school, to get them caught up. Because a lot of times they don't have that support at home.

Additionally, tutors had access to their student's teachers. This was another benefit of hiring licensed teachers. The academic abilities differed with students in the program. Some students required additional support, while others required enrichment. Miller spoke about the ease in collaboration with teachers to determine student needs. Miller stated:

> Honestly, I found more often than not, the kids that I were tutoring didn't really need my help. They were doing okay. And so, it was almost more of an enrichment kind of experience, which if you're a tutor it's hard. It's very easy to know what to do when a kid is struggling with something. It's hard to know what to do when they're meeting all expectations. And sometimes typically you'd talk to the teacher directly and they would say, 'Okay this child needs to work on this particular thing.' And other times they'd be like, 'Well they need to work on their math, and they need to work on their reading.' And you're like, 'Well I only have them for an hour. So, what do we need to focus on?'

The after school tutoring program provided multiple benefits. Native students were noticed. They received the extra academic support or enrichment based on their individualized needs. Additionally, after school tutoring provided reassurance to parents.

Maynor reflected:

> My son gets a little bit of help from the program and get[s] some reading. Just getting him some extra practice…to help him. So, he's staying, I mean he's at level, but just right at level. So just trying to give him that extra push to make sure that he's doing really well.

Anderson recalled how tutoring reassurance parents. The parents of a kindergartner were worried if they made the wrong choice by starting kindergarten early. The tutoring program ensured the student did not fall behind. Anderson said:

> She's a July birthday, and they were concerned at the beginning of the school year if they made the right decision. And she's doing just fine. She will be just fine. And I do think they put the right supports in action and everything for her. Yeah, she's really a great girl.

Academic support increased academic success. As a result, student confidence increased. Anderson mentioned the impact tutoring had on this kindergarten student. "I do think it really strengthened her. And I do think it's built up her confidence as well. And being able to move forward and take risks with her learning and even challenge herself."

Tutoring provided an additional benefit. Liaisons did not need to pull students from class when students performed at grade level. This allowed students to remain in the classroom with their peers. Anderson mused, "The student that I had this year does receive tutoring services. However, it's not necessary per say. She's doing academically okay, so she hasn't met with [the liaison] this school year [because] she truthfully didn't need it."

Besides academic support, after school tutoring increases advocacy for students and built relationships between teachers and families. In the next section, I describe the multiple ways the Indian Education program increased relationships and advocacy for their Native families.

Relationships and Advocacy

Relationships and connectivity are esteemed cultural values in Indian Country. Kingbird understood these important cultural traits and capitalized on relationships to establish the Indian

Education program. Today, the success of the Indian Education program is attributed to the relationships Kingbird established with families. Kingbird said, "So really when I start at the beginning of our program, it was all about developing those relationships and that respect back and forth."

After a time, the adult education program was no longer necessary. Kingbird concentrated their efforts serving Tribally enrolled students in the district. Kingbird first started as a liaison and advocated for Native students in the school buildings. As time went on, the Tribe hired additional liaisons to support their youth. Kingbird credited the success of the program to those developed relationships from the adult education program. Kingbird reflected:

> I'm almost starting on my fourth generation. So those grandparents who have all walked on now, were the first grandparents I worked with. Because a lot of them were raising the kids, you know? So then we have the parents, who are now the grandparents. You know I had all of them in school, and now their kids are almost all through school, and they're having kids.

Kingbird was earnest about their role as a tribal member and as an advocate. Kingbird described how they aspired to exemplify "damakota," which translates into "I am Dakota." Kingbird reflected, "Ninety-nine percent of the kids call me uncle, 'deksi'…[,] I've had a wonderful, wonderful, [life] here." Kingbird elaborated:

> And the responsibility that comes with it as uncle, I take that very seriously. Obviously when you say 'damakota,' that's what [it] is traditionally. What it's supposed to be. That's the teachings that [my wife] and I show the community every day. Our doors [are] always open…We lead a sober, drug-free lifestyle. We're powwow people…That's who we are.

Kingbird can be described as a staple within the community. Valuing face-to-face conversations over phone calls, Kingbird sat down with numerous parents, grandparents, aunties, and uncles, over the years, with a cup of coffee, to provide additional support for their children. To this day, Kingbird preferred to make those connections themself when sensitive issues arose. Kingbird spoke about how their personal relationships preserved the dignity of families.

Kingbird stated:

> [It's] just my longevity here and being able to really have meaningful, open, heart-to-heart conversations with parents, and grandparents, and aunties and uncles. [It] really helps, really. I mean that helps. My liaisons are never the bad guys. They're not making the phone calls.

Kingbird demonstrated their personal care and advocacy toward families:

> Hey, Johnny's not been in school for five days. You need me to swing by? Is something going on? Uh, Johnny doesn't have any lunch money, what can we do? You know, he's embarrassed to go in the lunchroom because he's got to get a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and he can't get a hamburger and french fries. You guys short? You guys short? You need twenty bucks, whatever? Or if I'm in there, I just throw twenty [to Johnny.] You know? That's because it's community. Because it's all family.

Kingbird spoke about his advocacy in the beginning years. Kingbird knew about the cultural mistrust between Native families and the school system. Therefore, Kingbird served as a bridge between the families and the school. It was important to find a middle ground while ensuring parents were heard and student needs were met. Kingbird explained:

> I will tell you, for the first five years that I was here, it was also about probably being that strong advocate but also trying to bring everybody to the table in a good way. And usually when parents got really, really upset, as an advocate not really supporting them in all of that negative approach to the school but trying to find some medium ground. We're really coming in, it's all about Johnny getting through that class or through whatever. And it all comes down to what's best for that kid. Everybody wants best for that child.

Kingbird knew about the criticality of advocacy. Special education meetings between teachers and families provided another example where advocacy was necessary. Kingbird observed how teachers spoke to Native families using technical jargon. When teachers assumed families were well versed in the technical language of IEP's, the conversation was hard to follow. Additionally, some teachers adhered to a time-bound structure of the meeting and failed to explain the process to Native parents.

Kingbird described working with families at the inception of the Indian Education

program:

> There [were] many times when I [had] parents come in that I know only have a second or
> third grade reading level. And teachers all sit there like they're above everybody and they
> go around and 'blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.' And when they get to me, because
> again, I'm an advocate, I'll sit there and say 'Well, this is awesome. But can we take a
> little break right now? Because I want to go over this stuff with the parents.'

> Kingbird elaborated how some teachers impacted Native parents.

> When you sat down a 25-page IEP with all the test scores and Woodcock Johnson, and
> all the rest of that stuff, and they're flipping through with ten or 12 teachers sitting at the
> table, oh my goodness. You have no idea. And I started this early on. When we got to the
> point where the case manager was saying 'Here sign this, and we'll see you in a year,'
> where I [would say,] 'Nope!'

> Kingbird's work influenced how teachers and parents presented themselves at the table.

Native parents in the community are educated compared to previous generations. Teachers also

received years of modeling from Kingbird on how to be more relational during meetings. The

dynamics between teachers and parents during IEP meetings softened. However, Kingbird

emphasized the inequities of IEP goals for Native students. Kingbird's current focus is ensuring

instructional goals and practices are rigorous enough for Native students to exit special education

programming and stay in mainstreamed classrooms with their peers. Kingbird explained:

> I just had a parent in here, yesterday, that I read an IEP for and said 'Do not sign this.
> Let's get the case manager on the phone.' And we got on the phone and I was like,
> 'Twelve months is too long. Can we maybe have a meeting in 30 days to see if Johnny is
> [progressing?]' [Because] they always say 'Well Johnny is only doing 20% of his
> homework in his class now. In a year let's see if we can get him up to 50%.' Oh my god.
> If you're at a second grade reading level in 8th grade, why are you waiting 12 months to
> find out if he or she is doing 20 or 30% [of their work?]

> Kingbird ensured that Tribal liaisons attend all IEP meetings with Native families.

Licensed teachers in the role of a liaison safeguarded Native student and families. Kingbird

reflected, "It's really just understanding how that child learns. And I think that's why when you

have a liaison in the position for more than nine months and has that teaching background,

they're able to at least [advocate.]" Kingbird mused on the success of the program:

> People have asked me what works here and why it works here. It's all just the little things…It's all about respect. I wish people would get that. It's not brain surgery. It's really about respect. Respect those parents. You don't know their life story.

As the program grew, three liaisons were hired and were stationed at the schools to

support students. The liaisons offered academic support. However, as relationships grew between

the liaisons and students, students relied on the liaisons for emotional support. The Tribal

liaisons became another adult advocate for Native students. Kingbird spoke about the importance

of training Tribal liaisons to meet the needs of the community.

> When I hire non-Indian teachers that [have never] worked in Indian country, it takes four to five years. It's not about their training. They have all this professional training to be a teacher. It's really about understanding who we are as a people and how we problem solve, how we work through things, how you have to be sensitive.

Kingbird elaborated on the characteristics Tribal liaisons needed, "Really to be able to

withstand the multitude of challenges that our kids bring to the table. It's just not one-

dimensional." Maynor agreed and added, "It's like ten-dimensional."

Participants described the multifaceted support from Tribal liaisons. Maynor recounted

their experience as former student. Both Maynor and Crow spoke about liaison support from a

parent perspective. Two current Tribal liaisons, and Maynor as a former liaison, described the

support they provided students as liaisons. Six administrators and two teachers provided

perspectives from a school standpoint.

Perspectives differed among participants. Tribal Members and liaisons spoke about

providing academic and emotional support to students. In contrast, teachers and administrators

relied on liaisons to build relationships and repair cultural mistrust within families. I begin with

Maynor's experiences as a former student.

A Student's Perspective on Liaison Support

Maynor first described how the liaison supported them as former student. Academically

Maynor was in good standing. Kingbird was the liaison when Maynor attended high school.

Kingbird's office provided Maynor with place of refuge.

Maynor explained:

[Kingbird] was my savior. At that time he was the liaison that was in my building and he was my savior. I was a good student, so he let me get away with whatever I wanted. I always did my homework, I always went to class. So, you know, if I was having a mental day, a really rough mental day, 'Uncle [Kingbird,] can I just come in here?' And he'd be like, 'Yes, just don't tell anybody.' You know and things like that. But he really was my savior, and I knew I had somebody to go to if I needed it. If I just needed a break, or I had something happen at home and I didn't want to talk to a school counselor, [Kingbird] listened to me.

Maynor recalled when Kingbird helped them with the passing of their godmother.

Maynor remembered:

So, my godmother had been killed. It was a really weird morning. It was super foggy, and I mean she was, it was really bad. And I had caught wind of it at school because somebody, people had been, some of my relatives had been pulled out and I was like, 'What's going on?' And so [Kingbird] called me in and told me what was going on. And when I called home my dad was like, 'I'm not taking you out of school for that.' I was like, 'That's my godmother, are you kidding me?' So [Kingbird] went and got all my schoolwork for me for the rest of the day. And I got to hang to out in his room for the rest of the day and just by myself because my dad wouldn't let me go. So, it's things like that, that for me, I was grateful for. And for my kids as well.

The personal experience reassured Maynor when they became a parent. I describe the

parent's perspective next.

A Parent's Perspective on Liaison Support

Maynor knew firsthand that their children would be attended to while in school.

Maynor described the support the middle school liaison provided to their daughter.

> She would go because of her mental health more than anything. Just to [advocate for herself.] 'I need a break. I can't sit in this classroom. The teachers are driving me crazy. Can I just take like five minutes to put my head down in here?' So that's the only time she really utilized middle school.

Maynor described how their daughter's needs changed during high school. The high school liaison provided wrap around support and tailored their approach to meet student needs on an individual basis. Maynor stated:

> I know my daughter in high school now utilizes it for work time. [She] will go into the room, the designated room that's there to do work time, quiet work, or [Thomas] will let her use her headphones where the teachers won't. You know, just things like that where she works better in that aspect.

Crow agreed with Maynor. Crow described the emotional support liaisons provided for their child. Students trusted Tribal liaisons more than student counselors. Crow said:

> But for my oldest, that person becomes like family to them. They go to that person not only for schoolwork, but for also personal things. They're a counselor to them and having that safe space at the school that they know they can go to anytime they need too.

Emotional support for students was highly regarded by parents and students. Academic support was described as an additional benefit. Crow explained:

> I didn't even have to do homework with her after a while. Because she would get [it completed] when [she] got to junior high and high school. She stayed after and got all her work done in a liaison's room, which helped because it was a neutral person helping her with her homework.

Academic and emotional support proved critical for Native student success. Students navigated the school system easier when they had adult advocates. Thomas, Taylor, and Maynor next describe the support they provided Native students as liaisons.

A Liaison's Perspective on their Advocacy

All three liaisons described different advocacies for Native youth.

Thomas spoke about being a bridge between teachers and students:

> I think just being another resource for them. Just knowing that they have someone that they can go to if they are having a bad day, or if they're [needing] help on homework and don't feel comfortable raising their hand in class or talking to the teacher after school. They know that they can come to one of us and say, 'Hey, can you help me with this?' Just knowing that there's someone that cares for them.

Maynor spoke about Native students who did not advocate for help. Maynor described the outreach they implemented for quieter students.

> Maynor explained:

> I've always made it a point to make connection with those kids at least once a month, if not two to three times a month. Just so they know I'm there and, 'If you ever need me you come see me.'

Maynor emphasized the need to recognize all Native students in the community. A proactive versus a reactive approach was important. Maynor elaborated, "Just so they know that they're welcomed, and they're appreciated, and that they're acknowledged."

Thomas and Taylor agreed about being proactive. In a joint conversation between Thomas and Taylor, Thomas shared, "Even if it's just like, 'Hey, you look kind of, like crap. [Want a] fruit snack?'" Taylor added, "Did you eat breakfast today?" Thomas then said, "Or hey, you're missing 17 assignments in math. Let's take a look at it and see what we can do to start helping you."

Taylor also spoke about how liaisons worked together to support a family. Taylor shared information with Thomas when family news might affect an older sibling. Taylor commented:

> I think that's part of why our program is successful. Because they formed that positive relationship starting in kindergarten. They know that there's somebody at each school for them…If I have a sibling and something's going on at the middle school, I'm like, 'Hey, just so you are aware, this happened…Or this is what So-and-So reported to me. Kind of feel out what your students [are] feeling.' And that's helpful.

Liaisons served to provide academic and emotional support to Native students. Advocacy differed from the school perspective. I next explain liaison support from two teacher's perspectives.

Teachers' Reliance on Liaisons to Build Relationships

Two teachers relied on liaisons for advocacy to increase relationships with a student or with families. Smith stated their Native students have not needed extra academic support. Therefore, Smith relied on liaisons to provide adult attention to their Native students. Smith reported, "He didn't so much need academic help specifically. I just more of wanted him to get one-on-one adult attention. So, they would go play games for 20-30 minutes."

Miller spoke about the challenges of communicating with Native parents. Sometimes teachers were not aware of housing situations for their students. They knew liaisons would have more knowledge about a family's circumstance. Miller described how liaisons supported teachers with communication. Miller said:

> We'll try to communicate through her or with her if we can. Sometimes she'll have some kind of background into where the child is actually living. Sometimes a parent might be listed, but an aunt is the one they are actually staying with. Just kind of communicating that way-making phone calls, you know, when you can.

While teachers relied on liaisons to increase relationships, administrators relied on liaisons to repair cultural mistrust from families.

Administrators' Reliance on Liaisons to Repair Cultural Mistrust

Five administrators and one former liaison spoke about advocacy from the school perspective. All six participants agreed about the need for advocates between Native families and the school district to repair cultural mistrust. The Tribal liaison served to establish trust between the school and families. Hanson explained, "We'll run into situations where we have parents, or you know, sometimes grandparents, that their experiences in [East River Bend] Public Schools

were not nearly as positive. And so obviously with that comes some feelings, and in some cases

mistrust."

Moore knew parents wanted to actively engage with their children's education. Parents,

however, mistrusted administration. Liaisons worked to connect families with the school.

Moore commented:

Parents, they really do care a lot about how their kid is doing. And so, they want those phone calls. But for some reason there's a mistrust with-if it's coming from a government phone, like our normal phone number [they don't answer.] And I get that. This is where [Thomas] comes in. He can contact [them.] And they all know [Thomas] and he's got wonderful relationships with families. And so, he'll often times be the person that can connect a teacher with a parent.

Peterson agreed, "I've seen that having culture liaisons in the school building during the

day helps…The families really knew her. They trusted her."

Hanson added how liaisons contributed to trust, especially when discipline was involved.

Hanson said:

So, I think that the liaison peace has been really helpful in that to have somebody saying, 'Nope. Nope. Nope. He's one of the good ones.' That I think has helped quite a bit, just in building that relationship. Because then once we have those relationships built, then everything becomes I think much more productive.

Clark concurred:

Trust is very, very huge…When there were discipline issues…having those liaisons who the families have built trust with really, really helped. So then it wasn't always butting heads. And so, I think having those positions in place really make a difference.

Maynor agreed with administrator's concern about cultural mistrust. Maynor spoke about

how liaisons acted as a referee between families and school.

Maynor explained:

> When I was there, I dealt more with behavioral type things, like kids just making bad decisions. And I wasn't necessarily dealing with it as discipline. I was more that person that was there as their bridge between the schools and the parents…Making sure everything was fair. Making sure that, 'Okay, yeah. I saw the video. You messed up. So, what they're giving to [you] is fair.' Or you know… just being that advocate for those kids to make sure that they weren't getting mistreated. That was probably what I spent a lot of my time doing.

Tribal liaisons provided a multi-faceted approach to academic and emotional support for students. Their work contributed to the success of Native students in school. Native students and families had a trusted adult and advocate in the school system. This preventative measure increased the visibility of Native students and families. As another strategy, the Tribal Indian Education department implemented professional development for teachers. They hoped to increase cultural knowledge among staff and students. I explain their strategy next.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is designed to increase knowledge regarding Native history and culture as well as to examine ways the educational system continues to oppress Native youth. Administrators, teachers, and staff members typically lack knowledge regarding Native history, culture, and values. Some regard Native histories as something that is over rather than appreciating how historic and intergenerational trauma affect Native youth and their families.

To overcome this challenge, the Tribal Indian Education department implemented a new teacher orientation every year for new teachers in the district. Five administrators, three liaisons, four teachers, and the Indian Education director spoke about the opportunity for new teachers. New teachers learned background knowledge, went on a tour of the reservation, and were treated

to frybread Indian tacos for lunch. A Tribal liaison, administrator, and two teachers spoke about the benefits of new teacher orientation.

Taylor stated, "Having our new teacher orientations helps too. Because when you come into the community, you don't understand the Native culture." Taylor expressed how new teacher orientation provided teachers "a little more background." Hanson added, "I think we do a good job front-loading… And so, any new teachers coming in get introduced pretty right up front to that relationship and to some of the cultural pieces." Kennedy said new teacher orientation provided teachers an understanding of how the Indian Education department "can be used as a resource for the district."

Kingbird explained:

One thing that we've seen with change is when we started doing that new teacher training. I think we started to build relationships. Which reflects a change in those, not all teachers, but at least a noticeable difference in teachers being willing to at least have a conversation or try to develop a relationship with our community.

Teachers participating in PD might attend ceremonies, travel to sacred places, engage in contests involving Native history and culture, and hear from Native elders and program personnel about the needs of Native youth. Discussions of racism expose systemic and institutional acts of oppression. Maynor recalled a time Native youth shared their experiences in East River Bend. Maynor said, "One of our favorite ones that we've ever done those when we had a bunch of our youth get up and talk about their experience in public school. There was not a dry eye in the whole building." Native youth shared "different challenges that they had, whether it be racism from peers, or from teachers or struggl[ing] because we do learn different[ly]."

Some educational and conscious-raising experiences caused teachers to feel discomfort and embarrassment due to their lack of knowledge regarding Native history and culture. Interestingly, three administrators described teacher discomfort. Teachers, however, reported the

benefits of the new teacher orientation during participant interviews. Kingbird explained their

approach:

>They come out here and we share some things with them. We have kids talk. We have parents talk about their experience in the [East River Bend] school district. We give them resources. I kind of get in trouble for it a little bit because of how I make the teachers feel. So, one of the trainings that I do, what is it Jeopardy where they have two panels, and they compete against each other? … I have a set of our kids sitting at one table. I have all these brand-new teachers right out of college… 'How many Tribal nations in [our state?'] Teachers can't raise a hand. The kids raise their hand. 'Okay, what am I wearing?' Teachers have no idea. Kids, 'it's a ribbon shirt.' 'What's the first thing that happens at powwow? Who's the first people [that] come in?' 'Oh, Eagle Staff carrier.' So, we go for only for a short period of time. And you can't believe how humiliated, [how] frustrated teachers get. And I stop it right there, and I say, 'This is exactly how our kids feel in your classroom. We don't want you to feel this way. We don't want them to feel this way.'

Peterson spoke in support of the exercise. Peterson said, "It was meant to give really a

sobering effect on the staff that being new to [East River Bend] you can't just placate over."

Smith added, "You know your first day on the job, this is a very big priority for [East River

Bend] public schools and for [Eagle River Indian Community.]" And [they] talked about that

kind of importance. It was really cool."

Teachers began to be culturally aware because of PD opportunities offered by the Indian

Education department. The benefit increased Native visibility in some classrooms. Moore

commented:

>I know we've got people on staff who have gone through that training. I have some teachers who, if you walk into their classroom, you would know right away that they have a broad view of the world… There's definitely an understanding that… a part of our school community [are] Native American students from [Eagle River.] And you would know that right away.

One example involved a kindergarten teacher who developed a relationship with a parent.

The parent taught the teacher basic Dakota and the teacher then incorporated a weekly Dakota

word into their lessons.

Anderson recalled the benefits of their cultural efforts:

Providing a community where you feel safe, where you feel supported, and your
knowledge, and that really was huge for her. Because academically she wasn't on the top
and she did need some additional [support.] But that made her feel confident and it made
her feel welcome. And I think you know, that's huge for kindergarten because that's
essentially setting the foundation for their whole academic and social emotional
experience in school. So, I think that is key, incorporating backgrounds and everything
into what we're doing, and even starting off the morning that way, so it's setting them up
for success.

Cultural awareness and success with cultural implementation motivated teachers to repeat

their lessons the following year. Some teachers collaborated with other teachings and shared

lessons. Anderson spoke about their collaboration and how it benefited future students and

incoming siblings.

And then her brother followed. And, actually, this is going to sound small town
(Anderson giggled) but my aunt, is, was, a kindergarten teacher too. She just retired…
But she had my student's brother, the year following. So, then she could implement some
of those things within her classroom. So, we could share and bounce ideas off each other.
So just having that background and that knowledge base I think is huge.

Increasing teacher's cultural awareness was a huge priority for the Tribe. The Tribe

influenced district practices. As a result, the school district pays for 40 teachers to attend the

state's Indian Education conference each year. Three administrators, three liaisons, and three

teachers spoke about the opportunity for teachers and staff to attend the conference.

Two teachers expressed interest in attending the conference. However, the annual

conference date occasionally fell on the same date as the district's parent teacher conferences.

The conflicting date presented a hardship for teachers. Two administrators mentioned that

securing substitute teachers limited some teachers from attending. Anderson described the

benefits of attending the conference. Anderson left with strategies and tools to implement in their

classroom. Anderson stated, "The conference for me was hands on and it was very visual. And I

could get a sense of the culture."

Native students benefited from the professional development teachers received. Teachers approach and instructional strategies changed to provide an inclusive experience for Native youth. East River Bend offers an alternative high school as an option for students when the traditional school structure does not support their individual needs. I next explain the structure of the alternative high school. I describe Native student success with this program.

The Alternative High School

The alternative high school is a small school located at the beginning edge of town. The school is considerably smaller than the other schools in the district. Five full-time teachers, two part-time teachers, a math tutor, and a building secretary serve approximately 60 students each year. The Tribal liaison supports approximately 10 Native students enrolled at the alternative high school. The building principal holds another administrative position within the district and spends approximately 10% of their time supervising the alternative high school. Clark stated, "It's a school that's been around for thirty years" and is considered "an independent study program."

Participants described the alternative school as a successful program for Native students. I spoke with two administrators, a Tribal liaison, and a teacher from the alternative school. Small class sizes, relationships with students, and flexibility of the program were named as reasons for Native student success. All four participants spoke about the benefits of small class sizes for Native students.

Smaller class sizes enhanced relationships between teachers and Native students. Teachers attended to Native student academic and socioemotional needs within a small class setting. According to Clark, classes in the high school averaged 34 students. Moore mentioned the alternative school allowed for authentic relationships. Moore said, "They're not getting lost

in a class of 30. There's more attention. I think there's a feeling. I think the kids feel like [the

teachers] care more and that's kind of something that comes out."

Kennedy spoke about the welcoming atmosphere in the alternative school. Smaller class

sizes increased a sense of belonging for Native students. Native students enrolled in the

alternative school were not outsiders. For this reason, Native students preferred the alternative

school over the high school. Kennedy reflected:

> [In] a classroom with 35 kids, especially in a community, where I don't know what our
> demographics are exactly right now, but it's majority White. You know, they really can
> kind of feel their minority status. And they just don't feel comfortable there at given
> times. So, they're coming out to us.

Thomas agreed. Thomas spoke about the inclusiveness at the alternative school.

"Everybody that goes to the alternative school loves it there. It's very inclusive. Everyone's very

supportive of each other."

Moore reflected, "Our Native students did very well at the alternative school. And I don't

know what it is about that. It's just that it's so much more relaxed. The relationships are tighter."

Clark added, "I think the respect is so big." Clark described the commitment and high level of

support teachers demonstrated to their students.

> Clark recounted observing a teacher teaching a class at the alternative school:

> I watched the entire class. And at the end of the class, he walked over, and he shook the
> young man in the shoulder and he, whatever the kid's name is, he said 'Johnny, Johnny,
> wake up.' Sorry (Clark tears up while speaking.) And he says, 'I hope this hour of sleep
> helps you be more successful for the rest of your day.' And I got it. I finally figured out
> what [our school] was about. And that's who they are. That group of teachers they know
> these kids have a problem before the kids even know they have a problem. They know
> these kids inside and out. They can sense the smallest little change in their behavior, and
> they say, 'What's up?' And they talk to them, and they talk through things. And like I
> said, if the kid is having a bad day, they're like, 'Okay just go home and we'll see you
> tomorrow, and we'll start all over.'

In addition to a sense of belonging, small class sizes increased academic support for Native students. The flexibility of the alternative program allowed for personalized instruction. A teacher and an administrator described the flexibility of the alternative school. Kennedy said flexibility allowed teachers to quickly address student need. Kennedy stated:

> Our school is really relationship focused. Even in a regular classroom setting our ratios are usually 10 students per teacher. So, teachers are able to connect pretty well and get a good idea of how or where the kids are coming from.

In addition, the program's flexibility allowed teachers to personalize instruction. Clark described:

> The teacher might have fifteen kids sitting in class, and he or she could have fifteen different classes going on at the same time. The kids are working independently. They work at their own pace which is awesome. We do have a few classes where kids actually are having to work together.

The alternative school's structure differed from the traditional high school. The alterative school offered an open campus compared to a closed campus at the high school. In addition, students were expected to attend 60% of the school week. This flexibility provided Native students ownership with their learning. Clark stated, "They don't like to get out of bed. So, if they can come in third hour and be there third through seventh, they can get their hours for the week."

The increased mobility of Native students interrupted schooling at the high school. The alternative school's flexibility allowed for a continuous education. Clark explained:

> When you come to [the alternative school] you start your class. You're not behind anybody. You're not ahead. You start your class that day and this is what you have to complete. And if you leave, and then come back, you pick up where you left off. You didn't just waste 90 days of education and you don't earn credit. You pick up where you were.

The non-traditional approach and flexibility of the school allowed for staff to meet every

Friday. Students did not attend school on Fridays to allow teachers to meet and discuss the

progress of every student. Clark explained:

> We sit down and talk about every single student. We go through how they're doing. And when it worked, [Thomas] would come out and join us. And we'd go over all the Native kids so that [Thomas] knew where every single one of their kids is at. Our secretary is a google genius. And she sends a weekly update to every parent; how many hours were they there, how are they doing. And it's about communication.

Kennedy found the flexibility of the self-paced curriculum helpful for Native students.

Some Native students visited their out-of-state reservations during the school year. Students

received academic credit when they returned to complete the work. Kennedy reflected:

> And just the mobility of kids between tribes too. We'll take kids in the middle of the year coming from [out-of-state]. Our kids will leave in the middle of the year and … then come back. So, a district or a school … [has] got to be able to adapt to that or adjust to that. And I think that's another reason why kids end up at [the alternative school] … Their movements in and out of a district is a lot more accommodating … [with] a school's that self-paced as opposed to you know, semester based. I think that's helped.

Small class sizes increased personalized attention. Personalized attention led to

meaningful relationships between teachers and adults. Respect was evident with a flexible

approach to education. Native student needs were met. As a result, Native student enrollment

increased. All four participants spoke about the increased enrollment of Native students at the

alternative high school.

Moore observed, "There's probably a higher percentage of Native American students that

go to the alternative school then say your White students or Black students." Clark reflected:

> I bet our number of Native kids has tripled this year over what it was in the past years. We're finding … one sibling comes, and the other sibling comes. So many pairs of siblings … and this one is a cousin, and then they start to see success… They are having success and then [Thomas] is going, 'This high school isn't working. Let's get them out to [the alternative school.']

Kennedy described how relationships with families increased trust. Native families opted for their students to be enrolled in a school setting where trust was already established.

Kennedy stated, "When you had a good experience with older brother or older sister, and then you know those parents at conferences, and then they come back in… you've already got that that trust built up. And that's huge." Thomas elaborated, "It's getting to the point where I have 8th graders that [are] already coming in saying 'I want to go to the alternative school.' I think families have had great success out there, where they fail at the high school."

Historical trauma and intergenerational trauma affected Native student success in school. The East River Bend Tribe implemented an Indian Education program to counteract the negative experiences for Native students. Tribal traditions and values were affirmed. The alternative high school provided an additional, successful learning environment for Native youth. These culminating efforts changed Tribal legacy.

Tribal Legacy

At the end of the school year, Native students, families, and Tribal Members have a lot to celebrate. The increased efforts of the entire community have once again provided a supportive learning environment for Native youth. A new batch of graduates are ready to celebrate their achievements. The Tribe honors all Native youth and holds two graduation ceremonies. One ceremony is specifically reserved for Tribal Members. And the other ceremony recognizes the accomplishments of all Native youth enrolled in East River Bend.

Students are honored with an Eagle Feather ceremony. Receiving an eagle feather in Native cultures is an esteemed honor and acknowledges the individual for their great accomplishment. Students are also presented with a star quilt, a Native American designed blanket. Presenting someone with a star quilt is another way to honor them.

Peterson described the moving experience:

I was invited to the eagle feather ceremony down at [Eagle River] where all the graduates came together that were graduating, whether it was from high school or college to receive their eagle feather. And it was a beautiful banquet, best food ever, because was at [Eagle River,] of course spared no expense. It was awesome…They didn't just honor the high school graduates… but the high school graduates, college graduates, trade school graduates, or if you went and got your certification… or whatever it was to better yourself that could bring honor to [Eagle River]… So it didn't matter if you were 18, 23, or 50, or 60, you were honored and celebrated at this graduation program in July. And then all the graduates received a ceremonial blanket. And I don't quite know all the ceremonial means behind it, but it was obviously an important gift to receive. And everybody from around came. They came to see and celebrate the graduates. And so that was pretty, I thought, was pretty important.

Moore added:

When I was able to go that ceremony last July, THE graduation ceremony. It was just really, really cool. I love how [Eagle River Indian] community… care for their students. And the kids that are going to school, and then the traditions, and making sure they know their community traditions. I love that. That's just, that's just so neat.

Kingbird expressed, "The superintendent is here. The principals show up; the teachers show up. It's like the event of the year where everyone comes down from the school that's [plays] a part, the tutors. It's a wonderful event." Kingbird understood the significance of the yearly graduation ceremonies. Kingbird reflected, "Is it not absolutely, unbelievable the vision of our elders to know? To see the future and put that in place?"

Tribal legacy extends beyond a fantastic graduation ceremony. Native youth go on to college and eventually return to the reservation. They choose to come back and share their expertise with the Tribe. Peterson stated, "Eagle River kids are self-motivated. They're going to college. They've got it happening, and they're going."

Crow spoke about Tribal legacy:

We've seen the numbers go up. And we've had people come back and help, and work for the tribe. And that's great. We've had people start their own businesses. It just is great. We even had someone, I can't remember what the girl's name was, she graduated from Harvard.

Educated Tribal Members return and personally invest their education and experience back into the Tribe. They instill their cultural values to their own children and to Tribal youth. Kingbird spoke on their pride for Tribal youth:

> We have now, a number of young adults that have their education that are coming back to the community. Daniel Robertson is 28. He's our language teacher; self-taught fluent Dakota. Wow! Shawna Steven, our medicine woman is in her early forties, works in the garden, all of that. I mean our [Tribal Historic Preservation] Officer, Mark Johnson, the third, college educated. We have an unbelievable group of young, enrolled tribal members that are really leading the way… I'm so proud of them because they're healthy, they're clean, most of them have young families themselves. [They're] part of breaking that cycle. They're really, good role models here.

Crow added:

> It's tough for our kids, but we're resilient. And I just want our kids to understand how resilient we are and how strong they really are. I mean our ancestors survived so much more than we ever will know in our lives. And we're still here. We're thriving. I always say we're not only surviving but thriving.

The wisdom of Tribal elders and the Tribal community's effort broke systemic cycles. Eagle River Indian community can proudly say that their sacred hoop is mending. Their legacy has changed for the better.

Summary

Native students experienced multiple challenges while attending school in East River Bend. These challenges created hardship for Native students and provided barriers to navigating the school system in East River Bend. Low graduation rates were attributed to historical trauma and intergenerational trauma. Participants named four major effects caused by historical trauma Native youth experienced: 1) racism, 2) implicit bias, 3) educator's resistance to build relationships with Native students and families, and 4) a loss of identity.

Additionally, participants named boarding schools as the precursor of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma caused: 1) lower family cohesion, 2) substance abuse, and 3)

mental health. To counteract these barriers, the Eagle River Tribal Council met with Tribal elders to offer financial incentives to motivate Native youth to graduate. Tribal Council established the Indian Education Department. The Indian Education program concentrated on an Adult Education program to assist Tribal Members with attaining their GED.

Once the value of education started to change, the program implemented several support systems to increase advocacy for Native youth in schools. These supports systems included Indian Education programing to: 1) affirm cultural traditions and values, 2) provide wrap around academic support, and 3) provide professional development to increase teacher's cultural awareness. The alternative high school provided another academic setting for Native student success. Tribal efforts changed the legacy of historical and intergenerational trauma. Graduates returned to the Tribe, started families, and shared their expertise.

In the next chapter, I analyze the themes participants described and apply analytical theory to the findings.

CHAPTER SIX – USING INTEREST CONVERGENCE AND NARRATIVES TO

COUNTERACT RACISM AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This case study involved an exploration of the Native student experience in a district with higher than average graduation rates. I begin this chapter with an analysis of historical trauma using Critical Race Theory (CRT; Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). I chose CRT as the overarching theory because it allowed me to interpret the substantial evidence of historical and intergenerational trauma experienced by Native students. I then turn to an analysis of the Indian Education program and its effects on graduation rates continuing with CRT. I analyzed the comprehensive educational components of a highly successful Indian Education program which evolved more than 30 years. The program consisted of a partnership between a public school district and a Tribal Council. Many factors, when combined, contributed to the education of Native youth.

Critical Racism Explained

CRT helped to explain and interpret the largest theme in the data, commonly referred to as historical trauma. CRT originally stemmed from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) and includes five tenants: racism as a normal construct, historical context, the importance of narrative, interest convergence, and intersectionality (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011).

My analysis begins with racism is normal, continues with historical context, and then interest convergence. My analysis ends with narratives (see Figure 8). Multiple data points from my study provide evidence for more than one CRT tenant. When this occurs, I explain the data according to each tenant and provide reasoning. I excluded intersectionality (another CRT concept) from the analysis as it was not evident in the data.

Figure 8

Critical Race Theory Tenants
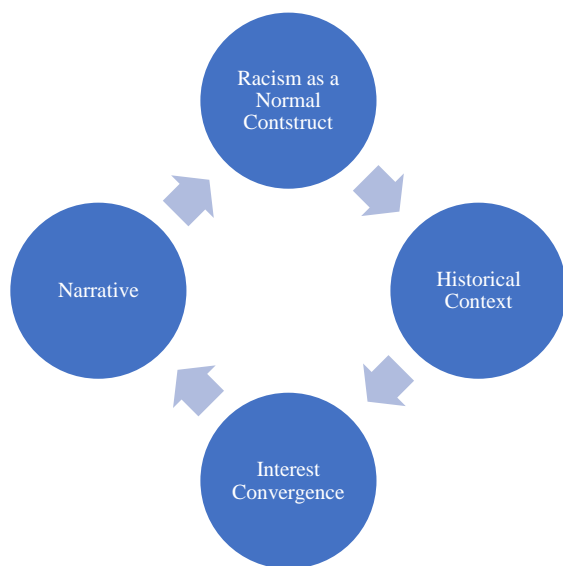
Racism as a Normal Construct

CRT assumes that racism is a normal part in our society (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). White supremacy is saturated in educational systems and has become a normal construct. Consequently, the normalcy of discrimination has become "uninteresting and unconcerning to most Whites" (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 4). Whites operate from a position of power and privilege. They are not required to consider the position of the oppressed.

Political, economic, and educational advantages granted to Whites make it hard for them to relate to the lived experiences of people of color and to fully understand the ramifications of oppression. Meritocracy excuses White supremacy with the assumption that "individual rise and fall based on their own merits" (Zamudio et al., 2001, pg. 15). Colorblindness justifies meritocracy and perpetuates systemic racism and discrimination within schools.

Whiteness created the classification of race, White and non-White. Racial classification

began as a mechanism to colonize the United States (Zamudio et al., 2011). Racial superiority

coined Native Americans as "savages," a term that previously labeled the Irish (Spring, 1997;

Takaki, 2008). The use of derogatory labeling and racialization described Native Americans as

an inferior race and justified colonization through educational reform (Jester, 2002). Zamudio et

al. (2011) argued:

> Whiteness was treated as a political right in the same way as a liberal political economy treats the ownership of property as a right, an inalienable right. In fact, whiteness was constructed as a precondition to claiming the rights of liberal society. But the rights of whiteness could not exist without the classification of people of color as non-white.

Racial classification gave way to White power and privilege. Systems of oppression

preserved the power and privilege afforded to Whites. White supremacy became "the

background against which other systems are defined" (Taylor et al., 2009, p. 4).

Hobgood (2000) explained White supremacy institutionally:

> Systems of unearned advantage and exclusion separate us into groups with unequal levels of assets (in society's terms) due to our unequal levels of social power. Critical analysis of these systems helps us see how privilege and oppression do not simply coexist side by side. Rather, the suffering and unearned disadvantages of subordinate groups are the foundation for privileges of dominant groups. (p. 16)

Native students were subjected to racist slurs from classmates. In one incident, a White

student called a Native student a "Prairie N-word." In another incident, a White student said to a

Native student, "Scalp me, daddy." Participants recognized that Native students who had lighter

skin and were White passing were not subjected to racism like their relatives. An administrator

revealed, "I would dare say that we probably had more incidents with a White student using a

racial slur with the Native students than we did with a White student using a racial slur with an

African American student." Tribal Members asked for accountability from the school district

concerning racism experienced by their Native youth.

Native students were subjected to stereotypes from teachers. Darker skin, brown eyes, and last names were used to racially classify students as Native. In addition, educators overgeneralized Native people and culture. Some teachers assumed if a student was Native, they were enrolled members of Eagle River and were either wealthy or qualified for extra academic support. Other teachers overgeneralized Native culture in the curriculum and assumed that totem poles represented Tribal culture.

Derogatory name calling is used to marginalize people of color. It is an act of "othering," a way to classify a group of people as non-White. When Tribal Members voiced examples of racial slurs against Native youth, they are speaking about the continuation of Native people being marginalized. Racism and White supremacy are upheld. The teachers who overgeneralize Native culture and made assumptions that all Tribes share the same cultural values and art forms serves as another example of marginalization. Structural racism is intact within these examples.

The examples of teachers using physical traits and last names to racially classify students marginalized Native students. Teachers assumed if a student presented as Native, they received extra academic support. Teachers also made the false assumption that if a student presented as Native, they were Tribal Members, and their family was wealthy due to casino profits. These two examples provide evidence for meritocracy. Meritocracy suggests "people rise and fall based on their own merits" (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 15). Meritocracy is an example of racism as a normal construct.

Racism as a normal construct was also evident with the school district's disciplinary rates. Native students discipline rates were disproportionately higher than enrollment. Native students accounted for 3.49% of the student population and were accounted for 10.79% of discipline. In contrast, White students comprised 75.76% of the student population and

accounted for 53.93% of discipline, a rate more in line with their enrollment. Participants explained implicit bias as the reasoning behind the high disciplinary rates for Native students. Native students were labeled as defiant when not making eye contact. The expectation for Native students to assimilate to White cultural norms is an example of racism as a normal construct. The pervasiveness of White culture is unnoticeable and rarely challenged. This is an example of "colorblindess." Zamudio et al. (2011) explained, "Due to power differentials, colorblindness implicitly values whiteness and devalues all that is not white" (p. 22).

Disciplinary rates for Native students and teacher's expectation for assimilation are examples of historical context. Native students were federally mandated to attend boarding schools and assimilate to White cultural norms. Historically, Native students received abuse as punishment. As evident in the data, exclusion is the more desirable form of punishment.

Racism is a normal construct was evident in my study when a teacher taught their class about Sundance. A Native student and an administrator asked the teacher to stop, but the teacher continued with the lessons. The teacher's refusal to stop, and to understand the offensiveness of teaching sacred ceremony demonstrated White privilege. Historical context and narratives are intertwined with this example. The teacher's assumption that their view of history was the more accurate view is an example of Whitewashing history. Additionally, the teacher did not understand the historical trauma of the Tribe and contributed to the continuation of systemic racism and oppression. The Native student advocating for their view is an example of using counterstory as a method for challenging the dominant narrative.

Other examples of Whitewashing history in curriculum included teaching the incomplete history of Columbus, Thanksgiving, Pocahontas, forced removal through war and imprisonment, and boarding schools. Wars between Tribes and the U.S. government are referred to as conflicts

and pass blame on Tribal nations without fully acknowledging the U.S. government's role. One Tribal member spoke about a teacher dressing up their Native children in pilgrim costumes during a Thanksgiving lesson. Sixth grade students were subjected to an annual field trip to a military fort without acknowledgement that the fort incarcerated Native Americans. A Tribal member and a Tribal liaison shared stories about how the experience affected Native families and youth. These examples perpetuate false narratives of Native people, diminish historical trauma, and create intergenerational trauma for Native students in school. Counterstories are used to provide the truth of the Native experience.

Participants described educators' resistance to form relationships with students. Native students felt policed when walking and socializing in the hallways. Native students reported they did not feel welcomed by their teachers. Additionally, participants described an absentee narrative of Native culture and history in the school curriculum. Native students were also penalized by teachers when the school bus made them late for school. These examples provide evidence for normalized racism.

Unwelcome environments and derogative statements from teachers created hostile and unsafe schools (Hare & Pidgen, 2011; Jester, 2002) and upheld cultural racism (Cerecer, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Johnston-Goodstar & Velure Roholt, 2017). These examples also provide evidence for narratives. Native youth provided voice and called attention to their experience. Administrators would not have been aware of these discriminatory practices had it not been for the Native narrative.

Historical Context

Historical context is an assumption of CRT (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). The

colonization of America provides a schema for educational racism today. Historical racial

divides continue to form our social constructs today due to "colonial processes:"

> These colonial processes divided the world between conquered and colonizer, master and
> slave, white and non-white (i.e., other). It included the development of an ideology, and
> processes of spreading that ideology (mostly through education), to justify colonization.
> From these past relationships, legal practices, ideologies, and social mores emerged the
> construction of racial difference as natural and fixed. Law upon law, practice upon
> practice, and construction upon construction has brought racial inequality to its current
> state. (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 4)

Genocidal efforts from the US government inflicted on Eagle River Tribal Members

included forced impoverishment, war and imprisonment, and forced relocation. The Tribe

surrendered most of their lands in treaty with the US government in 1851 for ten cents an acre.

The US government withheld payments, forcing the Tribe into poverty and starvation. In 1861 a

fight between White settlers and the Tribe occurred, causing the mass imprisonment of Tribal

Members and the execution of 38 Dakota men. The execution ordered by President Lincoln was

the largest mass execution in a day recorded in US history. Tribal Members were exiled and

forced to reservations in nearby states.

In 1936, the US government finally recognized Eagle River as a Tribal Nation and

awarded the Tribe approximately 500 acres. Tribal Members returned home and bought back

ancestral lands. However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a lock and dam and flooded

200 acres of livable land in 1938. Today, a nuclear power plant borders the reservation and stores

nuclear waste mere blocks from the reservation.

Participants described the lack of historical context among teachers and staff. New

teachers entering the district were unaware of the historical trauma experienced by Tribal

Members in the East River Indian Community. Administrators admitted an area for improvement by the schools was a deeper understanding of historical trauma. An administrator acknowledged feeling embarrassed when they questioned a student's t-shirt that read, "Remember the 38." The student explained their Tribal history to the administrator.

Teachers were unaware that some parents and grandparents had been placed in government sanctioned boarding schools. Boarding schools victimized Native children with the forced removal from their homes, disrupted Native culture and language, and punished Native children through physical and sexual abuse. Peterson held a staff meeting informing teachers about boarding schools. Prior to the meeting staff understood boarding schools to be a relic of the past instead of operating through the 1970's.

Understanding the historical context of the Tribe is imperative for teachers and staff working in East River Bend. Few participants could describe the historical trauma the Tribe endured and therefore could not understand how historical trauma remained a living memory for Tribal Members. Historical trauma is passed down through subsequent generations. Native youth are raised learning about their cultural identity and how oppression plays a role. The refusal to acknowledge historical trauma created unawareness of intergenerational trauma. Cultural unawareness allows for systemic racism and implicit bias to occur.

Curriculum in the United States highlights the colonization of people of color. Students learn about the enslavement of African Americans and how Native Americans were forced to live on reservations during Western expansion. The US curriculum fails to recognize the uprising and resistance of people of color during colonization. Students rarely learn the many accomplishments and contributions of people of color from historical to modern day times. Native American government, treaty rights, and cultural heritage are often dismissed or given a

cursory glance in US curriculum. As a result, students view Native Americans as a relic of American past and create a social construct about Native Americans as an inferior race.

Participants described the absentee narrative of Native culture and history in the curriculum offered in East River Bend. One administrator recalled a meeting with Native high schoolers. Native students wanted cultural representation and history in all their classes. Although the administrator knew an absentee narrative existed in curriculum, the administrator did not realize the importance until hearing the Native perspective. This example highlights narratives and historical context.

Interest Convergence

Another concept of CRT is interest convergence (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Interest convergence builds upon White privilege. Racial inequality occurs when it benefits Whites. Taylor et al. (2009) compared Marxist theory to interest convergence in "that the bourgeoise will tolerate advances for the proletariat only if these advances benefit the bourgeoise even more" (p. 4). Interest convergence heavily influences educational policies and practices.

Interest convergence was seen through the examples of disciplinary actions. Participants described the discrepancy between disciplinary actions between White students and students of color. One administrator recalled a teacher wanting a Native student disciplined because their locker smelled like marijuana. The teacher had to be counseled about the Native tradition of smudging. Moore questioned, "Are our rules set up to accommodate our students?"

Another administrator described the lenient disciplinary practices of a new principal. The administrator described the school district as an advocate of law and order. Residents reacted and confronted the school board when students of color were not disciplined at previously

disproportionate rates. Schools were now described as unsafe. However, when students of color were disciplined at a disproportionate rate, residents felt the buildings provided a safe learning environment for their White children.

Native graduation rates for the school district provides another example of interest convergence. Eagle River Tribal youth had a less than 20% graduation rate. Native students' low academic achievement was never addressed prior to Tribal influence. Tribal contributions to the school district including Indian Education programming and partnering with the school district dramatically increased graduation rates. The school district is a willing partner with the Tribe and benefits from the increased graduation rates for Native students. The school district can promote their high graduation rates without modifying the traditional programming of the school. Interest convergence does not consider the growth which occurs later on (after interest convergence yields results) but only addresses the initial motivation for engaging in change and sharing power. Interest convergence has continued over the 33-year history of the program because the power sharing benefits both partners. Few programs designed for school improvement have this longevity. The program is maintained because it gets positive results.

Narrative

Narrative is the final assumption of CRT (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Narrative is critical to CRT because it provides an alternative perspective to truth. Banks (1993) explained knowledge is constructed based on personal realities experienced by people. Knowledge is "heavily influenced by their interpretations of their experiences and their positions within particular social, economic, and political systems and structures of a society" (p. 5). Whites operate under a position of power and privilege. White privilege discounts other people's

perspectives because they view their own perception of reality as truth. Counterstories from people of color question and challenge the dominant narrative.

The Indian Education program addresses the gaps in White knowledge about history and its effects on Native peoples. Learning about Native history involves conscious-raising learning activities and some uncomfortable and emotional moments. The Indian Education director stresses the importance of cultural knowledge, sensitivity, and the need to recognize Indian people. Dominant views that need to be challenged include concepts of colonization, oppression, and westward expansion. Teachers and staff are given the opportunity to hear from Tribal Members, Native parents, and Native youth through professional development. Kingbird recalled the effects of counternarratives. When recalling one such session where Native youth shared their experiences, Maynor said, "There was not a dry eye in the room."

The Indian Education program provided a counter story to the dominant narrative by providing an accurate and complete history of Native culture. CRT educates people about the domino effects of oppression. The Indian Education program is fully aware of this. The goal of the Indian Education program is to support the Native students and educate a primarily White institution. The primary way to educate Native students and non-Native teachers involves providing a complete and accurate recounting of history.

A primary catalyst for change included professional development from the Indian Education program. Teachers did not report curriculum development as professional development opportunities. However, the Indian Education program was described as the dominant vehicle for change. Teachers increased their cultural awareness and were open-minded to implementing strategies to form relationships with Native students and families.

The Indian Education program acknowledges the challenges faced by Native students. Not unlike community-based programs, the Indian Education program provides strategies to counteract the challenges experienced by Native students. This includes telling the counterstories which challenge the status quo to implement change.

I identified nine educational components adopted by the Indian Education program. Participants described how these different components proved useful in retaining Native students in school; increasing Native student retention and graduation rates; and enacting change by offering professional development and promoting policy changes within a predominately White school district. The components included: (1) relationships and communication; (2) tutoring; (3) liaisons in schools; (4) summer programming and culture camp; (5) communication with Tribal elders, family, and Community members; (6) advocacy; (7) professional development; (8) an alternative high school program; and (9) graduation incentives (see Figure 9). The components combine to provide a comprehensive Indian Education program.

Figure 9

Indian Education program components
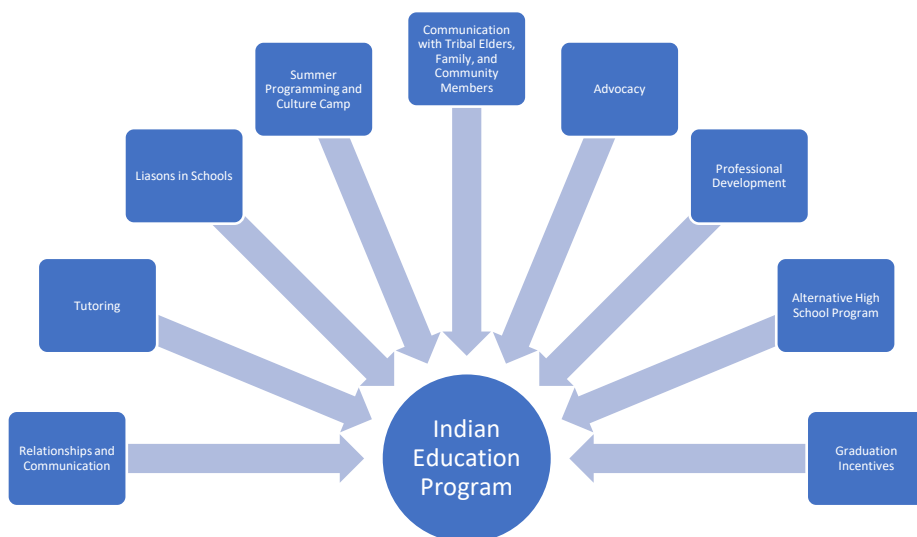
Relationships and Communication

The Indian Education program was built on the relationships Kingbird established with Tribal families. The adult education program was established by Kingbird's ability to convince older Tribal Members about the value of receiving their high school diploma. During the program's initial inception, Kingbird was the sole liaison providing advocacy for Native students and communication to Native parents. Face-to-face conversations are a Tribal preference and Kingbird often spoke with parents over coffee to talk about the educational experiences of their children.

Tribal liaisons were hired as the Indian Education program grew. Tribal liaisons exemplified Kingbird's example of trusted relationships with families. However, Kingbird continues to personally make the difficult phone calls. Over the years, graduation rates skyrocketed as cultural mistrust softened with the increased support and advocacy.

Tutoring

The Indian Education programming included after school tutoring for Tribally-enrolled students. Licensed teachers were hired as tutors. Participants described the benefits of licensed teachers as after school tutors. After school teachers knew and were able to collaborate with students' "regular" teachers to meet student needs. Participants described the increased confidence and academic proficiency of Native students who received after school tutoring. Parents were also provided reassurance that children's needs were being met.

Relationships were developed between teachers and families as they were expected to walk the student out of school and have a conversation with the family. Teachers became another trusted adult in the school for students and families. Additionally, teachers benefited from established relationships when becoming the classroom teacher of a sibling.

Liaisons in Schools

Three Tribal liaisons were hired to support students in the elementary, middle school, and high school. Participants described the emotional and academic support liaisons provided for Native students. Additionally, liaisons communicated regularly with Tribal families. They often provided teachers with information about a student and the challenges they were experiencing at home. Teachers provided compassion and modified student work as needed. Tribal liaisons acted as referees between the school and families. Native families relied on liaisons to provide an accurate truth of disciplinary actions.

Participants described how Native families would often take phone calls from liaisons instead of administration or teachers. In this regard, liaisons acted as the connection between school and families. Liaisons were another strategy to provide counternarratives and soften historical mistrust.

Summer Programming and Culture Camp

Summer programming and culture camp was a strategy to affirm Tribal traditions and values. Some of the cultural values included generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence. Academic content was delivered through a project-based learning format. Students learned their language, traditional foods, and medicine gathering during culture camp. Kingbird applied a traditional storytelling approach to all the learning activities.

Summer programming and culture camp filled the gap of an absentee narrative found in a traditional school format. Kingbird described the program's purpose as building "community and family." Kingbird knew the harsh consequences of an absentee narrative. "In lots of schools, our kids are invisible. And by 16 they are no longer there. And no one even recognizes they're

gone." Summer programming and culture camp was used as a strategy to negate the effects of an absentee narrative.

Communication with Tribal Elders, Family, and Community Members

Communication with Tribal Elders, family and Community Members was paramount to the success of the program. Tribal Elders had the wisdom and vision to secure a better future for the Tribe. Crow stated, "Councils before me realized years ago that the only way we were going to succeed was to invest in our education." Thus, the Indian Education program was created. Communication was the driving force of the program. Tribal liaisons were relied on heavily by families and the school for communication. Liaisons had a pulse on the community and could easily speak about a particular student and their needs. Liaisons were present during the school day, after school tutoring, summer programming, and community events.

Advocacy

Relationships and communication set the foundational blocks for advocacy. Tribal liaisons were deeply connected with families. Kingbird's longevity afforded them the opportunity to work with three generations. "So those grandparents who have all walked on now, were the first grandparents I worked with."

Closely knit relationships allowed liaisons to advocate for students and families. Kingbird spoke about pausing IEP meetings to interpret evaluation results and recommendations to parents. Students who were not eating school lunch were slipped 20 dollars. The family's dignity was preserved because of the previously established relationship. Kingbird stated, "It's really about respect. Respect those parents. You don't know their life story."

Professional Development

Professional development was provided yearly to new teachers entering the district. Teachers walked away with cultural knowledge of the Tribe. Narratives from students and parents were heard. Teachers became aware that they would serve Native populations and received strategies for building relationships.

Professional development became another strategy to address the absentee narrative. Although new teacher orientation provided a cursory schema, teachers described the experience as meaningful. Kingbird observed "a noticeable difference in teachers being willing to at least have a conversation" or building "a relationship with our community." One teacher stated, "You know your first day on the job, this is a very big priority."

Alternative High School

The alternative high school provided a flexible approach to education than the traditionally structured high school. An open campus, flexible time and attendance policy, small class sizes, and personalized attention were names as reasons for Native student success. In this setting, an absentee narrative did not exist. Staff met every Friday to discuss the progress of every student. The Tribal liaison was present when Native students were discussed. Narratives of success motivated Native students to choose the alternative high school over the high school.

Graduation Incentives

The Tribe initially offered per capita income as a graduation incentive. The narrative of education changed as graduation rates increased. Education became a cultural and intrinsic value. Financial incentives became less of an extrinsic award. Later, the Tribe offered full scholarships for post-secondary school or trade schools. Administration and Tribal Members spoke about the annual graduation ceremonies. All students who graduated school, college, trade school, or

received a certificate were honored. The Tribe "spared no expense" and the entire community came out to join the honoring.

The Indian Education program largely relies on support which occurs "outside" of the classroom but inside the school or in the community. For example, tutoring services took place after school. Liaisons pulled students from class to provide academic or social emotional support. Cultural programming is offered during the summer, "outside" of the traditional school year. The alternative high school is situated in non-traditional school and shares space with art galleries and studios. Its architecture even presents itself as an outlier from the rest of the school buildings.

The Indian Education program is comparable to other "outside" programs occurring within the school. Special Education students are typically pulled from mainstream classes to receive instructional support. English Language Learners leave their classrooms to receive direct instruction from specialized teachers. Students receiving speech services are asked to leave their classrooms as well for additional support. Typically, students requiring additional supports are pulled from same-aged peers and placed outside the classroom for that support. Native students are treated with the same regard. While the Eagle River Indian Education program combats racism and historical context with interest convergence and counternarratives, educators must ask when Indigenous Knowledge will be worthy enough for a mainstreamed classroom setting.

Summary

Four tenants of CRT explained Native student experiences in school. These tenants were racism as a normal construct, historical context, narratives, and interest convergence. Tribal program initiatives included: (1) fostering relationships and effective communication; (2) offering tutoring; (3) placing liaisons in schools; (4) providing summer

programming and culture camp; (5) encouraging communication with Tribal Elders, family, and community members; (6) providing advocacy; (7) offering professional development; (8) supporting an alternative high school program; and (9) providing graduation incentives. Interest convergence and narratives were used to counteract racism and historical context.

CHAPTER SEVEN – SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter I provide a summary, discuss implications, and suggest recommendations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the contributing factors that increased retention and graduation rates for Native American students in a Midwestern school district. This case study focused on a successful partnership between a school district and a nearby Tribe. I adopted a pragmatic and program evaluation approach to the qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Pragmatism "seeks practical and useful insights to inform action" (Patton, 2015, p. 152). Program evaluation sought answers to the following questions:

> What was the model being implemented? To what extent was the model implemented as designed (the fidelity question)? What are the variations in participation, and what explains those variations? To what extent can documented outcomes be attributed to the intervention (the attribution question)? What, if any, unanticipated outcomes and impacts occurred? (p. 179)

A review of the literature on Native American schooling illustrated five themes: (1) history of American Indian education; (2) systemic and cultural racism; (3) factors affecting dropout and graduation rates; (4) resiliency factors of Native students; and (5) culturally responsive schools and practices. I interviewed 17 participants to understand program initiatives to increase Native student success. The data from this study revealed the effects of historical trauma on Native students and Tribal initiatives to counteract historical trauma.

I analyzed the data using Critical Race Theory (Taylor et al., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011). Data from the study provided evidence for four of the five tenants of CRT: (1) racism as a normal construct; (2) historical context; (3) interest convergence; and (4) narratives. Native students in this school district navigated racism and historical trauma. The Tribe implemented strategies to counteract negative experiences Native students experience in school. Indian Education program initiatives included: (1) relationships and communication; (2) tutoring; (3)

liaisons in schools; (4) summer programming and culture camp; (5) communication with Tribal elders, family, and Community members; (6) advocacy; (7) professional development; (8) an alternative high school program; and (9) graduation incentives. Counternarratives from Native students created increased support and advocacy. Interest convergence from increased graduation rates led to a successful program and partnership between the Tribe and school district for over 30 years. The program initiatives increased Native graduation rates from less than 20% to over 90% consistently for the past 12 years. I next discuss implications schools should to consider to increase Native student success.

Implications

Historical Trauma

Every summer, my family made the trek back to our reservation. As we crossed over the Missouri river and entered Tribal lands, my parents relayed stories to me and my siblings about their youth. My mom would point to the river and say, "Under that river an entire town existed. That's where your father and I grew up until the government flooded our land." My parents were raised in what is referred to as the Old Cheyenne Agency. They spoke about a thriving Tribal Community with access to water and abundant resources. I heard stories about their carefree childhood and later how the US Government ceased the river valley to create the Oahe Dam. In 1959, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Members were relocated to Eagle Butte, South Dakota for the construction of the dam.

As a young child, my parent's stories were my first introduction to historical trauma. I heard the grief in their voices as they recounted the historical trauma and explained the intergenerational effects on our Tribe. They recounted a past they would never again experience.

Now, as an adult, I carry my parent's stories with me. As I cross over the Missouri river and enter Tribal land, I hear my parent's stories as if they are in the car sitting next to me.

I also knew about my parent's boarding school experiences, but never fully felt the effects until later in life. As my nephew was about to enter his kindergarten classroom for the first day of school, my dad leaned down, and whispered in my ear, "Imagine saying good-bye to Anthony and not seeing him until summertime. This is what boarding schools did to Native families." I looked at Anthony, how innocent and vulnerable he was at five years old, and I had an overwhelming urge to start bawling. I came extremely close to not letting him enter that classroom. This was my first realization of how I carry intergenerational trauma. Historical trauma passed down from grandparents and parents are carried by subsequent generations (Brave Heart, 2003; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brown-Rice, 2013; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Garcia, 2020).

There are many proud aspects to my ancestral history. I value knowing that both sides of my ancestral lines are tied to the same land. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal land holds my family's and ancestor's experiences and memories. I grew up knowing I was a descendent of Fred Dupree, who secured five buffalo calves and repopulated the buffalo herd from near extinction to over 500 head. My parent's stories were purposeful. My parents wanted their children to fully understand their ancestral history. Along with stories of cultural genocide, my parents taught me stories of our resilience.

Know and Appreciate Native History and Culture

An absentee narrative of Native history and culture exists in our schools. Educators described a lack of mastery with Native history and culture. History is taught from a White, colonialist perspective. Native student and parent narratives provided evidence for incomplete

and Whitewashed curriculum concerning Native history. Native students wanted cultural representation in all their content classes. Educators asked for more take-aways that could be implemented in their classroom.

Curriculum and textbooks must be examined to determine missing narratives from people of color. Local Tribal Communities can be asked for support. Many Tribal Members are willing to speak with classrooms. Their expertise on their Tribal history can provide missing narratives and a more complete account of history. All students benefit from hearing a complete and accurate history. Critical reasoning skills are developed when in-depth examinations are provided.

Examining Native colonization is important but provides a limited perspective on Native history and culture. Current social justice issues for Native populations should be examined in curriculum. Native contributions, past and present, can be included. In doing so, all students will recognize that Indigenous people are current, active populations within the US. Native students will feel seen and validated from the experience.

Educators reported benefits from professional development addressing Native culture and histories. School districts supporting teachers in attending statewide Indian Education conferences reiterate the importance of Native narratives in curriculum. Participants described conflicting schedules with professional development opportunities. School district calendars should schedule parent/teacher conference dates that do not conflict with statewide Indian Education conferences. Professional Development funding should be allocated for Indian Education opportunities for school personnel.

Understand Local Tribal History and Culture

Most Tribal nations experienced forced relocation, war and imprisonment, and assimilation initiatives through education. However, historical trauma and intergenerational trauma are unique and specific to each tribe. Participants described an unawareness of their local Tribal history and culture. For example, the mass execution of Tribal ancestors was unbeknownst by staff as localized history. Curriculum offered from a national textbook provided a cursory explanation and placed blame on the Tribe. Educators were unaware that Native children attend school knowing their Tribal history. Racialized harm continued when educators were not cognizant of specific historical trauma for their local Tribe.

School administration and teachers need to increase their awareness of local Tribal history. Curriculum should be examined and adapted to provide a complete and culturally appropriate narrative of the history. Schools can partner with their local Tribes for support, resources, and expertise to increase these initiatives.

Understand Boarding School Implications

New teachers were unaware of boarding schools and the consequent effects of intergenerational trauma. Participants described how some parents were treated poorly. Historical trauma education for non-Native educators can help teachers and staff understand the intergenerational trauma experienced by parents. Parents who were subjected to boarding schools were forcibly separated from their parents (Brave Heart, 2003) and may have experienced emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brown-Rice, 2013).

Braveheart (2003) explained:

Boarding school survivor parents lack healthy traditional Native role models of parenting within a culturally indigenous normative environment. This places parents at risk for parental incompetence. Traumatic childhood experiences may result in emotional unavailability of parents for their own children. The legacy of lack of control over choices about education, the school environment, and negative boarding school experiences across generations places a Lakota and other Native parents at greater risk for insufficient involvement in the education of their offspring. (p. 9)

Participants described educators unfairly judging Native parents demonstrating at-risk behaviors. Additionally, educators described a lack of parent involvement and barriers to communication with Native parents. Educators would benefit from a thorough understanding of historical and intergenerational trauma. An understanding of boarding schools could positively affect relationships between non-Native educators and Native families. Non-Native educators need a cultural awareness of the genocidal efforts from the US government. This might motivate non-Native educators to practice compassion and increase their efforts in building relationships with Native families.

Recognize Trauma and Adopt Trauma-Informed Practices

Native students displayed at-risk behaviors in schools resulting from trauma. School administrators would benefit from implementing trauma informed care in their school setting. Multiple programs exist and provide evidence for helping Native youth succeed. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) questionnaire ascertains the level of trauma a child has experienced and allows educators to understand how students are impacted (Felitti et al., 1998). The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin adopted a trauma-informed practice utilizing ACEs to address historical trauma and its health impacts on students (Bissonette & Shebby, 2017; The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, n.d.). Program initiatives included trauma-informed

training for staff, morning check-ins with students, self-regulation spaces for students, mental health services for students, and graduation coaches for seniors (Bissonette & Shebby, 2017).

Early childhood educators can refer Native families for culturally appropriate trauma-informed programming. Family Spirit is a unique home-based visiting program designed to offer support to Native mothers and their children from newborns to three years old. This program supports 100 Tribal Communities in 16 states. Family Spirit provides resources for family related trauma experienced from poverty, low education, substance abuse, and single parent homes (John Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, n.d.).

Imad (2020) identified ways teachers may help student who experience trauma. This included: (1) Work to ensure your students emotional, cognitive, physical and interpersonal safety; (2) foster trustworthiness and transparency through connection and communication among students; (3) intentionally facilitate peer support and mutual self-help in your courses; (4) promote collaboration and mutuality by sharing power and decision making with your students; (5) power of voice and choice by identifying and helping build on students strengths; (6) pay attention to cultural, historical and gender issues; and (7) impart to your students the importance of having sense of purpose (para. 18 – 30).

Provide Race, Racism, and Bias Training for School Personnel

Native students witnessed or were subjected to racism in schools. Implicit bias described Native students feeling unwelcome in schools. Additionally, educators stereotyped Native students and families and resisted forming relationships with them. Schools should recognize and examine practices affecting Native student experiences with racism and implicit bias. Multiple racial equity programs exist for school personnel. Teacher evaluation programs can be modified

to include racial equity expectations for teachers. Policies and practices established by the school district should consider perspectives beyond the dominant White narrative.

Change Discipline Practices Due to Lack of Cultural Knowledge or Bullying

Native students experienced bullying by peers in schools. Cultural misunderstanding of Native students exist is schools. Therefore, educators labeled Native students as disrespectful and defiant. An understanding of Native cultural norms is critical. Schools should also examine their disciplinary actions and the over referral of Native students. Action plans should be put in place to decrease bullying among students and to reteach educators when discipline occurs from a misunderstanding of cultural norms.

Tribal Healing

Historical trauma has led to devasting effects for Native Americans. Historical trauma has been attributed to depression (Brave Heart, 2003; Brave Heart et al., 2011), high rates of suicide (Brave Heart, 2003; Brave Heart et al., 2011; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), anxiety (Brave Heart, 2003), low self-esteem (Brave Heart, 2003), homicide, domestic violence (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), child abuse (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), and alcoholism (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brave Heart et al., 2011). Tribal awareness of historical trauma and healing initiatives proved successful.

Brave Heart (2000) found "trauma testimony" and "trauma response features" led to "transcending the trauma" (p. 252). Brave Heart & DeBruyn (1998) reported Tribes utilizing "healing ceremonies" had "a natural therapeutic and cathartic effect" (p. 74). In another study, Brave Heart (1999) adopted "traditional historical trauma response and intervention for healing" (p. 116). Lakota parents reported an awareness of how historical trauma affected their parenting and "changed their parenting behavior as well as their attitudes toward their parental role" (p.

199). Waziyatawin (2005) described how truth-telling, grief, prayer, and ceremony resulted in a collective healing. "By challenging the colonial vision of our past, we were validating our claim to the future" (p. 192).

Tribal communities should adopt culturally appropriate, trauma-informed response interventions. Healing within Tribal communities is imperative to decrease intergenerational trauma. Researchers reported commonalities toward collective healing: truth-telling, grief, ceremony, and cultural teachings (Brave Heart, 1999; Brave Heart, 2000; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Waziyatawin, 2005). Tribes should choose response interventions that embed and prescribe to their traditional values.

Culturally Sensitive Pedagogy to Increase Native Graduation Rates

The school district attained high graduation rates from culturally sensitive pedagogy practices implemented by the Tribal Indian Education department. Academic support, Tribal liaisons, and culturally appropriate summer programming are some strategies the Tribal program implemented. However, the school district has more opportunities to incorporate culturally sensitive pedagogy. High graduation rates do not indicate a seamless navigation of school for Native students. Educators should critically reflect on dominant narratives in school and engage in practices that disrupt the status quo.

A Revised Curriculum

Maker's (1982) classic curricular model identifies three areas to consider when designing challenging and or enriching curriculum including: (1) content, (2) the process involved in the ways engage students, and (3) the process involved to demonstrate the knowledge they gained or constructed. Applying this model to Native education may work to expand the inclusion of Native history and culture as well as the introduction of critical thinking and reasoning. Projects

that include art, story, drama, and movement should also be adopted. The primary goal of differentiated curriculum is to make modifications of student learning needs. All students need a challenging and engaging curriculum. However, Native students need to see themselves in the history and the class curriculum.

Project North Star provides literature resources to help engage Native students (Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented, n.d.). Many books feature Native youth as the main character that students can easily identify with. Educators can also access literature strategies to engage students.

Enrichment Strategies to Engage Native Students

The Indian Education Program described active student engagement within a project-based learning format. Cultural values and Tribal traditions were embedded within the curricular activities. Schools adopting Indigenous Knowledge systems fostered Native student success (Gallagher, 2000; Kanu, 2006). Building relationships, incorporating student voice and choice, integrating student strengths within learning activities, and providing challenges and enrichment are considered "high operational practices" (Jackson, 2011). Examining social justice issues with marginalized narratives and perspectives raised "critical consciousness" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 92). Participatory action research constructs meaning and enacts change. Schools adopting culturally sensitive pedagogy will promote Native student engagement and academic success.

Provide Direct Support to Students within the Classroom

The Indian Education program provides support to Native students outside of the classroom. However academic and emotional support can be implemented inside classrooms. Schools advocate for a least restrictive learning environment. Instead of pulling Native students from mainstream classes liaisons could provide support within classrooms. Teachers would

benefit from building relationships and rapport with Native students. Some Native students would not need to leave their classes in search of advocacy. Although the model implemented by Tribe provided evidence for success, an examination of student time outside of class should be considered.

Student Support Services for Underachieving Native Students

Educators at the alternative high school program met every Friday to discuss the progress of each student. A team approach was utilized to address concerns and implement change. Schools adopting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) incorporate a similar approach. Grade level teams plan curriculum and develop action cycles to increase student achievement. Schools can implement similar practices focusing on underachieving Native students. A collaborative, team approach involving teachers, liaisons, guidance counselors, social workers may increase Native student success.

A Modified and Flexible Approach to Schooling

Native students enrolled in the alternative high school achieved success. Some Native students opted out of the traditional high school and chose the alternative program. Small class sizes, personalized instruction, flexible attendance policies, and a self-paced program were named as successful approaches to education. Traditional schools could adopt similar programming to accommodate the needs of Native students. An online learning format could allow Native students to remain current in classes while they are visiting out-of-state reservations. Small class sizes increased Native achievement. Traditional schools could increase funding for more teachers or utilize team-teaching approaches as an option to decrease class size.

Provide Opportunities and Experiences to Expose Native Students to Different Pathways

My own experience gave me the opportunity to live and attend school overseas. Growing up I was exposed to multiple nationalities, cultures, and perspectives while in school and living overseas. Later, as an adult, I learned Native youth from my tribe did not know life beyond the reservation. A couple of young adults told me they didn't realize attending college in the city was a possibility.

Native youth benefit from increased exposure to new opportunities. This helps them realize choices beyond the reservation exist. Native scholars in the Indian Education program frequently visited college campus and went on field trips. During the beginning phase of the program, many Native youth had never been on a plane before. Native students need to know that multiple pathways and careers exist and are attainable. Increased exposure for opportunities is essential.

I identified 7 implications related to historical trauma and 7 implications related to programming. Figure 10 summarizes these implications.

Figure 10

Summary of Implications

Historical Trauma
- Know and appreciate Native history and culture and tell a more accurate and true history of Native people
- Specifically know the Tribal history and culture of Native students attending a "local" public school, including important people and events
- Understand how Native history related to schooling (boarding schools - assimilation) caused distrust of public education
- Recognize trauma and adopt trauma-informed practices
- Provide race, racism, and bias training for all school personnel
- Change discipline practices due to lack of cultural knowledge or bullying
- Tribal healing

Program
- Increase student achievement rates using culturally sensitive pedagogy
- Revise the curriculum, featuring content, process, products, and the learning environment
- Take advantage of enrichment strategies to engage and sustain the interest of Native students in learning
- Provide direct support to students within classroom as well as the Indian Education
- Adopt the methods used by Student Support Services to focus on underachieving Native students
- Offer modified and flexible approach to schooling.
- Provide opportunities and experiences to Native students to see different pathways for advancement in education and careers beyond the reservation.

Limitations of the Study

Data was collected during the COVID pandemic. Schools in this midwestern were closed while students were participating in distance learning. As a result, data was collected through participant interviews using Zoom and Google Meet. Classroom observations were not conducted. Additionally, this case study provided evidence for one Midwestern school district. Native participants were recruited to participate through referrals of the Indian Education department. Some Tribal Members declined to be interviewed.

Recommendations for Further Research

This case study examined one partnership between a school district and a local tribe. Additional research is needed to examine the effects of historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, and school response to Native student achievement nationwide. Tribal reservation schools experience different and unique challenges than metropolitan schools with Native

student enrollment. Comparative research of Tribal schools to non-Tribal schools would suggest differentiated approaches to meeting Native student needs.

Traditional research often dismisses Indigenous narratives and provides a Western canon approach to interpretations. Additional research incorporating multiple Native narratives is essential. Although narratives provided a critical component to this study, observing classrooms and the school environment is beneficial to get a complete depiction of the Native student experience.

Closing Thoughts

Historical trauma is not a relic of the past. Historical and intergenerational trauma are part of current, lived experiences for Indigenous people. Issues concerning social justice are rampant. Just the other day, I came across a news article highlighting a school district in Nebraska that cut two Lakota girls' hair. A school secretary cut their hair out of concern for lice.

The actions triggered historical trauma and created racialized harm for the family. The mother spoke about how boarding schools stripped Native children of their culture and the school's action was reminiscent of not honoring Native culture. Traditional Lakotas view hair as sacred and typically cut their hair only during certain ceremonies. The school district had no prior knowledge of historical trauma or boarding school experiences for Native families. The girl's father reported the secretary said, "You don't get lice if you have clean hair" (Bowling, 2021, para. 10). A local resident defended the school employee's actions by stating, "She did it to help the children and keep the school safe" (para. 14).

The safety and wellbeing of students in schools should be prioritized for all students. Schools need to examine what their purpose is. Are they in the business of educating or assimilating students? If the answer is education, then historical trauma, racialized harm, and an

absentee narrative need to be addressed and corrected. The safety and wellbeing for Native

students deserve this call to action.

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Appendix A

Date: October 2, 2020

To: Penelope Dupris

From: Sarah Muenster-Blakley, Institutional Review Board

Project Title: [1284612-2] Culturally Responsive Schools: A Successful Program Increasing Native American Graduation Rates

Action: Approval of Continuing Review

Original Expiration Date: July 8, 2020

New Expiration Date: July 8, 2021

Dear Penny:

Thank you for your request to continue your project beyond the current expiration date. I am happy to approve an extension of one year. Your project will expire on **July 8, 2021**.

Unanticipated problems involving risks or harm to project participants or others must be reported to the IRB within one (1) business day of the principal investigator's knowledge of the problem. Reporting forms are available in the IRBNet Document Library and on the IRB website and should be emailed to muen0526@stthomas.edu. Any non-compliance issues or complaints relating to the project must be reported immediately.

Questions can be directed to Sarah Muenster-Blakley at (651) 962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu at any time.

I wish you continued success with your project!

Sincerely,

Sarah Muenster-Blakley

Sarah Muenster-Blakley, M.A., CIP
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details.
See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Penelope Dupris (ID: 7241471)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of St. Thomas - Minnesota (ID: 2848)
- **Institution Email:** pfdupris@gmail.com
- **Institution Unit:** Education
- **Phone:** 612-819-9093

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Subjects Research (HSR)
- **Course Learner Group:** Human Subjects Research Training: Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Record ID:** 27552118
- **Completion Date:** 19-Jun-2018
- **Expiration Date:** 18-Jun-2022
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 96

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	18-Jun-2018	3/3 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	18-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	19-Jun-2018	4/5 (80%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kf7e33150-5489-484e-a74b-a95d70cc2363-27552118

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

Appendix B

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Penelope Dupris (ID: 7241471)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of St. Thomas - Minnesota (ID: 2848)
- **Institution Email:** pfdupris@gmail.com
- **Institution Unit:** Education
- **Phone:** 612-819-9093

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Subjects Research (HSR)
- **Course Learner Group:** Human Subjects Research Training: Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Record ID:** 27552118
- **Report Date:** 09-Aug-2018
- **Current Score**:** 96

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	18-Jun-2018	3/3 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	18-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	19-Jun-2018	4/5 (80%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	19-Jun-2018	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kf7e33150-5489-484e-a74b-a95d70cc2363-27552118

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Appendix C
Redacted Document

Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@█████████.org>

Doctoral Research request
6 messages

Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@██████.org>   Thu, Oct 12, 2017 at 6:01 PM
To: █████████

Hi █████,

My name is Penny Dupris. I am a fourth year doctoral student at St. Thomas and I work for the ████████ school district as an interim assistant principal at the high school.

I'm in the beginning phase of my research and I would like to study Native graduation rates. I understand that the ████ ████ school district has increased the Native graduation rate significantly.

I'm would like to research █████████████ and present the findings as an exemplar to increase Native graduation rates. I'm hoping to interview teachers, administration, Indian Education staff, parents and students or former students. I'd also like to observe some classrooms.

I'm hoping I can receive permission to conduct my research by observing the school classrooms and interviewing parents, teachers, and students.

Thank you for your consideration,

--

Penny Dupris
████████████████
████████████████
█████████

████████ █████████████   Mon, Oct 16, 2017 at 9:42 AM
To: Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@████████.org>

Hello! Your topic sounds potentially impactful. I am assuming that you are expecting to conduct everything outside of school hours (except, possibly, observation of classrooms). Also, will you solely focus on American Indian students and parents who are part of the program?

████
[Quoted text h dden]
--
█████████, Superintendent
█████████████
█████████████
█████████████

Phone (Secretary): ██████████
Phone (Direct): ██████████

Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@████████.org>   Mon, Oct 16, 2017 at 11:29 AM
To: █████████ █████████████

Appendix C
Redacted Document

Hi again!

Yes-I would talk to teachers and administrators outside of school hours. I'd like to observe some classes as well.

I believe I'm not allowed to interview current students but I could interview students who have graduated. I'm hoping to research why Native students are so successful in your school and present it as a case study for other schools to follow.

Is there an application process I should follow?

Thank you for your time!
Penny
[Quoted text h dden]

█████████████████████████████   Mon, Oct 16, 2017 at 2:09 PM
To: Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@██████████.org>

This sounds like a great project! We do not have a formal application process, but I am sure we can use your college's approval for additional information to make sure we are on the same page.

Providing access to teachers and admin will be easy during or after the school day. I was more concerned about interviewing students. We hire ████████████████████████████ to provide the service to our students, so they will know the students who participated and benefited from the program. I'm wondering if I should forward this thread to their education director so he could make the arrangements to meet with liaisons and students. What are your thoughts about that?

████████
[Quoted text h dden]

Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@██████████.org>   Mon, Oct 16, 2017 at 2:27 PM
To: ██████████████████████████

That would be great! I would love to have the support from ████████████████████████. I anticipate starting in the spring. I am finishing my literature review this fall and then I need to get approval from St. Thomas before I can begin.

Please let me know if you need any additional information from me.

Thanks again,
Penny
[Quoted text h dden]

█████████████████████████   Mon, Oct 16, 2017 at 3:11 PM
To: Penelope Dupris <dupris.penelope@█████████.org>
Cc: ████████████████████████

Sounds like a good plan. The success of the program is the result of the commitment made by the ██████████ ████████████ and the work of ██████████████. He oversees the program and supervises the tutors, so you will want to work through him to make arrangements. I'm glad you are highlighting their work!

Appendix D
Redacted Document

RE: Request for Permission from Tribal Council

███████ █████████████████

Thu 10/18/2018 2:51 PM

To: Dupris, Penelope F. <pfdupris@stthomas.edu>;

Good Afternoon, Penny:

Tribal Council has approved your request to interview ████████ with our Education department as well as parents and former students.

Please reach out to ████ at ██████████████ and he can give you more information about how to proceed.

████ is having trouble with his emails today, but they are diligently working to solve the problem.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Best Regards,

██████████
Executive Assistant

Fax: ██████ I Toll Free: ████████

From: Dupris, Penelope F. [mailto:pfdupris@stthomas.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, October 16, 2018 11:18 AM
To: ██████████████████
Subject: Request for Permission from Tribal Council

Dear Tribal Council,

My name is Penny Dupris. I'm an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe located in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. I'm currently a doctoral student with the University of St. Thomas, and I am also an Assistant Principal at ████████████████ in ████████████.

I plan on starting my dissertation this fall. I'm studying Native American graduation rates, specifically the factors that contribute to successful graduation rates for our Native students.

It is my understanding that your Tribal Education program partnered with the ▮▮▮▮▮▮ school district contributing to a higher graduation rate for Native students.

I'd like to use the ▮▮▮▮▮ school district as a case study for my dissertation. It is my hope that school districts can use your work as an exemplar to create change not only for their Native students but for Students of Color.

I've received permission from ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ to interview teachers and observe classrooms. However, your Tribal Education department is a critical component to help me gain the knowledge I need.

As a Native educator and researcher it is important for me to highlight Native voice. Native narratives are important to understanding the racial inequities we face in education and can provide perspective on effective pedagogy for Native students.

I'm writing you today to seek permission to include the Office of Indian Education in my research. As part of my research, I'd like to interview ▮▮▮▮ and his staff to discover factors that contribute to higher graduation rates for Native students. I'd also like to interview a few Native families and recent graduates over the age of eighteen that will provide voice to why your program is so effective.

As a doctoral research student I am under strict guidelines from the Institutional Review Board and the University of St. Thomas. I will not interview students under the age of eighteen. But I am hoping to interview your staff as they work directly with the elementary, middle school and high school. Anyone willing to participate in my research will sign a general consent form describing the purpose of my research and that participation is voluntary. Participants my choose to withdraw at any time. I'd be happy to give you a copy of the consent form should you need it.

Please let me know if it would be permissible to interview your Tribal Education department, parents and former students who are over the age of 18.

If you'd like to meet in person, I'd be happy to come down and explain the intentions of my research to you in person.

Thank you for your consideration.

Penny Dupris

pfdupris@stthomas.edu
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix E

Consent Form

Mending the Sacred Hoop: A Successful Program Increasing Native American Graduation Rates
[IRB tracking number: 1284612-2]

You are invited to participate in a research study about American Indian/Alaskan Natives graduation rates. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experience and knowledge with the school district. You are eligible to participate in this study because you work with or have American Indian/Alaskan Native children enrolled in the district. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not you would like to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Penelope Dupris, a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to find contributing factors for the successful graduation rates for American Indian/Alaskan Native students. This case study will provide an example for other school districts so they can increase graduation rates for their American Indian/Alaskan Native students.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

Recent graduates 18 years and older and families will be asked to:
- Participate in an interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will audiotaped and will take no longer than 60 minutes
- Participate in a possible follow-up interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will be audiotaped and will take no longer than 30 minutes

Classroom teachers will be asked to:
- Participate in an interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will be audiotaped and will take no longer than 60 minutes
- Participate in a possible follow-up interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will be audiotaped and will take no longer than 30 minutes

Staff will be asked to:
- Participate in an interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will be audiotaped and will take no longer than 60 minutes
- Participate in a follow-up interview over the phone or online through Zoom or Google Meet that will be audiotaped and will take no longer than 30 minutes

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

The study has risks. Mental fatigue and a violation of privacy are possible risks. The interview process will take no longer than an hour, but may be broken up in two or three periods. I will not publish or reveal your identifying information. I will keep your identifying information on my UST One Drive account. OneDrive will automatically encrypt data.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your privacy will be protected while you participate in this study. Your identifying information will not be used in the study. Your name and/or school will be assigned an alias or code that will be used in the study. You will determine where the interview takes place.

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. The types of records I will create include recordings, transcripts, master lists of information, and computer records. I will transcribe each audio recording and will destroy the audio recording immediately. A hard copy of the transcribed interview will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home. An electronic file of the transcribed interview will be stored on my secured, personal computer and will not contain your personal identifying information. A master list of information will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home. I will be only person who has access to the records I create. All records I create will be destroyed upon completion and defense of my dissertation. All signed consent forms will be kept for a minimum of three years upon completion of the study. Institutional Review Board officials at the University of St. Thomas reserve the right to inspect all research records to ensure compliance.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the school district, Tribal Community or the University of St. Thomas. There are no penalties or consequences if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used. You can withdraw by speaking with me in person, or e-mailing me at pfdupris@stthomas.edu. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Penny Dupris. You may ask any questions you have now and any time during or after the research procedures. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 612-819-9093 or pfdupris@stthomas.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Sarah Noonan at 651-962-4897 or sjnoonan@stthomas.edu. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu with any questions or concerns.

Statement of Consent

I have had a conversation with the researcher about this study and have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I give permission to be audio recorded during this study. If I am a classroom teacher, I give permission for my class to be observed and the walls in my classroom photographed.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____

Print Name of Study Participant

_____

Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Appendix F

Mending the Sacred Hoop: A Successful Program Increasing Native American Graduation Rates

IRB Tracking #1284612-2

Interview Questions

1. What is the partnership between Eagle River Indian Community and East River Bend schools?

2. How is this program implemented within the district?

3. What challenges do Native students experience in school?

4. What do you contribute to Native student success?

5. What program changes would you like to see implemented if any?

6. Who should I talk to in order to learn more?