2014

Portraits of Women's Leadership after Participation in a Culturally Based University Tribal College Partnership

Catherine Calvert
Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

PORTRAITS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AFTER PARTICIPATION IN A CULTURALLY BASED UNIVERSITY TRIBAL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

CATHERINE CALVERT

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program

of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

March, 2013

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

PORTRAITS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AFTER PARTICIPATION IN A CULTURALLY BASED UNIVERSITY TRIBAL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

prepared by

Catherine Calvert

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

Approved by:

_____

Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D., Chair date

_____

Al Guskin, Ph.D., Committee Member date

_____

Wendy Rosen, Ph.D., Committee Member date

_____

Robin Starr Minthorn, Ph.D., External Reader date

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and extend my deepest gratitude to the community that has supported and encouraged me throughout my higher education journey. First I would like to thank God for leading me in my return to higher education. My tribal support through the Muckleshoot Tribal scholarships enabled me to attend school as a single parent. Thanks to my tribe for their wisdom and generosity in establishing the scholarship program.

The support of my family and friends has been immeasurable. Thank you Jake and Jess for your encouragement and editing, and to my parents Larry and Carol Calvert, who taught me the value of faith, hard work, and reaching your goals. To my friends, thanks for the kind words and breaks during the writing. I would also like to extend my thanks to the employers, coworkers, instructors, and others who spoke words of truth and validation and envisioned achievement for me in higher education. Thanks to all who encouraged me along the way. My higher education journey has been a collective journey and one I have not traveled alone. Thanks to my past and present cohort participants for sharing their portraits of empowerment. Finally, thanks to my committee for your wisdom and support in making my doctoral program an encouraging validation of self-determination. I have been richly blessed by all of you and will always view my higher education as a collective blessing.

Abstract

This study explores the leadership, change, and empowerment stories of Native American women who participated in a tribal university partnership culturally based higher education program. In light of research identifying a prevailing lack of higher education completion rates for Native American students, my intention is to share the success stories of Native American women who persisted, graduated, and influenced their communities. Narratives of students' higher education persistence, community leadership, and empowerment are important to inspire future generations of students to first see the possibility of higher education for themselves, and then investigate their options and participate as students. After reviewing the relevant literature I present portraitures based on the methods of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) and Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), including my self-portrait and portraits of members of my cohort, and I then analyzed and interpreted the emergent themes. The research includes a cultural dinner and focus group, as well as individualized interviews. I make recommendations on how these themes create implications for leadership and change within individuals and Native American communities. Portraiture is a research approach that focuses on "the good" and offers an opportunity to engage in a relational story-making process. Relational practice and narratives have the best chance of influencing future Native American students who choose a path of higher education because they align with the culture of Native American communities. My inquiry into the cohort members' individual stories of empowerment and leadership in their communities is guided by my belief that these stories are important, and will have an influence on higher education. Pavel (1992) identified a need for more qualitative research to tell the stories of Native American students and their higher education experience. The research on Native American students in higher education had been largely quantitative and deficit based. I used

qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture as my methodology. Culturally, this method fits with the tradition of stories and within Indigenous populations. To focus on "what is good" rather than identifying problems and providing answers is an appropriate focus for my impending research into the cohort members' stories. The electronic version of this Dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

After 25 years of employment in the medical field, I enrolled in the Antioch University Seattle Bachelor's Completion program based at the Muckleshoot Tribal College, which offered not only an opportunity to learn through the tribal college, but also to learn about my own Coastal Salish, Native American culture. My prior learning experiences were in traditional public school and junior college settings. I entered an Indigenous learning experience coupled with the Antioch University "way of learning," which is anything but linear in scope, and is richly relational in nature as a cohort-learning model. This would be my first educational cohort, and there was much to learn regarding tribal collectivism as opposed to my previous isolated, individual, and traditional Eurocentric model of learning. Hesse and Mason (2005) captured the spirit of this experience as follows, "Learning communities create learning environments where students are not expected to be passive listeners, taking notes and memorizing facts, but instead are expected to work together, reading, writing, talking and relating their learning into their daily lives" (p. 32).

There was undoubtedly an adjustment period to becoming part of an inclusive cohort model, and, likewise, cohort members experienced a honeymoon period with one another. Within our mostly female cohort, we had many experiences of accord and discord, shared tears and triumphs, cultural sharing, and honest appraisals of the impact of our collective cultural grief, and loss. In addition to each new learning encounter as a cohort, our efficacy and empowerment as Native American mothers, sisters, wives, aunties, grandmothers, employees, community members, and educators grew. Over time we grew together as a group in our determined commitment to graduate as a cohort.

Jehangir (2009) suggests critical pedagogy as an appropriate theory for students on the margins. Furthermore, the areas of identity, community, and agency are optimally addressed within a learning community.

> Agency refers to the process by which engagement is a learning community and around multicultural issues encourages and empowers students to examine issues of social change and civic engagement in the context of their own experiences and the experiences of others with the intent to advocate actively for social change. (p. 37)

I came to value my tribal college/Antioch University cohort experience, as I had never imagined I would return to school as an adult learner. It was an opportunity to learn my Coastal Salish Tribal ways and participate in an educational cohort, which looked at all learners in a cultural and holistic way. As a group, we were passionate advocates of educational social change for Native American students. As future teachers we would provide culturally responsive curriculum opportunities embedded within daily classroom activities. By advancing our education we were empowering and equipping ourselves for a future as Native American educators.

As the years passed, I have reflected on the empowerment of this small group of Native American and non-Native women from various tribes around the Puget Sound region and the distinctive educational opportunity we shared. Our unique educational cohort experience initiated my literature interests related to Native American higher education and Native American women's leadership.

Relevant Dimensions and Gaps in the Literature

My literature focus is multifaceted in researching three areas as the backdrop of the cohort narratives on educational leadership. The first area is university and tribal college retention rates, the second is persistence strategies created by institutions for their Native

American and Alaskan Native students, and, lastly, Native American women's leadership is detailed.

The role and responsibilities of universities and tribal colleges to Native American students is well identified in the research. This responsibility begins with a recognition of the occupation of tribal lands and the customs of the tribes of the region in which the institution resides. The higher education establishment is also responsible for the climate and culture of their institution. Saggio and Rendon's (2004) research called for educators in the field of higher education to familiarize themselves with Native cultures, receive training in working with American Indian and Alaskan Native students, and establish stable relationships with both the students and their families, while at the same time offering services the students have identified as valuable.

Tribal colleges fill an educational need for Native American and Alaskan Native students in their remote locations on reservations (Brayboy, Fann, Castango, & Solyon, 2012, p. 69). Without tribal colleges these students would otherwise have limited educational access. Many students are bound to their communities by family commitments, lack of finances, and limited scholarships. Tribal colleges fill this higher education void. Another factor that attracts Native American students to tribal colleges is their faculties' holisitic treatment of students. Tippeconnic and McKinney (2003) stated

> Native faculty are expected to be better teachers, service providers, researchers, and mentors, and to support students more, because of their knowledge and experience in working with Native people, and because of their personal commitment to improve the condition of native people in this country. (p. 244)

Remedial courses, extra academic support, and both Native and non-Native mentoring from faculty provide retentive support to assist tribal college students to persist in their higher education.

Tribal colleges have a number of partnerships with local universities from articulation agreements, as well as programs sharing facilities on the reservations. Brown (2003) has noted

> The importance of collaborative relationships with mainstream institutions and Tribal Colleges to cooperate and collaborate for the sake of the most important stakeholders, the students. For those who intend to transfer to the mainstream institutions the Tribal College has proven to be an important, even necessary step, to reaching their academic goals. (p. 44)

One of the many features that add to the success of the tribal college programs is that "Tribal colleges have greater success with American Indian students because they recognize the importance of the individualized attention, offer programs that are culturally sensitive, and have learned that family support services are integral to their students' progress and success" (Martin, 2005, p. 81).

Both tribal colleges and traditional higher education institutions have responsibilities to serve and meet the needs of their Native American students. These needs can be met with institutional sensitivity, programmatic creativity, flexibility, and relational support from faculty and the institution for the student and their families. One such strategy is the intervention-based model, which attempts to provide a family like culture within the institution, along with the resources of a family specialist. The family specialist works with both the student and their family as an advocate. R. M. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) suggested that

> Establishing and maintaining a sense of "family," both at home and at college, fortifies American Indians' academic persistence and reduces feelings of resentment that family members feel toward students because they spend time away from home. (p. 61)

The concept of higher education within a nation-building perspective is discussed by Brayboy et al. (2012). "We suggest throughout this monograph that higher education for American Indians and Alaska Natives must be understood within the context of tribal nation building, sovereignty, and self-determination; Indigenous knowledge systems; and culturally responsive schooling" (p.

10). These efforts and others developed by colleges and universities to meet the specific needs of Indigenous students will assist them in negotiating their educational pathway in a culturally relevant educational experience.

I chose to divide my research on Native American women's leadership into history, tribalism, activism, and Indigenous feminism. The historical view and role of Native American women prior to European contact is a different type of leadership than post contact with the patriarchal Euro-Western assimilation practices employed during colonization and settlement. While it is impossible to speak for historical practices and present day customs of the 566 Tribal Nations and Canadian Nations, there are some leadership commonalities. The role of women as life givers and caretakers was, and is today, viewed with reverence within many tribal societies. Mohawk (2003) describes three areas of contributions by Native Americans to Western civilization as freedom of religion, women's rights, and children's rights. Many Indigenous nations practiced an inclusive model of governance that included women. Practices consisted of participation in negotiating treaties, political decisions, and women's councils. Portman and Garrett (2005) dispel the stereotypical view of chiefdom.

> American Indian governance is filled not with the romantic notion of male "chiefs" as wise supreme, all-knowing grandfathers but with tribal councils or communities consisting of multiple leaders (male and female) holding positions of leadership, most often with a group of (elder) women holding the ultimate power for decisions that affect the entire tribe. (p. 284)

Noted Indigenous feminist author Allen (1986) stated

> The colonizers saw (and rightly) that as long as women held unquestioned power of such magnitude, attempts at total conquest of the continents were bound to fail. The centuries since the first attempts at colonization in the early 1500s, the invaders have exerted to obliterate all records pertaining to gynocratic social systems, and to ensure that no American and few American Indians would remember that gynocracy was the primary social order of Indian America prior to 1800. (p. 3)

Women in their various leadership positions were viewed as threats to European patriarchy. Between assimilation, Judeo-Christian religious practices, and Euro-Western governance, women were excluded from their former positions of leadership, or their stance was altered. This systemic removal of women from the Indigenous societal roles was detrimental to their communities and the ramifications are still felt today by Native American women and their communities. Anderson (2000) suggested that the removal of women from decision-making and caretaking roles "disempowered women, it also disempowered Indigenous cultures" (p. 20).

Historical accounts identifying the leadership of Native American women pre contact are cognizant of the diminished accounting of women by a Euro-Western patriarchy and male recorders of events. Yet despite the obstacles of oppression, exclusion, and assimilation, women throughout history have maintained leadership roles and their place of caretaking within their communities.

Tribal activism includes women's leadership, political activity, and activism. A traditional tribal definition of leadership is one of a community mindset over self-interests. Miller (1978) has described Native women's leadership as

> Today Native American women are a force in the political and spiritual life of the people, as well as in the white world. Some work in governmental agencies, in schools, in public forums, pressing for Indian justice. You might call these Native American women leaders; they do not view themselves nor are they viewed by their tribes in this way. They may be respected and honored by their people, but they do not "lead" their people. They care for the people; they give to the people; they are committed to the welfare of the people. But all sit together in the sacred circle and no one is greater than another. (p. 39)

Warner and Grint (2006) have defined leadership as "less a position and more as a sphere of influence that must be contextualized to be understood" (p. 231). Native American Nations likewise are seeing continued growth of tribal activism and political women's leadership within

their communities. Prindeville (2004) cited Native American women from the southwestern tribal politics

> In general, these native leaders entered politics to help others, to improve community services and programs, to fulfill a civic responsibility, to professionalize a tribal government and reform tribal politics, and build tribal unity. (p. 111)

A popular belief of tribal activism is a view of collective endeavors for the tribal community over gender specific issues. Gender and the tribal community are addressed in scholarly tribal activism as noted in work by Lee (2012) and Nez Denetdale (2006), as they address the Navajo government and tribal activism in governmental issues based upon Euro-Western practices.

> While it is necessary for Native scholars to call upon the intellectual community to support and preserve Indigenous sovereignty, it is crucial that we also recognize how history has transformed traditions, and that we be critical about the ways tradition is claimed and for what purposes. (Nez Denetdale, 2006, p. 20)

Indigenous feminism is seen as the most controversial of the views of Native American women's leadership. The beliefs differ and Indigenous feminism is arguably a complex subject with strongly held opinions. Kenny (Kenny & Fraser, 2012) has defined the issue within Indigenous feminism as follows:

> Aboriginal women often perceive Western feminism as a phenomenon created by white women who are intellectuals in the academy and who see the world through an individualistic lens, as opposed to a community-based lens. Indigenous women struggle to find their own places with dialogues on feminist theories. (p. 11)

Additionally, in Prindeville's (2003) research Native American women choose to self-identify first by race rather than gender. This is seen as identification with their tribal nations and with concerns of tribal sovereignty, and collective concerns over the issues of exclusive gender subjects. Identification of race over gender is also seen in the area of

Native American higher education. Shotton (2008) discussed the educational pathway of American Indian women doctoral students who maintained their cultural identity.

> That is, the women maintained their tribal cultural identity despite efforts to force them to replace it with the norms of the academy, and maintained that American Indian concepts of appropriate behavior, knowledge, beliefs, philosophies, and traditions were valid and had a place in the academy. (p. 221)

These differences of collectivism over gender individualistic concerns manifest in issues discussed by the academy.

Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, and Barman (2010) stated,

> Those who struggle for gender equality are often seen, sometimes erroneously, as opposing traditional Indigenous practices and forms of social organization. Thus, Indigenous feminism frequently elicits accusations that fracture communities and undermine more pressing struggles for Indigenous autonomy. Consequently, feminist research and politics often appear to be irrelevant to the concerns of Indigenous communities and may even seem to be implicated in ongoing colonial practices. (p. 2)

In general, Native American scholars suggest there is a place for Indigenous feminism within the contextual framework of tribal women's initiatives. The coexistence of tribal advancement for women and Indigenous feminism is considered a tribal community asset. Anderson (2000) reflected,

> In *A Recognition of Being* I wrote about a four-part process of Indigenous female identity development that included resisting oppression, reclaiming our Indigenous tradition and culture, incorporating traditional Indigenous ways into our modern lives, and acting on responsibilities inherent in our new-found identities. This process is now useful to me as I think about how Indigenous feminist thought can help build healthier nations. (p. 85)

The work of nation building is an inclusive collaboration of women and men in the pursuit of opportunities and equality for all their people. This goal can be met within the various roles of Native American women in positions of leadership as, tribal activists, feminists, and by working collectively for the good of the community.

Given the importance of the topic, there are significant gaps in the literature with respect to the limited number of studies in Native American women's leadership. There is a need for studies to include the positive endeavors and roles Native American women employ in their various forms of leadership within their tribal communities. These areas may incorporate formal recognized leadership positions or unrecognized leadership by being asked by the community to step forward for a period of time in order to meet a specific need. As cited in Pease (2005) "The women emerging are the hearts of the nations" (p. 113).

Focus and Research Question

Since our graduation ceremony in Seattle, I have often wondered to what extent my cohort participants were influencing their tribal communities. After graduation I remained with some of my initial cohort participants for our consecutive master's program in education at Antioch University Seattle, Muckleshoot Tribal College, and we graduated two years later. I had frequently wondered if my fellow cohort participants had regarded the program as highly as I had in terms of how well it had equipped me for my current leadership role as a practitioner and scholar.

These thoughts led me to my dissertation concept question, "How has participation in a tribal university partnership's culturally based bachelor's completion and master's in education program influenced the cohort's women and their current leadership in education?" My inquiry into the cohort participants' individual stories of empowerment and leadership in their communities, and in the field of Native American education, is guided by my belief that these stories are important, and will have an influence on higher education. Pavel (1992) identified a need for more qualitative research to tell the stories of Native American students and their higher education experience. The research has identified the dismal numbers of Native American

students persisting to graduation in post-secondary institutions. My own research review solidified my commitment to sharing the individual stories of the cohort participants and their resultant work within their tribal communities.

The historical Native American educational experience is fraught with educational abuse and mistrust. The past exploitation of education as a tool to marginalize and assimilate Indigenous people is well documented. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) have summarized the cultural and educational genocide as:

> "Americanization," mandated the transformation of nations and individuals; Replace heritage languages with English; replace "paganism" with Christianity; replace economic, political, social, legal, and aesthetic institutions. Given the American infatuation with the notion that social change can best be effected through education, schools have logically been vested with the responsibility for Americanizing Indigenous peoples as well as immigrants. (p. 4)

It is within this educational backdrop that Native people have an individual and collective mistrust toward the United States' educational efforts and Euro-Western educational practices. This mistrust impacts public schools as well as tribal schools funded by the federal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Graduation rates for Native Americans are the lowest of any minority. The Washington State *Promising Programs and Practices for Dropout Prevention: Report to the Legislature* (Bergeson, 2005) noted a 50% dropout rate for 9th grade American Indian students. The boarding school experience and the generational fall out continue despite the fact that the boarding school policies have been removed.

The statistics for Native American and Alaskan Native high school graduation are bleak, and the same could be said for post-secondary education graduation. Overall, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2011), during the years 1999 to 2009 the number of full-time students rose 45%, with females enrolled up to 40% and males 35%. "In recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over has been larger

than the percentage increase in the number of younger students and the pattern is expected to continue" (p. 1). As noted in percentage distribution of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions by race/ethnicity in fall 1976 through fall 2009, American Indian/Alaska Native enrollment increased from 0.7 to 1.0 (NCES, 2011).

Native American and Alaskan Native retention to graduation is a well-documented example of persistence for only a small number of tribal persons.

> For Native American students in NCAA Division I schools, the persistence rate is 54% after the first year, and the general population rate is 68%. Likewise persistence into the third year is 33% for Native American students, and 49% for the rest of the population. Accordingly only 36% of Native Americans students have graduated within 6 years of initial enrollment. Fifty-six percent of the total population graduates in the same period. (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003, p. 548)

Our cohort was an example of the non-traditional student, the older student 25 years old or more, as well as students who had taken breaks in their learning while in higher education. In light of the historical, social, and economic barriers to higher education access for Native American students, the cohort'' individual stories are essential. Research questions that were posed or answered by my cohort included: What circumstances brought them to participate in higher education? What was right about the timing of the program? What caused these students to persist? Since completion of the program how has their education equipped them for their current forms of leadership? Is their current leadership in a recognized or authorized or unauthorized capacity?

Scope and Limitations

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experience of participants of Antioch University Seattle's First Peoples' culturally based higher education cohort, and their current educational leadership within their respective communities and tribal nations. This study does not attempt to generalize an educational cohort model, nor the experience of non-traditional

Native American women as students and their post-graduate leadership. It is also limited in that it is one unique partnership between a tribal nation and its college, and Antioch University Seattle, which has a commitment to social justice issues. This does not mean to imply a bachelor's completion teacher's preparation or master's in education program with another partnership would have comparable results. Instead, it is focused on the individualized portraits of Native American women and non-Native women and their experiences and current leadership.

I plan to use qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture as my methodology. I believe this is a suitable fit for the research subject and question because culturally, this method fits with the tradition of stories and Indigenous populations. To focus on "what is good" rather than identifying problems and providing answers is an appropriate focus for my impending research into the cohort members' stories. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described portraiture as:

> With it, I seek to combine systemic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor. The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. (p. 3)

Portraiture entails thick description as well as the identification from macro environmental setting to micro in an effort to provide the necessary backdrop and foundation for the stories. As the researcher, I am required to be cautious in stating my positionality from the beginning and to take care in placing my own voice within the stories. Lawrence-Lightfoot cautioned that,

> And although it is always present, the portraitist's voice should never overwhelm the voices of actions or the actors. The self of the portraitist is always there; her soul echoes through the piece. But she works very hard not to simply produce a self-portrait. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 105)

This methodology presented challenges for me in attempting to balance voice, context, and thick description, not to mention the unexpected obstacles that surface with interviews. I conducted

two to three in-depth participant interviews, and organized a talking circle of the cohort participants with a cultural dinner and gifting as is appropriate in Coastal Salish tradition and as an act of reciprocity. .

Before the interviews were initiated I used the questions developed to interview myself. The self-interview aided my ability to fully understand the requirements I am asking of the interviewees, as well as in bracketing to avoid having my story leech into my cohort stories. Additionally, I maintained a journal throughout the writing and research of the dissertation as I have found journaling to be a valuable tool in my reflection and analysis.

Contextual Framework

The student stories of bicultural efficacy, cultural resilience, leadership, and empowerment are inherent within the cohort. Within my framework and with the use of open-ended questions I address the following topics:

Student timing in returning to school

Motivation and self-leadership to return to school

Personal acts of self-determination within their educational experience

Lived experience and unauthorized leadership

Women's leadership post graduation

The role of their ancestors in their education

The inclusion of this framework adds depth and understanding to the student narrative, while using portraiture as a methodology. While these areas were initially identified, they were subject to change as the development of the project, questions, and themes emerged. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) referred to the constant calibration of the researcher's conceptual framework, hypotheses, and their data in order to obtain the narrative portrait.

> Working in context, the researcher then has to be alert to surprises and inconsistencies and improvise conceptual and methodological responses that match the reality she is observing. The researcher's stance becomes a dance of vigilance and improvisation. (p. 43)

Summary

My dissertation objective is to tell the stories of a cohort of women who worked diligently in education at their tribal communities, and at 20-40 years old decided to return to higher education. Their unifying purpose was to participate in a tribal/university partnership, culturally based higher education program. The narrative of women's empowerment through education is a common theme globally, yet the difference is the cohort experience of a small group of Native American women, who for a period of two years made their own education a priority in their lives. Some participants traveled up to three hours one way in order to participate in the program, and for all, this experience took precedence over the multitude of other activities these women were involved in within their families, culture, and community.

For years the cohort participants had practiced leadership in their communities with traditional knowledge and skill, yet the limitations of not having received their higher education degrees had daunted their efforts. Stories were told by cohort participants who while working in education were respected for their knowledge of their language, and culture, yet never really fit in. Their lack of education had caused them to work outside the hierarchical boundaries of education and work from the inside to initiate change. Meyerson (2001) has referred to these persons as tempered radicals.

> Tempered radicals are people who operate on a fault line. They are organizational insiders who contribute and succeed in their jobs. At the same time, they are treated as outsiders because they represent ideals or agendas that are somehow at odds with the dominant culture. (p. 5)

In order to negotiate their way while working in the field of education without a higher education degree, cohort participants had operated as tempered radicals changing systems from within. It is possible that now with their Eurocentric education they are no longer required to initiate change in this same manner. After completing their higher education, or resultantly by making job changes post education, participants may have enhanced their ability to lead from within or with a more recognized power and leadership.

I am interested in what I believe are the major components of our cohort experience within a tribal college and university partnership, which lead to current leadership positions and practices. One aspect is the responsibility of universities and tribal colleges to their Native American and Alaskan Native students in their educational pursuit of higher education. Secondly, Native American and Alaskan Native students have documented low persistence rates and extended periods of time to graduate with continued low graduation. Finally, the third area within this three-pronged focus is Native American women's leadership, and the various types of recognized leadership. I maintained a journal throughout the dissertation process as a way to both document the process and practice reflective leadership.

Chapter II includes a literature review of what I believe are the foundational literature concepts. The first area of focus is university and tribal college retention rates, the second is, persistence strategies created by institutions for their Native American and Alaskan Native students, and the third is, Native American women's leadership. I provide an analysis of the current literature and recognized theorists in an attempt to build a research-based foundation for my dissertation and to support my methodology choice.

In Chapter III I ground my methodological framework in portraiture and the appropriate use of this practice in working in a culture steeped in traditional stories and relational leadership.

Descriptions of the methods and process of obtaining the narratives in a culturally sensitive manner will be presented. Details related to portraiture methodology, study criteria, ethics, and process will be supported by literature.

Chapter IV includes the rich and detailed portraiture narratives from the talking circle as well as the individual interviews. My own interview will be included within the study, but every attempt will be made to complete my interview first to accomplish bracketing and prevent leeching information into the study. The detailed descriptive writing of portraiture will provide thick narratives of the graduates and their current leadership. The analysis and interpretations of the portraits will be presented in Chapter V. Literature themes and correlations will be identified and discussed as well.

Finally, Chapter VI represents an opportunity to share my contribution and how it adds to the literature on Native American women's leadership and empowerment through education. Accordingly, university retention and persistence strategies for these Native American women will also be discussed. This will provide an opportunity to identify areas for further research and not only place the study within a larger context but also ground it in the unique fact that the author is a Native researcher and fellow cohort participant. The collective components of the research project will add to the scholarly discourse on Native American women's empowerment, inter-tribal cohorts, tribal college and university partnerships, as well as, Native American persistence in higher education.

L. T. Smith (1999) has noted the importance of Indigenous researchers and their work in tribal communities. "When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms" (p.

193). The dissertation process and discovery of the leadership methods and activities the participants were involved in exceeded my expectations. I anticipated the culturally rich retrospective lens of our shared experience in a cohort. I was confident in the role our education played in our current leadership. The research confirmed and revealed the positive impact of our educational experience on our current leadership and the influence it had in our lives, and those of our families and communities in educational and community leadership and activism.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The focus of this study is to identify the current leadership involvement of Native American participants of a tribal college and university partnership cohort model. I am interested in the female cohort participants, their current work within their communities, and their leadership in the field of Native American education. My review of the literature for this study is three pronged and related to the historical perspective of Native American education and Native American non-traditional students, Native American student persistence and culturally responsive retention strategies in higher education, and Native American women's leadership,

Specific Literature Review Research Question

I am interested in what I believe are the major components of our cohort's tribal college/ university partnership educational leadership and empowerment. Universities as well as the tribal colleges have an institutional responsibility to Native American and Alaskan Native students in their pursuit of higher education. Secondly, Native American and Alaskan Native students have documented low persistence rates and take extended periods of time to graduate with low graduation rates.

Due to the institutional responsibility and the low persistence rates in higher education, culturally relevant curriculums and programs have been created by both universities and tribal colleges in an effort to address retention for Indigenous students. These programs differ among universities, colleges, tribes, states, and cultures. Some universities develop Native American study programs and differing curricula in an attempt to attract Native American students to their schools. Other universities develop tribal and university partnerships or tribal college and university partnerships, with an emphasis on meeting the employment needs of a tribal community. Tribal colleges likewise develop programs and curricula to meet their employment,

education, and language needs for their tribal communities (Akweks, Bill, Seppanen, & Smith, 2009; American Indian Higher Education Consortium American Indian Measures for Success [AIHEC AIMS] Fact Book, 2009-2010).

In order to address the post-graduate work of the mostly female cohort I felt it was also important to investigate the literature on Native American women's leadership and higher education. My concentration in Native American education is related to my personal experience, as well as my current work with Native American students and their families. It is important to understand the history of Native American education in order to fully comprehend current and future efforts. Warner and Grint (2006) have noted the importance of looking at Native American leadership from a historical context and the impact of assimilation.

> Nonetheless, much of the research still suffers from a historical bias that explores the leadership issues affecting Indian communities as if they are Indian problems rather than the consequences of historical displacement and cultural destruction. Indigenous leadership definitions found in the scholarship of Indians and non-Indians, then require an understanding of the impact of assimilation policies and practices in a historical context. (p. 231)

By investigating Native American women's leadership and education I have included a historical backdrop of both Native American educational efforts, as well as the role of Native American women and leadership and the influential policies that impacted them.

Historical Perspective of Native Education

A historical perspective of Native American education involves the recognition of the United States' use of assimilation policies in education and schools to accomplish their goals of conformity. The role of integration policies in Native American education is well documented. A brief historical summary of the educational eras of Native American education, and specifically higher education, include the Treaty era, and the Self Determination era, as noted by McClellan, Tippeconnic Fox, and Lowe (2005). The church was responsible for initial Indian

education efforts. The creation of mission schools and church-based schools was an attempt to "Christianize" the local tribes.

> In the early years of Indian education, the church played an instrumental role as "civilizing" agent. At the behest of the federal government various religious denominations were given exclusive responsibilities to acculturate the native population through education in preparations for eventual assimilation into civilized society. (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 810)

Nation-to-nation treaties had been established by the federal government placing the Indian as a "ward" and thus increasing the government's responsibility for Indian education. It was during this period that the first boarding schools, day, and industrial schools were established.

> This started the shift of Indian education from a largely missionary activity particularly funded by the government to an activity directly managed by the Office of Indian Affairs. Emphasis was on day, boarding, and industrial schools whose curricula focused on basic skills in arithmetic and in speaking, reading and writing English. (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 68)

Native American higher education that incorporated a purpose of education for Native Americans of this period included such notable institutions as Harvard, Dartmouth, and William and Mary, although limited numbers of Indian students attended. Two additional higher education institutions were established exclusively for Native American students, they were Pembroke University and Bacone University. The Croatan Normal School (now known as Pembroke University) began after the "Lumbee Tribe sought their right to be educated free from the segregated black schools" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 291). According to Reyner and Eder (2004) three years later the Cherokee National Male Seminary supported by the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the Muscogee-Creek Nation, funded by John D. Rockefeller, opened. The school had strict rules and required daily bible instruction. "The board of Trustees included the chief of the Creek Nation and the Delaware" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 294). The name was subsequently changed to Bacone College.

The Brookings Institute Meriam Report of 1928 is noted by historians and educators due to its influential impact in terms of initiating change in Native American education. The report was critical of the federal government's Indian policies and their lack of support for education and Indian self-governance. "In addition, the care of Indian children in boarding schools was found shockingly inadequate. The report concluded that elementary age children did not belong in boarding schools and that there was a need for more day schools" (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p 208).

Some researchers have noted the self-determination era began shortly after this report came out as well as the Indian Reorganization Act and Johnson–O'Malley Act of 1934 (McClellan et al., 2005). Others such as Szasz (1999) and Reyhner and Eder, (2004) identified the beginning of the self-determination era later, in the 1960s. Regardless, these actions empowered Native Americans to restructure and build their nations, and "The Johnson O'Malley Act was designed not to deal with organizational structure so much as the direct needs of Indian peoples (i.e., education, medical attention, agricultural assistance and social welfare)" (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 813). The tribal nations were given foundational policies in which to build from in the sense of education and meeting the practical needs of their people.

The 1950s brought a differing perspective by the federal government in its attempts to decrease government.

> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the federal government sought to terminate its trust relationship with Native Americans, relocate Native Americans from reservations by incentive (as contrasted with earlier federal efforts to use force to put Native American people on reservations), and shift responsibility for Native Americans services to the states. (McClellan et al., 2005, p. 10)

The relocation of culturally land-based peoples to populated cities and the loss of their communal ways had a devastating impact on Native American communities and tribes.

Additional reports and resultant policy based in part on the 1954 case of *Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education,* requiring desegregation, as well as the 1964 Civil Rights Act initiated change in the 1960s.

> The Economic Opportunity Act of 1965 was the second major piece of 1960's era legislation to directly impact the Indian population. As a part of President Johnson's Great Society Programs, it authorized Head Start, Upward Bound, the Job Corps, VISTA, and the Indian Community Action Programs. (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2005, p. 814)

It was during this same time period that the Kennedy report titled *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge* came out. The report highlighted the minimal progress made in Indian Education since the Meriam report 40 years earlier. This report was noted as instrumental in bringing about national awareness, action, and documenting the need for tribal self-determination. Other influential acts were the 1972 Indian Education Act.

> Provisions were made to meet special needs of Indian students in public schools, to establish a National Advisory Council on Indian Education to train teachers of Indians, to begin work with Indian community colleges, and to give tribes and other Indian organizations priority in funding for discretionary program use. (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2005, p. 816)

Also noteworthy was the 1978 Tribally Controlled Community College Act. This provided funding through the next decade for tribal community colleges and offered "incentive for the creation of new colleges" (Szasz, 1999, p. 235). Many tribal colleges were established during this period as a result. In 1968 Navajo Community College was established, which has been cited as the beginning of tribally controlled colleges. The college was developed to assist students in culturally based education. "Today the Tribal College and University movement has grown to

include 37 and make up the American Indian Higher Education Consortium" (AIHEC AIM Fact Book, 2009-2010, p. 2).

The historical preservation of Indian education has been a long arduous battle with Euro-Western society, church, and the federal government in maintaining rights for tribal language, culture, and ways. The need for education was recognized by Native Americans in order to adapt to their changing world, and the conflict over education and mandatory assimilation prevailed as tribal people fought to maintain their language and customs.

Through the establishment of mission boarding schools, government boarding schools, and day schools Native American students, parents, and tribes were required to personally deal with the ramifications of two conflicting cultures. There have been numerous reports from differing perspectives of students' experiences within these schools. Some students were forcibly removed from their homes and families during this era in a concerted effort to remove the Indian from the child. Other families were forced to relinquish their students, and did so with few remaining options. Reyhner and Eder (2004) noted that in 1895 "Congress had passed laws permitting Morgan [Commissioner] to enforce school attendance through the withholding of rations and annuities from Indian families who did not send their children to school"(p. 90). Other families saw the value in their children learning the English language as well as the Euro-Western culture and expectantly sent their children to the school to learn new customs.

Francis La Flesche, Omaha, worked in the office of Indian Affairs, later he received a law degree, and transferred to the Bureau of American Ethnology until his retirement in 1929. He understood the importance of documenting his early experience and those of other Indians and tribes. La Flesche offered an account of his schooling, as a young boy when his father had sent him to learn the ways of the "white race" by attending a Presbyterian mission school. He stated

the "hardship" of not being able to converse until one had learned how to do so in English, the various jobs within the school and buildings, and vacations when the children returned home for varying lengths of time. The schools used various types of force to produce immediate assimilation included cutting the children's hair upon arrival, changing all aspects of familiarity, and punishing students who spoke their first language or practiced their spiritual beliefs. La Flesche (1932) reported

> The first thing to be done was to cut his long hair. A towel was put around his neck, and soon the shears were singing a tune about his ears. He seemed to enjoy it, and laughed at the jokes made by the boys; but when by some chance he caught sight of his scalp-lock lying on the floor like a little black snake, he put his fists into his eyes and fell to sobbing as though his heart would break. (p. 75)

The discipline varied at the schools and was dependent on administrators and teachers who taught at the schools and their beliefs regarding their pupils and the role of the education in assimilating their students. Some schools used a militaristic approach, others the rigidity of religious practices, and additional schools used various forms of physical punishment. In some boarding schools, well-documented physical and sexual abuses occurred, as well as student deaths.

As students returned home there was obvious difficulty, students had mixed emotions and attitudes regarding their families and culture. Family structures were displaced following students' boarding school experiences. Tsosie (2010) stated that the dysfunction in parental relationships years later led to impaired child development and former extended family parenting relationships were later viewed as unacceptable, resulting in children's forced removal from their homes by state agencies for non-Native adoption.

> In addition, the physical, psychological, and emotional trauma suffered by many Native children in residential boarding schools gave rise to dysfunctional family relationships and patterns such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual

> abuse, which are still present in many Native families and communities. (Tsosie, 2010, p. 36)

These encounters within the "White man's" education system have created mistrust by Native people and a generational impact felt in our education system today. Regardless of tribal or public school status, students' mistrust in educational institutions may continue well into their higher education experience.

The Indigenous mistrust is extended beyond educational experiences to those of non-Native researchers entering communities to complete research without including the Indigenous perspective, traditional knowledge, or ways. Kenny, Faries, Fiske, and Voyageur (2004) cited historical obstacles within the research experience of Indigenous peoples as:

- Lack of partnerships with communities
- Researchers in control of all aspects of the research procedures
- No meaningful participant involvement
- Lack of trust of researchers by their participants
- Conflicting world views of researchers by the participants
- Lack of understanding by the participants on purpose and impacts of research
- Failure to obtain informed consent
- Irrelevant research methods, which are not compatible to Aboriginal culture
- Community not involved in identifying solutions and
- No follow-up or reporting back to the participants. (p. 10)

Assimilation efforts to produce a Eurocentric society with Indigenous peoples as the researched have left a worldwide impact on Aboriginal groups. Essed (1991) noted the 19th-century construction of race by biologists and anthropologists:

> The idea of White superiority came in handy, because it justified colonialism, the slavery of Africans, and the appropriation of the African, Asian, and American land and human resources by Whites as the result of in born inequalities between the "races," which made it natural for one to rule over the others. (p. 7)

It is within this educational backdrop of mistrust that Native people have high school graduation rates the lowest of any minority. The boarding school experience and the

generational fall out continue despite the fact that the boarding school policies have been removed.

Olson (2009) reported about the wounding experience of schooling from students of all backgrounds. She found former students who now, as adults, reported their own traumatizing schooling experiences. These former students reported about their own wounding from misguided policy makers. These experiences varied from too conventional and risk adverse, to toxically rebellious, or deadened.

The following wounds were identified by Olson (2009): Wounds of compliance, rebellion, numbness, underestimation, perfectionism, and wounds of the average. "What all school wounds have in common: Are produced in school environments that are intolerant of cognitive, emotional, or identity difference" (p. 57).

Native American students in public schools and university settings often encounter racism on a daily basis as additional wounding experiences. The cultural misunderstandings by society at large still impact our students on their educational journeys. Native American students encounter acts of micro-agression, overt and covert racism, surveillance, silenced, and being asked to speak for their culture (Brayboy, 2004; Brayboy et al., 2012; Shotton, 2008).

As a nation, we have not yet come to terms with our perceptions around race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, and other separating subjects. While non-Natives have referred to Native Americans and other marginalized peoples as the Other, L. T. Smith (2012) has referred to the citation of Other within research of marginalized populations and peoples oppressed. "It has been used alongside other similar concepts such as borders, boundaries, bridges, centre-periphery, and insider-outsider to demarcate people in spatial terms: as well as in socio-economic, political and cultural terms" (p. 204).

Native education today is working toward inclusivity for Native American and Alaskan Native students in all segments of the K-12, and higher education experience. Two examples of inclusivity and recognition of the value and importance of Native American culture are the Legislative House Bills of Indian Education in Washington and Montana. Washington State House Bill 1495, 28A-230-320 (2005 & Supp.2006) was designed for non-Native and Native students, enacted in 2005-2006 with the aim of encouraging the inclusion of tribal history in the common school curriculum. The Montana Indian Education for All, House Bill 528, MCA 20-1-501 uses stronger language and is an example of inclusivity and culturally responsive instruction for all including non-Native, Native students, educational personnel, and Montana Tribal groups (see www.opi.state.mt.us). These bills are also acts of self-determination and sovereignty. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) have suggested that rather than categorizing Native Americans as Others and challenging tribal sovereignty issues within education, Natives and non-Natives can both benefit from the equality of education and democracy.

> Schools, especially can be constructed as places of difference which children are free to learn, question, and grow from a position that affirms who they are. This vision of critical democracy, long held within Indigenous communities, has the power to create a more just and equitable educational system for all. (p. 170)

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to understand the historical perspective and respond to the specific needs of Native American and Alaskan Native students. This population of higher education students has experienced differing acts of oppression and marginalization during their educational experience, and as a result many return to higher education later in life as nontraditional students.

> While the provision of education is a guaranteed treaty right, it has long been associated with forced assimilation and the loss of culture. Today there is a search for educational solutions that guarantee Native American students the respect and competencies to live well in two worlds—contemporary mainstream

> society and the rich societies and cultures that are their heritage. (AIHEC AIM Fact Book, 2009-2010, p. 1)

As students enter the Euro-Western educational systems, they are indeed walking in two worlds. Some colleges and universities are employing new measures to address the needs of Native American students.

Non-Traditional Students/Native American Students

The statistics for Native American and Alaskan Native high school graduation are dismal, and the same could be said for graduation rates in post-secondary education graduation. Native American and Alaskan Native higher education retention to graduation in the past has been a well-documented example of persistence for only a small number of tribal persons yet these numbers are changing.

> This was also the pattern for the number of bachelor's degrees earned by American Indians/Alaska Natives. In 1976–77, around 3,300 bachelor's degrees were awarded to American Indians/Alaska Natives; by 1995–96, the number increased to 7,000, and in 2005–06, the number reached 11,000 bachelor's degrees. The percentage increase for the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to American Indians/Alaska Natives between 1995-96 and 2005-06 was 57 percent, compared to 28 percent for the total population. (Devoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. 134)

Higher education degrees and enrollment for Native American students are on the rise. According to the NCES for higher education, during the years 1999 to 2009, full-time Native American student enrollment rose 45%, female enrollment rose to 40%, and male enrollment rose to 35%. "In recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over has been larger than the percentage increase in the number of younger students and the pattern is expected to continue" (NCES, 2011, p. 1). As noted in the percentage distribution of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions by race/ethnicity in the fall of 1976 through the fall of 2009, American Indians/Alaska Natives increased from 0.7% to 1.0% (NCES, 2011).

As stated in the literature, Native American students are frequently non-traditional students entering college as young adults rather than directly upon high school graduation. Enrollment by gender is 53% women, and 43% of those are attending full time. The average ages of tribal college students

> In AY 2009-10.60 percent of first time students at a Tribal College were between the ages of 16-24 years old. Tribal Colleges continue to draw older students as well: 21 % between the ages of 25-34, and 13 % are between 35-49 years old. Among first time students at Tribal Colleges, 64 percent are single with no children. (AIHEC AIM Fact Book, 2009-2010, p. 19)

Students who enrolled in universities were frequently first-generation college students who tended to take a non-linear path in pursuit of their education (Jackson et al., 2003), attending at least three schools and taking breaks from college of up to two years. These stop outs were for various reasons, frequently family crisis, cultural ceremonies, and other related needs. Due to the inflexibility of higher education institutions the students were left with no other recourse than to quit school resulting in the stop out. It is important to note that the researchers also observed that these students were less confined to the graduation timeline "defined by the dominant culture" and were at ease with their decisions for stop out (Jackson et al., 2003).

Waterman's (2012) research discussed the role of home-going as a strategy of persistence in non-Native higher education institutions. "Participants reported family and community as an important source of support and expressed a need and obligation to be home to participate in the community" (p. 204).

In Kenny's (2002) report *North American Indian, Métis and Inuit Women Speak about Culture, Education and Work,* students discussed their difficulty in meeting school policies with family and community deaths and funerals. The first student is conflicted in deciding between meeting a test requirement or attending a teenage community member's funeral following his

suicide. The student ultimately took the test recognizing the school would never understand despite the inner conflict and struggle she faced prior to the test and after.

> I just did what I was taught to do, and what is the appropriate thing to do and the right thing to do from what my mother taught me. But I didn't see how that distinguished me from like say, a White person. I didn't understand that. That's when I started to see the difference. I thought about things differently -that my connection to my community was different because I actually had a community and a lot of people in the White world don't have a community. (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 28)

Another student in Kenny et al.'s (2004) report discusses the need for time away from school following her father's death and needing time to attend a ceremony.

> And the traditional ceremony is a long ceremony so I needed a whole week off of school. And of course, I needed some time for myself. And I wasn't given that. I was told after going to my teacher, to the vice principal and the principal that if I did take that time off I would be expelled from the class and I would have to start all over again. And the class was from September to January so it was October and past the halfway point. I was doing exceptionally well. I had a 97 percent average and because I took half the time instead of the full time, I was penalized 10 percent in my mark for missing the time period. And I tried to explain to them the importance of the ceremony, not to mention my dad had died. There was no leeway at all, and they said it is their policy and they have to follow the policy that was given to them. (p. 40)

Lee, Donlan, and Brown (2011) recommend that institutions use family relationships to motivate persistence, as well as regular financial aid counseling to offset stop outs. Alexitch (2010) supports flexible course and program designs to increase positive student outcomes. Furthermore, the institution has a responsibility for their cultural climate, which also impacts persistence and retention rates. Native American students encounter racism in varying forms on campuses, which can result in some students' disengagement, and later discontinuation of their education with the institution. One of the reasons cited for this disengagement is racism on university and college campuses.

Picca and Feagin (2007) conducted research on white students attending university campuses and their journal entries regarding racial events at those institutions in an effort to identify long-held racial beliefs of societal racism. They concluded there exists a front stage and backstage of racism in our society. The front stage is the perception of a perceived color blindness and racial acceptance within mixed racial groups. When the group dynamic changes and the group is exclusively white, students engaged in backstage racist comments and behavior. This behavior was common fare and accepted, and therefore reinforces the societal hierarchy of racial inequality. These acts of micro aggression are commonplace and frequently identified in research. Jackson et al. (2003) reported,

> The prevalence of experiences of racism among our participants was discouraging. Their descriptions of these instances were typically the most painful and poignant aspects of the interviews. Our surprise at the prevalence reminded us of our own denial and wishful thinking about racial issues. (p. 562)

These researchers remarked on the minimal number of research projects of racially oppressive experiences among Native American higher education students and noted this as evidence of institutionalized racism.

As a result of institutionalized, front stage, and backstage racism, along with a Eurocentric curriculum, Native American students attending higher education institutions are required to develop a bicultural status so that they function concurrently on two cultural levels (Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2009). A bicultural identity allowed students to maintain strong cultural identification while negotiating within the major culture. As Huffman (2001) has noted (see Table 2.1), a process of transculturation for Native American students strong in their traditional beliefs and culture allowed these students to persist and maintain their cultural identity within an establishment by developing a cultural mask and assimilating within the mainstream culture of the institution. Those traditional Native American students who felt

estranged from their culture and ways and who viewed their education and the actions of the institution as assimilation were considered estranged. Estranged students experienced alienation and did poorly academically, while those students who were transculturated overcame their feelings of alienation and persisted academically, as seen in (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Summary of Huffman's Processes of Estrangement and Transculturation (2001)

Process of Estrangement	Process of Transculturation
Stage One- Initial Alienation	Stage One- Initial Alienation
Stage Two- Disillusionment	Stage Two- Self-Discovery
Stage Three- Emotional Rejection	Stage Three- Realignment
Stage Four- Disengagement	Stage Four- Participation

Huffman (2001) asserted that Native American traditional students need not give up their cultural customs in order to succeed and persist in postsecondary education. He recommended institutions become purposeful in their celebration of Native American ethnicity in their campus environment in varied and intentional ways. Additionally, he called for "culturally appropriate higher education student counseling" to support students in their cultural integrity, persistence, and ultimately their retention in higher education (p. 34).

Culture allows students to be resilient in their ability to persist and translate new experiences in a discernible manner. Cultural identity is seen as an asset for students' sustainability as they negotiate Eurocentric higher education institutions (Wexler & Burke,

2011). Cultural resiliency is noted as maintaining spiritual practices with an ultimate goal of returning and giving back to their tribal communities (Drywater-WhiteKiller, 2010).

Some Native American students in predominately white higher education institutions adopt the stance of invisibility based upon their view of hyper surveillance by non-Natives. This surveillance has been unsolicited and further marginalizes their higher education experience (Brayboy, 2004). "The costs associated with being visible in and out of class for American Indian students help to explain why they may choose to make themselves less visible to others" (p. 135). Brayboy (2004) noted that students have been placed into these experiences based on the higher education institutions, in this case Ivy League schools, and their definitions of Native Americans. The definitions are stereotypical and rooted in the past and resultantly the students are left to deal with the ramifications of hyper surveillance and invisibility as a survival technique. "Invisibility serves to assist some students in 'flying under the radar' in order to maintain their cultural integrity, but it can also have damaging influences on students regarding marginalization" (Brayboy, 2004, p. 147). Brayboy (2004) stated the cost of correcting teachers, seen as elders, or speaking out to correct students' preconceived assumptions related to their cultural practices, was too much for these students to do and maintain their cultural integrity.

Despite cultural and institutional barriers students persevered to completion, and they graduated.

> These students demonstrated resilience in pursuing their degree. They continued to pursue their degree, even after struggling academically, taking long breaks from their studies, feeling discouraged by racism, moving from one college or university to another, or perceiving that they had little support from their college or university. They demonstrated determination to find personal and financial resources to help them in their pursuit of a degree. (Jackson et al., 2003, p. 561)

Students who persevered demonstrated their personal development of cultural identity, self-determination, and academic success. Native American graduates are viewed as nation builders

since these former students frequently return to their communities to serve and give back to their people. This goal of returning and giving back to their tribal communities is frequently noted within the research as their ability to persist to graduation with resultant nation building as an intended outcome. J. P. Guillory (2008) noted the personal cost of Native American graduates and giving back, in their efforts of nation building. These students were resilient throughout the challenges of their educational journey, as well as their reentry and giving back to their tribal communities.

University and Tribal College Culturally Responsive Programs

The literature review revealed themes within the Native American and Alaskan Native higher education persistence and retention efforts. Themes were related to (a) institutional responsibility to the student, in terms of curriculum, faculty relationship, and support of diversity by the organization; (b) student and institutional financial obligation; (c) tribal community and institutional partnerships in providing culturally relevant programming and higher education access for Native American and Alaskan Native students.

Institutional Responsibility

Universities. The roles and responsibilities of universities and tribal colleges to Native American students are well identified in the research. This responsibility begins with the recognition of the lands and customs of the tribes of the region in which the institution resides. The higher education establishment is also responsible for the climate and culture of their institution. Saggio and Rendon's (2004) research called for college educators to familiarize themselves with Native cultures, receive training in working with American Indian and Alaskan Native students, and establish stable relationships with both the students and their families, while at the same time offering services the students have identified as valuable.

An important factor for the institutional relational climate was the number of mentoring programs noted within the research. In the studies reviewed, numerous researchers suggested mentoring, peer mentoring, and staff relationships as important to Native American students' persistence and success. Shotton, Ossahwe, and Cintorn (2007) noted that "Pairing American Indian students with American Indian peer mentors can be a positive step toward facilitating their academic success and easing their transition into the university" (p. 98). Several other studies inferred relational components as important to the culture of the campus. These mentoring experiences ranged from organized peer and staff mentoring, to casual staff and student interactions outside the classroom (Chanet-Garcia, 2005; J. P. Guillory, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Okagaki et al., 2009; Waterman, 2007).

Noted within institutional responsibilities is the need for creativity in program development and relational opportunities for students and their families. R. M. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) suggested this can be seen in collaborative programs between tribes and local institutions for students who want to remain close to their families. "Suggesting this, *however, does not absolve* the universities from their obligation to offer sufficient financial support to Native American students and diversity-oriented programming. The financial backing for scholarships, fellowships, childcare, and programs is still greatly needed" (p. 81). Doyle, Kleinfield, and Reyes (2009) identified a need for counseling to assist students in returning to post-secondary institutions after they left as well as developing cohort programs.

As a result of their research on postsecondary education and its role in nation building in Native American and Alaskan Native communities, Brayboy et al. (2012) recommended that researchers, policy makers, and those working in institutions of higher education

> Consider the long-term effects of hostile educational practices for Indigenous peoples. We believe that a nation building approach to higher education is one

> route toward better understanding places of possibility and hope. We know too well why students are not graduating from colleges and universities, but know very little about promising practices and sites of success. (p. 177)

Tribal colleges. The first tribal college was established on the Navajo Nation in Arizona in 1968, and currently there are 37 tribal colleges on more than 75 sites in 15 states, serving more than 19,070 students, from 250 federally recognized tribes (AIHEC AIM, 2012, p. 3). Tribal colleges are known for their holistic treatment of students via culturally relevant and responsive curriculum. The presence of Native American faculty at tribal colleges is a notable attribute in the holistic treatment of students at these institutions. "Overall, American Indians comprise 43 percent of full-time faculty and 46 percent of all faculty at TCUS [Tribal Colleges and Universities]. Seventy-one percent of TCUs administrators are American Indian" (AIHEC AIM, 2012, p. 31). Tribal colleges have a number of partnerships with local universities ranging from articulation agreements to programs sharing facilities on the reservations In Washington state, "there are other notable postsecondary inter-institutional efforts to work across traditional institutional boundaries and create a more seamless higher education system" (Akweks et al., 2009, p. 18).

Tribal colleges attempt to infuse their cultural identities in curriculum, programming adult basic education, language revitalization, and incorporation of the tribal community's needs. These institutions are sensitive in their programmatic scheduling around ceremonial events. Kenny et al.'s (2004) qualitative research regarding women's culture, education, and work identified students and their response to the importance of culture within their educational experience and particularly an Inuit woman's experience.

> When I went to college here for teacher education, it was one of the best in terms of cultural relevance. Learning about the practices of culture made me aware of the importance of culture, and it gave it back to me again. My culture was always there; but the exposure to my culture that I had at the college made me appreciate

> it more. The more exposure, the more appreciation for the history of our language and our culture. (p. 50)

Tribal leaders acknowledge that to best serve their nation and peoples, leaders must obtain degrees in higher education. Woodcock and Alawiye (2001) have referred to this as an act of self-determination. They assert that as sovereign nations, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives have diligently worked to maintain their cultures and resist assimilation. This resistance by students has existed at the same time as a trend toward growing and adapting to the ever-changing world around them, including higher education, and they therefore assert that higher educational institutions must likewise adapt.

> Institutions of higher learning must commit themselves to the provision of a qualitative, culturally responsive education opportunity. If public universities and colleges are truly the vanguards of an informed and useful social order that recognizes, appreciates, and advocates the maintenance of cultural diversity, they must create a climate and an academic environment that is conducive to the inclusion of American Indian and Alaskan Native students and the communities they represent. (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 821)

The opportunities exist for higher education institutions to create innovative, specific interventions, programs, and academic communities for Native American and Alaskan Native students to not only persist in their higher educational learning, but also to thrive. R. M. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) cite creative program options as collaborative with institutional and local tribal partnerships, developing "Internships or conduit programs that emphasize student teaching, business management, or natural resource management—academic areas popular for the Indian students in the study and germane to the economic growth of the tribe" (p. 82).

Additionally, creative programs meet the students' needs as well as the nation-building efforts of the tribal nations. University distance learning programs on reservation sites work toward innovative programming while providing higher education services to offsite students. R. M. Guillory and Wolverton (2008) suggested that "By establishing distance education programs

between local/regional universities and Indian reservations, higher education can better serve those who want to earn a college education but remain on the Indian reservation to support their families" (p. 83). Support services of financial aid, scholarships, academic preparedness programs, family support, basic needs of onsite child care, and technological maintenance are noted by several researchers as ways to provide interventions and creative sustainability to assist Native American students in their higher educational pursuit (Campbell, 2007; R. M. Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Katz, 2005; Martin, 2005; Yatta, 2006).

Native American Women's Leadership

Native American women's leadership is well documented. For the purposes of this literature review it will be outlined in terms of women's historical leadership, tribal activism, and Indigenous feminism. As I researched it became clear that each area of Native women's leadership, current and historical, tribal activism, and Indigenous leadership, was a specific research area of noteworthy extensive study. My attempt within the literature review was to gain an understanding and provide an overview of these areas as they relate to women's leadership. Reviewing the research gave me a better understanding of the kind of leadership I might encounter with the participants of my cohort and their work within their current positions and communities.

Leadership commonalities exist within historical practices and present-day customs of the 566 Tribal Nations and Canadian Nations. Mohawk (2003) described three areas of contributions from Native Americans to Western civilization as freedom of religion, women's rights, and children's. Many Indigenous nations practiced an inclusive model of governance that included women. Practices included participation in negotiating treaties, political decisions, and women's councils.

> In traditional Iroquois systems of governance, women's political authority extended to choosing and deposing the chiefs. Chieftainships were determined and managed by matrons of certain families who held meetings with other clan women to make these decisions. Iroquois women also exercised their political authority through participation in community meetings. (Anderson, 2000, p. 16)

According to Anderson (2000) both the Mohawks and Cherokees had women's councils, which provided input into the political decisions made. Portman and Garrett (2005) dispel the stereotypical view of chiefdom. While it is impossible to speak for historical practices and present-day customs of all the federally recognized Tribal Nations and Canadian Nations, there are some leadership commonalities. The role of women as life givers and caretakers was and is viewed today with reverence within many tribal societies. Many Indigenous nations practiced an inclusive model of governance that included women. Practices included participation in negotiating treaties, political decisions, and women's councils.

> In traditional Iroquois systems of governance, women's political authority extended to choosing and deposing the chiefs. Chieftainships were determined and managed by matrons of certain families who held meetings with other clan women to make these decisions. Iroquois women also exercised their political authority through participation in community meetings. (Anderson, 2000, p. 16)

Historians have reported the presence and influence of women in meetings and negotiations. Mihesuah (2003) stated that "most Tribes were egalitarian" (p. 42), citing the various roles women had in religious, political, and economic power equal to men. She goes on to state that women were recognized and compensated for their various jobs in controlling economic resources for their tribes. Many tribes have a matrilineal line that locates women at an important place within their society. "Because a person's clan was determined by his or her mother, women possessed much political and social power, in addition to a guaranteed network of female relatives who lent support and companionship" (Mihesuah, 2003, p. 43).

Education was later used as a tool of assimilation of Indigenous peoples with forced boarding schools. Removed from their culture, students were educated in non-Native ways:

> Native American women were discouraged by their teachers and school administrators from maintaining any knowledge of their traditional Native American lifestyle and brainwashed into looking down on anyone who still lived in a traditional manner. Except for the few Native women who integrated into mainstream European American society, the majority of the female boarding school students returned to their reservations and the same lifestyle they had left. (Almedia, 1997, p. 765)

Almedia (1997) noted that the graduates of boarding schools returned to communities in which they were required to regain the trust of community members, and in some cases the graduates were looked upon as the "new oppressors" (p. 765). Yet, other women graduates were instrumental in helping to avoid and resist termination of their nation and cultures (Green as cited in Almedia, 1997).

Moving forward in history, Langston Hightower (2003) discussed the role of Native American women in the 1960s and 1970s with a research focus on women as the majority and originators of the occupation of Wounded Knee, members of Alcatraz, as well as the traditional role of women in the Fish-In-Movement of Coastal Tribes of the Northwest. First Nations Canadian groups such as the Yukon Indian Women's Association, and the Homemakers clubs were instrumental organizations that supported women's efforts to self-organize, identify the needs of their communities, and implement programs to meet those needs. Langston Hightower (2003) identified national needs addressed by women's groups have included forced sterilization of Indian women, adoption, foster care, infant mortality rates, high school dropout rates for Indian students, and land and resource struggles (p. 129).

Kenny (2002) has identified through the stories of North American Indian, Métis, and Inuit women the resiliency and leadership of women in their communities.

> A careful reading of the stories reveals specific strengths and sensibilities: a commitment to quality of life for themselves, their children and their communities, an ability to adapt to adverse circumstances, and resourcefulness and creativity in "getting around" dilemmas which would inhibit their capacities to grow and change, to make a contribution to society as a whole. In fact they have often succeeded against all odds. (p. 65)

Despite the obstacles and barriers presented by assimilation and Euro-Western patriarchy, post-contact Native American women throughout history have provided leadership for their tribal communities in various forms and within both traditional and newly constructed structural leadership forms.

Tribal Activism

For the purposes of this literature review tribal activism will include women's leadership, political activity, and activism. A traditional tribal definition of leadership is one of a community mindset over self-interests. Mihesuah (2003) referred to Native American tribalists as women who are secure in their tribal identity, and do not share white feminist interests: "Some Native women argue that, while they might be oppressed because of their gender, they are primarily disempowered because of their race, and they believe that it is more important to eradicate racist oppression than sexist oppression" (p. 160).

Two research studies identified demographic characteristics of Native American women leaders. The First Nations women leaders of Voyageur's (2011) study "were middle aged, 43, and had a postsecondary education. She was born into the community she led, and more likely than not, a member of a political and/or elite family within the community" (p. 82). Comparatively, Prindeville's (2003) study of New Mexico's American Indian and Hispanic women leaders demographic characteristics were

> leaders ranging in age from 24-64 with a median of 45 years for activist and 50 for officials. Some of the public officials, who started out as activists, entered

> electoral politics later for their careers. Others waited until their children were grown and /or out of school before they entered public office. (p. 596)

Prindeville's (2003) study identified the educational attainment of the leaders as 16 years, with a 40% completion of one or more graduate degrees. The main difference for the women politicians and activists was their difference in income. The politicians had a greater income, and activists' incomes were similar to the public they served.

Overall, within the research reviewed women leaders were involved in politics and activism in order to effect change for their communities and saw their work as caretaking for their children, elders, and nation.

> To achieve our full potential, we need to move away from the male stereotype of warrior. Aboriginal women have taken up the fight for Aboriginal rights through education, activism, art, writing, and other means. Their warrior hearts are fuelled by traditions, culture, and spirituality. (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 193)

In Canada, Voyageur (2011) reported a significant increase in women's leadership and effecting change and critical mass: "They are moving increasingly into elected positions as chief and councilors. There are now approximately 120 women chiefs and more than 800 women councilors" (p. 77). This was a significant increase in effecting change in tribal leadership.

Native American Nations likewise are seeing continued growth of tribal activism and political women's leadership within their communities. It is not without personal cost and difficulty but Indigenous women such as Louise Chippeway, Manitoba, are making differences on the political front.

> Working for government required major shifts in my life and values. Everything that I stood for as a Native person, culturally, linguistically and racially was challenged, questioned and sometimes undermined. I felt I almost had to give up who I was as a Native person to work in government. I almost became what they wanted me to be. Traditionally, government most often hires persons that are most like themselves: White, middle class and mainstream. A person had to fit into their mold to survive in the system. In order for Native people to be hired by governments, we sometimes have to adopt their values and corporate culture at

> the expense of our own. You almost have to sell out on yourself to survive. But I was not going to allow that to happen because I had something to contribute and I had a right to work for government and government needed to be overhauled. That was the conflict I faced initially. (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 33)

Archuleta's (2012) aptly summarized the work of tribal activists as follows, "leadership is therefore the ability to balance traditional culture with strategies to navigate the uncertainty and complexity of our times, bringing forth the resilient nature of all of us" (p. 164).

Indigenous Feminism

Upon completion of a literature review of Native American leadership and feminism I have learned this is a complex subject with strongly held differing opinions. Some Indigenous researchers call for an exclusionary definition of Indigenous feminism, while others recognize there is a need for inclusive work in both gender and tribal issues, not to the exclusion of one or the other.

> The reality is that most Native-women whether full-blood or mixed blood, living on or off tribal lands, activist or indifferent-are concerned about both racial and gender oppression. Despite rhetoric about white feminism having no meaning for Native women, not all Native women reject every aspect of white feminism, and they are no less "Indian" for their beliefs. When they identify themselves as "feminist," they often mean they are "Native Activists." concerned with more than just female marginalization. (Mihesuah, 2003, p. 162)

Not all researchers share the view of Indigenous feminists aligning with a white feminist agenda. Green (2007) defended the Indigenous feminist, recognizing their positions and their importance in tribal issues.

> They exist; they choose the label, the ideological position, the analysis and the process. Aboriginal feminists raise issues of colonialism, racism, and sexism, and the unpleasant synergy between these three violations of human rights. Aboriginal feminists illuminate topics that but for their voices would not be raised at all. (p. 20)

Researchers recognize there is an inclusive approach to tribal struggles and issues that can, in fact, include Indigenous feminism. Mihesuah (2003) added to the discourse in her work

Feminist, Tribalist, or Activist? when she stated that because of the vast differences within tribal nations, values, and opinions there is then no one feminist theory.

> How we as Native women define ourselves as female and how we relate to the concept of feminism, to feminists, and to each other, how we define colonialism, and how men and women should behave depend on our relation to our tribes, our class, appearance, life partners, education and religion. (p 159)

While the definition of Indigenous feminism has been identified by its critics as a white feminism, and does not address issues of marginalized women of color, those who defend feminism see it as an inclusive ideology. LaRacque (as cited in Green, 2007), has stated

> Feminism, then does not belong to any particular group, and those who understand and practise this social idea of ending gender inequality and injustice are feminist. In this sense, men and women of all back grounds can be feminists, and feminists should be among our best allies and many are. (p. 56)

Patrica Bedwell of Nova Scotia stated what feminism personally meant to her,

> When I was in sociology, I was doing research on Mi'kmaq women and domestic islands which was something that was very close to my heart anyway. Looking at feminist theory. It was real awakening for me starting to read all the stuff that people have read in the books-feminism, and about women's rights, what is domestic violence and what does it mean, patriarchal society, critical theory and I was having a great time, and it was a real awakening and a real learning experience for me. But it was when I got to law school that the conflict started. And it is because I went into law school under an affirmative action program. To me affirmative action means that the law school has to learn who we are and how to respect our abilities. The way that they assess White students' abilities doesn't work for us. So that is what it means. It doesn't mean that I am less than anybody else. It doesn't mean that I am stupid. But when I got to law school that's when it was bad. Because I was well: "You aren't qualified to here." So my response would be—it was a real fight. (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 27)

Bedwell goes on to comment in her interview on her personal cost of working in higher education and teaching at a law school and the lack of understanding for faculty for attending community events. She notes a schizophrenic existence, or as Huffman (2001) would state, a process of estrangement to process of transculturation. It was as she developed a bicultural identity (Okagaki et al., 2009) and embraced her strong cultural identification as a Mi'kmaq

woman and ultimately decided to live based on her Aboriginal Mi'kmaq values that allowed her to embrace her power.

> I had to make a decision and one of the things that helped me make that decision is that I read a book by Rita Joe, a poet. And I started looking at Mi'kmaq women. The people, my family, sister, my aunties, or whatever. And I started feeling the strength of all those Mi'kmaq women who were in my family before I ever got here who had done things so that I can be here. And the values of community, sharing, kindness, respect, honesty, caring—those were important and that I had to figure out a way to bring together those two halves with part of me going out there trying to make them like me, do the right thing, to feeling comfortable for me to make this decision—not to turn the power over to the law school or to someone else. I am struggling with that right now. I am taking my power back. It is a constant struggle. (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 31)

This is an example of an Indigenous feminist as both a powerful Indigenous woman, and supporting feminist ideals based upon her on Aboriginal culture.

The noted differences of definitions and feminist beliefs are vast and have caused Indigenous women to frequently avoid calling themselves feminists. Native American authors agreed there is a place for Indigenous feminists today and many are promoting feminist policies with or without identifying themselves as a feminist.

> As Indigenous women warriors, we are called to re-weave the fabric of being in the world into a new spirituality grounded and feminine-oriented political framework and process of "being together in the world." In that process, we are invited to deeply embrace the Other, who is after all, the Elders teach us, Ourself. This, I argue, is the urgent decolonizing project of Indigenous feminism today. (Stewart-Harawira, 2007, p. 136)

Contemporary Native American scholars emphasize there is a place for Indigenous feminism within the contextual framework of tribal women's initiatives. This is evident in the following statement from Nongon Ikkwe, an Aboriginal women's organization:

> Our people will not heal and rise toward becoming self-governing and strong people both in spirit and vision until the women rise and give direction and support to our leaders. That time is now. The women are now actively participating in insuring the empowerment of their people. Life is a daily struggle as women, as mothers, as sisters, as aunties, and grandmothers. We are

> responsible for the children of today and those of tomorrow. It is with pure kindness and our respect for life that allows us to gladly take up this responsibility to nurture the children, to teach of what we know, from what we have learned through trial and error. (Kenny et al., 2004, p.71)

The coexistence of tribal advancement for women and Indigenous feminism is considered a tribal community asset. The work of nation building is an inclusive collaboration of women and men in the pursuit of opportunities and equality for all their people.

> In short, we take sovereignty to be the inherent right of tribal nations to direct their futures and engage the world in ways that are meaningful to them. Self-determination is the engagement of sovereignty; put another way, self-determination is the *operationalization* of sovereignty. (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 17)

These goals can be met by the various roles Native American play as women in positions of leadership and as tribalists, feminists, and activists working collectively for the good of their nations.

More Relevant Dimensions from the Literature

Themes in persistence and retention. My research further revealed themes within the Native American and Alaskan Native higher education persistence and retention efforts. Article themes were related to (a) student relationships to their family and community support, preparedness, and family obligations; (b) institutional responsibility to the student, in terms of curriculum, faculty relationship, and support of diversity by the organization, and mentoring relationships; (c) student and institutional financial obligation; and (d) tribal community and institutional partnerships in providing culturally relevant programming and higher education access for Native American and Alaskan Native students.

The most recognized foundational research in the area of persistence and retention is Tinto's (1975) theoretical model of institutional departure, which suggested that integration into

college will determine success, whereas a lack of student commitment and low involvement will increase withdrawal and dropout rates. He acknowledged a lack of research related to different racial backgrounds and the processes these students may experience, as well as studies considering whether these differ or vary among different academic institutions.

Tinto's theory of persistence and retention was seen as a call to action by Indigenous researchers Pavel and Padilla (1993), who sought to use this model with Native American/Alaskan Native data; up to that time had never been researched. These researchers took longitudinal data from sophomore and senior cohorts in high school and beyond, using structural equation modeling to identify issues related to Native institutional departure.

> During an exploratory analysis, minor revisions to the model suggest that family background, postsecondary intentions (both prior to and during college), and formal and informal academic integration are the most significant aspects of Tinto's model that influence American Indian/Alaskan Native postsecondary outcomes. (Pavel & Padilla, 1993, p. 14)

Pavel and Padilla's (1993) recommendations support the need for research to "increase and foster positive family support and postsecondary intentions" (p. 14) early in a Native American/Alaskan Native students high school experience. Institutional programs to support post-secondary academic and social integration were also recommended.

Huffman's (2001) resistance theory and transculturation hypothesis is also a foundational theory. Huffman worked with culturally traditional Native American students to identify his hypothesis that students who were transculturated experienced a more successful higher educational experience than those students who were alienated and struggling academically. He identified four cultural masks utilized by the students: assimilated students, marginal students, estranged students, and transculturated students. The noted difference between the estranged students and the transculturated was their response to assimilation. The estranged students assumed an "aggressive rejection of assimilation. These students viewed mainstream as a threat

to their ethnic identity and generally revealed a distrust of the college setting" (Huffman, 2001, p. 9). The transculturated students, similar to the estranged students, maintained a strong relationship with their Native American culture and chose not to assimilate. "However, unlike estranged students, these students used their ethnic identity as a firm social-psychological anchor and derived strength and confidence from that cultural mask. These students found security and strength in their ethnicity" (p. 9).

Huffman (2001) indicated that Native American culturally traditional students can both maintain their cultural identity and succeed in higher education. He recommended that institutions acknowledge and celebrate Native American ethnicity on their campuses within their cultural environment, in varied and intentional ways. Additionally, he called for "culturally appropriate higher education student counseling" (p. 34) to support students in their cultural integrity, persistence, and ultimately their retention in higher education.

While Heavy Runner and Decelles (2002) acknowledged the role of family-based education in higher education, the researchers created the Family Education Model (FEM), a collaborative work between Indian educators, social workers, institutional advisors, and five higher education institutions including tribal colleges, local community, and university developed the model. The FEM model was built upon three beliefs:

1. Many students and their families need the college to act as their liaison with existing social and health services during times of crisis.
2. Tribal colleges must seek to enlist, develop, and structure the ability of family members to support student efforts.
3. Tribal colleges must engage family members in the life of the college community by enlisting them as partners and involving them in cultural and social activities. (Heavy Runner & Decelles, 2002, p. 3)

The shift from student individualism to tribal collectiveness is honored in the FEM model by recognizing the support and place of the family in the student's higher education journey. Heavy

Runner and Decelles (2002) recommended that institutions seek inclusive ways of honoring cultural values by using caseworkers in a strength based decision-making process and having educational specialists incorporate the bicultural strengths of spirituality, language, family, and community.

The final recognized foundational theory found in my critical review of research on Native American/Alaskan Native persistence and retention in higher education is found in Brayboy's (2006) tribal critical race theory. Tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) was developed to specifically address the needs of tribal people, whereas critical race theory was designed to address civil rights issues and is more closely tied to black-white racial issues and the premise that racism is endemic to society.

Brayboy (2006) identified nine tenets of tribal critical race theory, which included the premise that colonization is endemic to society. The theory recognizes the United State's policies of assimilation, white supremacy, and imperialism. While tribal nations are working toward issues of tribal sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination, these actions toward sovereignty acknowledge the importance of culture, stories, traditions, and call on scholars to acknowledge the theory and practice for social change (Brayboy, 2006, p. 430). "Ultimately then, we have come full circle because TribalCrit research and practice-or better still, praxis-moves us away from colonization and assimilation and towards a more real self-determination and tribal sovereignty" (p. 441).

Tribal critical race theory provides an additional lens for researchers and institutions to examine the experience of Indigenous students by recognizing student and community needs and producing changes in educational systems to promote Native American sovereignty and self-determination. These changes include culturally relevant curriculum, institutional diversity in

culture, hiring practices, and climate. Programmatic flexibility is necessary to meet the needs of students in offering college readiness courses and scheduling flexibility permits students to attend cultural ceremonies and events. The Pathways for Native Students: A Report on Washington State Colleges and Universities (Akweks et al., 2009) cited best practices for student success as

- Consulting and engaging tribal communities;
- Providing connections to family and culture;
- Supporting positive Indian identity;
- Finding Indian role models or mentors in the student body and the faculty and staff;
- Providing comprehensive, integrated student support services;
- Using culturally relevant curriculum and teaching; and
- Tailoring programs to fit student schedules and other specific needs.

Larimore and McClellan (2005) provided an expansion of a summary of themes in persistence and retention in Native American/Alaskan Native populations:

- Application of Euro-American theories of retention,
- Application of Indigenous-based theories of retention,
- Individual factors in student persistence: family support, staff and faculty support, institutional commitment, personal commitment, connections to culture,
- Cultural identity and persistence,
- Role of perceived racism and stress,
- Specific Native American populations,
- Institutional factors in student persistence,
- Student retention in tribally controlled college,
- Role of finances in Native American student retention,
- Role of staff and faculty, and
- Retention programs for Native American students. (p. 18)

During my review of the literature, I found this summary of theories to encompass the broad spectrum of persistence and retention theories. Larimore and McClellan (2005) concluded by emphasizing the importance of further research in the area of Native American/Alaskan Native persistence and retention by Native and non-Native researchers alike.

These five foundational theories addressed Native American/Alaskan Native students' persistence and retention issues. These theories recognized individual needs, family inclusion,

tribal community needs, specific recommendations for higher education institutions, and ultimately changes that would benefit Indigenous people and society.

Women's Leadership

Themes in leadership, tribalism, and feminism. In this literature review of women's leadership I found that authors quoted Allen (1986) and Mihesuah (2003) frequently, and the most prominent research themes were leadership, tribal activism, and feminism. Each theme is an area of leadership with the common goal of improving the lives of women and their community members. My review included edited books, peer-reviewed articles, and dissertations. Common characteristics of Native American women's leadership were caregiving, perseverance, adaptability, strength, political activism, relational leadership, cultural, spiritual, and language keepers, awareness of community needs, mentors, activists, collaborative, community organizers, and empowerment. Frequent barriers and challenges for women leaders were oppression, racism, patriarchy, colonialism, assimilation policies, micro-aggression, violence, women's horizontal violence, loss, grief, sexism, and power issues.

The types of leadership styles noted within this literature review included relational, servant, adaptive, participatory, team, transformational, cultural, and ethical leadership. Northouse (2007) defined ethical leadership, which is found embedded within the above leadership styles, as follows

> Sound ethical leadership is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty, and community. It is the duty of leaders to treat others with *respect*—to listen to them closely and be tolerant of opposing points of view. Ethical leaders *serve* others by being altruistic, placing others' welfare ahead of their own in an effort to contribute to the common good. *Justice* requires that leaders place fairness at the center of their decision making, including the challenging task of being fair to the individual while simultaneously being fair to the common interest of the community. (p. 368)

One third of the readings were related to the historical role of women's leadership collectively, and within specific tribes and bands. A common subject was the disempowerment of women due to patriarchy and assimilation practices and the "shared colonial history by all Indigenous women and the …imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women's power, status, and material circumstance" (Suzack et al., 2010, p. 3). Despite these barriers Indigenous women have demonstrated a resilient ability to adapt and reclaim their places within their communities. These acts were seen as reclaiming traditional cultural practices, as well as acts of self-determination, and sovereignty (Henning, 2007; LaRocque, 2007; A. Smith, 2007).

Despite the sexist practices of patriarchy within colonialism women fought to serve and lead their communities and did so without recognition or equality. Women have led in traditional ways of being and as organizers meeting their community's specific needs for a period of time. These leadership roles have typically been in educational, spiritual, activism, cultural, and language, as well as governmental settings. In Canada "women currently comprise 25 percent of the top-level governmental leadership positions in Indian nations, a figure not yet reached in the United States or many other countries" (Langston Hightower, 2003, p. 130).

Differing aspects of Native American women's leadership consist of many women who have been approached by their communities to serve in a guidance capacity.

> That's why leadership is a troublesome word. Because we don't think of it as that. We don't put people on levels. Momentarily, we rise to the occasion, but that is all, I get to sit back down and be flawed and all of that which comes with being a human being. (Simms, 2000, p. 638)

Women take this role as servant leadership, and an inclusive leadership model of serving their communities for a period of time rather than directing their people. The collective body is the power within the leadership. As noted by Simms (2000),

> Power has multiple meanings and connotations and is based on an individual jockeying for a leadership position. In the Indian world, the spirit of community neutralizes individual power. Native American people prefer to look at the community as a source of power and leadership. The community view is inherent in the culture. (p. 643)

A frequently noted goal is empowerment for the collective community rather than individualistic gaining of power for themselves.

> American Indian models are much more concerned with how different forms of leadership—individual or collective in different circumstances can serve the community rather than enhance the reward and reputation of their individual embodiment. (Warner & Grint, 2006, p. 240)

Leadership and defining leadership positions and ways are different for each tribal nation and these roles are frequently not in traditional positions. Pidgeon (as cited in Kenny & Fraser, 2012) noted that "Indigenous leadership is not confined to individual actions or traits. Being a leader means having meaningful and respectful relationships with others" (p. 140). The relationships are also within the context of land, place, and ancestors (Wilson, 2008, p. 91). This could be stated as a holistic relationality with the environment and peoples as a whole.

Tribal activism is identified as political activism, or activism from identified positions of leadership, or individuals acting for the common good within systems. Mihesuah (2003) stated many Native American women call themselves tribalists:

> Many traditional Native women—who might more accurately be called "tribalists: —are not concerned with definitions of feminism, because they are secure in their identities as tribal women, they do not need scholars to tell them of the importance of women to their tribes. (p. 160)

Tribal activism is deeply rooted in issues of sovereignty and the tribal community and the empowerment of the community as a whole. "As many of us have learned from our mothers, sovereignty must begin with the individual and it is impossible to be sovereign peoples when the very safety and well-being of women and children are at risk" (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005,

p. 6). Tribal and political activism is initiated by community concerns by individuals who are positioned with and without recognized leadership, and many women who would never consider calling themselves a leader. Tsosie (2010) identified leadership as the acts of generosity and giving of oneself to their community when called upon and this may be at a high personal cost to the individual. "Leaders belong to the people in a way that imposes great responsibility upon them" (p. 41).

Indigenous feminism within this literature review was discounted and defended, ignored and promoted, and notably controversial. Paula Allen's work, including the book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986), has been the most frequently cited work in this literature review. Other authors include Mihesuah (2003), Green (2007), Suzack et al. (2010), and Kenny and Fraser (2012). A common theme within the most recent literature is the recognition that Indigenous women and feminism can coexist. Lawrence and Anderson (2005) suggested that "Ultimately, we have found the arguments by Aboriginal women which either attack or support feminism to be less useful than the importance of Native women finding their own strengths from within their heritage" (p. 6). As Native American women find their voices and strength, their communities will ultimately benefit from their leadership.

> Women of color have for too long been presented with the choices of prioritizing either racial justice or gender justice. This dualistic analysis fails to recognize that it is precisely through sexism and gender violence that colonialism and white supremacy have been successful. (Green, 2007, p. 103)

One example of finding voice and personal strength as a women is found in Dixon's (2006) interview with Chancy, a professor

> I personally paid a high price in terms of just where I had come in my own personal history that I was not about to allow the community to further denigrate this identity, this Native identity. And as a woman I have really taken from the

> model of my grandmother, and that is, I am very proud of who I am, as a mature woman. Proud of who I am. They use my identity and my culture as a weapon in some ways to undermine our sense of who we are, and I started to use it as a way to protect me. This is who I am. So it is about putting my stake in the ground. I am not going to be moved. (p. 77)

Several authors addressed oppression, micro-aggression, or violence against women as acts threatening Native American individuals' sovereignty and community sovereignty. A. Smith (2007) suggested that sexism within Native communities and its origin in colonialism and gender justice cannot be a separate issue from Indigenous survival, posing the question "Before Native peoples fight for the future of their nations, they must ask themselves, who is included in the nation?" (p. 97).

Due to the controversy over Indigenous feminism, not all Native American women are open in their support. Prindeville's (2000) research on women in public office and Native American politicians reveals a closet feminism: Native American politicians may not actively promote Indigenous feminism, yet they support feminist policies.

> In summary, despite the majority (63%) of the public officials' lack of support for feminism, each one of the leaders personally advocates policies and programs that promote equality or improve the status of women. And, whether they self-identify as feminists or not, the great majority of the leaders (83%) incorporate traditional women's issues into their official public policy agenda. (p. 643)

The discourse related to Indigenous feminism is extensive, and varied with differing opinions. It has its place in Native American women's leadership and with a growing acceptance it will remain and coexist within Native communities. The role of women as life givers and caretakers was and is today viewed with reverence within many tribal societies. Numerous Indigenous nations practiced an inclusive model of governance, which included women, and today women are reclaiming their places in leadership. It is with a sense of understanding their Indigenous ways, and education, that women are rising up as they have since time immemorial to

meet the needs of their communities in their efforts at nation building for their children and the future generations. As stated by Luther Standing Bear Oglala Lakota, "It is the mothers not the warriors, who create a people and guide their destiny" (as cited in Pease, 2005, p. 14).

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to research Native American women's leadership, higher education resistance and persistence, and culturally relevant programs for Native American nontraditional students. This review of literature provided a foundational background for my dissertation topic in researching the leadership of my former cohort members and their current leadership within their tribal communities post graduation. An additional reason for the research in persistence and retention is my current work with Native American high school students entering higher education.

As a former cohort member of a tribal/college university partnership, I found the culturally relevant programs offered and their differing emphasis interesting. I firmly believe my vocational plans would be quite different if it had not been for my tribal scholarship and my ease in accessing my first university experience at a campus close to my home.

As a Native American woman I found the leadership literature review informative and beneficial in understanding theory related to women's leadership from a historical, tribalist/activist, and Indigenous feminist context. The impact of colonialism and patriarchy on the historical accounts of women and Tribal leadership were informative in the disruption of Tribal gender roles and responsibilities. The ramifications of forced assimilation and patriarchy on Tribal customs have had a disastrous multigenerational impact on Indigenous peoples. This was a new learning for me and gave me a greater understanding of the complete disruption of Indigenous peoples' gender roles by Euro-Western contact. These gender positions have yet to

be fully rectified within some tribal nations and account for the place of an Indigenous feminism today.

Based on my dissertation focus of portraits on Native American women's leadership, and by researching my former cohort participants, I chose to use qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) as my method. Portraiture is rich in detailed description and is well suited to the cohort graduates sharing stories of their current leadership experiences. The portraits are consistent with an Indigenous research context based on relational practice.

> In American mainstream ideology, the purpose of life consists of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." From a traditional Native perspective, a corollary would be "life, love, and the pursuit of wisdom." Understanding one's vision is understanding the direction of one's path as a caretaker, moving to the rhythm of the sacred heartbeat. From a traditional perspective, this is among the true essence of what it means to be a leader. (Portman & Garrett, 2005, p. 289)

By returning to my former cohort relationships and researching current leadership practices, the research endeavors to share "the good" and strives to provide an asset, rather than deficit-based lens. Wilson (2008) described the Indigenous research conscientiousness: "A strong, Indigenous research paradigm can provide ways to celebrate the uniqueness and glory of Indigenous cultures, while allowing for the critical examination of short comings" (p. 19). I believe the portraits will identify both the celebrations and the shortcomings, through the stories of women in their leadership pathway.

Chapter III: Design of Study

I plan to use qualitative phenomenological, ethnography portraiture as my dissertation methodology. This method is an appropriate cultural fit with the tradition of Indigenous populations and their stories. In my choice of a method I have attempted to respect the importance of relationality in a Native American research context.

Historically, there has been a misuse of Western research in Indigenous communities by outsiders. L. T. Smith (1999) has identified the importance of acknowledging the effects of past research of Indigenous peoples, noting in particular that the methodologies used by the researchers were "embedded in multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices" (p. 2). My choice to pursue a post-colonial research context is therefore in response to this recognized Euro-Western approach to knowledge.

> The word postcolonial is used in the research context to denote the continuous struggles of non-Western societies that suffered European colonization, indigenous peoples, and historically marginalized groups to resist suppression of their ways of knowing and the globalization of knowledge, reaffirming that Western knowledge is the only legitimate knowledge. (Chilisa, 2012, p.12)

The term post-colonial is not used to imply that manifestations of patriarchy and colonialism are no longer present in the research but rather to acknowledge its past place within research on Indigenous peoples (Chilisa, 2012). It is additionally important to note other areas where researchers have identified the implications of knowledge from a Euro-Western lens. From the context of anthropology, political science, education, and Native American studies Brayboy (2006) has identified a tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) and noted the United States' policies and practices were embedded in imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy (p. 431). TribalCrit is an acknowledgement of traditional cultural ways of knowing and being within a given tribal community that provides an alternative method of recognizing knowledge

(Brayboy, 2006, p. 434). I have taken care to be vigilant in my awareness of the lens from which I view my research in Native American women's leadership as it pertains to higher education persistence and retention. Additionally, I have taken care to acknowledge the various cultures and ways of being and knowing throughout the narratives while identifying emergent themes in my data.

My positionality is that of a female Native American educator in a K-12 public school system. My higher education emphasis has been on Native American education. I was enrolled in the university tribal/college partnership and a cohort member of the same cohort as the participants in this study. There is depth in our shared experiences and our relationships of two or four continuous years of schooling together.

Within Indigenous research and ways of being and knowing the research should have a relational perspective that includes an ethical foundation. Having a relationship with the research participants implies that we will share a sustained connection, one in which a researcher should strive to maintain their association, rapport, and accountability with their research participants.

Narratives provide a relational way of gathering data in research and affirming the cultural nuances of the story. Chilisa (2012) has stated the functions of story in research as

> 1. Stories are the tools of data collection, analysis, and interpretations that give another side of the story to deficit theorizing about the Other and allow the Other, formerly colonized and historically oppressed to frame and tell their past and present life experiences from their perspective.
> 2. Stories enable researchers to triangulate postcolonial indigenous values belief systems, and community and family histories with other sources of knowledge.
> 3. They provide data from which to debate postcolonial indigenous perspectives on a variety of issues, for example, perspectives on gender relations.
> 4. Storytelling allows the researched to speak freely about all their relationships, including the role of spirituality in their life.
> 5. Stories can serve as vignettes that bring alive and make memorable the experiences of the people.

> 6. Stories and storytelling allow both listeners and tellers to gain understanding, to do self-analysis, and to make new decisions that enable people-owned research-driven interventions and development programs. (p.140)

There is an undeniable power of cultural Indigenous narrative and its place within qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture research. Relationality provides accountability and a context for the research. Portraiture is a method in which both relationships are valued and revered.

Indigenous Methodologies

The use of portraiture as a methodology for Indigenous research is a natural match in its use of detailed narrative for peoples steeped in oral tradition. The organic storytelling within portraiture and the search for "goodness" are appropriate as an Indigenous methodology. Kenny et al. (2004) stated,

> Qualitative research methods that include individual and group interviews, focus groups and participant observation are often more compatible with Aboriginal culture than survey instruments. Qualitative methods that incorporate the oral traditions, personal interaction and group consensus promote direct input of participants only in identifying problem areas but in determining solutions as well. (p. 12)

As previously noted, when researchers are insensitive to the cultural traditions and practices and enter Indigenous communities they instigate harm with their research. Chilisa (2012) has referred to this misuse and damage.

> In the context of capturing a reality based on love and harmony, the story makes the researcher aware of the need to capture the data in such a way that our samples are inclusive of all social groups, for example, by gender, race/ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, and sexual orientation. Every segment of the community has a place and a value in the community, and the omission of the voices of any one of these segments in the research process is not in the interest of the values of the community from which the story comes; it has potential to harm the welfare of that community. (p. 113)

The Western researcher raised in a society that values individualization may not be fully aware of tribal community collectiveness. By entering a community with preconceptions and looking for deficiencies in this manner, researchers have inflicted harm upon Indigenous peoples. On the contrary, an Indigenous approach is premised on an attitude of learning and openness. As Wilson (2008) explained,

> My role is not to draw conclusions for another or to make an argument. My role, based upon the guidelines of relationality and relational accountability, is to share information or to make connections with ideas, or thought process-that would not allow them to be accountable to their own relationships. (p. 133)

Chilisa (2012) has stated this as completing relational research where the participants become "co-researchers," in which case it is important to share the names and stories of those involved (p. 117). In doing so, the researcher utilizes an appropriate inclusive manner of sharing relational research practices and changes the power dynamic between the research participants to that of co-contributor. Such a shift brings a level of holistic healing to the work of research as noted by Kenny et al. (2004),

> In a holistic approach, the fragmentation of life through separating and alienating policy processes will be bound back together with integrity. This integrity will facilitate ongoing healing for Aboriginal people that demonstrates the possibility that we can all learn from history. And we can all change our ways in the face of the roles forced upon us through historical events. Research can be a productive arena in which to relinquish the roles of colonizer and victim as a level playing field emerges between research partners through responsible and respectful research practice. (p. 37)

On a personal level, I find the relationality of qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture a fitting approach as I enter into research that will include people with whom I've had past relationships. I am committed to an inclusive participation with my former educational cohort participants and co-researchers as we investigate together their leadership after graduation.

Portraiture Methodology

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), Harvard professor, sociologist, researcher, and author of several books, developed the portraiture method. In doing so, she identified within traditional research a deficit-based approach requiring researchers to seek problems and deficiencies within subjects. This approach to research did not always include a focus that was appropriate for those narratives oriented toward sharing goodness. Lawrence-Lightfoot desired to tell the stories of goodness collaboratively with her subjects. While looking for the goodness, she noted

> My coauthor, Jessica Davis, a visual artist and human developmentalist, and I wrote a book about boundary crossing—about a methodology that hopes to bridge aesthetics and empiricism and appeal to intellect and emotion, and that seeks to inform and inspire and join the endeavors of documentation, interpretation, and intervention. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p.7)

In telling the stories of goodness, the researcher seeks to identify the essence rather than an exact portraiture of the subject. By choosing to tell the narrative from strength rather than deficiency, "this approach particularly is appropriate within the field of educational leadership, since educators arguably can gain more from studying success than they can from failures" (Hackman, 2002, p. 54). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) likens this to an artist's work in the portraiture of their subject.

> As a matter of fact, I think that one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships. (p. 9)

This ability to embrace the contradictions within a subject's narrative can also be found in the voice of the researcher within the work. The voice of the portraitist is used as narrator, and interpreter of the data, steering the subject and context of the story. At any time within the narrative the portraitist can interject and participate and by doing so must be ever conscious of the impact this has on the dialogue, subjects, and the direction of the story.

The portraitist tells the narrative using thick description in which one easily identifies with the context as it has been provided in rich detail. The role of thick description makes research more accessible outside of the confines of academia. The research reveals goodness within one specific narrative and its inherent uniqueness, yet collectively the same could be said of similar circumstances in another place.

While relationships are important to portraiture as a methodology, it is also important to frame the boundaries of these relationships. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain the framing process as follows: "The portraitist is always open to the unexpected and to the reshaping of understanding that surprising discoveries will require" (p. 163). It is within this search for goodness that the portraitist is mindful of their role as a researcher, while in the midst of their discovery of uniqueness within a site, or subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) speak of this as both the uniqueness and the universality of the uniqueness that can be identified within portraiture methodology.

This methodology further allows the researcher to find emergent themes through data collection, analysis, and triangulation. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) identified five modes of analysis within portraiture.

- Identification of visible and audible refrains spoken in various contexts.
- Emergent themes are heard in resonant metaphors shared by many.
- Emergent themes are embroidered into the ritual and ceremonies that symbolize the institutional values.
- Discoveries of emergent themes through triangulating data from various sources.
- Revealing patterns through dissonant strains in finding the coherence in what is scattered to the actors in the setting. (p. 214)

Upon completion of the identification of the emergent themes the portraitist's next task is to bring the narrative, stories, and themes together into a cohesive narrative.

> To achieve this unity, the portraitist must have identified the overarching vision for the piece (conception), underscored the emergent themes creating a scaffold for the narrative (structure), and given insight, aesthetic, and emotion to the structure through the texture of stories, illustrations, and examples (form). (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 256)

The portraitist's role, as noted by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), is to provide the narrative with a tone not hindered by their own along with a "clear and consistent voice and perspective" (p. 256).

Critics of the portraiture method decry the power of a researcher to identify and produce a narrative that is not reproducible, nor is there access to the information. Fenwick (2000) noted the imbalance of power and authority of the researcher/portraitist and the reader/viewer. He cited the final portrait as

> Though not directly stated as such, the resulting portrait is a literal, encompassing, and stable *truth*. And that truth is singular, unequivocal, and transcendent. By *transcendent* what is meant is that the summative portrait is beyond reproach. It isn't that the reader cannot form alternative opinions; rather, it is that the reader has no actual means to do so. The *power relations* between the researcher/portraitist and the reader are not comparable. (p. 22)

In my review of the literature, I believe the benefits of portraiture in looking for the good and sharing narratives in a culturally indigenous context of relationality and accountability outweigh the criticism of subjectivity or reproducing outcomes.

Guiding Questions

My dissertation question is: How has participation in a tribal university partnership's culturally based bachelor's completion and master's in education program influenced the cohort's women and their current leadership in education? By asking this question I sought to understand their perception of the role of their higher education experience and their current leadership. Additionally, I have also considered the degree to which their current leadership is consistent with the field of education.

In setting the contextual framework for the narratives of the Native American cohort and their current leadership I plan to use open-ended questions to address issues related to their timing in returning to school, and their motivation and self-leadership to resume their education, as well as their identified personal acts of self-determination. I will also seek to understand their lived experience in terms of both authorized and unauthorized leadership, as well as their view of their gender and the role of their ancestors in their education.

Placed within the framework of the narrative is the detailed rich description that is framed in context and detail. This description begins at the macro level and progresses to the micro.

> Portraits are always framed by the ecological context: a vivid description of the geography, the demography, the neighborhood, and a detailed documentation of the physical characteristics of the place that evokes all the senses—visual, auditory, tactile. The readers should feel as if he or she is there: seeing the colors of the autumn leaves, feeling the temperature of the gentle breeze, and hearing the rustling branches. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 44)

As the narratives develop, the emergent themes will become evident within the stories. The context of the research must provide for a constant recognition of the researcher and her role within the positionality and the narrative and include a step-by-step process that guides the participant from the description phase into the narrative.

> In portraiture, then, the place and stance of the researcher are made visible and audible, written in as part of the story. The portraitist is clear: from where I sit, this is what I see; these are the perspectives and biases I bring; this is the scene I select; this is how people seem to be responding to my presence. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 50)

The transparency of the researcher is thus vital to the narrative and the research. In sharing the researcher's positionality, bias, and perspective, one is free to become engulfed in the story—free to identify and make their own decisions regarding perception and bias. Transparency also allows the researcher the freedom to state their view of the site and

participants, and provide the reader an opportunity to again become fully engrossed in the interview and story. Van Manen (2005) refers to the shared personal experience

> Common experiences require phenomenological attentiveness precisely because they are so common and unremarkable. Phenomenology aims to produce texts that awaken a sense of wonder about the order of what is ordinary. Wonder means seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. But this sense of wonder cannot be coerced or produced upon command. It can only be offered as an invitation to the person who is open to it. (p. 49)

Portraiture provided challenges for me in balancing participants' voice, context and thick description, as well as the unexpected obstacles that surfaced with interviews and talking circle. Yet I embraced the challenge confident the portraits would reveal the wonder within these Native American women's experiences of leadership.

Research Procedures

The participants of this particular study were all the cohort participants of a university/tribal college partnership. These participants were enrolled in a Native -focused bachelor's completion or a master's in education with a K-8 Teacher Preparation program. My study will include participant graduates and those who did not complete the program in order to understand the barriers or obstacles to their participation. Each member of the cohort will be invited to contribute to the study.

Prior to any meeting with the participants I completed the Antioch University Leadership and Change Ph.D. internal review board process. This procedure is designed to ensure that the research is sound and within the parameters of human subject participation. The intent with all research is to do no harm either intentionally, or unintentionally, and the internal review board oversight ensures this protection. The participants were provided with a consent form approved by the internal review board. Those cohort members who then chose to become involved in the study were required to complete their signed consent form to participate.

Research Procedures and Environment

This research study attempts to look at a specific cohort of non-traditional bachelor's completion program and master's students and their leadership experiences following their participation in the program. The demographic of the participants is likely to be adult learners, from various Coastal Salish Tribes. The study will not generalize one tribal affiliation over another, nor look at tribal governmental issues involved within their communities. The scope of the study was designed to identify how participation in a particular Native focused bachelor's and master's education experience may or may not have impacted the participants' current leadership within their scope of influence.

For my research procedures I endeavored to provide a culturally rich environment to foster the former cohort relationships. To do so I invited the cohort members to a dinner at my tribal casino, and I opened with a blessing and a welcoming song. Once the dinner portion was complete we then participated in a focus group, or talking circle. In order to facilitate the discussion in the talking circle the participants were provided a list of the open-ended questions prior to the event. This permitted the participants to have time in advance to reflect on the questions to enhance the focus group discussion. At completion of the evening I provided a gifting of an honorarium in order to help with the cost of their travels.

At the completion of the dinner I asked for volunteers to participate in a separate individual in-depth interview to be scheduled at a later date. Upon completion of the 2-3 in-depth portraiture interviews, as is appropriate in Coastal Salish tradition I gifted the participants as an act of reciprocity.

Prior to the individual interviews I used the questions developed to interview myself. The self-interview aided in my ability to better understand the requirements I am asking of the interviewees. I then considered my own interview within the cohort stories.

Focus Groups

For sixty years focus groups have been used for discussion and data gathering in the military, multinational corporations, and extensively in market research. The use of focus groups has also been employed in educational pedagogical literacy groups by Freire and Kozol, and in a political social justice agenda by "consciousness raising groups (CRGs) of second- and third-wave feminism [that] have been deployed to mobilize empowerment agendas and to enact social change" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 887).

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) described how feminist activists used focus groups to equip themselves with the collective narrative story as a vehicle of empowerment and to assist women with finding their voice. Madriz (2000) stated the importance of creating groups that are homogeneous in terms of race, class, age, and life experiences, while the importance of using culturally common and safe environments for the setting, and equalizing the power dynamic was noted by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005). The researchers stated the benefits of focus groups as:

> Often produce data that are seldom produced through individual interviewing.
> Homogenous collectives often reveal unarticulated norms and normative assumptions.
> The use of mining the collective memory.
> The homogenous groups identify norms.
> Well suited to problem posing and problem solving.
> Enhancing the kinds and amounts of empirical material yielded from qualitative studies.
> The use of expression and content and capitalize on the richness of group dynamics.
> (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 903)

From an Indigenous research context focus groups respect cultural traditions. As Kenny et al. (2004) noted,

> Qualitative research methods, such as interviewing, focus groups and participant observation, are relevant to the oral traditions and personal interactions in the Native community. Interviews and focus groups involve person-to person interaction; data are gathered directly from the source, from people who actually "live" the topic being studied. (p. 19)

Site of the Research

By meeting in the tribal casino conference rooms for the meal and focus group I was able to establish a culturally appropriate environment for a Native American meeting. It has been nine years since the cohort began the educational journey, and the focus group's collective memory served the cohort participants and enhanced the discussion. I felt the focus group gathering served as a twofold process in identifying data and empowering the collective voice of the cohort.

This is an act of reciprocity, and the research is within a culturally contextual and relational accountability. Wilson (2008) has asserted "relational accountability means. In essence this means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (p. 99).

In providing a culturally appropriate environment and event with a shared meal for the cohort participants I am endeavoring to respect the co-participant relational experience of the talking circle. The homogenous race, gender, and cohort pedagogical experience of the group provided dimensional mutlivocality.

Journaling

I have found journaling to be a valuable tool in my reflection and analysis. The journaling experience provided a venue for me to state and explore my feelings, frustrations, and triumphs within the portraiture process. I maintained a biweekly journal and used this writing

experience to assist in jogging my memory of specific detailed events. Van Manen (2002) has stated that good phenomenological studies always have the following two components: "concrete portrayals of lived experience, and offer reflections on the meanings of those experiences" (p. 49). The journaling experience provided insight into the common experience, and through the analysis the sense of wonder that Howard (2002) refers to in ordinary events is shared within the research. There is much to be gained within the reflective learning and journaling process. Emergent themes, multivocality, emotion, description, and other areas are reviewed and discovered within the written lines of journaling.

Summary

In telling the stories of goodness by means of portraiture the researcher seeks to identify the essence, rather than an exact image, of the subject. Because relationships are so integral to portraiture as a methodology, it is also important to acknowledge the relationality of these human connections. The challenge in using a relational Indigenous methodology is holding the space and the relationships accountable within the portraiture writing style. It would be much easier to write up the interviews from complete strangers while remaining aloof, judgmental, and clinically objective. Researcher accountability is especially high in an Indigenous relational methodology and applies even further to my research because the Native American educational field is small. It is therefore vital to enter into all Indigenous research respectful of the interconnectedness of environment, story, and relationships. The benefits of such an approach can be seen in L. T. Smith's (1999) examples of the importance of researchers writing women's lives and stories in such a way that the researched are honored.

I have sought within this chapter to demonstrate that portraiture is an appropriate method for the narratives of Native American women's education and its perceived impact, or lack of impact, in their current leadership roles within their communities. This study is an attempt to look at education and leadership in a holistic manner. In Kenny and Fraser (2012), Kenny spoke to the premise of the parts of our being that cannot be separated:

> We are whole. Our mental concepts are one with our bodies, hearts, spirits, and souls. Land, ancestors, Elders, stories, women, grandmothers, parents, language, education, collaboration, healing, and resilience—these are the concepts that unite our worlds. The notion of embodied concepts animates our leadership theories with a richness that keeps our worlds vital, integrated, and whole. (p. 12)

It is within this holistic framework that I shared the portraits of women and the complexity of their leadership. The results of the study include the written portraitures of the talking circle, and three individual narratives including my own. The portraitures provided a detailed and rich holistic view of their perception of their education and the role it has played in their current leadership.

Chapter IV: Results of the Study

As I explained in Chapter III, I used qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture as the research methodology for this dissertation because this method is an appropriate cultural fit within the tradition of Indigenous populations and their stories. In selecting a method I attempted to respect the importance of relationality in a Native American research context. Relationality was important to these findings in that I too had been a cohort participant and sought to share the narratives of our common learning experience within higher education. The power of cultural Indigenous narrative and its place within qualitative phenomenological ethnography portraiture research is undeniable. Relationality provides accountability and a context for the research. Portraiture is a method in which both relationships are valued and revered.

I present the results of a talking circle and three one-to-one in-depth interviews with interpretations of the findings in the next chapter.

Portrait of the Talking Circle

The focus group was scheduled with the participants 6-8 weeks in advance via email notification of a reunion dinner and research-talking circle of the cohort members. The timing was the end of June at the completion of an educator's school year. There was a positive response by the cohort members to the initial notification email. Some indicated a desire to be present at the talking circle and reunion although they were unable to attend because of work schedules, and transportation. Several had indicated they would contribute and did not do so. Not all of the twenty cohort members were notified as some of the contact information changed in the nine years since the cohort existed, and attempts to locate current information failed.

The talking circle setting was the tribal casino of the university partnership tribal college and was close in proximity to the tribal college. I had rented a banquet room for the group and expected a small group of ten. Ultimately, seven including myself were present. Talking circle participants were from nearby towns as well as some who had traveled to attend. The room was the smaller of the banquet rooms and much larger than the group required. To enter the room there was an outside access that minors were required to use for entrance, or the security guard was required to accompany those underage patrons through the casino to the indoor entrance of the banquet room. My 18-year-old niece had accompanied me acting as my assistant with the evening's details including emails, addressees, and signed Institutional Review Board consent forms of the evening's participants. One of the participants brought her teenage daughter as well, so, like my niece and I, they were escorted across the large smoke and noise filled casino past the tables, machines, and restaurants to the other area of the casino and to the banquet area. The single banquet room was in stark contrast to the noise of the machines and the dizzying array of sights and sounds. With the banquet door closed we entered the quiet calm of a dining room with a table set for 15 and a personal waiter to meet all our needs once we entered.

It is customary for Coastal Salish Tribes to offer a prayer or song prior to the start of meetings and meals, and an elder or recognized spiritual leader is asked to offer the prayer. The group looked at participant #2 as the one to offer the prayer for the meal and talking circle. All the participants and the two underage family members sat together at the table where we immediately shared hugs, reunion stories, and a meal together. There was shared disappointment in those who were not able to come to the evening, but an understanding of busy schedules and lives.

After what seemed to be a very short period, but in actuality was nearly an hour and a half, I suggested we begin the talking circle. Once we had all returned from a short break we were huddled in a small grouping of seven chairs in a circle. At this time I asked for a volunteer for an opening prayer, it was immediately agreed who should say the prayer for the group, participant #2. She began with the ease and confidence of a spiritual leader who is frequently asked to say a customary opening prayer. She asked for a blessing of the words and our time together.

At this point I had used a waiter's tray and stand in the middle of the circle to set up my many recording devices. We joked and laughed at the number of "backup devices" I was using to document the details and data of the evening. The joking was among knowing researchers who fully understood the importance of recording all of the participants' statements. Once in place and recording I stepped into the role of talking circle facilitator.

All of the participants were very familiar with the protocol of a talking circle, and I shared the use of a rock as our talking piece for the speaker, along with reminders to let each share fully without interruption. We began with introductions and our current jobs, and then moved into five of the ten questions that had been outlined and previously provided to the participants. In order to provide freedom in the flow of the evening's conversation the participants were given a copy of the questions (See Appendix A). Acting as the talking circle facilitator, I encouraged the participants to speak to any of the questions provided and I provided some guidance and talking circle parameters. The group was prompted at any time or with any question they could choose to pass, and by no means were they expected to speak unless they were comfortable in doing so. Due to the time constraints the participants were encouraged to answer 4-5 of the outlined questions, although if they felt compelled to do more they could

address any of the 10 questions listed or include more than one question in their responses. The group seemed at ease, as old friends sharing within the confines of a familiar protocol to contribute their responses.

The location of the talking circle was a small grouping of chairs within the center of the banquet room to avoid any of the casino sounds seeping in, although within minutes of starting, an Elvis like impersonator had begun singing. As the facilitator, I asked the group to speak up as we were now competing with the singer, which brought laughs within the group.

The women spoke with a confidence secure in themselves and their personal stories. At times the group would lean in for the two softly spoken participants, and then sit back in their chairs again. The frequency of the raucous bursts of laughter throughout the course of the talking circle caused me to smile again while transcribing the evening's events.

The research themes I decided upon for the talking circle and the individual portraitures included their background, education, obstacles, walking in two worlds, and their thoughts and dreams regarding their future leadership. The pathways of the participants' return to higher education were related. Most had been working in the field of education or had always wanted to be a teacher and began to pursue their long deferred dream. Specific reasons for return to higher education included personal desires for a bachelor's or master's degree in education, to become a teacher, and for many to be a role model for family, students, or community members, and financial reasons of upgrade in pay scale, or increases in salary. For one it was

> I had moved several times with my now ex. for his career. I had left a couple of masters' programs after just being accepted or barely starting. I was determined to go back, but several life experiences changed that. I was determined at the time I went back. In addition to showing my son what he could do, I wanted him to see that women/anyone could do, even in the face of obstacles. And I feel that part of our purpose is to be always learning and growing. (participant #6)

Another stated her motivations as

> I worked at the school for so long you know, I had my AA(Associate of Arts), but I didn't have my teaching certificate. For me the motivation was to try to stand in the same line as the teachers and have a voice, I would be a voice for the students. (participant #2)

Participant #4 was instrumental in investigating the university/tribal college partnership and recruiting several members from her tribal community to attend alongside her.

> When I think back I had been recruiting everyone. [Laughter]. Thinking I was not going to do this by myself, and I found this cool program and I knew that it was just what I wanted. I knew that [name] and they all needed it too. I would talk everyone into it and we will all go into debt together. I think about it was like the time that I found the cohort was about the time that I did the career change from moving from head start to the Tribal school. At Head Start I was a teacher and at the Tribal school I was a TA. So that was a real shocker, because I had always been a teacher for 17 years, and then to move into a TA position, which didn't pay any less than the teacher paid from Head Start, it was just the title. I just couldn't swallow that. I had a really good boss at the time. [name]was like "There is money, you have got to do it, you can do it [name]." She was the one who like really shoved me out the door and then I found the cohort, and I grouped everyone together, and I called them to go in debt with me all. [Laughter]. (participant #4)

Of the seven talking circle members she had recruited three others who attended and completed the bachelor's and master's programs. Upon graduation from the bachelor's completion program she progressed immediately into the master's in education program. Not all the former cohort members from her community continued because of various reasons, so she recruited new women to participate and commute with her. Repeatedly during the talking circle, those who had been recruited by participant # 4 credited her persistence and initiative to investigate the program and share her vision with others as their reason to continue their higher education pursuit at that time.

She stated she did not see herself at the local state university with 20 year olds who were deciding if they were going to become a teacher. When she arrived at the university/tribal college cohort she was pleased to find:

> Because everyone came in with so much experience and everyone supported each other and when we left it was like I felt like my ideas were valued and I didn't, I

> don't know if it was before, when I didn't think I was valued as much. I had the confidence to do the things that I did. I still do that. And I still want to do the doctorate program with some people. [Laughter]. (participant #4)

Participant #4 continued her recruitment of her former cohort members to enroll in a doctoral program throughout the evening and had one other participant indicate she would like to do so. Those previously recruited knew participant #4's steadfast persistence and knew this would not be the end of this discussion of the doctoral program.

Obstacles

The topic of obstacles demonstrated the women's strength and dedication to their long deferred pursuit of higher education. They were able to look at what could be called by others as insurmountable circumstances or barriers, and see their ability to overcome. Individual former obstacles to participation in higher education were noted as personal timing and having been a 9th-grade dropout and later getting a GED.

> I had a choice of going back to work after my son was born and making $50 over what it cost for daycare with the education that I had, or taking that leap and going to get my Associate of Arts degree, and I took that leap. And it was a struggle, I am a 9th-grade dropout. I got my GED when I was 18. So for it to work it meant a whole lot of work for me and I didn't know I had it in me. I really didn't, every single day was a struggle for me. And I had always been capable educationally. But I got to a point in 9th grade and I dropped out. So I knew that I was starting everything with a deficit, and I feel it still. But the reason why is because that little 6 year old girl, raised my hand. And I tell my kids that same story and to take that leap of faith, and to speak your dream. Because you are speaking it out there to the powers that are there and if you hold it inside no one knows. So I took that leap and here I am (participant #3)

The group recruited by participant #4 was located 3.5 hours from the tribal college site. I asked them to speak to their commute, and was surprised that it was not viewed by the participants as an obstacle to overcome.

> It was like 3-3.5 hours coming down because we hit traffic. But we had to be in the car by 1:00 leaving the school, because if we were a minute late we would hit really bad traffic on 405. So we had to be in the car, on the road by 1:00 so we could miss that traffic. If we didn't we would get the look, because we had come

> in late. That was because someone messed up, and had to take a bathroom break, instead of a straight shot. We could take bathroom breaks when we got down there but none. Then when we went back it was usually about three hours, and two hours and 45 minutes to get home because we left at 9 pm we would be home by11:30 pm or 11:45 pm and then [name] was at the high school and they had to be at work by 7:30 in the morning. (participant #4)

Those who commuted this distance spoke to the camaraderie, fun, and community building experience it was for them. Experiences during the commute time included completing homework on laptops and running into the college to print off their homework assignments before class, working through questions related to assignments, discussions, and fun.

> When we were doing it and someone would say "Oh my God and we would say "Oh no, it is not a lot."[Laughter]. "It was so much fun." And now we think about it, and think "What were we insane? How did we do that?"[Laughter]. (participant #4)

Walking in Two Worlds

Participant #2 shared her educational experience of walking in two worlds as she was absent from her art class in order to attend and fulfill the expected tribal community cultural activities.

> I remember in one class when I was working my AA, gosh, I got a D in my art class, the rest of my classes I was doing very well. I asked the instructor "Why did I get a D? I did everything I was supposed to do?" He said "Well you were gone on this day, and this day." "Well I was at a funeral." "Well you can't miss school." "Really?" This was a rude awakening for me. Then fishing season opened so I HAD to go fishing, because that is what we do when fishing season opens. So again my attendance was in jeopardy. And then other things happened that needed my attention as a tribal member, I should have stayed focused on my studies, but at the time I was new at studying. I thought I would just keep doing what I was doing (Being a member of the community). When I realized that my attendance affected my grade it was real and was a real rude awakening for me, I now understood the meaning of walking in two worlds. When you have commitment to education, it must be just that a commitment. You can't do funerals, you can't go fishing, you can't go berry picking, you can't baby-sit, and you know all those things you just have to drop. When I was doing my BA, I just had to wear my blinders, I couldn't go help this family, or I couldn't go help that family, even when I was working on my master's, people in the community were dying and just so many of our people were being laid to rest and I just had to stay focused. And even when my father passed away, I was working on my master's

> and I had to drop out a minute, had to freeze my class and then just jump right back in as soon as I was able. I can relate to the students today and be able to tell the students these days how one is able to succeed and walk in two worlds. (participant #2)

Other participants noted the struggle of balancing individual's culture within the confines of the public school setting, and being told by the elders

> To go get those tools so you can lead your people to where they need to go. Go get those tools so you can share and teach them, because those young ones will need to know how to live in those two worlds. (participant # 1)

Participant #2 noted that she and participant # 5 both work at their tribal school and have created their own educational recognition of walking in two worlds for their graduating students.

> Me and [name] made cedar paper for our high school graduates so they get their certificate on the white linen and run that through the copier then we make the cedar paper. And that is to show here is your cedar diploma and your diploma from the school. I think that those kinds of things we have to make sure that even though we need this paper, we can also have it on cedar or leather. I really like this question. Because it is important that our kids walk in two worlds. But they don't understand as much as we want them to understand what it is the difference between walking in two worlds. I guess one day when they are right up face to face with it like I did with my art they will fully understand it. I really like art but I wasn't there.

For both participants #3 and #4 working in a public school system as a Native American woman had its challenges in "feeling like I have validity and credibility and in working with non- Native leaders and administrators to understand that I really do get what my kids need" (participant #3). Participant #4 noted that it was only as the school became aware that she was a teacher and her many years of education and teaching experience in education that they became "receptive" to her.

> They really changed their attitude toward me and it was very different. It was like I almost did not want to tell them, because I was thinking it doesn't matter what kind of education and background. I am still representing these students and I am still here to advocate for them. (participant #4)

Participant #6 also works in a public school setting and noted the "different worlds" she lived in as a woman, single-parent, and as a teacher, and the need for balance when walking in two worlds.

Future Leadership

Participant # 5 was turning 70 years old soon and was the oldest in the cohort. She had 28 grandkids and 10 great-grandkids. She described pushing her family members to continue their educational pursuits and telling them to "Do their homework, to go to school, and not miss any school." She worked at her tribal school for 28 years teaching tribal language, culture, art, and history. Particpant #5 reported pushing her students in the same manner as her family to continue and complete their education. She is nearing retirement and does not yet see herself as completely retiring, instead working part time at the school, and substitute teaching in her future.

The talking circle participants had varied and some similar future leadership plans. Three cohort members stated interest in pursuing doctoral degrees, one is attending various meetings in search of community involvement since completing her higher education, and another is interested in being a union representative within the public school setting. One participant who currently is working for the tribal employment needs of her community wanted to develop tribal internships for returning tribal members upon their homecoming from their higher education experience. She noted her tribal community was not always welcoming of their tribal members who made their education a priority for a period of time, and their reentry was challenging.

> Open your arms let them come home; they need to be back into. Because going away to school, we all know how that felt. You do kind of lose your identity, because you are so busy in that. Like [name] said, you get into that book learning, and that constant this is what we need to be doing. You lose touch with the funerals, gatherings, meetings, and being around the community and feeling whole in that community again. (participant #5)

Several participants stated a desire for more leadership than their current employment or community involvement.

As the talking circle facilitator, I had the responsibility of timekeeper and I was sensitive to the late hour of the evening and informed the group that we needed to close our time together. There had been a lot of laughter within the sharing and respect for each other demonstrated in careful listening and adherence to the talking circle protocol. I indicated to the participants that in some ways the evening felt rather spiritual and they agreed. As I had asked in the beginning of the talking circle for an opening prayer, I again asked a member to now complete our time of collective sharing with a closing prayer. Participant # 2 volunteered as the group nodded in agreement holding hands during the prayer there was strength, and an assurance in their spirituality and conviction for the work before us.

I proceeded to provide deep and heartfelt thanks to the group for their travel and participation in the talking circle and my research. There were smiles and nods as the group sat huddled together with the rich and deep camaraderie of a cohort that had completed lifelong dreams together in a bond of solidarity and tribal sovereignty.

We had begun the talking circle before the dessert options could be served and so each one was encouraged to take their desserts home, and they began loading their cardboard boxes with the treats while the discussion and laughter continued. The conversation flowed from the moment they entered the room and until they departed. There were hugs and comments of how it had been a pleasurable experience in getting together to reunite, share, and contribute to my research.

The participants gathered their belongings to depart, and the live casino music now streamed in through the open doorway. I felt fulfilled in the knowledge that the participants were

humble leaders, leading with a quiet and confident authority. While driving home and discussing the talking circle with my niece I stated I had been enriched and blessed by my fellow cohort members sharing of their evening and energy in the reunion and talking circle experience. While none of the participants referred to themselves as a leader, which is common within a collectivist tribal culture, it was evident each participant was a leader in their own way in their circle of influence as educators, and within their family and community.

The In-Depth Personal Portraits

In the personal portraits I will use the pseudonyms Marie, Sonya, and Debra for the participants who shared in one-to-one in-depth sharing. I completed a self-portrait interviewing myself and answering the same questions in advance of meeting with the participants. The audio taped portraits were one hour in length, although my time with the participants tended to be overall 2 to 2.5 hours of visiting or catching up pre- or post-portrait. I traveled to the participant's home with the exception of one, who sent email responses. Personally, my travel time to the university/partnership was 10 minutes from my home. It was enlightening to drive to the participants' homes and realize the time and energy that went into their travel to the tribal college site three times per week, and with twice a week evening courses ending at 9:00 pm during their bachelor's and master's program. There were several participants who traveled 2.5 to 3.5 hours one-way to attend the university/tribal college partnership cohort. These same students in their journey would have passed several traditional universities and colleges in their travel to the tribal college partnership cohort. As the participants stated the university/tribal college element was their enticement to join the cohort.

All the in-depth portrait participants had stated interest in attending the talking circle although were unable to due to work, or conference attendance. The one-to-one portraits gave these participants the ability to include their voice in the research.

Portrait of Marie

Background. I completed my first portrait with Marie, who had been unable to attend the talking circle secondary to teaching her evening class which ended at 10:00 pm. Marie and I were in the cohort together when I was in my master's in education program and she was in her bachelor's completion with a teacher certification program.

The travel to Marie's home took approximately 45 minutes from the Tribal College site. Most of the drive was windy tree lined back roads close to the Cascade mountain range. Being close to the Cascades meant an increase in elevation with mountainous terrain and the houses were distances apart. I followed the winding road and took a turn that lead up an extremely steep gravel road to her house on the side of a large hill. It was a lovely larger home on a spacious lot and the neighborhood houses were similarly sized with yards tended with obvious care and attention. Marie's next door neighbor's spouse had passed away, and through a series of medical issues and circumstances had lost his house during the recession. She shared that her family had also nearly lost their home secondary to lengthy unemployment issues. It is evident the house is a custom home with extensive thought and care into the details and maintenance.

The home's interior was warm with sunlight from large windows streaming into the kitchen sitting area where we were located for the entire interview. Trees were visible in varying shades of green. During one part of our time together a hummingbird was outside on the deck and quickly flew away. While inside but unseen, we heard the periodic background chirping of two parakeets and a cockatiel.

We spent the first 45 minutes of tape catching up on each other's lives and driving her daughter 5 minutes away to her play date's home and returning for the portrait. This is a recognized area of affluent homes with each home tucked in assorted and unique ways into the wooded hillsides. As she confirmed the details of the play date we were assured a quiet and uninterrupted time which would later become Marie's period to work on her own school projects.

Marie is a non-Native and one of several within the Native-focused university/Tribal College partnership cohort. Marie spent twenty years following, as she would state, her "first passion, music" and then education. She had been a performer and entertainer leading a band around the globe. She indicated she had been very successful following her passion yet "not a rock star." From her early childhood she indicated she knew she was a gifted musician and was playing Handel's sonatas on her flute in the fifth grade. After high school she began community college in their professional entertainment training music program and after two semesters felt it was "too much like high school." At the same time she had been offered a position with a band and quit college to go on the road. Marie attributes "rock and roll and too much fun got in the way for me I guess," laughing. She recognizes the unique life experiences music afforded her as entertainer.

> It was great though, but that opened the door to life experiences you normally wouldn't have. When you travel as an entertainer and you are singing and working around the world and having the experience, it is different than just being a tourist who is going a trip. You deeply get engrained into the culture. I lived in Japan for 7 months and did tech pack and DOD shows in the Mediterranean, in Korea. I toured Korea for 8 weeks during the Olympics. You know so many wonderful things with music.

Marie speaks of her leadership experience as a bandleader and explains that it was one of her dreams. She talks with her hands and frequently has her hand next to her mouth, in a circular

position, which I later thought was the same position of holding a microphone. This was unknowingly a habit of having been an entertainer and performer for many years and communicating to her audiences while holding a microphone. At various times in the interview she used her hands dramatically; using gestures in place of words and is an energetic personality.

> I have been in bands and forced to be onstage and perform. So that does require an ability to be out there in a leading role I guess you might say in an image and a public figure. So there is a lot of that which provides great leadership because you have to have an ability to do that if you are going to be successful. And I feel that I was very successful and still am in the role of a professional entertainer and group leader.

Education

Marie's road to education was admittedly not a straight pathway with musical detours along the 20-year journey to her Associate of Arts degree, which she completed through a distance-learning program. Marie completed the course work over several years while on the road touring and singing. She stated this learning program predated online computer programs of today, and she was required to complete packets of work and mail in her completed projects to her instructors for grading.

Later, as a parent, she started teaching at her daughter's daycare and because of her love for learning and a desire for more training she enrolled in a 10-credit Child Development Associate program at the nearby technical college.

> So when I started to do the teaching there, I am not one to take on things, so when I say I am going to do something I am going to take it to 11 not to10, but to 11. That is kind of funny. I need to get more, and I just need to learn more so that I can do this job the best I can.)

The program gave her knowledge of how to do the job, write lesson plans, and work with children. It also provided social, emotional, and cognitive skills and a familiarity with being observed teaching. It was thus reportedly a "great start." This program revealed her love of

working with young children and her desire to do more with kindergarten or first grade students in the public school setting. Her initial pathway to the cohort began with an interview with the Waldorf School as she had an interest in the school for both herself and her daughter. Waldorf staff encouraged her to investigate Antioch University, noting that, "If you go to Antioch you will get so much more out of it. It is not just going to school it is actual life changing." So I looked into Antioch University and they had two programs, downtown Seattle, and the First Peoples program. She heard about the First Peoples program

> And I thought so I have been all over the Native Communities. I thought I don't know anything about these cultures and if there is a way for me to have a real great different experience, I should do something like that. That would be wonderful to immerse myself in a cultural experience different from myself. But yet within my own community because I grew up in (town name), so why not?

She had positive comments about her experience in the cohort and when looking to continue her education beyond her bachelor's degree she investigated the option of the master's program at Antioch. The Antioch master's program expense was prohibitive and she ended up in an online university program with less of a financial burden. She proceeded to get her master's in Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology. When she speaks of her teaching practicums she becomes even more animated and her passion for teaching is evident in the excitement and creativity she brought to the classrooms, lesson plans, and activities she planned and executed.

Marie describes herself as very hard working and "works circles around others." She anticipated she would be working in K-12 education, and is currently working in adult vocational education. Marie is dedicated to education and is working on her second master's program. She is presently working on a certification program but discovered that with an additional three classes she could get another master's. If she decides to continue, with an additional class as an

internship she could get her certification and be a principal if she so desired, Marie noted this as an interest.

Walking in Two Worlds

Marie stated that by being a participant in a university/ tribal college partnership cohort she felt there were understandings she did not share and at times when she had mispronounced names during presentations she thought to herself, "I don't know as much as everybody else." She went on to state that walking in two worlds as a non-Native in a Native-based program

> Was a real chance for me to feel very much on the minority side of things. I think it was very good and giving that disequilibrium piece. And it helped to bring out some feelings of this is how some people could feel when they are the minority in a culture, and it was great for me in a lot of ways. I think I was accepted very well mostly. There were a few, I think a few people within the cohort that might not have been as accepting. I found out that more from just talk than people saying that…But overall, putting myself in that position of being a person in the other world, it was a great learning experience. I am glad that I did it in every single sense of being able to experience that.

Future Leadership

Marie is committed to a future in leadership and is working toward that end goal via her current educational pursuits. She has some interest in school administration and possibly becoming a principal. She states leadership has been in her background and described herself as a natural leader not seeking the more recognized positional leadership roles because she was so involved in music. She is currently employed with a for-profit vocational training program as an instructor and department head.

> It is interesting, we walk through a door and we try to make it work and sometimes it doesn't and we learn from it. But when it doesn't work and the rubber meets the road, it makes it really hard for the future. [Laughter]. Why am I teaching beauty school and it is ok, but, it could be different, and it could be worse, and maybe it is even better and I don't know it? Sometimes you do not know what you have; it is better than what you think you want. You don't know right? So then this afforded me the opportunity to get into leadership without having to already have the leadership degree. So there have been good things that have come from it in the roundabout way.

Marie is investigating other positions within higher education. She is dedicated to remaining true to her passion for underserved students and their need for a community college experience to receive training and opportunities for a better paying vocation. Marie is also considering jobs in early childhood possibly, in the Head Start program as a Director.

> I have to balance out all of this higher Ed. That I am taking and it is nice and it is wonderful, but I have to pay it back. And what I am going to do to pay it back? It all has to meet up with the criteria of my life to make it feasible. The feasible piece is something that I really have to continue and then it has got to be a passion for me, because I don't do anything I am not passionate about. I have got to have passion.

At the completion of the interview I asked if there was anything she would like to add. Marie added her thoughts related to the Antioch cohort experience

> In a more, I don't know, the depth of the meaning of it for me has been solidified more in a sense of empowerment to all people. I don't think I would have seen it the same. And so by going through the cohort with the First Peoples program, I see that my life of leadership I am going to be a much stronger leader. Because I am going to have a much more pluralistic, diverse, strength of understanding, of where students are. I already do this all the time, and weaknesses, and how people work together to bring education to students in a more diverse, cultural sense and a more meaningful sense. Meaningful too, in the way of multiple intelligences, in the way that Antioch as a university viewed education, and then through the cultural First People's piece. So that has and will give me future strength and has as a leader…so it has been a very impactful part of my life that will just continue to again, go through generations now, it is generational.

The hour and questions have been completed with the audiotape turned off, but the discussion continued until there were hugs at the door way and goodbyes of a former cohort participant.

Portrait of Sonya

Background. Sonja had been unable to attend the talking circle as she was out of state at a continuing education gardening course. We were in the cohort together during our bachelor's completion, with a teacher certification, and shared a few classes of the master's in education program. Sonja had stated an interest and support for the research project and my doctoral

program from the onset. We see each other periodically throughout the school year as she works for a tribal school and I work for a public school district. Because we both work in Native American education we frequently attend the same school field trip outings and periodically share moments from chaperoning to stay marginally caught up with each other's lives.

On the day I called regarding a meeting Sonja enthusiastically said "Do you have time today? I am leaving for a 2 week vacation in 2 days." Within an hour and a half I was sitting in her backyard viewing her lovely gardens, where there was obvious care and devotion to her thriving vegetable gardens. I would learn later the importance of gardening in her life. The time it took to get to the city where Sonja lives was 45 minutes. This was approximately the same distance to the tribal college site. I had used my GPS device to assist in my poor directionality and it had mistakenly indicated I was at my destination. This coupled with my own poor directional skills had brought me up short from my destination. I had parked behind a vehicle as instructed by Sonja and later learned I was a block below the location. I called Sonja for directions and she came out to the street and stood on the sidewalk a street above waving and talking to me to help guide me to her yard via cell phone.

Her home is set back off the street line of houses with a garage and shed at the street. It is an older and quiet neighborhood tucked within the city. I later learned her house is across the street from her childhood home and other relatives currently live on the street. We joked about this fact.

We situate ourselves outside for the dialogue, as it is a beautiful summer's day of 80 plus degrees. We walk toward a table and set up, sitting under the shade of her neighbor's large mature fir and deciduous trees. The outdoor table is filled with potted plants, gardening products, and squash. I have a full view of her raised vegetable gardens and berries with the

garden posts painted in brightly colored hues of purple and green and shade hats hanging on them. There is a comfortable breeze, while the older dog is sleeping in the shade of the house; periodically a crow interjects throughout the interview. It made you wonder if the trickster Raven was mocking us in some way?

Sonja is a Native American from a tribe in the plains. She was one of the younger cohort participants. Sonja is admittedly loud and has a boisterous personality, laughing and smiling often. She has a quick wit and the laughter flows in her presence. She carries herself with a confidence and appears comfortable with herself. She explained that throughout her childhood she was told to be quiet. "I realize that I am very strong and people do listen. If not for my volume, for the confidence. Because some people don't walk like that, and it is foreign to me because that is how I live, I walk." Sonja has been a tribal school elementary teacher for the past seven years and prior to that she was a teacher's assistant and teacher in a previous tribal school.

Education

Sonja attended an Indian College cohort for her Associate of Arts prior to attending the university/tribal college cohort. She described having been drawn to her first tribal college experience because:

> It was people who were trying to get their education trying to better themselves and they were also I guess, not the norm in my mind at that time. It was not the norm to be in a Native school. And that just pushed me further and further, because once I was with strong Natives and healthy, and they wanted to better themselves. I just you know, there is nothing you can't do. There are other people like that there. There are other people like me. You know it's okay. And they're okay, and I am okay. It is okay.

During the Associate of Arts program she was required to interview and write a paper for a large project. She chose to interview her Native American grandfather. She stated she would never have received the information regarding her grandfather's past without the required school

assignment and interview. Sonja attributed the impact of this project and the role of her ancestors in her persistence in higher education.

> I just remember, because my father was the first to go to college on that side of the family and they were so amazingly proud. You know oh, all this good stuff and it was very enlightening to get it first hand from him. You know how horrible it was for them. And they couldn't identify with who they are, and all this stuff, but still pride. And still the tradition, he spoke our language and everything. So it was, that was a great push to continue, so I have the pride, so I identify as Native American, but what am I going to do with that? Am I going to just be in brown skin? Is that all you are doing, or are you going to do better and help make it better for everybody rather than have to deal with all that stuff for everybody?

While working as a teacher's assistant she described participating in work training and immediately following the session there was a presentation by Antioch University/tribal college partnership education programs. She stated she considered the program for financial reasons as well as growing up with a family expectation of college graduates.

> I was working as a teacher's assistant; I had three children and was divorced. I knew that that income was not going to continue to work as the children got older. And being as it was evening classes, that is why I could take that on as something I could do, and it would end up as a career, where I could follow my children. I could still go on the camping trips, the little vacations because our schedule would be the same. Because I was a single Mom, so I was it, so that was it. I was a single Mom. Money, and the need to show them that this is how you do it. You run into obstacles, life happens and you have to happen with it. You may have obstacles but you have to keep moving.

It was at this point in the interview and the mention of obstacles and the specific questions regarding obstacles in the higher education experience, that I anticipated Sonja would mention medical issues. Having been a cohort member myself, I was curious as to why she did not mention the loss of time due to health issues and when she did not discuss it I asked "Regarding the medical absences?" Her response was

> In my opinion and my family's opinion, whatever you let become an obstacle your children will also see obstacles as something that can stop you. And if you show them that then they are going to continue to do it. Like I said, it is a big

> expectation in my family. In all women, 5 daughters proceed to give birth to 5 granddaughters, and in short, men were not to be depended on, and showed that to be true. So we were just strong women that this is the way you are going to do it. You can be happy and have a man and everything, but you can never know what will happen. So make sure your feet are firmly planted and able to keep going if something bad happens.

She did keep going in her education and continued in a second Antioch cohort for her master's in education program. This was a cohort after my master's program and due to not having enough students the cohort was absorbed into a larger cohort and classes were offered in different cities and campuses. Sonja stated this program did not meet up to her former experience in our shared cohort experience. She commented it was unfortunate and she felt a sense of responsibility having recruited two fellow-coworkers. Sonja described frequently apologizing to her friends.

Money was a noted issue within her education. For her bachelor's degree she was able to receive grants, but for the graduate level she had no other recourse than to take out school loans. She had considered completing a Ph.D. program but is still currently paying off her master's program. During her master's program she took additional classes in sustainability. Due to finances she has yet to complete a one-quarter class and notebook in order to get her endorsement and become certified in sustainability.

Walking in Two Worlds

Sonja stated she was raised by a non-Native mother, and her non-Native grandmother was born and raised on a plains reservation. "So we were immersed in Native culture our whole life even though we were not raised by a Native person." Her father was "Native and lived nearby and was around." Sonja's experience as a Native American woman and walking in two worlds was realized as a young child attending a private school. There was the recognition of financial differences from the other students and her mother working at the schools she attended

to cover tuition, and "wanting the best for us." Classmates were described as using her status as a parent working at the school against them, "coupled with the lovely hoops and yells of the typical Native American noises." She stated because of her skin color she was called Mexican and Indian offensive names and slurs, and was asked if she lived in a Teepee.

Sonja went on to say

> But I do know that it does make you stronger, 100 percent stronger. And like I said I am raised by a non-Native woman. It was really an odd line. It wasn't really a line. It was just I lived and went to school with non-Natives, but I was obviously different. So I think it made me stronger. It made me embrace who I am. Because different to me was okay, it was good, because I didn't want to be like those mean kids. They were different, they were the same. In my opinion, in my child's mind, I didn't want to be the same. I did want to be different. So I embraced the difference.

She stated she does not see the difference as walking in two worlds, but noted that it is rather her reality, and walking in her world. Sonja describes her family makeup of Natives and cousins mixed with African Americans, and Mexicans:

> A lot of different mixes, and we just celebrated everything as normal. Difference is totally normal in our family, it just is, I don't know that I would call it two worlds. I can tell you two worlds when you walk into two different places. I can give you my upbringing my knowledge if I walk into a non-Native place that's where I will go. So If I walk into a Native place that's where I will go. So in that way it is definitely two worlds. But I don't strip off one or the other when I go. I just change maybe my vocabulary, maybe my mannerisms to make others feel more comfortable, because sometimes people get uncomfortable.

Future Leadership

Sonya stated her passion for tribal schools, and outdoor education. It is evident to see within her home her passion for gardening and during the interview when she mentions school gardens she becomes animated when she speaks of the opportunities for collaboration and coordination within school curriculum, "how it connects to science, math, reading, writing, art. I

can connect you any way shape and form, and the kids love it." She stated she was able to use her education as a "point to jump off into outdoor education" and use her passion in developing school gardens.

Presently, there is an acre of land with a barn on it, and over the three years of development there are currently 35 fruit trees, seven 84-foot raised vegetable beds, and five 110 foot rows of assorted berries. She goes into detail of the connection with state standards, and common core for lesson planning and instruction. What started with her own passion for gardening and classroom worm composting grew into a large school garden.

Sonja describes her relentless requests at the tribal school for garden space and her persistence in seeing the vision realized that assisted in eventually spreading the word within the tribe and she was connected to a tribal leader to help with the actualization of the garden. Initially, there were discussions as to whether the gardens should be exclusive school gardens or a community garden. The school garden designation was a safeguard so in the fall there would be vegetables and fruit for the students to take home to their families. Sonja's advocacy to keep the gardens recognized as school gardens while encouraging interaction with the community were heard. During the school year when vegetables or fruit are picked from the garden the tribal school cooks include it with the meal and a posting next to the item, "Look what came out of your garden today."

She has met with the superintendent and described her vision of the future for the gardens, which could include chickens in the barn, and becoming certified organic. Working with the tribal school board and fisheries, there could be lessons developed in smoking salmon, and teacher trainings. The future could hold integrating the classroom and garden knowledge and share the information with other tribal schools while including the students in the

presentations. Sonja hopes to one day have a full-time position as the outdoor educator taking care of the gardens, and teaching the students and empowering them through their experience. She described attempting to be paid through the summer for the garden care but was denied and it was later approved for casual labor to provide the summer care.

> Which is a step, yeah I learned to recognize that yeah, it felt like a smack in your face, so what, it was a step forward. Maybe next year they will say "Ok you can take care of it." Nothing happens fast, and you have to just take everything as a blessing and as a step forward. It will happen, nah don't be in a hurry [Laughter].

We visited for an additional hour after the taped discussion out in her yard, catching up and sharing ideas regarding her passion for outdoor education. She declined a review of the transcript, saying "Don't put anything in there that will hurt anybody." I walk away with hugs and several beautiful fresh squash.

Portrait of Debra

Debra's response was the only one to be completed via e-mail due to scheduling conflicts and timing of the data gathering process. Debra is a tribal descendent from a Plains area tribe. She is currently unemployed, taking the summer off "due to the stress of commuting and working for capitalistic establishments in an effort for me to put together what I really like to do." Debra is involved in the arts and develops programs for young children. She is energetic, animated, joyful, and creative. I have recently been involved in one of Debra's creative endeavors, an educators' training at a national conference, and I hired her to come and perform at a Native American summer camp that I have annually for K-8 Native American students at the public school district where I am employed. Debra uses props and creativity in her theatrical presentations of Native American traditional stories and teachings. She has a wiry frame and it is difficult to explain the high level of energy she brings to her work. She is theatrical in her

voice and gestures, and brings joy and laughter to adults and children alike during her performances. This same energy spills over into all she does.

Debra describes her family background as strong Native American and German Jewish who, "abhorred Natives and were very prejudiced." She had an untraditional upbringing. Money and time, along with a lack of respect for mainstream education by her immediate family, were stated as obstacles to her higher education pathway. Later, when she was 63 years old and a caretaker for a family member, she was unbound from her basic needs of rent, food, or childcare. It was during that time when she began to work toward her dream of completing a master's program. The philosophy of the university/tribal college program was important to her as she "did not have to just take the prescribed boring assimilation, that I think can stand for 'as I mutilate' your creative drive classes I had found at the many schools I investigated."

Education

Debra's education included traditional high school, and progressing to a university when she was 18 for her bachelor's degree, and a tribal college. She was the first person on her Native American side of the family to receive a bachelor's degree. Her father had coaxed her to attend college despite her plans of employment and marriage. But her father had other plans for her future. He was an addicted gambler and told her the family had put together a pot of money for whoever had the first child to graduate college. Her father had put his money on her and outlined the length of time including a summer semester required to beat her cousin. She stated she loved her father and took on the challenge and "won by one quarter term."

> My father always said, "In order to finish college you will have to climb the white man's paper mountain. There will be lots of paperwork and sometimes you will get discouraged and want to give up. When you get to the top the white man will reward you with of all things another piece of paper: the diploma. Never under estimate the value of that piece of paper. It is worth a lot."

Debra described teaching in ghetto schools and that she learned to dislike the educational experience "or lack thereof" for her underprivileged students. She likewise "abhorred" traditional higher education.

> In fact I worked with the [name] State to help set up an alternative school system on the religious [site] decades before pursuing my master's in Ed. That system existed from 1973 until 2001. I abolished American History and taught it only from the Native American stories I knew and heard about genocide and displacement and its costs to my family. One of the kids who entered high school age (as most did into the traditional system) came back to let me know the public schools were telling a different story about history and it surprised him there was one. HA HA. I got to them before the system did.

Since receiving her bachelor's degree Debra has worked in the field of education or volunteered for the past 49 years.

Walking in Two Worlds

Debra described walking in two worlds as "very challenging" until she began her master's in education program. Her family background included one half of her relatives who did not believe in the "American form of history and capitalism," and the other half who valued money, earning, and saving money. Her Native American family beliefs were also seen in lifestyles valuing people above money. Yet the other side of her family was interested in her pursuit of a good job, husband, and meeting their expectations and values. Debra described her Native American family as very strong "even before the 70s and AIM and the movement." While her non-Native, German Jewish family was prejudiced.

> So I grew up loving my Native American family the most because they were kind and good to me but thinking we were losers, and poor, and neer-do-wells. That opinion still exists today in that side of the family and half of my siblings chose it and half did not. The love I received from my Native American (Cherokee, Comanche) Grandmother [name] steered me always towards honoring my Native American roots the most, and following her values of family, generosity, integrity, and commitment to family and community above money.

Debra described a promise she made to her grandmother who had been orphaned, to care for the orphaned and underprivileged children. This allowed her to see circumstances in which minority children lived "the persecution poverty, and prejudice through her Grandmother's eyes." She described her lifestyle choice as "dedicated to people over money." Her other side of her family, had a different set of values of money, job, status, "to make the family proud and show I was a worthy person." The fact that these were differing values created a challenge for Debra.

Future Leadership

In terms of leadership before and after her university/tribal partnership Debra described her former leadership as

> My form of leadership was strong, but had evolved to be heavily influenced by fear. I took many strong and controversial stands before and suffered beatings, exclusion, harassment, and physical abuse. So I began to shrink from making leadership choices or providing leadership. The cost had been too enormous for my children and me.

She goes on to describe the feelings she had when she had her master's in education diploma and the "dignity" she felt upon her completion of the degree. The self-empowerment she described as well as viewing herself as a "dignified academic" impacted her in a profound way that led her to begin to write articles, "taking control of my story and moving forward with strength and no fear again."

In addition to writing, Debra established a foundation with the state historical museum.

> I have created a collection with the Washington State History Museum Woman's Consortium that focuses on my side of the 26 years in the (name) from a woman and mother's eyes. I also have written numerous articles for the (name) Magazine because I saw while going to grad school that in the words of Hollywood writers "if it's not on the page it ain't on the stage." I came to the realization that I could in a way influence history by simply captivating others with my side of the story. I would NEVER have been able to accomplish that if I did not have the master's in Ed behind my name and all that went with that—the journey—to reach that

> accomplishment. So in a way my leadership is more subversive, working behind the scenes, not out in front where I get pot shots at my leadership but like a silent drone amassing written works and a collection at a well-established museum I am a leader in shaping a story for future generations.

Debra views her future leadership as a Native American woman in her community as a desire and 'dedication to the children now adults" she influenced in the past and her role as an elder storyteller and performer. She has plans to continue her presentations at national conferences and "a focus on early childhood venues" and performances that sets her apart in her creative work.

Self-Portrait

I have included my self-portrait as yet another narrative of the cohort participants. Prior to the focus group or the individual in-depth portraits I interviewed myself on audiotape with the same questions I would be asking the participants.

I am a tribal member of the tribe with the university partnership. I was 45 years old when I started the program and I am currently working for the public school district bordering my tribe as a Title VII, Indian Education Coordinator for K-12. I am a single mother, and at the time I began the cohort my children were 19 and 15. Their ages are of importance to the narrative because had they been any younger I doubt I would have entertained the concept of returning to higher education.

I had worked in the medical field with an Associate of Science degree as a Certified and Licensed Occupational Therapy assistant for 25 years. I had always sought out employment opportunities where I would be considered a team member, rather than a therapist's assistant. The community hospital where I had worked for 10 years in the field of worker rehabilitation and chronic pain, was desperately attempting to remain independent from a hospital buy-out. The previous 18 months various hospital downsizing efforts were put in place with limited

results, and ultimately, the next round of budgetary cuts and layoffs resulted in our entire department.

I was aware of the need of a vocational change after 10 years in chronic pain, a noted difficult field of rehabilitation. For a year I had read advertisements in our tribal newspaper about the university/tribal partnership teacher certification program. I was reluctantly forced into change by the impending layoff, and so began investigating this program in March and later began the cohort in July. Additionally, the tribal college site was 15 minutes from my home, which was an incredible opportunity because I live in a rural area with universities north and south of my home, but at a commute of 45 minutes to an hour in either direction. The university/tribal college partnership was in the right place, and at the right time in my life.

Education

I am the first generation to attend college from a hard working blue-collar family where my dad worked as a welder and my mom was a homemaker. In terms of my own education and obstacles, I was my biggest obstacle to higher education due to a lack of self-confidence. I was steered by a high school counselor to attend community college, and later specially, the Occupational Therapy Assistant program. I attended the two-year program and commuted 45 minutes daily. A few years after completing my program I returned to a community college in an attempt to get my bachelor's in occupational therapy, but dropped out after one quarter due to lack of interest and lack of confidence while fulfilling missing course requirements. As the years progressed in my job I became more confident in my skills and abilities.

> It is so important the power of words and what we say to people. I heard it enough over the years that I should go back to school that I finally let it enter my thoughts and my reality, and gave it some conscious thought. Whereas, before I would never have done that. So it was those supervisors and directors and employers, it is really to their credit that I went back to school.

Each year during annual reviews the topic of returning to higher education would come up, and each year I had excuses and did not yet have the confidence to do so.

One of the therapists I was working with had just begun a master's in organizational management course with Antioch at the Seattle campus. She was commuting the one-hour distance and excitedly sharing her positive experience with the university cohort. My investigation of my tribal options revealed a generous education program offering full scholarship with paid tuition, and living expenses for tribal members. It was only as the circumstances backed me into a corner of continuing to work as an assistant or make big changes in my life that I returned to higher education. I am a spiritual person and I was feeling compelled by both my circumstances and by the Creator to begin the program.

So I began my higher education journey and I enjoyed the bachelor's completion program so much that midway into the bachelor's program I with participants # 3 and #4 were committed to the master's in education program and completed them together. And so I began my walk in two worlds.

Within 18 months of completing my master's program and job change I again felt spiritually led to begin a doctoral program despite the fact that I had been medically treated for cancer. It was terrifying to begin a doctoral program months after a cancer-related surgery and the uncertainty of not knowing whether I physically could complete the program based on my health. But once again, I felt that persistent voice encouraging me to pursue the program. As I investigated various doctoral programs I felt most drawn to the Antioch Leadership and Change Ph.D. program. The generous tribal scholarship program that I had benefitted from in the past extended to a doctoral degree so I applied and was accepted to continue my journey of both lifelong learning, and a Native American focus.

Pursuing doctoral studies has been a life affirming course of action for me that has given me the opportunity to refocus my life as a cancer survivor on advocacy and giving to others and viewing my future in a positive light of possibility.

Walking in Two Worlds

For the first 45 years of my life I walked in one world, the non-Native world. It was only as I participated in my Native American cohort that I was acknowledged as a Native American woman, despite the fact that I was an enrolled tribal member since my late twenties. I grew up away from my tribe, reservation, and customs. My first experience with Native Americans outside of my own family was as I began the cohort. It was somewhat traumatic as I began the readings of history from the Native American perspective, which was my first encounter with history other than the non-Native perspective. The cohort participants were warm and accepting of me as I learned my Coastal Salish culture with other tribal members and Native people. In addition to my higher education cohort, I was employed at our K-12 tribal school.

This was a total Native American cultural immersion program of my own creation. It was not without my cultural misunderstandings, growing pains, and tears. I learned firsthand the impact of generational trauma, and poverty within a reservation. I watched as the tribal school struggled to provide accountability and individual growth within a system fraught with tribal politics. It is not an easy process to undergo cultural immersion at any age, much less your first encounter at 45 years of age. I also grew as a Native American woman in those years and the Native-focused higher education fed me with increased historical understanding while my mostly Native American cohort taught me current lessons and facilitated my growth.

My current job as a Title VII Indian Educator for the bordering school district is a liaison position of standing in the middle place and daily walking in two worlds. I frequently find

myself explaining the customs or expectations of the tribe or the non-Native school district to each other. I am in meetings to help facilitate understanding and collaboration.

> This role of a liaison can be a lonely place because you are in the middle ground that not everyone understands or can stand within. It is kind of lonely at times but it is very valuable because it facilitates understanding. And it helps people to recognize, understand, and accept cultural differences. So we need liaisons, they are a very valuable and play an important role. So in terms of my Native experience there is so very much for me to learn about my Native culture, I have foundational understandings and I have a belief in remaining a lifelong learner and to remain open and adaptable to the new learning.

Future Leadership

In my future leadership I am focused on Native American education and currently enjoy the advocacy that comes with working within a K-12 system.

> Working with high school students there are times when you are required to dream for them when they can't dream themselves, push them, and encourage them. Because we do not know what kind of messages they are getting elsewhere. I know how valuable those positive messages of belief and encouragement were for me when people said I should to go into higher education.

I envision working next in higher education within a community college, university, or possibly a bridge program. If not within these areas, I might work within a nonprofit serving Native Americans. I have learned the importance of remaining open to the Creator and life experiences that will come my way. I would not have imagined participating in the higher education that I have completed. Even in my wildest dreams those were never imagined so I try to view my future more open to my experiences.

I am passionate about two things, being a life-long learner, and recognizing that as life-long learners we can pick up education at any point in our lives. It does not have to be a straight educational progression, and, like me, and for many of our Native American students, it is not a straight pathway to higher education. It is complicated and has frequent stop outs, but that does

not change the fact that students who are dedicated to their educational goal can do it. Through federal student loans and scholarships, and tribal educational commitment to their people and providing scholarships, students have the means to do it. Education is vital in our tribal nation building, and we must have the educational background, in skills and degrees, for our tribal nations to keep them viable as they fight every single day for our tribal rights. We need educated and empowered Native American people to fight for their people and nations.

Conclusion

The findings of the talking circle and the individual portraits provided important narratives of the cohort participants. The stories are similar and yet personally exclusive in terms of the paths to higher education and persistence. Universities and colleges would describe and refer to the participants of this research as non-traditional students. Throughout their program the cohort participants described how they maintained their vision of completing their higher education as well as the resultant changes their education would initiate within their lives, their families, and communities.

In Chapter V I discuss, analyze, and interpret the data while answering the research question: How has participation in a bachelor's completion and master's in education program influenced the women participants and their current leadership in education? The data results and themes will be discussed in detail with additional supporting narratives by the participants. Additionally, in Chapter V the scope and limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Chapter V: Interpretation of the Findings

My research included the participants of a university/tribal college partnership as members of a cohort who were completing their higher education. The data includes portraits derived from a talking circle and four in-depth portraits, including my own self-portrait. I have used a qualitative phenomenology, ethnography portraiture method for my research. The rich detail in the portraits coupled with the relational accountability was an appropriate fit for a mostly indigenous population of participants.

In this chapter I will discuss the data in terms of the demographics, analysis, interpretation, themes, scope, and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. Recurring themes were noted within the talking circle and in-depth participant portraits. Commonality was found in their educational experience in the following areas: healing and empowerment, persistence and walking in two worlds, advocacy, and leadership. This chapter will identify those widespread encounters, obstacles, and achievements within the higher educational experiences of the participants and answer my research question: How has participation in a bachelor's completion and master's in education program influenced the women participants and their current leadership in education? In addition to my dissertation research, future research and recommendations will be shared and discussed from the findings. The participant demographics are included and important to the analysis of the research, as well as recommendations for higher education institutions.

Participant Demographics

The participants of the talking circle as well as the one-to-one portraits were enrolled in the First Peoples' program, an Antioch University Seattle/tribal college partnership. The participants were in a cohort learning experience and working toward their bachelor's

completion or master's in education, and both programs provided the option for a teacher's certification.

I chose to share the portraits of the women of the cohort since the program had few male participants. The majority of the cohort members were tribal members and several were non-Native. For my research, two of the participants were non-Native, and the rest were tribal members or a tribal descendent. The participants' initial higher educational experience for their Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree was most often at a community college, and other participants completed vocational school, state university, or tribal college. The participants' first encounter in higher education ranged in age from 18-53 years of age, with the majority entering higher education at 18 years old directly after high school. Participants were later enrolled in the First Peoples cohort at the ages of 32-61 years of age, with the majority in their 40s. The difference in the amount of time before most participants returned to higher education and ultimately entered the cohort was 20-23 years after their first college or university degrees, with a range of 2-46 years later. The data is consistent with tribal college demographics of Native American students considered non-traditional, older students, and half of the student population is female single parents (AIHEC AIM Fact Book, 2009-2010; Jackson et al., 2003; Lundberg, 2007).

A unique attribute of the university/tribal partnership student cohort was increased ages ranging from 32-61 years, while the age range of most of the tribal college students was 16-49. Overall, the increase in age of the university/tribal college partnership is consistent with the findings of the National Center for Education Statistics for students overall (NCES, 2011). Collectively, the participants had 204 years of experience in the field of education, with 128 years exclusively related to the education of Native American students in tribal or public schools.

Individually, the number of years the participants taught Native American students ranged from 5-49 years. Nearly half of the participants were first generation college students and had taken a non-linear path to their undergraduate and graduate degrees, as was consistent with the research (Jackson et al., 2003; Saggio & Rendon, 2004; Waterman, 2007). The participants were mothers, single parents, wives, sisters, aunties, grandmothers, community members, employees, and cultural and spiritual leaders.

Most participants were aware of their direct educational influence on at least five or more family members, and indirect influence on additional community members. This was a conservative number of individuals influenced by the participants, as it is recognizably difficult to measure one's direct influence, especially when the all the participants work in the field of education. An estimation of the number of students and community members the educator participants influenced as role models is likely far greater than their personal belief.

Healing and Empowerment

Healing and empowerment was a frequent theme of the talking circle and the in-depth portraits. Words used to describe healing and empowerment ranged from self-confidence, spirituality, gaining and using their voice, feeling validated, sense of dignity, having recognized leadership, and self-determination. Several participants noted education provided this empowerment and considered receiving their higher education degrees as their personal acts of self-determination.

The development of first-generation students in learning communities or cohorts is discussed by Jenangir (2009). These learning communities create safe environments and bridges for first generation students to understand the complex world of higher education at the same time as finding their ability of self-expression and voice.

> Finding voice is irrevocably tied to the notion of self within community, because one's voice does not exist in a vacuum; rather it is embedded in and impacted by context, language and position of the speaker and by the community in which he or she must speak. (Jenangir, 2009, p. 40)

Lundberg (2007) provided another example of learning and voice found within higher education classroom discussions where students were required to "integrate ideas, reflect on concepts, and synthesize multiple perspectives from various types of sources" (p. 415). This was coupled with institutions that valued diversity and provided the students an ability to learn to share their thoughts and voice in discussion. This type of engagement was a noted by Lundberg (2007) as a factor in their empowerment as well as their student involvement within the institution and their persistence and resiliency.

The tribal university cohort program was developed with a culturally relevant curriculum. An example of this was one of our initial classes was a writing support class. We had a university non-Native writing professor who slowly and patiently taught our cohort to use our voices audibly and in the written word. Weekly we completed required journaling and free writes, and ultimately papers. In our second quarter we were to write a 20-30 page self-story. Again, the instructor masterfully, and patiently, led us section by section into the in-depth self-story. In retrospect, it is evident how this elder instructor worked tirelessly at encouraging her insecure writers by assigning various creative writing assignments. We were taught to share our thoughts and written word aloud in the small intimate class of six students. This exercise was noted as a foundational piece to our gaining trust with each other and sequentially developing our voice and was discussed in the talking circle by several participants.

Participant #3 had always dreamed of being a teacher, since she was six years old, and raised her hand in school to identify her vision of becoming a teacher. She had dropped out of high school in the 9th grade and completed her GED, and later returned to higher education. She

realized her dream of one day becoming a teacher through the university/tribal college bachelor's completion program with a teacher's certification. She noted her personal act of self-determination as developing her voice.

> I have a voice. I have never in my life probably felt like I had a voice. For me I have always felt that I was, I don't know, strong-willed? But I think that not only am I strong-willed, but that I am strong. I can advocate for our communities and I can advocate for children, whether they are Native or not, and for my fellow teachers. (participant #3)

As a 6th-through-8th grade math and reading interventionist for Native students in a public school participant #3 described her students as "thriving."

> I have about 90 and they thrive. And they love who they are. Some of them come not wanting to say to everyone in the school they are Native, but when they are here with me they learn to know that they are okay being Native. Whether they have blonde hair and blue eyes, or whether they are like me. I love my job and I thank all you guys for the part that you played in making me in who I am. Because you remember me, I was so shy and so scared. But you guys let me be who I was, and become who I am.

She thus found an empowered voice was found within the educational process of a learning community. Ultimately, the strength and leadership gained by the participants is then enacted within their jobs and leadership positions.

Participant #4 spoke of her inspiration in returning to higher education when she made a job change from a Head Start teacher of 17 years, to a new position as a teacher's assistant at her tribal school and being unsatisfied with the change in title. Participant #4 credits an encouraging boss who persuaded her to return to higher education and was accommodating in her early release from her job to attend school to support her efforts. Participant #4 was instrumental in recruiting other participants to return to their higher education. She described her cohort educational experience as follows

> But the one thing, when I think back to finishing the cohort up, I think it gave me the strength to think that I wasn't stuck in a job. I could tilt it any way, but it gave me the confidence that I could do anything.

Sonja likewise noted the empowerment of her higher education experience in the master's degree in education and completing her degree.

> After I finished my thesis there is pretty much nothing I can't do. [Laughter]. I am pretty much invincible now. It's definitely going to school full time, working full time, and with three children, it was just a strengthening piece. It definitely let me know that you can do whatever it is you want to do. You really can. That's definitely a mark for education because it definitely did that for me. I would say that it tells me whatever I want to do, I can do. I am pushing through with the garden thing and I want to. I would love to go to Tribal schools everywhere and show from the ground up how it can be done.

I too noted my completion of my higher education as an act of self-determination and healing in my self-portrait.

> I truly believe that I was led by the Creator to do this, and it was beyond my wildest dreams to go back to school and get my bachelors and the self-determination to see myself in a new light. And to believe in myself in a new way, and to push myself beyond my limits, while at the same time walking in a new world. It was a huge act of self-determination to get my bachelors. And there were those of us who were saying we are not stopping here, and we are going on to get our masters. And within our bachelors completion there were 4 of us that finished our masters, and that was huge. And then I was out for a year and it was like this is not enough. I want my doctorate. And so I started looking into programs, with my Tribal support and the generosity of their scholarships. It has been a huge act of self-determination supported by my Tribe.

Participant #1 completed her Associate of Arts degree in 1998 and despite the promptings of her family to return to school she was married and did not pursue her education. She indicated God and participant #4 were instrumental in her later return to higher education.

> I think it was just time. And then as we went back I kept thinking well, there is always the place God put you at that time. I really am a spiritual believing person, and as so my health you guys all remember, my health was really bad at that time, but everything created everything else that was going on. So I don't think I really had a choice in what was going on, and why I was going back to school…. So I think is a part of my reasoning. Coupled with the fact that I had such a great

> bunch of ladies to travel with the support system was there. And I think we don't have that, lots of times. And I think in building cohorts that is what you do. So I just really believe that everything happens for a reason and it happens for another for a reason that mirrors what you want to do in your life. My brother even said to me when I said "Guess what I am doing, I am going back to school to become a teacher." He said "Oh really, don't you think that you should have done that a long time ago? You know you could do that" or something like that. I chuckled to myself because they already knew, they meaning my older siblings. That's what that was all about.

Participant #1 summarized the higher education cohort learning experience by reflecting:

> But I think the leadership that was developed amongst us the trust and I think it is holding us up. You know I hear you guys the voices and I hear the spiritual connection amongst all of us. The healing we went through, we all knew what we were going to do whatever that made us to be where we were at that time. That education that we received in that group was about us healing. And we all went through it together.

These portraits communicate the validation the participants received within, and from their educational experience. Saggio and Rendon (2004) identified the importance of validation within a learning environment and the cultural climate to produce self-confidence, voice, and empowerment. Within a learning community this can be both "interpersonal and sometimes spiritual in nature" (Saggio & Rendon, 2004, p. 233). Their research identified the role of creating "validating learning environments," with a direct correlation to the cultural content and the student's learning competencies (p. 237).

Debra stated

> From the moment that diploma for master's in education from well established non conventional Antioch First People's Program was handed to me I got something new and exhilarating: Dignity!! I began to regain my sense of self-empowerment and began to advocate for others and myself with a newfound power. I was now a dignified academic and I began writing articles, taking control of my story and moving forward with strength and no fear again.

Personal healing and empowerment gave several participants voices to become advocates for their students and community members. I too had viewed my education as an act of self-

determination and empowerment, although I had never considered my higher education as an act of healing until it was stated by participant #1. It was accurate to state my education was healing, it was healing for all those times of feeling insecure, devalued, voiceless, and lacking confidence in myself and my ability. Participant # 2 noted in a picture at her graduation ceremony wearing her gown with the other classmates and holding her cap her finger was positioned in an unmistakable gesture

> I really like that, I know when we all took pictures of ourselves when we were in our cap and gown. I think my finger was like this (demonstrating a gesture) [Laughter]. This is because of all the times when people have treated us so badly without that piece of paper, when we were growing up. Going to school is like an affirmation, where we stood and where we believed. How Indian kids were being treated. So we had to go all the way around, or go clear down 1-5 to get that paper to just to have that voice and to have that affirmation. But that piece of paper looks good. I think we were the only ones that know that that finger meant [Laughter].

Participant #2 had stated her motivation to return to higher education later in life was to "stand in the same line as the teachers and have a voice. I would be a voice for the students." The noted empowerment and confidence the participants felt having received their degrees impacted their own lives as well as the lives of the students they served, their family, and their communities.

The healing was found in their self-confidence, skills, bicultural efficacy, and seeing themselves as equals in the field of education. Empowered with their educational background and self-assurance in their abilities the participants no longer saw themselves from a deficit base, but rather from a stance of equality with their educational peers. The healing was in the daily triumphs of being non-traditional students and meeting all their accompanying responsibilities. Their successes were achieved in the foundational educational process in both the mundane and larger projects building their sense of value, and bicultural efficacy. Participant #1 referred to the shared learning experience.

> You are building community, and when you are building community amongst your own community, because when we go home and you hear, her Dad (hand on participant) and his, bless his heart he is gone. And when we graduated he gave us a big dinner. He was one of the elders of our nation and he was in our council for many years and we just lost him recently. And it was an honor. He goes, "I wanna thank you girls," and there is an elder saying that to us and we are older ladies. But here is an elder respecting the fact that we were getting our education. And I want everyone to know so they call the [name] to come in and take pictures that is our [name] newspaper. I want you guys to have this on the front page, and sure enough they did. These girls, you know sometimes they wouldn't believe that we did that. Sometimes I don't believe we did that. The commitment it took, and the stick-to-it-ness that the ladies had in just finishing.

Nation-building and self-determination come with knowledge and the resultant healing of Native American students and their tribal communities. Despite research stating the low numbers of successful educational predecessors, and noting Native Americans as the smallest number of students in higher education as well as the student population taking the longest amount of time to complete their goals and meet graduation requirements, Native American students who persist in accomplishing their goals, and complete their education heal themselves, as well as their communities, and nations in the process. There is healing in the awareness that as a student, as a Native American woman, you defied the norm, while at the same time setting an example for those around you.

My personal healing occurred upon receiving my degrees and the resultant inclusion and recognition it permitted within my daily work in the hierarchical field of education and interacting with school administrators and teachers.

> In the settings in which I worked in medical, and education, without that piece of paper people don't listen to you. Or they discount you, or you don't even get invited into the table for the meetings and they are very hierarchical, as I have said and you need a piece a paper[degree] to play the game. Once I had that I was able to be a part of different programs and got invited to have my voice heard in terms of culture and activities as liaison within the tribe and within the public school, and without my current master's degree I don't think it would be happening. Or it would be happening in a much more limited sense.

Kenny et al. (2004) spoke of the healing and empowerment of nations through their women.

> Our people will not heal and rise toward becoming self-governing and strong people both in spirit and vision until the women rise and give direction and support to our leaders. That time is now. The women are now actively participating in insuring the empowerment of their people. Life is a daily struggle as women, as mothers, as sisters, as aunties, and grandmothers. We are responsible for the children of today and those of tomorrow. It is with pure kindness and our respect for life that allows us to gladly take up this responsibility to nurture the children, to teach of what we know, from what we have learned through trial and error. (p.71)

The degree of healing for the participants was related to their own personal journey in addition to the twenty or more years these educators operated within a hierarchical education system that limited their potential and voice based on a job title. The employment ceiling, lack of educational opportunities, finances, employment limitations related to job positions, and not being unrecognized, or heard, were the influences that required healing through the higher education process. The irony is the field of education with its hierarchy and limitations initiated the wounds, yet also provided the curative healing when the participants completed their higher education.

Walking in Two Worlds and Persistence

The Native American and Alaskan Native educational experience is complicated. It is complex due, in part, to dual beliefs, languages, and spirituality presented and taught at any one time for the student to negotiate within her learning experience. Due to this duplicity or multiplicity of concepts, Native American and Alaskan Native students have experienced a tumultuous and fractured education, fractured in the sense of the common phrase "walking in two worlds." Wildcat, an accomplished Indigenous author, educator, and activist referred to walking in two worlds as a schizophrenic educational experience. He clarified that it is a more accurate depiction to say "walking in two cultures":

> The problem of professional expertise in institutions of higher education is that "expertise" is thought of as culture-free or value-neutral. It is true most American Indian students feel they are "caught between two cultures" throughout their technical and professional education, but I would argue that professional and technical education is in fact is not a "specific body of knowledge existing with the gulf between two cultures." Rather, professional education and the resulting "expertise" are implicitly value-laden and reflective of the schizophrenic metaphysics of Western society. (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 114)

This is not an uncommon experience for Indigenous peoples in their educational pursuits to incorporate their cultural beliefs with those they are being taught within their secondary and post-secondary education. Researchers have referred to this student experience as transculturation—to persist and maintain their cultural identity (Huffman, 2001), bicultural efficacy, the belief that one can be true to one's ethnic identity and still function effectively in the majority culture (Okagaki et al., 2009), spiritual relevance, or, arriving to their higher education with a foundation of knowledge (Saggio & Rendon, 2004), and cultural resilience (Wexler & Burke, 2011). This recognition of the benefits of two cultures in the education of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives is an asset-based approach. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) noted this as the "creative tension as we compare and reconcile, where possible, Western scientific knowledge and information with our own cumulative tribal wisdom" (p. 87). Recognition of Indigenous knowledge and ways within Euro-Western educational institutions is a relatively recent admission.

The subject of walking in two worlds was discussed in the talking circle and was a topic in all the portraits. This matter was relevant for all the participants, Native American and non-Native, as all were involved in a second culture besides their own. Participants discussed their experiences in two worlds as coming to terms and making peace with their own relatives and the different cultures within their immediate family, at their school as a young child, commuting

from their Native American reservation community to attend higher education, and leaving the dominant culture to enroll and participate in a university/tribal college partnership.

Sonja described her family as multi-racially mixed and stated they "celebrated everything as normal." She noted

> So I guess that is the best way you can describe I don't, it is hard to say walking in two worlds, because it is walking in one world it is my world. It is just the world of me, and I am different than a lot of people and I am the same as a lot of people. So I think it is good, it is a good thing.

Sonja depicted the experiences of racial comments, slurs, and teasing by her young classmates, "I lived and went to school with non-Natives, but I was obviously different. So I think it made me stronger." She expressed being "drawn" to a tribal college for her higher education experience, "because it was like people." She illustrated the difference of the dominant Native tribal college as holding her up as a Native American woman, rather than her experience in the past when the dominant Euro-Western educational culture was pushing her down for being Indigenous.

Bicultural efficacy and the process of transculturation for Native American students attending Euro-Western dominant culture higher education programs is outlined as either a process of estrangement or of transculturation for the student by Huffman (2001) and supported in the research of Okagaki et al. (2009). This theory is used to explain persistence among culturally traditional Native Americans during their higher education. Those students who persist are typically those who maintain their cultural traditions while attending school in the dominant culture and view their education with openness while continuing to value and practice their traditional and cultural beliefs. The stages of transculturation are noted as initial alienation, self-discovery, realignment, and participation (Huffman, 2001, p. 24). Those traditional Native American students who viewed their dominant culture education as a threat and as assimilation

are less likely to persist. The process of estrangement is outlined as initial alienation, disillusionment, emotional rejection, and disengagement (Huffman, 2001, p. 24).

The portraits demonstrate the participants' growth and transculturation in their educational process as young children and later in their higher education and university/tribal college cohort experience. Sonja described her encounter with racism, remarking how stereotypical comments and slurs caused her to grow in her self-discovery and realization of the unique family background she had, and their practices of celebrating their differences. She noted these actions initiated her desire to be different from those children from the dominant culture who teased her. "So I think it made me stronger. It made me embrace who I am."

Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5, along with myself, attended higher education in a non-Native and dominant culture, college, or university for their first two years. The enticement for participant #4 was the Native-focused program, and she was later instrumental in leading others to enroll in the higher education program. Participant #2 stated her encounter in walking in two worlds was during her Associate of Arts degree and the absences she had accrued while attending cultural and community activities. "I now understand the meaning of walking in two worlds. When you have a commitment to education, it must be just that a commitment."

The experience of participant #2 is similar to those cited in Kenny's research (2002). Her research project included gathering Canadian aboriginal stories for policy recommendations. The narratives revealed the frequency with which Native American women in higher education were required to make difficult choices regarding their participation in their education and the strict interpretations of the dominant culture's school policy over their participation in cultural events, including deaths and funerals. The majority of the time the students were required to align themselves with the school policy in order to persist and continue in their education. The

institution's marginalization of indigenous customs and activities required as Huffman (2002) stated a "Realignment" of the student's practices, and as participant #2 noted "when you have a commitment to education it must be just that a commitment." She goes on to state with pride her encounters and the importance of walking in two worlds, and as a tribal school educator she can share her knowledge with her students.

My experience of walking in two worlds was a warm and welcoming environment of co-learners in the Native focused program. I had extensive new learning regarding my culture and Native American history, and these courses provided a new and alternate historical lens with disillusionment, and corrections to what I had been taught in the dominant culture high school, and community college. I created a personal cultural immersion program in a part-time position in our tribal elementary school. While I was learning my cultural ways, I was also viewing the current educational practices of an inclusive K-12 tribal school, which were notably different than my own elementary knowledge, or that of my children.

Both non-Native Marie and participant #6 sought out an experience of walking into another culture in the Native-focused university/tribal college cohort. Participant #6 had spent time in Arizona on the Hopi reservation "invited by a friend to attend dinners, ceremonies, and dances." This participant was open to "learn and understand another culture." She indicated because of these former experiences she had previously walked in another culture, and the university/tribal college cohort was a good fit.

Marie had been a seasoned traveler staying in numerous countries and cultures around the world and had recently returned from four years in Fairbanks, Alaska. "I thought I don't know anything about these cultures [local Native American] and if there is a way for me to have a real

great different experience, I should do something like that." She respected and valued the cultural education she received from her university/tribal college experience:

> But if we can just have a better understanding and think more pluralistically about cultures and where people come from and where their challenges are in history. How to maybe learn from history so we do not continue to repeat it. Repeat the inequities and the things that make people hurt…. I would have not realized that again, if it had not been for going through the cohort and having those deep understandings that were brought to me that education.

In summary, the experience of walking in two worlds made the participants stronger in their bicultural efficacy, confidence, voice, and as role models for their students, families and communities. It opened up understandings for all the participants in sharing of their respective cultures. The participants stated they valued the Native focused learning they obtained within the university/tribal college partnership.

Persistence

All the participants spoke to their persistence in their education. It should be noted that I initiated discussions around health and long-distance commutes with those students who had what could be perceived as obstacles and did not mention them as such or even note them as a difficulty in the discussion until I questioned them regarding the topics.

There is extensive research from differing points of view on Native American students' persistence and resilience in higher education. The topics include social and campus support, including mentoring of peer, faculty, and staff, in both organized and organic mentoring relationships (Belgarde & Lore, 2003; Chanet-Garcia, 2005; J. P. Guillory, 2008; Lundberg, 2007; Lundberg & Schriener, 2004; Okagaki et al., 2009; Shotton et al., 2007; Waterman, 2007). Integration into campus life and incorporating family support is noted and most frequently cited from foundational research by Tinto (1975), Pavel and Padilla (1993), and the Heavy Runner and DeCelles (2002) family education model. Other researchers called for family support in tangible

terms such as childcare, family social interactions, liaison, and spiritual support (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2010; J. P. Guillory, 2008; R. M. Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Martin, 2005; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; Waterman, 2007). Mentoring and family support were outlined with few researchers acknowledging the benefits of a learning community or cohort for relational sustainability.

The participants were able to maintain the support of their families while continuing their education in the university/tribal college partnership. On several occasions due to lack of childcare the participants had their children or grandchildren present in the class in an open and accepted manner by the cohort as well as the institution. A family-like setting was established by the lead faculty member, suggesting the cohort share a meal on class days due to the rural location, time, and for the social support a shared meal creates. Participant #3 volunteered to make a main dish for the meals and extended herself in practical ways for the cohort. These actions built camaraderie, support, and care for one another, and as the research indicated strengthened the resilience and persistence of the cohort.

The portraits revealed sacrifices, persistence, and resiliency, as well as those circumstances that others would consider an obstacle or hindrance and were not described as such in the portraits or the talking circle. As noted by the researchers and participants, obstacles mentioned were time, money, self-confidence (Kanu, 2006), and other passions. Several portraits identified health issues or absences, and family deaths, yet it was not stated as an obstacle, despite the fact that there were participants who were out for a period of time during their higher education.

During the talking circle I waited for the group who had traveled 3.5 hours one way to speak to the distance they traveled to the university/tribal college program yet none had

mentioned the travel. So I specifically asked the group to speak about their commute. They mentioned with fond memories of their travel together and the community bonding they experienced during the 3 times per week commute for some participants for 2 years, and others 4 years continuously. There were several others in the cohort who traveled 2-2.5 hours coming from the western part of the state to attend. Sonja and Debra lived 45 minutes in opposite directions from the university/tribal college campus. It was obvious the length of time and the distance to the university/tribal college partnership program was not viewed as, nor did it become, an obstacle to the participants.

As was cited in the research, money was stated numerous times as an obstacle to the participants' higher education (J. P. Guillory, 2008; Lee, Donlan, & Brown, 2011; Martin, 2005) and their ability to initiate their learning prior to, or since, the cohort. All participants joked regarding their school loans and current debt, and again those interested in their doctorate were contemplating their finances, and their need for additional loans. Once more, money was considered an obstacle to their participation in a sought after higher education program. Despite this obstacle, however, several participants were seriously investigating doctoral programs.

Sacrifices included their time and involvement with their families and communities. Yet most stated the example they were setting for their families and communities was an important factor for them, especially their immediate sons and daughters, as a positive example rather than a family sacrifice. Participant # 2 remarked:

> I think the whole idea of building a foundation for not only myself, but for the kids. It only takes two years, you are going to go forward anyway you might as well be doing something. And someone cannot take it away from you. I think the motivation was just that little inner voice. And that said the people look at it and say it can be done.

Participant #2 noted the singular focus and sacrifices of higher education at the exclusion of berry picking, fishing, funerals, and gatherings. Participant # 3 stated she wanted to continue learning and show her students they too could keep learning. Participant # 5, the elder of the group, stated that she returned to school in her 30s and later in her 60s for the university/tribal college, "But I am always pushing them and reminded them that I worked and went to go back to school, and if I could do it, they could do it. I am still pushing them to continue their education." I likewise felt the family example of returning to higher education outweighed the sacrifices required at the time.

> I started going back to school when I was 45, my son had just graduated high school and my daughter was a freshman. So my son and I started college at the same time. So they got to see me doing homework when they were doing homework, and working on formatting papers. They got to see the sacrifice of when you do your education once you have a family. So I would say "You need to get this done while you are young. See how hard this is." And they would say "Yes, I see it."

Sonja described her obstacle as, "Money and the need to show them [children] that this is how you do it. You run into obstacles, life happens and you have to happen with it. You may have obstacles but you have to keep moving."

Age is a factor in that the cohort ranged from 32-64 years old with most participants in their 40s. It could thus be said that the majority of their child-raising years were behind them, while their elder care responsibilities could be increasing, as noted by Debra. Family obligations were heightened for this age group, yet they persisted. The dedication and single focus of the participants is evident in their endurance and resiliency. The participants stated financial needs for their families as a motivation to return to school, as well as their personal desires for fulfillment of long-held dreams of higher education. Because of their age they had a vast amount of work experience in the field of education or other areas, prior to the university/tribal college

cohort. The participants were fully aware of their employment limitations without higher education and initiated the change for themselves, their families, and their communities. The sacrifices also lead to their resiliency and persistence in meeting their educational goals for themselves as well as their families.

Extensive research has been completed regarding the role of institutional responsibility of the campus climate, acceptance of diversity, and the cultural and multicultural relevant curriculum. The role of the higher education institutions and their responsibility regarding the school climate, Native American support programs, and acceptance of diversity were identified as supporting Native American students' persistence (Belgarde & Lore, 2003; Campbell, 2007; Chanet-Garcia, 2005; Katz, 2005; Lundberg, 2007; Okagaki et al., 2009; Oxendine, Oxendine, & Minthorn, 2013; Wexler & Burke, 2011). The research revealed various higher education institutions partnered with tribal nations and created university and tribal college partnership programs with neighboring tribes. Other examples of higher education institutions making concerted efforts toward their Native American students included specific Native American studies programs, Native American fraternities and sororities, development of culturally relevant curricula, viewing and recognizing students as arriving to the institution with foundational knowledge and cultural wisdom, and providing cultural events such as PowWows, all of which are typically designed to address Native American students' persistence.

Martin and Thunder (2013) noted the importance of institutions and student affairs to include and partner with tribal elders and tribal communities. They described an act of spiritual inclusiveness by the University of Montana and University of Wisconsin, and the spiritual practice of smudging. The smudging ceremony is performed as a cultural purification ceremony, and prior to students moving into their dormitories. The universities reviewed and modified

their policy regarding burning items in the dwellings to enable the students to participate in the ceremony.

> Smudging is restricted to designated space, signs are posted, and in most cases university officials are notified before the ceremony. Although still not ideal, this type of policy demonstrates an important first step institutions can take to assist Native students in meeting their unique needs. (Martin & Thunder, 2013, p. 44)

The university/tribal college summer program's schedule was culturally sensitive to the student's needs and designed around regional Native American community activities. To avoid interference with regional tribal fireworks sales the university/tribal college program's summer quarter began after the 4th of July, to provide students availability to work in family and community firework stands. Shortly after the quarter began there was a 2-3 week break in July for the regional canoe journey in which many students were involved either as support for, or a member of, a canoe family. This was an example of a university/tribal college program making every effort of inclusion and student sensitivity for increased involvement in a culturally-based program. The instruction was, as much as possible, taught by Native Americans and the content and curricula were Native focused. Spirituality was practiced as culturally appropriate and respected by all. The university/tribal college partnership sought to create and provide a culturally based bachelor's and master's in education program for the Native American focused program.

Leadership and Advocacy

The leadership and advocacy within the portraits are unmistakable, and in many occurrences in unrecognized and unauthorized actions within a hierarchical educational setting. There were noted differences within the leadership and advocacy pre- and post-higher education for the participants. The participants were notably empowered in their leadership by their higher education.

Advocacy. The most common word the participants used for their leadership actions was advocacy, specifically, and repeatedly by those who worked in public school systems. But it was not exclusive to public schools; vocational and tribal school employees also noted their actions of advocacy for the students they worked with. Participant #3 stated she taught non-Native administrators the cultural importance of funerals and their length of time, as well as other gatherings pertaining to her students' absences.

> It has been a huge advocacy thing for me to learn how to have a voice. ME, the one who couldn't speak. I do have a voice and I do have dignity and a voice. So my kids can retain their dignity and as that advocate, I have to go in there with dignity so that they don't say. "Oh yeah she is lying for you" of whatever it is, because I come off with an attitude. So I don't, I speak to them in the most peaceful, calm manner that I can so they can get it. That this isn't a fight, this is the way it is, and you are going to have to understand it, because I am going to teach you, and that is what I do.

She described how a teacher had called a student a "Dumbo" in her presence, and how she had intervened on behalf of the student:

> And they said "Oh he likes it, he thinks it is funny." But he said this to me and I walked out in the hall, I was covering for a class and I caught up with him. "I just want to ask, do you really like being called Dumbo?" He said "No." I said "Can you tell her that?" and he said, "No, I can't tell her that." I said, "Do you want me to tell her that?" he said, "No." But I made it clear to people these things are happening, not in a pointed way, but that she would know the exact conversation, in a way they should know I 'm tattling, but more like but that is not how I talk to my kids and that is not how I talk to these kids. In fact they need something totally different. I don't know if that is considered leadership? But I really feel that if you don't say anything then you are following.

Additionally, participant # 3 advocated for middle school students at the beginning of each school year by teaching students to speak up for themselves in teacher and staff interactions in a respectful manner.

> I tell all of my students that if you don't feel like you are being treated well, you have the right, and I taught my kids this too. You have the right to say to someone, "I am sorry, I don't like the way that you are speaking to me and I am asking you to stop." And I ask them to please say it just like that, and keep the

> anger out of your voice. Keep your eyes on their eyes and you tell them, "I don't like the way that you are treating me, I am asking you to stop." And then you can say it again and that is an empowering thing that I do for my kids every year. And some of them used it and some of them have gotten themselves in trouble, but I always back them. I say, "They have the right to tell you they don't appreciate the way you are treating them." That hit that nerve with me and it is very important. Most important to me.

Non-Native participant # 6 was employed at a non-traditional public high school. She described her advocacy as:

> For example, I advocate for my students even when that isn't popular. This year, for example, I advocated for students who were placed in classes they weren't ready for; LA, math without the prerequisite classes and raised questions about how we place them in the future. I advocated for students who needed extra help, working with other teachers (I have some wonderful colleagues) and arranging tutoring/extra help. I also believe that we respect students when we hold them accountable, while helping them not always the case. I brought this up even though it was difficult because it happens, and it isn't for the students. They need us to give them an education that means something to them and helps them in the future, not just a piece of paper.
>
> I also work in a public school setting and daily within my job I am required to advocate for students and their families with administrators, principals, teachers, and staff in different meetings regarding school policies, procedures, and interactions.
>
> What are more important to me, when I was in medical it was patient rights, and now it is student rights and social justice, and working within systems and within a team.

Debra is the only participant currently working in a for-profit vocational training program, as an instructor and department head. She stated her advocacy as:

> But the way that I look at their vocational training and I have been a leader there and I have been so attracted to helping my ESL and my dyslexic, and all the students who are having the most troubles seem to come to me and seem so and glad that they end up making it through the program because I have worked with them so much. I think that I need to take that passion and that strength and take it somewhere I am more appreciated, and I can do even better work.

Participant # 2, who worked in a tribal school, explained an example of her advocacy.

> I was talking to one of the gals who was in the office yesterday and I said, "So are you going to sit at that desk all the time?" And she said, "I'm thinking about going back to school." I said, "That's it. Let's call them right now." So I can be an advocate to some of the younger people. So I said "What is it you need to do?" And she shared her story, about dropping out, and owing money. I said, "There are ways around that. The first thing that you need to do with that." So I can be an advocate and I really like that. Even when we were going to school if kids were thinking about going, to school I really like that. Even those people that were not thinking about going to school when they see us dashing out the door then they can see that they can move forward themselves. Not to stay back sitting and being happy.

The participants noted their advocacy was strengthened by their higher education and the process of building their efficacy, validation for their personal dignity, culture, and their personal voice. The university of the tribal college partnership was founded and had a long, rich, dedicated history of social justice, which strengthened and empowered the advocacy of the participants. The participants were steadfast in their activism for their students and as promoters of justice and equality.

Leadership. The leadership of the participants was in realms and activities beyond their authorized roles and positions of employment. Recognized leadership was found in their employment and the development and writing of curricula for the tribal school language and culture programs by participants # 5 and #6. Participant #5 spoke of her legacy of teaching for 28 years. Over that period of time she encountered numerous school principals who supported culture and language within the curriculum, and those who did not. She stated she currently worked with an administration supportive of language and culture. During a staff meeting she reportedly encouraged the tribal school staff to the use the morning announcements spoken in the tribal language as daily language lessons. The Native American educators leadership and their roles as consistent caretakers of their tribal culture and language in addition to their leadership as

teaching role models for the children, helped to maintain their ways of being for future generations and contribute to the nation-building of their tribe.

> When I first started doing morning announcements the kids didn't really go for that morning announcements. They didn't really go for that, and here we are again. But the teachers, when we would start having our meetings and I spoke that we need to have all the staff encourage the kids with the morning announcements and speaking it. So a lot of the teachers are now making them take notes and they have to remember the word of the day. They get rewards for it. Now they really miss it, if I am not there, or if I am gone. They miss the morning announcements. Teachers are all catching onto the readings, because I read the same way every day so they remember their greetings. So now they like morning announcements. I challenge them to go and do it sometimes when I am not there. Now I have to find more curriculum for them because they are starting off at a younger age now. I am busy all this summer working on my lesson plans and trying to make it more challenging for them next year. I am real happy that as I watch the school grow it does get better and better.

Participant #6, the elementary culture and language teacher of the same tribal school and nation, stated,

> We know that our students are very capable. I would think that maybe I could be a role model for some of the students. If she [I] could do it, they would feel that they could do it. I think the other reason was for my community, there are not very many people in our community that have a master's degree and I was looking at some statistic today and it was like a very low percent. I think the whole idea of building a foundation for not only myself, but for the kids. It only takes two years; you are going to go forward anyway you might as well be doing something that will be worth the while. Once you are done there is no one that can take it away from you. Once you get your education it is yours. I think the motivation was just that little inner voice talking.

There is significant power in the longevity of work by these educators, by their daily presence and encouragement of their students, staff, and their community, not only in their words but in their actions and leadership. Both culture and language teachers described the multiple generations they had taught their tribal history, culture, and their language. They described the number of former students who regularly approached them to speak the language to them. Participant # 5 had videos of her first classes from 1992 which she played for her current students. Present students had the opportunity to view their mothers, family, and community

members from twenty years ago in her culture classes, and the enjoyment the students received in seeing familiar faces while reinforcing participant #5's leadership as a keeper and teacher of their language and culture.

Sonja's leadership was demonstrated in the development of the gardening program and in her daily classroom management. She noted the importance as a teacher and leader "leading them somewhere where they feel it is a good safe place." The gardening program is one such program where the students reportedly look forward to and enjoy their time and lessons in the gardens.

The gardening process began with a classroom worm composter. Despite being told she could not continue worm composting, Sonja found a way with a new large fish tank. The glass tank was considered acceptable and the kids were able to view the worms, and plant root systems. Later she was told to get rid of the tank, and she laughingly stated she ignored them. When trying to find outdoor space for a school garden she was persistent in her requests for space.

> I asked continuously "What about there? What about here? What about that whole field? I was told continuously "No, No, No." "Are you using it?" "No." "Can I use it?" "No." So I was just shot down continuously. So [name], came to me one day and he said "So I hear you are the recycling garden person over there, everybody knows yo're the one that is a little over the top." I said "Absolutely, what is going on?" He said, "I was looking at that field over there? What about that field?" I said, "I have tried, I have tried, and I am getting shot down." So he said, "Now let me try." He came back, "I"ve got permission." He talked to the certain people that had control over the land and they weren't using it. Not even at all. So I got some money and went out and just, [name] helped me build the beds and went at it and really gave some time on that. We started with three 40 ft. beds. And we took them over in no time. They were to the max packed. Then he said, "Well I'll build you more." And he got more next year, got more lumber, but simultaneously we added some trees and berries.

Sonja demonstrated vision and leadership in her tireless pursuit of school gardens. Her enduring vision to integrate the school curriculum for all grades was based on her belief that the

students would benefit, as well as the teachers. Sonja acted as a tempered radical (Meyerson, 2001) in changing the system in which she worked. As an educator she was fully aware of the needs of her students, as well as the entire school population, and worked relentlessly to initiate change and develop a new program for the school. It is that same determination that guided her to develop integrated curriculum incorporating the gardens while meeting state standards in addition to the daily responsibilities of her classroom.

Sonja planned to create opportunities and trainings to share with other tribal schools in developing and sustaining a school garden while including the garden in the curricula for all ages.

> That is what I want to do. The teachers are so hungry for something that the kids really like. Some way to teach them perimeter and area and they are not scratching their eyeballs out. They measured the field. I had to know what the perimeter was and make it area and figure out how much we need, and they did it. That is their garden, I definitely helped out but it is their garden and I definitely love that they own it. They own it. They make sure and go "Who is in there? How come this did not get watered?" I just sit there and go "I don't know, you should be, did you do it? Isn't that your garden?" The ownership it's just awesome to watch. They take it and they go.

The participants' leadership was evident also in the public schools. Participant # 3 described her role in the public school working with all the minority students in addition to her position with the Native American students. She is a recognized leader who stands up for the rights of all minority students, who otherwise who would not have an advocate. Participant # 3 speaks of the students as "pegged," or marked by the administration and staff and that "a hole is being dug underneath them" because they do not have the support other students benefit from exercising their white privilege.

> Believe it or not I have found a voice and my voice is for these kids. And it is not just for our Native kids, but for any kid who has a struggle. I advocate for them, I have become that go to person for bullied kids, and Native kids. They send kids to me whether they are Native, or not. So that for me is really where my leadership

> came to, I don't know if it is going to be any higher than that. I don't want to be an administrator. I have always wanted to be a teacher

Participant #6 noted her significant work on various school committees, and as a fine art curriculum leader. She was also an activist and served as a picket captain during a district strike, and a union representative in a former district. These have been recognized forms of leadership and leadership development.

Other participants practiced leadership outside of the K-12 system in their tribal systems in tribal employment and youth programs, vocational school, and developing a foundation. Participant # 1 worked for her tribe and was on several tribal committees and could be referred to as an activist.

> That is why when I went to school it was so different because there were so many of us women. And embedding those leadership skills from what we were doing, when you go back and to the things where I knew I was going to end up doing. It has allowed me to have a bigger voice. A lot of the time those teachings I received were from the men in my family. So when I speak, I don't back down, and I don't lie, and I don't cheat, and I don't steal, and you better believe I will fight for our people. So if you are battling my people you know I will fight against you. It is a continuous, we all know in our own nation we have some corruptness, we have some deviant behavior going on. But we all know money it has not been a good thing, we all know that. Sometimes we keep quiet to save our jobs sometimes you gotta stick your, and step up and say "You gotta stop doing that because you are messing with our people's lives.

Marie and I were specifically working on leadership degrees in higher education programs. At the time she was working with adults and although she had a love for early childhood, she worked in a vocational education program. Marie was investigating future jobs in the areas of young children, or adult education. Her present educational program offered an ability to become an elementary principal. Marie was the only participant within the talking circle and portraits who was attracted to becoming a principal. The other participants adamantly stated that school leadership position held no appeal for them. Marie indicated:

> But I definitely want to make a difference in leadership so it makes a difference in the community of the school and when that right position happens, hopefully, it will also allow me to have more time to do some passions and getting involved with community things.

The leadership of the group was varied and yet similar in that the participants were supporting and leading their immediate schools or tribal communities in advocacy, leadership, or activism. The other commonality is that the portraits demonstrated their humility as they seldom referred to themselves as leaders, but instead referred to their advocacy. All were demonstrating leadership as role models to their families, students, and communities.

Future Leadership

The participants' age ranged from 32 to 61 yet none of the participants spoke of a future with a full retirement. Even the most elder participants stated they intended to work part time, or write articles. Each participant had future plans, which involved the betterment of their students or community. Four participants stated an interest in obtaining a doctoral degree, one was working on her second master's degree, and I am working on my dissertation. Three were actively seeking doctoral program information, with participant #4 initiating her doctoral program recruitment at the talking circle.

Debra stated,

> So in a way my leadership is more subversive, working behind the scenes, not out in front where I get pot shots at my leadership but like a silent drone amassing written works and a collection at a well-established museum I am a leader in shaping a story for our future generations.

The majority of the participants mentioned their continued work in the field of education. Their roles of advocacy and program development were the most prevalent within the school system and beyond into tribal communities. Participant #1, who was employed by her tribe, described her job in tribal employment as,

> My role right now is just that, getting and giving opportunity to people that want it. And if you want it we are there, and if you don't want it, that is your choice too. Don't think I won't come looking for you. That is what it is all about, you have got to advocate for it.

Participant #1 summed up the future leadership of the group as,

> You know I just think that that leadership is embedded in us, no matter where you are at, or any of us are at, we are still a part of each other, and that is the spiritual connection that we all have with each other forever…It is it is about leadership, spirituality, and all that went, and it becomes what we are and what we can do to make change and we brought it home. I kept saying now if we could bottle this. [Laughter]. It could be really inspiring for all of our community.

The future work of the participants was in giving approaches to their students, or community, and not in self-gratifying methods but in ways of empowering others as they had been strengthened by their education. The portraits identify women who would endeavor to work within their given passions while empowering others, and their nations. The beneficiaries of their fervent work were the students, families, schools, museums, communities, and the public. The portraits identified the magnitude of their impact within five years since the university/tribal college cohort completion and their future work will undoubtedly have the same or even a greater impact.

Analysis

The portraitures were consistent with the findings of my literature review. I found that when institutions established time, relationships, and partnerships with local tribal communities, the tribal people benefitted. Likewise, when higher education institutions were sensitive to the needs of Native Americans developed educational programs that met the employment needs of tribal communities, and provided Native American faculty with culturally relevant curricula, the students gained. To sustain the Native American programs the literature revealed mentoring programs and peer mentoring in both organized and organic ways as having assisted Native American students in their persistence. The literature review identified the institutional climate

and acceptance of diversity, spirituality, and flexibility in class scheduling and policies allowed Native American students to persist despite numerous obstacles that may arise. The talking circle and portraits revealed consistent data findings with the research and tribal college demographics.

The specific characteristics of a Native American culturally relevant program of the university/tribal college partnership enticed several of the participants to investigate and enroll in the program. This included students who had prior experience with a tribal college, and those who did not. The cohort had numerous students who were non-Native, or were unfamiliar with their Native American culture who were drawn to the Native American focused program. Additionally, participants noted the social justice stance and history of the university drew them to the partnership.

A number of similarities existed between my research and Kenny's (2002) *North American Indian, Métis and Inuit women speak about culture, education and work.* The women shared common narratives regarding inflexible higher education institutional polices, which significantly impacted these Native American women in their cultural and family obligations. Likewise similar themes within the portraits of healing, education, and cross culturalism, or as the participants referenced walking in two worlds, were stated.

Student resiliency is understated and misunderstood in the research. The portraits presented here remarkably illustrate the degree of resiliency of adult learners, women, with numerous responsibilities and family obligations, in their commitment to participate in a university/tribal college partnership 2 to 3.5 hours from home 3 times a week and not see the distance, and time, as a prohibitive factor. The small group of students who supported each other in their extensive commute for the 2 to 4 years of their higher education is notable. All participants had remained intact within the cohort. They demonstrated their resiliency and

persistence despite health or family deaths, and later returned to the cohort. Other participants as adult learners worked full time with family obligations in addition to their schooling, yet all had continued intact in the cohort. Their portraits speak to the dedication of these students and their motivation to achieve their goal of a degree.

In the literature review I did not find the number of partnerships between tribes and higher education institutions as I had anticipated. Since I had been a participant of a university/tribal college partnership I presumed it was a common practice, I found that other institutions and tribes had partnerships, although the practice was not widespread. The portraits of this research exposed the lack of culturally relevant programs for Native Americans as the participants were required to travel great distances in order to enroll in what was a unique university/tribal college partnership rather than a common program offering by higher education institutions. The commuting students traveled through two large cities with numerous state and private universities, yet none met the needs of the Native American women adult learners. The lack of creative Native American university and college programming necessitated the extensive commute the students chose to endure in order to find a university that met their higher education needs.

During the literature review, I also anticipated the research would reveal other Native American cohort programs and found one other study, Seifert and Mandzuk (2006) specific to teacher education cohorts, which also had older student learners. The research largely called for inclusion of family and mentoring relational supports and did not include learning communities and cohorts as a relational support.

Gaps in the Literature

The gaps in the literature revealed a call for research in the area of universities and their collaborative relationships with local tribes. These collaborations and partnerships serve dual purposes in meeting tribal employment and nation-building needs and for the universities offering diverse culturally relevant programming to attract both Native American and non-Native students. Given the current period of recession and fierce scrutiny of higher education institutions it is timely for tribal nations to contact colleges and universities to assist in their nation-building efforts, as well as fulfill their employment needs, and for higher education institutions to approach local tribes to develop partnerships. These collaborative efforts would initiate responses by Native Americans to commence their return to school, and for non-Native students who wish to benefit from a diverse learning opportunity.

The relational benefits of cohorts and their role in persistence, resiliency, and relational support should be further investigated, especially regarding Native American Tribal partnerships, with universities in support of their diverse populations while creating a climate of cultural acceptance. Peer mentoring naturally occurs within successive cohort models, when students are given time and opportunities with the different cohorts to discuss their education and concerns. The relational support of a cohort can also be likened to an extended family foundational structure and should be further investigated in Native American higher education.

Summary

Prior to my research I had a deep appreciation for my university/tribal college education. This was evidenced by my continued higher education after completion of my bachelor's degree into my successive master's program and my return to a cohort in my doctoral dissertation. I became committed to sharing the portraits and their significance and value to the field of education. The importance of a tribal university partnership as well as a bicultural educational

experience for the Native American and non-Native students is an example of collaboration with far-reaching results. The portraits of empowerment and healing are not exclusive to Native American student's receiving their higher education, but meaningful to the participants, their families, other students, and tribal nations.

The persistence of the participants and the sacrifices they made to continue to their goal of a higher education degree was not just for themselves but for their families as well. The participants became role models during the course of their studies for their immediate family, as well as for their future students and tribal members. The resiliency of the participants is inspiring and should persuade others, including tribes and higher education institutions, to create such learning environments, and partnerships for future students. Higher education recruiters should seek to enroll adult students and provide inclusive programs for adult students of all ages.

The advocacy and leadership of the participants is consistent with other research on Native American women, in which roles of leadership are taken for a period of time, in service to their community. Furthermore, the caretaking and advocacy revealed in the portraits were present in Native American women's leadership past and present. The participants were empowered by their education to take their advocacy and leadership to new heights in their servant leadership and sharing and equipping others. These portraits share the empowered women's lives and their current leadership in their communities.

In Chapter VI, I will address the implications of the portraits for leadership and change. I will answer the research questions and the research purpose. I will identify how the gap in the literature was filled through this research and the portraits as well as the limitations of this study. In addition, I will share my learning from the research and how it has changed me as a person, practitioner, and leader for positive change.

Chapter VI: Implications for Leadership and Change

In this chapter I will look at the implications of the research portraits within a context that includes both a Native American and non-Native focus. Additionally, I will discuss recommendations for future research and my personal learning.

I entered into the dissertation attempting to answer the question: How has participation in a university/tribal college partnership's culturally based bachelor's completion and master's in education programs influenced the cohort's women and their current leadership in education? To answer the question I used a phenomenological/ethnographic portraiture method. The research included interviews and observations based on a talking circle with a reunion dinner, and three in-depth interviews of the cohort participants resulting in four portraits, including my own self-portrait. The areas addressed included the participants and their educational background and the role of ancestral influence either in their return to school or their persistence. The obstacles in their return to higher education were noted, as well as those hindrances the participants had overcome. Additionally, the participants' bicultural experiences of walking in two worlds, as well as their current and future leadership and advocacy, were discussed.

I had entered into the research convinced that there were unique components to the university/tribal college partnership and the women who had been co-participants with me. The depth of knowledge and leadership of the participants who had been working in education without their degrees and their commitment to achieving their goals of higher education remained influential in my life. I felt that the portraiture approach would be a powerful way to share stories in the field of educational research, non-traditional students and Native American students.

My research project included a small group of women participants and was not meant for the generalization of educational cohort models, nor the experience of non-traditional students or Native American women students and their post-graduate leadership. The intent of the research was to focus on the individual and group portraits of the participants and the themes in their return to higher education and their current leadership.

Gaps in the Literature

The gaps in the literature were in Native American women's leadership and Native American cohort models. Limited research was found in these areas to facilitate student persistence and resiliency. There is a need for research studies to include the positive endeavors and roles of Native American women in their various forms of leadership within their tribal communities, as well as the positive and effective university/tribal college partnerships.

While the research identified the success of Tribal Colleges for Native American students, not all studies revealed positive outcomes in terms of Native American tribal colleges and their graduates. Burnett (2013) compared the increased financial costs of tribal college degrees by contrasting them with less expensive degrees at prestigious universities such as MIT, Harvard, and the University of Chicago. He explained that the government subsidized tribal colleges do not produce the intended outcomes for Native American students.

> One might think a solution to this ineffective federal spending would be to identify Indian students who are prepared for and interested in serious education and to help them to get it at actual universities. This has been tried. Indian students can attend many state universities at no cost. Some go; few make it through. Incentives to return to the subsidies and kin of the reservation dampen desires for educational advancement with all the difficulty and effort it entails. (p. 2)

Previous chapters in this dissertation discussed the complexities of Native American students and their success in tribal colleges and universities. The collaborative work of university/tribal

college partnerships are recommended to fill the void of successful higher education experiences for Native American students.

Regarding the dynamics of tribal college-- university partnerships, research findings in a study conducted by Nichols and Kayongo-Male (2003) suggest that contextual, motivational, individual, and organizational factors as well as collaboration, empowerment, and outcomes were significant in state university and tribal college collaborations. Within each of these areas the researchers outlined "what worked and what does not work" in a university tribal college collaborative (Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003, p. 13). Their research also cited non-productive influences of a state university tribal college collaboration, including:

> A final matter on the topic of what does not work in state university-tribal college collaboration concerns the potential for cumulative impacts of negative experiences. In other words, a negative experience in collaboration may do more than affect the outcomes of a particular collaborative endeavor. Such negative experiences may affirm a participant's already reluctant or skeptical attitude toward partnering with state universities or tribal colleges in the future. (Nichols & Kayongo-Male, 2003, p. 18)

Presently, due to a lack of enrollment the First Peoples' program of the university/tribal college partnership's bachelor's completion cohort for K-8 teachers' preparation and master's in education is no longer offered within the university/tribal college program. This is not to imply the educational programs will not be offered again at a later time.

Five years ago an additional program was added to the First Peoples' partnership based on the needs of the tribal community. The First Peoples' master's in leadership and management program was developed meeting the tribal community's needs and providing opportunities for tribal people's self-determination and nation building (Brayboy et al., 2012). The shift identified the changing needs of the local tribal communities and the responsive action of the university/tribal college partnership to establish additional programming. Currently, the tribal

college is looking to other higher education institutions for new partnerships. Partnerships will need to continuously adapt proactively to remain relevant and offer sustainable programming in a changing society.

My study attempted to provide research within the noted gaps by sharing the positive portraits of these Native American and non-Native women leaders. The research was consistent with the literature and the findings that Native American women seldom refer to themselves as leaders, as was the case with the participants. The participants were a humble group of women who did not refer to themselves as leaders, but as activists, and their works of advocacy were designed to empower others.

> Aboriginal women do not often exercise power over others while adhering to a more practical perspective on leadership based on experience, wisdom, and action. If you ask a Mi'kmaq woman if she sees herself as a leader, she will likely respond in the negative. (Doyle, 2012, p. 192)

Doyle (2012) described her own journey, which has similarities to many of the research participants.

> Finding strength in each of us is the first step to following our heart, to finding our voice and taking the first step towards warriorship within leadership and self governance. Finding our place means finding the strength within each of us, the spiritual warrior. (p. 194)

The participants were educators who have followed their passions, fulfilled their long-held dreams, and in the process lead their families and communities. The educators and activists are now confident in their leadership roles, their actions, and their wisdom and self-determination. These Native American and non-Native women are clearly leaders.

Native American women's leadership was evident throughout the portraits. The participants were staunch advocates for their students and were empowered by their education, which gave them a voice to do so. Previously, the participants had lead in unrecognized ways

but their education gave them an opportunity to lead in ways that were more explicitly recognized. In my research I crafted portraits of their current leadership and their planned future leadership within their communities.

From a Native American context, leadership is often enacted when a tribal member has been asked to assume a role for a period of time for the good of the community. That individual gives of themselves, often sacrificially for the good of the people. The leadership offered is for a period of time and noted as a servant leadership in service to the community. Pidgeon (2012) has stated this shaping of future leaders is within the context of relationality, tribal collectivism and spirituality. "Shaping our future leaders means empowering them to connect to their warrior spirit, to engage in meaningful and respectful relationships, to honor the cultural integrity of each person, and to be responsible to one's community" (Pidgeon, 2012, p. 148).

Kenny and Fraser (2012) has referred to the connectivity of the whole and its interconnectedness within nature and within the context of the community as another aspect of indigenous leadership, "Native Leaders must constantly monitor the pulse of the interconnectedness of all things and gauge how these connections challenge our communities" (Kenny & Fraser, 2012, p. 7).

An example of monitoring the pulse of the community and its relationships was as participant #1 witnessed a disconnect of the interconnectedness of tribal members returning to their Native community post higher education and finding they no longer had a sense of belonging. Her indigenous understanding of relationality allowed her to view the disconnection and identify a way of inclusivity and restoring a relational pathway to engage these returning tribal members through internships.

In advocacy, leadership is recognized as the actions of empowering and supporting another. Advocacy could also be identified as activism within the indigenous context of leadership. The participants took their role as advocates equipping and empowering others as relational. Their new found voices of empowerment gave them the ability to act as warriors within a context of relational advocacy.

> Because, I am going to tell you that women are better leaders because, they care, and they work from their heart. It is not about the money, it is not about the prestige, it's about their people. So I am a real advocate for women in leadership roles. (participant # 1)

These portraits have demonstrated the daily leadership of the teachers of tribal language, culture, program development for tribal people, leadership, program development, and support within the public school system. The participants were encouraging others, in their families and communities, and despite barriers, the participants were resilient in pursuit of their education and demonstrated leadership in roles of spirituality, education, activism, and culture and language keepers. The participants displayed common characteristics found in the research of leaders as care givers, adaptable, strong, politically active, mentors, activists, and collaborative community organizers. These participant leaders fought patriarchy, colonialization, assimilation policies, micro-aggression, and violence, women's horizontal violence, loss, grief, sexism, and power issues, while building and empowering their youth, tribal members, and communities.

Those who were non-Native brought awareness and educational practices of equity and social justice to their work as well. The self-determination and leadership these participants received through their educational experience and have since shared in their work is worth duplicating by other institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the research, I recommend that higher education institutions investigate the possibilities for program development designed to meet the needs of older non-traditional Native American and non-Native students. Non-traditional, Native, and non-Native students have a wealth of experience and are receptive and open to higher education institutions that are inclusive and honor cultural knowledge. These portraits have revealed the sacrifices older non-traditional students will endure to attend a bi-cultural efficacy empowering higher education experience. Higher education institutions have an obligation as stated in their mission statements to meet their responsibilities to tribal people. These obligations are met when institutions seek to link the needs of Native American students and meeting the tribal community's needs for employment and nation building. Developing programs for non-traditional Native American students in a cohort-based program where appropriate should be investigated.

The research in Native American higher education extensively states the benefit of peer and faculty mentoring in student persistence, yet there are no studies that have identified the benefit of a cohort experience in student resiliency. The family education model (FEM) (Heavy Runner & DeCelles, 2002) is noted as foundational research in Native American persistence and resiliency due to the focus of support provided for the student and their families. Likewise, a cohort model can provide a student-focused structure that embodies many of the attributes of "family." A cohort can provide consistency and persistence for students in peer and faculty relationships within the cohort. I believe that cohort models as persistence and resiliency strategies for Native American students should be further evaluated and discussed within research as yet another relational approach with Native American student and non-traditional student retention.

A Call for Collaborative Partnerships

The portraits revealed that a university/tribal partnership appealed to both Native American and non-Native students alike and drew these students from great distances so that they could participate. The participants were required to travel to attend a culturally-based program since other university programs either did not exist in teacher education or did not offer the partnership of a tribal college and well established university. The participants were experienced educators looking for a program that would recognize their experience and honor their culture. These students were willing to make significant sacrifices for two to four years in order to attend the university/tribal college partnership program and experience a grounded and relevant curriculum. The reservation-based tribal college housed a number of institutions—two technical colleges, one community college, two colleges, and one university for their tribal people and other Native Americans as well as non-Natives. The partnerships were established to meet the educational needs of the tribal people and set up within a close proximity to encourage enrollment.

The Pathways for Native Students: A Report on Washington State Colleges and Universities (Akweks et al., 2009) clearly outlines collaborative partnerships of higher education institutions and tribes. The report outlines the importance of "partnerships that are based on mutual respect, mutual benefit, mutual accountability, and mutual learning" (p. 66). Also, J. P. Guillory (2013) cited a list of recommendations for tribal colleges and institutions considering partnerships. He noted the importance of capacity building and sustainability of programs and whether the intended partnerships fit the mission statements of their schools. "One lesson learned from collaborations is that the best are those in which each institution emerges stronger as a result-academically, financially, organizationally, and/or relationally" (p. 105).

Creative institutional programming has the potential to meet Native American students' needs and draw students who have dropped out, or have completed their associate's degrees, to return to higher education programs. At this pivotal time in higher education, institutions need to look at creative ways to support non-traditional Native Americans, and minority students who otherwise would never consider a return to higher education. Establishing relationships and partnerships with tribes and tribal colleges and developing creative and culturally based programming opens the door of opportunity and bicultural learning for all students.

Personal Learning

My personal learning and self-determination throughout my doctoral program as well as my dissertation has been in continued and numerous lessons of empowerment and voice. As a recent cancer survivor, I knew I required a change of mindset, into one of new possibilities for my future. I hesitantly took steps of faith forward in rebuilding my life as I was accepted into the Leadership and Change program after my diagnosis and surgery. I entered with little confidence, but felt assured that this was the path I was to take. As I listened to my new Ph.D. in Leadership and Change cohort members, many well-versed in leadership theory and research, I quietly moved forward.

The required readings fed me with new leadership understandings and I would reframe them within a Native American educational context. Each assignment gave me an opportunity to build my voice and empowered my current leadership work in my K-12 public school. I addressed the hierarchy, patriarchy, colonization, as well as the practices of assimilation for Native American students. During this period I further developed my advocacy and leadership with students, families, teachers, principals, and administrators. I grew and developed my voice with my fellow doctoral cohort.

The dissertation process of the observations and interviews with the talking circle and the individuals, then the crafting of the portraits, was exciting and expanding. I saw my former cohort participants and their current leadership following their educational growth and empowered voices. Wilson (2008) stated, "If research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (p. 135). I am a different person after having completed my research and doctoral program.

I have always been convinced of the power of education and I am even more committed to the process of equipping our Tribal Nations and people with their voice and leadership. In terms of future leadership, I want to assist Native American people to view their potential through the lens of education. I am committed to tribal university partnerships and the potential higher education institutions can offer Native American students through creative culturally based programming. And I understand that there are bridges to cross in these partnerships (Burnett, 2013; J. P. Guillory, 2013), areas of challenge, and a need for improvement. Nevertheless, I do believe that my research has demonstrated that there can be successful partnerships and successful results from partnerships between universities and tribal colleges for non-traditional students.

It has been an honor to share my higher education experience in Native-focused programs within a university steeped in a history of social justice. My firsthand experience of women's empowerment, self-determination, and tribal nation building has been life changing. I have had the opportunity to complete all aspects of my education within this university and I have become an empowered Native American woman in the process. The research portraits revealed similar experiences for the participants and their current leadership. As an interviewee in Archuleta's

(2012) work remarked, “The best approach for leadership is to live, experience, invest time, preserve, learn, and use this wisdom for improving conditions for all” (p. 171).

The portraits of women’s leadership reveal that the role of education for life-long learners is a continuous journey. The participants demonstrated that other responsibilities and caretaking may have detained them for a period of time, yet this research revealed the women patiently waited for ways, and the appropriate timing for a return to higher education and leadership. The non-traditional participants demonstrated their resiliency in working toward their long-held dreams, all the while learning about themselves and their self-determination. The participants view their roles of advocacy in education as their future, as do I, and we will continue to empower our students, families, and communities along the way of our leadership paths. As Wilson (2008) observed, “This is why research itself is a sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space” (p. 87).

Appendix

Appendix A

Talking Circle Group Questions

1. Think back to what motivated you to return to higher education?

2. How would you describe your experience as a Native American woman and walking in two worlds?

3. How would you describe your leadership post graduation?

4. Describe your future leadership plans as a Native American woman in your community?

5. Is there anything we should have talked about and didn't?

Appendix B

In-depth Personal Interview

1. Please state the region of your Tribe, and current job.

2. Please describe your educational pathway prior to the cohort.

3. What would you identify as obstacles in your pursuit of your higher education?

4. What was your motivation to return to school and participate in the cohort?

5. How did your ancestors play a role in your pursuit of higher education?

6. How would you describe your experience as a Native American woman and walking in two worlds?

7. How would you describe your leadership prior to your participation in the cohort?

8. Please explain any differences in your leadership following your higher education.

9. How has your education influenced your current leadership within your family and community?

10. How has your education influenced your personal acts of self-determination?

11. Describe your future leadership plans as a Native American woman in your community?

12. Is there anything we should have talked about and didn't?

References

AIHEC AIM Fact Book (2009-2010). (2012) *Tribal colleges and universities report*. Retrieved from http://www/aihec.org/resourcesAIHEM_AIMS report_May 2012.pdf

Akweks, K., Bill, N., Seppanen, L., & Smith, B. L., (2009*). Pathways for Native students: A report on Washington state colleges and universities.* Partnership for the Native American College Access & Success Project. Retrieved from http://www.goia.wa.gov/Links-Resources/PathwaysReport.pdf

Alexitch, L. R. (2010). The role of cultural affiliation in the academic adjustment and performance of Canadian Aboriginal university students. *Journal of America Indian Education, 49,* 66-82.

Allen, P. G. (1986). *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian traditions.* Boston, MA: Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

Almeida. D. A. (1997). The hidden half: A history of Native American women's education. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(4), 757-771.

Anderson, K. (2000, Summer). The powerful history of Native Women. *Horizons*, *14*, 1.

Archuleta, M. (2012). Approaching leadership through culture, story, and relationships. In C. Kenny & T. N. Fraser (Eds.), *Living indigenous leadership: Native narratives on building strong communities* (pp. 162-175). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Bedwell, D. P. (2012). And so I turn to Rita: Mikmaq women, community action, leadership, and resilience. In C. Kenny & T. N. Fraser (Eds.), *Living indigenous leadership: Native narratives on building strong communities* (pp. 162-175). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Belgarde, M., J., & Lore, R. K. (2003). The retention/intervention study of Native American undergraduates at the university of Mexico. *Journal of College Student Retention. 5*(2) 175-203.

Bergeson, T. (2005). *Promising programs and practices for dropout prevention*. Report to the Legislature, Olympia, Washington. Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/promisingprogramsandpractices.pdf

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2004). Hiding in the Ivy: American Indian students and visibility in elite educational settings. *Harvard Educational Review, 74*(2)*,* 125-152.

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2006). Toward a Tribal critical race theory in education. *Urban Review, 37*, 425-446.

Brayboy, B. M. J., Fann, A. J., Castango, A. E., & Solyon, J. A. (2012). Special Issue: Post secondary education for American Indian and Alaskan Native. Higher education for nation building and self determination. *Wiley Online Library ASHE Higher Education Report, 37*(*5*), 1-154.

Brown, D. (2003). Tribal colleges: Playing a key role in the transition from secondary education for American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 42*, 36-45.

Burnett, T. (2013). The tragedy of tribal colleges: Government-subsidized colleges for Native Americans spend lavishly but the results are poor. *The John William Pope Center for Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=2858

Campbell, A. E. (2007). Retaining American Indian/Alaskan Native students in higher education: A case study of one partnership between the Tohono O'odhan Nation and Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ. *Journal of American Indian Education, 46*(2), 19-41.

Chanet-Garcia, J., (2005). Native Americans in higher education: The complex mission of a Native American studies program in an Ivy League school. *Native American Studies, 19* (2), 33-40.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.

Deloria,V., & Wildcat, D. R., (2001). *Power and place: Indian education in America*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Resources.

DeVoe, J. F., & Darling-Churchill, K. E. (2008). *Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008* (NCES 2008-084). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education: Washington, DC.

Dixon, S. L. (2006*). Listening to the voices of prominent Native American women: Experiences of success and oppression* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No 3228067)

Doyle, A., Klenfield, J., & Reyes, M. (2009). The educational aspirations/attainment gap among rural Alaska Native students. *The Rural Educator, 30,* 25-33.

Doyle, P., (2012). And So I Turn to Rita: Mi'kmaq women, community action, leadership, and resilience. In C. Kenny & T. N. Fraser (Eds.), *Living indigenous leadership: Native narratives on building strong communities* (pp. 192-203). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Drywater-Whitekiller, V. (2010). Cultural resilience: Voices of Native American students in college retention. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 1*, 1-19.

Essed, P. (1991). *Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fenwick, W. E. (2000). A Critical appraisal of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture as a method of educational research. *Educational Researcher, 22,* 21-26.

Green, J. (2007). *Making space for indigenous feminism*. Black Point, Canada: Fernwood.

Guillory, J. P. (2008). *Diverse pathways of "giving back" to tribal community: Perceptions of Native American college graduates* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No 3370393)

Guillory, J. P. (2013). Tribal college collaborations. In H. J. Shotton, S. C. Lowe, & S. J. Waterman (Eds), *Beyond the asterisk: Understanding Native students in higher education* (pp. 39-51). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Guillory, R. M., & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*, 58-87.

Hackman, D. G. (2002). Using portraiture in educational leadership research. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 5*(1)*,* 51-60.

Heavy Runner, I., & DeCelles, R. (2002). Family education model: Meeting the student retention challenge. *Journal of American Indian Education, 41*, 1-15.

Henning, D. K. (2007). Yes, my daughters we are Cherokee women. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for indigenous feminism* (pp.187-197). Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood.

Hesse, M., & Mason. M. (2005). The case for learning communities. *Community College Journal, 9,* 30-35.

Howard, P. A., (2002). Common experiences: "The Look" in teacher's performance evaluation. In M.van Manen (Ed)., *Writing in the dark*: *Phenomenological studies in interpretive inquiry* (pp.50-60). London, Canada: Dalhouse.

Huffman, T. (2001). Resistance theory and the transculturation hypothesis as explanations of college attrition and persistence among culturally traditional American Indian students. *Journal of American Indian Education, 40,* 1-39.

Jackson, A. P., Smith, S. A., & Hill, C. L. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 44,* 548-565.

Jenangir, R. R. (2009). Cultivating Voice: First-generation students seek full academic citizenship in multicultural learning communities. *Innovative Higher Education, 34,* 33-49.

Kamberelis, G., & Dimitriadis, G. (2005). Focus groups: Strategic articulations of pedagogy, politics, and inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3d ed.) (pp. 887-907). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kanu, Y. (2006). Getting them through the college pipeline: Critical elements of instruction influencing school success among Native Canadian high school students. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *18*(1), 116-145.

Katz, J. R. (2005). "If I could do it, they could do it": A collective case study of plateau tribes nurses. *Journal of American Indian Education, 44*(2), 36-51.

Kenny, C. (2002). *North American Indian, Métis and Inuit women speak about culture, education and work*. Ottawa, Canada: Status of Women Canada.

Kenny, C., Faries, E, Fiske, J., & Voyageur, C. (2004). *A holistic framework for Aboriginal policy research.* Ottawa, Canada: Status of Women Canada.

Kenny, C., & Fraser, T. N. (2012). *Living Indigenous leadership: Native narrative on building strong communities.* Vancouver, Canada: UBC.

La Flesche, F. (1932). *The middle five: Indian schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Langston Hightower, D. (2003). American Indian women's activism in the 1960s and 1970s. *Hypatia, 18,* 114-132.

Larimore, J. A., & McClellan, G. S. (2005). Native American student retention in U.S. postsecondary education. *New Direction for Student Services, 109*, 17-32.

LaRocque, E. (2007). Metis and feminist: Ethical reflections on feminism, human rights and decolonization. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for indigenous feminism* (pp. 53-69). Black Point, Canada: Fernwood.

Lawrence, B., & Anderson, K. (2005). Introduction to Indigenous women: The state of our nations. *Atlantis, 29*(2), 1-10.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(1), 3-15.

Lee, J., Donlan, W., & Brown, E. F. (2010). American Indian/Alaskan Native undergraduate retention at predominately White institutions: An elaboration of Tinto's theory of college student departure. *College Student Retention, 12,* 257-276.

Lee, L. L. (2012). Gender, Navajo leadership and retrospective falsification. *Journal of Indigenous Peoples Alternative, 8*(3), 277.

Lomawaima, K. T., & McCarty, T. L. (2006). *To remain an Indian: Lessons in democracy from a century of Native American education.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lundberg, C. A., & Schreiner, L. A. (2004). Quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction as predictors of learning: An analysis by student race/ethnicity. *Journal of College Student Development*, *45*(5), 549-564.

Lundberg, C. A. (2007). Student involvement and insitutional commitment to diversity as predictors of Native American student learning. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(4), 405-417.

Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. In N. K. Lincoln & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 835-850). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Martin, R. G. (2005). Serving American Indian students in tribal colleges: Lessons for mainstream colleges. *New Directions for Student Services, 109*, 79-86.

Martin, S. C., & Thunder, A. L. (2013). Incorporating Native culture into student affairs. In H. J. Shotton, S. C. Lowe, & S. J. Waterman (Eds.), *Beyond the asterisk: Understanding Native students in higher education* (pp. 39-51). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

McClellan, G. S., Tippeconnic Fox, M. J., & Lowe, S. C. (2005). Where we have been: A history of Native American higher education. *New Directions for Student Services, 109*, 7-15.

Meyerson, D. E. (2001). *Tempered radicals.* Boston. MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Mihesuah, D. A. (2003). *Indigenous American women: Decolonization, empowerment, activism.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Miller, D. (1978). Native American women: Leadership images. *Integrated Education, 16*, 37-39.

Mohawk, J. (2003). Mohawk: Three Indian contributions to western civilization. *Indian Country Today Magazine Oneline.Com*. Retrieved from http://ictmn- community. tgpstage2.com /ictarchives/2003/05/02/Mohawk

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2011). *Fast facts*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98

Nez Denetdale, J., (2006). Chairmen, presidents, and princesses: The Navajo nation, gender and the politics of tradition. *Wicazo Sa Review Spring, 21,* 9-28.

Nichols, T. J. & Kayongo-Male, D. (2003). The dynamics of tribal college-state university collaborations. *Journal of American Indian Education, 42*(3), 1-24.

Northouse, P. G. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Okagaki, L., Helling, M. K., & Bingham, G. E. (2009). American Indian college students' ethnic identity and beliefs about education. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*, 157-176.

Olson, K. (2009). *Wounded by school: Recapturing the joy in learning and standing up to old school culture.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Oxendine, D., Oxendine, S., & Minthorn, R. (2013). The historically Native American fraternity and sorority movement. In H. J. Shotton, S. C. Lowe, & S. J. Waterman (Eds.), *Beyond the asterisk: Understanding Native students in higher education* (pp. 67-79). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Pavel, D. M. (1992). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in higher education: Research on participation and graduation*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED348197)

Pavel, D. M., & Padilla, R. V. (1993). American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary departure: An example of assessing a mainstream model using national longitudinal data. *Journal of American Indian Education, 32*, 1-19.

Pease, J. (2005). *The spirit of Indian women.* Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom.

Picca, L. H., & Feagin, J. R. (2007). *Two-faced racism: Whites in the backstage and frontstage.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Pidgeon, M. (2012). Transformation and Indigenous interconnections: Indigeneity, leadership, and higher education. In C. Kenny & T. N. Fraser (Eds.), *Living indigenous leadership: Native narrative on building strong communities.* Vancouver, Canada: UBC.

Portman, T. A., & Garrett, M. T., (2005). Beloved women: Nurturing the sacred fire of leadership from an American Indian Perspective. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 83*, 284-329.

Prindeville, D. (2000). Promoting a feminist policy agenda: Indigenous women leaders and closet feminism. *The Social Science Journal, 37*(4), 637-645. doi:10.1016/S0362-3319(00)00104-X

Prindeville, D. (2003). Latina and American Indian women leaders, political representation, and environmental policy. *Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies (JOLLAS), 1*(1), 61-81.

Prindeville, D. (2004). Feminist nations? A study of Native American women in southwestern tribal politics. *Political Research Quarterly, 57*(1), 101-112.

Reyhner, J. & Eder, J. (2004). *American Indian education: A History.* Norman,OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Saggio, J. J., & Rendon, L. I. (2004). Persistence among American Indians and Alaska natives at a Bible college: The importance of family, spirituality, and validation. *Christian Higher Education, 3*, 223-240.

Seifert, K., & Mandzuk, D. (2006). Student cohorts in teacher education: Support groups or intellectual communities? *Teachers College Record, 108*(7), 1296-1320.

Shotton, H. J. (2008). *Pathway to the Ph.D.: Experiences of high-achieving American Indian females* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No 3304231)

Shotton, H. J., Oosahwe, E. S. L., & Cintron, R. (2007). Stories of success: Experiences of American Indian students in a peer-mentoring retention program. *The Review of Higher Education, 31*, 81-107.

Simms, M. (2000). Impressions of leadership through a Native woman's eyes. *Urban Education, 35*(5), 637-637.

Smith, A. (2007). Native American feminism, sovereignty and social change. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp.93-106) Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood.

Smith, L. T. (1999). Connecting pieces: Finding the indigenous presence in the history of women's education. In K. Weiler & S. Middleton (Eds.), *Telling women's lives: Narrative inquiries in the history of women's education* (pp. 60-72). Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2d ed). New York, NY: Zed Books.

Stewart-Harawira, M. (2007). Practising Indigenous feminism: Resistance to Imperialism. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 124-137). Black Point, Canada: Fernwood.

Suzack, C., Huhndorf, S. M., Perreault, J., & Barman, J. (2010). *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (Women and Indigenous Studies). Vancouver, Canada: UBC.

Szasz, M. C. (1999). *Education and the American Indian: The road to self-determination since 1928*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research, 45,* 89-125.

Tippeconnic, J. W., III., & McKinney, S. (2003). Native faculty: Scholarship and development. In M. K. P. Benham & W. J. Stein (Eds.), *The renaissance of American Indian higher education: Capturing the dream* (pp. 241-255). Mahwah, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Tsosie, R. (2010). Native women and leadership: An ethics of culture and relationship. In C. Suzack, S. M. Huhndorf, J. Perreault, & J. Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 29-42). Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.

Van Manen, M. (2005).Common experiences. In M. Van Manen (Ed.), *Writing in the dark: Phenomenological studies in interpretive inquiry* (pp.49-50). London, Canada: University of Western Ontario.

Voygueur, C. (2011). Out in the open: Elected female leadership in Canada's First Nations community. *Canadian Review of Sociology, 48*(1), 67-85. doi:10.1111/j.1755-618X.2011.01250.x

Warner, L. S., & Grint, K. (2006). American Indian ways of leading and knowing. *Leadership*, *2*(2), 225-244.

Waterman, S. J. (2007). A complex path to Haudenosaunee degree completion. *Journal of American Indian Education, 46*(1), 20-40.

Waterman S. J. (2012). Home-going as a strategy for success among Haudenosaunee college and university students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *49*(2), 193-209.

Wexler, L., & Burke, T. K. (2011). Cultural identity, multicultural competence, and resilience: A pilot study of Alaskan Native students' experience at university. *Journal of American Indian Education, 50,* 44-64.

Wilson, S. (2008) *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods.* Black Point, Canada: Fernwood.

Woodcock, D. B., & Alawiye, O. (2001). The antecedents of failure and emerging hope: American Indians and public higher education. *Education, 121*, 810-820.

Yatta, K. (2006). Getting them through the college pipeline: Critical elements of instruction influencing school success among Native Canadian high school students. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 18*(1). 116-145.