TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: PERCEPTIONS OF PRESIDENTS AND STUDENTS

by

VICKI BLACK

Under the Direction of Judith Preissle and Ronald Simpson

ABSTRACT

This first part of this qualitative study began with an exploratory question. Thirteen presidents or designated representatives of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) were asked what they perceived to be a need by their institution that could be identified or improved upon through research. After data analysis of the answers that were received from the presidents, the second purpose of the study was to determine the perception of TCU students about their educational experiences. The presidents wanted to know what their students thought of as strengths and areas for improvement in their educational experiences. The third purpose was to determine how TCU students described or understood the meaning they associated with their educational experiences. Using a hybrid exploratory-phenomenology approach, 45 students were interviewed. Data were analyzed thematically; findings were presented thematically and in alternate forms—composite chapters were written and poetic representations of the data were also presented. Overwhelmingly, students were very positive about their educational experiences; strengths included faculty and staff interactions, language and cultural preservation, and the feeling of belonging and excitement for learning. Areas for improvement included childcare, electronic support and transportation. Students felt that their education was pivotal in their success at communicating with members of their families and communities who were

literate in the language and were the keepers of the tradition. They also described their education as being life-changing; they began to view education in a different perspective. They began to recruit their siblings, cousins and other family members to return to school for a GED and then to a TCU for formal education. Students also discussed the fact that they began to expect their children to attend a college or university. Tribal college administrators and faculty can use the information provided in this study to improve their respective colleges or universities. This can also be used to open a dialogue for students to discuss specific information with the administration and faculty at their colleges or universities. Higher education, in general, can benefit from the study by reviewing the successes that are important to American Indian and Native Alaskan students.

INDEX WORDS: TCU, Students, Presidents, Strengths, Areas for improvement, Perceptions, Meaning

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DEDICATION

First, this dissertation is dedicated to the Tribal College and University communities in the United States. I appreciate the presidents, designated representatives and students who took the time to provide me with stories about their educational experiences. Words and stories are, for me, a gift. I am deeply grateful for all those who told me their stories.

This dissertation is also dedicated to Thomas Dyer who embodies the very definition of a true scholar. Dr. Dyer encouraged my study of American Indian higher education, even when it was not popular.

I also dedicate this dissertation, with genuine appreciativeness, to Judith Preissle and Ronald Simpson. Dr. Simpson graciously allowed me to talk him out of retirement so that he could co-chair my dissertation committee. He and Dr. Preissle supported and encouraged me throughout this lengthy and challenging process. They refused to give up on me even when I wanted to give up on myself. I am very grateful for their perseverance, patience and expertise.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The heat shimmered from the black asphalt as I drove my car into the designated parking lot. Closing the car door, I made note of the hot, humid temperature; hot and humid was characteristic of the long August days in Georgia. To the delight of young school children, local news anchors used the scorching sidewalks as an excuse to demonstrate the art of frying eggs. Shrugging off the heat as nothing more than a mild annoyance, I walked to the higher education building; the first class of my doctoral education was the history of higher education in the United States. From the course name, I thought that it sounded mildly interesting; but, I did not assign it much thought. I did not know much about the history of higher education so I expected to learn a lot. I did not, however, expect one class to impact my life in a significant way. This one course transformed my interpretation of all that I thought that I knew about higher education, and, as a result, I emerged as a different person, nurse, educator and scholar.

Assigned to write a paper about something of interest from a historical perspective, I decided that, as a nurse, the history of nursing sounded suitable. I thought that the topic might prove to be a little boring, but definitely appropriate. However, after some intense contemplation about my life goals and interests, I allowed myself the luxury of changing my paper topic to something that I really wanted to explore in detail—something that I thought would enrich my personal and academic life. As a person with Cherokee and Creek heritage and a person who believes in the power of education, I decided to shift my paper topic from nursing to the history of American Indian higher education. I wanted to learn more about American Indian life and education seemed like a logical way to progress.

The history of American Indian higher education, I naively discovered, did not encompass a plethora of published scholarly works. I read the available literature and constantly searched for additional works to add to my knowledge. The cyclical nature of reading, writing, and searching led to many hours of anguish and disbelief. My frustration stemmed, not only from the treatment of Indigenous students in the United States educational system, but, also from the paucity of available scholarly literature. Major higher education history textbooks typically either did not include anything on Indigenous education, or, if included, it consisted of a small acknowledgement. I did not comprehend how historians of higher education omitted indigenous peoples from the historical conversation, as if they were not part of the educational history of the United States. This blaring omission and my overwhelming sense of frustration prompted my decision to focus on American Indian higher education throughout my course work. I had never considered history as a "social construction" (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. xxiv).

As the weeks and semesters progressed, I grew increasingly intrigued, frustrated, and ardently committed to American Indian higher education. I began my doctoral work as a naïve student who believed that anyone who wanted an education enjoyed equal opportunities and access. I believed that education empowered and changed lives and that one's ethnicity did not matter in the United States educational system. I developed into a scholar who questioned almost everything that I learned throughout the years about education in the United States. As my naiveté vanished and my critical questions and anguish grew, I, sadly, accepted the fact that education without equitable access is a tool of oppression.

Historian Axtell (2001) argues that the study of anything related to American Indian and Alaska Natives is not a popular choice among researchers and scholars. I experienced this skepticism from my classmates—some of whom declared that all Indians were dead and

questioned my future as an educator. The concept of the vanishing Indian is not uncommon; children's literature and movies perpetuate the stereotypes (Sneve, 2003). Listening to the skeptics in my life only served to fuel my determination. I continued forward, class after class, doggedly focused on American Indian higher education—even when confronted with easier choices. After finishing three years of full-time coursework, I decided to focus my dissertation research on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

After the completion of three years of coursework, an approved dissertation proposal and a completed preliminary study, I relocated from Georgia to Flagstaff, Arizona. As a doctoral candidate, I realized that, even though I knew some things, I still did not know a lot about American Indian higher education. I knew that, in order to better understand what I did not know and to authentically learn more, I needed to reside and teach in a community where American Indian people lived, studied and worked. I needed to live in a place where American Indians were, in fact, alive and well.

I experienced significant changes since my move to Flagstaff, Arizona. I am more cognizant of my lack of knowledge about American Indian history, American Indian life, and American Indian education. And, I am now much more comfortable with my lack of knowledge. When I started this journey, I did not even know what terminology to use—*American Indian or Native American*. I spent a lot of time agonizing over choices and things that I now realize have no definitive answers although controversy certainly abounds (Chaudhuri, 1985). The ambiguity is something that I struggled with but am now comfortable accepting. I continue to embrace American Indian education with all of the inherent intricacies and complexities. I remain intensely passionate about American Indian education and maintain hope that one day the historians will get it right, and, that textbooks will include a comprehensive historical analysis of

American Indian higher education. I also fervently hope that equitable higher education in the United States becomes accessible to all who desire an education.

This dissertation was accomplished in two stages. As I developed the characteristics of an Indigenous scholar, I embraced the ideology that American Indians "have been studied"—often without their permission, their participation and, very often, to their detriment. Early in my doctoral studies, I committed to changing this practice in my own research. I began this study in an explanatory fashion by interviewing Tribal College Presidents and other administrative leaders to ask them what they identified as their research needs; my goal was to conduct a research study that was useful to the tribal college community. After analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, I interviewed Tribal College and University (TCU) students to learn more about their experiences as learners in these minority institutions of higher education. The Presidents and other academic leaders wanted to know what their students identified as TCU strengths and areas for improvement. I wanted to know more about the perceived meaning of their educational experiences; therefore, I adopted a hybrid exploratory- phenomenology methodology.

American Indian nations thrived prior to European contact; and because of this, they have the inherent right to sovereignty. Sovereignty is discussed in further detail in this chapter. In this chapter, I also provide background information on the status of American Indians in the United States and background information on American Indian higher education. I also discuss, in this chapter, the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, limitations, and assumptions inherent in the study.

United States American Indians Prior to Contact

The population of U.S. Indigenous people prior to the European invasion is controversial; different academicians use varying estimates. In 1928, James Mooney, a respected ethnographer

at the Smithsonian Institute, estimated that, in 1941, the Indigenous population was around 1.15 million (Sandefur, Martin, Eggerling-Boeck, Mannon & Meier, 2001). Henry F. Dobyns (1983), noted anthropologist, predicted that the population of Indigenous peoples was between 90 and 112 million at the time of "discovery." C. Matthew Snipp (1997, 2004), sociologist, estimated that the Indigenous population was in the range of three to five million. While it is not clear how many Indigenous peoples lived on American soil prior to European contact, it is clear that multiple Indigenous nations thrived and prospered. These Indigenous peoples spoke multiple languages and enjoyed different cultures; each nation had its own distinctive social structure that the people managed through formal government structures (Axtell, 1981, 2001; Begaye, 2008; Saunders, 2011).

Sovereignty

American Indian nations maintained self-governance long before the European conquest. By 1831, Chief Justice John Marshall defined the tribal nation as "domestic dependent nations" and were a "distinct political community, having territorial boundaries within which their authority is exclusive" (Cherokee Nation v. Georgia). The Supreme Court, in 1832, deliberated the inherent sovereignty of tribal nations in *Worcester v. Georgia*. The state of Georgia tried to impose its laws on the Cherokee Indian reservation, located within the state's boundaries. The Supreme Court ruled that:

> Indian nations [are] distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries, within which their authority is exclusive, and having a right to all the lands within those boundaries, which is not only acknowledged, but guaranteed by the United States…Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil from

> time immemorial…The Cherokee nation, then, is a distinct community, occupying its own territory, with boundaries accurately described, in which the laws of Georgia can have no force, and the citizens of Georgia, have no right to enter, but with the assent of the Cherokees themselves, or in conformity with treaties, and with the acts of Congress. (*Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S., 1832)

The *Worcester* doctrine has endured some changes throughout the years, but its basic principles and tenets remain intact. Indian nations have "the inherent right of self-determination and self-government" (Pevar, 2002, p.86). Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) include the right to self-education in the definition of sovereignty; "sovereignty includes the right to linguistic and cultural expression according to local languages and norms, the right to write, speak and act from a position of agency" (p. 9). The Supreme Court has always recognized that American Indian nations have inherent sovereign rights; however, they also argue that "Congress has plenary authority to limit, modify or eliminate the powers of local self-government which the tribes otherwise possess" (Pevar, 2002, p. 86). Pevar argues that this is a principle of law that is grounded in military power and brute force. Over the years, Congress has obliterated many tribal governments and has restricted the authority of the rest (Pevar, 2002).

Who Is An American Indian/Alaskan Native?

One of the things that I became acutely aware of as I navigated the American Indian and Alaskan Native education literature and talked with American Indian people was the fact that often the very category of who can be considered American Indian or Alaskan Native is complicated and troubling. There is not a single all-encompassing definition of American Indian/Alaskan Native and, because of this, controversy abounds.

The federal definition includes blood quantum as a defining characteristic of who can be considered American Indian or Alaskan Native. According to Cook (n.d.), blood quantum is defined as the total percentage of blood that is native due to bloodline. According to Cook, all of the tribal nations use blood quantum as a requirement for membership. Usually, this is detailed on a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) Card issued by the United States Government. Additionally, many of the Nations themselves have other requirements for membership. Some Native Americans will never recognize someone as "Indian" unless he/she is an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe, band, or nation. Others will recognize someone as "Indian" if he/she is making an honest effort to reconnect with his/her own ancestral culture and lives a lifestyle that is consistent with Indigenous philosophies.

The Office of Management and Budget and the 2010 Census define American Indian/Alaskan Native persons as:

> people having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who indicate their race(s) as "American Indian or Alaska Native" or report an enrolled or principal tribe, such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups. (Norris, Vines & Hoeffel, 2012, p. 2)

The Current Status of American Indians/Alaskan Natives in the United States

According to the 2010 Census data, 5.2 million people in the United States identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, either alone-or-in-combination with other races. From this total, 2.9 million people identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native alone. The 2010 Census data indicates that the total population for the United States

grew from 281.million to 308.7 million—a 9.7 percent increase. In comparison, the American Indian and Alaska Native alone population increased from 2.5 million in 2000 to 2.9 million in 2010; this represents an increase of 18 percent and signifies that this population grew twice as fast as the United States total. The American Indian and Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination population experienced faster growth than both the United States population and the American Indian and Alaska Native alone population, growing by 27 percent from 4.1 million in 2000 to 5.2 million in 2010 (Norris, Vines & Hoeffel, 2012, pp. 1-4). It is important to note that the definition of American Indian and Alaska Native used in the 2010 census originates from the United States Office of Management and Budget's 1997 *Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*. This definition of American Indian or Alaska Native is:

> A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliations or community attachment. The American Indian and Alaska Native population includes people who marked the "American Indian or Native Alaska" checkbox or reported entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Yup'ik, or Central American Indians or South American Indian groups. (Norris, Vines & Hoeffel, 2012, p. 2)

The majority of people who reported "American Indian and Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination populations in 2010 were located in ten states: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Washington, North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan" (Norris, Vines & Hoeffel, 2012, p. 6). Among all states, the ones with the most significant American Indian and Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination population growth between 2000 and 2010 were Delaware, Georgia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. Each of these states

exceeded a 50 percent increase in American Indian and Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination population. The American Indian and Alaska Native alone category also grew in every state except Vermont; Vermont experienced a decrease of 9 percent. Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia experienced the fastest growth rates of the American Indian and Alaska Native alone population (Norris, Vines & Hoeffel, 2012, pp. 6-8). According to Snipp (1997), American Indians remain the one of the least urbanized groups in America; however, when they reside in cities, they do so in cities where relocation programs existed in the 1950s—cities such as Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Dallas, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Indigenous Education Prior to European Contact

"Education is as old as human society, and every human society had its own particular ways of making its children into full-fledged adult participants in its culture" (Havighurst, 1957). The Indigenous peoples of North America had their own distinct ways of teaching their children in elaborate and systematic manners that relied mainly on oral traditions and modeling behaviors. Children followed their family members and participated in whatever activity was being done. Tribal elders, as "repositories and cultural transmitters of culture" (Reagan, 2005, p. 123), were storytellers; their stories were passed down from generation to generation. "Elders are the best living examples of what the end product of education and life experiences should be" (Deloria, 2001b, p. 45). Stories contained messages of social and behavioral norms (Fletcher, 2008). The traditional Indigenous family was a multigenerational network of people, each of whom had certain responsibilities that extended to the entire clan (Deloria, 2001b).

Some tribes used alphabet systems while others used artwork and symbols to preserve stories. Tribal chiefs drew pictographs on rocks and in caves to exemplify warfare and hunting. Tribal culture was taught through demonstrations on how to tan hides, find and prepare food, set up

teepees (when used) or other housing, design clothing and take care of children. Spiritual teachings were communicated through prayer and ceremonies (Honena, 2011).

> American Indian people raised and educated their children in a manner unique to their peoples, consistent with their customs and traditions, and adapted to their specific surroundings. Indian children knew who they were, where they came from, and how to live. They knew how to survive and maintain their cultures, languages, stories, and rules of order. (Fletcher, 2008, p. 1)

Each tribe passed down education that was linguistically appropriate and culturally specific. At the time of the European arrival, there were an estimated 250 distinct languages (Reagan, 2005). Children were taught survival skills and were expected to become adaptable life-long learners so they could live efficiently and effectively among their own people (Mann, 2006). Education was, in fact, not introduced to the Indigenous peoples of the United States; American Indian Nations prided themselves on their educational system before European contact. However, the Indigenous way of educating their children was not recognized as valid by European settlers. The European settlers did not recognize the Indigenous way of life as being successful—they certainly did not consider the Indigenous way of education as an affirmative or model. "For many centuries, whites scorned the knowledge of American Indians, regarding whatever the people said as gross, savage, superstition" (Deloria, 2001a, p. 1). Further, "native individuals were assumed to lack the verbal, cognitive, even motor skills necessary to succeed in schools" (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. 16).

American Indian Educational Experiences After Contact

Formalized European-based education of Indigenous peoples began shortly after the settlers landed upon the shores of America. The politicization of American Indian education

occurred simultaneously. The European-based education for Indigenous peoples was intended to assimilate and to Christianize. Indigenous peoples were viewed as "heathens" and "savages"; the European settlers believed it was their duty to "save" them. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) argue that American Indian education post-contact became a "grand experiment in standardization" (p. 282) and that American Indian children became and remain the pawns in the sovereignty war between American Indian and Alaska Native nations and the United States government.

Deloria (2001b) summarizes the differences between Western education and Indigenous education: "Education today trains professionals but it does not produce people. It is, indeed, not expected to produce personality growth, in spite of elaborate and poetic claims made by some educators" (p. 43). "The goal of modern education is to produce people trained to function within an institutional setting as a contributing part of a vast socioeconomic machine" (p. 43).

> This condition, the separation of knowledge into professional expertise and personal growth, is an insurmountable barrier for many Indian students. It creates severe emotional problems as the students seek to sort out the proper principles from those two isolated parts of human experience. The problem arises because in traditional Indian society there is no separation; there is, in fact, a reversal of the sequencer in which non-Indian education occurs: in traditional society the goal is to ensure personal growth and then to develop professional expertise. (Deloria, 2001a, p. 43)

There are three distinct periods of American Indian higher education: the colonial, federal, and self-determination periods. Each period will be reviewed briefly; however, they will be examined in more detail in chapter 2.

The colonial era ranges from approximately 1492 through 1775. During this time, nine colleges were established. Harvard, William and Mary, and Dartmouth were the only three colonial colleges that incorporated the education of American Indians in their original mission statements. However, only 47 American Indian students enrolled and only four graduated from these three institutions during the entire time period (Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005). Several reasons for failure to educate American Indians include:

> Greater interest in the fundraising appeal of educating Native Americans than in its accomplishment; a perceived lack of apparent value of European-American higher education by Native Americans; and a lack of acceptance of educated Native Americans into white society on the one hand, and a lessening of traditional skills resulting in unfitness for tribal life, on the other. (Saunders, 2011, p. 36)

The federal era extended from the American Revolution into the mid-20th century. It is delineated by the politics of treaties and related legislation that defined the trustee relationship between the federal government and American Indian nations. Although many colleges and universities were established in the United Stated during this era, few included a focus on American Indian education. When it was included, vocational training was emphasized, to the exclusion of academic education. Essentially, education services provided by the federal government to American Indians during the federal era continued the unrelenting colonial philosophies of conversion to Christianity, forced acculturation and assimilation.

The self-determination era is differentiated by several trends which, as Saunders (2011) points out seem to contradict one another. The Progressive movement in education brought about a renewed appreciation of and emphasis on American Indian culture, along with the inclusion of American Indian culture in college curricular offerings rather than the suppression

and eradication of it (Saunders, 2011). In 1934, the federal government enacted the Indian Reorganization Act; this affirmed American Indian sovereignty and self-determination. In the 1940s and 1950s, federal legislation and termination policies sought to end treaty and trust relationships with many American Indian Nations, to end federal acknowledgment of some tribes, to shift accountabilities from federal to state governments and to relocate American Indians from their reservation homes to urban areas. These policies often resulted in disastrous consequences. After World War II, some American Indian and Alaska Native soldiers began to use some of their educational benefits under the GI Bill. During this time, scholarship money from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and from tribal governments also became available.

In the 1960s, as a response to protests from both Native and non-Native Americans, the federal government changed its policies from termination and relocation to self-determination. Several legislative acts were passed: the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Indian Self-Determination and Assistance Act of 1975, and the Education Amendments of 1978. Other federal legislation and actions during this era that positively affected American Indian higher education include the Navajo Community College Act of 1971, the Tribally Controlled Community College Act of 1978, and the 1994 extension of the Morrill Act, granting land grant status to tribal colleges. The self-determination era brought a renewed recognition among American Indians of the value of, even the necessity for, postsecondary education. "The right to self-determination is the most important right sought by Indigenous peoples" (Chaudhuri, 1985, p. 15). In 1997, Paul Boyer observed:

> The value of higher education became clear to many American Indians in this new era. A college degree did not have to be synonymous with assimilation. Now it could be used to strengthen reservations and tribal culture. The belief that higher education

> could serve the practical needs of a tribe was a necessary ingredient for the founding of the tribal college. (p. 23)

The Founding of Tribal Colleges and Universities

Implementation of the self-determination policy provided the opportunity for American Indian nations to establish tribal colleges to meet the educational needs of their communities and to provide for cultural and language preservation and restoration (Boyer, 1997; Stein, 1988, 1992; Tippeconnic, 1999). American Indian nations sought to establish their own higher education institutions as a result of the challenges American Indian and Alaskan Native students encountered in mainstream colleges and universities. These challenges included access and the ability to remain enrolled (Boyer, 1997; Brown, 2003). In addition, according to Stein (2009), the founders realized that the problem was more complex and systemic than just access and retention. The founders and their supporters recognized that they were encouraging students to enter a system that had tried to obliterate the entire American Indian population.

> TCU founders recognized that they couldn't just prepare tribal students to be proficient in their won cultures but must also be prepared them to be proficient in the non-Indian world that surrounds the tribal communities. They had to prepare their students to love productively in two very different worlds. It had to be that way if their peoples were to survive with some semblance of whom they really were and are, and were to protect what they had retained of their homelands and sovereign rights into the twenty-first century. (Stein, Shanley, & Sanchez, 2002, pp. 73-74)

As a result, the first tribal college, Dine College (formerly known as the Navajo Community College), opened its doors on July 17, 1968 in Tsaile, Arizona (Stein, 1992). From

1968 to 1972, six tribal colleges were founded. The first six presidents struggled to keep their lights on, their doors open and their programs intact. Their continuous economic struggle prevented growth and development of their programs; therefore, the presidents of these pioneer colleges founded the American Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). "AIHEC serves its network of member institutions through public policy, advocacy, research, and program initiatives to ensure strong tribal sovereignty through excellence in American Indian higher education" (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, American Indian Measures for Success, 2012, p. *vi)*. Currently, AIHEC represents 36 tribal colleges and universities in the U.S. and one in Canada.

Presently, TCUs serve more than 18,000 academic students each year; the largest TCU is Dine College which is located in Tsaile, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation. Dine College serves more than 1,870 students. Oglala Lakota College, located in Kyle, South Dakota, serves approximately 1,830 students. Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (Baraga, MI) is the newest and smallest accredited TCU with approximately 60 students. "The average TCU enrolls about 530 full-time students, but together they serve many thousands more annually—roughly 65,000 collectively—in community based programs" (His Horse is Thunder, 2012, p.8). Tribal Colleges and Universities will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

21st Century American Indian/Alaskan Native Participation in Higher Education

In the fall of 2010, 18 million undergraduate students attended colleges and universities; this represents an increase from 13.2 million in 2000. All ethnic/racial groups increased in enrollment between 2000 and 2010. American Indian and Alaska Native enrollment increased from 78,000 in 1980 to 179,000 in 2010; this represents a one percent increase each year (Aud et al., 2012, p. 34).

Of the 18 million undergraduate students in 2010, 76 percent attended public colleges and universities, 15 percent attended private nonprofit schools, and 10 percent attended private for-profit institutions. Enrollment patterns by institution type varied by race/ethnicity; 45 percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives attended public two-year institutions, compared with 38 percent of White, 40 percent of Black, and 41 percent of Asian students (Aud et al., 2012, p. 90).

Problem Statement

American Indian/Alaskan Native higher education is not well represented in mainstream scholarly literature. Furthermore, American Indian/Alaskan Native students are underrepresented in mainstream colleges and universities. Tribal colleges and universities were established to serve American Indian communities and students. Studies of TCUs have been accomplished throughout the years although none, to my knowledge, have originated by asking the presidents what they thought would be of interest and useful to them. When asked, TCU presidents identified different needs, but, several presidents wanted to know what students thought of their educational experiences at tribal colleges. They wanted to know what students identified as the strengths and the areas for improvement in the TCU they attended.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were three-fold. The first purpose was to identify a relevant research need for TCU communities. The second purpose, after the initial data analysis, was to determine the perception of TCU students about their educational experiences. The third purpose was to determine how TCU students assigned meaning to their education.

Developing the Research Questions

Based on my commitment to conducting Indigenous research in a respectful and authentic way and my belief that research is a dynamic, participatory process, I began the

research with a specific question for TCU presidents and academic leaders. The research question for the first part of this study was: "What study would be of interest and useful to the presidents and academic leaders at Tribal Colleges and Universities?"

Once I completed the interviews and analyzed the data for the first part of the study, the guiding research questions for the second part of the study included:

1. How do students perceive their educational experience at TCUs?
2. What meaning do students ascribe to their educational experience at TCUs?
3. From a student perspective, what do TCUs do well?
4. From a student perspective, what can TCUs do better?

Significance of the Study

This study is potentially important to TCU administrators, faculty, and students. It is also potentially important to educators and to the higher education community, in general. The study's results will provide the TCU community with input about its educational institutions from both student and senior leadership perspectives. The results will provide information to the TCU community about areas that the students perceive as needing improvement and areas that the students perceive as being robust. Student insights and perspectives can be powerful and can lead to significant changes and developments. The results can also provide information to mainstream higher education scholars, staff and administrators, especially those that have Indigenous learners in their student bodies.

Overview of the Methodology

Both parts of the study were conducted using qualitative research methodologies. The first part of the study was conducted using an exploratory descriptive approach. I interviewed 13 TCU presidents and asked them to identify and describe the research needs of the TCU

community. Using thematic analyses techniques, I analyzed the data and determined that a common need for TCU communities was to learn how students perceived their educational experience—positive aspects and areas that needed improvement. TCU presidents and academic leaders expressed high levels of interest in the project and expressed an authentic desire to know more about what their students thought about their education and what those experiences meant to them.

The second part of the study was conducted using a hybrid exploratory and phenomenological approach. I asked TCU students questions about their TCU experiences; specifically, I asked them what they liked and what they felt could be improved in their TCU educational experiences. I also asked the students about the meanings of their education; I wanted to know what their education meant in relationship to their professional goals, their family structure, and their tribal status.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 began with an introduction to the study; following was a brief discussion on sovereignty, an important American Indian and Alaska Native legal term. After this, I provided a discussion on a controversial issue: who can be considered an American Indian and Alaska Native. This was followed with a discussion of the status of Indigenous peoples in the United States. Next, Indigenous education prior to European contact was briefly discussed, followed by a discussion of American Indian education after contact. This was followed with a discussion of the founding of Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States and a discussion of 21st century American Indian and Alaska Native participation in higher education. The problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of study followed. Next, an overview of the methodology was presented.

Organization of Subsequent Chapters

An overview was provided in chapter 1. In chapter 2, I provide a detailed history of American Indian education after European contact. Chapter 3 delineates a history of Tribal Colleges and Universities and includes a discussion of the current status of all the United States TCUs that belong to the American Indian higher education consortium. In chapter 4, I describe the methodology used in this study. In chapter 5, I explain the data analysis process; data analysis continues for several chapters. In chapter 6, thematic analysis of the first part of the study is delineated. In chapter 7, thematic analysis of the second part of the study is explained. In chapter 8, a composite of a TCU President is presented. In chapter 9, I present a composite of a TCU student. In chapter 10, poetic representations of the data that were constructed from data analysis are presented. In chapter 11, an alternate representation of the data is presented; this is a letter to the editor of a newspaper and is written from the perspective of a White TCU student. Finally, in chapter 12, I conclude the study and offer suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

> History begins with the implausible conception of the evolution of the interpretation of other implausibles, designated as facts (Henry, 2003).

The American education of American Indians and Alaska Natives can be categorized into three distinct eras: colonial, federal, and self-determination. This chapter provides a detailed review of the colonial and federal eras. The colonial era covers the years from 1492 to approximately 1777; the federal period roughly covers the years from 1778 to 1974. This chapter also reviews the early stages of the self-determination epoch; chapter 3 provides a comprehensive review of self-determination. The founding of Tribal Colleges and Universities became a reality for native nations as a result of self-determination.

The Colonial Era

European based education of the Indigenous peoples was a high priority for the settlers who invaded the shores of the United States. Education was intended to assimilate and to Christianize the Native peoples who were considered "heathens" and "savages" by the newly arrived settlers (Adams, 1946, 1971; Cremin, 1970).

In 1617, King James I asked Anglican clergymen to collect beneficent funds to build churches and schools for the "barbarians." In 1618, the English settlers reserved 10,000 acres at the second settlement of the colony, Henrico, Virginia, to build the University of Henricus. The first English University in the United States planned to include an Indian school on the campus. A feud developed between the colonists and the American Indians, and, as a result, the Virginia

Indigenous people rebelled on March 22, 1662. Lives were lost and the college was destroyed, effectively ending the plans for the university (Adams, 1995; Adams, 1946, 1971; Henrico County Virginia, n.d.).

During the 17th century, newly established colleges often provided for the education of Indigenous peoples in their charters. The 1650 charter of Harvard College, established in 1636, included the education of Indian youth, "…that may conduce to the education of the English and Indian youth of this country, in knowledge and godliness" (Harvard University Archives, 1650, The Charter of 1650). In 1656, Harvard constructed a separate Indian college on the campus (Boyer, 1997). The building, constructed to accommodate 20 students, never housed more than six Indian students during the four decades of its existence. Mostly, it accommodated English students and the college printing press (Carney, 1999).

In 1665, Caleb Cheesehateaumuck, an Algonquian Indian, graduated from Harvard College; he was the only American Indian to graduate from Harvard during the colonial era. He could speak, read, and write Latin, Greek, English, as well as his own traditional language. Cheesehateaumuck, exposed to diseases and deplorable living conditions while at Harvard, died a few months after graduation. His death was neither the first nor the last among Indigenous students during the colonial period (Carney, 1999). Stein (1992) contends that American Indian students often died from illnesses, dramatic changes in lifestyle (including diet), and heart break caused by loneliness and isolation.

The February 8, 1693 charter of the College of William and Mary also included a mission to spread the Christian faith to the Indigenous peoples (William & Mary, 1616-1699, n.d.). In 1723, the president of William and Mary obtained humanitarian funds and built the Brafferton building to house Indigenous scholars ("William & Mary, 1700-1749" n.d.). Ironically, not one

American Indian student attended William and Mary during the life of the Brafferton School (Wright, 1997).

During the colonial era, specific schools were also established primarily for the purpose of educating Indigenous children. Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregationalist minister from Connecticut, founded Moor's Indian Charity School in 1754 in Lebanon, Connecticut. His motivation for founding this school was steeped in his interpretation of what was best for the Indigenous peoples:

> And the Christianizing the natives of this land is expressly mentioned in the royal charter granted to this colony, as a motive inducing His Majesty to grant the royal favour to our fathers. And since we have risen up in their stead, and enjoy the inestimable favour granted to them, on this consideration; What can excuse our not performing to our utmost, that which is of greatest weight, and should powerfully excite and perswade us hereto, are the many commands, strong motives, precious promises, and tremendous threatenings, which fill so great a part of the sacred pages and are so perfectly calculated to awaken all our powers, to spread the knowledge of the only true God, and Saviour, and make it as extensive and common as possible. It is a work, in which everyone in his place, and according to his ability, is under sacred bonds to his utmost endeavors. (Wheelock, 1762, p.12)

Moor's Indian Charity School, named for Joshua Moor who donated a house and two acres of land, began after Wheelock successfully taught Samson Occum, a young Mohegan Indian. Occum became a preacher among the Montauk Indians of Long Island and a primary fundraiser and spokesperson for Moor's Indian Charity School. When the school opened its

doors, only two Delaware Indians enrolled; in eight years, enrollment increased to 20 students (Cremin, 1970; Wheelock, 1762).

According to Garrod and Larimore (1977), Wheelock actually opened two schools at this time in Hanover: Dartmouth for the sons of English men and Moor's Indian Charity School for Indigenous students. Garrod and Larimore further argue that Wheelock's original commitment to American Indian education disappeared by 1829; he shifted his emphasis to the education of European-American students.

The colonial period of Indigenous education was marked by education intended to Christianize, civilize and colonize. Colonial education for Indigenous students emphasized agricultural, industrial and domestic training rather than academic studies; in many cases, they were glorified elementary schools; at best, the schools were rudimentary high schools (Cremin, 1970; Oppelt, 1990; Wright, 1997; Wright & Tierney, 1991). Colonial education, through assimilation, contributed to the demise of the American Indian way of life.

The Federal Era

After the colonial period, there were five major federal government policy periods in American Indian history; these periods comprise the federal era of America Indian education in the United States (Angspatt, 2001). The first policy period is The Treaty Period that lasted from 1778-1871; the second period is The Forced Assimilation Period from 1872-1934. The third period is the Restoration Period from 1934-1951; the fourth is the Termination Period from 1951-1974. The final and current policy period is the Self-Determination Period; this period began in the 1970s and continues into the 21st century. Szasz (1974, 1977, 1999,) argued that whenever federal policy changed, the United States government changed its emphasis on Indigenous education.

The Treaty Period (1778-1871)

After the American Revolution, the United States federal government, in 1778, began producing treaties with American Indian nations. Through treaty making, American Indian tribes surrendered certain lands and assets in exchange for services and payments. In many treaties, the U.S. government agreed to provide education for Indigenous youth. From 1778-1871, the federal government entered into more than 400 treaties with various American Indian tribes (Miller, 2008). Even though Congress ended treaty making with Indigenous tribes in 1871, the signed treaties remain in effect and are considered the "supreme law of the land" (Miller, 2008, p. 158). "Indian treaties have the same force and effect as federal statutes. A violation of an Indian treaty is a violation of federal law" (Pevar, 2002, p. 53). "As former Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black stated in criticizing Indian treaty abrogation: Great Nations, like great men, should keep their word" (Pevar, p.49).

In 1802, Congress made the first general appropriation for American Indian education, known as the Civilization fund; it was not to exceed $15,000 a year. The increase in funding for education incited swift growth in religiously supported missions developed specifically for the Indigenous peoples. Religious fervor and religiously supported education swept through Indian lands as many attempted to share in the available monies. Mission sponsored education became the first substantive attempt to deliver the education promised through treaties (Mitchell, 1962; Reyhner & Eder, 1992; Stahl, 1979).

As the federal government began to dominate Indigenous education, a de-emphasis of higher learning occurred. Assimilation became the government's primary goal, accomplished mainly by teaching vocational skills to enable Indigenous people to become self-supporting in, first, an agricultural and, subsequently, an increasingly industrial and technological society. The

1824 establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), as a War Department, offered the U.S. government an answer to the "Indian Problem" (Reyhner, 2006, "Historical Overview"). The BIA also offered an administrative mechanism for providing and monitoring education services to the Indigenous population and it continued the goal of assimilation of the Indian population into the White dominant society (Adams, 1946, 1971; Meyer, 1972). A quote from Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1885 speaks to the goal of assimilation:

> It is of prime importance that a fervent passion should be awakened in their minds. The stars and stripes should be a familiar object in every Indian school, national hymns should be sung, and patriotic selections should be read and recited. They should be taught to look upon America as their home and upon the United States government as their friend and benefactor. They should be made familiar with the lives of great and good men and women, American history, and be taught to feel a pride in their great achievements. They should hear little or nothing of the 'wrongs of the Indians' and of the injustice of the White race. If their unhappy race is alluded to, it should be to contrast it with the better future that is within their grasp. (para. 2)

Of the 400 treaties negotiated between Indigenous nations and U.S. government, 120 incorporated educational stipulations. Many of these provisions focused on farming and agriculture. Article 7 of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie was typical of these provisions in later treaties:

> In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservations, and they pledge themselves to compel their children, male and

> female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. (Reyhner, 2006, "Historical Overview")

Forced Assimilation Period

In 1870, Congress appropriated $100,000 for the operation of federal industrial schools for American Indians; this caused a rapid growth in industrially sponsored education (Fischbacher, 1974). Brevet General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, in 1878, began admitting Indian students into the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute near Hampton, Virginia. The first 15 Indigenous students were adult male prisoners of war who were admitted at the request of Captain Richard Pratt (Ahern, 1977). Originally founded in 1868, the school provided education for newly freed African American slaves after the Civil War. Armstrong believed that the "despised races" required a special type of education that depended heavily on manual labor and harsh discipline. He expected the graduates of Hampton to return to their communities and model a new and more successful way of life for their families and peers (Buffalohead & Molin, 1996).

In fall of 1878, Pratt returned from the Dakota territories with the first group of Indigenous children to be educated in the off-reservation system. Included in this first group were nine girls, the first Indigenous females to undergo the Americanization process in a formal educational setting. The Hampton Institute introduced a new concept to Indigenous education:

the education of young married couples. These couples, trained in "model" housekeeping, were expected to take these skills home and model them for their families and friends. In addition to their attendance at regular school, the young couples were taught gender-specific skills that ranged from cabinet making (for the males) to cooking and sewing (for the females). This was antithetical to many of the teachings that occurred in American Indian communities, many of which were matriarchal societies. From 1878-1912, the Hampton Institute was the most advanced and best-funded non-reservation boarding school contracted by the Office of Indian Affairs. The philosophy of White supremacy and the assumption of Indian savagery permeated the Hampton educational system (Buffalohead & Molin, 1996).

In 1879, General Richard Henry Pratt founded the Carlisle Indian Trading School in Pennsylvania. The United States Congress authorized Pratt, an army captain, to convert military barracks into a school for Indigenous children. Captain Pratt established himself as a leader in the movement to educate Indigenous people into the ways of the White man. He believed that older Native Americans were entrenched in their ways making them beyond hope of being saved. Instead, he focused on the Indigenous youth. Pratt argued that, if Indigenous children could be totally removed from their homes and their cultural communities, immersed in the White culture, and taught useful trade and skills, they could become functioning, self–reliant adults. In an address to a convention of Baptist ministries in 1883, Pratt wrote: "I am a Baptist because I believe in immersing the Indians into our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked" (Pratt, 1892, 1973, p. 265). Pratt instituted strict policies that were intended to strip the Indian identities from the children. These policies included changing the children's names from traditional names to European influenced names; he required all students to wear uniforms that he considered appropriate for White society. Pratt

instituted an English-only speaking policy. He also required male students to cut their hair and maintain a short hair style. In addition, traditional foods were forbidden. Indigenous children were often removed from their families without permission and subjected to a disciplined routine of work and education. The curriculum Pratt used emphasized agricultural, industrial, and domestic arts; academic education was not a priority for his Indigenous schools (Buffalohead & Molin, 1996; Pratt, 1892, 1973).

Another federal school, the United States Industrial Training School, better known as the Haskell Indian School, was founded in 1894. Haskell had access to private financial resources; this allowed the school some autonomy from the BIA. Haskell, located in Lawrence, Kansas, focused on agricultural education that included wagon making, blacksmithing, harness making, shoe making, and farming for the male students. Females were expected to learn to cook, to sew, and general homemaking skills. Twenty-two children originally enrolled in Haskell but the enrollment quickly grew to 400 students within a year. The school administrators stressed two points: how to speak English and how to perform tasks efficiently and well. The school enforced strict military discipline (Adams, 1946, 1971; Haskell Indian Nations University, Haskell Archives, n.d., "School History").

During the next few years, several other schools were established that followed this same stringent structure and military philosophy. The intent of all these schools, the complete transformation of Indigenous children began with their physical appearance but went beyond to the inner spirit. The spirits of Indigenous students were broken. The children were expected to convert to Christianity and leave their Native customs and traditions behind along with their language identities. The experience of federal education for Indigenous children was traumatic and damaging to entire Indian families and communities. The overt intention of federal

education was to prepare students in such a way that they could not return to a traditional family and community way of life; in essence, the goal was cultural genocide (Adams, 1946, 1971; Adams, 1974, 1988, 1995,).

Some American Indian Nations responded by opening tribally sponsored schools in an attempt to control their own educational destiny. These schools, largely or wholly under tribal supervision, were financed in a number of cases solely by tribal monies. In the Southeast, the Cherokees established a successful school system that included 21 schools and two academies. The school buildings were constructed by the Cherokee Nation, and, in 1852, enrollment reached 1100 students. The Cherokee school system educators taught students both the Cherokee and the English languages. An extremely literate people, an estimated 90% of the Cherokee Nation could read and write (Adams, 1946, 1971).

Established in 1851 in present-day Oklahoma, the Cherokee Female Seminary provided education to mixed-and full-blooded Cherokee girls from elementary grades through high school. Uniquely, the school was not established by missionaries or the federal government; the Cherokee Nation founded the Cherokee Female Seminary. The Seminary was modeled after Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in Massachusetts. The Cherokee Female Seminary did not provide classes in the Cherokee language or Cherokee culture. Many acculturated Cherokee student welcomed the chance to attend a school that was modeled on White educational principles; they embraced the education as a way to fit into White society. Traditional Cherokee students found the atmosphere oppressive and hostile to their cultural upbringing. Mihesuah (1993) suggests that tensions existed between the acculturated students and those who espoused traditional Cherokee values and teachings: “evidence suggests that the social atmosphere at the

school contributed to a rift between Cherokee girls from progressive, mixed-blood families and those from more traditional, uneducated backgrounds" (p. 2).

A goal of the Cherokee National Council was for the Seminary to educate Cherokee women who would use their education to "instruct the uninformed or common Cherokees, that is, children from the lower economic class who were often taught traditional Cherokee customs at home" (Mihesuah, 1993, p. 3). From 1851 to 1856, prospective students were required to pass an entrance exam before being admitted. This exam excluded many Cherokee girls who did not have an education and were unable to score high enough for admittance. The school and its students became known as elitist—causing dissent in the Cherokee community. In 1872, seminary administrators began to admit underprivileged Cherokee girls after an outcry from upset parents who wanted their children admitted to the school. Even though they might have been less affluent than mixed-bloods, full-blood Cherokees determined their own mores and were active in Cherokee Nation politics (Mihesuah, 1993). "Utilization of what the seminaries had to offer was only one avenue Cherokees used to adapt to the ever changing world, and the fullbloods chose for themselves whether or not to send their children to the white-oriented schools" (Mihesuah, 1993, p. 4). According to Mihesuah (1993), the decision to allow indigent children to attend school added a class system to the socioeconomic divide that already existed at the school.

> Acculturated students and teachers took tremendous pride in their education and their physiology. Mixed-blood students frequently scorned those girls who had a lesser proportion of white blood and even other mixed-bloods who had darker skins, despite their acculturation and education. It was the consensus of the mixed-blood students and teachers—both white and Cherokee—that the fullblood girls were "a little bit backward,"

> although a few progressive fullbloods also belittled those who had a minimal understanding of "white ways." (Mihesuah, 1993, p. 4)

Identity was a huge issue for the children who attended the Seminary. Girls, depending on their family background, ranged in appearance from tradition full-bloods to a more white appearance if they were of mixed ancestry. As Mihesuah emphasizes, the concept of identity was even more complicated because all of the girls considered themselves Cherokee although their cultural beliefs differed. The mixed-blood students strived to fully adopt the White ways and find their place in White society. The full-blood students questioned how they were going to fit into White society—the goal of the Seminary. The school operated from 1851 through 1856 and from 1872 through 1909. Approximately 300 students attended but only 212 graduated from high school (Mihesuah, 1993).

The Chickasaw Nation, along with missionaries, in 1852, established the Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females in present-day Oklahoma. After the forced relocation from Mississippi to Indian Territory, the Chickasaw Nation determined that education was the only way their people would survive a world that seemed to be continuously changing. As a people, they were able to see beyond their immediate needs as a Nation to their future needs—to know that literacy was fundamental for the success of their Nation. Cobb (2000) divides the 97 year history of Bloomfield into three periods determined by who was in charge of the Academy—the Chickasaw Nation, missionaries, or the Federal government. Each administration was committed to the goal of literacy; the goals for literacy might differ but, in the end, students were expected to become literate and to fit into the White society.

> Literacy was seen as the appropriate tool to acculturate the Chickasaws and turn them into efficient and religious U.S. citizens. In order to accomplish this task, the

> administrations had to include more than reading and writing in their curricula; Bloomfield students had to be introduced to the "hidden curriculum"—the appropriate social skills and cultural conventions, traditions, and ideologies. However, in this case, the desire for Indian students to learn the appropriate social skills, conventions, and ideologies was hardly hidden. Indeed, reformers, missionaries, and policymakers staunchly believed that these related skills were of equal importance—in fact, of even greater importance—than basic reading and writing skills, and they voiced their opinions loudly. (Cobb, 2000, p. 13)

On May 17, 1882, the U.S. Congress approved the construction of a school, Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, in present-day Oklahoma for the education of American Indian children. The goal was for the school administrators and educators to assimilate the American Indian children into White society. "Chilocco was a federal school…vast in scope, military in organization, fervent in zeal and violent in method—to transform young Indian people" (Lomawaima, 1994, p. xi). Chilocco, a coeducational facility, had different houses for students—they were assigned to houses based on gender and age. Even though it was coeducational, Chilocco administrators envisioned a different education based on gender; the educational curricula was devised based on gender roles and the ideology of patriarchy, specifically, that the American Indian child should receive education based on their status in White society.

> Patriarchal society envisioned women's place in the home. Indian women's place reflected the double burden of gender and race. Their domesticity training prepared them not to labor in their homes but as employees of white women or the boarding schools that trained them. Limited Indian school vocational training in "appropriate" fields such as

> teaching, nursing, business, or cosmetology lagged several decades behind educational opportunities for white women in the same fields. (Lomawaima, 1994, p. 81)

Male students at Chilocco were expected to learn a trade that would benefit White society and, incidentally, all trades taught at the school "contributed in some way to the maintenance of the institution. Some of the work subsumed under "trades training" could fairly be called drudge work, with little or no educational value" (Lomawaima, 1994, pp. 68-69). Federal educators insisted this type of education prepared the American Indian youth for "effective leadership and a productive role in the American work force (p. 69). This rationale was iterated in Chilocco's 1934 Annual Report:

> Very soon the Indian child grows up to become a man in all respects except his means of earning a living in a society where the language of a dollar is better understood than any other. Vocational training will fit him to earn a satisfactory living with all of the accrued benefits to society, neither does such education hinder the Indian boy or girl from pursuing his education farther if the time and the mans are available.
>
> Indian youth is very similar to the youth of any other race so far as the human qualities are concerned, but on account of his home environments he is handicapped in making adjustments to our modern society…[These] children are left with no parental examples to follow in choosing a vocation and with little essential information with reference to what occupation would best for him to choose. (National Archives and Records Administration, 1934, p. 41)

In 1883, the Choctaw Nation launched a comprehensive school system. Community members built 12 log schoolhouses. Higher level schools were also planned; these were meant

to offer manual training and advanced instruction. Earlier, the Choctaw School Report of 1847 listed nine academies and schools. These schools were supported by tribal funds as well as federal funds. Various subjects taught at the Cherokee and Choctaw schools included Latin, Greek, French, astronomy, algebra, botany, and music (Adams, 1946, 1971).

Sara Winnemucca, a self-educated Northern Paiute Indian, founded and directed the Elizabeth Peabody School, near Lovelock, Nevada in 1884. Winnemucca believed education provided the only means by which Indians could advance and protect their rights in the White world and coexist with EuroAmericans. She believed that by teaching children English and giving them a basic education she was helping the Paiute people as a whole. Even though she had the support of prominent citizens like Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann, she never received government funds or support; in fact, the federal government did not acknowledge the existence of her school (Lascarides, 2000; Spack, 2002). In 1886, Winnemucca wrote to the *Winnemucca Silver State* newspaper:

> It seems strange to me that the Government has not found out years ago that education is the key to the Indian problem. Much money and many precious lives would have saved if the American people had fought my people with Books instead of Powder and lead….Indian schools are failures at many agencies, but it is not the fault of the children, but of the teacher and interpreter….The most necessary thing for the success of an Indian school is a good interpreter, a perfect interpreter, a true interpreter….I attribute the success of my school not to my being a scholar and a good teacher but because I am a good Interpreter, and my heart is in my work. (Winnemucca, 1886, para. 3)

Shortly afterwards, a Washington official arrived at her brother's residence and told her that she could not receive funds from the Reserved Fund for Indian education unless she

surrendered her school and her brother surrendered his land. Eventually, the school closed due to lack of funds (Canfield, 1983).

Two American Indian colleges came out of the 19th century: Indian University (Bacone College) and the Croatan Normal School (Pembroke University). Indian University, founded in 1880 for the education of American Indian students, offered kindergarten through high school preparatory education and a four-year college curriculum. Almon C. Bacone, a missionary teacher opened the school under the sponsorship of the American Baptist Mission Society through the Cherokee Baptist Mission. Bacone, an educational reformer, approached education in a holistic manner. Bacone, considered very progressive for his time, believed in the integration of education with the student's home and family life. He believed that Indigenous students needed a college in their community; a college that would serve the specific needs of the American Indian student. The college began with three students but quickly grew to serve larger numbers; within five years, the college had an enrollment of 109 students. The college awarded its first baccalaureate degree in 1883 (Bacone, n.d., "About Bacone College"; Carney, 1999).

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacted legislation that created the Croatan Normal School on March 7, 1887. Designed to provide training for American Indian school teachers, the school developed as a response to a petition from the area Lumbee Nation Indians. The school opened with one teacher and fifteen students. For many years, the focus was at the elementary and secondary level; the college awarded its first diploma in 1905 (Carney, 1999; University of North Carolina at Pembroke, "History of UNCP", n.d.). In 1909, the school moved to Pembroke. In 1911, the General Assembly changed the name from Croatan Normal School to the Indian Normal School of Robeson County. In 1913, the Assembly once again changed the name to the Cherokee Indian Normal School of Robeson County. A two year teacher training

program was added beyond the high school level; the elementary school was eliminated. In 1941, the General Assembly changed the name to Pembroke State College for Indians. In the United States, between 1939 and 1953, Pembroke was the only state-supported four year college for Indians. Eight years later, the General Assembly compressed the name to Pembroke State College. Change occurred again in 1969 when the General Assembly changed the name to Pembroke State University; the institution became a regional university. In 1972, the General Assembly established the 16-campus University of North Carolina; Pembroke State University was one of the principal institutions. In 1996, Pembroke State University became The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (University of North Carolina at Pembroke, "History of UNCP", n.d.).

The federal government relocated tribes to reservations and confined them there from 1851 to 1871; tribal peoples were considered wards of the state and made dependent on the federal government. The succeeding policies aimed to rid the government of this responsibility. The General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Severalty Act, was passed to eliminate tribalism and turn Indians into "productive, useful citizens." The act divided and distributed communally held reservation lands into individual allotments of 40, 80, or 160 acres and allowed the government to buy any surplus land. The U.S. government could then resell the land to raise funds in the name of Indigenous education. The underlying assumption of this legislation was that the responsibility and opportunity represented by private property ownership would transform Indians into small-scale, self-supporting farmers. In fact, however, the land allotments consisted of property so barren that even subsistence farming failed. Instead of making Indians economically independent, the act, operating until 1934, stripped the Indian population of an estimated 82,800,000 acres of land; this was two-thirds of their territory. These

lands were sold or leased at prices far below the fair market value and were forever lost to the American Indian peoples. This act increased the dependence of American Indians on the federal government although the purported aim was quite the opposite. Reformers looked at the Dawes Act as a major milestone in their never-ending crusade to solve the "Indian problem" (Adams, 1988; O'Brien, 1985).

Several anthologies such as *Messengers of the Wind: Native American Women Tell Their Life Stories* (1995) give voice to American Indians. In this book, Elaine Salinas discusses what the Allotment Act did to her reservation and her family:

> Indians were supposed to become farmers, "productive citizens". They had been used to moving with the seasons in search of wild game, fish and rice, sharing what nature provided. The idea of dividing land into individual plots and planting seeds was totally alien to them. People sold acreage just to buy food for their families. In desperation, they accepted the low prices Whites offered for the land. A lot of land was also lost through illegal tax forfeitures. That's how we lost most of the White Earth reservation. (p. 82)

In keeping with the government's goal of assimilation through education and its policy of gradual disengagement from Indian affairs, attendance at public schools was encouraged. Off-reservation boarding schools began falling in slight disfavor by the turn of the 20th century, but they continued to maintain an existence (Adams, 1988). In 1890, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs offered to pay each state 10 dollars per quarter for each Indian child enrolled in public schools. In 1891, Congress declared school attendance for Indian children compulsory. In 1893, Congress authorized the withholding of rations, clothing, and other annuities for parents who did not comply with compulsory school attendance. In 1894, Congress prohibited the placement of

children in schools outside their state or territory without parental permission (Fischbacher, 1974).

Around 1900, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs supported the construction of on-reservation boarding and day schools. More children attended public schools than federal schools by 1912. Regardless of where Indian children were taught, the curricular emphasis continued to be citizenship and vocational skills as evidenced by the uniform course of study introduced into all federal Indian schools in 1916. Indian children were thought to be well suited to be farmers, mechanics, and housewives (Adams, 1988). They were not considered good candidates for professions that required academic preparation.

Assimilation was also taught to American Indian students in more subtle ways, as Emi Whitehorse remembers:

> At Christmas, if we got lucky, we would get gifts, and one year we all got Barbie dolls. Barbie had a size D bust and a nineteen-inch waist, long legs, and blond hair. We all thought we were supposed to look like her. Well, we found out that no matter how we manipulated our bodies, we could never look like Barbie. We had tanned skin and dark hair. (Whitehorse, 1995, p. 60)

Rose Mary Barstow attended a boarding school in 1923; she was eight years old when she began. Her mother converted to Catholicism and convinced her father to also convert. Rose Mary grew up on the Mille Lacs Reservation until the death of her mother. She eventually lived with her grandparents on the White Earth Reservation:

> Grandpa put me on his lap and said, "My girl, you are going to a place your mother chose for you so you can get an education." My dad took me in the truck to the Sister School,

> Saint Benedict's at White Earth. A sister showed me around the church. When we came back, my dad was gone. "Daddy," I yelled, running after him, but they caught me and brought me back. I felt really lost. The sisters cut off my long braids. They put me in a kindergarten class because I could speak only Ojibwa. A little Indian girl wrote something on the board, and I guess she made a mistake, because the whole class laughed. Sister had her hand over her mouth, but I could tell she was laughing too. The girl sat down, she put her head down, her shoulders slumped. I thought, "How rude these people are." I knew etiquette. The way I was raised, you don't make fun of people who make mistakes, you help them. If they're slow, you leave them alone. After that, I zipped my mouth; I made sure they weren't going to make fun of me. The rest of that year, I never said a word. (Barstow, 1995, pp. 262-263)

There are some well-known American Indians who were educated in the Western educational system; these men became famous for their assimilationist work. Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa) was a physician who worked to "civilize" American Indians through the Society of American Indians. The Society of American Indians, founded in 1911, was the first national American Indian rights organization established and managed by American Indians. The six American Indian founders were highly educated women and men; they became known as the Red Progressives. This group included Charles Eastman (Dakota), Carols Montezuma (Yavapai-Apache), Thomas Sloan (Omaha), The Honorable Charles E. Dagenett (Peoria), Laura Cornelius (Oneida), and Henry Standing Bear (Sioux).

In 1926, a full-scale examination of federal policy toward the American Indian, financed by John D. Rockefeller and sponsored by the Institute of Government Research, ensued at the request of the Department of Interior. The final report, officially titled "The Problem of Indian

Administration" but more commonly called the Meriam Report, was published in 1928 (National Indian Law Administration, n.d., "Meriam Report"). According to Adams, the intent of the report was not to criticize past Indian services but to propose constructive ideas on how to attain acceptable living standards for American Indians. However, the report vehemently criticized the current educational practices and advocated systematic reform including the elimination of the standard curriculum that only considered the dominant culture. Federal schools for Indian children were found to be over-crowded with under trained and underpaid faculty. Indian children were subjected to rigid work and study schedules and did not have decent nutrition or health care. The report encouraged educating Indian children in their home communities and not at distant boarding schools. It also urged increased federal expenditures for Indian education, including funds for secondary education and scholarships and loans for higher education. The report also strongly recommended that Indian Services provide Indian youth and their parents with tools to adapt to both the White and Indian worlds; so even though the report questioned the predominant education methods, the goal of assimilation remained the same. However, the Meriam Report played a pivotal role in changing the direction of American Indian education (Adams, 1946, 1971; Lomawaima, 1999; Stahl, 1979). It was instrumental in education reform for American Indians/Alaska Natives. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) emphasize that "The Meriam Report proposed a remarkable possibility: that the federal government should support Native people who choose *to remain an Indian*" (p. xxiii).

Restoration Era

A pamphlet written in the 1930s by educational experts for the Bureau of Indian Affairs acknowledges the difficulties faced by American Indian students removed from their homes and communities at an early age:

> Poverty, isolation, and the nomadic life of many Indian families have made it difficult for them to give their children those minimum essentials of nurture, health, and education which they will need as they grow up to face life in the United States today. Attendance in public and day schools is more and more possible for Indians, especially for those whose homes are stable and located near a school. Fortunately, this number is increasingly rapidly, but there is still a considerable number of Indian young people attending boarding schools.
>
> Unfortunately, many of these children have been taken from their homes at an early age and placed in boarding schools far from familiar scenes and faces. For them the large institutional school building becomes, for a period of years, their home; the busy matron, a substitute for mother, is shared with many others. (Bataille & Sands, 1984, p. 93)

In the 1930s, the leadership of W. Carson Ryan, Willard Beatty and John Collier provided some significant changes in federal American Indian educational policy. The 1930s became a time of new ideas for American Indian education. Ryan, who served as the educational specialist for the Meriam Report, became the BIA's Director of Indian Education in 1930. Ryan's goals included developing a community school system, eliminating the standard White dominated curriculum, developing courses to teach to Indian children about their own cultural heritage, increasing the enrollment of Indian children in public schools, and phasing out boarding schools. Ryan, a strong proponent of vocational training, emphasized the need for Indian youth to develop useful and practical skills to take back to their communities. During his tenure at the BIA, Ryan's objectives were often criticized and resisted. However, some progress occurred, and, when Beatty succeeded Ryan in 1936, he continued to support the same goals. Both men, influenced by the Progressive Education Movement, believed that Indian children

could be taught most effectively in their own cultural environment and that education should be adapted to meet their needs. They sponsored efforts to develop a more culturally relevant curriculum that included classes in Indian arts and crafts. They also campaigned for the teachers of Indian youth to become more culturally sensitive and to adapt teaching methods to the needs of the American Indian students. The impetus for inclusion of American Indian cultural heritage signified a major departure from past educational policy (Stahl, 1979; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974).

From 1933 to 1945, John Collier served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Since the 1920s, Collier, described as an activist, worked to awaken public concern about the needs of American Indians. During his tenure as commissioner, he provided dynamic and aggressive leadership and brought about sweeping historical changes in federal American Indian education policy. Collier recognized and valued the distinct American Indian cultural heritage. He supported policy and legislation that sought to provide American Indians with some measure of civil and cultural freedom, tribal self-governance, and economic stability. Collier did not renounce assimilation policies but instead worked hard to provide a balance between American Indian cultural preservation and assimilation into the social and economic life of the dominant society (Reyhner, 1996).

Almost 100 community day schools were built between 1933 and 1941; some boarding schools were closed. Community schools provided material beyond the traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, problems continued to exist in American Indian education. In 1932, only 385 American Indian students were enrolled in colleges, and only 52 Indigenous college graduates existed in toto. During 1941, more Indian children attended federally sponsored day schools than boarding schools. However, many American Indian children, especially those living in remote areas, did not attend school of any kind (Oppelt, 1990).

Two key pieces of legislation passed by Congress in 1934 reflected the public outcry for reform, the changing federal policy, and support for Collier's goals. The Wheeler-Howard Act, also known as the Indian Reorganization Act, was primarily concerned with improving the economic situation of American Indians and reestablishing some type of tribal self-governance. Prior to this Act, American Indians were verbally encouraged to make their own decisions but did not have the political decision making authority or the economic resources to do very much. This act also established the precedent for government support of Indian higher education. The act authorized loans to cover tuition and other expenses in recognized high schools, trade schools, vocational schools, and colleges. The act authorized $250,000 in loans for college expenses (Fischbacher, 1974; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974; Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001; Wright & Tierney, 1991). The purpose of the Wheeler-Howard Act (1934):

> There is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of any funds in the United States Treasury not otherwise appropriated a sum not to exceed $250,000 annually,…for loans to Indians for the payment of tuition and other expenses in recognized vocational and trade schools: *Provided*, That not more than $50,000 of such sum shall be available for loans to Indian students in high schools and colleges. (Sec. 11)

This legislation focused on safeguarding American Indian sovereignty that extended to include education. The goal became to free American Indians from insufferable and unjust treatment from educational systems.

The other significant piece of legislation to pass Congress in 1934 was the Johnson-O'Malley Act. This act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to enter in contracts with any state or territory for Indian education, health care, agricultural assistance, and social welfare (Oppelt, 1990; Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001). The Johnson-O'Malley Act, according to Sharpes

(1979), is one of "the principle vehicles for subsidizing education by the federal government for Indian children. Policy by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and funding levels have been narrowly interpreted: funding criteria do not apply to Indians who have left the reservation" ("The Johnson-O'Malley Act").

As far as Congress was concerned, the ultimate goal of these two pieces of legislation and of federal Indian policy remained the assimilation of the American Indian population and an end to government involvement in American Indian affairs. By 1937, the Senate and House Indian Affairs Committees began to question the direction of Collier's education initiatives. These committee members believed that education should prepare American Indians to live and function as productive citizens away from the reservation lands. They criticized Collier's efforts to adapt education to the needs of the American Indian students and the tribal reservation environment. Collier resigned in 1945, largely because of continual friction. His resignation also coincided with a change in the political climate in Washington, D.C. The change in government leaders reflected a demand for American Indian assimilation and led to the termination of some tribes, the transfer of legal jurisdiction of Indian reservations to states, and the termination of various federal services. Once again, schools focused on assimilation and integration (Fischbacher, 1974; Oppelt, 1990).

World War II significantly impacted education in the United States, including American Indian education. Indian veterans returning from the war could take advantage of the GI Bill's educational benefits. The GI bill, established in 1944, paid for tuition, fees, books, and supplies, and provided a living allowance. As a result, according to some estimates, 2000 American Indians enrolled in some form of postsecondary education by the late 1950s (Carney, 1999;

Clark, 1972). Vocational training for employment was encouraged throughout the federally sponsored school systems in the postwar years.

Even with a college education, American Indian veterans experienced employment discrimination. Roberta Hill Whiteman discusses her father and his experiences; her father was a World War II veteran.

> He went into the army during World War II; then he went on to college, and became a math teacher. He moved to Oneida and then on to Green Bay hoping to teach high school, but not one school wanted to hire an Indian math teacher. So he found a job teaching math at Wisconsin State Reformatory. (Whiteman, 1995, p. 197)

Ingrid Washinawatok's story of her father's experience repeats this theme.

> My dad went to Michigan State University on the GI Bill, the first in his family to go to college. He got a degree in police administration and political science, but ended up working as an insurance adjustor in Chicago. (Washinawatok, 1995, p. 92)

During the war, many community day schools closed. Congress did not want to reopen them; instead, they preferred to support the boarding schools that emphasized acculturation and attempted to prepare students to live away from reservations. Therefore, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, enrollment in boarding schools again. Many American Indians remained on or returned to their reservation lands and tribal communities. Congress interpreted their failure to assimilate into the dominant society as a desire to remain eligible for any further federal payments. Reflecting this interpretation, in 1946, the Indian Claim Commission Act was passed in 1946. It intended to resolve the situation by allowing tribes to sue the federal government for

outstanding claims (Carney, 1999; Fischbacher, 1974; Fuchs & Havighurst, 1973). The unanticipated consequences of this act are described by Fuchs and Havighurst:

> Rather than encouraging Indians to leave, once claims were settled, the act served to develop legal experience among the tribes, increased sophistication concerning their historic rights, and increased experience with investing of award monies in reservation developments, educational, social, and legal programs. (p. 14)

Termination Period

In accordance with the government's firm conviction that the time had come to end federal commitment to American Indian tribes, the Hoover Task Force on Reorganizing the Executive Branch, in 1949, recommended that states assume responsibility for American Indian nations. In 1951, a relocation program was initiated to encourage migration to urban areas. Between 1952 and 1970, the program relocated over 100,000 American Indians. In addition to relocation, the program provided vocational training, although sporadically. Training focused on blue collar skills, services, and trades (Carney, 1999; Fischbacher, 1974). Elaine Salinas was uprooted from her childhood home on the White Earth Reservation during the relocation effort. When the Relocation Act was passed in 1956, the government told the Indians:

> 'You move off the reservations, come to the city, we will find you a job.' But the people weren't trained for the few jobs open to them. They crowded together in small, overpriced flats…Relocation was hardest on the men. Historically, the man was the provider. Indians who had some status within their tribe as religious leaders, chiefs, hunters and warriors came to the city to find themselves viewed by the larger society as extinct. (Salinas, 1995, p. 82)

Relocation was a difficult time for American Indians.

> This was a dark time for Indians. The BIA was enticing Native people into the cities with promises of jobs and education. You could be trained as a welder, a cosmetologist, a janitor – jobs considered suitable for Indians. If you did get a job, there was no chance to advance, no retraining for another field. (Wittstock, 1995, p. 114)

In 1953, the termination era began with the passage of Public Law 280 and House Concurrent Resolution 108. Public Law 280 transferred jurisdiction from the federal government to the states in Indian country. House Concurrent Resolution 108 called for an end to federal supervision of American Indians. Some interpreted this to mean that the federal government wanted to free the American Indian to become economically independent. Many American Indians, including those in the National Congress of American Indians, established in 1944, saw the termination policy as an abdication of responsibility and resisted its implementation (Carney, 1999; Fischbacher, 1974; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974).

Ingrid Washinawatok, a Menominee, discussed the termination policy and its effects on her people:

> Termination was a disaster for the Menominee. We had had our own electric department, our own telephone company, we had schools, we had a hospital. Ours was supposedly a model reservation. But when Termination went into effect, they closed down our phone companys (sic), our electric department, and a lot of people lost their jobs. (Washinawatok, 1995, p. 90)

American Indians felt that the aim of the termination policy was coercive assimilation through the abolishment of treaty rights, relocation of Indian peoples, the dissolution of federal

recognition and services, and the acquisition and sale of Indian trust lands. Not alone in their opposition, in the winter of 1954, a small group of social scientist met at a conference sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation at the University of Chicago (Fannin, 1968). On the basis of their experiences and knowledge of American Indian communities, they concluded: "Forced, or coercive, assimilation is self-defeating in practice, tending to agonize and drive underground in the Indian groups these leaders who might otherwise develop constructive and cooperative attitudes toward greater acceptance of non-Indian society" (Fannin, 1968, p. 663).

In 1957, a Commission of the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian was established. The final report, issued in 1961, recommended American Indian and Alaska Native involvement in affairs affecting their lives. The commission affirmed that the object of Indian education should be to assist the American Indian in becoming a productive citizen and a full beneficiary of U.S. rights without sacrificing ancestral heritage (Fannin, 1968). The termination period lasted from 1953 to 1958, during which time the federal government formally ended its legal relationships with 61 tribes. Members of these tribes became ineligible for federal services; these services included education. Multiple federal schools in multiple states for American Indians/Alaska Natives closed. In California and Oregon, Johnson-O'Malley funds ended; these two states assumed full responsibility for the education of American Indian youth. In other areas of the country, American Indian enrollment in public schools increased from 52 % in 1952 to 60 % in 1964 (Fannin, 1968). However, the BIA boarding school system also expanded as Hildegard Thompson, who succeeded Beatty as Director of Indian Education in 1952, began to achieve her goals of improving enrollment and retention rates of school-aged Indian children. Boarding schools offered the most feasible

arrangements for formal education to children who lived in small geographically isolated communities (Fannin, 1968; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974).

The Self Determination Era

In 1961, three independent assessments of the status of Indian affairs were published. These included the Fund for the Republic Commission Report: A Program for Indian Citizens, A Declaration of Indian Purpose, and a Task Force Report commissioned by the newly appointed Secretary of the Interior, Udall. Though based on different perspectives, all three reports denounced the termination policy, advocated the adoption of new policy and program goals, and to varying degrees, commented on the BIA's organizational shortcomings. All three reports recommended increased Indian participation in and control over programs and services within their communities, major improvements in Indian education, and a stronger emphasis on economic development. The financial resources, organizational structure, and support for innovation and change necessary to implement many of the proposed changes were unavailable. However, the BIA reconceptualized its mission and began to articulate its role as assisting economic and community development. In 1966, Robert Bennett, a member of the Oneida Tribe was appointed BIA Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Bennett was the first American Indian in the 20th century to hold this position (Carney, 1999; Fannin 1968; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974).

In the early 1960s, Director of Education Thompson began to deemphasize American Indian high school vocational training and began to advocate for postsecondary education. This emphasis on postsecondary education represented a major shift in policy. Higher education for Indians had never been a government concern, nor had vocational schools prepared or encouraged students to attend college. This new policy met with criticism both from within the BIA and from members of the American Indian community. Critics maintained that the

elimination of high school vocational training would restrict the career options of American Indian students (Fannin, 1968; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974). During a 1961 speech to the second annual Navajo Youth Conference, Thompson addressed the need for continued education by American Indian youth:

> With an education you can help to make such dreams come true. Without an education you will not have the skills and knowledge that will be needed to dream to create, or to do the level of work required in the wonderful future. The uneducated will be left behind, while others move on to a good life for themselves and their children. An education will open doors to all the technical occupations—the doors to all of the skilled trades—the doors to the arts. Without an education only doors to laboring jobs will be opened to you and the laboring jobs are getting fewer each year, because machines are taking over the work formerly performed by human hands. Today it is estimated that approximately 7 percent of our population are out of work. Among Indians the percentage is higher. Why—because there are not enough jobs? No—there are jobs—we do not have enough teachers, enough doctors, enough nurses, enough engineers, enough managers of industry, enough good artists, enough good musicians. Every year doctors and nurses and teachers and engineers come to your reservation to serve you and your people. Why? Because there are too few of your people with sufficient education to qualify for all of these jobs. Think of all the opportunities in these fields right here in the Southwest. And the same holds true throughout the country. And within your reach are the opportunities for the kind of education you need to realize your dreams – and to become leaders of tomorrow. (Thompson, 1962, paras. 28-31)

Commitment to improving the status of the nation's socially and economically disadvantaged citizens was a driving force behind the national policy, legislation, and social programs of the mid-1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Higher Education Act of 1965 all reflect federal-level recognition of persisting inequities and a determination to reduce barriers to full participation in society (Boyer, 1997). In the 1960s, American Indians /Alaska Natives began to assert their political sovereignty and to demand control of their social, political, economic, and religious institutions in U.S. communities. They especially demanded control of education because they viewed education as a vehicle for preserving tribal languages, traditions, and history; maintaining cultural identity, value and pride; and developing the skills needed to build economically strong and independent communities (Deloria, 1985; Oppelt, 1990).

In 1965, American Indian and Alaska Natives tribal leaders started a successful drive to have Congress include Indian schools within the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA was expanded in 1967 to provide monies for schools that provided education for the American Indian and Alaska Native populations (Stahl, 1979).

Congressional concern over American Indian and Alaska Native education resulted in a study of the feasibility of transferring the responsibility for the education of Indian children from the BIA to the Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). This study, conducted jointly by the BIA and HEW, indicated that the transfer from the BIA to HEW would be too difficult and would not allow the bureau sufficient time to determine the effectiveness of its new educational program. The study did not result in a change in the authority for American Indian and Alaska Native education, but it, along with numerous

complaints by tribal leaders and members over the quality of education provided to American Indian and Alaska Native children, resulted in an increased awareness in the Congress of the inadequacies of past BIA educational policies (Oppelt, 1990; Szasz, 1999, 1977, 1974).

By 1966, direct Indian involvement in the direction and practice of education became evident. That year, the first Indian Teachers Corps projects began in Nebraska. A pivotal event occurred in Indian education in 1966; the Navajo tribe opened Rough Rock Demonstration School in Chinle, Arizona. This school opened under the direction of an all American Indian Navajo Board of Education. The elementary school, funded by the federal government and operated on a contract basis by the Navajo Tribe, was considered an experiment in American Indian education. The school's director, Robert Roessel, believed that the best of White and American Indian cultures were compatible and the curriculum reflected this integration. He believed that the school should instill a sense of Native pride in children and that schools should also prepare children to be both American Indians and Americans. He believed that a merging of the cultures would yield the most benefit to the children (Adams, 1988; Cohen & Mause, 1968).

Roessel discussed the integrated curriculum in a 1967 speech to the Eighth Annual Indian Education Conference:

> This is what we call the 'both-and' approach to Indian Education—taking the best of the dominant culture and the best of the Indian culture and putting these together in the classroom so the child grows up with a positive sense of well-being, a positive self-image, with pride in his or her heritage. Nobody is against this or very few people at least, and yet you can search high and low in schools and not find a continuous program from the first grade through high school and into college which is attempting to do this. This is what we're trying to do for our White children, to make them proud they're

> Americans, proud of their German ancestry or their Scottish lineage. We do this deliberately and successfully in our textbooks, but not for Indians. So our board said that they wanted the Indian people to be included in a positive way in our curriculum, and gave an outline of what they wished; not just generalities, they wanted biographies and history. They wanted to learn about the Navahos today, their problems and opportunities. They wanted the Navaho child to be proud of being a Navaho as well as being proud of being American. They wanted the Navaho language taught in the classroom. (Roessel, 1968, para. 20)

The BIA established the National Indian Education Advisory Committee in 1967; this committee, comprised of 16 Indian representatives, advised the commissioner of the BIA and the commissioner's assistant for education on issues directly related to Indian educational programs. In 1966, a Presidential Task Force began a study on the status of Indian affairs to make recommendations about education, economic development, and other facets of the "Indian problem." Its findings, reported to the President in 1967, were not released to the public, but Herb Striner, a member of the task force, released his own results. He recommended the transfer of the entire BIA operation to HEW (Fannin, 1968). The Honorable Paul J. Fannin, also a member of the task force, reflected on the formation of a special subcommittee on Indian education:

> Because I felt that Indian education still lacked the prominent public forum necessary to provide the impetus needed for reform, I urged, in August 1967, the formation of a Special Subcommittee on Indian Education. Although the Senate has committees, subcommittees and special subcommittees to study almost every problem, none existed

> to study Indian education exclusively, one of the most specialized and least researched of all problems. (Fannin, 1968, p. 663)

The first hearings, held in Washington D.C., December 14 and 15, 1967, were designed to discuss the nature of American Indian and Alaska Native education and to identify problem areas to be considered in more detail during subsequent field hearings. The subcommittee had difficulty studying American Indian and Alaska Native education without delving into the politics of American Indian and Alaska Native relationships with the U.S. government (Deloria, 1985; Fannin, 1968).

> While the special subcommittee has attempted to limit its study as much as possible to problems concerning classroom education, it has been necessary, in the interest of a thorough investigation, to consider federal-tribal relations, federal-state relations, and Indian health and economic conditions. (Fannin, 1968, p. 663)

In 1967, two comprehensive studies of Indian education were released. The first, the National Study of American Indian Education: The Education of Indian Children and Youth, had received a grant funded by the U.S. Office of Education. The study, directed by Robert J. Havighurst, took five years to complete. The findings suggested that the primary problem confronting Indian education was lack of Indian involvement:

> If there is a problem in Indian education today, it is perhaps best described in terms of the need to re-evaluate goals in terms defined by Indian people themselves; how to better the quality of the educational environment; how to make the school more responsive to the diversity of the peoples and their needs; to more clearly define the roles of the federal, state, and tribal governments in supporting the educational enterprise; and how to insure

> the participation of the Indian communities in educational decision making. (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1973, p. 18)

In August 1967, a Special Subcommittee on Indian Education under the U.S. Senate Committee of Labor and Public Welfare initiated the second study. Under the guidance of Senators Robert F. Kennedy, Wayne Morse and Edward M. Kennedy, this committee was charged with the investigation into the problems of American Indian education. The final report, published in 1969 and titled Indian Education: A National Tragedy-A National Challenge (also called the Kennedy Report), is considered by many to be the single most important contemporary document in Indian education (Carney, 1999; Fuchs & Havighurst, 1973; Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001). It has also been described as a **"**damning indictment of both Indian education and federal Indian policy" (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 5). According to the report, little had changed since the Meriam report; the report documented that both public schools and the federal Indian education system had "continued the impossible, yet historical, policy of turning Indian children into whites" (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 5). The subcommittee called this policy coercive assimilation. Woodcock and Alawiye outline the results of this coercive policy:

> 1. The destruction and disorganization of Indian communities and individuals. 2. Prejudice, racial intolerance, and discrimination towards Indians far more widespread and serious than generally recognized. 3. The classroom and the school becoming a kind of battleground where the Indian child attempts to protect his integrity and identity as an individual by defeating the purposes of the school. 4. Schools which fail to understand or adapt to, and in fact, often denigrate, cultural differences. 5. Schools which blame their own failures on the Indian student and reinforce his defensiveness. 6. Schools which fail to recognize the importance and validity of the Indian community. The

> community and child retaliate by treating the school as an alien institution. 7. A dismal record of absenteeisms, dropouts, negative self-image, low achievement and ultimately, academic failure of many Indian children. 8. A perpetuation of the cycle of poverty which undermines the success of all other federal programs. (Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001, p. 5)

The Kennedy Report also documented the 49% drop-out rate among American Indian high school students. Of the remaining students who graduated from high school, only 28% attended college (Carney, 1999). The second part of the 1969 Senate subcommittee report, Indian Education: A National Tragedy-A National Challenge, called for more Indian community colleges, advocated Native American Studies programs in mainstream colleges and suggested improvements in scholarship grants by the BIA. It also suggested that higher education programs for Indians be included in Title III (Developing Institutions) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 which would dilute some of the BIA's power. It also recommended that funds from the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and Higher Education Act be used to support BIA programs (Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, Indian Education-A National Tragedy-A National Challenge, 1969; Woodcock & Alawiye, 2001).

The late 1960s became a very busy and productive time for Indian education reform. Robert Bennett, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs delivered an optimistic keynote address to the Bureau of Indian Affairs-Sponsored Education Administration on June 13, 1968. In a very real sense, this workshop for education and guidance personnel working with Indian children signifies a new era in Indian educational policy. The beginnings of the new era can be pinpointed to March 6, 1968. On that date President Johnson delivered to Congress an unprecedented message outlining the plight of the American Indian and Alaska Native minority;

he referred to them as the forgotten Americans. His message called for a program that stressed American Indian and Alaska Native self-determination and promoted partnership self-help, so that American Indians and Alaska Natives could take full part in the life of modern America. Concerning educational opportunity for Indians, the President directed the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to establish a "model community school system for Indians" (Johnson, 1968). Furthermore, the President urged development of a "concentrated effort in Indian education with state and local agencies," (Johnson, "Education") stating that "this is critical if the two-thirds of Indian school children in non-public schools are to get the special help they sorely need. This broad mandate projects our responsibilities for Indians into the very vortex of the nation's future (Johnson, "Education").

In 1969, President Richard Nixon in keeping with Johnson's message decreed that the American Indian had the right to self-determination: "right of self-determination of the Indian people will be respected and their participation in planning their own destiny will actively be encouraged" (Nixon, 1970, p. 566). He recognized that:

> One of the saddest aspects of Indian life in the United States is the low quality of Indian education. Drop-out rates for Indians are twice the national average and the average educational level for all Indians under federal supervision is less than six school years. Again at least a part of the problem stems from the fact that the federal government is trying to do for Indians what many Indians can do better for themselves. (Nixon, 1970, p. 566)

For the first time in United States history, American Indian and Alaska Native voices were heard. American Indians/Alaska Natives recognized higher education, not just vocational

training, as the key to self-determination. As a people, American Indians/Alaska Natives were ready for tribally owned and operated colleges.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the history of American Indian higher education in the United States; the history is divided into three distinct eras. This chapter also provided a detailed review of the first two eras: the colonial and federal eras. The chapter also reviewed the early stages of the self-determination period. In chapter 3, I provide a detailed assessment of Tribal Colleges and Universities, the result of self-determination.

CHAPTER 3

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Tribal Colleges and universities are distinctive institutions of higher education; they are unique in physical locations, in their accountability responsibilities, in student populations and in mission statements. In addition to traditional higher education curricular offerings, TCU administrators, faculty and staff are expected to be responsive to the tribal leaders and people who live on the reservations that house their institutions. TCU administrators and faculty/staff, collectively and individually, are accountable to their Nation's people—this responsibility encompasses economic growth and development, language restoration and preservation, cultural conservation, environmental sustainability and sovereignty related issues (including land-grant status). TCUs were conceived from the idea and belief that self-determination was essential for the survival of American Indian nations and peoples. Tribal leaders and educators realized that the establishment of their own higher educational institutions was crucial to the communities' continued existence and well-being. The student populations have different needs than Non-Native students. Special challenges are also associated with these predominantly minority-serving higher educational institutions.

TCUs provide a link for community members to maintain traditional Indigenous knowledge. "Increasing evidence suggests that there are good reasons for American Indian students not to discard knowledge traditionally held by their tribes—knowledge at once ecological, moral, practical, and most certainly philosophical" (Wildcat, 2001, p. 8).

Currently, there are 37 American TCUs and one international TCU that maintain membership in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of TCUs and reviews the founding of the first six TCUs and the creation of AIHEC. Table 3-1 provides an overview of the 37 TCUs located in the United States. The chapter also reviews some of the unique missions of TCUs and the special challenges and opportunities that TCUs face. Tables 3-2 and 3-3 provide an analysis of the mission statements provided by the TCUs located in the United States.

Historical Development of TCUs

The idea of higher education for American Indians was conceived out of necessity to ensure the sustainability of Native nations. Indian nations face the highest rate of poverty and unemployment in the U.S.; they also have the highest rate of high school drop-outs in the country (American Indian School Dropouts and Pushouts, n.d.; Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010, Unemployment on Indian Reservations, 2010). Educational leaders, tribal leaders, and other community members believed that education was the only way that Indian nations could emerge from the so-called "plight of the Indians" and become successful in the two worlds in which they must learn to navigate – the Red and White worlds.

> Education at mainstream colleges and universities did not meet the needs of American Indian and Alaska Natives.
>
> > Indian students are confronted with the monolith of Western science when they leave the reservation to attend college. In most introductory courses their culture and traditions are derided as mere remnants of a superstitious, stone-age mentality that could not understand or distinguish between the simplest of propositions. (Deloria, 2001b, p. 3)

First Six Tribal Colleges

Navajo Community College (Dine College)

The Navajo people, dedicated to education, lobbied for many years for a college to serve the needs of their community. The Navajo Community College, the nation's first tribally controlled college, opened its doors in 1968 in Tsaile, Arizona (Dine College, n.d., "Dine College History"). The Navajo Community Act of 1971 provided federal funds to assist the Navajo Tribe of Indians to administer education to its members through a community college. The Act appropriated 5.5 million dollars to Navajo Community College to build a campus. In an unprecedented move, the monies were given not to the BIA to administer but, instead, to the Navajo Tribal Council. Navajo Community College became the first Indian institution for higher education to be established and directed solely by Native American Indians and it served as the prototype for the development of other tribal colleges (Stahl, 1979). The success of the Navajo Community College can be credited as the true beginning of Indian self-determination in higher education. During the next four years, five tribal colleges opened in the western United States, where the most concentrated American Indian population exists. In this section, I discuss the founding of these colleges.

Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University (D-Q University)

The roots for Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl University (D-Q University), the second tribal college, began in the 1960s when a group of scholars began a campaign for an American Indian and Alaska Native university controlled by a majority American Indian Board. This group seized an opportunity when the U.S. Army, in 1970, vacated a 643 acre site that housed a communications relay station in California. The vacated land became federal surplus property and was placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. A

number of Native Americans/Alaska Natives placed a claim on this site with the intent of developing a school controlled by Indigenous peoples. After lengthy negotiations, the federal government awarded D-Q University title to the land in 1971, under provisions of the federal surplus property laws. D-Q University opened in 1971; uniquely, it was located outside of reservation lands (Oppelt, 1990). D-Q University closed its doors in 2005 as a result of accreditation issues. Currently, D-Q, as an Inter-Tribal Learning Community, is attempting to reopen the university's doors (Constable, 2012.).

Oglala Lakota College

As soon as the Pine Ridge Indian reservation came into existence, Oglala leaders began pressuring the U.S. government to honor the treaties that promised education. Lakota leaders recognized that education controls a community's destiny (Oglala Lakota College, n.d., "OLC History/Accreditation"). During the mid-1960s, several leaders of the Oglala Sioux Tribe began speaking out about the need for higher education. In response, the Oglala tribal council chartered Oglala Lakota College, the third tribal college, on March 4, 1971. The mission was to provide education to students so they could compete for employment opportunities on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (Oglala Lakota College, n.d., "Presidents Message,"; Oppelt, 1990; Stein, 1992, 2009).

Sinte Gleska University

The fourth TCU, Sinte Gleska University, was chartered on January 28, 1971 by the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council. The idea for a tribal college, in this case, was first introduced during the 1950s when tribal officials embraced the need to establish a local higher education institution to address the high postsecondary drop-out rate among tribal members. This eventually developed into public discussions led by Stanley Red Bird, a local Rosebud Sioux

Reservation leader, as was supported by tribal council members. The first president, Gerald Mohatt, was asked, in 1970, by Red Bird to help develop a college for the local community. Red Bird noted that young people who left the area to attend college often returned after several months, or if they graduated from a mainstream college, they did not return to the reservation. Red Bird indicated to Mohatt that he and other community leaders were frustrated with these outcomes and believed that a tribal college would be beneficial to the Indian people. Within six months of this conversation, Sinte Gleska College was chartered (Bordeaux, 1990; Boyer, 2002).

Mohatt, in a 1990 article, reflects on the eight goals the local community leaders voiced when they proposed the college. The first goal was to establish a college as a bridge to successful off-reservation higher education. The college planned to assist in transfers to four-year universities by preparing students in English and math literacy. Second, these leaders wanted to bolster strong western educated American Indian and Alaska Native leadership so that the Indians could provide the direction for future growth of both the college and the community itself. The elder leaders believed that non-Indian education was a crucial need for the American Indian nation's future leaders. The third goal of the college was to keep young educated people on the reservation to provide future direction and leadership for the community. The leaders also hoped that the college would become a vehicle for economic and community development and eventually provide job opportunities by developing business enterprises. The college was also designed to become an institution independent from tribal politics. Moreover, its charter stipulated that the college was to remain an independent entity with an independently elected board of directors, autonomous budget, and its own human resource policies.

A primary reason for establishing the college was the committee's desire to establish a base for preserving the language and culture of the tribe. Access for all of the people was also

one of the visions of the community leaders; the college was to meet the needs of the people rather than the people meeting the needs of the college. Finally, the eighth mission of the college was to meet the English literacy needs of the Lakota people (Mohatt, 1990).

Turtle Mountain Community College

The Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe, in the 1960s, experienced tension and pressure because of population growth and an increasingly poor economy. Tribal members looked for creative ways to relieve the mounting stress and tension. Many tribal members were World War II and Korean veterans; some had jobs off the reservation and others had participated in the 1950s relocation effort. All of these events exposed the membership to an economically better way of life beyond the reservation boundaries. This group of members, and those who had gained a higher education, began questioning the quality of life on the reservation and sought ways to improve life for tribal people. They also questioned the effectiveness of the tribal government and the continued dominance of the BIA. This group formed the Associates for Progress in the mid-1960s to assess the social, educational, and economic structure of the reservation. Education was identified as a high priority and the Education Committee was appointed by the Tribal Council to develop recommendations. The Education Committee recommended the development of a tribal college (Turtle Mountain Community College, n.d. "President's Message"; Stein, 1990b, 1992; Oppelt, 1990).

The Associates for Progress, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, encouraged mainstream colleges to offer classes on the reservation as a short term measure. In association with North Dakota State University, initial funding was obtained through a federal Higher Education Act grant to govern a tribal college. The Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe charted the college, the fifth TCU, in 1972. For many years, the college operated in rented spaces that they

found within the community. College leaders later purchased and renovated several old buildings and added several metal buildings. In May 1999, the college moved to a new campus and a new 123 acre facility where it continues to operate (Stein, 1992; Oppelt, 1990).

Sitting Bull College (Standing Rock)

Standing Rock, the sixth TCU, was charted by the Standing Rock Tribal Council in 1972. Leaders recognized the need for an institution of higher learning to provide opportunities for the people living on the reservation. The committee responsible for the college's development negotiated a consortium arrangement with Bismarck Junior College; they also applied for and secured Title III funds under the Higher Education Act of 1965. The $100,000 grant funded three initial staff positions: a president, counselor and business manager. Standing Rock opened its doors in 1973 (Sitting Bull College, n.d., "The History").

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium

The first six TCU presidents struggled to keep their programs intact and the doors of their individual TUCs open because of continuous economic challenges. Recognizing this, the presidents of the first six TCUs gathered in 1973 and founded the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC). Initially, the TCU presidents and other tribal leaders worked as volunteers for AIHEC; they advocated and lobbied for TCUs. These leaders, educators and lobbyists were diligent and built a successful organization to represent their best interests; they began to conceptualize the TCU mission as a national movement (Gipp, 2009a; Stein, 1990a). Gipp (2009b) maintains that "the history of AIHEC is a story of dedication, persistence and collaboration" (p. 7). He also states that AIHEC "proved to be the catalyst to a dynamic process that has continued to expand these past thirty years" (p. 7). Currently, AIHEC represents 36 TCUs in the United States and one in Canada:

> AIHEC is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities. AIHEC provides leadership and influences public policy on American Indian higher education issues through advocacy, research, and program initiatives, promotes and strengthens Indigenous languages, cultures, communities, and tribal nations; and through its unique position, serves member institutions and emerging Tribal Colleges and Universities. (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, para. 1)

AIHEC describes its mission as:

> AIHEC's mission is to support the work of the tribal colleges and universities and the national movement for tribal self-determination. AIHEC's mission statement, adopted in 1973, identifies four objectives: maintain commonly held standards of quality in American Indian education; support the development of new tribally controlled colleges; promote and assist in the development of legislation to support American Indian higher education; and encourage greater participation by American Indians in the development of higher education policy. (AIHEC, n.d., "Funding and Resource Opportunities")

Other Significant Developments for American Indian Education

The Indian Education Act of 1972 (Title IV of Public Law 92-318, Educational Amendments of 1972) added new legislative statutes and contained provisions to amend such previous legislation as the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Adult Education Act of 1966. The Indian Education Act provides several revenues to benefit American Indian and Alaska Native education. One section of the act established pilot programs to meet the special needs of American Indian and Alaska Native children. Some of the other programs include bilingual and bicultural programs. The act also included research programs for adult education including

literacy and high school equivalency preparation. The act also provided funds to be used in the preparation of teachers for reservation schools. As a result of this act, the Office of Education was established in the BIA and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education was founded (The Indian Education Act of 1972, Title IV of Public Law 92-318, Educational Amendments of 1972). Other federal bills passed in the 1970s were important to the support of Indian education. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of these bills—including the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Indian Self Determination and Education Act of 1975, the Education Amendment Act of 1978, and the Higher Education Act of 1978 (Stahl, 1979).

Stein (2009) notes that the "initiative and development work done by the TCU presidents, Board of Trustees, and AIHEC…has led to many innovative and productive outcomes" (p. 19). One of these is the 1994 extension of the Morrill Federal Land Grant Act (Pl. 103-32). The extension of this act provided land grant status to tribal colleges, a significant development for tribal colleges, even though no federal land was available to grant to the colleges. These colleges instead received endowments from the federal government (Bigart, 1997; Gavin, 1995). The work by the TCU founders and supporters also led to Presidential Executive Orders. In 1996, President Clinton signed Executive Order No. 13021 which

> promoted TCUs access to all federal programs and instructed those same agencies to explore ways in which they might assist TCUs carry forward their mandate to serve American Indian communities. On June 3, 2002 President Bush signed an executive order creating two powerful new advocacy tools for TCUs, which are the President's Board of Advisers on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities. (Stein, 2009, p. 19)

Mission of TCUs

The mission and curricular offerings in TCUs are substantially intertwined; it is impossible to speak of them independently. The central goal of all TCUs, according to AIHEC (AIHEC, AIMS, 2012), is to save their respective nations (p. 1). Nation saving, a monumental goal for any higher education institution, guided the TCU movement in the 1960s when tribal and educational leaders realized that education would provide tribal community members with sustainability and the skills required to walk successfully in both the Red world and the White world. The missions of TCUs encompass broad tenets such as acknowledging Native identity and language restoration and preservation. The missions also include specific goals such as providing remedial education and increasing workforce development in their native nations. TCU administrators and leaders, with tribal leadership and guidance from elders, attempt to provide solutions to the challenges found on the desolate landscape of American Indian reservations. See Table 3-2 for a further delineation of TCU missions.

TCUs, while alike in their mission statements, are each unique and distinct institutions with differing histories, challenges and locations. For example, the Institute of American Indian Arts (Santa Fe, New Mexico) is one of only three federally chartered Indigenous higher education institutions in the United States. It was chartered "in 1986, and was charged with the study, preservation and dissemination of traditional and contemporary expressions of Native American language, literature, history, oral traditions and the visual and performing arts" (Institute of American Indian Arts, n.d., "History"). Ilisagvik College is located in Barrow, the northernmost point of Alaska; a recent message on their website warned that a polar bear had been sighted near the campus (Ilisagvik College, n.d. "Announcements"), an observation that defines its location at an extreme northern latitude. Several TCUs are not located on reservation

lands; these are the College of the Muscogee Nation (Okmulgee, Oklahoma), Comanche Nation College (Lawton, Oklahoma), Haskell Indian Nations University (Lawrence, Kansas) and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (Albuquerque, New Mexico) (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012). United Tribes Technical College (Bismarck, North Dakota) has a child development center and K-8 school on campus that incorporates "native culture into the classroom and reward students who demonstrate Lakota values in their behavior" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6). The missions of TCUs are inclusive of tribal cultures and traditions; the following pages highlight these customs.

Celebrating and Embracing Native Identity/Language

TCU leaders, faculty, and administrators incorporate native identity into their individual mission statements and, thus, into their programs and curricula. Language restoration and preservation is a primary goal of TCU faculty and administrators. Language transmission, once a primary function of families, became lost in assimilation efforts (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6) and has since been absorbed in TCU mission statements and curricular offerings. One hundred percent of the TCUs include Native identity in their mission statements or president welcome statements. "TCUs also work to preserve tradition, language, and culture by integrating languages into early childhood programs and working with local and elementary and secondary schools to integrate language and cultural studies into their curricula" (AIHEC/ AIMS, 2012, p. 7).

The mission statement of Bay Mills Community College in Brimley, Michigan "is to provide quality educational opportunities, promote research and facilitate individual development in an accessible, community-based, and culturally diverse environment that supports and maintains the Anishinaabek culture and language" (Bay Mills Community College, n.d., "Mission and Objectives"). Ilisagvik College (Barrow, Alaska) "provides quality post-

secondary academic, vocational and technical education in a learning environment that perpetuates and strengthens Inupiat culture, language, values and traditions" (Ilisagvik College, n.d., "College Mission"). Ilisagvik College "teaches Inupiaq language courses in villages throughout the North Slope using Skype" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6). "The Inupiaq Studies staff is also assisting in the development of a Rosetta Stone language program to supplement their Inupiaq language courses" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6). Sisseton Wahpeton College in Sisseton, South Dakota "will preserve and extend Dakota culture, language, and history while contributing to economic development through the provision of human capital and other resources (Sisseton Wahpeton College, n.d., "Mission Statement"). Blackfeet Community College (Browning, Montana) sponsors language classes at various sites around the reservation and in Montana. The college also broadcasts the language on local television stations and the local cable network (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6).

As the preceding examples demonstrate, TCU administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to assuring that the Tribal Nation's children learn their native languages. Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota) runs the Porcupine Head Start/Early Head Start program on the reservation. The college offers immersion programs for the children in the Head Start programs as well as for parents and other people who want to learn the Lakota language. In 2008, the education program at the College of Menominee Nation (Keshena, Wisconsin) began "training, certifying, and recertifying teachers, focusing in particular on helping teachers integrate the Menominee language and culture into classroom curricula" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 7). Stone Child College (Box Elder, Montana) is:

> Creating a Cree language curriculum and will implement a Cree language immersion classroom for newborns through age three. The second phase of the project will begin

> with the opening of the Language Nest Classroom. There, babies will be immersed in Cree language for eight hours each day. Stone Child College's children will be the next generation of fluent Cree speakers – and represent the tribes' greatest opportunity to preserve and maintain the Cree language. (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 8)

Celebrating and Embracing the Wisdom of Elders

Elders provide an important component of TCU education. Elders are present in classrooms to offer instruction and perspective; however, they are also instrumental in bridging the classroom to the community. Dr. Billie Jo Kipp, at Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana, in her "President's Message" (n.d.), states that "we not only love our children but we revere our elders, as well. We look to the older generations to pass down their extensive bodies of traditional knowledge" (para. 2). The College of the Muscogee Nation in Okmulgee, Oklahoma acknowledges elders in its "Core Values": "HOPORENKV (WISDOM): We gain insight from scholarly learning and the knowledge and experience of our elders". Aaniih Nakoda College (Harlem, Montana) administrators and faculty video-record interviews with elders to preserve their knowledge (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6). Elders are an integral part of the community library program at Aaniiih Nakoda College: "We also have made arrangements with the local Senior Citizens Center for elders to come to the library twice a month to tell stories or read to the children" (Fort Belknap College Library, n.d.). Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, Minnesota offers an Honorary Degree for Elders (HDE). The HDE program is:

> intended to place greater emphasis on practical benefits for elders who wish to pursue life-long learning aspirations, and to enrich the role of elders in contemporary society. Achievement of the HDE is based on attendance, initiative, traditional mentoring/cultural

> infusion of junior peers, and the fulfillment of an annual education plan. The regular advisory services of the College will assist each elder in preparing an Annual Education Plan (AEP). Elders enrolled in the HDE program will be exempted from the usual rigors of western assessment methods. (Leech Lake Tribal College, n.d., "Elders Program")

Elders work with many TCUs, including Dine College (Tsaile, Arizona), Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota), Tohono O'odham Community College (Sells, Arizona), and Turtle Mountain Community College (Belcourt, North Dakota). Table 3-2 provides a list of the TCUs that involve Elders in their institutions. This list was compiled through a review of the TCU websites. "Elders teach classes or workshops in language, traditional crafts, and history; provide guidance and counseling; pray with and for students; and translate materials" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 6).

Ambassadors to Other Cultures

At least one TCU explicitly reaches out to non-Native students. Michael Parish, the President of Bay Mills Community College (Brimley, Michigan) notes that "…the non-tribal students get an understanding of tribal culture and gain a respect that they would never have received anywhere else. This does a lot to improve relations within our community, which dramatically improves our tribal students' self-confidence" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 8). It is also important to note that most TCUs maintain open admissions so that there is diversity on most campuses. This is also discussed later in this chapter when "Student Profiles" are presented.

Land

Place is fundamental to American Indian and Alaska Native people (Ambler, 1998; Basso, 1996; Deloria, 2003, Mander, 1999; Miller, 2001). The earth and its land, water, and air

are central to all American Indian and Alaska Native people and help shape their identities. "For this reason, respect for the environment and sustainable practices are embedded within the curricula and programs of TCUs" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 9). After most of the TCUs represented by AIHEC were granted land grant status in 1994, AIHEC established the First Americans Land-grant College Organization and Network (FALCON), a non-profit, professional association that represents TCU leaders, faculty and staff (AIHEC, n.d., "FALCON"). FALCON was established to ensure the wellbeing of America's Indigenous peoples by fostering communication, cooperation, and professionalism among Tribal College Land Grant educators through these activities:

1. Promoting and preserving American Indian culture and language in all its professional activities;
2. Supporting member colleges in maintaining the unique identity of Tribal Colleges and Universities;
3. Fostering collaborative relationships among all Tribal College Land Grant educators;
4. Fostering equitable partnerships within the U.S. Land Grant system;
5. Providing a unified and collective voice that represents the common interests of its Land Grant professionals and enhances the image of the Tribal College Land Grant system; and
6. Facilitating and supporting the professional development of its membership.

(AIHEC, n.d., "FALCON")

Empowering Communities

The local Indigenous community is at the core of the mission and offerings provided by TCUs. In addition to traditional Western academic curricular classes, TUCs also offer General

Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes, after-school programs for elementary and secondary school students, firefighter certification, computer literacy classes, and reading literacy programs. In many cases, the only library in a Native community is the one provided by the TCU. TCU libraries provide archival services, collect oral histories, and preserve artwork and other documents provided by the tribal nation (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 11).

Enhancing Workforce Development

Commitment to preparing Native community members to enter the workforce is a core priority for TCUs. The national average of unemployment on American Indian reservations is 50%, compared with 10% in the general U.S. population ("Unemployment on Indian Reservations", 2010). In the Northern Great Plains, the unemployment rate hovers between 77 and 80% ("Unemployment on Indian Reservations", 2010). Of the ten poorest counties in the United States, eight are on Indian reservations ("Unemployment on Indian Reservations", 2010). Chronic and high unemployment leads to poverty, which, in turn, translates into a spectrum of despair and social ills, ranging from high suicide rates, high drop-out rates and health disparities, to poor nutrition and poor housing conditions.

Many of the TCUs offer degrees or certificates that are responsive to the work force and needs of their respective communities. Sisseton Wahpeton College (Sisseton, South Dakota) offers an Associate's of Applied Science (AAS) degree in carpentry technology and an AAS in hospitality and casino management (Sisseton Wahpeton College, n.d., "Programs of Study"). Sitting Bull (Fort Yates, North Dakota) offers an Associates of Science (AS) degree in office technology and building trades; they also offer certificates in farm/ranch management and wind turbine technology (Sitting Bull College, n.d., "Program Information"). Tohono O'odham (Sells, Arizona) offers apprenticeships in carpentry plumbing and facilities maintenance (Tohono

O'odham Community College, n.d., "Programs Currently Offered"). Turtle Mountain Community College (Belcourt, North Dakota) offers ASS degrees in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning and in tribal paralegal/advocacy. They also offer certificates in computer support and in entrepreneurship (Turtle Mountain Community College, n.d., "Programs and Majors"). United Tribes Technical College (Bismarck, North Dakota) offers AAS degrees in small business management, criminal justice and health information technology—coding and medical transcription (United Tribes Technical College, n.d., "Academic Programs").

Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota) highlights its success in increasing employment among their alumni: "Lakota people are now employed in teaching, nursing, human services, business, computer, and vocational positions providing services and support to the people and families of Pine Ridge reservation" (Oglala Lakota College, n.d., "Training Today's Leaders"). The Institute of American Indian Arts (Santa Fe, New Mexico) likewise recognizes its success as a leader in Native arts: "Many of the country's most illustrious contemporary American Indian artists, poets, writers, musicians and cultural leaders are IAIA alumni, while others are affiliated with IAIA as faculty, staff, visiting artists and scholars" (Institute of American Indian Arts, n.d., "History"). Haskell Indian Nations University (Lawrence, Kansas) "has graduates in all levels of state, tribal and federal governments as well as graduates who are elected members of national Indian organizations" ("The Bureau of Indian Education", 2010, p. 8).

Developmental Education

In the United States**,** roughly 650,000 Native students are in the K-12 educational system. About 92% of Native students attend regular public schools while 8% attend schools operated or funded by individual American Indian and Alaska Native nations or by the federal Bureau of

Indian Education (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). As will be emphasized throughout this study, Native students drop out of school at an alarmingly high rate; they have the highest dropout rate of any other ethnic or racial group in the United States ("American Indian School Dropouts," n.d.). Approximately three out of ten American Indian and Native Alaska students drop out of school before graduating from high school—whether on the reservations or in other areas of the United States. Students drop out because their needs are not being met or they are pushed out because they protest how they are treated ("American Indian School Dropouts", n.d.). As Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2010) maintain, American Indian and Alaska Native students have "continually faced serious political, economic and social issues including racial prejudice and discrimination, paternalism, loss of treaty rights, isolation on economically depressed lands, health disparities, lack of political power, and loss of Native languages since the colonial period" (p. 22). This often results in students dropping out of school or being placed in services that are not beneficial or needed, such as special education.

If American Indian and Native Alaska students graduate from the K-12 system successfully, they are often significantly underprepared for college level work. TCU administrators and faculty recognize this and know that they must address this issue in order to help prepare their students for college. Many of the TCUs offer developmental courses to ensure the success of their students. Approximately "80% of tribal college students take at least one developmental studies course" (Paskus, 2011, p. 8). Since its inception, Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota) has offered developmental courses. In the 2005-2006 academic years, the college leaders established the Foundational Studies Department. This allowed "developmental educators from assessment, humanities, and the math departments to begin training and researching ways to improve services to underprepared students" (Oglala Lakota College, n.d.,

"Foundational Studies Department"). During new student orientation, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College (Hayward, Wisconsin) "administers a placement exam, and with these results advises students on appropriate entry-level courses" (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College, n.d., "Skills Courses"). Students are enrolled in general English, general math or adult basic education, as needed.

Student Profiles

Tribally controlled colleges and universities serve mostly nontraditional college age students. The typical student, often a single parent, is a female in her late 20s or early 30s with children. "Mothers in their 40s or 50s often graduate with one of their children in the same class" (Ambler, 2002a, p. 1). According to Brigs and Davis (2000), the demographic is beginning to shift and include younger students and male students. "Students as young as 16 enroll in a tribal college, bored at high schools and seeking more challenging curriculum. Indian students return to their parent's reservations, trying to discover their roots" (Ambler, 2002a, p. 1). Students enrolled in tribal colleges often return to school after repeated failures elsewhere; many of them are single mothers interested in acquiring marketable skills or other adults who simply did not consider pursuing higher education before the creation of a tribal college on their reservation. Most students have many family and community responsibilities. This often means that students sit out for a semester or semesters. Students of both genders are typically unemployed, underemployed, or earn low wages. Attending college is a financial burden for many of these students; an estimated 85% of tribal college students live at or below poverty level. Most students live within the borders of the reservations that the TCUs serve (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012).

Many of the students enrolled in these colleges are first-generation college students; many are first-generation high school graduates. TCUs operate by open enrollment which may include "the gifted, the recovering alcoholics, adults who were pushed out of the fifth or sixth grade, and students with a different language and culture from that of mainstream universities. They nurture students who are legally blind or undiagnosed dyslexics" (Ambler, 2002a, p. 2). MeChelle Crazy Horse, in 2002, received the Student of the Year award at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota. According to Ambler (2002a), Crazy Horse is typical of TCU students:

> At 30, she is older than the conventional college students. Her parents did not attend college. When she was nominated for the Student of the Year award, she and her husband had four children ranging in age from five weeks to 10 years old. (p. 2)

When Crazy Horse accepted her award, she spoke of previous encounters with formal education: "When I went to school in Rapid City, they told us we wouldn't amount to anything" (Ambler, 2002a, p. 2). She also spoke about her family and their desire to participate in education: "I was the first in my family to go to college. Then my younger brother and my cousin both started college. I started something in my family…I am going to amount to something!" (Ambler, 2002a, p. 1).

Tribal college and universities also accept students regardless of ethnicity/race. Sometimes, non-Indian students enroll in TCUs because, geographically, the school is the closest to their homes. Ambler (2002a) interviewed students at an AIHEC student conference. She describes one student and her discussion with him:

> We talked with…a middle-aged, non-Indian man from a notoriously racist reservation border town. As he completed his fourth year and looked forward to his bachelor's degree, he expressed his deep gratitude to the college and his fellow students, who had provided him with not only an academic education but also a social and cultural education about the neighbors he never knew. (p. 1)

Tribal colleges also function as the first part of a student's educational journey; many students transfer to larger colleges and universities. The following is a quote from a student who attended Oglala Lakota College before transferring to a mainstream institution:

> What I enjoyed most about being in a tribal college was the sense of community. Oglala Lakota College was a stepping-stone. It gave me the confidence to be vocal and to get involved…My time at Oglala Lakota College gave me a sense of duty and the poise to go further outside the world. (Shortbull, 2003, "I Can Do Anything").

Challenges Unique to TCUs

Location

Most Tribal College and Universities are located on reservation lands. Reservations, in general, are located in rural, desolate locations with difficult terrain and extreme temperatures. Bay Mills Community College is located in Brimley, Michigan on the Saint Mary's River. According to the institutional profile located on the AIHEC (n.d.) profile page, some students drive a 100-mile round trip in order to attend classes. Ilisagvik College, in Barrow, Alaska, "serves an 89,000 square mile Arctic tundra region—the North Slope—which is not connected by road or rail. The region is ice-locked nine months of each year" (AIEHC, n.d., "TCU Profiles"). Cankdeska Cikana Community College is located on Spirit Lake Reservation in Fort

Totten, North Dakota. Rousey and Longie (2001) describe the road conditions of the reservation:

> Although the nearest city (Devils Lake, with a population of 9,000) is only 13 miles distant across the lake, floods in recent years have washed out all but two roads leading to the reservation, necessitating a 50-minute detour around the lake, half of it on dirt and gravel roads. Throughout much of the year, blizzards, ice, and snow make the roads impassable. (p. 1495)

Funding and Financial Aid

Tribal college students are some of the poorest students in the United States; therefore, financial assistance is essential for their success. Most TCUs maintain very low tuition costs; The American Indian Higher Education Consortium/American Indian Measures for Success (AIHEC/AIMS) (2012) report that most TCUs charge $100 per credit hour and calculate that the average cost per academic year for an education is $13,000.

TCU staff and administrators spend a lot of time educating students and families about financial aid opportunities. According to AIHEC/AIMS (2012), most TCU students receive financial aid:

> In 2009-10, 76 percent of all TCU students received Pell Grants. Most students also receive other forms of aid, such as the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, state scholarships and grants, federal and state work study programs and tribal scholarships. In total, nearly $83 million in financial aid was provided in 2009-2010 to TCU students. (p. 28)

In the 1990s, AIHEC established the American Indian College Fund; the purpose of this organization is to raise funds for TCU scholarships. "By 2009 -2010, more than 3,500 TCU students received a total of $4,090,050 in vitally needed scholarship funding from the American Indian College Fund" (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012, p. 28).

TCUs also provide tuition waivers and discounts to their students; the amount of financial aid, while substantial, is not adequate to meet student needs. As discussed in chapter 1, unemployment and poverty are extremely high on reservations. AIHEC/AIMS maintains that many TCU students "have already used up their federal aid eligibility while attending—but not completing—programs at other institutions" (p. 28). AIHEC/AIMS states that TCUs, in the academic year 2009-2010, discounted and waived nearly $1.3 million. Without these reductions in fees, many students would be unable to attend.

In most cases, TCUs do not receive funds from the states in which they are located (Matthews, 1999). Financial support for TCUs from the tribes and communities that they serve has been reduced because of severe economic conditions on most reservations and in tribal communities. The federal government provides most of the financial support for TCUs under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012; Stein, 2009). In the academic year 2009-2010, the Act authorized $8,000 per American Indian and Alaska Native student; however, funding was only $5,235 per full-time American Indian and Alaska Native student (AIHEC/AIMS, 2012). AIHEC points out that Howard University, a minority-serving institution, receives $19,000 per student. It is also important to note that TCUs do not receive reimbursement for non-American Indian and Alaska Native students although most TCUs have an open enrollment policy (AIHEC/AIMS, 2009; Martin, 2005).

Student Mortality

The health of American Indians/Alaska Natives is poor in comparison to the health of the United States population. American Indians/Alaska Natives experience:

> higher rates of sickness, disease, and mortality among all age groups. Currently, the alcoholism death rate for American Indians is 7.3 times higher than for the general U.S. population; accidents, 3 times higher; diabetes, 3.5 times higher; homicide, 1.6 times higher; and suicide, 1.7 times higher. (American Indian Higher Education Consortium & The Institute for Higher Education Policy (AIHEC/IHEP), 2001, p. 22)

Tribal faculty commented to Ambler (2003) after they had attended two funerals for students in six months: "When you say, 'Have a good weekend,' you never know who you will see on Monday.' Another said, 'Your heart can only break so many times" (p.1). Student deaths occur because of vehicle accidents that involve alcohol or drug abuse; often, no one is wearing a seatbelt when the accident occurs. Students also die due to diabetes complications, suicide and murder (Ambler, 2003). TCUs conduct their own research to determine the causes of student mortality:

> Research by Fort Peck Community College in Poplar, MT, found 40% alcohol and drug abuse in the tribal adult population and indications that one-third of the student body at the middle school had been involved in an accident or violence. A survey by the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe found that 33% of the respondents had a family history of substance abuse, 48% had a family history of violence; and 28% had considered attempting suicide. (Ambler, 2003, p. 1)

Rousey and Longie (2001), researchers, studied family support systems and their importance in a tribal college, Cankdeska Cikana Community College (Fort Totten, North Dakota). As part of their study, they examined retention and attrition rates and discovered that the tribal college registrar staff calculated their graduation rates by calculating student deaths—they included deaths as a factor when predicting their graduation rates for the year. The researchers asked the two non-tribal college registrar personnel in the area if they made similar calculations. The staff at two mainstream schools indicated that they had no idea of what happened to non-completer students. One of the researchers asked the registrar staff at Cankdeska Cikana Community College if she would ever not know if a student died. Her reply was: "Would I not know if a student had died or not? With all due respect, Dr. Rousey that has got to be the stupidest question anyone has asked me! (p. 1502)

Two Tribal Colleges That Do Not Belong to AIHEC

There are two tribal colleges that currently do not belong to AIHEC; both of these colleges reside in Oklahoma. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College is currently partnered with Southwestern Oklahoma State University. The administrators and faculty are in "the process of developing all that is necessary to be an independent, academically rigorous, two-year degree granting tribal college that can demonstrate financial stability and a secure student enrollment" (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College, n.d., "Letter from Dr. Henrietta Mann"). Once the academic infrastructures are in place, the administrators and faculty will apply to AIHEC for associate membership and, eventually, they will apply for full membership. Pawnee Nation College, located in Pawnee, Oklahoma has partnerships with Bacone College and the University of Oklahoma. The long term strategic plan of the administrators and faculty is to

apply to AIHEC once all of the infrastructures are in position (Pawnee Nation College, n.d., "Partnerships";" Pawnee Nation College, n.d., "Strategic Development Plan").

Summary

American Indians/Alaska Natives have endured many hardships and faced many difficulties in the pursuit of fair and just education for their children—all citizens of the United States who are often treated as third-class citizens. Working to enhance their people's opportunities, American Indian and Alaska Native leaders overcame numerous obstacles to establish institutions of higher education. Once established in the mid-twentieth century, TCUs made significant progress in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and other people who wanted to attend.

This chapter reviewed the first six TCUs and the founding of AIHEC. Table 1 provides an overview of the 36 TCUs located in the United States. The chapter also reviewed some of the unique missions of TCUs and the special challenges that TCUs face. Tables 3-2 and 3-3 delineate some of the missions that are undertaken by TCUs.

Regardless of their treatment, American Indian and Alaska Native leaders have continued the fight for the right to education. "The battle for Indian children will be won in the classroom, not on the streets or on horses. The students of today are our warriors of tomorrow" (Box, n.d., "Vision"). Chapter 4 includes a review of the methodology used in this study.

Table 3-1

An Overview of 37 TCUs in the United States

College	Location	Year Chartered	Nations Served	Languages	Programs
Aaniiih Nakoda College (Formerly Fort Belknap College) http://www.fbcc.edu/?page=home	Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana.	1984	the White Clay (Aaniiih or Gros Ventre) and Nakoda (Assiniboine) Indians	A'anin and Nokada	AA AS NACTEP
Bay Mills Community College http://www.bmcc.edu/index.html	Brimely, Michigan	1984	Bay Mills	Nishnaabemwin	AA AS AAS Certificates Diplomas
Blackfeet Community College http://bfcc.edu/index.php	Browning, Montana	1974	Blackfeet	Blackfeet	AA AS AAS Certificates
Cankdeska Cikana Community College http://www.littlehop.edu/content/	Fort Totten, North Dakota	1974	Spirit Lake Dakota	Dakota	AA AAS AS Certificates
Chief Dull Knife College http://www.cdkc.edu/	Lame Deer, Montana	1975	Northern Cheyenne	Cheyenne	AA AS AAS Certificates
College of Menominee Nation http://www.menominee.edu/default.aspx	Keshena, WI Green Bay, WI	1993	Menominee & Oneida	Menominee	AA AS AAS BA BS Technical Diploma Certificates of Mastery
College of the Muscogee Nation http://www.mvsktc.org/	Okmulgee, Oklahoma	2004	Muscogee	Mvskoke (Creek)	AA AS AAS Certificates
Comanche Nation College http://www.cnc.cc.ok.us/Home	Lawton, Oklahoma	2002	Comanche	Comanche	AA AS AAS AGS

Dine´ College http://www.dinecollege.edu/index.php	Tsaile, Arizona	1968	Dine´ (Navajo)	Dine´ (Navajo)	AA AS AA BA Certificates
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College http://www.fdltcc.edu/	Minnesota	1987	Anishinaabe	Anishinaabe	AS AA AAS BS Certificates
Fort Berthold Community College http://www.fortberthold cc.edu/	New Town, North Dakota	1973	*Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation (Three Affiliated Tribes)*	Arikara Mandan Hidatsa	AA AS AAS BS Certificates
Fort Peck Community College http://www.fpcc.edu/	Poplar, Montana	1978	Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux	Three distinct language groups: the Dakotas, the Nakotas, and the Lakotas	AA AS AAS Certificates
Haskell Indian Nations University http://www.haskell.edu/	Lawrence Kansas	1882	Multiple American Indian Nations Across the US	No distinct language program	AA AS BA BS
Ilisagvik College http://www.ilisagvik.cc/	Barrow, Alaska	1986	Inupiaq	Inupiaq	AA AAS Certificates
Institute of American Indians Arts http://www.iaia.edu/	Santa Fe, New Mexico	1975	Multiple American Indian Nations Across the U.S.	No distinct language program	AFF AA BFA BA Certificates
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College http://kbocc.org/index/index.php/home	Baraga, Michigan	1975	L'Anse Indian Reservation	Ojibwa	AA AS AAS
Lac Courte Orielles Ojibwa Community College http://www.lco.edu/	Hayward, Wisconsin	1982	Lac Courte Orielles	Ojibwa	AA AAS AS Certificates
Leech Lake Tribal College http://www.lltc.edu/	Cass Lake, Minnesota	1990	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Ojibwe	AA AS AAS Diploma Professional
Little Big Horn College http://www.lbhc.edu/	Crow Agency, Montana	1980	Crow	Crow	AA AS Certificates
Little Priest Tribal College http://www.littlepriest.edu/	Winnebago, Nebraska	1996	Winnebago	HoChunk	AA AS

Navajo Technical College http://www.navajotech.edu/	Crownpoint, New Mexico	1979	Dine´ (Navajo)	Dine´ (Navajo)	AAS BS BAS Certificates
Nebraska Indian Community College http://www.thenicc.edu/index.php/en/	Macy, NE Niobrara, NE South Sioux City, NE	1972	Omaha Tribe of NE Santee Sioux	Umoho (Omaha) Isanti (Santee Sioux) Dakota	AA AS AAS AAA
Northwest Indian College http://www.nwic.edu/	Bellingham, Washington	1983	Lummi	Lummi	BS BA AAS AST ATA Certificates Professional Technical Studies
Oglala Lakota College http://www.olc.edu/	Kyle, South Dakota Plus 9 branches	1971	Oglala Lakota (Sioux)	Lakota	MA BA BS BSW AA AAS Certificates
Red Lake Nation College http://www.redlakenationcollege.org/index.htm	Red Lake, Minnesota	2004	Anishinaabe (Red Lake Nation)	Anishinaabe	AA Certificates
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College http://www.sagchip.edu/	Mount Pleasant, Michigan	1998	Isabella	Ojibwa	AA
Salish Kootenai College http://www.skc.edu/?q=node/165	Pablo, Montana	1977	Confederated Salish & Kootenai	Salish	BA BS AA AS AAS Certificates
Sinte Gleska University http://www.sintegleska.edu/	Mission, South Dakota	1971	Rosebud Sioux	Lakota	AA BS BA BAAE
Sisseton Wahpeton College http://www.swc.tc/	Sisseton, South Dakota	1979	Sisseton & Wahpeton (Dakota Nation)	Dakota	AA AAS ASD Certificates
Sitting Bull College http://www.sittingbull.edu/	Fort Yates, North Dakota	1973	Standing Rock Indian Reservation	Dakota and Lakota	BS AA AS AAS Certificates

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute http://www.sipi.edu/	Albuquerque, New Mexico	1971	Multiple American Indian Nations	No Specific Language Program	AA AS AAS Certificates
Stone Child College http://www.stonechild.edu/	Elder, Montana	1984	Chippewa Cree	Cree	AA AS Certificates
Tohono O'odham Community College http://www.tocc.cc.az.us/	Sells, Arizona	1998	Tohono O'odham Nation	O'odham	AA AS AAS AABUS Certificates Apprenticeships
Turtle Mountain Community College http://www.turtle-mountain.cc.nd.us/	Turtle Mountain, North Dakota	1972	Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indian Nation	Ojibwa	BS AA AAS AS Certificates
United Tribes Technical College http://www.uttc.edu/main.asp	Bismarck, North Dakota	1969	Serves 5 Tribal Nations: Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation) of the Fort Berthold Reservation and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa	No language program within the college	BS AAS Certificates
White Earth Tribal and Community College http://www.wetcc.org/	Mahnomen, Minnesota	1997	Anishinaabe	Anishinaabe	AA AAS Certificates
Wind River Tribal College http://www.windrivertc.org/index.htm	Ethete, Wyoming	1997	Wind River Indian Reservations and Surrounding Communities	Northern Arapaho & Eastern Shoshone	AA

Information taken from AIHEC webpage and each TCU webpage

Table 3-2

TCU Mission Statements

Name Change to Reflect Identity	Cultural Identity	Language Programs	Increased Self Esteem To Students	Workforce Development	Land Sovereignty	Elder Wisdom	Basic Skills Instruction	Accreditation	Emphasizes Continuing Education
ANC	ANC	ANC	ANC	ANC				ANC	
	BMCC	BMCC	BMCC	BMCC	BMCC				BMCC
	BCC	BCC		BCC		BCC	BCC	BCC	BCC
	CCC	CCC	CCC	CCC				CCC	
	C Mus Nation	C Mus Nation				C Mus Nation			
	CDFC	CDFC		CDFC	CDFC			CDFC	
				CMN	CMN 96			CMN	
DC	DC	DC		DC			DC	DC	
	FLTCC	FLTCC		FLTCC	FLTCC		FLTCC	FLTCC	
	FBCC	FBCC		FBCC	FBCC			FBCC	
	FPCC	FPCC		FPCC				FPCC	
Haskell				Haskell					
	IC	IC		IC				IC	
	IAIA			IAIA	IAIA	IAIA		IAIA	
	KBOCC	KBOCC	KBOCC	KBOCC					
	LCOCC				LCOCC			LCOCC	
	LBHC	LBHC		LBHC				LBHC	
	NTC	NTC		NTC					
	NIC	NIC		NIC				NIC	
NWIC			NWICC	NWICC					
OLC	OLC	OLC		OLC	OLC	OLC	OLC	OLC	OLC
	RLNC	RLNC							
SKC	SKC			SKC				SKC	
		SGU			SGU			SGU	
	SWC	SWC		SWC					
	SCC	SCC		SCC					
	TOCC	TOCC			TOCC		TOCC		
	TMCC			TMCC			TMCC		
	UTCC			UTCC			UTCC		
	WETCC	WETCC							
	WRTC	WRTC							

Provides Community Education	Improve Tribal Management	Provide Social, Cultural & Recreational Services	Prepare Students For Transfer	Library is a community asset	Sustainability	Global	Open Enrollment
BMCC							
BCC	BCC	BCC	BCC				
CCCC				CCCC			
College of Mus Nation			College of Mus Nation				
CMN					CMN		
			DC		DC		
			FLTCC				
		FBCC				FBCC	
	FPCC		FPCC				
			IC		IC		
			KBOCC				
NTC			NTC				NTC
NIC		NIC				NIC	
OLC			OLC				
			RLNC				
	SKC		SKC				
			SCC				
			TOCC				

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

There is a call for a decisive and widespread change in how research is conducted in Indian country (Caldwell et al., 2004; Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith 1999; 2012). Historically, research has been something that was 'done to' American Indians and Alaska Natives and other Indigenous cultures. Research was often conducted without the consent of Indigenous peoples and was often done to their detriment. Caldwell et al. (2004) argue that a "parallel relationship exists between the historical treatment of AI/ANs and the research methods used to study them" (p.5). Smith (2012) maintains that

> the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that Indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity. (p. 1)

Wilson (2008) contends that Indigenous research should be approached and carried out in a ceremonious way. When viewing Indigenous research as a ceremony, everyone has a meaningful place and everyone who participates "should be ready to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness" (p. 69). It is important to Indigenous people

worldwide that Indigenous research methodologies and paradigms are developed, implemented and respected. When conducting Indigenous research, the researcher is accountable to the people with whom she/he interacts, interviews, and observes. The researcher should also include participants in developing the research question and in selecting the design and the methodology for the inquiry; the researcher should also collaborate with the participants about how and where the results are disseminated.

When I began this study, I committed myself to being as true to Indigenous research and the associated philosophies as possible. I began this study with the idea that I wanted to do a study that involved Tribal Colleges and Universities. I sought to conduct a study that was useful to the TCU communities. Accordingly, I started with an exploratory study to determine a relevant research need. I interviewed TCU presidents to gain an understanding of their research priorities. The second purpose, after initial data analysis of the initial exploratory study, was to determine the perception of TCU students about their educational experiences; the presidents wanted to know what the students thought the TCUs did well and what they thought needed improvement. The third purpose was to determine how TCU students described or understood the meaning they associated with their educational experiences at TCUs.

For the purpose of this study, qualitative methodologies were used to gain the perspectives of TCU leadership and students. Qualitative research is a broad term for methodologies that seek to include the words and stories of participants; participant perspectives are sought to add to an existing body of knowledge or to generate knowledge about an unexplored topic (Creswell, 2009). To determine a relevant research need for TCU communities, an exploratory method was used in the first study. For the second part of the study, a hybrid exploratory-phenomenology method was used.

In this chapter, qualitative research and the qualitative methodologies that were used in this study are discussed. This includes an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings, the research design, the role of the researcher, the research participants, and the data collection and analysis methods.

Qualitative Research

"Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011a, p. 3). Qualitative research "operates in a complex historical field… and any definition of qualitative research must work within this complex historical field" (p. 3). Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) offer a generic definition of qualitative research:

> [It] is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. (p. 3)

Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people perceive phenomena in their worlds, how people manage these phenomena and how these phenomena affect people and influence their world views. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011c), a qualitative researcher may be perceived as a bricoleur—a qualitative researcher uses different methodologies and takes many different representations (data) given to them by participants and transforms them into a montage or a quilt. "The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011c, p. 5). There are many types of qualitative bricoleurs. "The interpretive

bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting." (p. 5). Critical bricoleurs emphasize the "dialectical and hermeneutic nature of interdisciplinary inquiry, knowing that the boundaries between traditional disciplines no longer hold" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 683). The political bricoleur knows that everything is political and that there is inherent power in science and knowledge ((Denzin & Lincoln, 2011c, p.5). The outcome of the "interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quilt-like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage; a set of fluid, interconnected images, and representations…. like a quilt, a performance text, or a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole" (p. 6).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011c), arguably qualitative research gurus, maintain that there is not one paradigm or theoretical perspective that is associated solely with qualitative research. They also argue that there is not one set of methods or practices that belong entirely to qualitative researchers. Instead, qualitative researchers legitimately use many different methods and approaches for their work. No method is privileged over the other because insight and knowledge can be gained from all research perspectives and practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011c).

Theoretical Perspectives

As with most things in my life, I approach the theoretical perspective of this study eclectically. The following underpinnings significantly influence my research and scholarly activities—as well as my personal interpretation of the world.

Red Pedagogy

Coined by Grande (2004, 2007, 2008), "red pedagogy is an Indigenous pedagogy that operates at the crossroads of Western theory, specifically critical pedagogy and Indigenous

knowledge" (2007, p. 134). Grande (2007) argues that as American Indians and Alaska Natives examine

> communities, policies and practices, we take seriously the notion that to know ourselves as revolutionary agents is more than an act of understanding who we are. It is an act of reinventing ourselves, of validating our overlapping cultural identifications and relating them to the materiality of social life and power relations. (p. 134)

Grande argues that red pedagogy is not a methodology or a technique that can be memorized or implemented; rather, it is a "space of engagement" (Grande, 2007, p. 135). Red pedagogy is a process that occurs and changes as one changes and grows as a human being and as a scholar. Knowledge and ideas are dynamic; therefore, red pedagogy is dynamic as well. It is ever-evolving.

Decolonization

Colonization systematically stripped Indigenous peoples of their rights, including the rights to self-determination; colonization took lands away from Indigenous people, and, as such, abolished an entire way of life (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005). Modern Indigenous issues such as poverty, addictions, suicide, and health disparities are all the direct result of colonization. Colonization, Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird argues, is "an all-encompassing presence in our lives" (p. 2). Decolonization, as defined by Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, is the "intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation" (p. 2).

Critical Theory

Critical theorists believe that the world is "based on power and struggle and is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values" that are formed and preserved over time (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 98). Critical theorists consider their work activism; their goal is to critique, transform and emancipate (p. 99). Critical theorists use participatory research that "empowers the oppressed and supports social transformation and revolution" (p. 104).

Indigenous Educational Philosophies

In the literature, some Indigenous educators discuss education from an Indigenous perspective. These scholars have informed my thinking and my research orientation. Gregory Cajete (Pueblo) (1994) linked a model of American Indian educational philosophy to cotemporary educational practice:

> A primary orientation of Indigenous education is that each person is their own teacher and that learning is connected to each individual's life process. Meaning is looked for in everything, especially in the workings of the natural world. All things comprising Nature are teachers of mankind [sic]; what is required is a cultivated and practiced openness to the lessons that he world has to teach. Ritual, mythology, and the art of storytelling—combined with the cultivation of relationships to one's inner self, family, community, and natural environment—are utilized to help individuals realize their potential for learning and living a complete life. Individuals are enabled to reach completeness by learning how to trust their natural instincts, to listen, to look, to create, to reflect and see things deeply, to understand and apply their intuitive intelligence, and to recognize and honor

> the teacher of spirit within themselves and the natural world. This is the educational legacy of Indigenous people. (p. 227)

Design

This study was designed to understand the perspective of leaders and students of Tribal College and Universities. In the first part of the study, I used an exploratory qualitative method to answer the research question: What study would be of interest and useful to the presidents and academic leaders at Tribal Colleges and Universities? Once I completed the interviews and analyzed the data for the first study, the guiding research questions for the second part of the study included these:

1. How do students perceive their educational experience at TCUs?
2. What meaning do students ascribe to their educational experience at TCUs?
3. From a student perspective, what do TCUs do well?
4. From a student perspective, what can TCUs do better?

I used a hybrid exploratory-phenomenology method to answer these research questions. An exploratory method was used to ask participants specific questions to capture the answers that the presidents wanted to know about students and their perceptions. Phenomenology was chosen as the second method because phenomenologists believe that the "perceived world is the real world" (Steward & Mickunas, 1999, p. 100). I sought to gain an understanding of how the students perceived and made sense of their educational experiences at tribal institutions. The hybrid design was appropriate for the study because the purpose was to ask students specific questions and to determine the meaning they attach to their educational experiences at TCUs.

Phenomenological Perspective

Phenomenologists seek to understand the meaning that participants make of their life experiences; it is an "approach to the study of experience" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 11). I desired to understand what meaning TCU students associated with their educational experience and how they perceived that experience. I wanted to understand if students thought their educational experience influenced their lives and, if so, how so and what this looked like from their perspective. I wanted to understand how TCU students perceive, experience and make meaning of the influence that their educational experiences has on their lives and to identify emerging themes and patterns.

Overview of Phenomenology

According to Patton (2001), the phenomenological approach is used to "explore how human beings make sense of experience, how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 140). The method requires in-depth interviews with the participants that have direct experience with the phenomenon, is reflective in nature, and provides the researcher with an opportunity to gain deeper understanding of the lived experience of the participant. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research method (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) identified seven principles in phenomenological research. These are:

1. a commitment to the use of qualitative methods;
2. a primary focus on the whole experience, rather than on its parts;
3. a search for meaning over a search for rules
4. primary use of first person accounts as main data sources;
5. insisting that accounts of experiences are a necessary part of any scientific understanding of any social phenomenon;

6. performing research that is guided by the personal interests and commitments of the researcher;
7. the necessity of treating experiences and behavior as integrated parts of a single whole. (p. 21)

Creswell (2009) further suggests that the researcher maintain the following procedural guidelines:

1. the researcher needs to understand how people experience a phenomenon by understanding philosophical perspectives behind the approach;
2. the investigator develops questions that explore how participants describe their lived experience;
3. sample participants should be carefully selected to ensure that they have experienced the phenomenon under investigation;
4. data analysis is divided into statements; clusters of meanings; and, a general description of what was experienced and how it was experienced; and
5. the research report should end with the reader better understanding the essence of the experience described by the participants. (p. 54)

I sought to understand information gathered through participant interviews that elucidate their meaning of their educational experience at TCUs.

Research Participants

The research population for this study is the TCU community that includes presidents, academic leaders and students. Currently, there are 37 TCUs in the United States that are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Annually, TCUs serve 18,000

students; the average TCU serves about 530 full-time students. Dine College (Tsaile, Arizona) is the largest tribal college; there are over 1870 students who attend Dine College. Oglala Lakota College (Kyle, South Dakota) is the second largest tribal college with over 1830 students. Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (Baraga, Michigan) is the smallest and newest member of AIHEC; it has a student body of approximately 60. "The average TCU enrolls about 530 full-time students, but together they serve many thousands more annually—roughly 65,000 collectively—in community based programs" (His Horse Is Thunder, 2012, p. 8).

I interviewed 13 Presidents and academic leaders in the first part of the study. Purposive sampling was used; according to Creswell (2007), "this means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125). I sent letters to the presidents of each TCU; the letters explained the purpose of the study and asked for their participation. I followed the letters with phone calls to each president. Thirteen presidents or their designated administrative representative agreed to participate in the study. Once consent forms were signed and returned, I called each person and the interviews occurred.

For the second part of the study, I used purposive, snowball and convenience sampling and interviewed 45 TCU students. A combination of all three sampling techniques was necessary to access the student population. I began the study with letters to the presidents of each TCU; the letters explained the purpose of the study and asked for institutional participation. I followed each letter with individual phone calls. Four TCUs asked me to submit my study for their specific IRB approval. Once I received consent forms and IRB approval, I began the process of recruiting students to participate. Student recruitment was a challenge and took a significant amount of time. I sent a letter to a website asking for participation. One person

responded. She was able to recruit two participants, who, in turn, suggested other students. After these interviews, the process stalled and I was unable to recruit other participants. After a significant amount of time lapsed without any further participation, I arranged to attend an AIHEC student conference. At this time, I decided that in order to recruit student participation, I needed to offer a small financial incentive. After IRB approval for the incentive, I created recruitment flyers for the conference. Once I arrived at the conference, I distributed the flyers around the conference area. The flyer stated the purpose of the study, the financial incentive and my contact information. When a student called and asked about the study, I explained the purpose of the study. I also explained the specifics of the interview, and, if he/she wanted to participate, I arranged to send the person a consent form and then I arranged an interview time. I interviewed students at their convenience. After the conference, I continued to receive phone calls and interest in the study. I interviewed all students who expressed interest and consented to participate. The 45 student participants represented 20 TCUs.

Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, I conducted 13 interviews with TCU presidents and 45 interviews with TCU students. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to "allow us to enter into the other person's perspective….it begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). I used an interview guide to make sure that I maintained the same line of inquiry with each participant (Patton, 2002). Each interview was semi-structured and each interview was audio-recorded. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interviews ranged between 45 minutes and 190 minutes. All of the president's interviews occurred via telephone. The student interviews were conducted via telephone or in-person; I attended an AIHEC student conference and conducted some

interviews in the hotel where the conference occurred. I asked permission to take notes during the interviews. Everyone agreed and I took notes in my own cryptic shorthand during each interview. I also used a journal to record memos; these memos captured my impressions and initial thoughts about the interview and data. Students who wanted to participate but could not do so during the conference were able to arrange an appointment for a phone interview after the conference ended.

Memo Writing

I wrote memos in a notebook journal after each interview. The notes were about things that I found intriguing or things that I did not understand or knew I needed to think about and read about in more detail or that I needed to follow up in subsequent interviews. One thing that puzzled me when I began talking to students was a concept that the students termed as "jealousy." After the sixth interview with a student, I made the following note:

> This is the sixth student interview that I have done. Five out of six students have discussed something that they refer to as jealousy. The students discuss, on their own volition, the issue of jealousy. This is seen in their communities and in their own families. People get jealous when they learn that a student is going to school. All the students who have discussed this issue thus far have said they don't understand it but they feel that once they have an education and return to their community that the people will not be accepting of the person and that they will eventually have to leave their own community. I find this ironic since the students are going to school in order to help their communities; that is what I hear "I want to give back to my people" but they cannot if they are not allowed to by the very people they want to help. The students so far have experienced frustration over this phenomenon.

After this memo, I began to ask student about this concept if they did not introduce it on their own terms. I wanted to know if this was something that the American Indian and Alaska Native students thought was an issue in their individual communities.

I also typed each memo and put the memos in a file that I named "Interview Memos." Typing each memo is a way to "immerse yourself in the data in the transition between fieldwork and full analysis, a chance to get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole" (Patton, 2002, p. 441). When typing the memos, I found myself back in the interview process and sometimes had some "ah ha" moments; these were moments in which I interpreted the data differently or thought of the interview from a different perspective. I relied on these memos to help me clarify or re-think about an issue or concept.

Transcriptions

During the interviews, my goal was to secure the perspectives and voices of the participants. The next step was to transcribe the interview tapes. I transcribed a third of the tapes myself but I also used two teaching assistants to transcribe the remainder of the tapes. Once the tapes were transcribed, I listened to each tape and read the transcript. I made corrections as necessary. According to Patton (2002), the act of listening to the tapes while reading the transcripts serves a way to immerse oneself in the data. I did not identify each participant in the transcripts. Instead, I used numbers and letters on the tapes themselves and used the numbers and letters as the tapes were transcribed. For example, 1P was the first President whom I interviewed; therefore, 1S was the first student whom I interviewed. The numbers and correlating letters allowed me to maintain confidentiality.

Overview of Data Analysis

After the transcripts were read individually and proof -read, I printed all the transcripts and read them individually several times. As I read them, I made notes on the margins of the transcripts. Once I had read all of the transcripts and made notes, I went back to the electronic files and with my handwritten margin notes, I began to use color codes and analyze the data thematically. During the data analysis process, I thematically coded the data. I also used alternate ways to express the data; I wrote a composite chapter that represents the student data. I also wrote some poems that are presented as well. The next couple of chapters in this dissertation present these analyses.

The Role of the Researcher

Qualitative researchers are very aware of their own biases, assumptions and prejudices; they understand that their world views influence how they interpret their reality and world in which they live. Therefore, they understand that their research is interpreted through the lens of their own lives. For the purpose of this study, it is important that I reflect on my values and beliefs so that I can situate myself within this study. This information was also used when I introduced myself to the participants who informed my study. I shared pertinent parts of my life that allowed me a connection with the participants. American Indians and Alaska Natives are brought up with certain traditions and introducing oneself and one's ancestry is a very important part of everyday culture for most American Indian and Native Alaska people. "It might not matter to most people where a person lives or even from where he or she comes. But to a person of Native American Indian, North American Indian, Haudenosaunee, or any other "Indian heritage,"…it matters very much" (Hill, 2003, p. 21). Family and family responsibilities are also

often central in the lives of American Indian and Native Alaska students; I felt that it was important to share that sense of myself with the participants as well.

My paternal family hails from North Carolina and Georgia. My maternal family originates from Florida. My families did not participate in the Trail of Tears; they were people who escaped into the mountains to avoid the forced relocation. Because having American Indian ancestry has not always been honored or respected, I was not raised in an American Indian culture although my heritage and ancestry is Cherokee and Creek (Muscogee). As such, I do not have the first-hand knowledge of what it means to grow up as an American Indian. However, I understand what it means to grow up in a situation where education was not the norm or the desired expectation. I grew up in a rural part of Georgia and was raised in a family plagued by generations of poverty, violence and addictions. I am a first-generation high school and college graduate; my father was illiterate and did not appreciate higher education. As an adult, I was told that I "grew beyond my raising;" it was not meant as a compliment.

I am raising my biological niece as my daughter because her biological parents, who are drug addicts, neglected and abused her. At six years of age, she was malnourished, in need of health care, could not attend to her daily activities of living, and was very under-educated. When she came to live with me, I was in the middle of my doctoral course work. Immediately, she influenced my life in significant ways; becoming a parent overnight was a challenging transition fraught with trail-and-error, many tears and a lot of joy. I view the world differently since Ashley became my heart-daughter. As someone who always fiercely believed in the power of education, I cling to this belief more strongly now because I know that our family's generational cycle of poverty, violence, and addiction can only be overcome through education. However, this belief is also tempered by the realization that not all have the opportunity for or access to

educational opportunities. It hurts me on a personal level to acknowledge this weakness of the educational system in the United States because, as a feminist, I believe that all people should have equal educational opportunities, regardless of gender, ethnicity-race, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Sadly, after my research into American Indian education, I am far too aware of the truth that is shaped by the political and economic realities of education in the United States—realities that include oppression, limited access, equity, and affordability.

As a researcher, I believe in multiple realities and that, as human beings, we constantly change so that, from moment to moment, we interpret the world differently. I assume that the respondents who participated in this story were truthful and as accurate as possible; however, I acknowledge that their interpretations may be different if I were to interview them today.

As a result of my doctoral course work, this research, and my experiences as an educator in a border town in northern Arizona, I interpret the world differently than I did before these experiences. In the back of my mind, I always look at things with an American Indian perspective. I critically question the world more frequently and wonder where all the American Indian politicians, educators, artists, healthcare administrators and leaders are and why they are excluded, far too often, from mainstream institutions and everyday conversations. I have become much more aware of racism and prejudices; I witness it frequently. I see how American Indians are treated in grocery stores, shopping malls, and on street corners. Firsthand, I witness the devastating effects that lack of preparation in K-12 education has on Indigenous students in postsecondary education. I grow increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement of real educational reform that includes American Indians, Alaska Natives and other minorities. I grow increasingly frustrated with the lack of honest dialogue about American Indians and Alaskan Natives and the historical trauma that is perpetuated day-after-day in the United States. I grow

increasingly frustrated by the romantic versions of American Indians that are perpetuated on television and in novels. I am aghast and appalled by the lack of knowledge that an average citizen has about American Indian and Alaskan Native issues. And, I am more appalled by the lack of concern that an average citizen has about such issues.

I teach my daughter the history of American Indians that is absent from the textbooks or, if included, is inaccurate. I talk to her about what it is like to not have opportunities because of the color of one's skin or the socioeconomic status of one's family. I teach my daughter what it means to advocate for those whose voices cannot be heard. At the end of the day, I try to be true to my own beliefs and teach those to my daughter, while being an advocate for American Indian students, Indigenous education and accurate American Indian and Alaskan Native history.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of qualitative research and included a discussion of a theoretical perspective. The research design, the research participants, and data collection were also discussed. I included a brief discussion of data analysis and ended the chapter with the role of the researcher. The next few chapters present the findings: thematic analysis of the presidents, American Indian, Native Alaska students and Non-Native students; composite chapters of the president data and the Indigenous student data, a letter to the editor written from the perspective of a Non-Native student attending a TCU and poetic representations of the data.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT INTERVIEWS

The first purpose of this exploratory-phenomenology study was to understand the research needs of TCU presidents. The research question for this part of the study was: "What study would be of interest and useful to the presidents and academic leaders at Tribal Colleges and Universities?" Once I completed the interviews and analyzed the data for the first part of the study, the guiding research questions for the second part of the study included:

1. How do students perceive their educational experience at TCUs?
2. What meaning do students ascribe to their educational experience at TCUs?
3. From a student perspective, what do TCUs do well?
4. From a student perspective, what can TCUs do better?

Thematic Analysis of TCU President Interviews

I printed the 13 transcripts from the President interviews and read them each evening for several weeks. Once I read the transcripts multiple times, I made notes in the margins. These notes helped me to conceptualize the data. In the end, not all of the notes were significant for data analysis but they were all helpful in the process of conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing the data. After I made notes in the margins, I underlined, in pencil, all of the text that I thought was germane to the research questions. I took a significant amount of time to think about the themes and to re-read the transcripts. After this, I began to color-code the themes. Using the computer's text highlighting coloring system, I began to thematically color-code the data. I began with broad themes and collapsed some of them as I continued the process; some preliminary themes were eliminated if they were not supported by the data. The themes from the

TCU President data were organized into broad categories: student issues, community issues, mission of colleges, and college issues/concerns.

Student Issues

Each president and representative expressed concern about their students; they all articulated a desire to improve their students' lives, academically and personally. The presidents and representatives discussed the challenges of offering higher education who often arrived without the background for college-level work. They recognized that many of their students desired a higher education but had to learn how to transition into a student role. The students needed to learn how to "do school", how to organize themselves and their lives around expected structures in higher education. The presidents and representatives emphasize that their students had multiple, competing priorities and responsibilities to families and communities that made their lives and student experience more complicated than typical mainstream undergraduate students.

We Spend a Lot of Time and Money on Remediation

All of the Presidents of the TCUs spoke of the need to provide remediation for students. They spoke of the constant struggle to pay for these courses and faculty to teach the courses. The following data excerpts support this theme.

> *We spend a lot of time dealing with reading and writing and math and science, bringing people up to speed because here on our reservation, most of my words will only be for our reservation, is that we have people coming in here with 3rd grade reading levels and low writing scores and skills in math and science that need extensive remediation and we try to deal with that. We are an open admission school, meaning we take in everybody that comes to us. Sometimes it is very difficult to take some students who because of their*

lack preparation, not because they aren't intelligent but because the lack of preparation starting as low as the elementary or primary schools (Participant 1P)

It is not the student's fault but the system that fails them – they come to us and they can hardly read and they don't know how to do simple math equations. They struggle to write a decent sentence. We spend a lot of time and a lot of money in remedial studies. It is really frustrating because we know the system is failing them – the system that is supposed to leave no child behind is definitely leaving our children behind! (Participant 10P)

When We Hold Them Accountable, It Can Be Shocking

This theme, represented by the following data excerpts, speaks to the need for instilling accountability and responsibility in students. The presidents and representatives spoke to the need for their students to learn how to incorporate these responsibilities and accountabilities into their lives.

People have got to show up for classes, they have to attend classes and they have got to do the work that has to be done for those classes - especially if they have aspirations of going on to a 4 year college. For that kind of a work ethic is really necessary and you are largely on your own and you are on a really restrictive budget and you can't afford to deviate too much from that budget or from what your class requirements are. I think a lot of our students need to understand that. We try to help them as much as possible which is the reason why TC's were established, to meet the needs of our Tribal students, our non-traditional students. (Participant 3P)

Our kids sometimes don't seem to know how to work hard – they don't know that they have to show up to class on time and that they need to finish what they start. They don't know how to work hard – it is not really that they don't want to work hard, I honestly think that no one has ever expected them to stick with something and when we hold them accountable, it can be shocking (Participant 6P)

Some of our students come here so they can avoid jail – but that is ok – we teach them how to be responsible – we won't let them get away with not doing what they are supposed to do. And, in the end, if they stick with it and are successful, they turn their lives around. That is an awesome feeling. We celebrate those students and their success just like we celebrate all of our students. (Participant 10P)

It is just that sometimes that kind of work ethic needs to be instilled early on. (Participant 13P)

Child Care

A few of the TCUs offer child care; however, the majority of TCUs do not offer this service. The students and the presidents and representatives who I interviewed recognized the need for child care; they were all in favor of providing child care but resources were an obstacle. The data excerpts below are from the president's interviews.

There needs to be more child care. There needs to be increased financial aid resources. We need to be able to provide safe child care for our students, whether it be through our college day care of through using relatives to baby sit while students are in school. It is absolutely essential that the babies are well cared for so the mothers and fathers can

concentrate on their programs of study without worrying about the safety and well-being of their children. (Participant 4P)

We need child care. I have students who bring their kids to classes. We don't recommend it but we don't kick them out of class, unless the kids get out of control and then we have to say something but mostly we try to work with our students but you know it is a hard things to do—to balance the needs of the student, the needs of the classroom and the needs of college. It is a real big issue for our college. (Participant 5P)

We Have to Teach Our Students How to be College Students

The presidents and representatives discussed that the majority of their students needed direction on how to become a student and all that the student role encompasses. It was something that the presidents and representatives did not see as a problem per se but saw as a teachable moment for their students.

We have students who don't know how to be a student; they don't know what it takes to succeed. We have to teach them how to be a college student. Now, remember, a lot of our students did not graduate from high school; they got their GED and we have to kind of prepare them for college. (Participant 8P)

We have learned over time that our students often come through our doors and they do not know how to be a college student. Some of them are not even sure what a college education means. So, we pair them up with a mentor and have them get together the first day so the mentor can show them around and help them out. That has helped our incoming students to feel more comfortable and to learn how to be a college student. (Participant 10P)

Community Issues

We Are Struggling Out Here

All of the presidents and representatives discussed the poverty and lack of resources as a reality of their institutions and their communities. They discussed how this affects their student bodies.

> *Our students are poor; their families are poor. Our reservations are poor. It is a fact. (Participant 2P)*

> *It is a known reality that Indian people are some of the poorest on the earth. We are no exception. If you look at our statistics, you will see that we are struggling out here, struggling to eat, struggling to keep warm, struggling to clothe our children. We are just working hard to get through every day. As a student when you are working hard to survive and then you are working hard to get through classes and then the next day, it starts over again. It can be overwhelming. (Participant 5P)*

> *Our reality on the reservation is different than your reality. We are a poor people. We don't have a lot of employment opportunities on our reservation. We don't have a lot of things to motivate our youth. We try to help them think beyond today and beyond our poverty. But, they still struggle. We all do. (Participant 7P)*

Mission of Colleges

Each president and representative discussed the absolute need to incorporate cultural traditions and language preservation into their curricular offerings. The missions of each TCU centers around these concepts and are reflected in the data excerpts from the president interviews.

The Learning of the Language is the Learning of the Culture

> *You can't learn language without also learning your culture (Participant 2P)*
>
> *I think one of the most important things that is going on within tribal communities is that colleges are helping students connect to their culture. (Participant 3P)*
>
> *So many of our homes are losing the language and our language is available, our language our traditions our songs our prayers, all that information is available through TC's for students who may feel somewhat disenfranchised from their culture (Participant 5P)*
>
> *Once you learn the language you have a much better understanding of your whole culture in general. As, as you learn more about your culture you can certainly appreciate and respect it more because through the understanding and increasing your knowledge about the culture you are also increasing your understanding of what Indigenous people have experienced. And what they had to endure and in doing so you are going to have a whole lot more appreciation for what our forefathers experienced and to understand why we are where we are today. That is much easier to place in context once you learn your language because the learning of the language is the learning of the culture (Participant 12P)*

Global Awareness

The Presidents and designated representatives spoke of the need to educate their students about the United States and the global society.

We are also providing students who live in very rural communities to become aware of what is going on globally and to be a part of the whole global discussion about the environment, laws and things like intellectual property rights. (Participant 4P)

Even though we are out here on our reservation we try to help our students to know what is happening out in the world. (Participant 6P)

Our students have to be citizens of our tribe, citizens of the United States and citizens of the world. We hope to educate them in such a way that they become productive members here, in our country and in our world. It is a big task but tribal colleges accomplish big things all the time! We are accustomed to walking in the Red and White worlds. (Participant 10P)

Work Force Development

Presidents spoke about their awareness of the need to develop a work force for the reservation and the people on the reservation.

We are providing some meaningful vocational programs (Participant 1P)

The colleges have set forth and put into play some very good vocational training programs and I would like to name some of them just to give you an idea of what's going on in some of the tribal colleges. We have programs like hazardous material, and those are vocations that are very essential in the whole homeland security and the whole issue of terrorism. Software development, de-bugging software, other kinds of vocations are a little more traditional like truck driving, cdl, pre-nursing, CNA, computer technology and I think that the TC's have done a fairly decent job at doing environmental scanning in their local areas to determine what jobs are we going to have available in the next, say 5-

10 years and what do we need to do to prepare our students for them. So I think that preparing our students for vocational jobs, connecting them to global, to the larger global society. (Participant 3P)

It is important for us to educate for all kinds of different roles. Not everyone can be a teacher or a nurse. The truth is we need mechanics and we need people who can fix our computers and we need people who know how to work and care for the land and our animals. We know that we have to grow our own and then find places for them to use their new knowledge and skills. (Participant 11P)

College Concerns

There are concerns that the TCUs, as institutions, experience that the typical mainstream college does not experience. The following data excerpts highlight some of these specific apprehensions.

Operating Close to the Edge

I think almost everybody will say that because tribal colleges operate really close to the edge. If we were a big company, we would be on the verge of bankruptcy. So, that is always an issue and any little thing that comes along like the continuing resolutions that the congress is currently operating under always has an immediate financial impact on us. And that happens almost every year. So, we are prepared for that; we get lines of credit at our local banks and so forth and hope that we don't have to use them. (Participant 1P)

Our budget is always always always an issue. We just deal with it on a day by day basis. Sometimes I think we are going to have to close our doors but so far we have always

managed to keep it going—don't know if we can always do it but we will always try to stay open. Our community needs us; our students need us and their families need us. We have much to do and we have very few resources. But, we will manage. We always do. Somehow. Someway. Although I know some colleges have had to close their doors. I will fight with all that is in me to keep our doors open. (Participant 11P)

Culture Shock with Transfers

I think there is a cultural shock, literally the cultural shock, not the academic shock when you first go from here to a major institution. The actual cultural shock between the Native American culture and the white culture, I think that is quite devastating. We do our best to prepare them for that kind of change. We also try to provide our students with enough computers so that when the do go off to school the need for computers is not such a shock to them. (Participant 2P)

I think there has to be a real transition for those students who want to go from here to a larger university, there has to be a really good transition between here and the receiving institution, whatever that institution may be. Regardless of what happens, and even if you are white student who has been brought up in ***(I removed the state name****) it is still a culture shock to go to a bigger university. For our Native American students, it is quite a shock to go to another school where you are definitely the minority. On our campuses Native American Students are the majority here. To have that whole thing flipped around is kind of a shock. (Participant 9P)*

Faculty

Well most of our full time faculty are not Native American, they are white but very dedicated. They can probably make twice as much money someplace else. We have two people who commute 180 miles daily. Then we have another two people who commute 90 miles daily. Then we have a whole bunch of people who commute 50 miles daily. There are various factors that enter into these commutes; one of them is a severe lack of housing on the reservation for reservation residents themselves. The other is that it is difficult for non-enrolled members of our reservation to purchase housing on the reservation. Another factor that makes it difficult to recruit Indian people into our ranks has to do with money—the salary schedule that we have to abide by. The salary schedule, as much as we try to keep it up, is not as competitive as some of the other institutions in the area so when the Native American student with a four year or master's degree pop up someone is going to grab that person if only to fulfill a quota if nothing else. They are usually offered more money that we can offer here. (Participant 7P)

We have both Indian and non-Indian faculty. Some of the subjects we have a hard time finding Indian faculty so we have to rely on non-Indian faculty. It is not ideal in a way but in a way it works out really well for our students. They get to build relationships with both Indian and non-Indian faculty which gives them good exposure – it might actually help them if they go on to a White college. (Participant 10P)

Personalized Attention/Attentive Staff

It is but we have a very dedicated staff of people whose main interest is in helping the student. We also try to accommodate them by establishing a learning center which is

fully equipped with state of the art computers and we have tutors in there and the instructors even go in there to help them too. We try to structure it so that we provide computers and we provide the added, needed instruction here to help them through. We do not just leave them hanging. We provided tutors and mentors and try to help them as much as possible but they have to do their part too. That is the other side of it, they have got to show up, and they have got to take advantage of these services. We can't do that for them. (Participant 3P)

I think we do a decent job here. We try to meet all of the needs of our students but sometimes we can't. Our faculty and staff go above and beyond the call of duty when need arrive. I know we need some things but we also have the most kind hearted people here. A student cannot get the personalized attention elsewhere. I think we excel at that—personalized attention and people who really care about the student and the students family and the students situation. (Participant 13P)

Following Students After Graduation

Once again that is so dependent on finances. We don't have a formal program of tracking their students as to what their degrees of success are or nonsuccess are once they leave here. I know we should do that but we don't have the financial or personnel resources to do that. And once we asked the main 4 year institutions, they are usually very helpful but their concentration is on their students. (Participant 8P)

I would like to get a grant or some money just to track our students over a 4 year period because doing it just 1 year isn't going to produce very valid results. I think it would

have to be kind of a longitudinal study to find out what generates success or what contributes to the failure of the students that are failing. (Participant 10P)

Summary

In this chapter, a thematic analysis of the president and representative interviews is presented. The presidents and representatives discussed issues specific to their students, the communities and the colleges. The next chapter is a composite of a few days in the life of a TCU president; it is written in the form of journal entries.

CHAPTER 6

COMPOSITE OF TCU PRESIDENTS

This chapter is a composite of a few days in the life of a tribal college president, Gertrude. Gertrude is the president of a small tribal college located on a reservation in the United States. The following represents a brief period of time in her presidency. The composite is based on interviews that I conducted with 13 TCU presidents and data from an exhaustive literature review. Data excerpts from the interviews that I conducted are italicized. The composite is in the form of excerpts from Gertrude's journal.

Thursday August 16th

The first day of school for the academic year is always filled with hope and promise. It is also filled with new students, many of whom have never been to college. *One student, an older student, popped her head in my office today and asked me: "When do we eat lunch?" I had to explain to her that college is different than high school. Some of our students did not complete high school and have never set foot in a college. Sometimes, it is a hard transition and I did not want to embarrass her or make her feel inept.* I spent some time with her and actually she and I decided to share our lunch time together. *She is very excited and very nervous about being in college –unsure but determined. This kind of sums up our students: unsure but determined.*

It is always fun to walk around the first day of school and meet new students. *We have 250 students; by the end of the semester, I will know all of their names. It is a source of pride for me. I like knowing who our students are and what they hope to get out of their college experience. I like to meet their families and get to know their individual stories. I think it helps*

them when they know that I care for them and that they can come and talk with me if they need to or if they have something they need help with.

Monday, September 3rd

Wow! Bringing two small children to class was an act of desperation. Of course, two children, ages 3 and 5, could not stay in a classroom; we allow older children to stay—those who can sit quietly. For the overall well-being of the students and the professor, I had to intervene; I spent the afternoon with the two kids in my office. Not much work was done although I must admit the afternoon was not in vain. The experience allowed me some further insight into the needs of my students. *I know my students need childcare* but now I know they **need** it. The young student told me "I really did not know what to do; my grandma is sick; she usually takes care of them and I was up against the wall." I must admit that *I love that the students are committed enough that they come to school regardless of challenges. I am not sure where else students are as dedicated as ours.* And, while, I love children and do not mind providing emergent child care, it is not my job. *My job is to find things that help my students be more successful.* I must find a way to solve the child care issue. I will put it on our faculty meeting agenda—again! I will also spend some time talking to our Elders and tribal leadership. We must find a way around this barrier for our students.

Tuesday September 4th

Today, I am focused on grant writing. I need a grant to assist us in developing a childcare program. I spent last night looking at our classroom assignments and all of our space. This morning I spoke with two of our resident elders. We agreed that, even though we are really tight on space, we need a space for childcare. In my grant, I will ask for enough money to purchase a small manufactured building to put on the south side of our campus—a small building

dedicated to childcare. I envision a nice space for our students and their children. I have an appointment to talk with some of the tribal leaders; I will have to get their buy-in before I submit the grant. *It is a fine balancing act—seeking tribal approval while moving forward with plans for the college. Having tribal approval and support is necessary for success.*

Thursday September 20th

I was in the office working on the budget for next year when I received a call from my administrative assistant. There was a young woman, in tears, who wanted to talk to me about her options. I thought she was one of our students but it turns out that she is a freshman at a mainstream university. She was in tears. She does not feel that she fits into the university and, sadly, she is failing her classes. She wanted advice. While speaking to her, I learned that she is a student at a university that is a few hours away from her home. She is home sick. She misses her family—her siblings, her cousins, her grandparents, her parents. She wants to drop out of school and go home but she is conflicted because she also wants to be successful in school. We looked up her university online and found some resources for native students. The university has a native student center that she did not know existed. I printed the information for the center; the contact information and asked her to make an appointment before she left my office. She made the call while in my office; she has an appointment with one of the counselors in two days. I talked with her for a long time and helped her develop a plan to get her courses under control for the semester. The university has American Indian tutors available. I asked her to make an appointment with a tutor and to get some consistent help. She agreed that she would do so. She wants to either be a physical therapist or a medical doctor. I do not want her goals to be undermined because she is homesick.

We also talked about the possibility of her attending school here for a couple of years. The college is closer to home and has a student body that is mostly American Indian; however, I did not sway her one way or the other. I think this is a decision that she needs to make after some thought, some prayer and some time with her family. I provided her with some information but I stressed that she needed to successfully finish this semester; not only for her GPA but for herself. She needs to feel successful.

The remainder of the afternoon I spent working on the budget. In a word, the budget is dismal. We need money in a huge kind of way. I must go on the road and do some fundraising. *I do not mind fundraising but it takes me away from here where I am desperately needed. My job is multifaceted; I am a person of many hats. I teach when needed but I fund raise, recruit faculty, and try to know all of my students. It is a list that goes on for quite a long time. However, I love my job. I love knowing that I am impacting the lives of our students. Of course, I want our Native students to be successful but I want success for our Non-Native students as well. When I became an educator, it was because I believe in the power of education. I believe education can change lives. It changed mine. No way did I ever think that I would be a President of a college but here I am; even though it is not glamorous, I think it is an important job. I really love helping students.*

Summary

In this chapter, a composite of a few days in the life of Gertrude, a TCU president was presented. The composite represented journal entries. In the next chapter, thematic analyses of Indigenous student interviews are presented and explained.

CHAPTER 7

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS STUDENT INTERVIEWS

I printed all of the student transcripts and divided them into two different stacks: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students. I read the transcripts each evening for several months. Once I read the transcripts multiple times, I began to make notes in the margins. In the end, not all of the notes were significant for data analysis but they were all helpful in the process of conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing the data. After I made notes in the margins, I underlined, in pencil, all of the text that I thought was germane to the research questions. I took a significant amount of time to think about the themes and to re-read the transcripts. After this, I began to color-code the themes. Using the computer's text highlighting coloring system, I began to thematically color-code the data. I began with broad themes and collapsed some of them as I continued the process; some preliminary themes were eliminated if they were not supported by the data. Thirteen themes were identified in the Indigenous student data; data excerpts support each theme.

I Was Kind of Lost And Did Not Know What To Do With My Life

Many students discussed the fact that they did not know what to do with their life and the TCUs offered these students a place to go that allowed them to define a purpose.

> *I guess I was kind of lost and did not know what to do with my life; I did not graduate from high school but I went and got my GED. I wanted to do something but I did not know what and did not even know how to start. I felt lost; I felt uncertain about my future. (Participant 23S)*

I tell you I was kind of lost and did not know what to do with my life. I wandered around and got into some trouble. After I spent some time in jail, I cleared my head. The tribal college I go to helped me figure out what to do with myself. They helped me get my act together. And, I am so glad; it is hard when you don't know what to do with your life. It is like getting stuck in mud and not being able to move your body. (Participant 27S)

During high school, I did not really think beyond graduation. I did not think that I would really need a good paying job cause so many people on the rez are poor; I just figured that I'd be poor too. But, when I held my daughter for the first time, I knew that I needed to figure it out fast. For her sake. (Participant 33S)

I am grateful because the staff at the college helped me to get into school which helped me figure out what to do with myself. (Participant 37S)

The College Means the World to Me

Each student discussed what the college and the higher education experience meant to him/her on a personal level. They also discussed the impact and significance that the TCU meant to them and how they planned to incorporate that experience into their families and communities.

You know, you cannot put a price tag on what the tribal colleges do for us students. It is like priceless. They give us an education but it is more than that; the college means the world to me. I am a firm believer in tribal colleges. I will encourage my kids to go to one. (Participant 2S)

I have to say that the college means the world to me; they are so focused on us as students. But, they are also community focused; they are a part of what goes on here on the rez (Participant 4S)

It sounds cheesy but the college means so much to me; it has opened so many possibilities; I think that I can do anything now. I can change my destiny because they have given me an education. (Participant 19S)

I love my college; it is so awesome for me to be a student in a tribal college. It is really life changing to come to school and learn to do something that I want to do and that I know will help my people (Participant 34S)

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Violence

Some students identified that they believe education is one way to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and violence.

*My boyfriend was into meth and he drank. When he was drunk, he beat the hell out of me. I felt awful about myself and I guess I went to rock bottom. When I reached my bottom, I was able to let people help me. One of my AA counselors helped me think beyond myself and think about what **I** wanted for my life and for my kids. I knew I wanted better for my kids. I am in my second year at college and know now that I deserve better than someone who hits me. I know that my kids deserved better than to live like we were living. It is hard though because there is a lot of violence and a lot of despair in the rez. (Participant 9S)*

My whole life I have lived poor. My family is poor. The rez is poor. I watched my mom get beat up and I watched me fall in the same pit. My kid's dad beat me. I know that my

education will help me. I will get a good job and I will help my kids rise above this stuff that we have grown up with out here on the rez. It is really sad to see how our people live out here in the middle of nowhere. (Participant 15S)

I look around me and I see nothing but despair—poverty, violence, drugs, alcohol. It swallows my people up. I know that to break this cycle of poverty and violence that I must get an education and I must rise above this stuff. I must teach my children how to be better than what we have on the rez now. (Participant 21S)

I come from a long line of alcohol drinkers who drink and get violent. They smash up things and then wonder what happened. I felt that if I was to get out of this cycle that I had to do something different. School is different. No one in my family has ever been to college. I hope that I will get out of this cycle. I hope I beat the odds but it ain't going to be easy. (Participant 32S)

I Am A Role Model For My Family (Ambassadors)

Some students discussed the fact that once they were enrolled and successful in school that they began to encourage their family members and friends to consider attending a tribal college or university. They began to expect that their children would attend a college or university.

Now that I am going to college, my cousins are thinking of going too.
I talk to my sisters and brothers about going back to school—I want
them to go too! (Participant 5S)

I started going to school and it was hard on my husband—he kind of got scared and maybe a little jealous. But, after a year, he enrolled and he loves it too! (Participant 14S)

My daughters are in middle school. I already talk to them about going to college. I want them to start out at a tribal college and then maybe go to a bigger university if they want to. (Participant 16S)

I have a nephew who is 16 and he is in high school and he is starting to get in trouble. I took him to our college and let them talk to him about college and staying out of trouble. I hope he will think about going. If he does not, I fear that he is going to ruin his life. (Participant 21S)

My father is the one who encouraged me to go to college. He strongly believed that education was the only way to survive. He had a college education and he really wanted that for me too. He convinced me and now I talk to my kids all the time about going to college. They know that this is what I want them to do; it is what I expect them to do. I hope it sticks. (Participant 42S)

I Never Dreamed That I Could Go To College

Some students discussed that they never really imagined that they would be able to attend a college. When they discovered that they could attend, they were amazed.

When I was in mainstream high school, the teachers told me that I would not amount to anything. For a while, I believed them. I really never thought that I could go to college. I was a horrible high school student but here I am and I am doing ok. I am going to be something—I am going to prove to those teachers that they were wrong. (Participant 9S)

I grew up thinking that if I made it out of high school that I would be ok. I certainly never dreamed that I could go to college; it never entered my mind. We are just not a family that ever went to college. (Participant 14S)

To be honest, I hated school. Never, even thought about going to college; no one in my family did so it just did not seem like an option. I am glad that I was encouraged to try it. (Participant 29)

College seemed like an unachievable goal. I did not graduate from high school so I never thought that college would be an option. But, I love it and am doing well! It is exciting and it makes me sad that probably a lot of people don't know that they can go to college too. I wish all the kids on our rez would go to college. I bet our rez would be a better place to live. (Participant 44S)

I Can Do Anything Now!

Students spoke about the self confidence that their attendance and success at TCUs provided for them.

I feel like a little kid who says "I am a big kid! I can do anything now!" That is what it feels like; I can do anything now! And, I am so glad to be a student at our tribal college! (Participant 8S)

After the second semester here, I felt like I could do anything that I put my mind to doing. The first semester was touch and go, but the second semester was definitely better. Now, I am in my fourth semester and things are good. I am glad that the college took a chance on me! (Participant 9S)

> *I was a lousy student. I could not have cared less about school and certainly did not want to go to college. I am grateful that there are tribal colleges; I will be able to graduate and become a teacher which is a little unreal for me—me, who never wanted to go to school at all, will be teaching kids (laughs). I hope that I can inspire them to be better students and to know that college is a real option for them. At some point, our people will go from being uneducated to educated; I think that will help us all have better lives. We would have a better future; as a people our lives would improve. (Participant 25S)*

> *At first, I wanted to be a mechanic but now I am thinking about maybe getting a degree in nursing. I never thought about a degree in something much less being a nurse. Who would have thought that I could do anything except be a mechanic? I am glad that I decided to try college. It has changed my life for the better. (Participant 43S)*

It Means So Much to Me That I Can Learn the Language of My People

Students discussed the reticence that they felt when they first discovered they were required to take a language class. However, once the class began and they discovered they could be successful, they discussed the joy and satisfaction they received from learning their language and conversing with the people in their families who were literate in the language of their people.

> *When I was little, my grandma spoke our language, but my parents couldn't do it so I never learned. I am so excited to learn the (removed specific language) language and I know that my family is proud too. My grandma just smiles when I talk to her in our language. She is so happy and is so eager to help me learn. It makes me really happy to see her happy like that. It makes me feel like a good person. Like an honorable person. (Participant 6S)*

I used to run out of the room when anyone wanted me to speak in our native language. I don't know why exactly; I was embarrassed, I guess. Now, even though I know so little, I am excited to get the chance to learn the language of our ancestors. It means the world to me that I will be able to pass that along to my children and their children. It is so wonderful [tears up]. I wish I could make you understand how wonderful it is—to be given another chance to learn something that many of us thought was disappearing. It gives me hope for our people. It makes life better for all of us. (Participant 24S)

When they told us we had to take a semester of language, our language, I was not sure that I wanted to do that. I knew a little bit; I could introduce myself, but now I am really happy that I took this class. It makes me feel so much better about myself. I am glad they make all of us take it because most of us probably wouldn't if we had the choice. (Participant 31S)

I feel like I am getting a gift to learn our language. It is an awesome gift for them to give us. Having the elders help us learn our own language is a wonderful experience. They are as proud of us as we are! It is hard, don't get me wrong, but it is worth it and it really matters to our people. To our future as an Indian nation; something we all need to have hope for—to know our people can survive and go beyond. (Participant 39S)

We Are Getting To Learn Our History—Not Just The History That Someone Else Wants Us To Think Is True

Students discussed the fact that they were excited to learn things that were relevant to their lives and that was historically accurate.

When we come here, we are entering a zone where we know that what is being taught is the truth. We know that our history is ours; not what some white person wants us to think is true but we learn what is important to use as a people. We learn the Indian truth. The way it was taught before the settlers destroyed our country. We are learning what we need to know in order to take us into a better future. (Participant 1S)

White man's education has always been taught to us. Now it is our turn to learn about us—about our people and about our history—not the history that white man teaches but the history from our ancestors. It is an incredible to know that what is being taught is right—right for our people. Right for our children. Right for us. (Participant 11S)

The best thing for me is knowing that I am learning what our ancestors passed down and that I get to teach it to my kids and my grandkids and maybe my great-grandkids. (laughs) (Participant 21)

I think a tribal college is the best of both worlds; we can learn what we need to learn in order to function in the white world but we also get to learn what is important for our people. This is stuff not in white textbooks; this is stuff that is vital for us to learn; we are given a gift with this information. (Participant 29S)

Learning More Than What is Being Taught in the Classroom

Students discussed learning that went beyond the classroom walls and how they integrated this learning into their lives.

When you first come to the tribal college, you think that you are here to learn more about reading and writing and stuff like that. What no one tells you is that you are learning so much more than that. We learn everyday something about who we are as a people and

how to get along—how to make our world—our rez better—how to improve things that are important to us. You cannot get this in a white school. No way. I feel blessed to have this opportunity. (Participant 18S)

I find myself getting out of bed, anxious for a new day at school. What am I going to learn today and what I am going to learn about? It is so much more than the website says and it is so much more than anyone can really explain. It is like I knew that I was Indian but I did not know what all that meant until I started here at the tribal college. Once I got here, I was amazed at what I was learning. I know that one day I want to teach here. I have not told anyone that before; I only recently figured it out but I want to teach here because I think that this college is going to improve our peoples' lives—I would like to be part of that experience. I want to know that I made a difference in kids' lives and in our rez. I will sleep good at night knowing that I can make a difference. (Participant 20S)

I am not sure you can understand this, but what I learn everyday outside of the classroom is just as valuable as what I learn in the classroom. I learn about my people and our history. It is handed down from our ancestors and is so much more than I ever could have hoped to learn. The elders are instrumental in my learning these lessons. I am so happy to have this experience and gain this kind of knowledge. (Participant 26S)

We learn more about ourselves and our people in one semester than I ever thought was possible to learn at a college. I did not know that I would get to learn all of this stuff when I started here. Now, I am very excited to teach my kids what I learn here. (Participant 35S)

I Will Be Able To Help My People

Students discussed the idea that they would like to take their education and help the people in their reservation communities.

> *As a nurse, I will be able to help my people; it is a way for me to stay on the rez and use my education for the good. It is a good feeling to know that I can do this for myself and for my people (Participant 3S)*

> *I do not want to leave my rez because I would be leaving a part of me that I treasure but I also have to make a living. I have to be able to support my family. Going into teaching will allow me to stay on the rez, work in a school close to my home and help my people become educated in a way that makes sense to us and includes a better representation of our culture than the white schools can provide. I am excited to know that I have the potential to make our rez a better place to live. I wish other people on the rez would get off of their butts and go to school. What do they have to lose? I get mad when I see people wasting their lives on drugs and booze. (Participant 5S)*

> *I am interested in starting my own business one day so that I can stay home on my rez and maybe help our people. I hope to grow my business so I can hire other Indians to help me. That would give me satisfaction. I want to know that I helped my people out. (Participant 12S)*

> *I have never really thought much about giving back but now that I am in school and learning so much, I realize how much I want to do something to help my people; something that will make a positive impact in our culture. I am hopeful that if we all*

start thinking about giving back to our tribe that we will see a better future here on our rez. (Participant 17S)

I know this sounds corny or whatever but when I go to bed at night I want to go to sleep knowing that I did my best to help our people. That I made a difference. (Participant 41S)

Our Kids Need To Know That They Can Do Better

Participants want the children in their communities to know that they have options available to them that do not include gangs, alcohol, drug abuse or suicide.

Our kids need to know that they can do better and that they can go to school and make a decent living for themselves and their families. They need to know that they have options and that they don't have to drink or use drugs; that there are things to look forward to. They don't have to join a gang. They don't have to self-destruct. We owe them that much. (Participant 7S)

What's that old song, kids are our future? [laughs] That is what we need to understand that our kids need us to help them rise above all of this poverty and alcoholism. We owe our kids a safe world where they can be kids and know that they have a decent future. (Participant 10S)

Our kids ought to be able to go to a good high school and graduate. They should be able to get a job on the rez so they don't have to drive so many miles to get a job or so they don't have to move away from their families. (Participant 12S)

We must rise up and protect our children. They deserve a good life. a life that gives them a reason to get up in the mornings. (Participant 26S)

There is a lot of suicide in our people—a lot of sorrow and despair—a lot of our teenagers kills [sic] themselves because they don't see a better way. We got to teach them that they don't have to kill themselves; that we can help them ease the pain and the hell they feel. We must get ourselves educated so we can know how to stop the suicide epidemic. (Participant 38S)

It Is The First Time In A Long Time That I Have Held My Head High

I look at my kids and I feel ashamed that I have not done better by them but I am on the right track now. I am close to graduating and will be able to get a job that will help us have a little better life. I want my kids to understand our culture, and I want them to have a pride about being an Indian that I did not grow up with. I don't want them to be ashamed of our ancestors or our history. I want them to go to powwows and dance traditional songs. I want them to know our stories. They are our lifeline. I want them to know that a college education will help them and that a tribal college will heighten their knowledge about our people. It can't get any better than that. (Participant 4S)

I guess that I had lost my pride about being an Indian, but the college reminded me of our traditions and what we hold sacred. It has made me think better about myself and better about being an Indian. I can pass that on to my children. (Participant 12S)

I grew up thinking that I was not as good as a white person because I am a different color. I am glad that I came here because I can remember what it means to be an Indian and I can be proud of it. (Participant 18S)

You know about November being Native American heritage month or something like that? Well, every day at the college is like that; we hold our heads high and take pride in our Indianness [laughs]. We hold our heads high. It is the first time in a long time that I have held my head high and, you know, it feels good. It feels right. I like feeling this way. It is better than hittin the bottle every day and passing out. I'd say that is a much better deal. (Participant 24S)

I have not abandoned my core Indian values; if anything the tribal college has made them stronger. Actually, I am more proud to be Indian than I ever was before! I love learning more about our people, our history, and our language! I love honoring our elders. When they are in the classroom, it is like being transported to a better time. Their stories are sometimes the best part of the day. (Participant 31S)

I have to say that the college has helped me to become more proud of being an Indian than before. I did not really think much about Native pride, did not think we had much to be proud about but now I know better. We have a lot to be proud of and I am glad to be able to pass it on to my kids. And maybe their kids. (Participant 38S)

Jealousy of Family/Friends

American Indian and Native Alaska students discussed a concept that they termed jealousy. They experienced jealousy from family members or community members; this was not what they expected when they began their collegiate education. This is a significant concern for students.

Ok, so this is something that worries me—people can be very jealous about those of us who go to school. I am afraid that I won't be able to find a job cause of that jealousy. I don't want to have to move away in order to get a good job (Participant 2S)

I had someone talk to me the other day about how they hated it when people when to college and came back thinkin they were better than everyone else. You know, I do not think I am better than anyone else but I am glad I went to school. I don't understand why everyone does not go to college. (Participant25S)

So, the other day I went to the store and this girl was in there—I went to high school with her. She was so messed up. I talked to her and when she asked what I was doing I told her that I was going to the college. She became so mean and told me that I was a disgrace to my people. A sell-out. I asked her how I was a sell-out going to a tribal college but by that time she was really getting hateful so I just left. It scared me though—does everyone think that I am a sell-out? is everyone going to be jealous cause I am a student and why? [tears up] I just want someone to be proud of me and I want to help my people but I don't want people to think I am feeling all better than they are. I don't at all – I just want to be somebody [cries]. (Participant29S)

I get so pissed off when someone says something bad about me going to school. I ask them why they don't get off their ass and go to school too. This school takes everybody and all you have to do is go and try to do something with your life. I am sick of people being all jealous about something that they too can do and have—everyone on this reservation could have an education if they wanted one. (Participant44S)

This concept really puzzled me and I turned to the literature to make it clearer in my mind. On an Indigenous blog called The Indigenous Perspective, a note was posted anonymously:

> To The Indigenous Student: You ARE good enough. You can do whatever you strive to do. Don't let the ignorance and jealousy of those around you deter you. Hold your head high, and prove to everybody that you can do something great. That you can and will amount to something. Be the difference. Be the example all Native students should follow. And help pave the way for future generations of Indigenous children so they too can have the hope to be something great. You can do it! (Anonymous, n.d., Diaries of Indigenous Students)

Interestingly and, in contrast, Deloria (2001b) discusses that accomplishments are regarded as family endeavors:

> The final ingredient of traditional tribal education is that accomplishments are regarded as the accomplishments of the family and are not attributed to the world around us. We share our failures and successes so that we know who we are and so that we have confidence when we do things. Traditional knowledge enables us to see our place and our responsibility within the movement of history as it is experienced by the community. Formal knowledge, on the other hand, helps us to understand how things work, and knowing how things work and being able to make them work are the marks of a professional person in this society. It is critically important that we do not confuse these two kinds of knowledge or exchange the roles they play in our lives. The major shortcoming in American institutional life is that most people cannot distinguish these

> two ways of knowing; and for many Americans there is no personal sense of knowing who they are, so professionalism always overrules the concern for persons. (p. 46)

Tribal Leadership Should have College Degrees

Some students discussed the idea that they felt tribal leaders should have a college education.

> *I think that the tribal leadership should have education. Many of them do not have any kind of education. They would be good models to go to a tribal college. (Participant3S)*

> *Our leaders do not have degrees. It bothers me cause they are responsible for moving our people in the right direction (Participant 11S)*

> *I want our leaders to come to school. I think it would help them help all of us and it would be a good role model for younger kids and for their families.(Participant 15S)*

> *It shocked me when I realized that our tribal leaders did not have to have education in order to be in a leadership position. That seems wrong to me. I think they would all benefit from having an education (Participant 23S)*

Fears about Transfers to Larger Universities

Students in two year tribal colleges discussed the necessity of attending a larger university so they could obtain a bachelor's degree. When they discussed the necessity of going to a larger university, it was not about the mechanics of transferring—it was more about leaving the security of their TCU, their families and communities.

> *I will need to transfer to a big university and I really dread it because I am so scared of leaving a place where I know everyone and where everyone is kind to me. I need to know*

some ways to succeed when I get to the city and am trying to figure out how to do what I need to do in order to graduate with a bachelor's degree. It was a really big step for me to come here to this college and now I have to think about leaving here and going elsewhere. I wish they had a bachelor's degree here so I could just stay here where I am known and where I know it is ok to make mistakes—where I know that someone cares about me. (Participant 6S)

I know that in bout a year and a half I have to leave here and leave my family and go to the city to finish my education. I dread it because I know I am going to need support and I know that it is not going to be like being here at the tribal college. I suppose I need someone to hold my hand [laughs] when I get there but I am not going to know anyone. And, even though I am an adult, it scares me. Why can't this school have a four year degree? [laughs] (Participant 17S)

When I think about transferring to a bigger university for my bachelor's degree, I get a sick feeling in my stomach. I am not sure how I am going to handle a move like that – to not have people around me who are supportive of my efforts and who will call me if I am not in class. I don't know. I am scared. I am really afraid that I will fail and be a disappointment to myself, my family and my tribal college. My gosh, the people here at school are all about us doing good. If I go to the university and don't do good, what will they think of me? (Participant 19S)

I absolutely do not want to go to a bigger university but I know I have to but that does not mean I want to. I am not looking to going somewhere where there are not Indian people

around me all the time. I am gonna be lost in a sea of White faces [laughs] (Participant24S)

Summary

Thematic analyses of the student interviews were presented in this chapter. Fifteen themes were discussed. Students discussed the impact of their education for themselves, their families and their communities. Table 7-1 depicts which participants contributed to each theme. In the next chapter, a composite of a TCU is presented. The composite is presented as a diary of a student.

Table 7-1

Thematic Analysis of Student Interviews

Theme	Participants
I Was Kind of Lost	1, 2, 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44
College Means the World to Me	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43
Breaking the Cycle of Poverty	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 39, 42, 43, 44
I am a Role Model	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44
I Never Dreamed That I Could Go to College	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 41, 43, 44
I Can Do Anything	1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 29, 32, 34, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44
It Means so Much That I Can Learn The Language	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 44
We are Getting to Learn Our History	1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 41, 43,
Learning More Than What is Taught in Classroom	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43
I Want to be Able to Help my People	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 44
Our Kids Need to Know They Can Do Better	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 24, 25, 22, 25, 26, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43
It Is a First time in a Long Time That I Have Held My Head High	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 44
Jealousy of Family/Friends	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 41, 42, 43,
Tribal Leadership Needs Education	2, 4, 8, 12, 15, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, 42, 44
Fears About Transfers to the Big University	3, 5, 6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 28, 32, 34, 37, 38, 41, 42,

CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS: COMPOSITE OF TCU STUDENT

The following, developed from interview data, represents a composite Tribal College student. This is written in the form of a diary. I wrote this chapter several times. When I began the process, I wrote it without using any of the actual data excerpts. I used my own words; once I had a basic chapter outlined, I went back to the data. I then re-wrote the chapter, and to stay true to the original words of the participants, I used as many distinct data excerpts as I could weave into the narrative. These excerpts are italicized. Some of the data I extrapolated and put into words that I believed represented the students who graciously allowed me to interview them. I am grateful to of all of the student participants and I hope that they recognize their voices in this composite.

October 22nd (Monday)

Today is my birthday! I am 22! Yah me! My Dad says I am just a baby. My 10 year old brother says I am an old woman. Hehe! My Grandmother wonders where the time has gone and how I can be a mother with two children of my very own. I sort of wonder that myself. What happened to the teenager who was determined to not have children for a long time? What happened to the teenager who was determined to leave the rez? I wish I knew! I know I should have waited to have children but life just happens sometimes. I already feel myself wanting to tell my little ones to wait to have kids but I think they are a little young yet and I don't want them to ever think that I regret having them because I really don't. At all. They are my world! I am happy to be their mother.

I have never really had a journal but a friend of mine suggested that it helps to write down feelings and thoughts so I am going to give it a whirl. I found myself an old spiral notebook and a pen. It will have to do for now. I think my kids will get a kick out of reading my thoughts and feelings when they are older. Or at least I hope so. I hope that I can keep up with them long enough so they can read them as they get older. I wish I had journals of my relatives. It would be kind of cool to read what they were thinking and what they were going through—kind of like a time travel of sorts.

I think that 22 may be a different kind of year for me because as soon as I opened my eyes this morning, I had the feeling that I was not on the right track for me or my kids. I felt empty and somewhat hopeless, a little down and out. This is not a comfortable feeling for me. I am usually fairly upbeat and positive. *I want more for my kids than what I have and I don't just mean stuff and things. I want them to have choices in their lives. I don't want them to struggle every single day of their lives. I look at the kids who live on the rez. They are into trouble at such an early age with drugs, gangs, violence.* It scares me now that I have two little ones. I want them to grow up with more choices and the ability to make better decisions. It would hurt me so much to see my babies grow up and get into drugs or choose to be in a gang because they did not feel that they had other choices. As long as I am alive, I will work hard to let my children know that they are loved and that I want only the best for them. *It is hard to imagine a better world outside the boundaries of the reservation but I know one exists. I just want us to figure out how to make the reservation a better place for our children to grow up. That is really my dream, to make the reservation a better place for all of our children. The historical trauma that exists is so overwhelming. It has gotten us in a lot of trouble. I just get so upset when I look around and see all the poverty and unhappiness in our lands.*

I remember my own childhood and it scares me a lot to think that my kids are going to face the same struggles that I faced. *The rez is not an easy place to grow up on or an easy place to live. There is so much poverty and so few jobs, too many alcoholics and too many drugs, too much violence. It is really depressing to look at our community and know that we live in such poverty and despair. Most everyone on the rez is poor. We are probably some of the poorest people in this country and maybe in the world.* But, that is the way it has been for centuries now and while I cannot change that, I can do something to make life better for me and my two children.

So for my birthday, I gave myself a little gift that I hope will turn into a bigger gift. I went to the local Tribal College and talked to them about getting a GED and maybe going to college someday. It is a fact that there are few opportunities on the rez for work. I guess that is what I am trying to say. *I want to live on the rez with my family but I want it to be different. I want to have a job that means something, that pays enough for me to feed my children and give them some of the things in life that they want, not big materialistic things but a good education and good food, a nice place to live, the ability to provide for their children.* I want it to be better for them and their families. It seems so overwhelming at times but I know that I have to begin somewhere. Baby steps, baby steps. I just have to put one foot in front of the other. I *am a scared mother of two. I am scared of failing and I am scared of not going forward. I am scared that in ten years, I will still be sitting right here looking at myself in the mirror and not liking what I see. I want to feel better about myself as a person and as a mother. I cannot believe how much responsibility I feel for my children. It scares me at times. It makes me wonder if my parents felt the same about me.*

When I went to the college, I felt a little out of place, like I didn't belong since I did not even graduate from high school. I was really nervous just opening the door and stepping inside. The staff was really nice. They were helpful and were nice and asked me how they could help me. After I talked with them a little while, they set me up to take the GED, gave me some study guides and they also gave me applications to fill out for college and for financial aid. And they told me to come back if I needed help filling them out. They told me that I could get some financial aid and they reminded me to ask the tribe for assistance as well. They said their job was to help me get into school, help me to get money and to help me graduate from school. It is nice for me to know that there are people to help me stumble along the path to a college education. I *never thought about going to college before. I didn't even finish high school so I never thought that I could actually get a college degree.* How many other things have I missed out on because I did not know? I want my children to know what their options are. I feel like that is my job as their mom, to help them know what they need to know.

I am very scared and very excited! I am hopeful for the first time in a very long time! I want this, much more than I ever thought that I would!

December 3rd (Monday)

I received my GED results today. I passed! Yah! I felt like a happy little school girl, not like a grown up mom of two. LOL (laugh out loud)! The kids looked at me dancing around and they did not know what was going on but they saw their mom dancing and laughing so they danced and giggled too! It made me feel good to see them being little kids full of joy! We danced and laughed for a long time. It is good for them to see me laugh and giggle! I want to capture this feeling forever. It was such a fabulous feeling. *What mother does not want their*

children to be happy? My grandmother joined us. It was wonderful to see her so happy and proud of me! It felt very good. And very exciting! And very scary!

I am happy but really nervous about going to college. I have no excuses now. I have a GED and need to follow through with college. I need to get it together and do this for myself, for my kids and grandma and even for my people. *We, Indians, need more successful people to help ease the burden on the reservations. I hear many people talk about walking in two worlds and I get that—we do—we have to know how to live on the rez and we have to know how to make a go of it in the white world*. It is like walking on a tightrope. I never worried about it before. I just kind of wandered around from day to day and worked my little job and came home to my kids and my Grandmother. Now, I feel like I have the responsibility to learn to live on the rez successfully and to make it work in the white world too. I *want to know how to get the best out of both worlds for myself, my kids, my family, and my community*.

I believe that we are all one in the world but we sure don't act like it. It is like everyone in the white world is fighting to get ahead of the other and sometimes I feel like that attitude is spilling over everywhere. I don't want that. I just want a good life for me and my kids, a chance for my kids to have better than me. Who can argue with that? I have not talked to many people outside the college about going back to school. *I am a little scared of how people will take it—will they make fun of me and tell me that I can't do it? Sometimes, it seems that people on the rez are jealous of people who go to college*. I don't really get that. I hope now that no one is going to be jealous of me or make fun of me. I know that I am going to need support from people around me but for now it is my little secret goal. I am scared and somewhat shy to let anyone know about this goal of mine.

January 7th (Monday)

I got into college! I cut it close with my application and even though I know that the college accepts everyone, I was still nervous about getting accepted. I do not know why exactly but I was. I need some school supplies. I need to figure out child care and how to make all of this work! I have a lot to do! I only have a very short period of time to get myself together. School starts in a week. Oh, my goodness. What am I going to do? Get organized is a good plan. Freak out a little then settle down so that I can focus and try to get myself together.

I guess I have to spill the beans and let people know that I am going to college. COLLEGE! How exciting and how scary. I feel like I am about six years old going off to the first grade. I am that nervous and that excited and that unsure of myself. I am going to tell my Grandma first She is gonna be surprised and proud! I hope she will be proud. My Grandma has been my one constant; she is my rock, as they say! She is everything! She loves me and my girls. I love her with all of my heart. She has had a hard life and I want to make things easier for her.

There is a lot of emotion that I did not expect to have! I am surprised that I am crying and laughing all at the same time. I did not really expect to feel so much. I did not expect to be so excited or so unsure of myself.

January 13th (Sunday)

Tomorrow is the first day of school for me. It will be my first day as a college student! *When I left high school, I never imagined that I would want to go back to school. In fact, I hated school and the thought of college did nothing for me whatsoever. I even made fun of kids who went to college—Indian nerds, I called them, only because I thought I did not have the same options. I did not even think it was possible to go to college especially since I did not graduate*

from high school. It was a struggle for me to find the motivation or, maybe it was courage, to get a GED. I guess though that I did not even know I wanted one until my birthday. It just did not seem like an option for me.

High school seemed like a waste of time and space. It was like I could not ever seem to get in the groove of going and doing things that did not make any sense to me. *Or maybe I did not see the relevance in my life. I don't know. It is kind of odd to think about the high school thing. I was not grown up but certainly felt that I was when I found myself pregnant. If I had only known how not grown up I was. It makes me laugh now to think about that pregnant girl with braids in her hair. She knew it all yet she knew nothing. I know now how much that I actually do not know. There are a whole lot of things I know nothing about.*

I don't regret having my baby. She grounded me and I found a higher purpose, I guess. She and her sister are the reasons that I am going to be a brand new college student in the morning. A college girl—who knew?

I am a nervous girl. I am really surprised at how nervous I am. I feel silly. I have a six year old, Emma, and a two year old, Gracie, and here I am fretting over going to school. Maybe I feel like a high school student after all! I guess it is ok to feel silly.

I am anxious to see what tomorrow brings for this college girl! I think it is odd to know that tomorrow is a new beginning to my life. I hope it is a successful beginning and that I can do whatever needs to be done in order to go forward. I do not want to fail. That is my major fear. Even though we are not supposed to give into our fears, I am scared. I hope that I can get a good night's sleep. I am scared.

January 14th (Monday)

I survived my first day as a college student! It was nothing like I thought it would be. It is nothing like high school. That is for sure and that is a good thing from where I sit. It is like a school full of grownups who are all gathered together to learn something, to learn something in order to get to a different place in their lives. I guess I should say our lives because I am there to learn too and to change my life and my children's lives. It is an awesome responsibility to be an adult with children. *The college feels like an opportunity but I am still a scared girl on the inside.*

Today, in each class, we introduced ourselves to one another and to the teacher. I was able to say my name and my family's name in my own language. It was not very smooth but I got it done. I was glad when it was finished—it was a relief when it was not my turn anymore. Some of the other students did not know enough of our language to introduce themselves properly. It is something we are all going to work on, or at least that is what our teacher says. *It is mandatory to take language classes in this college. I look forward to speaking my own language and teaching it to my girls! My Grandma will be able to help me out with this.*

I liked being able to go to a class that I had some say so in choosing. I am in basic classes like English and math. I don't really like love those subjects but it is ok for now. I know I will get to my goal. *When I registered for school, I took placement tests and they said that I needed the basic classes.*

I did not get my financial aid check yet. There seems to be a problem in the processing of paperwork or something. *The financial aid counselors are very awesome, very helpful. They knew that I could not attend without some assistance. The tribe is helping me out some too. I am grateful for any assistance that anyone provides or is willing to provide.*

The financial aid counselors were able to find me a little emergency money, enough to get me some gas and a couple of my books. Who knew that books cost so much money? Not me, that is for sure. It seems like highway robbery! LOL (laugh out loud)! *I am just not sure that a book should cost so much. It seems wrong. I never imagined that I would ever pay so much for one book. It is a lot of money and honestly I felt a little guilty about spending so much money on something that my children can't eat or wear.* But, they are necessary or so I am told.

I wish the college had child care. Child care is a huge deal for me since I have two little ones. I worry about it constantly. I noticed some of the women had some older children in classes with them today. I know that my two are too young and too busy to sit still in a classroom. I hope that I never have to take them with me to class because I think they would not be able to be quiet and sit still. It would make me uncomfortable, like I would be too worried about them to learn anything. I hope that I never have to face that situation.

I am thankful that I have my Grandma to help me out. She is sick but she is able to keep an eye on them for a couple of hours at a time. *I can't afford day care for them. It is way too much money. They must be fed and have clothes that fit*. Their Daddy is not around too much. He is not very reliable although he loves his kids a lot. I cannot count on him for child support money or child care. Maybe one day, he will be able or willing to help support his daughters. It would be nice but it is I think a dream or a big wish on my part. And, I am too much a realist to believe in fairy tales! Unfortunately, he likes to drink too much and that makes him unreliable, in my book. I cannot leave my kids with someone who drinks too much. *I have too much going on to fall into the alcohol trap that I see so many of my family, my friends, and my community falling into. Oh, don't get me wrong, I could do it and do it easily but I choose not to. It is easy to get drunk and ease the pain but the pain is always there and always hurting more when you*

wake up the next day. To me, it is not worth it but too many on the rez, it seems the only way to live. I hope I can always resist it and that my kids can avoid it too. But, it is a constant worry for me.

January 29th (Tuesday)

I have not had a very good day. I do not think that I am prepared to be a college student. I don't have a good basic foundation—even though I dropped out in the 11th grade, I should know some of this stuff—shouldn't I? I don't remember much math. My writing does not seem to be good enough. I am not able to understand everything that I read. I feel like a big fat failure. I am not sure that this is the right thing for me to being doing. It seems so overwhelming. It is like I don't know more than what I know. It is an impossible situation. I would like to bang my head against the wall. I want to lay down on the floor and kick my heels up like my kids do when they are having a temper tantrum. If only I could get away with it. If only it would help me. If only I was not an adult with two dependent children, not that I don't want my children. I just wish it was not so difficult.

I am not good at being a college student. I am not sure that I have what it takes. That makes me really sad. It makes me want to cry. *I wish I was smarter. I wish I was more organized. I wish I could make time stand still so I can learn how to be a better college student. There is so much to learn and there are only so many hours in a day.* I have to spend time with my kids and with my grandma and I have to sleep. I also have to do the laundry, make the meals, take the kids to the clinic if they get sick. I have to study though and take tests and write papers and do math problems. I am so upset. I do not want to fail out. What kind of role model am I? I feel like a failure as a mom and as a student. I am just beside myself with anxiety. I know that this feeling is temporary but I still feel badly.

January 30 (Wednesday)

I wallowed in self-pity last night but I am back on track this morning and I am determined to do this thing! I went and spoke with the academic counselor today. She was very supportive. Her name is Nan and she encouraged me to ask for help from my teachers. She was really helpful. She hooked me up with a tutor. I think a tutor will help me a lot. I know I have a lot to learn. The counselor also suggested that I ask some of my classmates if they would like to organize study groups.

The counselor reminded me that college is meant to be challenging and that if it was easy, I would not be getting a good education. I know she is right but still I wish I knew how to do things a little better than what I do. I would love to be able to sit down and just write a paper without sweating it out and without worrying about every little sentence. It would be nice to know what the teacher was talking about with all of the math lingo. But, I guess I will learn it all someday. Hopefully. If not, what will I do with my life and how will I help my 2 daughters be successful in their lives? I really want to be the best mom possible.

February 1st (Friday)

It snowed today, and, of course, my car would not start. The bitter cold temperatures probably did not help it any. I hitched to school. I live 20 miles from school and did not have much choice. I probably walked about two miles before someone came by and gave me a ride. I really wanted to go back into the house and forget about it but *I am really trying to be a good role model for my kids and the other people in my family*. *I have younger siblings and I want them to finish high school and go to college. Anyone can quit when it is hard but not everyone can stick it out when it is difficult or so I tell myself but* it was really cold this morning and I really wanted to go back home and go to bed. When I finally got to school this morning, I

wanted to turn around and go back home and go to bed but I stuck it out. And, I am glad that I did even though I did not want to. At all.

February 4th (Monday)

Saturday, I was able to find a new battery for my car. I hope that I do not have to hitch any more rides to get to school. Today, I picked up a girl who was walking along the road. She was trying to dodge the snow drifts. *It is hard but some of my classmates walk to school or hitch a ride every day*. I will try to pick people up who are walking cause somebody saved me from walking the entire way the other day. I was grateful for the ride and I think other people would be grateful too.

February 5th (Tuesday)

Every single person in this house is sick except for me. I had to stay home from school. It is the first day that I missed and I felt bad about it. But, I could not leave my grandma or my babies when they all have fevers and are throwing up. *One of the teachers called me to check on me. She wanted to know why I was not at school. I told her that everyone in the house is sick. She seemed to understand but she told me to try not to miss too many days because it is hard to catch up. I know it is not a good idea to miss but my family comes first*. I could not leave them knowing that they are all so sick. What kind of a mom or granddaughter would I be? Not a good one. *Family is my first priority*. As a mom and a granddaughter, I am the one they count on. Always. Some days it seems overwhelming but mostly I think of it as an honor.

February 15th (Friday)

I had a test today in math. I made a B! I am very excited! I am taking our required language class. It is so wonderful to learn my language. It makes me really happy to be able to teach my children some of the things that I am learning. *My grandma is helping me too. She is*

fluent in our language and she always wanted to teach me but I was too busy doing something else or nothing. I have to admit that I did not want to learn when I was younger. But, now I see the importance and want my kids to know our language and our customs. I do not want our culture to die.

The college has helped me to understand the importance of our culture, our traditions and our language. I am embarrassed that I know so little. But, I am learning now. And, I am hopeful because I know that the college takes this mission to heart. There are elders in some of our classes and they know a lot and are able to add things to our discussions and lectures. I wish my Grandma could come to college with me. She is proud but she is worried too that I will change and be a different Indian girl. I think I will be better cause I will know our language and our customs better and I know I already listen to the elders including my grandma better than I ever have before. I just have to keep talking to Grandma and get her to help me and my daughters learn our language and the other important things about our tribe and our culture. This is one of the best things about a tribal college.

February 18th (Monday)

My uncle passed today. I have to leave school but I called all of my teachers. They were understanding, even the Non-Native ones. I really hate to miss school but *family responsibilities come before anything else. This I was taught when I was a little girl*. I have a lot to do. We have to travel to the other side of the rez and it will be a long trip. I think that the tribal college people understand about ceremonies and their importance. I probably could not find this in a mainstream college. *I am not sure many Non-Natives know the significance of ceremonies and customs.*

March 11th (Monday)

Midterm exams begin today. *I am surprised at myself because I want to do well. I want good grades.* I am nervous. *I have a hard time taking tests. My mind tends to freeze up but I hope that it will get easier each time that I take a test. We have had test taking classes but I think I should take that particular class every single week. I might get the hang of it by then. My grandma says for me to have more faith in myself and my understanding of things.* My girls gave me big hugs today before I left home—that helped put a smile on my face. It makes me feel good to leave them knowing that they are happy and safe.

March 20th (Wednesday)

I passed all of my midterm tests—what a relief for me! I was scared. It is time to register for next semester. I plan to take a break over the summer but I will register for fall. I need some time to settle down and get more organized. I want to spend more time with my girls this summer. They will never be these ages again. I don't want to regret anything about their childhood.

I have decided that I want to pursue a degree in nursing. The college offers an Associate's Degree in nursing. I have thought about what I wanted to do since I passed the GED. I wasn't too sure. Nursing is a good choice because there is an IHS hospital on the rez and hopefully they will hire me. If so, they take care of housing and there is a daycare facility on site.

Daycare would be a very cool thing. Grandma is getting frailer. Her diabetes is out of control. Her sugars are too high. She seems like she is not doing well. I am frantic about her and need to call the clinic to see if I can get her an appointment. She has always been there for me and I intend to be there for her. She raised me and is more of a mom to me than my own mom.

She will move with me when the time comes for us to relocate. I love my Grandma. She is the best parent and Grandma in the world. I hope my children will know what an remarkable woman she is and how much she has to teach them. They love her but they are little and do not understand what I did not understand as a little one. They do not understand what our culture, our way of life means to us and our people. It is my job to teach them the importance. I do not take that responsibility lightly at all.

May 10th (Friday)

Classes are finished for the semester. I am relieved but a little sad. I have come to love being a college student. It suits me. I finally feel that it is my place. I had to say goodbye to one of the Non-Native teachers today. She is moving to a larger city to teach. *It seems that the Non-Native teachers leave more often than the Native ones. I overheard some of the staff talking about it - sometimes, the Non-Native teachers come to the tribal colleges to learn how to teach and then move on. I think it must be a difficult thing to come and live on a reservation when you are not Native. It is hard enough as a Native and we have family here. It is pretty isolated out here—it is a long drive to a grocery store and there is very little shopping. The internet connections are either poor or nonexistence.* It is hard to be on Facebook when you cannot get on the computer. The nearest big city is several hundred miles away. It *is hard to live on a rez in the United States. It is lonely sometimes and the weather is deplorable. But, my family live here and my people so I will live here and raise my kids here. But, I have changed a lot this year and now I will raise them with the expectation that they will get an education to improve their lives and our people's. I never had that as a child. No one really thought much about education and how it could change us and help us and help our situation. There was not a tribal college on our rez when my mom and dad were teenagers or young adults. They would have had to travel a*

long ways to go to a college. Few did. No one really helped them to understand that it was needed to get a better place in life. I am sad about that. I know that I have to teach my children better than that.

I think that the Native teachers are a little easier on us than the Non-Native teachers. Everyone wants us to succeed but the Non-Native teachers seem to hold us to a higher standard than the Native teachers. The Non-Native teachers do not call us when we are absent. They expect us to come to them and find out what we missed. The Native teachers call us and tell us what we need to do to catch up. It is not that we don't appreciate that the Native teachers look after us. We do but we also wonder if they doubt our ability to succeed. We talk about it sometimes in our study group. We know what we need to do. We can do it! We want everyone to know that we can do it too. Anyway, that is my thoughts about it. Just in case anyone was to ever ask me. Ha! As if. It is one thing that I think is different in a mainstream college – I don't think any teacher would call us to find out why we missed a class. I may be wrong but I don't think they do that sort of thing

June 10th (Monday)

I woke up today and realized that I miss school, the teachers and my friends. I am a full-fledged college student! Don't get me wrong, I am happy to have a break but it is good to figure out that I really like going to school. It is a good day. *I feel good about myself and my future! I can, for the first time in my life, imagine myself going to graduate school. It was not that long ago—just a few months—that an Associate's Degree seemed out of reach. Don't get me wrong—it is hard for me and I feel like I am struggling every single class but I am happy to be doing it and know that I will not struggle without a reward. It will be good when I graduate and when I*

am able to get a good job. I will feel like I am able to provide a better life and a future for my children. That will be a victorious day for me and my little family.

I plan to spend a lot of time this summer helping Emma to read better and getting Gracie to say her alphabet and learn her numbers and colors. I now realize the importance of helping them learn the basics. I want to help Emma with basic math skills. *The school has taught me so much about myself and about how to be a better parent. I think about doing things differently as a parent but I guess I could say that I also think about things differently from a community perspective. I want to be a better community person, a better Indian! I think about things that I never used to think about, like what it means to get the girls in a good school and how to help them. And, how to be a better role model for other people. Even people who might not know me personally.* I think that this college has helped me to think about this kind of thing in a different way.

August 14th (Wednesday)

Classes begin tomorrow. I am very excited to return to school. I still have some courses to take before I can even apply to the nursing program. But, I am good with it. Less than a year ago, I started this journey. I feel as if I have come a long way in such a short period of time. I did not think that school would affect me or the way I see myself but it has and that is bizarre to me. It is something that I did not expect to happen.

I have also decided to try and participate in some of the clubs that are offered at the school. *I want to become as involved as I can* with the realization that my children still need me at home as much as possible. The children's paternal Grandmother Lyons has agreed to watch them a couple of days a week. She is really a good grandmother and I am very happy to accept her help. This will give Grandma a break. She is getting frailer but her spirit is still strong! She

needs more rest now and can't move around as well but she is still teaching me so much. I love her more than I can say. I hope that I can honor her by passing her teachings to my girls. I will give it my very best shot.

August 15th (Thursday)

I woke up this morning eager to get to school; unfortunately, everything and everyone conspired against me and my eagerness. The alarm clock did not go off. The babies did not want to get up and eat breakfast and Grandma was not feeling well. I called Grandmother Lyons and she agreed to come over and pick up the girls and she said she would feed them and get Emma to school- and for me not to worry. I got my Grandmother settled and was able to get to my first class a few minutes late. The teacher was nice about it. But, I felt frazzled all day. Kind of out of synch.

Things got better in the afternoon and I was glad to be back in the groove; I look forward to this semester. I feel more prepared for the whole college experience this semester. Not just with supplies, but with my mental state of being. *I have allowed myself to identify myself as a college student. It is like a huge deal to me. It makes me proud of myself and hopeful for my two children. I want my kids to grow up knowing that I expect them to plan to go to college. It was not expected of me; hell, we were lucky to get to school most days.*

August 16th (Friday)

This morning went smoother because the kids cooperated. Grandma is feeling better. I am so relieved. She has been my rock for so long. My life would not be the same without her. I owe her a lot. I owe her this college education. She struggled hard to raise me. I know that she sacrificed a lot to raise me. I owe her although she would tell me I owe her nothing. I know

better. I feel like I need to better myself for her and the kids. Her life would have been easier without raising me. I am so grateful to her.

August 23rd (Friday)

The first week of the fall semester is behind me! I have much to do but I have it all mapped out on my calendar. I have applied for a work study program. I hope I get the job. I need the money so badly. The kids have grown lately and can no longer wear their clothes. It is hard to keep them clothed, fed and in clothes!

The children seem to be in a routine of sorts. They seem happy to go to Grandma Lyons's a few days a week. They are very happy to see me after school and I am thrilled to see them. Some days are long and when I think of going home, cooking dinner, doing laundry, giving baths, I must admit that I get a little more tired. But, they are the reason that I get up each morning and haul myself to school. They are the reason that I have forced myself to go to school when I was so scared.

I find myself in need of a computer. Last semester, I went to the library and did all of my work but I did not have such a heavy load nor was I a work study student. I cannot be gone from home any longer than necessary. I will ask the people in financial aid Monday to see if they have suggestions on how to get a computer cheaply.

I then have to figure out what we can give up in order to have internet access. *There is a lot more to going to school than books and going to school these days.* There are a lot of things that I did not think about when I started school.

August 26th (Monday)

I talked with financial aid staff today. There is a special program to buy laptop computers. I applied for assistance. I am excited about the possibility of having a computer at

home although I have yet to figure out how to pay for the service each month. I cannot squeeze another dime out of my budget, if you can even call it a budget. I call it a disaster. Of course, *the internet service is not reliable out here* but I would like to try. If I can get the service, it will help my time management.

September 2nd (Monday)

Having a computer at home has been really helpful. I am able to get a lot of things done after the girls go to bed. I am able to bathe them and read to them before bedtime. Sometimes I read and sometimes I tell stories to them. Sometimes, I do both. It is important to me that I am home in the evenings with them. I want them to grow up knowing their mom. Not having a mom in my day to day life as a child has affected my life in significant ways. Not all negative, it is important that I am in their lives. *It is important that I try to be the best mom that I can be at the same time it is important that I try to be the best college student that I can be. I cannot separate myself from either role nor do I want to. I want to do both really well. I want to be proud of myself and make my Grandma proud of me!*

October 22nd (Tuesday)

It is my 23rd birthday! I am a year closer to my goals! I am celebrating my birthday in style this year. I am going to make a nice lunch for my little family. I am then going to write a paper and study for a math test! Yikes! Next week is going to be a busy week. I will have to stay very organized. I remember last year at this time. I went to the tribal college and asked them to help me with a GED. And, they helped me not only with that but *they got me thinking and excited about going to a tribal college. I owe the people at the college so much! They believed in me and my potential long before I began to believe in myself. I thought that I could*

not possibly go to college and raise my two girls. I know differently although I do wish with all of my heart that the college had child care!

I started talking to my siblings and cousins about going back to college. Several of them have not graduated from high school but I know the front office people at the college will help them get a GED too. *I think we have to be educated in order to function and survive in the Red and White worlds! I talk to my two little ones about college all the time now; of course, they have no clue what I am talking about!* I know they will go to college, even if I have to drive them myself! I can just see myself driving them back and forth to college every day! Hehe.

October 23rd (Wednesday)

Today, the girl's dad called me. He wants to come and see the girls. *I know he means well but it is hard for them when he just comes and goes. I want him to get his act together so he can be a proper father.* I am not sure that is going to happen. Even though he does not have a GED, he has a good job but it is hard work. He is young now but I worry that when he gets older; it may be too hard physically. I also know he drinks too much and that makes me really uncomfortable. His mom is so good to us so I try and get along with him. He is not really a bad guy; he is just not very responsible or dependable. I am not sure what is going to happen but *I know that I must be financially responsible in order to care for all my girls. I want them to have a better life.*

November 12th (Tuesday)

My midterm grades were good but I feel that I am on a slippery slope. I am trying to do a research paper but it is hard. *I continually find myself trying to stay caught up with everything* – my little ones have been sick and it has thrown me off course with my school schedule. When they are sick, they want Mom to hold them a lot. And, it is a little hard to hold them both and

study, especially when I am tired too. I am not one who can stay up all night and function well with studying. I find myself crying a lot. Crying does not inspire confidence in myself. It makes me feel weak. And, silly.

Money is tight right now which makes things seem even more bleak than normal. I have joined a couple of study groups: one for science and one for history. I hope they help keep me grounded with the two courses. I am a little overwhelmed, thinking of all the stuff that I still need to do for the semester. One day at a time is what my Grandma keeps telling me. I know she is right. I am tired. *When I get tired, I get overwhelmed*. *And when I get overwhelmed, I feel like I am going to fail and that I will never amount to anything. I suppose that is not unusual but it does not make it any better when I am feel that I am going through hell every day.*

I am fairly certain that I need to put myself to bed now so the day can end. I feel like crawling under the covers for a few weeks. Maybe then I could get caught up on my sleep. But, I know that I cannot do that nor do I really want to. I want to succeed.

November 13 (Wednesday)

I suppose I was really down yesterday. I re-read the entry and could not believe that I was so negative. I guess that I get really upset when I get tired. A good night's sleep put things in perspective. I am busy but I think that I will survive. I have a lot of support from my Grandma and I am fairly smart! *More than smart, I am determined. And stubborn! I suppose that it is my greatest strength, my stubbornness.*

I do need some help with writing a research paper. I will ask at school to see if there are some ways to get help. I can write but I am not certain that I know exactly how to get started on this paper. Writing seems a little overwhelming. There are a lot of rules about writing and I am not sure what all they are. I did not write a lot even when I went to high school. I'd have to say

that I do not know how to write well enough for a college paper. I guess it is good to know what I need to work on.

November 14 (Thursday)

I am excited to have a writing tutor! I guess things are not as bleak as I thought they were earlier this week. If I can keep my head up, I will be fine. I just have to stay positive and very focused. My planner is so full. It seems that every day is filled with something. Some days, I long for a nice, boring day, a day of doing nothing. I don't think I am going to have any of those kinds of days for a while. Even if I was not in school, my girls would not allow for boring days!

We have two elders in our language class. It is so awesome to hear their stories. I must admit that learning our language is really not that easy for me. I seem to struggle. The elders tell us the importance of learning our language and the importance of passing it to our children. I am starting to do this for my girls; it is easier with Grandma's help. I feel very blessed to have her in my life. She knows so much about our culture. I want to soak all of her knowledge in! I talked to the elders in our class about how to keep all of this knowledge in our family and in our community. They suggested that I listen, listen and try to absorb everything. And, that I tell my Grandma that I want to learn as much as possible; and, of course, that I try to speak our language at home either exclusively or as much as possible. I really want my kids to grow up bilingual. It will take some work on my part. I know my Grandma will help. She already loves helping me. It makes her feel needed and important. And respected. I could not respect her any more than I already do.

December 6th (Friday)

I am finished with another semester! Yes! I am happy to be finished with this one. It was tough and seemed really long. I am honestly relieved that I finished with good grades and most of my sanity intact. Next semester, I am going to finish what I need to do in order to start the nursing program in the fall. I am looking forward to nursing school. I hear it is tough though, as in, really, really hard. I do not know if I can handle it but I am going to give it a really hard try. I think that nursing will provide me and my family with security. I also see it as a way to give back to my community. One day, I can see myself being a home health nurse. I want to get a better handle on our language so that I can communicate better with my elders. I hope that I can learn the language better so that can happen. My Grandma is just thrilled with my choices. She thinks nursing is an awesome idea. I love making her happy and proud!

January 14 (Tuesday)

I am starting the semester in a good mood today. My children had a tough time getting in the groove this morning. They did not want to move very fast but I like to feed them before I leave in the mornings so I kept talking to them and kissing their sweet faces til their little feet hit the floor. I like to know Emma is ready for school and that she and I can say good morning and that I can tell her that I love her. It seems like a basic mom thing to do. It sets me up for a good day and I imagine it makes her feel more secure too. I want her and Gracie to know that I love them. Above all else, they deserve to know that their mom loves them with all of her heart!

A weird thing happened to me today when I drove into the parking lot at school. I felt excited and happy and, what was really odd for me what that I felt like I belonged. That is so unusual from where I sit. *I have never quite felt at ease in a school before. It is nice to feel that I belong! I want my kids to grow up and know that they, too, belong in school.* I am pretty sure

that my children will feel differently because I feel differently. I *want them to grow up knowing that school is a good thing and that their teachers are there to help them succeed. I want them to grow up knowing that I expect them to go to school, to finish high school and to go to college. I have already started talking to them about college. I have had to educate my family so that they are not negative about education. I don't want them to have a fear of school or to look at school without anything but respectful curiosity. I know education has not always been a good thing for Indians and in fact has been downright disastrous but I truly believe we have to get an education so we can learn to be successful both in the white world and the red world. Especially the red world. We must take care of ourselves and our people. I think that education is one way to take care of our families and our community. We must learn to take what we need from the white world, things to make better lives for ourselves and our children! We cannot afford to be shy about taking what we need, much has been taken from us. If we can make education work for us, then I see it as a win-win. I have learned that it is one of our treaty rights. Rights that have not always been enforced throughout the years but that we should stand up and demand now!*

I have come a long way in a short period of time. I like school much more than I ever thought I would. I am a better student than I ever thought was possible. I enjoy learning new things and even the things that I don't really like, I don't mind as much as I used to. I understand more now than ever about how education makes you think differently. I am a different girl than I was and I am glad. I have not abandoned my core Indian values, if anything the tribal college has made them stronger. Actually, I am more proud to be Indian than I ever was before! I love learning more about our people, our history and our language! I love knowing that I can teach my kids more about us as a people and that I can help them respect our people more. That is one thing that I have gained, a respect for my culture. I love that about my

tribal college! I want my children to go to a tribal college for at least a couple of years. I cannot imagine a better way for them to begin as college students. They will get a college education but they will get it in a safe environment where Indians are the norm and are the rule, not the exception! There is nothing but acceptance in my tribal college.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a composite chapter that represents a TCU student. Thematic analyses of Non-Indigenous student data are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF NON-NATIVE STUDENT INTERVIEWS

There were seven non-Indian students. There were 5 males and two females. They all identified themselves as White. They all chose a tribal college because it was close to their home. Their majors ranged in disciplines but included education, nursing and construction. Overwhelmingly, the participants described their educational experience at a tribal college in a positive way.

I printed all seven transcripts and read them each evening for several weeks. Once I read the transcripts multiple times, I made notes in the margins. These notes helped me to conceptualize the data. In the end, not all of the notes were significant for data analysis but they were all helpful in the process of conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing the data. After I made notes in the margins, I underlined, in pencil, all of the text that I thought was germane to the research questions. I took a significant amount of time to think about the themes and to re-read the transcripts. After this, I began to color-code the themes. Using the computer's text highlighting coloring system, I began to thematically color-code the data. These themes from the Non-Indigenous student data are presented in this chapter.

Thematic Analysis

I Did Not Know What I Did Not Know

White students discussed the lack of knowledge that they had about American Indians. This represents knowledge they did not know they lacked.

I grew up near the reservation. The tribal school is the closest college so I opted to go there. I have learned that what I knew about this tribe was not right. I did not truly understand what I did not know. Now, I am blown away by my lack of knowledge. It is really sad. I have lived in this state all of my life and am ashamed at how little I knew about this culture. (Participant 13S)

I am appalled at what I thought I knew about this tribe and what I actually know. Truth cannot be found on westerns or in our history books. I guess that is my lesson to be learned here. (Participant 30S)

I am honestly embarrassed about my skewed knowledge and wrong ideas about this tribe that I live so close to (Participant 45S)

I Found Myself To Be The Minority For The First Time In My Life

All of the White students discussed the fact that they were on a campus where they were the minority, for the first time in their lives. They spoke of the discomfort and awkwardness they felt at being a minority. They all acknowledged that it was a good learning experience for them. Some wanted their children to experience this as well so they would be more empathetic toward peers who were minorities.

As a white male, I was really hesitant about coming to a college that was mostly for Indians. I did not know if I would be accepted or if I would be a laughing stock. I found myself to be the minority for the first time in my life. That was eye-opening for me. I can't say that I like it but I learned something about myself (Participant 22S)

I am shocked at what it feels like to be a minority. I do not like it but it gives me an idea of what others feel like when they are the minority. Even though it is not comfortable, it is probably a good experience for me. (Participant 30S)

I thought it would bother me to be the minority but I have to tell you everyone has been accepting. They don't seem to care what color my skin is. I find that being the minority is kind of eye opening. If we could change skin colors for a day, we might stop being a racist society (Participant 36S)

It is odd to be a minority student. I have not ever been the minority before. I now know what it feels like to not know the jokes or even how Indians define humor. I have never felt like I did not understand jokes before. It is quite different to be a minority. I must say I do not like it. At all. But, I can deal with it and it is nobody's issue but my own. I accept that. I can tell you though I bring my kids to powwows and stuff so they can experience what it is like to be the minority too. It is a good learning experience for them and for me. (Participant 40S)

Tribal Colleges are the Myth-Busters of Stereotypes

The participants discussed, at length, how surprised they were to learn how many stereotypes they had about American Indians and Alaska Natives. They believed that being a student at a tribal college helped them to know the truth versus stereotypes.

It took me a while to figure out that the things I learned from television and movies are basically stereotypes and are not a true representation of facts. I guess you can say tribal colleges are the myth-busters of Indian stereotypes. Being a student at this college has taught me a lot of things that I did not know, and I really did not understand what I

did not know. I just assumed everything that I knew was right. I think everyone should attend a class at a tribal college. We might understand some things then. (Participant 13S)

I would like to tell you that I did not have any stereotypes in my brain when I first started school here but I would be lying. I think what I have learned from my time here is that Indians do not fit the mold that we are all taught every single day of our lives. I remember playing cowboys and Indians where the Indians were all the bad guys. We played that, in large part, because of television; how awful is that? I feel foolish even telling you but it is something that I have been thinking about. About how society has one view of what it means to be Indian but how can you even know that unless you are Indian and grew up in an Indian culture?(Participant 22S)

All I knew about Indians was what I saw on television and what I was told in elementary schools. I knew that Thanksgiving was somehow associated with Indians but that was about the existence of my knowledge. You know, after elementary school, I don't think we ever heard about American Indians again. I think that is a systematic failure of our education system. The fact is that American Indians are a significant part of this country's history. (Participant 28S)

American Indians and Alaska Natives Do Not Fit A Mold

The Non-Native students discussed the fact that they grew up thinking that all Indians were alike and that they did not realize the diversity until they attended a TCU.

I grew up thinking that all Indians are the same and that they all live a certain way. I found out that there are over 500 tribes in the United States and they may have certain similarities but they are more different than alike. (Participant 22S)

As a kid, I thought Indians were only one certain way and that there were not many Indians left in America. I came here and learned things I never would have known otherwise. (Participant 30S)

I grew up in the Southeast. I thought all Indians lived in teepees and wore war paint on their faces. I have since learned that American Indians do not fit into a mold. I was illiterate in my knowledge about American Indians. It is disgraceful. And, I am quite ashamed of myself and most of America (Participant 36S)

Summary

In this chapter, thematic analyses of the Non-Indigenous student data were represented. In the next chapter, an alternate representation of Non-Indigenous student data is presented.

CHAPTER 10

FINDINGS: ALTERNATE REPRESENTATION OF DATA FROM NON-NATIVE STUDENTS

Alternate Representation

The letter below is written to an editor of a newspaper. It is written from the perspective of a non-Indian student who attends a tribal college. I extrapolated data from the interviews when I wrote this letter. Data excerpts are italicized.

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter, as a White man, to discuss the Tribal College that serves the nearby reservation. I have been a student at the college for a year. I have never had the opportunity to go to college before. I live in a rural part of the state. The tribal college is the most convenient college for me and they offer a degree that meets my needs.

I must admit that I was a little hesitant at first because it is a college for American Indian students. I was afraid that I would feel out of place and that I might not be welcome. I have, in fact, been welcomed by the students, teachers, and administrators. No one mentions my lack of Indian blood; just as they don't mention my lousy handwriting or my inability to understand algebra. My skin color does not seem to matter. Lack of knowledge and skills do not seem to matter. It seems to matter more that I show up when I am supposed to, that I try my best, that I listen with respect, that I ask thoughtful questions, and that I, and my family, attend some of the after-class activities that are offered such as pow-wows.

The school is so small that I am recognized and acknowledged—as is every single student who is enrolled in classes. The President of the college knows my name; in fact, she knows every single student's name. It humbles and inspires me. It makes me want to send my very White children to the college so that they, too, might be a known student versus a number. I want them to learn the true history of the United States government and its detrimental relationship with the American Indian nations in this country. I know that I don't understand all the ramifications and technicalities associated with treaties but I know they are not always honored by our government. I think that should change. I think we should teach our children the truth because they might just be able to change things.

I feel as if I am getting a quality education in my major but I am also getting an education on the history of the tribe and their culture and traditions. It is sad to me that I have lived in this state all of my life, received my k-12 education here and I now know how much I did not know about the people of this tribe. I feel foolish. And, apparently, what I thought I knew was not accurate. Our K-12 and college teachers at the mainstream schools could benefit from the Indian perspective. If this happened, we might not have such skewed education in our country. Our flawed textbooks and our historical memory need a significant and honest revision. Stereotypes and myths about Indians that we all grew up with and thought were factual are very far from the truth.

Things are not equitable in this country. I challenge each and every person who reads this article to get in a vehicle and drive to a reservation. See firsthand what the American government has done to the American Indians. See the poverty, the isolation, the barren ground. Stop the car and talk to some of the Native peoples. Ask them where they work. Ask them where the jobs on the reservation are. Ask them what their dreams are and what their dreams are

for their children. Then stop and honestly compare your life with theirs—put your problems in perspective. We all need to realize that the government in this country must right some wrongs. We, as taxpayers and voters, need to demand changes.

I think it would be beneficial for each adult in this country to attend at least once class at a tribal college. I think every family should take their children to a powwow. It might lead to a more harmonious coexistence. We might learn things about ourselves that are surprising.

Life on a reservation is hard. Resources are few and diseases and addictions are many. Even so, the people work hard under adverse conditions and share the few things they have with one another and with visitors. There are some lessons that the White community could learn. And, I contend, that our world would be a better place to live. We would not have so much rage or inequities in our lives. All our children would have a better future.

Sincerely,

Jack Vance

Summary

In this chapter, a letter-to-the-editor was presented and represented the data of the Non-Native students that I interviewed. The next chapter presents poetic representations of president and student data.

CHAPTER 11

FINDINGS: POETIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DATA

Education at a Tribal College from a Professor's Perspective

We welcome all from our community

The elders

The young

And the in-between

We welcome

High school graduates

High school drop-outs

And

High school students

We welcome

The literate

And

The illiterate

We welcome

Native

and Non-Native

We provide education with a twist –

We teach curricular offerings seen in mainstream institutions

Yes, we teach math!

And English!

We teach history –

although we clarify some events that often are misrepresented in mainstream literature

I Want Better for My Children

When I had my first child

I was a young girl myself

I did not realize the significance

Of the birth of my sweet little son

I did not know that as a parent that I would

Stay awake at night worrying about

Things like groceries and gas bills

I had no clue that as a parent I would

Stay awake at night worrying about

The future

A few years later

When my second child was born

I lost serious sleep

Worrying about the future for both of my children

Parenting on the rez is difficult on good days

And downright scary on bad days

Our children grow up with few opportunities

For positive ways of living

The poverty is overwhelming

The despair, is at times,

Palpable

There are many opportunities to make wrong choices

Alcohol, drugs, gangs, violence

Pick your poison

It is all around us

I look at the tribal college

As a haven

A place to learn how to live in

Both worlds

The Red World and the White World

A tribal college is a

Place where I know that the truth is taught

The truth about our history, our culture, our traditions

The teachings of the elders

Passed down from generations

Is taught in the midst of things that the White world teaches

Ancient teachings communicated alongside English, math, science, and geography

A place where accurate history is taught

It is a place where teachers call when a student is absent

To check and make sure things are ok

It is a place where teachers understand the significance of family and ceremonies

Where hitchhiking and walking miles in bad weather is an acceptable method of getting to classes

A place where each of us has struggled and

We respect each other for the ability to get to class each day

Every day we get to class is a good day

Walking in Two Worlds

Our lives have not been the same

Since the European invasion

We lost our way of life

Now we struggle to regain our traditions

To remember what has been forgotten

We must learn the delicate

Balance of walking in the White world

While not straying from the Red world

White education ignores

Dismisses

Or gets the facts all wrong

However

Education seems to be

Our best bet to get out of the

Poverty and despair in which we live

And in which we raise our children

Looking Out the Dusty Window

She looks out her dusty window

And sees a world fraught with

Obstacles and a path strewn with bodies

Bodies of her ancestors and her relatives

She knows in her heart that the red road

Must be traveled for the survival of her people

She cannot stop the journey

But she knows that the journey

Needs preparation and that she must learn

To travel the red road in a different way

Than others before her

For the sake of her children

And her children's children

The red road perseveres

And she knows in her soul that she must too

She must learn to navigate the red road

Within the boundaries of her culture

She must learn to take the best things out of her college experience

And leave behind conflicting information and the wrong information

Behind without a glimpse in the rear view window

She represents her people's future

A challenge she readily accepts

Because she realizes those that walked before her

Did their best to make the future better for her

And she knows that she must do the best for her children

And all those coming after her

Knowledge

Our knowledge might be considered less than in the White world

but in the Red world, we know that knowledge does not always come from a text book or from a scientific experiment.

We know that knowledge is sometimes in the way we treat each other and the way we see things

We know that knowledge comes from our heart and from our ancestors and from our elders.

The Red Education Road

At Tribal Colleges

We learn about our history

Our culture

Our traditions

Our language

In addition

We learn about the

Dominant world

And the traditional collegiate subjects

We learn how to survive both worlds

The Unintended Consequences of a College Education

I was a very reluctant high school student

I could not imagine going to school voluntarily

I never expected to like being a college student

I never expected to enjoy critically reading history books

We read the White history books and analyze the contents

Always looking for truth

I never expected to like learning

I did not think that I would enjoy reading books and articles

Or writing papers and doing algebra

I am shocked but I actually look forward to class

I never expected to wake up in the morning

Anxious to get to school

Anxious to learn how to be more productive

Anxious to learn our language, our teachings, and our culture

We Don’t Take Education for Granted

We don’t take education for granted

Every day we get up and are thankful

To get ourselves to this building

Where we are taught useful trades and professions

Where we are free to ask questions

Where our elders participate in classes

And keep our classes true to the Old Ways

We are very thankful for each person

Who teaches us and each person who

Cleans the floors and each person who

Helps us with financial aid

We are thankful for every person

Who opens the door to our Tribal College

And assists us on our educational journey

Summary

Poems that represented the data were presented in this chapter. The final chapter offers conclusions to the study, implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, implications of the research study, recommendations for future research, and limitations of the study are proffered. The statement of the problem and review of the methodology are reviewed.

Statement of the Problem

American Indian and Alaskan Native higher education is not well represented in mainstream literature. American Indian and Alaskan Native students are underrepresented in mainstream colleges and universities. Tribal colleges and universities were established to serve American Indian communities by providing education. They were also established to provide cultural and language preservation and restoration. Studies of TCUs have been completed throughout the years although none, to my knowledge, have originated with a general research assessment. When asked, TCU presidents identified different needs, but, several presidents wanted to know what students thought of their educational experiences at tribal colleges. They wanted to know what students identified as the strengths and the areas for improvement in the TCU they attended.

Overview of the Methodology

The study was conducted using qualitative research methodologies. I selected qualitative methodologies because they allow the voices of the participants to emerge. The first part of the study was conducted using an exploratory descriptive approach. I interviewed 13 TCU presidents and representatives. I asked them to identify and describe the research needs of the TCU community. Using thematic analysis, I analyzed the data and determined that a common

need for TCU communities was to learn how students perceived their educational experience—the positive aspects and the areas that needed improvement. TCU presidents and academic leaders expressed high levels of interest in the project and expressed an authentic desire to know more about what their students thought about their education and what those experiences meant to them.

The second part of the study was conducted using a hybrid exploratory and phenomenological approach. I asked TCU students questions about their TCU experiences; specifically, I asked them what they liked and what they felt could be improved in their TCU educational experiences. I also asked the students about the meanings of their education. I wanted to know what their education meant in relationship to their professional goals, their family structure, and their tribal status.

Integrated Answers to Research Questions

How do Students Perceive Their Educational Experience at TCUs?

Students recognize that their college experience changed their lives and they verbalized hope that their positive experiences will influence their family members to consider higher education—they actively encourage their siblings and their cousins, and in some cases, their parents to attend college. The students also experienced a shift in their thinking about education and began to expect their children to attend college. This represents a major shift in how education and the potential changes in their lives are conceptualized from the time they entered school. Many students expressed the fact that they thought that, as parents, this was part of their responsibilities but they also expressed how they have begun to think of education as life-changing—not only for their lives but the lives of their children and their children's children. Although students did not use the term catalyst, they thought that, due to their positive

experiences at TCUs, they wanted to share that excitement and help to motivate family members and friends to attend college.

Most students, Native and Non-Native, discussed the fact that they will encourage their children to attend a tribal college or university before they attend a mainstream higher education institution. Non-Native students saw this as an opportunity to teach their children about local culture and traditions and also saw this as a chance to confront racism, misperceptions, and stereotypes about American Indian cultures within their own family structures. The Non-Native students stated their embarrassment and dismay at their own lack of knowledge about local American Indian nations. They expressed a desire for American Indian culture and traditions to be highlighted in mainstream United States so that cultural understanding could occur and misperceptions could be reconceptualized. All of the Non-Native students stated that they attended a tribal college or university because of convenience but they also acknowledged that they were really pleased with their educational experience. They discussed the experience of being a minority which they found disconcerting but enlightening. They enjoyed and were proud of the fact that the presidents knew their names, expressed an interest in their families and, that; they and their families were invited to the local cultural celebrations. The Non-Native students expressed their appreciation to the tribal college communities. They expressed a desire to see the tribal college administrators recruit more Non-Native students so that even more Non-Native people could be exposed to Indigenous cultures and traditions. The Non-Native students expressed a strong appreciation of Indigenous cultures during their tenure at TCUs.

Nation saving, a goal of TCUs was not discussed in specific terms but American Indian and Alaskan Native students visualized their educational experience as being transformative and discussed how this translated into their families and communities. Native students interpreted

their educational experience to mean a change in their employment opportunities and their financial status. Students see this as a way to improve their family's socioeconomic status and the financial base of their individual communities. However, this belief is also tempered by the fact that students perceive that there is a feeling of jealousy among their family members and community members; the jealousy, the students perceive as a barrier to their ability to return to their communities as an educated person who can be successful. This jealousy phenomenon is something that students want tribal leaders, TCU presidents and academicians to address, but the students admitted that they did not know how to address this concern. They felt it was pervasive throughout the reservation communities and felt that their particular communities would not be successful until it was confronted and resolved.

American Indian and Native Alaska students discussed the fact that they thought tribal leadership should be required to hold a degree. This was an issue that they brought up on their own—I did not ask anything about tribal leadership but some students were very outspoken about their beliefs. They thought that the leaders of the reservations should be role models and attend a college or university for a degree. This was supported by a statement in the literature from Laura Mae Osceola. She refers to tribal leadership: "You take the good out of white man's ways and take the good out of Indian ways, and rule your people" (Kersey & Bannan, 1995, p. 208).

American Indian and Alaska Native students discussed the ease that they felt with noncompetitive, cooperative learning. They felt that each classroom in the TCU was designed in such a way as to minimize competitive learning and maximize cooperative learning. These students felt proud if they could assist someone to see something in a different perspective or if they felt they were part of assisting a peer to learn a concept. The Non-Native students also liked

the noncompetitive environment and felt that a communal bond in assisting each other to learn was a positive aspect of the TCU learning environment.

What Meaning do Students Ascribe to Their Educational Experience at TCUs?

American Indian and Alaska Natives describe their experience at TCUs as life changing. The students describe a process of going to school as a tentative and uncertain student but, at some point, along the continuum, they shifted their identity to include that of a college students and they embraced their educational experience. They recognized that their education experience at the TCU was instrumental in their Western education but also, more importantly, they acknowledged that it allowed them to become proud of being American Indian or Alaskan Native. They felt like the language and cultural tradition classes were crucial in their lives and the lives of their families. They were able to take the information they learned and teach their children, siblings, cousins, parents and other family members. Students who were parents were thrilled to begin to learn the language of their people so they could begin to teach their children. They felt like they were an important link in introducing and transferring cultural knowledge and language into their family structures. They discussed feeling hopeful about their future—something they had not felt before their TCU experience.

From a Student Perspective, What Are TCU strengths?

Students are very positive about their educational experience at their respective TCUs. They spoke about the fact that they did not feel like a number in the tribal college. They enjoy the individualized attention and relationships that they forged with the faculty, administrators and staff at the individual colleges and universities. The students feel a sense of belonging and were grateful that the Native and Non-Native teachers were invested in their success. Collectively, the students feel that the faculty and staff were all helpful and invested in their

success as a student. They acknowledged an appreciation for the staff who assisted them with financial aid and finding funds for their continued education. They acknowledged that if the president of the college knew their names and engaged them in conversation that they felt important and that they "mattered." They were slightly intimidated by the language classes but, once they engaged in the classes, they felt that it was important and something that they would be grateful for the remainder of their lives and that the tribal nation would be grateful forever—because they felt it would be something that would allow their language to flourish. They felt those classes were integral in their education but also their personal development and identify as an American Indian. They also felt that this education allowed them to connect with the members of their families and communities who were literate in the language and were the keeper of traditions. The students discussed how those particular community members "lit up" when they went and tried to engage them in a conversation using their Native language—it did not matter if the students were well spoken or not—it was the effort and the enthusiasm that was vital.

From a Student Perspective, What Can TCUs do Better?

American Indian and Alaska Native students discussed the need for availability of specific resources. These resources include child care resources, family and individual student housing, transportation, and electronic support such as laptop computers. The students perceived these issues as barriers to their educational success. Every American Indian and Alaska Native student who identified as a parent and did not have TCU childcare discussed the need for child care. They disclosed that they either took their children to class or had to miss class because of child care issues. They also identified transportation as an issue; many hitch-hiked to school. Students described jumping over snow drifts and water puddles as they walked to school. They

were grateful for people who picked them up and drove them to school—or at least to a closer proximity. They identified transportation as an obstacle to attending school, although they all acknowledged that they walked and hitched a ride whenever they could. The students also identified access to electronic resources and reliable internet services as a barrier. If students had access to computers, they discussed the lack of reliable internet services as an issue. If they did not have access to computers, they discussed the lack of personal computers as a concern. One of the concerns was the money that was required to buy a computer and then the money that was required to provide ongoing service. Computer labs, if available, were acknowledged as a positive in their schools but students felt they needed more hours and staff to increase accessibility. Non-Native students did not have anything to offer when asked about areas for improvement; they did not, as a rule, face the same issues that American Indian or Alaskan Native students did.

Limitations

Limitations include the fact that not all 37 TCUs were included in the study, so the results are neither fully representable nor generalizable to all TCUs. Thirteen presidents or representatives were interviewed; roughly one-third of the TCUs were represented in the initial part of the study. In the second part of the study, I interviewed 45 students; the students represented 20 TCUs. Another limitation for the study is that I only interviewed participants once; time constraints did not allow me to interview participants more than once. A third limitation of the study was that, due to a mechanical issue with my equipment, I was unable to fully transcribe three of the student transcripts. However, I was able to use some of the data from these three interviews. A fourth limitation of the study is that only two of the participants returned the transcribed interviews with suggestions or corrections.

Implications

Tribal college and university administrators and faculty can use the information provided in this study to improve their respective colleges or universities. This can also be used to open a dialogue for students to discuss specific information with the administration and faculty at their colleges or universities. Tribal college and university administrators and faculty are in an ideal position to discuss some of the issues that the students discussed. One issue the fact that students perceive that there is a feeling of jealousy among their family members and community members; the jealousy, the students perceive as a barrier to their ability to return to their communities as an educated person who can be successful. This jealousy phenomenon is something that students want tribal leaders, TCU presidents and academicians to address, but the students admitted that they did not know how to address this concern. They felt it was pervasive throughout the reservation communities and felt that their particular communities would not be successful until it was confronted and resolved.

Two-year tribal college administrators and faculty are in a position to assist students with the psychological and social implications of transferring to a four year university. Students did not discuss the logistics of applying to or transferring credits to a larger university; instead, they discussed their fears of attending a school where they will be the minority, where they will not know anyone and where no one will have a stake in their educational success. Tribal college administrators have an opportunity to develop a formal peer mentoring transition program with the larger universities where their students can transfer to complete a bachelor's degree and have a peer mentor who can provide insights on how to be successful in a four year university.

Higher education administrators, faculty, and student support services, in general, can benefit from the study by reviewing the successes that are important to American Indian or

Native Alaskan students. Indigenous students are successful when they feel that their success in seen as important within the institution and that someone is interested in their success. Having a personal relationship with an administrator, staff or faculty person is important for students so they feel that someone is invested in their success. American Indian and Native Alaska students realize that education is important in order to navigate the two worlds in which they walk and they do not want to feel as if they have to choose the White world over the Red world. They think it is important for people in their educational institution to know that their family responsibilities and their cultural responsibilities are crucial to their overall emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Non-Native students feel that a personal connection to someone in the institution is important to their success as well. They, too, want to know that someone cares for them and their success as a student.

Suggestions for Future Research

Tribal colleges and universities provide important services to their respective peoples and communities. It is important to realize what these institutions provide that assist students to graduate and become successful. In-depth case studies of each tribal college and university would provide more insight into how each one is successful in individual missions. Longitudinal studies that follow American Indian and Alaska Native students from kindergarten through their college or university experience would allow insight into individual students and their journey through the educational system. American Indian and Native Alaska students attend college and universities despite many barriers; research about their persistence and resilience would be helpful to k-12, TCU and other higher education administrators and faculty. The concept of jealousy that is described by American Indian and Native Alaska students warrants a follow-up research study. The idea that TCU students begin to perceive education differently and begin to

recruit family and friends also warrants further study. Tribal leadership and education is also important for additional research.

Conclusion

Tribal college and universities provide valuable services that are important to the success of American Indian and Alaska Native students and their communities. American Indian and Alaska Native people must walk in two worlds—the Red and White worlds. Education allows them to be successful in both worlds. Students speak about a restoration of pride in their identities as American Indian and Alaska Natives. They speak of the joy of sharing their beginning (or improving) language skills with family and community members. Students who attend TCUs graduate with a degree but they also graduate with a monumental shift in their perspective about education—they begin to recruit their family members to attend local TCUs and they begin to expect their children to attend a college or university. Nation saving, a monumental mission of TCUs, seems to be occurring at Tribal Colleges and Universities—one student at a time.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Template of Letter to TCU Presidents

Dear President _____:

My name is Vicki Black Bishop, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia and the Institute for Native American Studies at the University of Georgia. I am also an Assistant Clinical Professor at Northern Arizona University.

In 2007, I interviewed Tribal College and University Presidents to determine the research needs of the institutions. The research needs of each institution varied, but several Presidents indicated that they would like to know what their students thought about their college experience and what worked and did not work. If you agree, I would like to interview some of your students to ask their perceptions of their educational experience I have attached my interview questions for your review.

If you are agreeable to your college participating in this study, I would appreciate your identifying one student who would be willing to serve as a contact person for other students who agree to participate. If you prefer I use other means to contact students that is fine too.

Could you please let me know if your institution has a separate IRB process? If you do, I will submit an application to the appropriate office. This study has been approved by the University of Georgia's IRB, pending your authorization.

I would like to offer to come to your institution and present the findings of this research study, once it is completed. I would be happy to present the findings to your students and faculty, as well as to community members and anyone else you identify.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study, I am happy to speak with you. My cell phone number is (404) 451-5504; my home number is (928) 266-7913; and my email address is vickibishop2001@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Vicki Black
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
Assistant Clinical Professor
Northern Arizona University

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Native American Indian Higher Education: Students and Graduates Discuss Their Tribal College Experiences

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. (I will use the following to assist the student/graduate if he/she needs prompting: Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to high school? Are you an enrolled member of a tribe; if so, which tribe? Which Tribal College did you graduate from and which degree did you receive?

2. What support do you have for going to college? (student participant)
What support did you have when you went to the Tribal College? (graduate participant)

3. What degree program are you currently enrolled in? (student participant)
What degree did you receive when you graduated from the TCU? (graduate participant)

4. What are your academic goals? (student participant)
What were your academic goals when you were at a Tribal College? (graduate participant)

5. What do you think the Tribal College (insert specific college name) is doing well? (student participant)
What do you think the Tribal College (insert specific college name) did well? (graduate participant)

6. What do you think the Tribal College (insert specific college name) is not doing as well as you would like or expect? (student participant)
What do you think the Tribal College (insert specific college name) did not do as well as you would have liked or expected? (graduate participant)

7. Please tell me how the college has helped you achieve your academic goals.

8. Please tell me how the college has not helped you achieve your academic goals or prevented you from achieving them.

9. What has helped you come to college and stay in college? (student participant)
What helped you go to college and stay in college? (graduate participant)

10. What has made coming to college and staying in college difficult? (student participant)

What made going to college and staying in college difficult? (graduate participant)

11. Student Participant: Do you plan to transfer to a four year college? If so, where and what will be your major? If you are transferring, how has the college assisted you with this process? How has the college not helped you with the transferring process?

Graduate Participant: Did you transfer to a four year college? If so where, and what was/is your major? If you transferred, how did the Tribal College assist you with this process? How did the college not help you with the transfer process?

12. What other things would you like to share with me?