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RETHINKING EDUCATION ON NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

MADISON SUZANNE MILLER
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Theodore R. Alter, Ph.D.
Professor of Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Economics
Thesis Supervisor and Honors Adviser

Kathryn Brasier, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Rural Sociology
Faculty Reader

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

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Students in CED 400: Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to highlight insights to direct the curriculum development of education regarding Native American history and culture for high-school students. In a study of U.S. state curriculum requirements, Shear et al. (2015) found that many states do not have any requirements for teaching about Native American history and culture, while those states with requirements often only include superficial rules lacking profound events in American history. Noting the lack of inclusion of Native American history and culture into primary education, this study asks topic experts and students: (1) What should high school students learn about Native American history and culture? (2) How should they learn about it? (3) Why is it important for high school students to study the subject matter? The research methods of this study involve key informant interviews with experts in Native American history and culture, a survey of university students, and key informant interviews with students. Five of the eight Native American history and culture experts identify as Native American, while the remaining three experts have had significant, long-term experiences working with Native American people, and learning and teaching about Native American history and culture. The students were selected from the roster of students who completed a course at Penn State University entitled CED 400: *Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing*. The findings from the study are a compilation of the knowledge and perspectives of the participants and may provide useful insight to curriculum designers, education policy-makers, classroom teachers, university professors of education, and diversity education professionals.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

When approaching the U.S. primary education system, it is vital to ask critical questions about the purpose, the motives, the process, and the outcomes of education. Why is learning about history within the primary education system important? Why do children in the U.S. primary education system spend years learning about American and foreign history? Who determines what students are taught? *Who gets to write history and for what ends?* These questions have recently emerged as a national conversation involving education reform.

Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina have all recently been engaged in curriculum battles mostly surrounding changes to the Advanced Placement (AP) US History program set forth by the College Board. During the fall of 2014, Colorado's Jefferson County school board decided to organize a committee to review the College Board's new AP US History curriculum to ensure that the material would "promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights" (Urist, 2015, p. 1). Potentially innocuous on the surface, many students, parents, and concerned residents of the school district saw the formation of the committee as a deliberate way of refuting the College Board's new curriculum, which covers the motivations of the 17th century American settlers in part involving Native American peoples (Macneal, 2014; Urist, 2015).

The protestors, who favor the new curriculum, perceive the school board's actions as attempts to censor history, removing the parts, which paint the US government in an unfavorable

light, while blocking students from the truth. However, the Republican National Committee criticizes the new curriculum for providing a “consistently negative view of American history” (Macneal, 2014, p. 1). Following four months of protests, the school board terminated plans for the review committee and accepted the curriculum changes set forth by the College Board (Gionet, 2015). Although the citizens of Jefferson County, Colorado prevailed, curriculum debates play a persistent role in the US primary education system. Winston Churchill, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, states that, “history is written by the victors,” which often mean the wealthy, the socially elite, and the powerful. However, the truth matters. Truth can only be reached when all voices share their stories.

In addition to education reform, the current US political climate is beginning to draw attention to the issues facing Native people and reservations. In April 2015, First Lady Michelle Obama addressed a group at the White House advocating the prioritization of creating opportunities for Native American youth. In her address, she articulates how the painful history of abuse toward Native American people from the US government has led to many of the problems facing Native populations today, such as addiction, poverty and violence. She continues by stating, “And we should never forget that we played a role in this. Make no mistake about it – we own this” (CNSNews.com Staff, 2015, p. 1). Concluding her address, she calls our government to action saying: “And we can’t just invest a million here and a million there, or come up with some five year or ten-year plan and think we’re going to make a real impact. This is truly about nation-building, and it will require fresh thinking and a massive infusion of resources over generations. That’s right, not just years, but generations” (CNSNews.com Staff, 2015, p. 1).

With a heightened focus on what American youth are learning in the US primary

education system and on the current status of issues facing Native American people, we are entering a remarkable time in history where we can begin to embrace truth and embrace one another as fellow citizens. With over 566 federally recognized tribal nations within the very borders of the United States (Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.), educating American youth about Native American history and culture is an important task. As presented in the literature review, it is important for American youth to learn about Native American history and culture. However curriculum about Native American history and culture continues to be often absent and largely superficial in U.S. primary education, potentially because issues between the US government and First Nations have not been settled and as Native American people have suffered great abuse at the hands of the federal government. In order to drive curriculum changes and to repair relationships between Native nations and the U.S. federal government, the objectives of the study are to (1) describe perspectives regarding the importance and relevance of Native American history and culture as a subject of study and to (2) offer insights for reforming current education on Native American history and culture. The paper begins with an analysis of literature explaining the current workforce and educational climate and offering reasons for studying Native American history and culture. Following the literature review, section three provides a description of the research methods used in this study, while section four presents the research findings. Finally, section five provides a broader discussion about the findings and their potential applications followed by a conclusion prompting us to rethink Native American history and culture.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There has been a breadth of research completed addressing methods for educating Native American students (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Gregory, 2012; McCardle & Berninger, 2015), but there is less research on the importance of educating non-Native students on Native American history and culture. There is also less attention given to perspectives calling for an enhanced primary education social studies curriculum on Native American history and culture. While there is an unmet gap in the body of research in fields of history education and education reform, there is relevant research being conducted within the field of indigenous studies and advocacy of indigenous knowledge¹ to solve current environmental problems (Katz, 2015).

While research does exist about the history and culture of Native Americans and past and present issues facing Native peoples, there is a gap between what we know and what we teach American youth in public schools. This gap produces fundamental questions. What are schools currently teaching students about Native American history and culture? Why is it important for youth in the U.S. to learn about Native American history and culture, including its role in American history and its role in environmental issues? How does Native American history and culture fall within the field of diversity? Why are schools not teaching about Native American history and culture?

¹ The World Bank recognizes the definition of indigenous knowledge as: “The information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making.”

Current Education about Native American History and Culture

The research of Dr. Sarah Shear, Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education at Penn State University, depicts this reality. As Shear and colleagues (2015) collected the curriculum requirements and K-12 state standards of every U.S. state, she found that many states did not have any requirements for teaching about Native American history and culture, while those states with requirements in place had very superficial rules. While the majority of state-level U.S. federal and state history standards provide standards for teaching about indigenous people before the 20th century, only “13.34% of the 2,230 coded content standards relating to Indigenous contexts are post-1900” (Shear, 2014). The disproportionate focus on the past impede American youth from gathering an understanding of indigenous people today. In addition to portraying Native American people as populations of the past, curriculum guidelines also contain a lack of pivotal events in U.S. history and lack of specificity about the great diversity of Native American tribes. According to the findings of Shear et al. (2015) presented by Shear (2014), “only 16 states include standards that specifically name and discuss issues related to the Dawes Act, Fort Laramie Treaty, and Indian Removal Act,” three extremely important events in U.S. history. Out of all 50 states, 27 states neglected to specifically name any indigenous peoples in their standards. While the study shows the lack of depth and breath of state standards concerning Native Americans, the literature on the role of Native American history within American history (Rosier, 2013; Harmon, 2011), on diversity education (Hurtado, 2001; Wiethoff, 2004; Toossi, 2012), and on current environmental challenges all show the importance of learning about this topic.

Native American History as Integral in American History

Despite the lack of integration of Native American history within the narrative of American History (Shear, 2014; Shear et al., 2015), several historians claim the intractable nature of these often-divided histories. Namely the works of Howard Zinn and Paul Rosier model histories that are often shadowed from mainstream educational curriculum.

Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* is a powerful analysis of history featuring the voices of people who did not make policy decisions yet greatly affected the history of the country and were greatly affected by history. Originally published in 1980, the book is one model for teaching history. Each chapter closes with discussion questions to encourage students to think critically about how the stories presented in the book compare with and fit into the historical narrative they have been taught in school.

Zinn's work presents a helpful tool in balancing the historical account spotlighting Native American people in the portrayal of Christopher Columbus, the colonization of the United States, and the Cherokee perspectives of Andrew Jackson. However, Zinn's book has also been the brunt of criticism (Beneke & Stephens, 2012; Plotnikoff, 2012; Flynn, 2003). The issue under debate here is that history is a reflection of beliefs. We delude ourselves when we solely view history as the dispersion of facts and universal truths. The mission then of reforming education on Native American history and culture for high school students is to pair the history education students receive in primary education with accounts from people who were not in power, many of whom were exploited in the name of national progress.

The First Nations peoples of the United States are one heterogeneous group of people who are largely marginalized in public education, as evidenced by the research of Shear et al (2015). However, Sam Wineburg, Education Professor at Stanford University, claims that Zinn's

work only replaces “one buttoned-up interpretation of the past for another” (Plotnikoff, 2012). The challenge then is to teach students to recognize the limits of each historical source and to provide students with a range of perspectives in order to provide the most expansive view possible. The effort of this study then is to supply students with perspectives, which do not appear in their textbooks, such that together, students may see a range of perspectives within historical narratives. All actors in history have their own truths to share.

The Zinn Education Project, a consequential product of Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, includes free downloadable resources for educators to use in discussing various historical time periods and themes. Zinn states that the goal of the project is to “introduce students to a more accurate, complex, and engaging understanding of United States history than is found in traditional textbooks and curricula” (The Zinn Education Project, 2015, pp. 1). Following the philosophy of valuing diverse perspectives in history, the key informant interviews and survey discussed in this study serve as the outcome of diverse citizens sharing their voices and thus their political views. It is thus in the process of creating historical works and in the ultimate works themselves that citizens are able to express an often obscured historical truth, as well as to begin to deal with the complexity of reality where many and sometimes competing truths abound. The process of wrestling with diverse claims is essential for learning (Brasier, 2016, Personal Communication) and is integral to critical thinking, which involves improving “the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing [any subject, content, or problem]” (The Critical Thinking Community, n.d., pp. 1).

In addition to work by Howard Zinn, historian Paul Rosier explains how the history of Native American people is integral to the history of the U.S. As American society has been built

and persists on the cornerstone of capitalism, Rosier particularly emphasizes the importance of recognizing Native American people in the narrative of U.S. economic history. Citing work by E. L. Jones, Rosier explains that settlers “acquired not only land from Indians but also ‘capital improvements’ such as trails, tracks, cleared farm fields, and the use of a ‘local’ crop—maize” (Harmon, 2011 pp. 707). He takes care to state how the economic history of the U.S. cannot be complete or accurate without recognizing the role of Native people. Rosier also states the implications of such a limited view of the American economic trajectory. Rosier states, “Economic histories that overlook the role of wealth wrested from Native people reflect a deep-seated inclination to characterize Euro-Americans’ conquest of the continent as expansion rather than imperialism” (Harmon, 2011, pp. 710). While explaining the integral nature of these histories, Rosier examines several books on American economic history to show how Native Americans are both neglected and stereotyped in U.S. economic history. Finally, Rosier offers that integrating the narratives of Native and “Western” economic histories, we can begin to bridge academic cultures, while working to understand economic cultures different from our own.

Not only is Native American history essential to economic history, but it is also integral to historical understanding of both sovereignty and environmental movements. Many Native American reservations have become the brunt of environmental disaster, while also persist as places with a robust environmental knowledge base. Rosier points to Sid Mills, a member of the Yakima nation and a Vietnam veteran, who claims: “Proper change would stop pollution and serve all people through an equitable distribution. The Indian people had this” (Rosier, 2013, pp. 733). As environmental crises are growing in the United States and worldwide (NASA, n.d.; Environmental Defense Fund, n.d.) and environmental activism is growing, especially among the

U.S. Millennial Generation (Pew Research Center, 2011), the national stage is set for increased education about Native American history and culture.

The Diversity Education Wave

Education about Native American history and culture fits the prioritization of diversity and inclusion nationally and globally. A definition of diversity commonly used in the business sector is “creating an environment where companies recruit, develop and leverage the best talent to achieve business goals profitability” (Johnson, 2014, pp. 6). Companies also tend to define inclusion as “proactively working to insure all employees’ cultures are valued so everyone can contribute to their full potential” (Johnson, 2014, pp. 6). Additionally, many companies and higher education institutions develop specific definitions of diversity and inclusion for their organization. For instance, The Pennsylvania State University believes “that diversity includes appreciation and respect of differences in race and ethnicity, in gender and sexual orientation, in religious affiliation, in age and life experience, in nationality and language, and in physical capabilities” (The Penn State University, n.d., pp. 1).

As diversity has increasingly become a priority across organizations in business and education, prior research provides evidence into the benefits of diversity. Within the business sector, researchers have shown the benefits of gender diversity. In a study of Standard & Poors’ ranking of 1,500 top companies, Dezsó and Ross (2012) found that “female representation in top management leads to an increase of \$42 million in firm value” (pp. 20). The researchers explain this value of gender diversity in part by increased innovation. Additionally, after collecting data on 2,360 companies globally from 2005 to 2011, the Credit Suisse Research Institute found that

“companies with one or more women on the board delivered higher average returns on equity, lower gearing (that is, net debt to equity) and better average growth” (Phillips, 2014). While gender diversity has been studied in the business sector, diversity extends far beyond gender, offering that the benefits of gender diversity may simply represent one example of the benefits of valuing a broad approach to diversity.

Many companies have committed to diversity and inclusion and unite through national and global bodies. The United States Executive Order 13583, signed into law in August 2011, established a coordinated government-wide initiative and strategic plan to promote diversity and inclusion in the federal workforce. By 2050, the U.S. workforce is projected to have a racial composition of 75% white, 12% Black, 8% Asian Americans, and 5% “All Other” (Toossi, 2012). The U.S. workforce is also projected to have an ethnic composition of 30% Hispanic and 70% non-Hispanic, which represents a doubling of the Hispanic workforce since 2010 (Toossi, 2012). In addition to the benefits of increasing diversity in business, attention to diversity is also necessary in order to fit the reality of America’s increasing racial and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, the Committee on Global Diversity and Inclusion within the International Organization for Standardization has developed international standards on human resource management and is in the process of developing updated global human resource standards (T. Hogan, personal communication, September 1, 2015).

While the business sector and higher educational institutions actively commit to diversity, it is an opportune time for students to learn about Native American history and culture. The movement to increase diversity education in businesses and school may be traced back to the Civil Rights movements and women’s rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Gorski, 1999). The purpose and goal of diversity education is largely to enhance individuals’ self-awareness

(Flynn, 1998) and to increase individuals' ability to understand others and to communicate across differences (Wiethoff, 2004). In a study by Hurtado (2001), there was a measured benefit of diversity activities: "there was a significant relationship between student growth on various educational outcomes and activities during college associated with having a diverse student body and faculty" (pp. 1). As education prepares students for involvement in the workforce and civic life, the theory behind diversity education is that students' conceptions concerning diversity impact their behaviors (Pollitt, 2006). Learning about Native American history and culture strongly fits the aims of diversity education, which companies and educational institutions have embraced. In addition to the importance of diversity, there exists a breadth and depth of academic and professional resources for organizations to utilize.

Indigenous Knowledge: A Recognized Field of Knowledge

Along with diversity education, the research regarding curriculum on Native American history is closely tied to and dynamically interdependent with the field of indigenous knowledge. While various people, organizations, and institutions define indigenous knowledge differently, there are many common themes persisting throughout definitions. The World Bank recognizes the definition of indigenous knowledge as: "The information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making." Furthermore, "indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems" (Flavier et al. 1995: 479; World Bank, n.d.). Many other definitions include that indigenous knowledge is knowledge derived locally (Kigotho, 2015; Warren, 1991; World Bank, n.d.), unique to a given culture or society (Kigotho, 2015; Warren,

1991; World Bank, n.d.), continuously developed and adapted to the changing conditions (Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.) over a long period of time (Kigotho, 2015), offering long term sustainable advantages (Warren & Rajasekaran, 1993).

Indigenous knowledge has a wide range of applications, including: disaster relief (Shaw, 2008), housing (Shaw, 2008), agriculture (World Bank, n.d.; Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.; UNESCO, 1999), animal husbandry and ethnic veterinary medicine (World Bank, n.d.), use and management of natural resources (World Bank, n.d.; Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.; UNESCO, 1999), food security (Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.; UNESCO, 1999), primary health care (World Bank, n.d.), preventive medicine and psychosocial care (World Bank, n.d.), education (Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.; UNESCO, 1999), saving and lending (World Bank, n.d.), community development (World Bank, n.d.;), and poverty alleviation (World Bank, n.d.). For example, indigenous knowledge in Africa has led to treatment methods, including herbal remedies, for obesity, Type II diabetes, and impotence (Kigotho, 2015). Additionally, the Gagadju, an indigenous population in Australia's Northern Territory, practice burning techniques to sustain the tropical savannah ecosystem of floodplains and forests (Nakashima & Roué, 2002).

While extensive research shows the multiple and sustainable benefits of indigenous knowledge (De Villiers, 1996; Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.; and Warren & Rajasekaran, 1993), there remains a lack of integration of indigenous knowledge into policy formulation and implementation (Kigotho, 2015; World Bank, n.d.). According to the World Bank (2013): "The basic component of any country's knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge. It encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood" (Schnabel & Lenz, n.d.). Noting the importance of indigenous knowledge, yet the current lack of integration into academia and development work, it appears educating students

about Native American history and culture may be a step toward increased understanding of the merits of indigenous knowledge.

The analysis of previous literature therefore reveals several reasons for studying Native American history and culture. Learning about Native American history and culture in primary education may lead students to gain: an improved understanding of American history, an increased ability to think critically, an increased value of diversity, preparation for living in a diverse country and a globalized world, and increased applications of indigenous knowledge to solve complex problems. The findings of this study largely support the views presented in the literature, while offering new insights from new perspectives.

Chapter 3

Research Questions and Methods

The method of this study involved key informant interviews and surveys. The participants were informed of the objective of the study during the survey and the interviews. The objectives of the study are to (1) describe perspectives regarding the importance and relevance of Native American history and culture as a subject of study and to (2) offer insights for reforming current education on Native American history and culture.

The participants were separated into two categories: experts on Native American history and culture and university students who completed a course pertaining to Native American history and culture. Eight interviews were conducted with experts in the field of Native American history and culture. The participants in this group were selected based on their experiences and passions in the fields of indigenous knowledge. Five of the eight Native American history and culture experts identify as Native American, while the remaining three experts have had significant, long-term experiences working with Native American people, and learning and teaching about Native American history and culture. The interviews addressed questions regarding the underlying goals for a course model, topics to include in the course content, how to organize the course content, and how to engage students in the material.

A survey was sent to 41 students who were enrolled in a course entitled CED 400: *Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing* at the Pennsylvania State University from spring semester 2014 and spring semester 2015. The students were asked to share their perspectives on the course topics and teaching methods. At the end of the survey, students were asked if they

would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Following the survey, five students were interviewed and they were asked to respond to questions regarding the most important lessons they learned, how their perspective on Native American history and culture changed after the course, and how the course has impacted their educational experience and their life. All interviews across both participant groups were recorded and analyzed in-depth for key insights. The key insights from the interviews and surveys serve as the primary findings of the research.

Both surveys and key informant interviews have strengths and limitations. Surveys can reach a large audience of participants, and can provide quantitative measurement and ordinal measurement. While the student survey included open-ended questions, many of the questions involved selecting among a provided list of options. Therefore, surveys are often limited, as they do not provide insight into the reasoning behind a participant's response and are not conducive to capturing stories and narrative impacts. Additionally, the participants of the survey were purposively selected, rather than randomly selected and thus are not representative of all university students.

The key informant interview method is limited, as the participants are not representative of a certain population, and are purposively selected, rather than randomly selected. Recognizing this potential bias, the key insights reveal the perspectives of key experts in the field, identified purposively for their contributions and experiences relevant to Native American history and culture. While the study focuses on people who are interested in Native American history and culture, the research does not include perspectives from people either disinterested in Native American history and culture or opposed to teaching the subject matter. Additionally, only one of the participants had a background in primary education and curriculum development. Thus, for implementation purposes, people with expertise in primary education curriculum development

should use the insights from the interviews to apply the findings in appropriate and effective ways.

Key informant interviews also convey the perspectives of fewer people than other methods, such as surveys. However, due to the participants' extensive experiences and knowledge in the field, the value captured within fewer responses was favored over more, yet less descriptive, responses. Furthermore, key informant interviews allow for in-depth analysis of motivations, behaviors, reasons, and perspectives. Although limitations exist within surveys and key informant interviews, the methods selected are relevant and useful in this study, due to the applicability to the aims of the research. As the research aims to (1) describe perspectives regarding the importance and relevance of Native American history and culture as a subject of study and to (2) provide insights to assist curriculum developers and other professionals working on education reform, the mixed methods allow the manifestation of key insights and perspectives necessary for the work.

Chapter 4

Findings: Expert Perspectives

The study findings are separated into two categories including perspectives from (1) experts in Native American history and culture and (2) university students who completed a course pertaining to Native American history and culture. While many of the findings across the two participant groups are similar, the responses are divided, as each group contribute unique perspectives. The first section below reflects the insights of experts in Native American history and culture concerning the goals of a course, pertinent topics, how educators should approach teaching the material, organization of the material, methods for student engagement, and the importance of studying Native American history and culture.

Goals

When asked about the goals a short course on Native American history and culture should have, one of the participants aptly stated:

They're going to be ambitious and they're going to sound like more than what could fit in a course, and the reason why is because I think our educational system has not given students a good background in issues and history involving Native Americans.

The participants stated the following goals:

- Break down stereotypes about Native people
- Show Native people and Native resilience *today*
- Showing diversity among Native peoples
- Provide historical foundation for students to navigate and understand the world today
- Recognizing privilege
- Importance of representation in education
- Increasing students' capacity for cultural understanding
- Increasing student's capacity for critical thinking

(1) Break down stereotypes about Native people

Five of the eight participants specifically mentioned the importance of breaking down stereotypes and correcting misconceptions about Native American people. One participant stated: “so much of what Americans think they know about indigenous peoples is either completely inaccurate or stereotypical, which has it’s own levels of inaccuracies in it.” Three participants referenced the media and popular culture as major culprits leading to stereotypes about Native American people. In the words of one participant, “the biggest misconception is, of course, media-driven.” Another participant described the tension between learning through school and media experiences:

we all learn through media, through television, movies, and popular culture media and those things – and we also learn through school, but when the people teaching us also learned through media, it ends up self-replicated there and that’s a major, major issue.

Recognizing that Native people are “often imagined and infrequently well-understood,” two participants explained the danger stereotypes pose to both non-Native students and Native students. One participant described how stereotypes prevent people involved with policy-making, government programs, or education from listening to people who are actually Native. People with decision-making power mistakenly listen to people who are not Native, yet attempt to speak on behalf of Native people, while ignoring the Native people who are trying to speak. In this way, stereotypes block Native peoples’ self-determination on a number of levels. One participant explains:

But because people don’t know anything about Native people – they don’t know the real history, they don’t know what being Native means today – they can’t recognize a person sitting in front of them, because they have too many stereotypes in their head to be able to recognize the person sitting in front of them. These things happen.

Thus stereotypes hold back non-Native people from being able to correctly understand who to listen to on issues facing Native people; they prevent non-Native people from an accurate cultural understanding; and they prevent non-Native people from recognizing the strengths and contributions of Native people.

For Native students, stereotypes are equally if not more destructive. One participant described an interaction with her son:

There have been moments when my kids have come home from school and said, 'hey mom and dad, I'm confused. We're Native right?' I'm like, 'Yes, of course we are. You know this.' 'Well where are our bows and arrows? We don't have bows and arrows, and the kids at school in my kindergarten class say Native people have bows and arrows. I don't have any so what does that mean?' It breaks your heart.

Confusion about personal identity caused by the tension between what one learns about oneself through school and what one learns about oneself through participation in one's home and community may prevent students from reaching their full capacity in school. Another participant explains:

For Native people, it's important to know their stories. And it's important, because that is an affirming piece of identity development and a powerful tool for engagement to keep the kids coming to school and sticking it out through school, and graduating from school.

One method for addressing the goal of melting stereotypes is to create "contemporary, real, relevant, and relatable" curriculum. In line with this three-word mantra, seven of the eight participants noted that an important goal of a short course would be to show Native people today.

(2) Show Native people and Native resilience *today*

Meeting and interacting with someone, in person or online via videoconference, was identified by four participants as both a goal and a method for showing Native people today. In order for people to avoid making stereotypes about Native people from popular culture,

curriculum should address the issue of invisibility Native people face. One participant provided an example of experiences with Non-Native students:

Every semester I get a student who asks me how many Native Americans are still alive. I'm like, 'a lot,' but they come to the class having been told a one-sided story that ends at the year 1900. And I can't fault them for the question and I can't be mad at them for the question, because that's all they've ever learned – so we need to do something about that.

Another participant expanded upon the notion of invisibility and the need to rectify the invisible status of Native people:

The population is very small. The population is also very diverse. There are close to 600 nations, and they're not all the same. So when we look at how diffused that becomes, even when people know a Native person, they often don't realize that they know a Native person. The stereotypes are very strong and very pervasive, so it leads to people becoming invisible, and the stereotypes are rooted in either whatever is the popular imagination of prehistoric or early contact or 18th or 19th century. They are very rarely rooted in something more contemporary – and when they are it's something like drunkenness. And again, you can easily see the connection to a 19th century concept as well. It makes a break and it makes it really hard for Native people who don't fit that stereotype to be fully seen or fully acknowledged.

In showing Native people today, four participants specifically mentioned the importance of showcasing the resilience of Native people. One participant stated: “regardless of how much they tried to get rid of us, we’re still here.” Another participant spoke about her experience talking with a man who runs an empowering skateboarding program for Native students:

He said, 'Our students hear all the time that we are the poorest community in the United States and we're the most violent-ridden community, and our peoples' suicide rate is so high.' And he said, 'It is, but if that's all they ever hear, then they're going to feel like I'm always going to be poor, and I might as well kill myself.'”

The participant further explained, saying:

They need to make sure that they talk about that resilience, and that there are Native peoples working in very strong ways on a whole range of things to strengthen their communities, their political stance, their sovereignty. So I think they need to hear the history first or else they are just going to be clueless, but they need to understand that Native peoples have a lot of agency. They are not just victims of colonization.

Finally, in order to showcase the resiliency of Native people, participants suggested talking about the work of indigenous activists today for sovereignty rights, for decolonization, and for the protection of the environment.

(3) Showing diversity among Native peoples

One participant felt that it was especially important to show the diversity among Native people in both historical and present contexts, so that students do not leave with the misconception that Native people across the almost 600 tribes share the same beliefs, customs, and worldviews.

(4) Providing historical foundation for students to navigate and understand the world today

Four main aspects of this particular goal include: providing students with the pre-contact history of the United States; reflecting an accurate story of Christopher Columbus; bridging the pre-contact history and post-contact history to the present; and recognizing the contributions Native American people have made throughout the United States and the world. Three participants stated a desire for students to learn about the history of the land prior to settler contact. Another two participants discussed the desire for an accurate story of Christopher Columbus. One participant articulates views on Columbus and the interactions among pre-contact and post-contact histories:

I'm not sure that I was ever taught how this land was inhabited by millions of people before Christopher Columbus. The Christopher Columbus thing needs to be told in a completely different way. And I'm not saying in an anti-white person way, but just a truthful way. [...] I just think I want the kids to know how many people and nations and their way of life were going just fine before everything started happening. And in a sense, in a perfect world, those two worlds could have merged and all become great and it was just not what happened. So it would be nice to hear that taught in a non-destructive way.

Finally, whenever talking about any piece of history regarding Native people, six of the participants note that it is essential to bring the pre-contact history and post-contact history to

show how Native people are affected today. For instance, students should be able to understand the present conditions of sovereignty, jurisdiction, reservations, land rights, sustainability, health, and healthcare, and how these aspects of modern life are rooted in the history of the United States.

Three participants noted the goal of recognizing the contributions Native American people have made throughout the United States and the world. One participant noted that students should learn about how indigenous communities have led and are leading major successes in environmentalism. Two participants specifically mentioned the importance of bringing to light how the Founding Fathers of the United States in many ways created the Constitution based on the model of the Iroquois Confederacy.

(5) Recognizing and understanding privilege

Four participants expressed the importance of talking about privilege, race, and the impacts of privilege on history and education. Participants spoke about the benefit of making people comfortable with being uncomfortable. In other words, while conversations about race and privilege may make people feel uncomfortable, it is helpful for students to recognize that being uncomfortable is part of the experience of learning about one's self, about how other people live, and about the world. Three participants specifically drew out the link between recognizing privilege and understanding how privilege impacts the study of history and our education system. One participant described how much of the history taught in U.S. public schools is largely based on a white American timeline, white American perspectives, and stereotypical inclusions – which are incomplete without counter narratives. In the words of one participant:

We have a responsibility as a nation to address that and to give voice to indigenous peoples and open those spaces for them to tell their story their way – not how we want, because it would make us white Americans feel less guilty, but let them tell the story.

Privilege does not simply explain the lack of Native American voices in mainstream history education, but it also provides insight about how Native students are impacted by lack of representation in education. One participant explains:

One of the dimensions of white privilege is that for white folk their historical narrative is the common core, and for people of color, it's an elective, if it's there at all. And so that tells everybody that white is normal and that white skills, histories, experiences are valued and important to learn, because you're going to go to school for 13 years, you're going to learn everything you need to know to be successful in the next phase of your life. And if you're Native and your stories are never there, then it says that you and yours are not important. And people receive that message like an assault and they respond with the traditional caveman reaction to that, which is fight or flight. Truancy is flight and discipline is fight, and those are huge problems for Native students and students of color across our country.

Another participant thoroughly described how privilege disadvantages groups of people without a written history. One participant explains:

So that's a big piece of it, is just that history isn't considered to be real; and then in terms of historians and archeologists, there's a sort of a formal break between historical culture, which is defined as it was written down, and prehistoric culture, which is defined as it wasn't written down. So all of the things that happened before a historian, a white person who came to write it down, and so there's a hard break there. So for example the [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act]. If you can't bridge that with some piece of paper that says that these are my ancestors, too bad for you, they're now part of the public domain. This archeologist's scientific reasons for wanting to dig them up and shellac them and put them in a museum outweigh the fact that you know damn well that those are your ancestors.

(6) Providing representation in education

In order to improve retention and achievement of Native American students and students of color, students should be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. One participant explains:

For Native people, it's important to know their stories. And it's important, because that is an affirming piece of identity development and a powerful tool for engagement to keep

the kids coming to school and sticking it out through school, and graduating from school. And so it's a part of the retention package. Everyone should be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and the body of teachers.

This participant continues to explain the far-reaching effects of representation in education.

If you look at the graduation rates of students of color in America, it's 50% in many places and the nationwide average is a little less than 60%. If we have an educational system that has a success rate of 60%...60% on a grading curve is F. And if we have an educational system that works that way for what's now the largest demographic cohort in the country, that's not a recipe for a healthy country. If we had perfect equity today – we don't, but if we did – we know that the correlation between people who have money and who don't is wider and wider, but the correlation between people who have money and an education is tighter and tighter. If we had perfect equity, our achievement results are enough to racialize [sic] the economic disparities in our country. And so our educational system reinforces white financial, cultural, and political privilege.

(7) Increasing Students' Capacity for Cultural Understanding

Three participants directly described the necessity of learning about other cultures, and developing skills to cultivate cultural intelligence. Part of the reason for the goal of increasing cultural understanding is to prepare students to live, work, and make decisions in the world beyond the classroom. Detailing the damaging effects of a lack of cultural understanding, one participant states:

And what happens when we don't know about something or someone is that we become a lot more ambivalent about its destruction and sometimes wantonly participate in that. So what are we doing to the natural world and what are we doing to each other? America has been well-equipped at winning military conflicts and very poorly equipped at winning a peace. And ultimately to win a peace, you have to arrive at the point where you can see how more than one culture, language, and way of looking at the world can coexist in the same space, and America isn't there. And to me, the value of infusing some Native history into the core curriculum includes that it is part of the training for everyone about how to think about tolerating more than one experience and way of looking at the world.

One participant expresses how the demographic shifts in America are making cultural understanding an even greater imperative for students:

We are already in a place where the majority of our students in America are students of color, and nobody is going to be the majority racial group. So it is incumbent upon all of us to understand everyone else's experiences, learn from them, appreciate them, and figure out how to get things done cooperatively. America's never had to do that, they've always just been able to crush somebody. But we're going to have to figure that out or we're going to have a lot more social division and it's going to have a racial fault line.

Finally, one participant shows the necessity of understanding culture, as students enter the working world and as students understand how history connects with the conditions of the world today:

In some areas, Indians aren't just people who live here, but they're the largest employers. And so if you want to prepare people for the world in which they will live and work, then they should know about some things contemporary, relevant, and relatable, like what is a tribal government? How does that work? How is it structured? What's the legal difference between that and a different nation like America or France? What's the same? And those are important bodies of knowledge to know. It helps us understand the American experience. How the land ended up being taken from Native people and given to the parents of all the children who are going to school in this country, but also how to navigate the world in which people actually live and work.

(8) Increasing students' capacity for critical thinking

Three participants expressed that one of the goals of learning about Native American history and culture should be to increase students' capacity for critical thinking. Participants mentioned several ways that learning about Native American history and culture will stretch students' ability to think critically. For instance, understanding tribal structures (including critically thinking about complex definitions of tribes, bands, and nations); interactions among tribes and the United States; different customs and cultures across Native American tribes (including adoption practices, family customs and structures, opting into war versus war practices in the United States); and linking the history to the present.

Pertinent Topics

Throughout the interviews, the participants described a plethora of topics, which they find to be important for high school students to study regarding Native American history and culture. The topics mentioned include: Resiliency, Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, Land and Treaty History, Boarding Schools, Jurisdiction, Economic and Political Realities, Relational Knowledge and Interconnectedness, Sovereignty, Dawes Act (General Allotment Act), Indian Removal Act, Art, Spiritual Practices, Indigenous Peoples Worldwide, Privilege, Way of Life Pre-Colonization, Food, Native American Approaches to Science, Technology and Science, Sustainability, Family Structures and Customs, Government, and the American Indian Movement.

For clarity, the topics have been ordered into four categories: (1) Native American Life Today: Challenging Misconceptions; (2) How Did We Get Here? Land, Treaties, and Policy; (3) Uncovering Complexities: Sovereignty, Structure, Diversity; (4) Where are We Going? Science, Innovation, and Indigeneity. The topics may be used by educators to accomplish one or more of the goals outlined in the first section of the chapter. Additionally, the topics may be reordered and reorganized to fit the time and resources of school. However, educators should be mindful to include material, and approach the material, in order to allow students to understand how to bring the history into the present and how to correct current stereotypes and to prevent future stereotypes students may hold regarding Native American people. Below you will find the topics organized into the four main categories.

(1) Native American Life Today: Challenging Misconceptions

- By the Numbers (how many nations, how many people, how many living on reservations, how many off-reservations, occupations, etc.)
- What are Reservations?

- Economic and Political Realities
- Family Structures and worldviews
- Privilege
- Resiliency and Realities Today

(2) How Did We Get Here? Land, Treaties, and Policy

- Pre-Colonized America
- Doctrine of Discovery
- Manifest Destiny
- Boarding Schools
- Resiliency and Realities Today

(3) Uncovering Complexities: Sovereignty, Structure, Diversity

- Legal Jurisdiction & Major Crimes Act
- Conceptualizing Sovereignty
- Federal and State Tribal Nations, Bands, Tribes
- Resiliency and Realities Today
- American Indian Movement

(4) Where are We Going? Science, Innovation, and Indigeneity

- Native American Approaches to Science & Sustainability
- Food
- Innovations by Native American People
- Resiliency and Realities Today
- United Nations and its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Many of the participants felt strongly that resiliency should be a topic presented. The proposed topic structure includes a focus on resiliency and current realities, such that each topic or lesson presented can help students to develop accurate conceptions of Native American people today – void of stereotypical and incorrect popular culture renderings. One participant explains the need for a curriculum, which showcases Native resiliency:

For Native people, if all you're ever told is that you're the loser, nobody wants to be that. It's actually counter-productive to positive self-esteem and identity development. So it's

important to acknowledge loss and ugly chapters, even more important to show how Native people have, in spite of all of that, navigated and been successful at it. And there are so many ways that Native people have made the world and our country what it is and a lot of times they receive very little attention.

Additionally, a purposeful emphasis on the present will address the issue Native American people face of being often invisible or misunderstood to many Americans. In the words of one participant: “Understanding is an important part of equipping people to reconcile around that so that we don’t have more racial divides and divisions going forward.”

Although the topics art, interconnectedness, and spirituality were mentioned by participants, these topics were not included in the topic organization list above, as some participants felt that these topics may not be appropriate for high school students without much background in Native American culture. One participant noted that a non-Native person may interpret a piece of literature or art very differently than a Native person; and that the non-Native person’s interpretation may further perpetuate stereotypes or may lead the individual to develop misconceptions about a wide, diverse group of people based on one work of art. The participant felt that it is possible to use Native art and literature in talking about Native American history and culture, yet that it should be approached with caution and with skilled facilitators, claiming that “it is easier to do harm than good.” Similarly, one participant stated that educators must be extremely careful when talking about issues, such as interconnectedness and spirituality, as both topics are “dripping in popular culture stereotypes.” In particular, three participants felt strongly that talking about Native American spirituality may be inappropriate in most cases. Two participants mentioned the difficulty of discussing religion and spirituality in public school, while two other participants thought that the topic may lead to misconceptions. One participant further explained saying that if educators teach students about spirituality without first making sure that students have a robust understanding of Native American culture and worldviews, “we

are undermining how much respect they can give to knowing about American Indians,” and may end up perpetuating stereotypes.

Organization of the Material

Each participant offered a unique idea about how to best organize a curriculum on Native American history and culture. One participant suggested moving from big picture to small picture. For instance, if talking about the history of the land and migrations, the participant recommended starting by observing the continent, looking at who is located to the East and West of the Mississippi, and discussing how and why they got there. Two participants suggested organizing the material into thirds; one suggested sections of Privilege, Worldview, and Indigeneity, while another favored a chronological approach of Pre-colonial, Colonial, and Today – or Elimination, Assimilation, and Reconciliation/Resiliency/Revitalization. This participant noted a necessity for timelines with different times or sections to allow students to put things in different contexts. Alternatively, another participant suggested using time as a factor of organization, yet starting with today and looking forward, next looking back, and then building the historical foundation to get to today.

Three participants noted the importance of innovating in the classroom in order to use the curriculum to meet state standards and in order to meet students at their level of understanding, interest, and learning style. Within these responses, each participant also noted a strong desire for statewide curriculum standards on Native American history and culture. In the words of one participant:

It does make sense to have a scope, sequence, objectives, outcomes and assessments perspective as you're developing and delivering material; but there should be room to

innovate and to connect with students wherever they're at in that process. So I think Native stuff belongs in the standards for every state and that can help encourage teachers to hit those targets. I think teachers should still have the freedom to figure out the best means to connect with their students, but also to be challenged to meet them in their way in their place.

One participant suggested using modules as an effective way of meeting standards.

Another participant explained the benefit of statewide curriculum on educators' ability to

innovate:

And that's why it was such a big deal for Montana and Washington to change their state curriculum to make it more indigenous-centered, because that changed the whole thing; that changed it all. So now teachers are still artistically planning their lessons, but it's been mandated by the states that indigenous narratives be included. So now they are supported in doing it. So it's not, 'Where can I fit boarding schools in? And where am I going to get the resources to do it?'

Two participants suggested using one topic or theme and integrating other topics or themes. The modules recommended by one participant would feature one main topic, such as food, but would draw a richness of connections to other topics, such as: science and technology, Native American approaches to science, land dynamics, and cultural significance. Finally, another participant recommended presenting an integration of academic text, food, art, and science in order to disrupt the potential for any polarizing debate. Additionally, to this participant, the course should include a trip to a local Native American community or a guest speaker after students have a background in the history and present.

Approaching and Engaging in the Material

When asked about how educators should approach teaching the material and what educators should have in mind when doing so, participants provided responses involving the importance of self-awareness, understanding of educational equity, support from administration,

appreciation of honest history, and relationships with Native American people. Two participants note that it is essential for teachers to know their own limitations and not to teach from what they learned in school – although it is the “easiest thing to do.” Encouraging educators to tell students when they don’t know an answer or are uncomfortable talking, a participant said, “be that transparent, because then it helps students grow in their curiosity, not grow in their answers.” In addition to assisting students’ accumulation of curiosity, educators admitting when they do not have an answer may increase the bond between the student and educator. One participant states:

[...] many teachers and the education system at large put this pressure on teachers that they have to be the expert in the front of the room and never admit that they don’t know the answer to a question, but there is no greater bond that I have seen, both in experience and in watching, between a teacher and a group of students to say, ‘I don’t know the answer to the question. I don’t know a lot about this topic, but I know that it’s important for us to learn, and we’re going to learn it together.’ And they go on this journey of discovery, discovery in the best sense of the word discovery, of relearning history for the first time.

In addition to self-awareness, educators should approach teaching about Native American history and culture with an awareness of equity issues. One participant notes that educators should understand white privilege, historical trauma, and diverse perspectives – yet claims that “our teacher training programs are not delivering that efficiently.” While bringing an understanding of privilege into the discussion, educators should make sure not to make it a black versus white issues, according to one participant. Two participants emphasized that while students need to know about the history, which includes abuse, curriculum should be less focused on the conflict and more focused on where we are today and how we got here.

In order to approach the material with awareness of oneself and educational equity issues, teachers need support from their school in the form of training, observation, academic resources, and financial resources for example. One participant thoroughly explained the need for educator support:

“How do we support them? Because there are a lot of teachers who want to do things with respect and things with accuracy, but it’s respecting them enough to say ‘we know you don’t have the time; we’re going to work with you. We’re going to figure this out together.’”

One method for working around teachers’ time constraints is to “engage teachers in the summer in workshops or modules, whether they’re online or in person.”

As three participants state that good intentions can cause more harm than good, the curriculum, the approach, and the engagement need to be both thoughtful and created through relationship with Native American people. Participants suggested that relationships with Native American people or communities should allow for self-determination within the curriculum such that Native people determine the stories they share and how they share their story. These relationships, according to participants, may involve having a Native American person teach the class or module, involving Native American people in the process of developing the curriculum, talking to an education consultant in a tribal office, using any educational materials the tribe created, and bringing in a Native American guest speaker. In line with self-determination, one participant instructs that educators teaching Native American history should understand that Native history is not synonymous with U.S. history: “It’s not your history. It affects you. You interacted with it, but it’s not your history; you don’t own it.” Finally, many participants emphasized the need for teaching honest, unsanitized history appropriate for the given age level.

When discussing how to approach the material, participants often talked about methods for engaging students in the material. In addition to creating relationships with Native American people, other methods mentioned included arts-based learning, forms of self-reflection, field trips, and observational activities. Four participants specifically mentioned the effectiveness of engaging students through art, including videos, plays, poetry, and literature. The participants

articulated that the works of art should feature Native American artists. One participant explained the role of arts in education:

[Art] touches our intellect. It helps us to analyze more rigorously, but it also touches our emotions, our bodies, our relationships. And I think we learn in a way that is important in this area where social justice is an issue. We learn in a way that I think builds our capacities more strongly to deal effectively with putting more justice into place.

In addition to arts, two participants stated that self-reflection is vital to engage students in material on Native American history and culture. One participant encouraged the use of journaling or other written self-reflective assignments, while another participant thinks that educators should use talking circles, a technique of cultural significance in indigenous traditions. Two participants described the importance of integrating place into education, especially as understanding place and relationships to land are important pieces of many indigenous cultures. For instance, the participant suggested traveling to museums, county and local historical centers, reservations, and even local streets with Native American names. Finally, one participant suggested that students should engage in learning by observation, often an indigenous education tradition. The activity would involve students watching someone without speaking and then later discussing what they learned from the process.

Helpful Resources

The participants mentioned many helpful resources spanning categories of trips, movies, other states and nations, books, personal contacts, and newspapers. Participants recommended visiting the Museum of the American Indian, the Carlisle Boarding School, a Powwow, Native American centers located close to the school location, and state and county historical societies. One participant passionately explained how the land is a powerful teacher; thus educators should

engage students in ways to learn from the land. In regard to movies, participants mentioned the *We Shall Remain* documentary series, as well as showing movies created by Native American film groups. Three participants suggested that educators and course developers learn from other states and nations, Montana, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, Tribal Nations in the U.S., and aboriginal nations in Canada, leading education on Native American history and culture. Educators can utilize the curriculum standards and resources developed by the leadership of these states and nations. Other helpful resources include print resources in the form of books and newspapers. Finally, as described throughout the approach and engagement section, personal contacts can be a hugely influential and effective method to teach students about Native American history and culture, and especially to correct misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding Native people.

Importance of Study

Participants were asked if they think that it is important for high school students to learn about Native American history and culture and to explain why or why not. In many ways, the goals described by interview participants in the first section of the findings reflect the various reasons why people view the topic as an important area of study. One participant noted that the teaching about Native American history and culture is important so that students don't feel lied to. One participant simply stated: "It's important for students to learn about to be humans." As being human involves interacting and understanding others, two of the participants stated that learning about Native American history and culture is important in fostering students' cultural intelligence or ability to understand others' experiences. In line with understanding other people,

another participant notes that it's important to study the subject, because "it's where we're living;" and thus is important in understanding our nation and our place within the world. The ideas of cultural intelligence and understanding closely relate to one participant's statement that knowing Native American history and culture is important for equipping students for the world in which they will live and work.

Similar to cultural intelligence and understanding, participants note that teaching about Native American history and culture is important in order to: address the invisibility of Native American people; to challenge and prevent stereotypes; and to prevent and address discrimination. One participant explained that, if done correctly and appropriately, learning about Native American history and culture is important for self-determination of Native American people. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, under the United Nations, states: "[a]ll peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (UN, 1966). One participant illustrates how lack of self-determination can lead to stereotypes and discrimination, and how stereotypes and discrimination decreases a person's self-determination:

The stereotypes, the invisibility, the lack of self-determination on all of the levels is so strong and so pervasive. Misinformation is so strong and so pervasive and so self-replicating that it's very damaging for the actual real Native people who have to live under those conditions. There are all sorts of problems that come out of that. There's research that talks about the effects of stereotyping and living in a state of chronic discrimination in terms of what that means about a person's health. It contributes to high blood pressure, which you know contributes to all sorts of things – heart disease, obesity, suicide rates: all of these things that are really really alive for Native people. And this is kind of a contributing factor or a limiting factor on what can we do about it. It's much more than just a theoretical nice thing to do.

Participants stated many others reasons why they perceive the study of Native American history and culture as important for students including: promoting social justice, increasing

peace, understanding sovereignty, facilitating a robust democracy, protecting the environment, and open thought. One participant depicts a fundamental interrelationship within the topic:

“understanding people of different backgrounds is the first step to also maybe having the idea of open thought.”

Two participants specified that learning about Native American history and culture is important in order to promote hope and revitalization. One participant explains:

And I think that's really important to understand the resiliencies, because I think students won't have much hope or much interest in being involved in any way with indigenous peoples or communities or supporting their cause in any way, politically, financially, or both, if they don't feel like there's hope and they see action and there is so much agency. And revitalization on the part of indigenous communities, I think our students need that, so that they won't fall back into that 'well they're all going to die anyway.' I think it will increase students' agency.

Finally, two participants state that it's important to study, because the United States has a responsibility to teach about Native American history and culture. One participant states:

And I think it actually, this is a strong statement, but is a moral obligation in the United States education or at least state-supported education to report that our model of democracy is one that is robust enough to be exported around the world and I think to make that robust enough, and just enough, and ethical enough to being much more open to admitting what went wrong, and what we don't want to happen again, and how people are working to get back to repair that, to address it.

Chapter 5

Findings: University Student Perspectives

In addition to gathering insights from several experts on Native American history and culture, the research findings also reveal the perspectives of university students. A survey was sent to 41 students who were enrolled in a course entitled CED 400: *Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing* at The Pennsylvania State University during the spring semester of 2014 and 2015. The first part of the course involves a semester of studying the history and cultural perspectives of indigenous peoples in the United States. The second part of the course involves a two-week cultural immersion field experience, through which students travel to Ojibwe reservations in northern Minnesota. The students were asked to share their perspectives on the course topics, and teaching methods. Ten students responded to the survey, equating to a response rate of approximately 25%.

The survey asked students to reflect on the topics they found to be most important and most interesting. Students found all of the topics listed as important. Table 1 depicts that student found learning about boarding schools and spiritual practices to be the two most important, closely followed by relational knowledge (interconnectedness).

Table 1: Importance of Course Topics

Regarding each topic listed below, how important did you find each topic was to your understanding of Native American history and culture? For each topic below, please select one option. (0-7 with 0 being not important and 7 being extremely important)

Topic	Mean	Standard Deviation
Boarding Schools	6.9	0.32
Spiritual Practices	6.9	0.32
Relational Knowledge (Interconnectedness)	6.8	0.42
General Allotment Act	6.8	0.42
Sovereignty	6.8	0.42
Indian Removal Act (Establishment of Reservations)	6.7	0.67
Family Structures and Customs	6.6	0.52
Native American Approaches to Science	6.5	0.85
Native American Perspectives in Literature	6.2	0.92
American Indian Movement	6.2	0.92
Federal Crimes Act (Jurisdiction of Law Enforcement on Reservations)	6.2	1.03
Traditional Art	6.1	0.74
Traditional Foods	6.1	0.99

Students were also asked to note how interesting (on a scale from 0 to 7) they found each course topic. Table 2 reveals that students found spiritual practices, relational knowledge (interconnectedness), boarding schools, and family structures as among the most interesting topics.

Table 2: Interesting Course Topics

How interesting did you find each topic listed below? For each topic, please select one option. (0-7 with 0 being not important and 7 being extremely important)

Topic	Mean	Standard Deviation
Spiritual Practices	7	0
Relational Knowledge (Interconnectedness)	6.6	0.97
Boarding Schools	6.6	0.52
Family Structures and Customs	6.6	0.7
Native American Approaches to Science	6.4	0.84
American Indian Movement	6.3	0.48
Traditional Foods	6.2	0.63
Indian Removal Act (Establishment of Reservations)	6.1	0.57
General Allotment Act	6.1	0.88
Native American Perspectives in Literature	6	0.82
Sovereignty	6	0.82
Traditional Art	6	0.67
Federal Crimes Act (Jurisdiction of Law Enforcement on Reservations)	5.8	0.79

Five students who completed the survey volunteered to discuss the course in individual interviews. The students were asked to describe the most important lessons they learned, how their perspective about Native American history and culture has changed, and how the course has impacted their educational experience and their life more broadly. Each student expressed different responses when asked to discuss the most important lessons they learned.

Most Important Lessons Learned

Some of these lessons involved understanding and approaching history:

- Understanding specific aspects of history (Boarding schools and General Allotment Act)
- Seeing how history is present
- Hearing history from the Native American perspective
- The origin story of the Ojibwe

The students described lessons relevant to culture and justice:

- Resiliency of Native American people and efforts to maintain their culture and way of life
- Appreciation of diversity
- Greater understanding and awareness of what it means to be a minority population in the United States
- Healing can happen when we bring people with fractured relationships together
- Understanding the concept of intersectionality
- Importance of keeping cultures alive

Students also explained broader life lessons they gained:

- Taking care of community²
- The importance of understanding, rather than knowing³
- Leading through example

² This lesson was identified by three students.

³ This lesson was identified by two students.

- Having respect and awe for the environment
- Importance of gratefulness
- Having a sense of purpose

Changes in Perspective

All students stated that the course changed their perspective on Native American history and culture in a variety of ways. Three students stated that they gained a deeper understanding beyond the surface level. One student shared:

I never really had a good representation of what a reservation was in my head. I kinda just thought it was this roped off area with just houses. I kinda thought they preferred to live there, because it's like a community. Like everyone else lives there and these are all people who are like me and share my similar beliefs and values so that's cool you know. I come from New York City and people do that on their own accord, you know. I never just thought too much about it as opposed to a war happened, land got taken away from people but we were like 'hey we'll give you this, go live there.' That's it. It was very surface level when I learned about it before. [...] something like this is going on and most of the population has no idea, doesn't think about it, [Native American people] are thought of more as like historical characters – not even historical figures, but historical characters. They're kind of fun, they're like pirates or something. It just makes me upset, and it's like how do you fix something like this?

Another student expressed the deeper understanding gained through the course:

It did a complete 180 I would say. So you learn that Columbus came and held hands, and then you actually find out that it was the biggest genocide that ever happened in human history, but for some reason that's not talked about in our textbooks.

Finally, one more student shares a similar, yet unique perspective appreciating the deeper understanding he developed:

I would say it went from predominantly ignorant to slightly enlightened. Slightly enlightened and significantly more interested. Let's see, I had probably been guilty of romanticizing Native American history prior to the course and just having a very two-sentences-out-of-a-textbook conception of Native American history, which boiled down this enormous diversity all across the Americas into 'Native Americans' so that was

another thing that I really appreciated learning specifically about the Ojibwe as one tribe. Just learning some of the details about how early colonialists and Americans related to Native Americans politically and economically just helped me get a more fleshed out view of history since Columbus.

Three students described how history continues to impact present realities. One student highlighted learning about hardships and poverty on many reservations, while another student highlighted learning about the boarding schools. One student described placing an increased level of importance upon studying Native American history and culture than before the course. Finally, another student spoke about how the course led him to realize that there are many paths to make a difference.

Impact on Educational Experience

The students each described how the course has impacted their educational experience. All students talked about how their subsequent learning and connections are affected by their experience in the course. All students discussed their desire to continue learning. One student specifically mentioned the desire to continue learning about how history affects Native people today. Three students described that they learned to understand and retain the teachings, rather than simply knowing the answers for grades. One student learned about how she retains knowledge. Three students explained understanding different types of knowledge.

One student discussed being more interested in and more aware of different perspectives. Another student specifically mentioned how learning about the Indian boarding school period impacted her understanding of Native American history and culture. One student was prompted to alter his educational direction toward the social justice field. Finally, one student described how the course has helped to ground her:

It has nothing to do with [my major] honestly, but the thought process it gave me to be like, 'there's a world out there that's so much bigger than myself, and there's a foundation of people and a family that I can always fall back on that it's helped me get through the mundaneness of trying to get my degree that it feels like sometimes. Even though I love what I do, it's just helped ground me really. All the teachings that I got from that class.

Impact on Life

The students each described how the course has impacted their life more broadly. All students discussed how the course has made them more mindful of their actions and of others. Three students shared that the course heightened their respect for and appreciation of nature. Two students stated that the course raised their awareness of diverse perspectives and of injustices. One student shared:

Just knowing about all of the injustices and stuff that goes on, that's definitely going to impact me in the future just cause now it's another part of something I believe. And more knowledge I have on what's wrong in the world. And you know, I'm one person, but the more knowledge you spread out, the more people get to know and then a change can happen. I don't know if you saw the Washington Redskins Super Bowl commercial was aired. Something like that...this is stuff that people should hear about whether they agree or not, you should just hear about it.

Three students described how the experience has impacted their career directions, with one student claiming the need to do something involving social justice. Two students expressed how the course has prompted them to share their experience with others, while one student stated that the experience will even impact how she raises her future children. Another student described how it will impact her political behavior. Two students stated that they have been impacted by the relationships they made in the course. Additionally, two students mentioned that the experience impacted their thoughts about spirituality. Finally, one student stated that he learned to question and interrogate history.

While students shared many ways in which the course impacted their educational experience and their life, one student summed up many of the students' perspectives, as he reflects:

All the important lessons I learned from it are lifelong lessons, and it's not information that I can forget. And any sort of information that sticks with us will change our behavior in the future. [...] Who I am has been shaped by that.

As the course CED 400: *Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing in North America* at Penn State University continues to impact students at the university level, several questions linger about the future of education on Native American history and culture.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Each participant in the study states that it is important for high school students to learn about Native American history and culture, yet there remains several disconnects between the perspectives of study participants and classroom realities. Returning to research by Shear et al. (2015), state curriculum standards lack requirements mandating that schools teach about Native American perspectives or events in American history. Even when standards are in place in states, Shear et al. (2015) finds that, while many teachers work to give their students the best education possible, many educators have not been trained how to teach the material and must often learn the material along with their students. These obstacles facing teachers can lead to misinformation, the perpetuation of stereotypes, and a lack of meaningful inclusivity. Thus, as we view the findings of this study within the context of K-12 public education in America, it is evident that changes in education rely on larger conversations about culture, diversity, inclusion, history, sovereignty, tradition, and representation.

While American history is composed of parts some people would like to forget, the reality remains that Native American people cannot forget the past and instead are continuously impacted today by years of history. Two of the Native American Experts interviewed consistently instructed that Native American history should focus on what students need to know *today*, and that history classes should be firmly grounded in both today and the future. For instance, students may be able to learn how the boarding school era continues to impact the

education achievement rates of Native American people, as well as the many forms of “historical trauma,” also known as the “collective wounding that spans generations” (Field, 2016). David Blight, U.S. History professor and the director of Yale’s Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, says: “Americans want to be descendants of a noble people [...] But history’s job isn’t to make people feel happy about themselves or their culture” (Urist, 2015). Furthermore, questions of self-determination surrounding history persist. As one participant summarizes: “Whose story is it? And who gets to tell it? Do you get to tell your own story or not? And if you don’t, what does that mean in terms of your agency as a person or a culture?”

Recognizing the complexity of the K-12 public education climate and the realities of history’s impact today, the findings of this study prompt questions about what changes are feasible in education. How can higher education institutions expand opportunities similar to the course at Penn State University? How can we bridge information silos between university professors and staff with expertise in Native American history and culture with curriculum developers and education policy-makers? How can we bridge the K-12 public education experience with the university experience to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the multicultural, global, and complex world in which they will work and live?

While the answers to these questions are far from clear, the findings of this study suggest relational and innovative education. Although making changes to K-12 public education curriculum presents large obstacles to the implementation of improved and enhanced curriculum on Native American history and culture, educators and people passionate about diversity education should be encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive reflections of students from the *Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing* course at Penn State University. Two of the most unique

aspects of the course include the focus on building relationships and innovation. Even if a school does not have the time or resources to devote a unit to Native American history and culture, bringing students into relationships with a Native American person or place (through a presentation, a Skype call, a video, a field trip, etc.) will at least provoke students to integrate the lesson into their life and to ask further questions. As education changes with technologies, new knowledge, and differing demands, innovation will always be a vital process for addressing problems. The faculty and staff who created Penn State University's *Exploring Indigenous Knowledge* course worked persistently for years to develop the course content, to coordinate the efforts with members of the Ojibwe communities, and to establish the course formally within the university (A. Marezki, 2015, Personal Communication). Despite obstacles, people passionate about rethinking education on Native American history and culture make meaningful differences, only some of which could be captured in this study. Through constant innovation together, educators, students, experts, and people passionate about justice and inclusion can continue to change our education system for the better.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Throughout hours of conversations with Native American experts and students, one message stands across each participant: stereotypes harmfully impact both Native and non-Native students – and primary and secondary education holds power to both perpetuate and eliminate stereotypes. When considering the future directions of high school education curriculum regarding Native American history and culture, it is clear that students interviewed desire to know the truth about history and are significantly impacted by their experience in the course. Although political and institutional obstacles may slow changes toward rethinking public education on Native American history and culture, courses at the university level like *Exploring Indigenous Knowledge* at The Penn State University present hope for ways in which people passionate about diversity and inclusion may work together to promote new ways of approaching this important subject in order to benefit all students.

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ACADEMIC VITA

MADISON MILLER

Madisonmiller264@gmail.com

EDUCATION:

The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College, University Park, PA

Bachelors of Science in Corporate Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Smeal College of Business

Bachelors of Science in Community, Environment, and Development, College of Agricultural Sciences

Option area in Environmental Economics and Policy

Specialization in Organizational Leadership

Dean's List all semesters

Presidential Leadership Academy, The Penn State University, University Park, PA

September 2013 – May 2016

- Studied in a three-year intensive certificate program led by the University President and dean of the Schreyer Honors College
- Analyzed, discussed, and wrote about policy and leadership

Honors Thesis: *Rethinking Education on Native American History and Culture*

Fall 2016

- Selected as one of eight students to present research to legislators at Penn State's Annual Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol Building
- Presented findings Penn State's International Education Week

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE:

Opportunity Finance Network – Strategic Consulting Intern, Philadelphia, PA

Summer 2016

- Reengineered system management of the department's two million dollars of financial information
- Developed a comprehensive business plan to enhance OFN's Ally program

Burack Environmental Law Office – Intern, Bala Cynwyd, PA

Summer 2015

- Conducted legal research and document review, and wrote reports on relevant case law
- Researched federal and state legislation regarding: wetlands, underground tank storage, hazardous substances, and clean streams

Schreyer Honors College – Scholar Assistant, University Park, PA

August 2014 – May 2015

- Served as a liaison between the Honors College staff and students
- Created, organized, and executed academic, career development, social, and service events for over 1,500 students in the Honors College living community

Chester County Economic Development Council, *Exton, PA*

Summer 2013

- Wrote 4 grant applications for a pilot STEM program for underserved girls in Chester County
- Developed program analysis reports and marketing materials
- Assisted in managing the Salesforce CRM system

Chester County Fund for Women and Girls, *West Chester, PA*

September 2010 – May 2012

- Served on two boards for the CCFWG, writing grant guidelines, evaluating grant applications, conducting site visits, and allocating over \$400,000 to non-profit organizations that serve women and girls in Chester County

RESEARCH & TEACHING:

Research and Teaching Assistant in Penn State's Office of Rural Development, *University Park, PA*

September 2013 – Present

- Conduct primary and secondary research, evaluate data, and write analysis in manuscripts on a variety of topics, including broadband Internet access and invasive animal management
- Trained in IRB process and completed 2 approved IRB applications

Teaching Assistant for ERM 411: *Legal Aspects of Land Management, University Park, PA*

August 2016 – Present

- Assist with course management of assignments, lectures, and projects relevant to legal principles and environmental laws and regulations

Teaching Assistant for Honors Leadership JumpStart, *University Park, PA*

June 2013 – April 2016

- Engaged in strategic development of course content, presented lessons, provide grades and feedback on assignments, and facilitate operations for a class of 24 students

LEADERSHIP & SERVICE:

Student Legal Services Advisory Board – Student Representative, *University Park, PA*

August 2015 - Present

- Partake in program and administrative decisions
- Market the legal services to students

Student Society for Indigenous Knowledge – Co-Founder and President, *University Park, PA*

March 2015 – May 2016

- Lead students in educating ourselves and others about the culture and history of indigenous peoples in the U.S. and abroad and advocating for the rights of indigenous communities
- Advocate for human rights, environmental rights, and diversity education and inclusion

Students Consulting for Non-profit Organizations – Team Lead, *University Park, PA*

August 2012 – May 2014

- Led a team of five members to conduct research, create marketing plans, develop strategic recommendations, and deliver workshops to assist three local non-profits

National Lutheran Youth Gathering Servant Companion, Detroit, MI

Summer 2015

- Led over 200 people for one week to complete service projects throughout Detroit

Southeast Pennsylvania Synod Servant Trip, Cherokee, North Carolina

Summer 2015

- Volunteered at various nonprofit organizations and missions for one week

Apollo FTK Thon Organization, University Park, PA

August 2014 – May 2015

- Led a group of 80 students in social and fundraising activities for Penn State's Dance Marathon

AWARDS:

- Milton J. Bergstein Student Community Service Award (Spring 2016)
- Certificate of Completion of the Explore Law Program at Penn State Dickinson School of Law (2015)

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS RECEIVED:

- Janiak Family Scholarship for Women Entrepreneurs (2016)
- The William T. Butz Memorial Endowed Scholarship (2016)
- Galen Dreibelbis Endowment for Excellence in Agriculture (2016)
- Edward W. Blosinski Scholarship in the College of Agricultural Sciences (2016)
- Arthur Mitchell Honors Scholarship (2015, 2016)
- Mcclure Family Scholarship (2015)
- Kunkle Bayard D Scholarship (2015)
- Louis J. D'Ambrosio Scholarship (2014)
- Academic Excellence Scholarship (2012 – 2016)
- Front Porch Trust Scholarship (2012)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society (Spring 2015)
- Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society (Spring 2016)

PUBLICATIONS:

- Miller, M., Fivek, E., Spangler, K., & Hovis, C. (2015). L'Oreal: beauty for everyone? *Community, Environment, and Development Undergraduate Research Journal*. University Park, PA: Penn State University.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION:

- Swedish University of Agriculture: Water Quality Management of the Baltic Sea and Chesapeake Bay
- Exploring Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Northern Minnesota: Field Experience Learning from the Ojibwe nation