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## Assessing the Impact of Public Secondary School on the Cultural Identities of Native American Students

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Assessing the Impact of Public Secondary School on the  
Cultural Identities of Native American Students

By

Joe Hobot

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirement for the degree of Doctorate in Education

Hamline University  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
April 2016

Dissertation Committee:  
Dr. Walter Enloe (Chair)  
Dr. Charlayne Myers  
Dr. Harald K. Faber

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which public secondary education has impacted the cultural identities of Native American students who were at one time enrolled therein, or regarding their current perspectives on how the cultural identities of youth within their families currently attending a public secondary school are being impacted. The study began with an autoethnographic submission whereby the researcher's own experience as both a Native American student and educator was also included as a part of the research. From there, additional data was sought and collected through the use of intensive interviews with subjects chosen from select demographic pools within the Native American community (including both recent graduates and elders).

Once completed, the study then analyzed the data to answer the following questions: How do Native American students that have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity? What are the views held by Native American elders regarding high school today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as high school students?

Seven participants were involved with the research – three Native American elders over the age of forty-five, three Native American adults under the age of twenty-five, and the researcher himself (a thirty-nine year old male). All of the participants had attended some variation of a public secondary school, and a few of the elders involved also had youth within their families who were currently enrolled. The research process examined the stories related by the participants as to what they or their family members experienced as students within a public secondary school, how it affected their sense of cultural identity, and what they hoped

might be changed for future generations to improve the experience of mandatory matriculation. From these stories, and the data that was collected and analyzed through a process of triangulation between the three data sources, and a new theory emerged relating to the impact that public education has had upon the cultural identities of these Native American participants, and what they would like to see happen going forward. Derived from the data, the new theory is as follows:

Owing to systemic failures within the public high school system – not only historical in nature but that which is also ongoing at the present time – members of the Native American community now believe that there is a responsibility incumbent upon the public high school system to actively support and to further Native American student understandings relating to their own cultural identities. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of such practices as indigenous language revitalization, increased course offerings centered upon Native American practices and history, unique classroom designs that include outdoor classes, and the inclusion of more cultural experts within the classroom as a knowledge resource. In so doing, public high schools will at long last join together with current and future Native American students in honoring the sacrifices made by their ancestors, and earn absolution for past transgressions by ensuring the ability of indigenous cultures to survive for future generations.

## Acknowledgements

This work, although immense in terms of size and expended effort to complete, truly represents only a small milestone within a larger journey. As my career has evolved from student, to teacher, to administrator, I am fully aware that I have been the beneficiary of an uncommon amount of support and good-will along the way. I am here now in life because of all those that supported, believed, and loved me along the way, and who continue to do so to this day.

First, I must express my gratitude to the participants of this study who agreed to take a trip down memory lane (at times a painful one) in a shared pursuit of trying to get a better understanding about what is happening in this world, and how our Native American people are being impacted by it. Through their grace, graciousness, and courage, they were able to share their stories for the greater good. For this I will forever remain grateful and indebted to them.

I would be remiss if I did not give a hearty hello and thank you to my fellow members of the Ed.D. 7 cohort. Through their unwavering support, great sense of humor, and honest engagements, I was provided with the requisite motivation to pursue this project until its conclusion. Bird by bird, with glitter (because the presence of glitter always means that a good time has just occurred), and weirdly but thankfully enough without another baby coming along (sorry to break the trend), I kept you all in my heart with each keystroke! In addition, I would like to thank the readers on my committee – Doctor Charlayne Myers and Doctor Harald K. Faber – whose insights, experiences, and above all immense patience was so greatly valued as I completed this work.

From the beginning to the end, there was my immediate family without whom none of this would have any meaning. For my three children, my sons Jordan and Jack, and my daughter

Arianna – this in large part is for you. Please remember, hard work always beats talent when talent doesn't work hard! I love you all and am so proud of each of you! My wife Mitzi, who surprisingly enough has not changed her identity and moved away as a result of the anxiety and perfectionist mania exhibited by her husband during this project, provided the solid bedrock of a foundation upon which my crazy could come to rest from time to time. Thank you so much Mitzi for believing in me, for supporting me, and for giving me up for all these years – both personally and from the family - in order to complete this work and this chapter of my life.

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Finally, for my mother *Chante Skuye Winyan* (“Sweet Heart Woman” – Patricia Hobot), and for my grandfather *Wanbli Tokeya* (“Leading Eagle” – James M. Fenelon - whose personal journey took him over to the other side during the final phases of this project), without your influence in my life I would not be here today, nor would this work. Please know that this dissertation was truly constructed in your honor ...

“A national culture, if it is to flourish, should be a constellation of cultures, the constituents of which, benefiting each other, benefit the whole.”

- T.S. Eliot

*Notes Towards The Definition of Culture* (Eliot, 1948, p. 58)

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“Great Spirit! ... You lived first, and you are older than all need, older than all prayer. All things belong to you – the two-legged, the four-legged, the wings of the air, and all green things that live . . . I am sending you a voice, Great Spirit, my Grandfather, forgetting nothing you have made, the stars of the universe and the grasses of the earth.”

- Black Elk, Oglala Lakota (Neihardt, 1979, p. 209)

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### *The Research Problem*

As a person of Native American descent, my being has been strongly influenced through the understanding of my culture, and of the history of my ancestors. This life journey to learn who I am culturally has taken me along a rocky, winding path through an aged forest comprised of hostility, aspersion, and illusion. This was never more present than during my time as a student within the public school system, and was unfortunately not an experience unique to my life alone. The historical association shared between schooling and cultural identity has been powerfully impactful upon the lives of millions of our nation's youth. Time and again throughout the history of the United States, the education system has been the principle vehicle chosen by the public for the purposes of molding and developing the cultural identities of its youth. Whether it was to confirm the civic engagement of the populace, to instill societal norms within new Americans, or to ensure loyalty and patriotism in the light of foreign existential threats, America's schools have repeatedly served as the chosen laboratory where our desired national identity could be incubated and grown.

For the Native American people, the relationship with the American school system has been one markedly defined by pain, loss, and anger. Many times this relationship devolved into an intentional, systematic assault upon our entire culture and social history. Such actions were undertaken so that indigenous youth could be quickly transformed into denizens of the dominant culture of the United States – a prospect to which they previously had no wish to take part, but now found themselves being consumed by it at an accelerated rate commensurate with the speed of an industrialized society. (Fear-Segal, 2007) The shadows cast by such historical traumas still

influences our community and our interactions with public education to this very day.

Unfortunately, as was the case then, so it remains. It is impossible for youth of any cultural group to escape the influence of the public education system in light of compulsory attendances laws. For the Native American student, such a prospect invariably evokes painful memories, while simultaneously produces feelings of trepidation at the specter of having to endure yet another year of trying to embrace their cultural inheritance from inside a system that has a history of being hostile to their very existence.

This dissertation seeks to examine where we are at today as a society in regards to the relationship between Native American students and the public education system of this nation. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to understand the impact that America's classrooms are having upon the Native American student's cultural identity - as related by the Native American student, their families, and by certain members of the education profession. How do Native American students who have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity? What are the views held by Native American elders regarding High School today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as High School students? Through this research effort, this work seeks to understand if the problems that occurred in the past are in fact still present now. It will try to ascertain if our society has progressed by adopting a more culturally inclusive pedagogy, or if it is still intent on prefabricating loyal, patriotic citizens in order to oblige some indeterminate threat to national security?

From time to time the tall trees along my life's path – borne of seeds sown from these very same misguided historical precedents - were able to block the light of understanding from

filtering down through the canopy towards my personage below. It was difficult to define my cultural identity within the context of the shifting moods and critical dispositions yielded within the schools I attended. Yet despite these long shadows, the songs and stories of my ancestors surrounded me and served as guidance – what John Cummins referred to as the “enormously rich human heritage of this continent [North America]”. (Reyner, 1990, p. 7) It was this very heritage that continued to encourage me to move forward in life, to keep learning about my family’s indigenous origins, and to keep on determining for myself just who I truly am – despite what was occurring within the classroom. The voices of my people compelled me to follow through on this journey not only for myself, but for the sake of others as well. It has become apparent that my educational experiences were certainly not unique, and that the knowledge I have gained has been gained for the express purposes of sharing with others so that they may avoid the trials that I have encountered. As such, it is important to me to positively influence future generations so that they can better navigate their pathways, and so that they do not run the risk of losing sight of themselves for the thickness of the trees and the darkness of shadows lying in wait along their way. That is why I have elected to pursue this particular line of research - to learn how their current journey within the public school system is different from that of my own, and how I might be able to effect a different, more positive outcome on their behalf.

With this context in mind, one must accept the powerful influence that formalized education has exerted upon our youth (myself included) regarding identity development and how it relates to their culture. In the United States, nearly one quarter of our entire life is spent matriculating within the halls of a public school – inside of institutions that have been specially charged with the relatively narrow focus of advancing the development of our children merely to become productive U.S. citizens capable of contributing to the larger society. (Mondale &

Patton, 2001) The enormous impact that public schools have had upon how we as Native Americans have come to understand our particular role in this modern world has been crippling.

For American Indian youth, the public education system within the United States of America has historically been at odds with the ways of our culture, and dismissive of the role that indigenous nations played within our collective past. During some of the more bleak eras, the proprietors of our public schools were outright hostile to the very existence of the indigenous peoples of North America, at times incorporating a structured system of humiliation and corporal punishment as a means of eliminating the practice of Native American cultural norms or languages by students. (Fear-Segal, 2007) Over time our system has gradually evolved for the better, becoming more humane in its methodologies, and more inclusive of our people's perspectives and history. (Huff, 1997) Yet in the light of some of the negative experiences I personally endured as a student, I knew that there was still need for further development in the manner in which Native American youth are formally educated. The principle result of this insight was my decision to focus my career within the field of education for the purposes of making a difference in this area.

Here in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we find ourselves living and working within an age of nearly constant reform. Public school districts are breaking from the past in expanding numbers, and are now openly endeavoring to embrace multi-cultural educative practices - with many having codified internal conduct policies ensuring inclusive practices their on campuses and within their classrooms. There are now even a handful of departments and institutions that have been specifically created to address the unique needs of minority students – including Native Americans. In addition to these adaptations towards a more modern, sophisticated approach regarding public education, we also live in an age where real-time data is compiled and

exhaustively examined through the latest applications of information technologies. This development has allowed educators the opportunity to assess the academic achievements of students in an ongoing manner that differentiates between the various minority subsets – all as a means of informing and improving the practices of our schools so that they can provide a high quality education for all of our society’s students.

While it is important to honor the way in which public schools now value engaging and monitoring the academic progress of American Indian students, it is unfortunate to note that the data generated of late still suggests that this particular community’s youth still struggle mightily to achieve meaningful accomplishments within our schools. As a result, the documented performance of Native American students are repeatedly cited as a principle reason for states and districts to enter into a seemingly ceaseless cycles of additional reform. (Klug, 2012) However, what appears to be lacking within these analyses is an assessment of how the overall educational *experience* within a public school impacts our youth – either positively or negatively – regarding the development of their own *cultural* understanding of self. I believe that even a cursory assessment of this issue would be of great value, and as such it is the central essence of the research problem this work seeks to address. For the sake of students of our community and their ability to achieve academically, we must examine how the experience of attending school is impacting the cultural identities of our children.

### *Personal and Professional Significance of the Research Problem*

As previously stated, my curiosity regarding this research problem was born out of my own unique heritage and personal experiences that have occurred throughout my life – not only during my formative years as a student but also now as a professional currently working in education as well. As such, I have become personally motivated by an interest in exploring the

issue of public schooling's impact on the cultural identity of Native American students. In so doing, it would provide an opening for gaining a deeper insight into multiple interrelated issues that temporally links together the past, present, and future. Through these insights, we will be better able to direct the evolving reform efforts within education so as to better serve our Native American students.

The first issue pertains to the hope of possibly reconciling elements of my own past through an examination of the added wisdom generated by the research and the stories shared by the subjects involved. Through such a reflection it becomes possible to dispel the shadows of previous experiences through the illumination generated by greater understanding. This expansion of comprehension could potentially unburden my soul from any longstanding hurt that may have been clouding my judgment in terms of honest reflection. Any such liberations of pain would only further enable me to reflect on my own past without undue bias, and thus create additional value to these experiences as something worthy of reflection when planning for today and tomorrow.

Second, this exploration affords an opportunity to ascertain both the good and the bad of what is actually being experienced within classrooms today by Native American students, and thus add to the knowledge base of teachers currently working within the system (a function directly affiliated with my current role as a lead administrator for a Native American-focused Alternative High School). As a result, the knowledge gained from such an assessment would also have direct applications towards potentially improving the academic performance metrics of this particular population going forward.

Finally, the research would undoubtedly serve as a powerful mechanism to enable myself personally to come to a higher consideration of my own being as I go forward down the wooded



pathway of life, informing my own evolution while further defining my future. Through this work and my engagement with my community that it will engender, I will be able to gain additional awareness as to where I would like to venture next, and in what manner I would like to further develop myself not only as a professional working in education, but as a father and as a human being.

### *My Formative Years and the Start of Schooling*

I am a person born of two worlds – one reflecting the traditional values of my Native American (Lakota) lineage, and the other bearing the countenance of my European extraction (of Irish and Polish roots). Arching over both of these personal ancestral pathways was the social environment within which my upbringing occurred – namely that of a lower middle-class household situated in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota. When taken all together, these varied elements created a unique and at times lonely existence as I struggled to comprehend the value of my heritage in the context of the larger world. At the center of this tension was the fact that what I was being taught at home often conflicted with what I was encountering just outside my front door. Most notably, the cultural knowledge passed on to me by family members was in sharp contrast with what I was being exposed to within the classrooms of the schools that I attended.

As these early years of being a student progressed, the cultural knowledge I acquired regarding my Native American heritage was seldom if ever reflected in the curriculum that I was introduced to by my teachers, nor was it ever exemplified by the remarks or attitudes that they exhibited during their lessons. Instead, what I typically encountered was the open denigration of my Native American culture by the people who populated these suburban classrooms (both teachers and students alike). It was as though they could not comprehend the cultural integrity of

the indigenous nations on this content, my mixed background, or even understand how their comments were hurtful and shaming. Thus a feeling of being markedly at odds with the nature of my schooling and the views of my peers seemed to always accompany me during my time as a student. I perpetually felt like an outsider sitting amongst a group that I could never be a part of.

A handful of incidents during this time reflecting this phenomenon were especially pronounced in their effect. As such they continue to stand out in my memory as being particularly influential on my personal development, as well as upon the understanding of my cultural heritage. These proverbial “watershed” moments were character-defining episodes by nature, and their collective impact is still felt to this day. An argument with my first-grade teacher over the meaning and facts relating to the historical origins of the Thanksgiving holiday. Being openly mocked and ridiculed by my sixth-grade teacher and fellow classmates after I had asserted my Native American heritage. The recurring denigration of my heritage as depicted within the textbooks and films used in class (and echoed by faculty and classmates) These incidents were in my estimation the most visceral exposures of a public education system that remained deeply flawed just beneath its surface, and that these flaws would serve to fuel my own sense of antipathy and isolation. However, it must be said that the totality of my educational experience was not entirely negative, that in fact there were many teachers throughout my time who were supportive and nurturing of my development academically. Yet, when it came to the concept of race, culture, and acceptance, - the idea of my own cultural identity - the efforts put forward by the various schools that I attended failed to support my development.

Further complicating this issue was my white complexion, which made it nearly impossible for me to fit in wherever I traveled. This was especially painful upon my return visits to the Reservations to spend time with family and friends where I would again be confronted

with disparaging remarks and racial epithets - only this time hurled by Native American strangers angered at my presence within their homeland. Such experiences would compromise a key point of contact with my contemporaries in Indian country, and furthered my cultural isolation. Being physical assaulted by other Native Youth, or verbally accosted at Pow-Wows as being an unwanted “white boy”, exacerbated this hurt. The resulting effect was that I perpetually felt like an outsider no matter what environment I found myself in. I was essentially cut off from learning about whom my people were and the value of our culture in any type of setting beyond my family’s living room and kitchen table.

### *Early Adulthood and the High School Experience*

As I grew older, my public education continued on in this manner, unfolding within a system that had yet to awaken from its decades-long slumber of ignorance and intolerance. My schools would remain deeply ensconced within a pervasive ethnocentrism that was layered with an unsubstantiated nationalistic idealism. This powerful combination of toxic ideologies had already come to define and influence public education for the better part of our nation’s history – and it was still so as I entered High School. The need for sanctuary was never more acute than during these later years, where I was quickly maturing from adolescence into adulthood - both intellectually and physiologically. It was also the time where the formation of my own individual identity was taking on ever more corporeal form with each passing day. Without support beyond my family, I found it incredibly difficult to carry on trying to learn about my heritage, who my ancestors were, and how all of this information could assist me as I transitioned on into the adult world.

Further life events that unfolded during this time would deepen my dissatisfaction with school – including witnessing an open hostility towards other cultural minorities as perpetrated

by fellow students in the hallways, locker rooms, and on the playing fields during sports practice. Classroom debates that disparaged the Tribal nations of our state that had students and staff alike repeatedly voicing their displeasure with existing treaty rights that allowed for Tribal nations to fish local waters in accordance with cultural customs, as well as enduring everyone's anger over a perceived unfairness with the sudden emergence of Tribal casinos. Without support being offered within the school, and in addition to the inertia of my own personal experiences, I felt compelled to lead an existence during High School living discreetly within a cultural "borderlands" – a place without cultural definitions or history, a place of solace from having to continually struggle towards understanding my identity within a society that seemed unwelcoming of such personal enterprises. It was a place from where I could learn how to fit in through silence and observation, to learn how to assimilate with my contemporaries. These were people with whom I shared classrooms, who unabashedly waved the American flag irrespective of what it had represented during our nation's past, who cheered for sports teams with offensive mascots, and who cursed the day that our state unjustly allowed for the creation Indian casinos.

When graduation day finally arrived, I was all too ready to leave. I had grown weary of having to continually navigate through the murky, swirling waters of a school environment where the pursuit of self-actualization was a lonely prospect buffeted by eddies of antiquated curricula - and at times - openly racist teachers and students. I had grown tired of always having to assume a defensive posture intellectually – standing up in defense of our people, our customs, and our history - in the face of overwhelming numbers of critics who continually disavowed such assertions. At the time of my departure, all that I was left with was the contemplation of one simple question: "Why did High School have to be like this?"

*An Historical Interlude . . .*

Concurrent with my own personal experiences, there is also the troubling history of Native American education within the United States as a whole. As my knowledge grew relating to this history, I came to see how this phenomenon continued to influence the educational experience of Native Americans on into the present-day – including influencing my own. So going forward after graduation, it became important for me to learn about these historical antecedents as a means of better understanding the relationship between what I experienced, and the currents of history that I was unwittingly caught up in as a student. It became clear that the past and the present were inextricably linked, and if nothing were to be learned from these occurrences, that the future itself would become predestined to follow the same rocky, shadow-strewn path.

As it began, the campaign to formally “school” Native American youth was born in the mid-eighteenth century out of a need to assimilate the indigenous nations into American society. The assimilation of the indigenous people was viewed as an integral strategy necessary for ending the ongoing bloody warfare that continued to rage on the frontier lands between the United States, private settlers, and Native American nations ever since first contact. The settlement of these lands by white Americans – as advocated by the federal government - stood in real jeopardy due to the recurring violence. Therefore the pacification of the American Indian became an imperative priority for the United States as many of these hostile tribes remained openly defiant to American domination and hegemony – as championed by President Andrew Johnson’s Peace Commission of 1865. (Eder & Reyner, 2004) Unfortunately, the continued resistance of the Native American people brought forward new and more insidious strategies for achieving this pacification– namely the use of boarding schools and the forced separation of Native American children from their communities. The educational practices implemented

within these particular institutions were comprehensive in nature and were executed “around the clock” for entirety of the day, and for the duration of the student’s entire youth. This was done to ensure the total assimilation of the Native American child within the dominant culture upon adulthood, without any interference from traditional influences that might still be present in the child’s home, or practiced by members of their family. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

Over the next several decades, an unrelenting pattern of intellectual and physical abuse was perpetrated by school officials, teachers, and clergy alike upon the vulnerable youth of the Native American people. These harsh tactics were employed deliberately as a strategic effort to destroy their cultural identity and extinguish their collective will to resist. As the chosen vehicle to be used, it was principally within the classroom where this campaign to break the spirit of a people occurred. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

After nearly a century, the model of boarding schools would eventually be abandoned as an official policy, but the damage that was wrought upon the Native American people as a result was profound and is still evident to this day – particularly as to how the Native American people view and value formal education in relation to the sustainment of their culture. (Huff, 1997) Yet despite the eventual demise of the boarding schools, the continual debasement of the Native American culture would continue on for decades longer. In its more recent incarnations, this assault on identity took on the form of culturally ignorant school curriculum, the ongoing inclusion of racist characterizations and imagery in the form of school mascots and institution-sponsored pageants and plays, and the upholding of erroneous historical assumptions by faculty and administration officials (in particular relating to Christopher Columbus, the founding of Jamestown, the origins of the Thanksgiving holiday, the “legend” of Sacagawea, and the history of “Manifest Destiny” - just to name a few). (Huff, 1997) As I came to understand this history, I

began to see strong connections between what had occurred historically with what I had encountered personally. It was through this type of public education system that my own path as a student traversed, until my eventual graduation and release from High School in 1995.

### *A Professional Life in Education*

Now, here in the twenty-first century, I have since become a professional educator myself, and after having taught in the classroom for several years, I now serve as the chief administrator of a small alternative high school within Minneapolis that specializes in working with Native American students. Upon completing my Master's degree in Education – including the obtainment of my teaching license – I was committed to teach within an urban environment, and if possible, to work specifically with the Native American student population. It was for me an opportunity to honor a commitment to professionally rectify the errors made in the past not only in my life, but in the lives of other Native American youth in decades past. It was my greatest fortune that a position opened up at precisely the right time to afford me just such a chance. And so my professional career began in earnest - fueled by personal passion and an abiding ideology predicated on developing the student's cultural identity as they simultaneously developed academically.

The students who have come to our alternative learning program are here because they have become disaffected with the mainstream schools they had previously attended within their local school districts, and have achieved little in the way of academics. Essentially these students are on their last chance to try to salvage their academic careers and earn a High School diploma. By and large, the student population is comprised almost entirely of Native American youth who reside within the urban core of the city, whose families are in desperate poverty, and who the “system” has already failed.

To support these students, our High School emphasizes our collective past as a people as a valued base of knowledge to draw from, and incorporates current perspectives of the Native American population within its daily operations as a means of focusing the students sense of self-worth – a distinct departure from what has occurred in the past. In fact, this strategy was undertaken as a direct response to the horrific historical impact formalized education had made upon our people as referred to earlier - while still building upon some of the advancements made in this area brought forth during recent years. Under my continued guidance, our institution has purposefully centered itself, its entire curriculum, and even the physical space that it occupies, upon reinforcing the Native American culture, perspectives, and practices. In so doing, our small school has successfully recaptured Native American students who had previously dropped out, and have empowered these students to graduate by *supporting* their cultural understandings as the necessary foundational work that serves to enable each to achieve academically. It is our hope that our efforts will serve to preserve the heritage that our ancestors struggled so long to maintain in order to pass down to us. It is also my own personal desire to eradicate any type of educational experience that I endured from every affecting another Native American High School student again. Influenced by my own recollections, I have guided our school to embody all that was lacking during those critical years of identity development within my own life. Here, the cultural identity of the student is sacrosanct, a sacred element to be explored and further defined as a prerequisite for the proper development of the individual person.

While I began my career as an instructor within this amazing school, I have since progressed into an administrative role whereupon the reinforcement of the school's mission, the ability to share its successes to a broader audience, as well as to ensure its solvency have now become the principle focus of my time. Through my efforts as the leader of this institution, it is



my job now to make certain that the faculty and staff remain committed to the vision and mission of our school, and whenever possible, I must also reach out and support similar such endeavors as a means of meeting the needs of our community's students. I move forward with such professional endeavors not only to provide assistance to my people, but to also address the lingering, lonely whimpers of a small student who was so lost during his time within the schools of suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota not so long ago.

From out of this context developed my ongoing fascination with the recurring theme involving how a person comes to understand their cultural identity and how that journey is impacted by their time in school – most significantly their time within High School (for this is where my current work occurs). This interplay between public education (which in the United States remains to this day a compulsory activity for all youth) and its effects on the development and sustainment of a person's cultural identity (specifically that of the Native American student within the context of secondary education) will be the principle research topic for my dissertation. I am interested in conducting this research as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of how members of *today's* Native American community view the relationship between formal education and their indigenous heritage, and what effects – if any – that it has had upon them as Native American students attending a public High School.

As such, I wish to learn more about what their views are regarding what they believe and interpret the impact of public education has had on their sense of cultural identity – all occurring just past the dark shadows of what has come before. I believe that emerging from their voices – through the sharing of their own personal viewpoints and experiences - will arise new knowledge that will serve to better inform the capabilities and policies of public secondary education institutions, and the practitioners therein. With that in mind, it is my intention to assess

just how far we have come regarding the evolution of our public school system at the secondary level with regard to its ongoing impact upon Native American students. What is the condition of this rocky and winding path for students today? Just how deep and dense are the shadows cast by the trees that surround them on all sides? Are any of the efforts today making this journey better for them?

### *The Research Questions*

The purpose of this dissertation will be to assess the impact that public secondary education is having upon the cultural identities of Native American students. As such, the work will intentionally target the ongoing tension existing between two key components – cultural identity of Native Americans and the public education system. Through the research, it is my hope to achieve a deeper understanding as to how both of these components are still influenced by this tension, and how this tension specifically continues to impact the development of our Native American youth.

The research itself will be focused to the confines of the public secondary school – or the High School experience – for this level of educational experience is directly related to my current professional career and will therefore have direct applications in concert with the other collected data. In addition, the inclusion of my own experiences will also allow for the opportunity to compare and contrast my own history with that of the present-day life experiences of Native American students currently enrolled in public High School. From there, I will then juxtapose these two unique storylines against the educational experiences of a third – that of our indigenous elders who walked along this very same wooded path before us all decades earlier. By triangulating these three distinct sets of shared experiences, I believe that a clearer picture of how High Schools are currently impacting the cultural identities of our Native youth will

emerge, and a deeper understanding of each of the three collections of lived experiences can be achieved.

With this in mind, the *specific* research questions that will be explored are as follows:

- 1a. How do Native American students that have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity?
- 1b. What are the views held by Native American elders regarding high school today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as high school students?

Overarching all of these questions would be a personal desire to weigh the information gathered from these sources against my own personal experiences as a student, as well as a person who now serves as an educational professional leading a public secondary school working specifically with Native Americans. This will be achieved by researching my own response to the second of the two research questions pertaining to the views of the elders within the Native American community. This group will be asked to reflect upon their own personal experiences in relation to what is being reported on by today's students.

Through the examination of these specific research questions - along with all of the sub-questions that will certainly follow in their wake once the research efforts have begun - it is my hope to triangulate the research between views expressed by current students, the elders who are in close relation to those students or with the community, and with that of my own experience – all in an effort of gaining a deeper understanding of the research problem being explored.

In order to ensure that the information gathered throughout the course of this study is accurate and truly reflective of the Native American community experiencing this phenomenon, I have chosen to directly engage those involved to learn of the viewpoints and beliefs that *they* currently hold. Therefore it is imperative that the findings take form as expressed by *their words*, through *their voices*, telling *their own stories*. As such, this dissertation will serve as a vehicle capable of eliciting meaning within the themes relating to cultural identity and formalized education that have been actually occurring within my life as well as within the lives of my people. The knowledge gained from this enterprise will not merely be for my own edification, but will also serve the interests for all who are involved by informing our practice towards the further betterment of the Native American educational experience.

#### *Overview of the Following Chapters*

As this work unfolds over the ensuing chapters, I will begin by exploring the various definitions of identity and cultural identity as defined by particular scholars within the field of psychology, and then transition into an examination of the historical record relating to American schools and their roles with regards to the development of student cultural identity. From there, an examination detailing historical antecedents that have established the foundation upon which public schools and the Native American experience has been built will be undertaken. In addition, I will also examine contemporary work written in response to the very same issue being explored by the research question and its subsets – how American Indian cultural identity has been impacted by public schooling, and recent recommendations for new methodologies to further support the community's students in this regard. Chapter 2 will therefore focus on the existing literature and previous work exploring the Native American experience in public schools, and will serve as the departure point for the forthcoming research occurring as a result

of this work. Through the establishment of what has occurred within the collective past of our people, the research will then be properly contextualized to transition its focus to assess what is happening within the here and now.

Chapter 3 will identify the research paradigm that I have chosen, as well as the rationale justifying the usage of this particular paradigm. This third chapter will also include a detailed explanation of the research methodologies that will be employed for the purposes of gathering data - including a description of the members who will be chosen to participate within the research and why they were appropriate to be selected in relation to the purposes of the dissertation. In addition, information detailing how the data will be organized once it has been collected will also be explained. Finally, the third chapter will also define the techniques for analysis that will be employed utilizing the data after it has been collected and organized. In essence, the purpose of this particular chapter is to provide a thorough description of the rationale for how the research will be executed, and in what manner the information gathered as a result of this research will be classified, interpreted, and analyzed.

The fourth chapter will consist of the actual data that was collected as a result of the research, and an accompanying analysis of that data confined to an examination of the information gathered via the research methodologies employed. In addition, this analysis will also draw in outside data and conclusions previously discussed within the literature review as found within Chapter 2 for the purposes of comparing what has been brought to light now juxtaposed against what was learned from historical antecedents already examined.

Finally, Chapter 5 will detail insights and emergent theories born out of the data results included within the preceding chapter. In addition, this final chapter will address any limitations that were present within this particular study, and as a result, the potential for new follow-up

research to add to the overall body of knowledge that this work has now contributed to. In addition, the fifth chapter will also afford an opportunity for the inclusion of any points of advocacy or policy suggestions that I believe will further serve the betterment of the experiences of Native American students who attend public secondary institutions.

“This American government, what is it but tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity?”

- Henry David Thoreau

*Civil Disobedience* (Atkinson, 1937, p. 635)

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Chapter Two Overview*

As identified within the previous chapter, the purpose of this dissertation is to assess the impact that public high schools are having upon the cultural identities of Native American students. In terms of reviewing the available literature relating to this particular research problem, there remains virtually no other published work that specifically addressed the issues raised by the overarching research questions (How do Native American students that have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity? What are the views held by Native American elders regarding high school today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as high school students?) What was available were a catalogue of resources examining the history of public education within the United States, the role and definitions of identity within society, the problematic historical record of Native American education within this country, as well as work meant to identify pedagogical practices that could assist in improving Native American academic achievement.

In order to construct the philosophic and theoretical foundations upon which the research portion of this dissertation would rest, I elected to approach the literature review from an asymmetrical axis of inquiry. Instead of following the more traditional path of directly drawing upon the wealth of knowledge found within an array of previous texts that were tied directly and specifically to the research question (which in point of fact such sources were simply not existent), I instead chose to take a different approach. Delineating the key components



embedded within the research question as a means of developing a pathway for guidance, I could then collect and develop a body of literature that would be able provide relatable insights and lateral documentation in support of the seemingly disparate issues being addressed within this work. Once identified and gathered, these materials would then comprise the body of literature to be reviewed for germane information relating to the specific issues identified within the research question. Insights then culled from the examination of these collected texts were then used as the building blocks for establishing the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

To this end, utilizing the two principle research questions identified in Chapter One, I distilled the preeminent foci found within these questions as the basis for the development of the literature review. The review was then centered upon the following three areas of concentration:

- 1) An exploration of established definitions, theories, and history relating to the concept of cultural identity regarding youth, young adults, and formalized schooling.
- 2) An understanding of the relationship existing between Native American communities and the American education system – both historically as well as currently.
- 3) An understanding of prescribed methodologies for greater cultural inclusivity and academic achievement within the classroom for Native American students specifically – as developed and implemented within recent years.

As a result of targeting the review of literature upon these three specific foci, I was able to collect specific resources designed to fit precisely within one of the three areas of concentration, and that could provide valuable contextual evidence deepening my understanding for each component part of the two research questions. When the sources collected for all three areas of concentration were then considered in concert with one another, I was then able to

construct a literature review that holistically addressed the principle thrust of the research problem and the ensuing research question.

What follows next within this chapter is an explanation of the literature categories that were employed, and then the actual written synthesis of the research conducted exploring these key texts – complete with my own analytic interpretations. Chapter two then draws to close with a collective summation of the reviewed literature that will serve as the foundation for the embarkation point whereupon the dissertation then transitions into the research phase – specifically with an explanation of the research methodologies to be employed as described in Chapter Three.

### *The Research Questions and the Creation of the Literature Review Categories*

Utilizing the now established areas of concentration – as defined by the central foci that were derived from the research questions being examined by this dissertation – I created three distinct categories that mirrored these areas of concentration. These categories would be capable of broadly housing the selected texts of the literature review, and would direct the manner in which the literature review would be executed. Once established, the various foci reflected within the principle research questions will then have been provided a theoretical underpinning as established by the seemingly unrelated – but now connected – texts that were reviewed. The literature review categories that were established are as follows:

Category #1- Understanding the Concepts of Cultural Identity as it relates to Education

Category #2 - The Historical Relationship between Native Americans and the United  
States School Systems

Category #3 – Towards Cultural Inclusivity and Effective Pedagogy: Current Trends in  
Native American Education

*Category #1: Understanding the Concepts of Cultural Identity as it relates Education*

*Definitions and concepts of cultural identity.*

One of the principle elements within this research is the concept of *identity* and *cultural identity* – in particular how these elements are impacted or influenced for Native American students throughout their matriculation within a public secondary school. In the context of this study, identity and cultural identity are aligned with many similarities, and for the purposes of this work the definition that will be employed will encompass both terms through the use of a complimentary and intertwined explanation. To this end, the definition whereby the expressions “identity” and “cultural identity” are conjoined will be defined as the sense of one’s self, one’s culture, and one’s place within the societal environment within which they live, and their culture as having been derived from self-attested identification in relation to their family upbringing and familial lineage. This definition was arrived at and supported by the literature reviewed for this dissertation.

To begin with, the efforts of the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson supports the inclusion of this basic, combined definition of identity with cultural identity previously stated. Erikson’s work asserts that there is combined functionality of both the inward and outwardly expressed personality inhabiting each human being. The manner in which these two aspects overcome ongoing challenges while a person lives on this planet is the principle catalyst fueling identity development and personal evolution. (Erikson, 1968) As such, a person’s culture and identity work in tandem as external challenges present themselves, and test the definitions held for each by the individual. In this sense, the ongoing relational exchange between the individual’s internal perception, sense of culture, self-awareness, and their environment serves as the determinant characteristics that establishes their overall identity.

Erikson argued that these challenges – referred to as “crises” – ultimately serve to continually refine the identity of the person and the conceptions of culture whereupon the person can function at a higher order of existence as they learn more of their own sense of self and how it relates to the wider world. (Erikson, 1968) This evolved state includes “an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity ‘to do well’.” (Erikson, 1968, p. 92) From Erikson’s perspective, the construct of identity thus fits with the chosen, braided definition for this work that includes the culture as well.

With regards to the development of ethnic or cultural identities, much of the literature suggests that these characteristics are most often determined through affiliation and associations introduced to the person during their formative years via their families and ancestral lineage. As a result of the transmission of cultural traditions and practices from one familial generation to the next, the individual develops an identification and self-subscribed sponsorship with a particular culture. (Sheets & Hollins, 1999). This self-sponsorship is typically carried with the individual throughout their childhood development and on into their adult lives – thus ensuring that the cultural identity as defined by the individual is present within the classroom during the time of compulsory school attendance. (Wortham, 2006)

Many leading thinkers within the American Indian community also ascribe familial and tribal affiliations and the inherent transfer of cultural knowledge between group members as the principal characteristic that defines the term “cultural identity” for the individual. As discussed by Julie L. Davis, the establishment and transmission of a cultural identity for indigenous students is a critical component that begins in the home life of the individual – as derived from the teachings of the family and the family’s elders. Often times the development of this cultural identity is neglected by the institutions out in the wider world through which Native people

would have to navigate (including schools), thus putting even more import on the individual's ability to retain and assert their cultural identification on their own. As a result, an adherence to these cultural practices and understandings as inculcated at the family level is believed by most Native Americans as the principal vehicle for instilling actual meaning to their existences by providing each individual with an identity to which they can adhere to. (Davis, 2013) Teresa L. McCarty expounded on this contention by asserting that a continuation of the cultural practices as established within the home on into the classroom would serve to further secure the personal sense of identity already present within the Native American student. (Klug, 2013) When these works are connected to the writing of Erikson, the inter-connectedness of identity and cultural identity, their self-determinant nature, and their ongoing relationship with the wider world support the chosen braided definition of "cultural identity" that will be utilized by this work.

From here, one must begin to understand the fragile state of a person's cultural identity and the powerful influence that both internal reflection and external stimuli can have upon it. Again, we return to Erikson, who delineated a sequential process of personality development that mirrors the physiological development of the individual. This sequence – if interposed upon by external events – could potentially constitute a critical moment of self-reflection, and in turn, self-development if the changes are incorporated and processed by the individual successfully. If not, the individual might potentially devolve into a cluttered state of debased functionality where past assurances and understandings that they had believed to be the component parts of their identity have been seemingly invalidated (specifically with regards to their cultural identities). (Erikson, 1959) Such junctures in the evolution of a persona were termed by Erikson as "identity crises" - whereby an individual who has not yet fully incorporated earlier personality developments within their existing conceptualization of their personality is then confronted by

another critical moment prematurely. This ensuing “crisis” typically has a high potential for generating a very negative effect upon the self-determined identity – potentially shattering their established construct while pushing the individual into an ill-defined psychological morass as they struggle to reorient themselves in the face of new external challenges. (Erikson, 1959)

When one considers the all-encompassing nature of the public school experience, especially in relation to the various stages of identity development exhibited within a school’s student body, the potential for negative impacts and Ericksonian crisis points to occur take on a heightened likelihood. For nearly eight hours each day, the youth of this country are ensconced within a single location governed by the ideals of a single institution - whereby such an external experience is most likely foreign to what they have been accustomed to as exhibited within their homes. This potential is then further exacerbated when external events directly serve to negate or repudiate cultural identifications held by the individual. “Youth after youth, bewildered by the incapacity to assume a role forced on him by the inexorable standardization of American adolescence, runs away in one form or another, dropping out of school, leaving jobs, staying out all night, or withdrawing into bizarre and inaccessible moods.” (Erikson, 1968. p.132) Wortham goes on within his work to contend that such moments do not necessarily need to be accumulated over time, or be directly linked to socio-historic antecedents in order to be of impact on the individual. Instead, he contends that a singular moment of experience within the classroom has the potential of profoundly affecting the identity construction of the student. (Wortham, 2006) Drawing upon the understanding that the individual’s construct of cultural identity is subjugated to continuous challenges by outside stimuli, and that such constructions of cultural identity remain tenuous throughout the development of youth, one must now take into consideration the deliberate efforts of the United States education system to influence these processes.

*Historical considerations of cultural identity in education.*

One of the central objectives for the American education system since the birth of this nation was to transform its youth into productive, morally upright, and loyal citizens of the republic through formalized schooling. (Tyack, 2003) After the successful conclusion of the revolutionary war, such pursuits were deemed outright necessary in light of the variances in lifestyle existing between the distinct geographic regions of the young nation. Within each of these fledgling states were uneven levels of education, as well as wide disparities of wealth between communities, all underscored the relative novelty – and hence instability - of the new democratic “experiment” now embraced by the recently liberated republic. To address these perceived divisions and to facilitate greater cohesion amongst the population, several prominent civic leaders of the late nineteenth century endeavored to infuse curriculum within the functioning school systems that not only taught pupils within the traditional content areas focused on cognitive development, but also deliberately emphasized the development of the actual identity for each student – namely that of their being distinctly “American.” (Mondale & Patton, 2001) Through the employment of such training and conditioning of youth within public schools, it was believed that democracy could be preserved through the ongoing production of a thoughtful and engaged civic population - as constructed by the education system. Yet this presented a transactional enterprise, whereby the independently developed cultural identity held by students and supported by their families and communities would have to be supplanted by this new system. At the dawn of the American nation, elected officials believed it was an insistence upon the people that had to be made. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

By the dawn of the twentieth century, the United States found itself operating within a new social and economic paradigm. In the West, the frontier had essentially been “closed” with

the cessation of hostilities between the government and indigenous peoples living therein, as well as with the massive expansion of American settlements having been firmly rooted all the way to the Pacific coast. In the East, unparalleled numbers of European immigrants were flooding the docks and cities of the eastern seaboard – swelling the populations of the urban centers seemingly overnight with masses of unskilled, foreign-born, and often times severely impoverished people. (Tyack, 2003) Within this context, the established power structure within the United States began to fear that this sudden influx of new people might permanently disrupt the established order that had prevailed upon the political landscape of the country for the past one-hundred and twenty five years – an order that had historically bestowed upon them their roles *as* the identified power structure. To this end, the public school system was turned to once again as the principle vehicle for addressing the needs now present within these newly arrived populations. “Common schools” as they were referred to – were dramatically augmented so as to be able to incorporate the children of these immigrant populations. (Tyack, 2003)

As is suggested by their name, the common schools were designed to provide a standardized curriculum and instruction relating to civil behavior in order to acculturate each student to match the vision of the nation as propagated by the societal leaders. Very little (if any) consideration was given to the cultural identities already adhered to by these youth or their families by the administrators of the common schools. However, many of these new arrivals to American shores were actually intent on adopting whatever practices, customs, societal protocols - even languages and surnames - so long as it hastened their family’s ability to be fully assimilated within their newly adopted homeland. Once more, the cultural identity of the student – as supported by their families and base communities – became necessarily expendable in the push for inclusion within the American society by new arrivals. Such desires for immediate



assimilation by these immigrant populations was due to their belief that it would prove to be the surest way of permanently securing their ability to stay in their newly adopted homeland, and in the process assuage their palpable fears of being forcibly returned to the harsh realities of their homelands that they had sought to escape in the first place. This receptive attitude towards assimilation also held true regarding the compulsory attendance of their children within common schools, essentially validating the rationale of the civic leaders who had created them. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) Such willingness to readily adopt the beliefs and cultural as exemplified by the dominant American culture at that time spoke equally about the privation and tribulation that prompted these people to leave their home country and take the perilous journey to America in the first place, as well as to the luster and promise of the American dream that drove them here.

For a portion of the population, the implementation and execution of the common school model worked well – serving to educate hundreds of thousands of American youth during the opening decades of the twentieth century. However, even here at this early date - during the infancy of the American public school system - the concept of cultural identity in relation to student development made an immediate and impactful emergence. Specifically, the lack of any deviation within the required content found within the curriculum of common schools quickly fostered controversy and widespread public condemnation within certain quarters – as though such deviations were “un-American.” The challenge itself emerged from the very same populations that had prompted the issuance of additional resources and support to the common school model to begin with – from these very same newly arriving immigrants. Ironically, the origins of the challenge to the concept of the common schools was not raised as a result of a debate involving American civic identity – but rather the religious identities of American citizens.

As these vast human waves of immigrants continued to wash upon American shores, many of the new arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe, thus creating a huge influx of members of the Catholic faith – the dominant religious affiliation found within those particular regions. Immediately, these new communities began to challenge the strict adherence to a here-to-fore Protestant-influenced curriculum within the common schools on the grounds that compulsory attendance by their children would in essence be forcing the next generation of their communities to turn their back on their collective heritage, as well as their accepted cultural identities. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) Local and religious leaders from Catholic communities then galvanized to forcibly change the content and standards regarding what would be taught within these schools, only to have their efforts fall woefully short. (Common schools would eventually reduce the inclusion of religious studies, as well as the direct use of the Bible, but such reforms were mainly cosmetic and not very far reaching). In the end, Catholics elected to start their own parochial school system predicated upon their Catholic faith, values, and culture as the preferred means of education their youth. As long as the faith-based teachings remained within the traditionally accepted Judea-Christian realm, and the American ethos was reinforced in the same manner as it was within the common schools by the materials used by the students, the power structure within the United States gave its tacit approval for the creation of the separate parochial system. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

What is important to note within this particular historical context is that even here at the outset of this public education system, large amounts of the civic population regarded the practices of schools as nakedly assimilative in their purpose, and outright dismissive – if not openly hostile to - the prospect of another culture that deviated from the preferred Protestant, Caucasian normative behaviors trumpeted by civic leaders of the United States at that time. It

was widely accepted by both sides of this issue that the preferred ethos of the dominant culture was in fact being liberally embedded within the minds of the students who attended these schools for the purposes of reprogramming or augmenting their personal cultural identities to support nationalistic intentions. (Tyack, 2003) In this light, the country witnessed that not only parents, but religious leaders within the mainstream United States society had coalesced around the common goal of protecting and reinforcing the integrity of the student's fragile cultural identity – and using daily school matriculation as the principle vehicle for doing so.

As the twentieth century wore on, the outbreak of two cataclysmic world wars embroiled the United States within a mechanized slaughter beyond its own shores in an unprecedented capacity. Despite coming out on the winning end regarding both of these foreign enterprises, the United States passed quickly through a brief reprieve of tranquility and peace, and then moved on into an international ideological battle between other military “super powers” who were diametrically opposed to our preferred ideology, and who were convinced that America was intent on disposing of them violently. As a result of all of the military conflicts and the ensuing Cold War, a heightened emphasis on nationalism and patriotism once again gripped the nation, and once again, the United States conscripted its public education system into service for the purposes of indoctrinating our youth as a means of inoculating our nation against this new and threatening foreign-born contagion. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

Here as before, the desired intent of using the public schools to further the homogenization of the American population via their youth took hold. The difference between this particular environment and what had come before was the inclusion and insistence upon the belief of American hegemony being imposed *upon the entire world* as a means of protecting ourselves at home. In this respect, the modality of education shifted from merely producing good

citizens that were somewhat capable in cognitive ability, able to assimilate within their society, and could ensure the longevity of the republic. Instead, the focus moved towards producing exceptional “citizen-patriots” who excelled and competed with one another as a means of asserting their loyalty to their nation, as well as through cognitive achievement - all in the hopes of contributing to the acceleration of American global dominance. A prime example of this phenomenon was the passage of the National Education Defense Act of 1958 – signed into law by the U.S. Congress underneath the spectral eye of the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* – whose repetitive orbits and unnerving, repetitive beeping served to underscore the paranoia experienced by many Americans. This sudden fear spawned by this unforeseen technological advancement within the context of the Cold War quickly fueled the public’s desire to use public schools to craft the right kind identity for its students. (Mondale & Patton, 2001) Here again, the independently developed cultural identity held by students and supported by their families and communities was supplanted within the classroom by a collective societal need to produce something else. In this instance disciplined citizen-patriots capable of intellectually outperforming our Soviet adversaries with control of the entire planet being in the balance.

As the political tumult of the 1960’s began to unfurl on the national stage – influenced by the sudden forced racial integration of Southern schools as engendered by the landmark ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* – the distinctions relating to personal cultural identities and their apparent disregard forcefully resurfaced as a contemporary issue with burgeoning support within the homes of many Americans. When digesting the last six decades of American history and the impact that schooling had upon the identity formation of students, and in light of the major political upheaval occurring in all quadrants of the nation (particularly in regards to civil rights and the war in Vietnam) both educators and American youth of the 1960’s reintroduced the need

to disavow the concepts of cultural homogenization as espoused by the traditional school system. (Tyack, 2003) As discussed by Hall and du Gay in relation to cultural identity formation, there remains an inherent need by humans to internalize and continuously recalculate their cultural identity as a means of trying to stay connected to the environment that they find themselves living in. (Hall & du Gay, 1996) While such instinctual processes as suggested Hall and du Gay may have been circumvented by the dogmatic schooling efforts during the first half of the century as a result of the nearly universal support within both parochial and public schools, the politically explosive sixties quickly deconstructed these aged expectations and reintroduced such internal considerations as student cultural identity in powerful fashion. Questions of “being” and the continual reassessment of individual cultural identity – most notably by the very administrators of our public education system – emerged during the second half of the decade. In this environment, students were left no choice but to follow the national zeitgeist and reassess the delicate nature of their own assumptions about their personages. This was the dawning of the age of identity politics. (Tyack, 2003)

The fragility of a student’s personal conception of cultural identity is an even more acute problem for the Native American community when these powerful, historical assimilation enterprises within schools were brought to bear upon them. By the late 1960’s, parents within the Native American community joined their voices with other cultural groups for the stronger inclusion of their cultural practices within the classroom. This fight would last for the better part of the remaining two decades of the twentieth century – often times having to settle for the mere *recognition* of their cultural ways so as not be totally negated by educators within the public school system. (Davis, 2013) Despite these efforts, many schools and professional educators continued to refuse acknowledgement of any cultural distinctions exhibited by Native American

students with regards their pedagogical approaches within the classroom. Deloria contends that the strict adherence to an accepted Western-European, pro-American approach to the learning process (ostensibly as a means of reinforcing the desired cultural assimilation sought for indigenous peoples) forced upon American Indian students a false dichotomy whereby they felt compelled to choose either adoption of such learning systems, or acceptance of their adversarial past toward the United States as a shameful, negative experience in need of historical expungement. They were expected to either severely repress their cultural predilections that had thus far aided their ability to learn within the structure of a formalized setting, or else the Native student could turn their back on the Western-European methods in favor of a reliance upon their familiar customs and culture – thereby sustaining the cultural identities but potentially severely impairing their ability to achieve academically and essentially ostracizing themselves from inclusion within the American “melting pot”. (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001) In the situation described by Deloria, we can see a powerful variant of an external challenge to the cultural identity of a youth who may not have developed a personal sense of conviction or adaptation regarding American hegemony. The most immediate result often times was the American Indian student’s accelerated slide towards an identity crisis – as suggested by Erikson - whereupon their developing sense of self was damaged or retarded in its ongoing evolution as a result of perpetually being confronted in classrooms with this external challenge to which they were unprepared for.

At this juncture, we must come to fully understand why such exceptional external challenges exist for specifically for American Indian students, why educators – even in this day and age – remain recalcitrant to embrace the cultural diversity reflected within the practices of their indigenous pupils, and why so many Native American students have struggled in years

gone by to achieve academically as a result of their insistence upon maintaining their cultural identities. Although as we have seen, many (if not all) of the distinct cultural sub-groups within this nation at one time or another were directly confronted with the homogeneous nature of the public school system and its insistence upon redefining the cultural identity of students to best fit national objectives, the experiences of the Native American people stand out in sharp contrast to many of their contemporary minority groups. For the indigenous nations of this land, it is an ongoing story of victors and the vanquished. They were not liberated peoples freed from slavery in search of new freedom and an opportunity to join the established American system. They were not new arrivals desperate to escape a horrific past and enamored by the potential obtainment of the American dream. Instead, they were a conquered and colonized people – unsure as to how an enemy of the state could or would be forcibly brought on into the dominant culture. (Fear-Segal, 2007) To understand the American Indian viewpoint, one must recast the historical precedents regarding the development of the American school system in a different light, and this time investigate such events through localized experiences shared by the members of the indigenous communities who found themselves overrun by a foreign and blood-thirsty army. Theirs was a truly unique involvement.

*Category #2: The Historical Relationship between Native Americans and the United States*

*School Systems*

The history of Native American education within the United States has been an unmitigated experience of brutality with regards to the destructive effect that it has had upon the culture of the people who were subjugated by it. As evidenced by the work of Adams, Eder & Reyhner, and Fear-Segal - all of whom have written detailed examinations of the history of Native American education - the United States endorsed and provided material support for a

campaign to systematically destroy the culture, history, and traditions of the Native American people living on this continent. The educational system was deliberately chosen as a principal weapon in this battle. Within the work of Eder and Reyhner, early efforts by the United States government such as the Indian Civilization Act of 1815 and the Civilization Fund of 1819 were both implemented to provide direct financial support from the United States to “religious groups and other interested individuals willing to live among and teach Indians” for the express purposes of converting Native Americans away from their traditional practices towards lives of domesticated agriculture, Christianity, and the usage of the English language and modern mathematics. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004, p. 43) Such conversion was characterized by Congress as the preferred method of introducing Native Americans to a model of civilized life embodied by the citizens of the United States, rather than having to liquidate them all through battle or forced privation, and hence more humane. It was believed that this ongoing process would in turn further entice American Indian people to abandon their cultural practices in favor of this new lifestyle once they had become more acclimated to it, and in turn bring an end to the open hostilities between each group. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004)

To this end, the formal education of the Native Americans could also serve as a vehicle to move them off of their expansive lands that were being used for their traditional practices of hunting and gathering. They would then be relocated onto smaller allotments as they were taught the ways of farming, and how to live harmoniously in permanent villages amongst Caucasian Christians – all as a result of their schooling. In so doing, it was believed that the indigenous tribes of North America would have incentive towards assimilating within the dominant U.S. culture in order to sustain their new lives as domestic farmers – as opposed to being slaughtered whole scale through ongoing conflict with the United States military. In addition, the



pacification of the indigenous peoples would occur simultaneously with their ceding huge tracts of land voluntarily - which could then be occupied by new American settlers moving west from rapidly congesting cities on the eastern seaboard. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) Unfortunately these early attempts at acculturation were not successful as many tribes continued to openly resist the westward expansion of the American people, or outright refused to partake within these new educational projects designed to transform them into “civilized” Christian farmers. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the writer Fear-Segal within her work *White Man’s Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation*, referred to the burgeoning desire of the American government that arose at this historical juncture for a “rapid, single-generation transformation of all Indian children” towards renouncing their traditional ways in favor of forcing their adoption of the lifestyle and practices of the American nation as a means of finally removing this obstinate barrier to U.S. expansion. (Fear-Segal, 2007, p. 43) Part of this desire by the government arose from the increasing levels of violence between the American Army and indigenous warriors out on the frontier – whereby countless white settlers had also become embroiled and killed. After the heinous blood-letting of the U.S. Civil War during the middle part of the nineteenth century, public opinion was firmly against any major or prolonged armed conflicts – particularly when involving populations they believed to be savage in their behaviors and practices (as was a common held opinion by working class individuals of the black community at the time of the conflict). (Fear-Segal, 2007)

Within this political context, the federal government looked for an intensive and comprehensive methodology in order to rapidly exterminate indigenous culture at its core as a means of expediting the American Indian people’s assimilation. The government found a new source inspiration through the work of an ambitious army officer by the name of Richard Henry

Pratt. In 1875 Pratt, while serving as a commandant of a federal American Indian prison colony at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, devised a new system of forced acculturation for the nearly three dozen indigenous warriors and spiritual leaders imprisoned there. While in charge, Pratt experimented with the extreme oscillating practices of corporal punishment, solitary confinement, long-term sensory deprivation, Christian indoctrination, combined with over-the-top rewards for the most banal of successful behaviors. (Adams, 1995) These behavior modifying practices sought to positively reinforce any expression of the American Indian prisoner towards adopting white, Judea-Christian, American culture - such as by providing lavish meals, new clothes, group gatherings with other prisoners, or brief supervised trips beyond the prison walls into nature in response to arriving at Church services on time consistently, or performing well at their assigned tasks of menial labor. Any failure or deviation from the expected behavior codes of the prison – particularly if the prisoners imbibed in any actions reflective of their indigenous culture, was met with swift and cruel repercussions intent on swiftly deterring any repeat offense. (Adams, 1995)

In addition to the behavior modification practices, Pratt also enforced strict grooming and dress protocols that echoed military standards. Prisoners were forced to cut their traditionally long hair, could not speak their own language (as English was only allowed), had to wear quasi-militaristic uniforms, and could not practice any religious ceremony that was not officially part of the Christian theological cannon. In short, all traces of indigenous culture – from appearance, communication, and practice - were disavowed and forbidden to exist within the walls of Fort Marion. Through this complete and total isolation of the prisoners from any sort of contact with their culture, and through the mixed use of brutal subjugation and lavish reward systems, Pratt was eventually successful in achieving his aims. In only a handful of years, Pratt was able to

reconstruct these adult indigenous males into English-speaking Christians who were capable of farming and intermingling with locals in nearby St. Augustine. (Adams, 1995) As Pratt's success was picked up by local and later national newspapers, the idea of "saving" the American Indian from their savage ways through forced educational assimilation began to take root within the minds of lawmakers. Although distasteful through its common use of physical brutality, Pratt's methods were deemed far preferable to outright extermination, and so the ability to re-educate American Indians – in much the same manner that had been occurring within common schools out east – embolden a new era of educational outreach into the frontier by the U.S. government on behalf of the indigenous populations living there. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

As these new emphasis on the schooling of American Indians began to materialize across the nation, the United States – working in concert with Christian missionary proxies – began to fortify their efforts for the physical domination of the entire continent, thereby fulfilling their claim of "Manifest Destiny". By eliminating the cultural identity of the Native American through forced assimilation, the American government believed that these hostile nations would simply cease to exist once consumed by the ever-expanding United States. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) In this sense, the last objective within the "Indian Wars" of the late nineteenth century was to crush the cultural identities of indigenous youth in order to hasten the projected plans of mass assimilation.

However, as was learned from the efforts of Captain Pratt, the common school model – which had been in operation in and around American Indian reservations for much of this time but had failed to achieve the assimilative objectives sought - would have to be jettisoned. Prior to the activities at Fort Marion, American Indian schools had typically been located adjacent to indigenous communities out on the frontier, and would only serve students during daytime hours.

With the arrival of the late afternoons each day, American Indian students would be discharged and free to return to their families – and their traditional ways. Referred to as “day schools”, these institutions were tasked with the most remedial of educational objectives, often times focusing merely on Bible recitation and basic English language development. Elders in the nearby camps were more accepting of the day schools and therefore encouraged their youth to attend, as they understood that their children would always return home to them by the evening. (Adams, 1995)

Yet progress – as determined by the rate of assimilation of the indigenous people on into American society – was painfully slow, and seldom effective. School administrators and faculty would often complain that their efforts were quickly extinguished during the time students spent at home amongst their relatives. More than anything, cultural confusion began to manifest within the youth who created a hybrid way of being - acting “white” during school hours in accordance with the wishes of the school teachers and principals, only to completely revert back to their traditional languages and customs immediately after dismissal once they were back home amongst their own people. (Adams, 1995) After years of marginal progress, frustrations began to mount amongst those who ran day schools, as they too began looking for more effective alternatives.

Operationally, the proprietors of new Pratt-inspired schools would now seek hasten the assimilative practices of formalized education. As a means of directly addressing the shortcomings of the day school methods, they would now instead seek to remove Native American children from their homes (often times against their will and against the will of their families) and inter them within a formalized institution for around-the-clock “education.” The school setting itself was designed to destroy all connection with their cultural roots and sever ties with

anyone who would advocate resistance. Constructed either on the outskirts of federal reservations, or else in the far reaches of frontier away from any American Indian encampment, these new schools would embody the characteristics of a military barracks. Once underway, the education of the indigenous youth would then be able to constitute around-the-clock militaristic indoctrination within the normative behaviors associated with the Christian, Western-European model of American society – far away from any indigenous interference. (Fear-Segal, 2007)

Once enrolled, students would now be forced to board at the institution, receiving instruction and behavior modification twenty four hours a day, and would be forced to stay for nearly 10 months each year (in some instances for the entire year). As explored within work of Fear-Segal, many of these “boarding schools”, including the progenitor of this system known as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (which was designed and operated by none other than Captain Pratt himself) enthusiastically employed curriculum and behavior modification practices designed to “Americanize” all aspects of the American Indian youth - including the wholesale replacement of their “clothes, values, language, and deportment”. (Fear-Segal, 2007, p. 163) Almost overnight, thousands of American Indian children were forcibly stripped away from their parents and traveled for several days in order to reach these newly constructed schools located on the very perimeter of civilization itself. (Adams, 1995)

Despite the protest of the affected American Indian families and the homesick cries of their missing children, this process was deemed necessary by powers within the U.S. government as a requisite measure to ensure the assimilation of the Native American people within the overall fabric of American society. To the extent that these procedures were believed integral are evidenced by the very fact that they were enforced from the very first moments after arrival of the Native student. “Upon enrolling, boarding and day school Indian students were re-clothed,

re-groomed, and re-named.” (Eder & Reyhner, 2004, p. 168) Pratt’s extreme system of forced behavior modification – first pioneered within the federal prison at Fort Marion – had now been formally adopted and was being implemented throughout the American west with an unprecedented rapidity. Only this time, instead of engaging adult prisoners of war, it was specifically targeting children, some of whom were not much older than 4 years of age. (Adams, 1995)

For nearly 50 years, these schools were the principal means by which the younger generations of the Native American people would receive any form of formal education. During this time, the youth of the Indian people were subjected to a deliberate and direct assault upon their own cultural identity, as well as their bodies and psyches. Through an ongoing and overt assault upon every aspect of their heritage, the boarding schools waged war upon the indigenous culture in its entirety by attacking American Indian children as a means of replacing within the hearts and minds of these vulnerable children the preferred ways of how they can be an American. (Fear-Segal, 2007) In essence, these boarding schools had become the new front lines in an intentional campaign of genocide directed at the flower of the next generation of indigenous people. However, as the years progressed, the goals set forth for these institutions were never met, and the challenge of incorporating the Native American fully into American society would persist. Owing to the tremendous ability of the American Indian people to resist, indigenous cultures survived the onslaught.

Even during the height of their existence, American Indian children would escape, running away back home, sometimes successfully, sometimes only to be caught and returned to the school. Risking severe physical punishment, students continued to speak their language in secret, as well as to pass on the stories regarding ceremonies and traditional practices amongst

one another. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) Although on the surface level it appeared that the American Indian students were successfully adapting to the American way, in reality the culture of the indigenous people was never fully extinguished.

Eventually, the majority of these schools were phased out as mounting criticism of federal Indian policy grew after World War I. The “Committee of One Hundred” – a federal committee called to order by the secretary of the interior – singled out the manner in which formalized education had failed the American Indian people. This report, coupled with the Merriam Report of 1928 established a new philosophy whereby it was believed to be a more effective practice to end the federal government’s unabashed support for boarding schools. Instead, these public reports advocated for a new approach whereby Native American students would now be allowed to enroll within the existing public school system alongside the children of white people. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) By allowing for cross-cultural matriculation, the schools within the public education system could then serve as a means of modeling the expectations of incorporating the desired societal hegemony. This most recent viewpoint was underscored by an ongoing internal migration as more and more American Indians moved off of reservation lands directly and on into the nearby surrounding white villages and small towns. With white families and American Indian families now living within the same civic spaces, elected officials thought it might be best to further encourage American Indian support for the town by allowing their children to attend the same schools. So, beginning in the era of the New Deal and the Franklin Roosevelt administration of the early 1930’s, American Indian youth began attending the same public schools as their Caucasian counterparts. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004)

Unfortunately, it would take nearly another three decades before schools and their curriculum would begin to actually acknowledge the right of existence owned by the culture and heritage of the indigenous people. Even during this time of increased access and tolerance of indigenous people within the public sphere, the presumptive attitudes of “Americanizing” the American Indian still proved prevalent within the curriculum and practices of these schools as well. The work of Delores J. Huff examines the efficacy of Native American education in the post-boarding school era that unfolded throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and her exploration regrettably revealed a deeply entrenched and ongoing practice of psychological and emotional damage continually wrought upon American Indian students as a result of antiquated curriculum and racist teacher mindsets. Such damage was particularly acute and liberally wrought upon those indigenous students who dared evoke or practice their traditional culture. Any deviation from the accepted American way was met with immediate censure and harsh (sometimes physical) retaliation. (Huff, 1997) As the years passed, and more harm was inflicted upon the youth of the American Indian people, a profound state of antipathy and anger quickly developed between the indigenous nations and the public school system of the United States. This malignant phenomenon, by the second half of the century having been inflicted upon several generations, was birthed from the boarding school era and reinforced within public schools in the years thereafter. It would come to be known as “historical trauma”, whereby indigenous families continue to bear deep wounds and scarring – both physical and psychological – incurred as a result of their experiences within schools. (Huff, 1997)

The ongoing result of historical trauma was that it has overtly and negatively influenced the relationships between the American Indian people with the formalized educational system of the United States. This very real condition is still present within the Native American community



to this day, with its most identifiable byproduct being a consistent and tragically low performance in terms of traditional academic measures as demonstrated by American Indian students within public schools, as well as an exorbitantly high drop-out rate amongst indigenous students. Unfortunately for the American Indian populations of the United States, their ongoing struggles within public schools were seldom interpreted by civic and school leaders as originating from this violent past, but rather as a short-coming or inability of American Indians themselves to perform at the same academic levels as their white peers. (Huff, 1997)

Much of this discontent and perceived failure would eventually reach a point of critical mass, whereupon leadership within the Native American community would begin to radicalize and organize along the lines of a more general political engagement inspired by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Furthering this agitation was the forced migration of American Indian people from reservations and rural towns into major metropolitan areas as a formalized federal policy. In an attempt to rectify persistent poverty that had plagued Indian reservations for generations, in the mid 1950's the U.S. government terminated federal financial support towards reservation services, and implemented a "relocation" policy where American Indians could voluntarily participate by permanently relocating from reservations for the nearest large city – as enabled by a government issued stipend and bus ticket. The hope was – on the part of the federal government – that the failure of economic prosperity to develop on tribal lands could be overcome by physically moving people to where the jobs were – in this case the large American cities. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004) Unfortunately, upon their arrival, newly transplanted American Indians found little in the way of meaningful employment, and even less in terms of housing. The immediate result of the relocation policy was the manifestation of severe poverty within the urban areas as well – as though the economic disparities found on the reservations had

merely followed people to their new homes. By the late 1960's, all of these historical occurrences contributed to a heightened frustration within the communities of indigenous people – both in rural and urban settings. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004)

This discontent would eventually manifest in the form of the American Indian Movement (AIM), an organization created in the late 1960's in Minneapolis, MN in response to repeated reports of police brutality. AIM began a political movement through which they insisted that American Indian people throughout the United States rediscover their traditional ways and begin practicing their cultural outwardly and openly. In addition, AIM called for policy changes whereby indigenous people could become truly empowered to take care of themselves and their tribal affiliations in an independent and autonomous fashion. (Hendricks, 2006) In addition, AIM membership immediately understood the impact and value that formalized education possessed for our people (many of whom within the leadership ranks of AIM had survived mandatory attendance at either government boarding schools or else within a missionary or parochial boarding school). As such, AIM would always include the education of its youth as a fundamental plank within their overall political platform. (Hendricks, 2006) For the members of AIM, the only way to alleviate the problems of Native American education was to disengage entirely from schools run by the government in any capacity, and to create their own system of schools predicated upon the cultural values of indigenous peoples. (Davis, 2013) Such schools would be run by the community, with input on all curriculum and teaching decisions. This particular time period constituted a critical turning point in the history and relationship between the Native American people and the American school system. It was at this juncture where the concept of a student's cultural identity began to take on primacy within the vanguard of

American Indian educative practices as a central consideration required for positive academic achievement.

Yet even after the advent of the American Indian Movement and the rising political involvement of indigenous people during this time, the development and support of Native American owned and operated schools – or at the very least Native American *oriented* schools – was slow to gain ground. Institutions such as the Heart of the Earth Survival School located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which opened its doors in the early 1970's, stood as a first-of-its kind example of how a school can be owned, operated, populated, and devoted to the Native American people. However, the persistent financial challenges faced by these schools precluded them from expanding and thriving – often times relegating them to embody a marginalized existence outside of the mainstream, reflective of the people themselves within the dominant culture. (Davis, 2013)

Also occurring during this time of reform and new thinking, leading educators and Native American elders continued to lobby for the further internal implementation of new initiatives within public schools so that they could better serve indigenous youth. Within the 1988 text *Teaching American Indian Students*, various key Native American educators enumerated a variety of teaching strategies and curriculum adjustments to be employed by public schools as a means of directly supporting the cultural identities of Native American students. They argued that if implemented such measures would demonstrably improve Native American educational achievement. In one instance, Karen Swisher and Donna Deyhle wrote that at the time of this particular text's publication, that "the body of research, although small, on learning styles of American Indian students presents some converging evidence that suggests common patterns or methods in the way these students come to know or understand the world", suggesting a further

need to tailor the educational experience of Native Americans towards their own cultural understandings and practices in order for them to be successful. (Reyhner, 1988, p. 86) In this sense, the cultural identities of the student became identified as the keystone upon which academic achievement must be built upon.

By 1991, a federal report was drafted and published by the Indian Nations At Risk Taskforce, a select group of leading educators derived from the United States Department of Education and from within the American Indian community itself. Their work, entitled *Indian Nations At Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action* continued the call for increased institutional reform within public education so as to empower Native students to achieve more. In short, the work emphasized a continued need to address the unique challenges faced by Native American students within our public schools – specifically regarding the ability for schools to work towards preserving and supporting the cultural identities of these students as they pursued their academic pathways. (Indian Nations At Risk Taskforce, 1991) However, despite all of these advances in thought regarding cultural identity and its relation to formal education at the close of the century, wholesale changes were slow to be implemented, if at all, by America's schools.

### *Category #3: Cultural Inclusivity: Current Trends in Native American Education*

We now stand within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - over one-hundred and forty years after the opening of the Fort Marion prison camp in St. Augustine, Florida, and fifty years after the dawn of the American Indian Movement. To date, our public school system is still grappling with how best to provide education to Native American youth that is culturally responsive, respectful, and engaging for students. Efforts are underway, and positive results are beginning to mount . . .

In recent years, new emphasis has been placed on preserving and promoting the cultural identities of American Indian students within public education. Educational leaders are focusing

their efforts in three main arenas: stakeholder engagement, curriculum redesign, and differentiated approaches within the learning space – all as a means of reinforcing the culture alongside the traditional content areas for indigenous students. (Klug, 2012)

With regards to stakeholder engagement, schools and school districts have come to recognize the necessity of buy in from the constituents to which each school must serve. In the wake of the tumultuous 1960's - when American Indian activism insisted upon total American Indian control of schools - public officials and elected school boards have made strong efforts to engage parents and community leaders within the Native American community as a means of informing the practice of teachers, as well as molding the types of curriculum to be used within classrooms. (Davis, 2013) From these ongoing discussions, an emerging emphasis on indigenous language revitalization and the inclusion of distinct cultural learning styles as a means of sustaining American Indian student achievement became paramount. As school districts began to implement these community recommendations, the indigenous communities sustained their levels of engagement within these forums – feeling respected and empowered to do so as an equal partner with the public educational system. The end result was an indelible impression being made on the manner in which American Indian students were being taught and the curriculum being uses - as defined by the people themselves. (Klug, 2012)

One specific case involved the Navajo nation when, of their own accord, tribal leadership reached out to bring a particular brand of an accelerated learning program onto their reservation schools – a program that until that point been nothing more than a methodology course taught within teacher education programs in major universities (such as the University of Nevada, Las Vegas). After having spent due diligence researching this the program, it was the belief of the Navajo nation that the design of these accelerated programs reflected their own traditional

practices, and as such might reinvent the educational delivery models within Navajo schools for the benefit of their students. Once brought in (as UNLV would eventually agree to partner with the tribe) this new working group set out to create a new vision of education that reflected both the desires of the tribal leaders, as well as the tenets of the accelerated program, and implemented this new way with much success. (Klug, 2012) In this sense, the call for Indian control of schools as staked out by the leadership of AIM fifty years ago has come to reality within this latest iteration of engagement.

Curriculum design was also directly targeted – particularly within the new century. In the wake of the passage of the federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), all minority groups were for the first time given special attention regarding the academic performance of their students. In the era of NCLB, American Indian students held the lowest achievement rates amongst their peers. To help rectify this situation, many states recognized the need to introduce indigenous perspectives and histories within the curriculum of the schools. The belief here was that through such inclusion of American Indian orientated material, American Indian students would have a greater engagement with the curriculum by understanding and recognizing the cultural relevance of what was being taught. For non-Native American students, the curriculum would ensure that old misconceptions and antiquated stereotypes relating to the American Indian people could forever be done away with. (Klug, 2012) To ensure that such curriculum was actually adopted by schools and faculty, many states set out to formally change the content area standards by deliberately enumerating many new required standards based upon Native American history and culture. Such changes to state standards were implemented within many states, with the direct result being the introduction of new curriculum that for the first time, incorporated the Native American perspective as viable and as a living part of the overall

American experience. American Indian student achievement data began showing a slow but steady improvement. (Klug, 2012)

Finally, echoing the accomplishments of American Indian operated schools of the early 1970's (schools such as the Little Red School House in St. Paul, MN, and the Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis, MN), tribal stakeholders, educational leaders, and teachers began a concerted effort to redefine – and in turn redesign – the nature of the learning space within which American Indian students would spend their time learning. New emphasis on outdoor engagements (camping, canoeing, wild rice harvesting, etc.) began to be incorporated within the overall delivery models of schools that serviced American Indian youth. In this way, students were able to practice their culture with the stewardship of elders as they learned content from the more familiar subject areas. This cross-over of extended learning in outdoor environments that blended traditional practice with mainstream content also began to bring about slow but positive growth with regards to American Indian student achievement.

In the end, the past twenty years has brought about a sustained effort to include and support the cultural identities of American Indian students, a far cry from the days of Fort Marion. Instead of prescribing educational pursuits to the indigenous people as a means of providing some sort of “salvation”, educational leaders have hard data over decades proving that such approaches failed. In the rubble of this failure – characterized by the common plight of any community without a functioning education system for their benefit – poverty, crime, drug addiction, gangs, sex trafficking, and overall destitution of spirit reigned. Our nation had no choice but to change their approach, and owing to the powerful engagement by the civic demonstrators and protestors during the late sixties, crystalized within the efforts of the American Indian Movement, the educational system finally allowed in members of indigenous

communities to begin planning together ways in which the public education system might finally serve to benefit Indian students everywhere. So the question now raises itself, and has become the central focus of the research of this project. In the here-and-now, how is the public education system impacting the cultural identities of Native American students?

*Chapter Two Summary: Setting the Stage for the Exploring the Research Questions*

When one examines the collected literature through the established categories as presented here within this review, it becomes apparent that identity and cultural identity are developed through a highly personal, and highly fragile system of interplay between the individual's sense of self, and how they conceptualize their role within the wider world that surrounds them. When the cultural considerations are added to this analysis – in particular for Native American students – it becomes evident that the ability for these students to obtain success has been severely compromised on account of the repetitive and unfortunate external challenges posed to their burgeoning sense of self development. To be repeatedly confronted with such challenges to their cultural identities would serve to only further complicate their ability to achieve academically at the same level as their peers by instead focusing their developmental energies on containing a painful and often times humiliating psychological disruption to their identities as crafted by their families. The irony here is that the preponderance of external challenges that were ultimately presented to students was done by the very proprietors of the educational system – through the ignorant and unyielding insistentcies of myopic civic leaders and educators who were intent on creating a particular brand of student that reinforced their conceptions of what it meant to be “an American” – a conception that seldom reflected the established culture of the student or of their families.



When transitioning to the historical antecedents relating to the interplay specifically between the Native American people and the educational systems employed by the government of the United States, these issues revolving around identity take on a new light – and a new significance. The identity issues confronting Native American students are not a recent development, but are the afterglow of the remnant ashes of an ancient fire that burned for decades – a fire set with the intention of destroying any culture that might deviate from the accepted and propagated dogma of what is required of a citizen of the United States. The methodologies of these destructive behaviors were never more acute than during their frontal assault upon the culture of the Native American people. In this context, the ongoing challenges to the identity development of Native American youth via the Erikson model throughout this nation's experience is nothing more than historical continuity – albeit in a more concentrated and insidious form. Until this damage is fully healed – as being attempted by educators and civic leaders here within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the historical trauma that was created will continue to fester. Thus the ongoing interplay and tensions present within these dynamics as reviewed in these pages – between what is considered to be “American” and what is not; what are the rights of the conquered once subjugated; and what is best for all of our society's youth – continue on into today's classrooms.

Yet all is not lost. With the onset of the political upheavals now synonymous with the decade of the sixties, a newfound vitality within the American Indian population surfaced, and with it a surge of energy to reshape the educational experiences of their children in a manner that not only was consistent with traditional practices, but enforced and supported such indigenous cultural considerations. With this renaissance came new found pedagogical practices emphasizing the Native perspective and support the indigenous student's cultural identities

through the inclusion of traditional Native wisdom and teachings. The direct result of these efforts was a powerful emergence of multi-cultural teaching and learning practices within the public school systems, including the development of Native American focused schools. The literature clearly informs us that by the close of the twentieth century and through the opening decades of the twenty-first, a major transition had begun whereby the antiquated, racist, and genocidal practices often affiliated with public schools in relation to the formalized education of American Indians was being supplanted by life-affirming and culturally supportive methods. It was nothing short of a major paradigm shift whereupon the safety, sanctity, and existence of the Native American community was forever moved out from being under continual existential threat, to becoming the collective focus of existential security by the very same public school system. All of these changes and reforms were centered upon the maintenance of the integrity of the Native American student's own cultural identity.

So how far have we come? What issues remain within this system? What might be working, and what efforts might still be in need of further reform? It is the hope of this research to try to ascertain just where we might be at by investigating the lived experiences of participants who are currently contending with our public schools – either as enrolled students, or as elder family members of enrolled students.

“Say not, ‘I have found the truth,’ but rather, ‘I have found a truth.’  
Say not, ‘I have found the path of the soul.’  
Say rather, ‘I have found the soul walking upon my path.’  
For the soul walks upon all paths.  
The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed.  
The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.”

- Khalil Gibran

*The Prophet* (Gibran, 2011, p. 54)

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Chapter Three Overview*

The purpose of this third chapter is to explain the research methodologies that were used to answer the research question central to this work, as well as establishing the philosophic and historical frameworks that have guided the decisions for adopting the approaches that were undertaken.

Originating from a constructivist paradigm, I elected to conduct a qualitative study that was geared towards seeking deeper understanding and meaning from a lived experience – specifically regarding the impact that public high schools have on the cultural identities of Native American students. To add corroborative validation to the data that would be generated as a result of this qualitative research, I briefly discuss the ways in which this dissertation utilized the technique of triangulating data sources and the importance therein of such applications.

From there, the chapter explains the two research designs that were employed by the study and why these two particular designs (*Grounded Theory and Autoethnography*) were selected - as well as the two research methods that were employed for the purposes of data collection (*Intensive Interviews and Autoethnographic Narrative*). To add clarity and purpose to the designs and methods that were used, this chapter also discusses the reasoning behind the selection of the participants and the unique manner as to how the data would be analyzed once collected.

By the conclusion of Chapter Three, the reader will have a clear understanding why this work approached answering the research question in the manner that it did, and how the

construction and implementation of these design choices effectively allowed for the gathering of pertinent data that would enable a meaningful analysis.

### *The Research Paradigm – A Constructivist Approach*

When considering the *positivist* and *postpositivist* manifestations of educational research paradigms – whereby it is assumed that reality is singular in nature, and is comprised of a fixed stratum of observable facts and empirical data that is confined inside defined parameters guiding the ongoing development of human knowledge - this work will deviate from such applications. Instead, the research presented within this dissertation has focused upon the *interpretation* of examined events as elucidated by the participants themselves. As positivism eventually gave way to postpositivism after World War II, and allowances for the consideration of contextual factors as well as the use of multiple theories when conducting research – yet it was still firmly anchored within the notion that there is a single reality to which all life must abide. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010) This dissertation will go in a different direction, guided by a relatively new paradigm of educational research that allows for the potential of multiple realities as *constructed* by the various accounts of the participants.

Through an examination of participant interpretations and recollections, the goal of this research will be to establish a pattern of various meanings as valued and detailed by the participants themselves - thereby allowing an emergent theory to be *constructed* out from amongst these varied and highly personal storylines. In this manner, this work then becomes an application of a constructivist approach to research, whereby a multitude of realities is brought forth within the study for the purposes of providing greater understanding, or for the linkage of commonalities that may engender understanding. McMillan and Schumacher refer to this as the “Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm” - within which the research will be housed, conducted,

and analyzed utilizing “systematic procedures but maintain[ing] that there are multiple socially constructed realities.” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p.6). Through the use of a constructivist paradigm, it is the hope that the research included here will be able to further understand a particular phenomenon as it was understood by those who are living in it now, or have lived through it, and in so doing attempt to identify commonalities woven through the myriad of “realities” brought forth from all of the experiences related by each participant.

Invoking a metaphor borne of the physical universe as a means of putting a finer point on this chosen paradigm, another way in which the constructivist approach can be conceptualized is to see this study from an externally removed vantage point that encapsulates the whole – much like the understanding that our planet lies within the an overall celestial body comprised of billions of various solar systems known as the Milky Way galaxy. It is here, at the galactic level, where the acknowledgement of the constructivist research paradigm best fits. Although Earth is but a small, singular point situated within one particular solar system comprised of other planets with observable patterns of movement (and in this case a stand-in for this dissertation), we must also understand that there are multitudes of other solar systems, each complete with their own patterns and occurrences – *their own unique realities* – each of which are coexisting within this same galaxy. As we then metaphorically move closer towards our intended target – the specific research question to be examined - it becomes the task of the researcher to delimit oneself from any one prescribed reality as experienced by any one of the component parts found within this heavenly cluster. Instead, the researcher within a constructivist paradigm must concentrate efforts on gathering new information with the intent of recirculating it back amongst the whole as a means of adding additional meaning to the individual lived experiences, but also as a contribution to the understanding of the totality of the unified – or galactic – existence as they

orbit their target. Through the compilation of both individual and collective perspectives, a clearer and more meaningful understanding of the human experience can thus appear as the new information is then conjoined with other research product.

Owing to the fact that within this metaphor (and paradigm) there is no one singular reality, that there is no divorcing of observable phenomenon from the feelings and interpretations of those being studied, and that the ability to extrapolate findings to create clear causal relationships takes a backseat to the principle mission of understanding the phenomenon - the overall method of inquiry that best suits this particular paradigm is that of the *qualitative study*. The hallmarks of qualitative research relies upon narrative response, the broadening of understanding as accomplished through the detailed description of a phenomenon from multiple participants, and an inductive method of evaluating and analyzing data as a means of constructing new perspectives and new knowledge. (Maxwell, 2013)

#### *Overall Method of Inquiry – A Qualitative Study*

Traveling deeper into this galaxy of methodology on to the next level within this overall methodological framework, it becomes evident that the research for this dissertation will be *qualitative* in nature. Within this context, the work will attempt to inform the reader about the worldviews and personal events as experienced by the subjects being examined in order to foster a deeper understanding regarding a particular lived occurrence or phenomenon. Such an approach differs from that of that of a quantitative methodology which is predicated on the testing of data or of preexisting theories that have typically been embedded within numeric valuations occurring within a static environment. As Maxwell states: “To be genuinely qualitative research, a study must take account of the theories and perspectives of those studied, rather than relying entirely on established theoretical views or researched perspectives.”

(Maxwell, 2013, p. 53) Therefore, through the use of the qualitative approach, this research will “emphasize gathering data on naturally occurring phenomenon . . . data . . . in the form of words, rather than numbers.” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 23).

This particular research project will employ a combination of differing qualitative research designs in an effort to bring to the surface the personal experience and personal views of the subjects participating within this inquiry. Through their words, through their opinions, and through the examination of their unique life experiences the research will ultimately construct a deeper understanding of the research questions being pursued. Through the use of a qualitative approach, the work will also be untethered from any dogmatic adherence to preexisting theories, or from pre-supposed and hypothesized relationships that are to be tested for validity.

(McMillan and Schumacher) In this respect, a qualitative study such as this is an act of venturing out boldly into uncharted territory – first by incorporating my own personal experiences, then by making contact with the denizens who might populate this new terrain, and whereby the observances and recorded histories as related by these individuals then becomes the centerpiece of the research effort. Through the exploration of the personal experiences of those who have lived (or are living within) a particular phenomenon that the research has set out to explore - as enabled by the vehicle of the research question –lies the catalyst for the construction of new knowledge and new understandings.

### *Validating the Research – The Triangulation of Information*

As we now navigate closer to the centerpiece of this work in terms of the galactic metaphor that considers the entirety of this research, it is important to note the systematic manner in which the data of this qualitative study will be arranged, and why. This work will attempt to *triangulate* the views, interpretations, experiences, and perceptions as lived by three distinct



groups or subjects against one another in order to foster a deeper understanding of this particular phenomenon. According to Maxwell, the most common application of triangulation is through the use of various methods of inquiry (i.e.: observations, interviews, surveys, document analysis, et al) which can then protect the work from potential validity threats inherent within any one particular method. (Maxwell, 2013) Yet such applications are not the only manner that triangulation can occur.

McMillan and Shumacher contend that there are various ways in which a researcher can apply a triangulated approach. One such example includes the triangulation of source points from where the data is to be collected, whereby the researcher acquires the potential for generating deeper understandings or differing insights into the topic being explored through the juxtaposition of the differing sources of data or inquiry methods (or both) against one another. This juxtaposition of the data source points is done in the hope of either corroborating or contradicting gathered information as a means of constructing new knowledge about the topic being explored. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). “In its broad sense, triangulation also can refer to use of multiple researchers, multiple theories, or perspectives to interpret the data; multiple data sources to corroborate data, and multiple disciplines to broaden one’s understanding of the method and the phenomenon of interest.” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010. p. 331)

For the purposes of this dissertation, the triangulation will take the form of collecting the data from three unique source points. The first collection point will be gathered from current Native American students enrolled in a secondary level school (High School) within the public education system here in Minnesota. The second source point will be the collection of views as expressed by Native American elders who also share in this very same particular experience

being researched through familial relations. Finally, each of these two sets of data will then be weighed against the third source point – that of my own experience as detailed by the author through a series of reflections upon key events as both a student and now as a professional educator (the purpose as to why these parties were selected will be discussed later on in this chapter).

### *Research Designs*

We are moving even closer to the central destination within this celestial metaphor. The chosen overarching research design can be considered a specific solar system or planetoid cluster within which the phenomenon or participants can be found. What is to be employed within this qualitative framework is known as *grounded theory* – which will in fact be working in concert with a second research design – that of *autoethnographic inquiry* - as the research question is explored from not only the viewpoint of both participants, but from the experiences of the researcher as well. Through the coordinated use of these two designs - which essentially envelope the participants and their experiences lying at the heart of the research - it is the intention of this dissertation to bring a unique depth of analysis to the information gathered by allowing for three distinct sources of information to be called upon (elders, current students, and the researcher himself). The resulting effect of using three sources of data will create the conditions requisite for the employment of the triangulation aspect of the research mentioned earlier. However, the process of collecting this data will not be for the purposes of testing a hypothesis, or the validity of an existing theory, or to try to fit the information gathered into a preexisting and defined schema. Instead, through the application of the tenets of grounded theory, all theoretical considerations related to this material must *emerge* out from the data that is collected, which in turn allows for the “theory” to be constructed.

### *Grounded Theory*

McMillan and Schumacher describe grounded theory as research that exists within the very context of the phenomenon being studied - whereupon throughout the entirety of the data collection period, any applied theory is derived from that which is collected, with the theory itself essentially having been tied – or “grounded” - to the very data that was collected. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010.) In this way, once the data has been collected and analyzed, the theoretical considerations will then be borne out of this material - as opposed to the contrary whereby the research is either made to fit into an established theory, or used to discredit one.

Unlike many of its qualitative counterparts, grounded theory remains unrestricted from any pre-supposition or from the application of a known theory or hypothesis. Instead, grounded theory retains an open-ended status free of judgment until all of the data has been collected, coded, and analyzed – from which it then manifests. (Charmaz, 2006) As such, the subjects of the research are at greater liberty to influence the eventual theory by freely expressing their own views and experiences about the research problem being examined - not only as firsthand participants within the subject matter being explored, but also as active participants within the research endeavor itself. Such outcomes are possible for the participants are also untethered and uninhibited by any dogmatic adherence to a pre-established theory or fixed reality that may be imposed – either deliberately or inadvertently – by the researcher. Instead, participants are permitted to relate their experiences to the researcher as the latent theory begins rising out not only from the data, but also from the interpretations that the researcher derives from conducting the study itself.

In relation to these amorphous characteristics of grounded theory, McMillan and Schumacher go on to cite the potential for three distinct types of grounded theory applications:

systematic, emerging, and constructivist. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010.) For this particular work, a *constructivist* application of grounded theory is most appropriate and is the one that is to be applied (also in keeping with the overall constructivist research paradigm referred to earlier in this chapter). “The constructivist design [of grounded theory] focuses on the perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of the participants. The findings tend to reflect ‘active’ codes that emphasize how participants have changed their perceptions and insights.” (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 347) Operating within this context, the constructivist variant of grounded theory remains in perpetual redefinition for the researcher must continually apply new evidence and ideas to the overall analysis *during* the actual collection process as information is relayed to the researcher by the subjects being examined. It is through this process where the theory is born. Kathy Charmaz summarized this process in the following manner: “Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflective stance toward the research process and products and consider how their theories evolve, which involves reflecting on [an] earlier point that both researchers and research participants interpret meanings and actions.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131)

With this understanding, the researcher cannot wait for the collection process to be complete before the latent theory begins to emerge, but rather the researcher is actively constructing, refining, and developing this nascent theory based on the data collected as the research processes unfold. For the purposes of this study, the theory that will ultimately materialize out of the research will do so via the specific data collection methods, and analytics that will be applied – intensive interviews, coding, and memo-writing (with each being examined in greater detail later on in this chapter) – that are consistent with the use of a grounded theory design model.

Once the proverbial dust has settled in the wake of the research conducted for this dissertation, a new theory regarding the topic explored will have emerged. This new theory will have been born of the data and shared experiences that were shared by participants through the actual processes of conducting the research and will thus be forever anchored – or grounded - to it. (Charmaz, 2006) Through this application of the grounded theory design a new knowledge set will have been constructed for future analyzation and consumption, whereupon it can then added to the existing body of work relating to the research problem being explored.

### *Autoethnographic Inquiry*

In order to augment the purposes of the grounded theory approach, as well as to create the right conditions to be able to triangulate the data amongst multiple data sources, a second research design will be employed in concert with the first - that of autoethnographic inquiry. This relatively recent addition to the overall matrix of qualitative research designs became more widespread towards the close of the twentieth century. The central concept of autoethnographic research is that it is a first-hand, in-depth analysis of personal experience as a means of ascertaining deeper contextual meaning regarding the cultural aspects that surround the writer, as well as deliberating upon any assumptions held by the writer in relation to their lives as they occurred within a particular social context. (Chang, 2008) In this sense, the work of the autoethnographer is more than just a retelling of the events of their lives - a manner akin to the autobiography – but rather this approach takes a concerted effort to connect the personal lived experience with the broader social and cultural environment within which these lived experiences occurred, and to critically examine the interrelational impact between the participant and their environment. (Chang, 2008).

Denzin goes on to clarify the purposes for conducting an autoethnographic inquiry: “We study how experience is constituted, framed, discussed, performed, analyzed, talked about, and interpreted. . . . To think of experience this way is to interrogate the practices that give these identities the appearance of being real and authentic.” (Denzin, 2014, p. 41) Through this perspective, the autoethnographic inquiry is an ongoing assessment of a person’s life as the person continually applies a critical eye towards a self-examination of their own interpretations of eventful moments – including both intellectual and emotional responses, and the reasoning as to why the environments that housed their experiences were the way they were. This is done for the purposes of trying to understand what is “real” or what “reality” was as experienced by the individual. (Denzin, 2014) The autoethnography then becomes more than just mere reflection, but a scientific dissection of life events in order to ascertain the relationship between the person and their cultural context, how each influenced the other, and what was “real” and what may not have been.

In this respect, the concept of culture is central to the autoethnographic approach, for culture is considered by Chang (2008) to be the totality of experience shared by groups of individuals living in contact with one another for the duration of their individual life spans. Therefore, it is impossible for the life experiences examined by the autoethnographer to have occurred in isolation – devoid of impact or influence - either upon or from - the extant culture within which they live day-to-day. (Chang, 2008) Cultural analysis then becomes one of the central objectives for any autoethnographic inquiry – whereby the writer begins examining their assumptions and interpretations of a lived experience in relation to the cultural dynamics at play at the time of the occurrence being examined, as well as to ascertain any changes within that culture in the time that has passed since the experiences transpired. As Jacquelyn Allen-

Collinson wrote: “Autoethnographic researchers whose focus shifts toward the “culture” end of the auto-ethno spectrum are usually subject to in-depth analysis of their lived experiences *qua* member of a cultural or subcultural group, with the aim of portraying vividly, and illuminating perceptively, wider cultural experiences, practices and processes.” (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 287) The autoethnographer not only is documenting their own lives, but also have the dual responsibility of offering a critical analysis and interpretation of their surrounding cultural environment.

In a related statement extolling the connections between the autoethnographer and their surrounding environment, the social scientist Arthur P. Bochner added yet another layer of connectivity by establishing a relationship shared between the researcher and the research itself. Bochner asserted that autoethnography was for him a manner of social science inquiry that broke down barriers between researcher and research topic, and in so doing, removed antiquated assumptions that the experiences of the researcher remained alienated from their work. (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013) From Bochner’s perspective, the autoethnographer is inextricably linked to their environment, as well as their conscience appraisal of their own research. As such both linkages must always be present within any rendition of autoethnographic inquiry.

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is my intention to also break down such artificial barriers and include the critical examinations of distinctive lived experiences that occurred within my own life through the inclusion of an autoethnographic inquiry in the form of an autoethnographic narrative (the specifics of the narrative will be described later on in this chapter). Such an approach is inherently meritorious for my life experiences encompass both aspects of the research question –I was once a Native American student who attended a public high school, and am now a professional educator who works almost exclusively with current

Native American high school students within the public education system. Through the use of an autoethnographic investigation regarding key life experiences drawn from each of these personal perspectives, a richer set of data will be generated as a result of having included my own perspectives that shares characteristics to what was expressed by the other research participants. The goal of this effort will be to juxtapose my own personal interpretations of key life-experiences and the cultural context within which they occurred against the other data sources being examined (as drawn from other Native American elders, and current Native American students) all as a means of identifying commonalities of experience, as well as differences of perception and opinion.

In addition, the inclusion of my personal narrative will also serve to bring deeper understanding regarding my own past experiences for my own edification, validating Bochner's point that the researcher is not divorced from their work, but strongly connected to it in a participatory fashion. Finally, the inclusion of my own autoethnographic piece will also serve to add my voice to that of the other participants as a valid point of reference within the overall research being conducted, and to the theory that will eventually be constructed via the application of the grounded theory design. In this respect, my own personal narrative will once again be interwoven within the cultural examinations posed by the research problem and research questions addressed by this work – thus continuing on the interrelational components already existing within my own lived experiences.

### *Selection of Participants*

The galactic metaphor that began this chapter has now arrived at its chosen destination point. We have traversed from the very large conceptions of this work at the outer most reaches, and moved successfully inward to a specific “planet” within this “galaxy” – that being the very



people with whom this research is concerned with – the participants of the study. When considering the totality of experiences within the history of public education as it relates to Native American students, there is a wide array of potential targets to investigate and call upon regarding the research question being explored within this dissertation. As Reyner and Deer illustrated within their work examining the history of Native American education, the slate of New Deal legislation in the 1930's provided for a host of new, federally supported educational efforts affecting huge portions of the Native American population eligible to attend public schools, and once the federal Relocation policies were enacted within 1950's, the reach of public education extended all the way from the reservations on into local urban centers. (Reyner, 1988) With such a widespread impact zone, there remains an ample and broad selection of participants to choose from in both rural and urban experiences that occurred over the course of several decades.

Regarding this particular study, I wanted to concentrate on a distinct time frame that revolved around my own personal timeline, and with student environments that were similar to that of my own – both as a high school student, and as an education professional. With this in mind, I was interested in learning about the experiences that occurred in the years just prior to my time as a student, then to follow-up and come to understand the experiences of students today in the wake of the professional efforts of myself and my colleagues. In between these two temporal points would be the autoethnographic examination of my own experiences – thus connecting all three data sets into a continuous time stream. In addition, I wanted the participants to have as similar settings as closely shared between all as possible. To accomplish this, I elected to set selection pool in either urban or rural areas– inclusive of reservations - for not only would

they resemble my own experiences as a student and professional educator, but also some of the historical occurrences examined within the literature review as well.

Following these design patterns, two distinct pools of participants representative of the chosen elements (two distinct time points bookending my own, as well as environments in either a suburban or urban area) came to the fore. In relation to research problem being explored (assessing how public secondary education is impacting the cultural identities of Native American students), elders who attended a public high school in the sixties, seventies, or eighties became a chosen participant demographic. The second pool would be comprised of Native American adults who have recently graduated from a public high school. To make this project manageable, yet also able to provide a depth of understanding warranting the effort, I have chosen to limit the amount of participants to six – three people from the first demographic pool (the elders), and three from the second demographic pool (Native American adults who have recently graduated).

When taken together with my own experiences, these seven distinct accounts generated by this research would be in a position to add greater clarity and richer data to inform the overall study. Also, by drawing input from three distinct data sources, this work would be able to then triangulate the related experiences between each source as a means of further deepening understanding and potentially constructing new knowledge. Finally, as will be detailed later on in this chapter, these data sources could potentially be returned to in terms of follow-up interviews for the purposes of conducting what is known as “theoretical sampling” – whereby emergent coding categories or the overall theoretical development within the design contexts of grounded theory would directly benefit by additional periods of data collection.

#### *Data Collection Process #1: Intensive Interviews*

In terms of this chapter's ongoing metaphor, it is time to land on the surface of our chosen planet and begin to collect information. In order to be able to pursue the research problem ("How does secondary public education impact the Native American student's concept of cultural identity?") – and in keeping with the established research paradigm, method of inquiry, and chosen research designs – the emphasis of this work will now be to understand the experiences of the subjects within the context of their own lives, as related by each participant. One of the most common data collection tools associated with grounded theory is that of the intensive interview. As a guided discussion prompted by thoughtful, open-ended questions designed by the researcher, these types of interviews allow for a deep exploration of the experiences of the participant through the vehicle of their own storytelling. (Seidman, 2013) Intensive interviewing also allows for the researcher to come to deeper understandings relating to the participant's direct experience during the analysis phase, for the prefabricated guide questions will have established a set of parameters to provide direction towards determining the emergence of latent concepts or theories within the data.

As Charmaz states: "Grounded theory methods require that researchers take control of their data collection and analysis, and in turn these methods give researchers more analytic control over their material. Qualitative interviewing provides an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight." (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28-29) When considered in this light, the use of intensive interviews directly compliments the grounded theory research design for it is an explicative experience generated by the participant, and based on their own personal experiences and perceptions regarding a specific phenomenon. The ability of the researcher to access these personal accounts insists upon the research methods being devoid of any

preconceived hypothesis, or extant theory. In so doing, the researcher is then empowered to allow the thematic and action-oriented similarities within these stories to surface in an organic and unencumbered manner whereby they are able to analyze the information in such a way where the latent theoretical considerations can then materialize of their own accord. (Charmaz, 2006)

Van Mannen contends that -through the use of such a collection tool as intensive interviewing - the researcher *must* come to see the world as the subject sees it and to understand the emotional and psychological implications after having lived through the occurrence central to the inquiry. The researcher must also determine how these shared experiences sheds light upon the nature of the phenomenon in general. (Van Mannen, 1990) The expressions and relations - as shared by the subject - are intrinsically imbued with meaning by the subject themselves by the simple fact that it was self-selected for sharing during the course of the inquiry. In this light, the content generated by the interview not only illuminates memory, but codifies experience as reality as it is recalled and understood by the participant.

However, as the work progresses, the researcher is responsible for assembling these various points of expression from the different subjects into a cognitive whole in the hopes of further distilling the essence of the particular human experience being examined. In so doing, the researcher is essentially extracting first-hand accounts as a means of determining further meaning of the phenomenon for consumption by those who were not involved. Max Van Mannen described the construction of such research through the process of intensive interviewing using “other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience.” (Van Mannen, 1990, p.

62). Therefore another purpose of intensive interviews is not only to reconstitute personal memory or lived experience, but to further define collective experiences as well.

The use of intensive interviews is to allow for the participating subject to freely elicit their own understandings and opinions as they relate to the phenomenon being researched. In this manner, it is the role of the researcher to *understand* the phenomenon as the subject has come to understand it. Through the sharing of their lived experience within the context of an interview, meaning is arrived at as the subjects themselves have constructed and shared it. (Seidman, 2013) Therefore, it is important to let the voices of the subjects to be heard, to let them speak for themselves and for the researcher to come to understand their interpretations of the phenomenon as they do. The best vehicle to allow this to happen is the intensive interview that provides for guided, yet open-ended questions which can then generate a thoughtful response on the part of the informant.

For the purposes of this work, the intensive interview questions that were used were designed to elicit open-ended responses relating to the informants experiences as a Native American student within a public high school, and when applicable (for elders who were former students), their thoughts of how their own experiences relate to what is occurring today for their family members who are currently attending a public high school. Specifically, the questions used were designed to draw out information relating to how their experiences within these institutions impacted their sense of cultural identity as a Native American student – with the hopes that a host of experiences would be available for each participant to elaborate on if they chose to do so. Additionally, the questions that were utilized also drew correlations with the historical antecedents related within the literature review, and also prompted the participants to synthesize their thinking by eliciting responses that pertained to an envisioned collective future.

(Specific characteristics about the exact questions constructed and employed are discussed in detail in chapter four.)

The format of the interview was deliberately relaxed and conversational in nature, with an allowance for as much time the participant could afford – with an understanding that one and a half hours of time for the interview would be ideal. The interviews were conducted in person, with an allowance for follow-up sessions (theoretical sampling – to be discussed later in this chapter) to occur either via telephone or again in the presence of the researcher. The questions were provided to each participant in advance to allow for them to think deeply about what was being asked, and in the hopes that such reflection would generate rich and informative responses.

Such considerations were implemented within the interview process to allow for the answers of the respondents to truly mold the collected data with as deep an understanding as they could muster regarding the topic of inquiry. Once complete, the interviews were transcribed, at which point data was then mined, evaluated, coded, sorted, and re-sorted in a methodologically consistent pattern with the constructivist nature of this entire research project. Without constraints or over-riding direction as a means of crafting a desired response, interviewees were free to elaborate or expound on the features of their lived experiences that they themselves felt were of value or import. It was the task of the interviewer (myself) to then adjust and remain flexible as the information emerged from the discussions created as a result of the interview process. As Charmaz stated: “Both grounded theory methods and intensive interviewing are open-ended but directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible approaches” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28) Once these interviews were concluded, a rich set of data had been procured from two distinct data sources – current Native American students attending a public high school, and that of certain Native American elders who also attended public high schools in their time and

who have relatives currently enrolled. These two data sources would now be joined by a third source – that being myself - in order to engage with the triangulation of data required of this work.

### *Data Collection #2: The Autoethnographic Narrative*

With regards to the inclusion of my own experiences, although listed here as the second data collection process within this overall research project, it was in fact the first piece of research to be executed on behalf of this dissertation. I employed a variation of an autoethnographic approach in order to assess my own opinions and reflections towards the phenomenon as related through a personal narrative. In this regard, I essentially will be turning the investigative approaches of the research upon myself, and through the inclusion of my own memories and perceptions relating to the same issues being examined within the interviews, I will produce deeper understandings of my lived experience to stand as part of the overall research. The purpose of including this narrative allows for the incorporation my own interpretations of the research question alongside that which has been gathered by the other two sources. As Van Mannen contended: “In drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others.” (Van Mannen, 1990, p. 54)

Another reason to pursue and include an autoethnographic narrative was so that as the researcher, I would have a vehicle for diving deeper into my own time stream to examine personal events with a critical eye as they relate to the overall research problem – as opposed merely retelling these events in a purely descriptive manner. Through this process, new understandings of my own life will lead to additional self-discovery in the here and now that would be applicable to the research. Therefore, a careful construction of the autoethnographic

narrative will be comprised through the thoughtful and ongoing exploration of autobiographical data, but will require the writer (myself) to critically assess the extent that the dominant societal culture has influenced upon these events. Ultimately this process will lead to new understandings regarding these relationships - not only with that of the dominant culture that has thus far housed my existence - but also concerning my own perceptions and self-understanding. (Chang, 2008) Once concluded, I can then embed my own involvements within the research context of this dissertation. As such, the reflections captured within the narrative will also be directly relatable to the experiences shared by the other research participants.

With regards to the construction and inclusion of my own autoethnographic narrative, this would be the first piece of formal research to be conducted – prior to the interviews. I focused on a handful of transformative experiences where I was either confronted with the overriding cultural context that was seemingly incongruent with my own understandings and upbringing, or when I was able to offer material support to the sustainment of a student's cultural identity. The commonalties shared by these experiences provide natural linkages – not only with each other, but with the wider research problem being addressed within this work – and therefore afford the opportunity for a deeper examination. The accounts detailed within the narrative are factual, and centered upon my experiences as a person of Native American culture within a public high school – both as a student and as a professional educator. Many of the open-ended questions utilized by the intensive interviews were derived from the composition of my autoethnographic narrative. This was done to ensure proper linkages with the overall work by flavoring the narrative with many of the same thematic concerns that were present within the intensive interviews conducted later with the other participants.



In addition, there remains an interpretive element as to what experiences – or “data” – that was collected as a result of writing this personal narrative, and the manner in which this data was analyzed. Such interpretive elements allows for a consistent approach to the research that remains tied to a constructivist methodology. As Chang states: “Autoethnography is interpretive in a sense that your personal perspectives are added in all steps of research, whether in data collection where certain memories are selected, in data analysis where certain themes are probed, or in data interpretation where certain meanings are searched.” (Chang, 2008, p. 140) The intent of the autoethnographic narrative is then to allow for a personal examination of these experiences as they are culled, composed, and studied – whereby new knowledge might emerge, providing for the opportunity of ongoing self-learning and self-discovery.

For the purposes of this work, the autoethnographic narrative examining key experiences within my own life will be included in conjunction with the transcribed interviews as an attachment within an appendix within this dissertation. However, to remain consistent with the application of grounded theory, the same coding mechanisms, memo-writing, and theoretical sampling (as described later on in this chapter) will be applied in like manner towards the autoethnographic narrative as it is towards the intensive interviews with the other research participants.

### *Transcription and Coding*

For this study, the interviews – after having been recorded – were then transcribed with numeric markers identifying each line. The purpose for the numeric devices would allow for the initiation of the coding procedures – following a pattern of line-by-line analysis for all transcribed interviews.

The coding processes as applied within the scope of grounded theory are the most integral function of this particular research design. The manner in which the data is sorted, analyzed, resorted, and finally assembled by the researcher is the determinant factor as to what theory will eventually arise from the data. (Charmaz, 2006) A unique feature of grounded theory is that the work of coding is not isolated to the period of time just after the completion of the data collection process, but rather the coding mechanisms are applied as an ongoing process beginning from the very outset of the data collection period, and the process itself is continuously revised throughout the entirety of the collection and analysis phases. In this sense, the data collection process and the coding process are truly intertwined components as the researcher continuously reviews the data for emergent themes and common concepts throughout the process - whereupon the genesis for a theory relating to the research question can eventually be constructed. As a result, the coding efforts become absolutely critical as the principle manner by which the researcher can establish the framework for the latent theory to be built on. (Charmaz, 2006)

By engaging all sets of data with the same coding approaches will serve to anchor all of the collected data gathered through the research efforts within the inductive tenets of grounded theory. As the research unfolds, the coding that is employed will possess three unique distinctions. The first distinction is that there will not be any use or application of predetermined coding categories throughout the entire research process. Instead, the coding practice will remain free of any preconceptions or extant theories in order for the work to be at liberty to establish its own categorical determinations as potential categories emerge out of the data collection process. The second unique feature is that the coding practice will be divided into two separate phases – an initial phase where the researcher begins preliminary classification exercises, which then is

followed by a focused phase – where the researcher begins to construct more finite and permanent categories for the data to be assembled into. Finally, the third distinction (detailed later) relates to the required ongoing process of memo-writing throughout the coding activities as the researcher examines and reflects upon the various coding information emerging over the course of the data collection process, and the potential development of a theory based on the data being compiled and coding techniques used.

Concerning the first phase of coding - what Charmaz referred to as “initial coding” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47) - the collected data is loosely assembled and reassembled into preliminary categories based upon what materializes from the data itself. This type of loose organization is done to identify recurring themes, recurring language or keywords, or emergent emotional responses repeatedly elucidated by the participants – or conversely by examining and ascertaining key differences. As stated by Kvale and Brinkman, the goal of this first phase of coding “is the development of categories that capture the fullness of the experiences and actions studied. Data instances are constantly compared for similarities and differences, which lead to sampling of new data and writing of theoretical memoranda.” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 202) As such, this work will employ several attempts at creating preliminary sets of codes based on the data, whereby through a progression of ongoing identification and alignment the data will eventually settle into a recurring pattern of repeated coding detailed later on in the research process. “Initial codes are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data. They are provisional because you aim to remain open to other analytic possibilities and create codes that best fit your data you have.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.48). For the purposes of this research, this initial coding phase will utilize a mechanism whereby each line of the interview transcripts will be

examined for commonalities and distinctions to allow for the development of preliminary coding sets.

The second phase of the coding process to be employed within this dissertation concerns the focused coding approach – described by Charmaz as when “you have established some strong analytic direction through your initial line-by-line coding, you can begin . . . to synthesize and explain larger segments of data.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57) Within this context, focused coding requires the researcher to begin establishing more concrete categories born of the initial coding analysis by which to classify the collect data – typically based on recurrence or import of the information that was collected. Through the process of focused coding, the researcher is then able to navigate between different data sources through the identification of common themes, opinions, experiences, and emotional responses expressed by the various research participants. (Charmaz, 2006) It is important to note, that as it was for the initial phase of coding, the focused phase does not need to occur within a prescribed time-frame, nor is the focused coding practice beholden to preexisting categories or theories. Focused coding can (and will) run *concurrently* with the data collection process, as well as with the initial coding phases. The focused coding activities will also be at liberty to construct its own categories based on the data that is collected during the research portion of this dissertation. In so doing, the researcher is then empowered to construct focused coding categories when they become evident – potentially capitalizing on what Charmaz referred to as “Aha! Now I understand!” moments when powerful evidence, coding categories, or theoretical considerations suddenly surfaces from the data. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 58) As such, the two phases of coding for this work – initial and focused – will be constructed from the data collected as the data is collected from the participants – thus allowing for the inductive determinations required of grounded theory. These same considerations – the negation of rigid

temporal executions of each component phase, and the ability to remain untethered to prefabricated categories or theories – also applies to the coding memo writing process that will also occur concurrent with the other two distinct features of this work’s coding processes. It is through the code memo writing process that the research will begin to formulate the theory to which it will have endeavored to construct. For the purposes of this study, the precise coding mechanisms that were employed are discussed in detail in chapter four.

### *Coding Memos, Theoretical Sampling, and Saturation*

As a resource to aid in synthesizing the data collected – as well as to transform initial coding sequences into more focused coding categories – the research will also employ ongoing coding memos written by the researcher as a means of adding additional clarity to the grounded theory design. These memos are typically personal in nature, reflecting the inner dialogue conducted by the researcher as the data is collected, analyzed, and sorted utilizing the initial coding that emerges, as well as understanding the process when the initial codes are then elevated on into the more focused coding structures to come. The purpose of the memos is to assist the researcher in further articulating the developing coding structure around which the emergent theory will be built upon. As Charmaz supports: “Memos give you a space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparison.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72-73)

The process for when and how to write such memos reflects the inductive patterns already established thus far within the process. Memo writing is not bound by any temporal considerations within the research process – they can and often do occur throughout the entirety of the work. Memo writing is not restricted by any formulaic construction nor any theoretical

considerations in terms of its content. Instead, the researcher is to use the act of ongoing memo writing to clarify and streamline their strategic thinking when considering all of the data that they are collecting or have collected. Once employed, memo writing can accomplish a variety of objectives as needed by the research project – such as enabling the assemblage of data within reasonable content clusters, establishing coding assignments, developing focused coding categories, creating theoretical constructs, or to identify needs for further data collection. The researcher is enabled to achieve these objectives through the self-reflection and meta-analysis that the practice of memo writing affords. (Maxwell, 2013) In this sense, and for the purposes of this dissertation, an ongoing process of memo-writing will occur in concert with the data collection, initial coding, focused coding, and theory development as a means of providing guidance as to how the work will be constructed.

In the event that initial and focused categories arise that possess too little data, or data that does not fully grasp the experiences being shared by the participants, it will be incumbent upon the researcher to return to the data sources and collect additional information targeted to addressing these identified gaps. Within her work, Charmaz defines such return to data collection throughout the process as *theoretical sampling* – whereby the researcher specifically targets the acquisition of new data for the express purposes of providing additional informational support to focused coding categories, or to the emergent theory. (Charmaz, 2006) It is for these very reasons that this research will employ theoretical sampling so as to ensure that the experiences related by the research participants are encapsulated as deeply and as richly as possible. The goal of theoretical sampling is to provide enough data so as to completely fill the focused coding categories - or the newly generated theory - with enough information that truly encapsulates the experiences shared by the participants to the greatest extent possible. “Categories are ‘saturated’

when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories.” (Charmaz, 2006. P. 113)

For the purposes of this research, theoretical sampling of the identified research participants will occur in accordance with the needs of the coding practices that develop over the course of the data collection process. If required, this will take the form of repeat interviews designed to specifically address information gaps that might arise, or to add additional detail to key concepts that begin to take on heightened theoretical importance as the research unfolds. In terms of applying these same coding mechanisms towards the autoethnographic narrative that will also be included within this work – including the concept of theoretical sampling if needed – such required revisions and additional information relating to the content of the narrative will be added in the form of addendums to the narrative piece itself. These addendums will also include explanations as to why such addendums were needed in relation to the coding mechanisms employed.

### *Theory Emergence within a Grounded Theory Enterprise*

Owing to the interpretive qualities present within a constructivist approach to grounded theory – as exemplified again and again throughout this dissertation, there is no one prescribed manner in which a theory is to be assembled and put forth for mass consumption at the conclusion of this work. This often times confounds a reader’s understanding of just what the emergent theory of a particular grounded theory research work really is – particularly if the reader is originating from a positivist approach whereby a static reality is tested via a presupposed hypothesis, with the ensuing results constituting the theory – either for the purposes of validation or invalidation. Charmaz also alludes to such issues relating to constructivist approaches to theory development: “Assertions abound about what stands as theory in grounded

theory, and that, of course, complicates assessing the extent to which grounded theorists have produced theories.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.133)

To this point, this dissertation will invoke the characteristics of an interpretive assessment of theory development – whereby the theory that emerges will have been built upon the researcher’s understanding of the explored phenomenon as defined by their own interpretations, and reflected – or “grounded” – within the collected and coded data. As Charmaz supports, researchers who employ the variant of constructivist grounded theory center their final theoretical considerations upon an abstract reading of the data and the experiences that were shared by the research participants as determined by the researcher themselves. (Charmaz, 2006)

In this light, the final construction of the theory of this work will be strongly influenced by my own interpretations of the focused coding of the data, and further developed in concert with the ongoing memo-writing process. The theory itself will be my interpretations of the existing relationships brought forth via the data and coding, as well as my ability to conceptualize ways in which the shared experiences of the participants might be utilized as a method to improve the experiences of future generations of Native American students matriculating within a public high school. This can be done via the theory’s identification of both promising practices as well as the definition of negative occurrences. Through such an analysis, the constructed theory will transcend a mere descriptive retelling of events, and instead call upon the furtherance of the process which gave the research life to begin with - a process to be executed in an ongoing manner as a means of an continually ascertaining meaning and direction as it emerges from the lived experiences of the people ensconced within the phenomenon being explored. Such meaning and direction could include - but not necessarily remain exclusive to - the open advocacy of new approaches to the high school experience when considering its impact upon the cultural identities



of these students. In its most very basic level, the theory that emerges from this grounded theory research design will point towards future analysis and advocacy, what Charmaz referred to as “analytic momentum” generated by the interpretive construction of the theory borne of the research. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 137)

### *Chapter Three Summary: Primed for Research*

As explained within this chapter, the precise manner in which this research will be executed has been defined through the exploration of several layers of identification and process - beginning with the broadest scope of vision and understanding – and concluding with a specific target and specific instruments for data collection and analysis. This work has adopted a constructivist paradigm and will firmly entrenched within the qualitative spectrum of inquiry methods. In order to foster as great of understanding as possible, this dissertation will triangulate the data collection source points in an attempt to either validate or contrast the shared details emanating from research participants – who have been chosen from three distinct groups that have all experienced the phenomenon being explored within this dissertation – including the researcher himself.

Moving inward towards even greater specificity, the work has been established to be utilizing grounded theory and autoethnography as the two principle research design models – both for their ability to afford access to new understandings as they emerge out from the research, but also for their direct reflection of the constructivist nature of this entire enterprise. Through each of these designs, the work will be able to draw out the information unique to the lived experiences of each participant, and will also include the events of my own life that are germane to the overall research problem.

Finally, the instruments for data collection (intensive interviews and autoethnographic narrative) and the unique manner in which the collected data will be examined, coded, and analyzed within the confines of grounded theory research have been selected, detailed, and supported by valid sources who have utilized such practices with great success within other qualitative projects. It is now time for the research to be conducted, and for this work to take the journey from the periphery of this galaxy of research, and rapidly speed towards its eventual destination.

“There are stories and stories . . . .  
There are the songs, also, that are taught.  
Some are whimsical. Some are very intense. Some are documentary . . . .  
Everything I have known is through teachings, by word of mouth, either by song or by legends.”

- Terrance Honvanteewa, Hopi

*Native American Wisdom* (Cleary, 1996, p. 40)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

#### *Chapter Four Overview*

The purpose of chapter four is to examine the results gathered through the research that was conducted in pursuit of the guiding research questions. To ensure proper understanding for the reader, the chapter will first begin with a review of the basic components of the research apparatus utilized for this dissertation. This review will include a restatement of the research questions, an explanation of the instrumentation used - replete with thematic choices and definitions utilized within its construction

From there, the chapter will then explore the manner in which the coding mechanisms were chosen and employed when reviewing the data collected from the interviews. Operating within the context of a grounded theory approach, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the coding mechanisms that were eventually settled upon, and what actions were taken to ensure data validity when the chosen coding mechanisms were in fact employed by the researcher. This portion of the work will also provide a brief biographical sketch of the subjects that participated within the study.

Once established, the next section of chapter four will examine the themes and major theory that emerged from the data once it was filtered through the applied coding mechanisms. This was accomplished through an analysis of what coded responses emerged as the most prevalent and recurring as drawn from the data – including from both sets of respondents (Native American elders and Native American students that have recently graduated from public high schools), as well as from the author himself (via the inclusion of an autoethnographic piece). Once identified and successfully drawn out from the collected data, a brief analysis of the

emergent theory will conclude this portion of the dissertation and set the stage for the fifth and final chapter.

### *The Research Questions*

From the point of embarkation from where the data would begin to be collected, the instruments used to conduct of the intensive interviews would need to be specifically designed in such a manner as to capture the essence of the research questions chosen for this dissertation. As fully formulated within first chapter of this work, it is pertinent to restate these research questions that served as the principal guide for the data collection process. The established questions are as follows:

- 1a. How do Native American students that have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity?
- 1b. What are the views held by Native American elders regarding high school today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as high school students?

When composing the questions that were to be used within the actual interview instruments, an additional component necessity arose. Not only would the participant interviews need to diligently pursue the stated point of inquiry established by the research questions, but the employed questions would also need to be constructed in a manner that could link the responses of each participant to the previous examination of prior research - as discussed within the literature review in chapter two. In so doing, the data generated by the research could then serve a dual purpose of constructing new knowledge in relation to the stated point of inquiry (the

research questions), but also could be seamlessly attached to the body of previous research established within the literature review – a body of work that had been woven together from several disparate sources. To this end, special attention was given towards crafting questions that could drive towards the central foci generated by the stated research questions, as well as to also provide direct linkages within the context of the analysis provided within the literature review that possessed distinct categories from which the reviewed texts were grouped.

Integral to this research were the actual participants. The subjects for this project include the author, young Native American adults who have recently graduated from a public high school, and elder Native American adults who either have young family currently in a public high school or else who elected to share their own experiences from many years ago. The reasoning behind the selection of members from these three groups was to present public high school experiences from differing vantage points – either as separated by the passage of time, or else as expressed from the vantage point of an elder family member looking upon today's circumstances. By drawing on three distinct arenas of experience, the study could enact a triangulation process between participants as a means of further exploring potential insights found within the collected data (as discussed later within the *Triangulation of Data Sources* segment).

#### *Description of the Interview Instruments and Subcategories Utilized*

Drawn from the purposes stated above, the construction of the instrumentation also took into consideration the time parameters that had been set for each individual interview – with each interview session to last no longer than ninety minutes. Once completed, each questionnaire was comprised of sixteen total questions. Each set of sixteen questions were written in two variants – the first set being crafted to elicit responses from young adults who had just recently graduated

from a public secondary institution. The questions utilized within the second version were worded in such a way to either elicit responses from elders regarding their own experiences, or to relate the experiences that might have occurred to a younger relative within their family. Beyond these temporal distinctions, the essence of the questions in both sets remained the same.

From there, the specific design of each question within both sets was constructed so as to represent categories that were embedded within the work examined in the literature review. In this instance, four categories were created from which each question was derived - and would later be housed once coding and analysis would begin. Three of these categories were based on the key elements cited within the literature review. A fourth category was then created as a means of advancing the thinking of each respondent to envision a potential new reality that would be based on the synthesis of their previous responses.

Once established, the researcher could then utilize these predetermined categories to provide further depth regarding how the collected data would be coded and analyzed after the collection process had been completed. In so doing, these four categories would then be able to readily produce a matrix by which all of the respondents could be weighed against each other, and against the other groups of participants within this research project, as well as against the findings that had been generated within the literature review. These subcategories and a brief descriptor were included within the instrument itself – along with all sixteen questions – and were released to each participant in advance of the interview session.

1. Cultural Identity: This subcategory relates specifically to the participant's personal understanding of their own cultural identities, with the purpose of these questions to get a sense of how the participant views and understands their own cultural identity in the wake of attending a public high school. The questions housed within this grouping

focused on identifying the participant's self-attested cultural identification, the manner in which the participant came to learn (and continues to learn) about their culture, and what the participant values most about their cultural identity. The final question within this grouping was an exploration of differences (if any) that might have existed between the manner in which their culture was discussed or taught in the home, against how their culture was received or taught in the high school(s) that they attended. This subcategory was entitled "Cultural Identity" within the research instruments and analysis process.

2. **Personal Experience:** The questions housed within this grouping required the recitation of direct or personal experiences that the participant wished to express. The questions were centered upon a retelling of their public high school experience, assessing any potential positive or negative impacts that these experiences engendered towards their sense of cultural identities, and to explore what they believed to be the most significant experience during their time in high school and why. The responses generated through the questions housed within this group went directly at the central research questions, allowing for responses that could be interpreted by the researcher to define the impact of public high school upon the cultural identities of Native American students as expressed by the selected participants. This subcategory was entitled "Personal Experience" within the research and analysis.
3. **Historical Context:** This subcategory directly correlates to the analysis provided within the literature review. As established within the literature, the historical occurrences involving the Native American people and formalized education was an



evolving process that is still unfolding today, and remains directly influenced by previous events. In this regard, this particular study sought to understand what historical influences potentially informed or impacted the experiences of the subject while they were attending a public high school. This subcategory was intended – if actionable - to uncover the participant’s previous knowledge base regarding historical antecedents relating to the research problem being examined (assessing the impact of public secondary school upon the cultural identities of Native American students). The questions housed within this grouping focused on exploring the subject’s understanding of the experiences lived by their community within formalized education as a whole (i.e.: the indigenous people of North America), as well as the personal experiences their parents and elders. Also included within this line of inquiry were questions designed to gauge the beliefs of the participants as to why current systems were put into place relating to the formal education of Native American youth, as well as to ascertain what their chosen methodologies might have been if given the opportunity to “undue” or rectify experiences detailed within the historical record. This subcategory was entitled “Historical Context” within the research instruments and analysis process.

4. Future Visioning: This particular subcategory was an attempt by the researcher to create a line of questioning that would synthesize the previous three subcategories as a means of generating additional, more nuanced reflections. By insisting that the participant imagine and express preferences regarding an as-yet-to-be determined future, the participant would be forced to draw upon their base knowledge regarding the historical antecedents that impacted both their community (the indigenous peoples

of North America) as well as their families, and they would have to integrate their own personal experiences as they answered such questions. The actual questions housed here involved how the participant would envision future curriculum, future educators, how their own progeny could benefit, and how their own personal futures (or their progeny) will be influenced going forward as a result of their public high school experiences. This subcategory was entitled “Future Visioning” within the research instruments and analysis process.

### *Description of the Autoethnographic Instrument*

In terms of the autoethnographic instrument, the author incorporated elements of the same four categories to express personal experiences by which his own responses could be then categorized and analyzed by the same methods as the participants who were interviewed. While the subcategories are reflected in the autoethnographic submission, they are not directly cited as a formal part of the structure of the instrumentation as the autoethnographic submission came prior to the intensive interviews. Specifically, the questions asked of the participants in the first two data sources were not used in the autoethnographic submission so as to allow for a deeper examination uninhibited by following scripted questions. However, each subcategory was in fact present in some fashion within the submission, and were therefore used within the coding process for the autoethnographic submission as well.

The actual autoethnographic submission was constructed in a unique manner – eschewing a traditional first person format. Instead, the nature and style of the submission engaged several different literary forms as each life event was explored. In addition, the autoethnographic submission was composed prior to the data collection process with the selected participants. The reason for these stylistic differences in the composition of the autoethnographic inquiry was to

allow the author various ways in which personal memory could be recalled and retold. As expressed within the work of Jones, Adams, and Ellis: “The literary . . . has the potential for putting flesh on the skeleton of abstraction, for bringing the affective into shared space with the cognitive, for revealing the human heart.” (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 385) It is the intention of the author that through the use of varying literary devices and writing styles, the submission will bring forward deeper insights and greater understanding regarding the effects of the selected life events that were examined.

### *Chosen Coding Mechanisms*

Once the all of the interview sessions had been completed and transcribed, as well as the submission of the completed autoethnographic piece, the findings were then coded using two specific techniques. These techniques were arrived at and managed after a series of internal memo taking was conducted by the researcher. Through the memo taking process, various potential applications of coding were explored and jettisoned in favor of a system that best fit the purpose of the research. Memo taking was pursued throughout the various points of the research process – including in the immediate aftermath of each interview, during intercession times, as well as after having reviewed all of the transcribed material. As discussed in the work by Charmaz, memo taking within the grounded theory methodology is a fluid, spontaneous activity intended to capture as well as guide the thought process of the researcher throughout the entire process of the research. (Charmaz, 2006) Thus owing to the amorphous nature of memo taking, there were several iterations of the coding process that were deliberated upon throughout, until the chosen methods that were eventually settled upon came to the fore. Once these defined coding mechanisms were settled on, both the interview transcripts and autoethnographic piece were then filtered through them.

The first mechanism arrived at was the creation of a series of three data matrices where key responses as expressed by each respondent were identified and catalogued based on their subcategory of origin, and assigned to each respondent within each of the three data source groupings. In this manner, each successive matrix was then able to engender direct comparison (or triangulation) of key responses issued by the participants by question, and by subcategory for each data source group. These matrices would be repetitively employed until emergent themes could be identified (these matrices will be explained in greater detail in the following section entitled *Triangulation of the Data Sources*). By employing a successive series of matrices as a part of the coding process, the research was able to hone in on deeper meanings, and avoid common pitfalls to what Charmaz referred to as “coding at a too general of a level.” (Charmaz, 2006, p.69) In essence, these matrices in their totality represent what is referred to as a comparative methods model – whereby analytic distinctions and connections are identified and then catalogued at each succeeding level of coding that is enacted. (Charmaz, 2006)

The second approach to the coding mechanism saw the employment of a fourth data matrix, only this time instead of identifying key responses, it tallied the emotional nature or emotional content of the responses as documented within the interview transcripts and autoethnographic submission. Charmaz referred to such coding practices as *in vivo* coding – whereby close scrutiny of the language used by participants would generate another comparative process by keying in on select words or phrases. (Charmaz, 2006) For the purposes of this study, the *in vivo* coding was accomplished by the researcher tallying emotive sentiments as categorized in one of two connotations - either positive or negative in expression – as evidenced within the responses given by each participant to each question. These emotive responses were identified either through the participant’s use of identifiable indicator phrases (such as “it was

*good*”, “that was *great*”, “I *liked* or *enjoyed* that”, “it made me *happy*”, or “it was *bad*”, “that was *terrible*”, “it was *abusive*”, “they were *not good*”, etc.). (Charmaz, 2006) In addition, an assessment was made by the researcher to establish if any of the subject’s remarks possessed an emotional connotation, but did not use any of the indicator phrases. By determining if emotional connotation could be identified as a result of the context within which statements were made, an emotional connotation could then be tallied. In this regard, while the responses may not have included any overt indicator phrases, the substance of the remarks did indicate some form of positive or negative emotional response by the participants.

Once compiled, each question and each subcategory could be assigned a series of positive or negative emotional connotation tallies by the researcher, as expressed by the participants during the interview. This second coding mechanism would then provide a small window into the emotional associations each participant held regarding the questions that were employed by the data collection instrumentation. It would also allow for an aggregate appraisal of the emotional connotations for each data source as assigned collectively to each subcategory of inquiry, as well as towards the overall research purpose (assessing the impact of public secondary schools upon the cultural identities of Native American students).

### *Triangulation of the Data Sources*

As expressed within the previous chapter, as well as in the previous section, the series of four matrices that were employed served as a means of cross-examining the three distinct data sources with the intent of triangulating the gathered information against each source. This was done in order to identify key similarities and potential themes as generated by the responses given. In this context, the research would triangulate the responses generated by the three distinct participant groups who lived three sets of experiences. Through this triangulation, common

elements or themes would then emerge. From there, the generated themes would be used to derive a potential theory as drawn from the collected data.

To begin the triangulation process, the most significant elements as offered by each individual respondent were drawn from the transcripts, subdivided between each subcategory, and then catalogued within a single matrix. At this point, a second matrix was then created in order to identify or code common traits present within the most recurring or most common responses for each of the three data sources. This second table was the beginning attempt by the researcher at trying to code or identify emergent themes born of the data. Through this filtration method as executed by the coding process, the research prevents itself from common coding failures described by Charmaz – such as merely analyzing superficial content, or not digging deep enough into the data by only focusing on material that is too general in its application. (Charmaz, 2006)

A third and final response matrix was then employed to specifically identify and examine common themes arising from the most-recurring responses shared by all three of the data sources. Then finally, also included within this third matrix, an assigned a moniker and summative sentence was employed to describe each theme that emerged from the triangulation of the data.

When presented in descending order, all employed matrices were arranged in the following sequence – with the inclusion of the second coding mechanism detailing emotional connotations within each response as the fourth and final matrix within this series:

1. Matrix #1: Key and significant responses as issued by each respondent and separated within each data source grouping per respondent.

2. Matrix #2: Common traits as derived by the researcher from the most common responses for each data source grouping for each of the three data source groups.
3. Matrix #3: Identification of emergent themes with assigned moniker and summative sentence that apply to all three data source groupings based on the triangulation of data coded thus far between all three data source groups.
4. Matrix #4: Tally of emotional content embedded in each response provided by each participant in all three data source pools.

The insights gathered from this triangulation, as well as any emergent theories that arose as a result of the triangulation made between all three data sources will be examined later on in this chapter (under the heading of *Emergent Theory Emanating from the Triangulation of the Findings*).

#### *Demographics and Backgrounds of the Participants from Data Source One*

Once the autoethnographic piece was completed and submitted, the next phase of the research would be to identify and collect data from participants that would populate the other data source groupings. The group of participants found within the first data source – young Native American adults who have recently graduated from a public secondary school – were comprised of two males and one female. All three had attended schools within the state of Minnesota. The two males were enrolled within an urban school in Minneapolis, while the female attended a high school outstate in rural northern Minnesota. All three were Native American, but the origins of the male students were from tribes located in western South Dakota, while the female hailed from a tribe indigenous to her home area of Northern Minnesota. A brief synopsis of each participant has been provided for contextual purposes for the reader. For the purposes of this study, their names have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity.

*Interviewee I - Bob*

Bob was an adult male youth whose tribal affiliation is that of the Lakota Sioux nation – originating out of western South Dakota. He retains strong familial connections with his relatives who remain on a federally recognized Indian Reservation (The Rosebud Reservation) and travels often back to his ancestral homeland to be with his extended family. Bob is currently enrolled within the Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) located within the heart of downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. His responses during the interview process were localized to his time as a high school student within a small public charter school that had been intentionally and specifically designed to serve Native American students, and was located within the urban core of Minneapolis on the north side of the city. Being only nineteen years of age, Bob was the youngest of all who participated within this study.

*Interviewee II - Dave*

Dave is currently twenty-five years old and attending classes within the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Dave is also a member of the Lakota Sioux nation, and heralds from the very same reservation as Bob – that of the Rosebud Indian Reservation. Dave also attended a similar designed public charter school whose principal population was Native American. This school was also located within Minneapolis, Minnesota. Like Bob, Dave also travels frequently between the Twin Cities in Minnesota back to his extended family who still live on the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota.

*Interviewee III - Melonie*

Melonie is a twenty-three year old woman who resides near Bemidji, Minnesota. Although she is not currently enrolled in any post-secondary program, she is however gainfully employed serving as a career counselor within a Native American run non-profit that specializes



in education and workforce development located near her home. Melonie and her family are Anishanabe – or more popularly known by non-natives as Ojibwe or Chippewa. They currently live adjacent to their tribe’s ancestral lands found within the federal recognized reservation of Leech Lake, Minnesota. Melonie attended and graduated from the local municipal high school that was located near – but not on – her reservation. As such, it was from her experiences while attending this particular public municipal school from which her responses were drawn during the interview. Melonie remains close to her extended family in both relations and proximity, and seldom travels much further than to area municipalities situated near the Leech Lake Reservation (Such as the cities of Bemidji, Walker, Cass Lake, Ball Club, etc.).

#### *Demographics and Backgrounds of the Participants from Data Source Two*

The group of participants found within the second data source were Native American elders (aged forty-five or older) whose advanced years meant that they either had younger family members currently enrolled within a public high school, or that their own experiences occurred several years prior to that which was related by the first data source (young Native American adults who had only recently graduated from a public secondary school). This second data source was comprised of two females and one male. The two women had attended boarding schools in their youth, with the male having attended a multitude of public schools in both urban and rural settings. One of the women had the entirety of her schooling occur outstate within South Dakota – which was reflective of her tribal affiliation and her homeland. The other two participants originated from tribal affiliations localized to northern Minnesota, and as such, had their schooling careers occur within the very same state. As was applied to the first data source group, the names of these participants have also been changed in order to ensure their anonymity.

#### *Interviewee IV – Hunter*

Hunter is a forty-five year old male who currently serves as an organizational development officer within a Native American non-profit near the area of Bemidji, Minnesota. Hunter is Anishanabe (typically referred to as Ojibwe or Chippewa by non-natives) whose ancestral ties and familial lineage center around the Leech Lake Indian Reservation located in northern Minnesota. However, shortly after his birth, Hunter was moved by his family to the west coast of the United States and spent his primary years growing up in Oakland, California. His parents were deeply involved in the west coast chapter of the American Indian Movement (AIM) – an indigenous political advocacy group. As such, these connections provided young Hunter with a unique application of home schooling as delivered by both his parents as well as a myriad of community experts who originated from the local Native American population in the Bay area.

Hunter's first foray into a public school setting was during his transition to high school, which occurred upon his return to Minnesota, where he was summarily enrolled within a mainstream municipal high school within the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. From there, Hunter would move around between different mainstream schools within the Minneapolis Public School District without much in the way of academic success, only to be removed after a handful of years by his parents once and for all when he moved back to the Leech Lake area in northern Minnesota. Once there, he was enrolled in a Native American-focused school operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (a derivative agency housed within the federal Department of the Interior) that worked in concert with the Minnesota Department of Education. Hunter successfully completed his high school education at this Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school, and then went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree from Bemidji State University in the

ensuing years. Hunter has never married, nor has any children of his own. However, he has several cousins, nieces, and nephews who are currently enrolled in a public secondary school.

*Interviewee V – Beth*

Beth is a sixty-eight year old woman who is from the Lakota Sioux nation, and whose family originate from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation located in north-central South Dakota. Beth is the only participant who did not attend high school within the state of Minnesota. Instead, the public secondary institution where she attended was the Flandreau Boarding School located in Flandreau, South Dakota – roughly one hundred miles north of Sioux Falls – during the middle years of the nineteen sixties. Beverly's time in high school just barely predates much of the civic upheaval and popular youth protests typically associated with the later years of that decade – including the creation and rise of the American Indian Movement in nineteen sixty-eight. Beth attended a post-secondary institution only briefly during the early nineteen eighties - having completed an academic certification in the field of Administrative Professional by the year nineteen eighty-seven.

Beth currently works as a receptionist at a Native American run non-profit based in Minneapolis, Minnesota – and has done so for the past eighteen years. Beth is currently single, and has never been married. She has four adult children, and six grandchildren – with several of her grandchildren currently enrolled in a public secondary schools in both Minnesota and South Dakota. Whenever possible, she travels back to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in order to spend time with her extended family.

*Interviewee VI – Shirley*

At seventy years old, Shirley is the oldest of all the participants within this study. Shirley was born and raised on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota, and is

Anishanabe (otherwise referred to as either Ojibwe or Chippewa by non-Native Americans). Shirley's experiences within a public secondary school occurred entirely within the Native American-run Red Lake High School in Red Lake, Minnesota. After successfully graduating from high school, Shirley earned her Bachelor's Degree from Bemidji State University, and then her Master's Degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She currently works as a career counselor at a Native American run non-profit specializing in workforce development that is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A widow for nearly two decades, Shirley has six adult children, and fourteen grandchildren – three of whom she has raised personally. Only a handful of her grandchildren are still currently enrolled within a public secondary school – with the others having already graduated or dropped-out and procured a General Education Diploma (GED).

*Demographics and Backgrounds of the Participants from Data Source Three – the Author*

My name is Joe Hobot. I am a descendent of the Hunk Papa band of the Lakota Sioux nation. My family originated from the Standing Rock Indian reservation located in central South Dakota. My grandfather *Wanbli Tokeya* (Leading Eagle) – whose English name was James M. Fenelon - was an enrolled member of the tribe until his passing, as is my mother *Chante Skuye Winyan* (Sweet Heart Woman) – whose English name is Patricia Hobot. I am the proud descendant of this familial lineage. To date, I have yet to earn or learn of my Lakota name, but look forward to doing so with great excitement and interest in the coming years.

I grew up in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, in a city called Blaine. I attended the local municipal high school and successfully graduated in the year nineteen ninety-five. From there I went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and then a Master's Degree from St. Thomas University located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I am

currently a Doctoral Candidate (pending the successful completion and submission of this dissertation) at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

My professional career began as a classroom instructor within an alternative high school in the Minneapolis public school district that was designed to work specifically with Native American students. From there I was quickly promoted through the ranks of the sponsoring Native American non-profit that ran the alternative high school. Today, I am 39 years old and currently serve as the President and CEO of the entire organization. I have three children of my own, one who is in college, another who is about to graduate from high school, and the youngest who is about to enter into high school. My entire professional career has been predicated on service to my community (the Native American people) and has been centered upon education – specifically the advancement of educational opportunities and the advancement of the Native American people. My journey – both as a public school student and now as a professional educator – mirrors much of the experiences of my community, as well as the participants of this study.

#### *Findings for Each Subcategory for Data Source One*

##### *Cultural Identity*

The first data source (recently graduated Native American young adults) expressed a strong association and connection with their culture, and by extension, they also possessed a clearly defined cultural identity. All three were clear in their conception of who they were as a person in specific relation to their tribal identification, and had a strong understanding of their ancestral lineage as well. This deeply-rooted understanding predated not only their matriculation within a public secondary school, but existed prior to their enrollment into any formalized education system all together (pre-Kindergarten). This knowledge base about their culture had

been taught to each respondent by their parents as well as by their extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) throughout their youth. They were well aware of their indigenous language and its importance upon defining their culture and by extension their identities. Each of the respondents repeatedly used their indigenous language during the course of the actual interviews.

The manner in which this cultural knowledge was transferred unto the respondents seemed to originate almost exclusively from their home life. Once in a public high school, none of these respondents conveyed any sense that the school itself added to their cultural understanding, nor did it bring any sort of intentional added value towards the further development of their own cultural identities. For the most part, each felt that their time in high school was merely a series of adjustments - some more jarring than others - as each did their level best to become acclimated to a structured environment that did not reflect their home, nor brought any new, overt cultural understandings to their own sense of cultural identity. The only exception to this notion that high school was essentially “neutral” towards further developing their cultural identities came from Melonie, who expressed happiness at having the opportunity to learn more about her native language of Anishanabe (or Ojibwe as typically referred to by non-Native Americans).

With regards to the most valued aspect of their cultural identities, all three respondents spoke of a distinct utilitarian purpose derived from cultural teachings and practices that they had been taught by their families. Through such applications, they believed that the individual and the community provided with guidance regarding how to live, grow, and prosper while alive on this planet. In this sense the stories that were handed down from one generation to another, along with the incumbent ceremonies, were intended to provide wisdom by which the youth

could continuously refer to as a means of navigating through the uncharted waters of their own current existence. As Bob – the youngest respondent in this study shared:

“What I value the most is that we’re able to with these cultural understandings, they are a great enabler in helping the collective, the masses. You can learn these to better yourself but really, a lot of cultural understandings are heavily rooted with the collective. They allow them to – they can occur without the families, in communities which we see as a community, basically an extended family, the immediate family like the *tiwahe* and the *tioshpi* – *tiwahe* the immediate, *tioshpi* considered the community. The way I see it is this cultural understanding has really empowered me. We walk what we call a “red road” and you are free of, you know, negativity. These problems nowadays that plague our people. We don’t drink or we don’t tear down our own people where we help our people up, help build them up, carry our Lakota ways.”

For Dave, the utilitarian aspects also included elements more personal and overt than a general ideology to be adhered to. For him, the events surrounding his birth and naming by his parents were significant as he was taught to refer back to them whenever he is in need of guidance today. What he referred to as his own “creation story” is viewed by Dave as a precursor to his life’s actions going forward. As such, it has become a useful reference tool whenever Dave is confronted by a challenge. In his own words:

“I think that’s what really helped me to see growing up, or just to be able to say, I’m going to help my people. I never really thought about where that came from until my father told me that story [Dave’s own creation story]. So I think I remembered that as a baby or I remembered it as my mission before I came into this world. And I think that is our right as an indigenous person that we have our own creation story. That we’re going to set out to do something, no matter the challenges, we’re going to accomplish it in some way. But never to underestimate our creation stories. I come to know that it is a responsibility that come [sic] with it. Accountability to that name, to respect it, to live up to it, to values and to know what it means. To be able to give and share because of it.”

For Melonie, her culture was omnipresent within her life for her extended family were all around her growing up. This fact was literally true even as she attended high school for her grandmother actually worked in the attendance office. In her mind, her culture is synonymous

with her familial relations – the traditions and practices indistinguishable from the family gathering and events.

When assessing the emotional content of the responses issued by the first data source within this particular subcategory, the language used suggested a pervasive and dominant sense of positivity and good feeling. The consistent nature by which their responses expressed positive or joyful knowledge when shared suggests that each respondent retains a positive feeling overall about the origins their cultural identities and how they currently conceptualize it today. When examining the emotional language used by the participants for this particular subcategory, this appraisal was supported by data, with a response rate of nearly eighty percent positive connotations (sixty-eight out eighty-four tallied remarks) as found within the responses containing some form of emotional content. (See Appendix B)

### *Personal Experience*

Within this subcategory, the findings suggest some variance in the structure and nature of each respondent's high school experience. For both Bob and Dave, each of whom attended a small alternative school within the city of Minneapolis specialized in providing services to Native American students, both expressed lament at perceived short-comings of the school regarding the ongoing development of their own cultural identities. While neither of these two respondents suggested that the school itself did anything overtly to detract or corrode their cultural understandings, they did convey the sense of a missed opportunity. Whether it was due to the fact that much of the school's faculty were not well versed in indigenous history or culture, or that the faculty slavishly adhered to a curriculum that they believed also omitted indigenous perspectives or contributions, both respondents felt that the school fell decidedly short in what it could have provided for them. Dave in particular took it upon himself to seek refuge within the



school's library where he could indulge in books centered upon the Native American experience, or were written by Native American writers. Dave never mentioned if the school ever sanctioned or punished him for such departures from class, but he admitted to doing so out of pure self-driven interest to learn about his culture. As Dave related:

“Teachers would be in and out so what I would do I would go to the library during lunch and read the books there. They had books there, really good books that they weren't even using in their classes, on Native history, Native governance, the BIA, and creation stories. And so, I don't know why but I was always adamant about going to classes, even though the school itself was very... not doing what it was supposed to . . . as good as it could have. So I continued to fill my time with those books . . .”

To be fair, both mentioned having taken culturally-orientated classes that were of some value, but the majority of offered programming tended to adhere to the more traditional content areas without much inclusion of culture. Often times, it was due to each of the voluntary extra-curricular activities that Bob and Dave both pursued where they were able to insert cultural practice into their daily scholastic experiences (both having participated within a Native drum group, and both were engaged in cultural practices such as ceremonies and other gatherings with students who came from different tribes beyond the daily requirements of their high school).

Said Dave:

“I think, you know if you got all white teachers teaching in a charter school where you do have some Native teachers, you know, the white teachers taught from their point of views. They might have had a prescribed curriculum down, you know, writing, computer sciences, history – there were some other classes that were like cultural arts and crafts classes, some wood shop classes, you had some computer literacy classes, some writing and math classes.... the History class I remember because it did not incorporated [sic] my world view as an indigenous person, you know, like I said, if I had it my way there'd be a Lakota institution here, one that respected our experiences and world views.”

In both cases concerning Bob and Dave, the faculty would engage them personally to share elements of the student's culture with their classmates. While pleased to assist their fellow pupils as well as the faculty, both Bob and Dave cite such examples more as a failure of the school, as opposed to an overdeveloped knowledge-base that they could offer as a supplement to the offered curriculum. Bob:

“Me being, they seen [sic] me, they even called us traditionalists, the teachers. So they would bring me and my brother into even some of the classes to help teach, tell some stories. That's what we did and people knew that's what we were about and they respected us for it.”

In addition, both Bob and Dave spoke of an internecine separation between Native American students that was not properly acknowledged nor addressed by the school – and in fact as a result of the faculty repeatedly calling on the respondents to essentially teach their peers – this separation was potentially exacerbated. Owing to their having been raised outside of the Twin Cities (back on the Rosebud Reservation) both respondents recalled how their traditional upbringing differed vastly from those Native American students who had been born and raised within the metropolitan area. To this end, Bob and Dave were unaffiliated with any street gangs (and remained so throughout their matriculation), did not imbibe in any use of drugs or alcohol, and did not participate in any of the weekend exploits or parties that their contemporaries did. As a result, they were viewed as separate from the main student body, characterized as “traditionalists” who were more intent on following tradition than popular fads. While this distinction was not meant to belittle Bob or Dave, it did seem to have an isolating effect on them both. The only real outlet socially for each respondent occurred once they joined in with a Native American drum group that their schools would tacitly support by offering them practice space after hours, and on some occasions as related by Dave, the opportunity to play and sing at certain school functions – such as commencements. Beyond this, there was little that the respondents

related to direct involvement of the school to deliberately foster or build upon the students own cultural identities. As a result of this inaction by the school, both Bob and Dave were left on their own to bridge the divide between themselves and their classmates.

For Melonie, such non-involvement by the high school was more typical of her experience. With the lone example of an Anishanabe (Ojibwe) language class she was able to take (and which she enjoyed), her time at a municipal high school in the Bemidji area of northern Minnesota was almost totally devoid of cultural instruction. Here again, as was the case with Bob and Dave, the school did nothing in the way to degrade or deconstruct Melonie's cultural identity, but it did not overtly support it either. Melonie's time as a high school student, spent within a relatively large high school (over one thousand, six hundred students), was one more akin to the traditional exploits of non-Native American students in mainstream public high schools. Melonie was mostly focused on her advancement through school towards graduation – a route that would prove for her rather circuitous.

As she entered her upper level years, her high school had her placed within a jobs program whereby she would spend most of her day outside of school at work. While interested in the opportunity, and voluntarily enrolling in the program, Melonie was caught off guard when she came to realize that her pathway would only ensure graduation, and not a successful transition to a post-secondary institution (which had been a personal goal for herself). Upon learning of how her path to a college might now be compromised, she enlisted the help of her mother to have her withdrawn from the jobs program. This was successfully enacted, but at the cost of extending her time in high school so that she could complete credits within required content areas that she missed during her time previously spent outside of school at work. Upon

reflection, Melonie felt that her school did not really work to engage her or any other minority students, let alone those who were Native American. Said Melonie:

“The higher ups when I was in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, for some odd reasons, I’m not sure why, they were just trying to make me not be able to succeed or flourish . . . like they just want the students, the Native American students, to fail. But I felt there was opportunity, though, like I said, at the school at the time, although I don’t see it as much . . .”

In terms of actual support for her cultural identity as being provided by the school, Melonie could only site the one class in the Anishanabe language. Outside of that, she relied on her own family network who were working in or around the school during her time as a student. In addition, Melonie found some modicum of cultural validation through her association with other Native American people and students who lived in the same area that she did during her high school years.

When all of the respondents were queried as to what their most powerful experience in high school was, Bob and Dave both cited their drum group, as well as being able to connect with other Native American students from different tribal affiliations outside of school. For Melonie – it was her actual completion of the work and her eventual graduation.

On the whole, the emotional content for this data source regarding this particular subcategory was quite charged – producing a larger amount of emotionally weighted responses. A majority of the emotional remarks were in the negative category – with roughly fifty-eight percent of the emotive statements having been negative (eight-two out of one hundred and forty-two). (See Appendix B)

### *Historical Context*

Here again, we see a distinction between the stories shared by Bob and Dave, with that of Melonie. Melonie had a strong connection to her culture through her mother and extended

family, but did not have much understanding as to what her parents or her ancestors might have experienced when they had attended a public high school. As such, Melonie was principally focused on her own experience, and finding success in high school only within the context of her own personal journey. Such matters as historical occurrences did not enter in to her thinking at that time.

Conversely, Bob and Dave were deeply influenced by the stories related to them by their parents and extended families. In addition, these familial tales also exposed both Bob and Dave to the overall historical arc regarding the Native American people and the summative effects that formalized education had upon their ancestors. In this sense, both Bob and Dave were keenly aware as to how the school system had deliberately attempted to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant culture – as most viscerally expressed by people within their own families.

Owing to the harsh and often times brutal experiences of the elders within their households, coupled with a burgeoning historical knowledge of their people as a whole, both Bob and Dave possessed a guarded mindset when they entered high school – despite the fact that both were enrolled within a small school ostensibly designed to focus upon Native American students. As he entered high school the stories that were related to Dave by his family were felt to be inseparable from his own experiences, and more significantly, a continuation of a long-standing historical trend.

“That’s a story that’s always played into my education today and the way I see it that story still plays into the education they use today. It may not be on a physical level such as the abuse that my grandparents received in boarding schools, my ancestors received in boarding schools. They were killed by the educational officials, killed by epidemics in boarding schools. And my parents experienced abuse in these schools, physical abuse but that in education today it’s a spiritual, emotional abuse that is administered by the teachers through their curriculum whether it be social, political, even economic sciences.”

The experiences of Bob's parents and extended family were of similar import – replete with stories of corporal punishment and overt actions taken by boarding schools to exterminate any sense that they had towards retaining their cultural identities as American Indian people. What was related to Bob as he was growing up had a powerful effect on how he came to perceive his own education – particularly once he entered public high school.

“To me education was not just an opportunity, it was an enemy. And to me it felt like I had to strike a right balance between 'em because I seen [sic] education as a way that tried to turn us into white people. And here, me growing up and knowing who I was and through stories, not just from my parents but from my relatives back home on the reservation, I, uh, I uh, I uh kind of seen [sic] education as my adversary.”

When asked for their opinions regarding the implementation of departments dedicated to Native American education by the public school system within the state, all three of the respondents within this group viewed the practice as a small step towards rectifying past historical mistakes. Each believed that for the most part, the intent behind such machinations was the state recognizing its failure towards providing a quality education for Native American students. The participants contend that through the creation of such specialized departments, the state hoped that a more positive experience could be offered. However, all three also shared the opinion that there were additional, ulterior motives towards these actions – namely to acquire more money through federal funding streams. Dave went on to speculate that the creation of these departments in the recent past was a means of further isolating American Indian youth from the other cultural groups within the state – either as the most recent iteration of the public school system's attempt at negating the unique cultural existence of the indigenous people, or as an attempt by the system to absolve itself of past transgressions against Native American by keeping the population perpetual marginalized and away from points of access within the dominant culture.

Finally, when exploring what they might have done differently had they been given some sort of omnipotent power over history, all three had distinct ideas as to what changes that they would effectuate. The most common expression from each of the respondents would be a renunciation of all assimilative practices that had been employed in the past - especially with regards to the most brutal and oppressive tactics that were present within boarding schools. Instead, each respondent suggested an overt inclusion of indigenous culture as a necessary component through which all types of learning could occur. A corollary to that demand would be the ongoing inclusion of instruction in the ways of indigenous languages – thus serving to preserve and protect these languages in perpetuity.

On this point as well, both Bob and Dave added unique features to their wishes. Bob would also include more outdoor, experiential learning that drew directly upon the traditional teachings of the student's tribe. In so doing, the knowledge base already held by the people is – in Bob's estimation - then validated in the process and serves to support the overall culture. In terms of pedagogical practice, the outdoor classroom setting was believed by Bob to serve as a way of enabling Native American youth to live their culture while learning in the very spaces that they inhabit. It was his belief that such linkages would make any academic pursuit much more impactful and meaningful for the indigenous student.

“We have bodies of work that are just as viable but are deeply more tailored to and relevant to our Native youth. Knowledge that they can actually use because they got to understand that our youth are not, they don't see themselves, they're not third degrees, they're distinctive peoples, Dakota and Anishanabe peoples or whatever other nations live in the states nowadays. That's what I like, I like more adventure based programming. Taking them out there to natural world and where their communities originated from, maybe their homelands and teaching them about their language systems, their knowledge systems, their traditional government structures. So that's what I would like to see.”

For his take, Dave added his own unique attribute by calling on Native American leadership back during the first days of contact to send their most trusted leadership to visit and observe western schools. After which they would then return to their homelands and incorporate those elements that they felt most useful into a new variant of public schools that were designed, implemented, and managed by indigenous peoples. Through this cross-pollination of ideas, Dave believed that a hybrid between the two cultures could be created by the Native American leadership and that this hybrid could have been designed to best meet the needs of Native American youth for many generations to come.

When assessing the emotional content of the responses gathered within this subcategory for this first data source, the results were mainly negative. Eighty-four of the responses out of the one hundred and twenty-two that were catalogued (roughly sixty-nine percent) possessed negative emotional connotations. (See Appendix B)

### *Future Visioning*

For the final subcategory of questions, all the participants provided responses that were very similar, and centered upon a couple of key characteristics that they would like to see occurring within classrooms going forward. First and foremost, all of the respondents within this particular data source emphasized the need for greater inclusion of indigenous languages as a part of the required curriculum. Both Bob and Dave emphasized the linkages between cultural practices and the actual use of the language – thus suggesting that students cannot learn one without the other, and as such, by having both present within the curriculum would essentially provide a deeper, richer educative experience for the Native American student. Melonie spoke of the need to have immersion-style language classes (whereby only the language being learned is spoken during the school day) – echoing her belief that many kindergarten through sixth grade



immersion programs were successful and that a continuation of such services on into high schools would be of value for future Native American students.

For each respondent in this group, the increased inclusion of additional Native American cultural practices within the curriculum was also suggested as a perceived want for future educational experiences. To this end, Dave suggested further incorporation of ceremony – particularly those practices that include the use of the traditional drum. In addition, Dave was also interested in seeing curriculum specifically designed to reinforce the idea that the Native American people are dual citizens of both the United States as well as their own indigenous first nations (which have also been classified as sovereign states by federal statute). Following his preferences, Dave would like to see the inclusion of courses that are designed to educate and empower Native American youth towards becoming what he called “nation builders” – thereby emphasizing a utilitarian purpose towards public education where Native American students can develop the skill sets needed to advance the interests of the indigenous nations existing within the United States as their future leaders and civic engineers. As shared by Dave:

“And I think that alongside those types of courses there should be courses that help my children to work with other indigenous nations, nation building courses that train them how to build powerful relationships, train them how to be – apply that into governance, train, them – apply that to economic development, philanthropy and, you know, things that started off real simple and basic. And I think that’s possible to be able to do that for my children and to be able to have culturally relevant programs that are rooted in experience in nature and in ceremonies and not just on paper.”

Bob made mention of branching out to incorporate exposure of indigenous practices and perspectives world-wide (beyond just North America) so that the Native American student could begin to assess their place beyond the extent of the dominant culture of the United States. In so doing, Native American students would then be provided with the means of understanding their position globally in recognition of other indigenous cultures existing on other continents who

might also be experiencing similar challenges as the students here at home. Here to, Bob's responses included mention that the nations of the Native American people are sovereign, and as such deserve equal recognition and footing on the international stage as any other nation-state. Bob would go on to specify his desire that – through the incorporation of such global perspectives – high schools will once and for all do away with antiquated curriculum that has supported colonialism and racist ideologies that allowed for and excused the subjugation of indigenous cultures across the globe for several decades.

In more concrete terms, both Bob and Dave wished to see greater use of outdoor experiential learning practices whereby Native American students spend a significant portion of the “classroom” time out of doors and engaged with their natural surroundings. In so doing, Bob believed it would be easier to incorporate indigenous language lessons as well as more lessons involving indigenous cultural practices (ceremonies, etc.) as commensurate with Bob's understanding of his own cultural identity and that of his family's. Dave argued similarly, stating that both the language and practices of the indigenous people are inextricably linked with the land itself, and therefore should be taught, and taught together.

Melonie emphasized her desire to see greater inclusion of community members and family within the actual educative processes itself occurring within public high schools. She found value in having multiple generations of Native American people learning together within the school – especially when the lessons involved the development of indigenous language skills, or the transmission of knowledge relating to cultural practices and ceremonies. By having children, parents, and grandparents all present within the learning community, Melonie felt that the education experience overall would be more meaningful and impactful not only for the Native American students, but for the membership of the extended family as well. In some

instances, Melonie concluded, the parents and grandparents might be the best sources of information regarding culture, and in other instances, these very same family members might be in need of learning about these areas in much the same manner as their high school student. By engaging the process together, utilizing a cross-generational approach, Melonie believed that the high school experience would most certainly be better for Native American students.

The final point of agreement as expressed by all three of the respondents centered upon their desire to see an increase of trained, licensed Native American teachers working within the public education system – particularly at the high school level. Each had additional prerequisites for these requested future educators – including Bob’s desire for them to possess excellent storytelling skills, and Dave’s wish for each to receive continual training from indigenous elders as a supplement to their ongoing pedagogical trainings. Each respondent emphasized their desire, and the perceived need, to have more teachers present who reflected the culture of the students that they have been assigned to teach. In so doing, all three believed that the experiences to be had by future Native American students would be more conducive towards supporting and building up their sense of cultural identity.

By a two to one margin, the emotional connotations expressed by the participants for this subcategory were positive in nature, with sixty out of the ninety-three emotionally charged remarks being positive (roughly sixty-five percent). (See Appendix B)

#### *Findings for Each Subcategory for Data Source Two*

##### *Cultural Identity*

Once the data had been collected from the second data source – that of the Native American elders - the commonalities of responses garnered with regards to their cultural identities were pronounced. All three respondents had a strong understanding about their cultural

identities and backgrounds. Each recalled how their sense of their cultural identities were imbued within them by their parents and by their extended families during their youth, as well as by their community as a whole. Both Beth and Shirley recalled how the cultural practices of their communities (Lakota and Anishanabe respectively) were omnipresent during their adolescence, with celebrations and ceremonies occurring year round. From their close proximity to these events, coupled with the everyday exchanges and interactions with their families, Beth and Shirley both learned the ways of their people as a part of their overall daily routines. For Hunter, owing to his rather unique upbringing (whereby he was often left alone for significant portions during his teen years, or else from time-to-time in the company of his uncles), there was an added element as to how he came to learn about his cultural identity. While he was taught much from his family, he also dramatically augmented his own cultural understandings through personal reading of historical texts on his own time.

Out of the three respondents, Beth expressed the strongest connection as she was able to speak her own language quite fluently. All three also had a strong sense of the history of their culture in relation to the historical antecedents of ceremony, as well as the parameters for the execution for each ceremony. From Beth:

“We grew up in a really small community of maybe five hundred or less people. And, um, we were all aware that we were Native American. We all spoke the language. Nobody spoke English. So when the time came that we were old enough to get into school none of us knew how to speak English. We all had to learn. And, um, with me, I really wanted to learn how to speak English and I used to read and read and read. I was just like a little book worm.”

In terms of what they held most dear about their culture, or to what they assigned the most value, Hunter shared his hope that his cultural identity and cultural practices have entered a phase where new interest generated by youth, coupled with a burgeoning allowance for personal expression and exploration within the dominant culture, have enabled his culture to grow and

expand in the coming years. In such an environment, Hunter asserted his belief that his Native American culture now presents a viable way forward for his people to live better.

Beth shared her love of returning back to the company of her people while working on regalia or preparations for ceremony or pow-wows, and how these return gatherings made her instantly feel at home and connected to her culture. In fact, all three provided responses that were remarkably similar with regards to how they value their culture's insistence upon welcoming members back into the fold after extended absences. They also valued the way in which new membership is encouraged and supported by the community as though these new entrants had been extended family members all along.

When these personal recollections and values were then juxtaposed against how their educational experiences unfolded in relation to the development their cultural identities, only Hunter spoke of specific linkages between the two. Hunter shared that some culture-orientated coursework was employed by certain schools he attended during his high school years (Hunter attended three different schools before settling in and finishing at a Bureau of Indian Education school in northern Minnesota) but the curriculum employed was merely what he called "surface-level explorations" that did not possess the depth or hands-on experiences he had shared with his uncles and extended family. This was due in large part, in his estimation, to the fact that much of the ceremonial exercises were considered quite sacred and only to be shared with those who were invited in by the elders, or who were Native American. As Hunter stated:

"We were practicing our culture, our spirituality at home. We'd have people coming in from other communities, people coming in our lodges and in our prayers, and that was something that we also shielded from schooling because that's where we did our thing, that's where we had our society. But in school it was kind of a different setting. It was kind of like the lite beer, the watered down version of it, because the level that we were doing of our own spirituality would have blown some kids' minds if we were to put that in school. And a lot of that

was secretive stuff as well. So there wasn't much cross over when it come to that."

For Beth and Shirley, their high schools did almost nothing in the way of teaching about their culture. For these women, the only real similarity between home and school was that in both arenas time was always set aside for ceremonies, cultural events, and community rites (such as pow-wows, marriages, child births, and funerals). In such instances, their schools made allowances for absences relating to traditional cultural observances. Beyond this, almost the entirety of their base of knowledge regarding their culture and their cultural identities were taught in their homes and amongst their families.

The emotional content found within the responses for this group were in the majority positive in nature. At a rate of nearly eighty-two percent (sixty-two out of seventy-six), those comments with emotional language were positive in nature – suggesting that for this particular data source group, they retain positive feelings in association with their concept of cultural identity. (See Appendix B)

### *Personal Experience*

In terms of their personal experiences within a secondary institution, all three were distinct. Hunter shared how he attended three different high schools during his tenure (two located in Minneapolis, the other in the Cass Lake-Bena region of northern Minnesota). As a result, he felt that his own journey lacked a consistency, and that his constant travels and repeated change in enrollments castigated him into the role of a permanent outsider – even when among fellow Native American students. Hunter's first two high schools that he attended were located within Minneapolis, and were mainstream institutions with a large and diverse student body. During his time at these institutions, Hunter found himself gravitating towards friendships within the small contingent of Native American students who were also in attendance. However,

despite these friendships, he continued to feel isolated and removed from the rest of his peers. This sense of isolation was further exacerbated by chronic episodes of violence occurring between students during the school day (of which he was both a victim of and a party to during his time there). For Hunter, this lack of general safety weighed heavy on him, and negatively influenced his opinion regarding the school and what he might actually learn as a student there.

The third and final school for Hunter – where he spent the majority of his high school years and where he successfully earned his diploma, was a small BIE school that served primarily Native American youth from the nearby Leech Lake, Cass Lake, and Nett Lake reservations. Despite the rather homogenous student body (predominantly Anishanabe, otherwise known as Ojibwe), Hunter related that not much was taught by the school to reinforce or support his culture beyond a handful of culturally-specific classes (particularly in fine arts). While these classes did emphasize what he had been taught by his family, in Hunter's estimation these classes did little to build upon that knowledge – either for himself or for the other Native American students who were also enrolled. Outside of the scope of curriculum, Hunter shared how the use of a school-based Native American drum group during extra-curricular activities (such as basketball games) did add a sense of pride to the understanding of his cultural identity, but the reality was that most of his high school experiences had been centered around the more traditional content areas.

For Shirley, who attended a public high school administered by her reservation government on the Red Lake Indian reservation, there was almost no inclusion of culture within the school activities or curriculum. Her experience was almost exclusively limited to the basic academic standards that were found in high schools throughout the state of Minnesota. For Shirley, her cultural identity and its ongoing development was to be found within her home life.

School was nothing more than a place to learn the necessary skill sets to enable her to survive within the dominant culture. During her time in high school, there was never any discussion as to what the school ought to be teaching in relation to the ways of the Anishanabe (her tribal affiliation) either by her family or by her contemporaries. Shirley attributes this lack of concern for the inclusion in culture on a number of items – most notably that her reservation was so isolated and insulated from the rest of the state that the people at Red Lake emphasized the learning of the major content areas as a top priority – knowing that their culture could always be learned at home. In this respect, by attending a school where her classmates were almost entirely Native American, there was no perceived need to include cultural education within the high school for it was so prevalent out in the community itself. According to Shirley:

“As far as my cultural identity, I grew up with it all around me with the ceremonies, the naming ceremonies, the feast, everything that they have now. It always was more in depth because there’s some things that they don’t do here, I see like in the cultural aspect. Some of our ceremonies are pretty guarded and sacred that we don’t talk about them. So I grew up and learned I was born that. I always say I was born it – everything, I lived it every day when I was growing up. Along with my grandparents and all the elders and I see a big difference in the cultural part today where there is just no – where the elders and people in the community were real different when I was growing up. It was more supportive, it was more community based, and it was caring about each other even if you weren’t related to them. It was just that culture part that you, I felt comfortable and well taken care of by the people in the community and with my family. So it was good.”

This too was reflected in Beth’s accounts. Beth attended a Native American boarding school in the late nineteen sixties in South Dakota. As was the case with Shirley’s high school experience that occurred in a time-frame just prior, Beth could not recall any overt support being offered by her high school relating to the development of her cultural identity. While they had pow-wows happening in nearby communities throughout the school year, there was no overt inclusion of culturally relevant material within the curriculum or inside the school itself. Instead,



Beth's experience was focused primarily on the obtainment of new skill sets that would hasten her ability to provide for herself after she had successfully graduated. To this end, her school work was focused on the traditional content areas (reading, history, math, science) but with an added emphasis on tracking mechanisms for each gender as well. These tracking pathways were similar to that which was present within mainstream high schools throughout the country at that time – home economics for girls, and industrial arts for boys. Beth shared how she embraced her home economics classes, enjoying the ability to learn how to sew and to cook. It was Beth's beliefs that these skills would enable her to move off of the reservation and potentially live in a big city someday. For her, high school was an opportunity to learn things that her family could not teach her. As shared by Beth:

“... for the high school at the boarding school, was really a rewarding experience for me because I learned a lot of things. I took home [economics], I learned how to cook, I learned how to sew, I knew how to do a sewing machine, I made a couple of dresses that we had to, we had to make our own dresses and we were in a little style show to show off our dresses. So I got a lot of good things that I've learned at that boarding school. And when I was a senior there we had a two week time frame but we had to take this one course prior to that learning how to do menus. And then shopping by the menus because there was a two week program where 4 senior girls and 4 senior boys, we took turns. They had a little off campus apartment. So after we got prepared with this one course, we got to live off campus for 2 weeks. And we had to utilize our menus and our shopping skills and our budgeting and all that. We had to put all that to work.”

Shirley and Beth were the only two elders of the three respondents that have children or grandchildren currently in the system of public high schools. Hunter has young cousins who are now enrolled within public high schools. When reflecting on today's scholastic efforts, all three suggest that there remain significant short falls and gaps within the educations provided to today's Native American students. Hunter expressed his belief that high schools today inadvertently force patterns of isolation upon Native American students as a result of the ever-

increasing diversity present within their walls, and as a by-product of their persistent lack of adopting multi-cultural applications to the curriculum and teaching methodologies. In his opinion, high schools today foster toxic environments where racist attitudes profligate amongst the different ethnic groups of the student body, and are reinforced by overt racist jokes and the occasional eruption of outright violence between these groups.

Shirley feels that there is an unadulterated profusion of mass media and popular culture within the high schools of this state, that when left unchecked, serve to erode any sense of cultural identity held by Native American students as taught to them by their families at home. Whether it be through the use of new mobile devices or unfettered access to the internet, Shirley believes that high schools today do nothing to limit the extent by which these information streams put forward by the mass media influence the developing minds of students. In this respect, even if considerations were made for the greater inclusion of culture for Native American students, Shirley believes that the problems posed by this new and unwarranted influence will prove to be too destructive.

Akin to the sentiments expressed by Hunter and Shirley, Beth described how there was ongoing bullying for her grandchildren as one of the most powerful experiences to emanate out from today's high schools for her family. While she believed that for the most part the high schools her children and grandchildren attended did not do much in the way of overtly undermining their sense of cultural identity, but she was troubled by the ongoing behavioral issues that were present and the ill effects that these problems had on her family. Beth expressed much frustration as to why the high schools did not do a better job of preventing such bullying from occurring. In the instance of Beth's grandson, these bullying episodes were between Native American students within an urban high school in Minneapolis. Beyond the episodes of bullying,

Beth felt that her children and grandchildren did have their culture supported by the high schools in small ways – most often manifesting in their ability to share an aspect of their culture in the classroom in relation to school assignments or school reports. Beyond this however, Beth did not recite any overt inclusion of Native American culture within the curriculum or the courses her children and grandchildren were pursuing as high school students.

For Shirley's extended family, despite her feelings about a perceived incursion of pop culture within the schools, her children and grandchildren also had several positive experiences that did directly reinforced their understanding of their cultural identity. Attending the very same school system in Red Lake that Shirley did, her children and grandchildren had access to culturally-specific programming as offered by the high school. Most notably, students were able to participate in traditional practices affiliated with their culture (in this instance outdoor learning involving wild rice harvesting, and "sugar-bushing" – or the collection of maple syrup and sugar from maple trees). These cultural experiences were, in Shirley's estimation, valuable experiences for her family in supporting the ongoing development of their cultural identities.

When assessing the emotional connotations found within the responses offered by the data source group for this particular subcategory, it was largely negative. Fifty-eight percent of the responses identified as possessing emotional wording were negative in their implication (fifty-six out of ninety-six catalogued remarks) – suggesting that on the whole, the participants within this data group were not pleased with their own experiences or with that of their family members. (See Appendix B)

### *Historical Context*

When reflecting on what each respondent knew about the historical antecedents relating to the Native American experience within formalized education, the results were mixed. Hunter,

owing to the many books and stories that were provided to him during his youth by his parents and by his parent's friends (many of these friends were members of the political advocacy group known as the American Indian Movement, or AIM), he had a rather sizeable base of knowledge relating to the experiences of elders within boarding schools and as to how Native Americans had been typically portrayed within the curriculum used in schools. As such, he possessed a guarded and slightly cynical mindset once he began attending high school. As a Native American student, Hunter shared how this foreknowledge regarding the history of his people further added to a sense of being an outsider, of being a student whose connections to the school and the student body were more remote and strained than what was possibly being experienced by his non-Native American contemporaries. Such feelings would prove a difficult obstacle for Hunter to overcome in terms of engaging with the material and activities provided by the high school, and would only be overcome (in some capacity) once he enrolled within a predominantly Native American high school in northern Minnesota.

Both of Hunter's parents – especially his mother – excelled at academics, and as such provided young Hunter with direct and symbolic encouragement as to the importance of education, and his ability as a student to succeed if he were to apply himself to his studies (Hunter's mother would go on to earn her law degree). To address the conflict that arose between the encouragement to succeed academically and his feelings of being on the outside looking in led Hunter to read voraciously on his own time, and to pursue his academics in a rather solitary fashion. Seldom did Hunter participate in regular school groups or after-school activities. Beyond the influence of his parents, Hunter admitted that at the time of his high school matriculation he possessed little in the way of understanding or connecting with the more long-

range historical occurrences experienced by his Native American ancestors with regards to formalized education.

Beth was, by her account, one of the first of her family to actually go to high school. Her parents and grandparents had never attended any type of formalized education system – instead having grown up on the Standing Rock reservation pursuing manual labor that had been passed down from one generation to the next (typically ranching and manual labor associated with farming). For Beth’s parents, the opportunity to attend a boarding school off of the reservation was a unique occasion for their daughter to set on a path for an improved life devoid of the destitution that was so prevalent where they lived. From her recollection, Beth related that there really were not many discussions about what their ancestors had encountered when they came into contact with the formalized education systems of the dominant culture. By her own admission, she did not know much about the history of her people beyond the experiences of their immediate family, and the exploits of the legendary leaders of her Lakota nation (mainly stories about Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull). Instead, the principal discussions involving school centered upon what school could teach a person, and what use it could provide the community if students were to take their studies seriously. From Beth’s experiences:

“So going to school there, they wanted us to go to school and like I said, my mother needed help ordering from the catalog. She didn’t know how to do that stuff. My grandmother didn’t know how to say things in the English or...she’d say it to me in Indian and I would interpret for her so they were really happy when the school system came into place. And my dad, he just made sure that we all went to school every day.”

With this in mind, Beth’s parents strongly encouraged her to leave home and attend boarding school, and to pursue her studies with diligence - free from the distractions of home life and her friends. It was their hope for her (as shared by Beth) that she would learn enough new skills as to be able to help the entire family navigate their way through this dominant culture, and

to be able to strike out on her own off of the reservation. Although frightened by the prospects of having to leave home, Beth did it for the pride of her parents and to potentially create for herself a new life free from the poverty that so badly permeated her community on the reservation.

Shirley's parents were graduates from the local Red Lake high school, but had not progressed very far economically. For their daughter, they wished for Shirley to earn her high school diploma so that she could go out and get a decent job. As was the case with Beth, Shirley never made inquiries as to what her people's historical experiences had been regarding schooling. Instead, any sense of history did not extend beyond the experiences of her immediate family and grandparents (all of whom had obtained a high school diploma through the school at the Red Lake Indian Reservation).

In terms of assessing the respondent's current understanding regarding the history of the American Indian people and the formalized education, each had a greater grasp now than they did when they were attending high school all those many years ago. All three viewed the creation of specialized departments for Indian education principally as a means for districts to acquire more money, with very little concern for the betterment of the educative processes for Native American students.

If granted the power to undue historical errors utilizing their current understanding of the situation, Hunter put forth the requirement of removing all religion from the educational system, and would have insisted upon involving Native American leaders during the historical period where formalized education was being developed and making incursions onto indigenous lands. In this way, Native American leaders could adopt that which they felt was of value, yet design the system that would be best suited for their people.

Beth would have preferred to see the inclusion of multiple generations within the educational systems that were offered to the Native American people. In this way, drawing upon her own experiences, people like her parents could learn right alongside of her in the ways of English literacy and modern mathematics. By bringing the generations together in this manner, they could continue on with their educations at home as well as in the school. Beth did offer some lamentations as to how her culture was never discussed or taught in high school during her enrollment. As such, she shared how she would like to have seen the school systems incorporate more cultural teachings in some manner during the very early years of the Native American experience with formalized education.

Here again, a preponderance of emotional associations for this data group regarding this particular subcategory was negative. Seventy percent of the identifiable emotional responses were negative in nature (fifty-nine out of eighty-four tallies), suggesting that their understandings of the historical context of public high school education with the Native American people is not held in high regard. (See Appendix B)

### *Future Visioning*

Each respondent had several ideas to offer regarding how they would improve high school education going forward for Native American students – specifically how this educational experience would interact with future Native American students and their sense of cultural identity. All three made references to the inclusion of more culturally specific activities. Hunter suggested the mandate of indigenous languages as a required course of study, but simultaneously encouraged more broad-based examinations of all cultures world wide – thus ensuring the capacity for Native American students to learn from and coexist within a more global-orientated environment. Shirley wanted to see more outdoor, experiential learning activities to strengthen

the Native American student's cultural connections to the land. Beth desired to see a more accurate portrayal of the Native American experience within the curriculum being used (especially within history textbooks).

In terms of crafting the ideal teacher, Shirley and Hunter emphasized the need of a teacher who possessed well-developed pedagogical skills so as to inspire the act of learning within future Native American students – even outside of school hours. If these teaching skills were present, both believed that it would benefit the development of the cultural identities of students in the future by encouraging students to engage more frequently with their families and with other related texts. Only Beth would make it a requirement that the preferred educators for Native American students themselves be Native American. In addition, Beth also would like to see that these teachers be better versed within their cultural practices so as to be better able to teach Native American students.

When questioned about how today's high schools are preparing American Indian youth to pursue their dreams, Hunter did not feel as though the high schools were in fact having a positive impact. It was his opinion that the success of today's Native American students was due in large part to their own resilience and their own ability to adapt within the dominant culture – more often than not supported by their families and their community, as opposed to their school.

Shirley believed that the high schools today, in comparison to her time, were doing a markedly better job at preparing Native American students for achieving their stated dreams. She cited the increase of supportive counseling, and the greater focus on college matriculation now presented to her grandchildren in high school as a positive step towards such preparation. She also commented on how she believes the simultaneous counseling now offered Native American



students towards conceptualizing their eventual career pathway has been a very positive development, and quite helpful in preparing the youth for obtaining their goals.

Beth also believes that the high schools are doing a better job in preparing today's American Indian youth for greater achievement. For her, the incorporation of multiple educational pathways – alternative schools, GED programs, and high schools for teen parents – are all improvements to the system since her time in high school. She in fact cites some of these very programs as being utilized by her own children, and thus allowing them to successfully complete high school and either obtain a good job, or go on to a post-secondary enrollment.

With regards to the emotional associations embedded within the responses elicited from this particular subcategory, the participant's feelings were remarkably up-beat and positive. Over three-fourths of the tallied responses (seventy-six percent - or fifty-seven tallies out of a collected seventy-five) possessed a positive emotional connotation within the participant's wording. Such lopsided percentages would suggest that this data source grouping felt especially hopeful and positive when considering their vision of a future of public high school education for Native American students. (See Appendix B)

#### *Findings for Each Subcategory for Data Source Three*

The following are examinations of the author regarding his own experiences within a public high school as drawn from the content found within autoethnographic study conducted in support of this research effort. The following analyses are conclusions issued by the author as inspired by the autoethnographic selection.

##### *Cultural Identity*

For myself, my family comes from the Hunk Papa band of the Lakota nation. My grandfather and mother are enrolled members of this tribe. My understanding and knowledge

base regarding my culture came almost exclusively from these two individuals – with my mother providing the most hands-on teaching. Through the interactions with my family, supplemented by the reading of relevant texts and films (either found on my own in the library, or suggested to me by my mother), I had a fairly good base of knowledge regarding the Native American experience as it related to formalized education when I began high school. Added to these sources were the stories shared to me by my step-father and his family, who were of the Hidatsa tribe of northern North Dakota.

What I valued most about my culture was its reverence for nature, as well as its ability to present a spiritual consciousness that was living and supportive of our experiences here on earth. In this sense, the teachings of our people offered a guide as to how to interact amongst one another, as well as to how we should interact with nature itself. Above all, these teachings asserted a firm belief in the inter-relatedness of all living things, and the need for a harmonious and balanced coexistence. In these teachings I found a source of tremendous wisdom that I value to this day, and guidance for whenever conflicts arise.

What was most distressing during my youth was how these values, this wisdom, was not reflected in any of the teaching I was learning in school. At the time of my high school enrollment, I was confronted with an environment that seemed to thrive on racism, hostility, and aggressive competition between the students who attended. There could not have been a greater divergence as to what I had learned about my culture at home, with what was being taught (or in most instances omitted) within my high school regarding my Native American heritage. This inconsistency played a profound role in my personal development, and most assuredly contributed to the development of my chosen career pathway as a professional educator.

When reflecting upon the emotive remarks made within the autoethnographic selection, the overwhelming majority of tallied responses were believed to be positive in nature at a rate of eighty-two percent out of all emotionally charged statements that were identified. (See Appendix B)

### *Personal Experience*

My high school experience was on the whole quite negative. At the time of my enrollment in the mid nineteen-nineties, my high school had the largest student body in the state – topping in at nearly three thousand total students. The school, located in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, was not very diverse, with what I would estimate to be a student body that was nearly ninety percent Caucasian. Throughout my time at this school, there were no clubs, activities, or after-school programs for minorities or students from differing cultural backgrounds.

The curriculum employed was steeped within the old mythologies that characterized the Native American as nothing more than an impediment to American progress – in particular whenever discussions arose involving the concepts of “Manifest Destiny” or the great “melting pot” of our country. Instead, the preeminent focus of the curriculum was strictly utilitarian in purpose – centering on the development of each student’s capabilities in literacy, mathematics, and science as a means of obtaining success beyond high school (either in college or a career).

The other prevalent characteristic of this environment was that there existed a virulent strain of racism amongst many of the student body. Perhaps this was attributed to the nearly homogenous population of the particular suburb that the school was located in, or the fact that many of the families of the student body still resided in more rural portions of the county within which the city was situated. Whatever the causes, racist graffiti and violent outbursts were rather

common within the school. At one point, after repeated violent assaults by white students upon the handful of African American students who were enrolled in the school (whose total population within the school did not even eclipse double digits), a series of mandatory sensitivity trainings were conducted by the faculty and administration with the student body as a means of staving off future violent episodes. Unfortunately these efforts failed, and the fist-fights continued all the way through to my eventual graduation.

Within this context, there was no support offered towards the development of my own cultural identity as a Native American student. The idea that there might be greater inclusion of cultural viewpoints or culturally specific courses – whether they were focused on the Native American culture or some other non-White ethnicity – was laughable within such a toxic school environment. In fact the pervasive hostility reverberated throughout the school on a nearly daily basis with sounds of clenched fists striking down upon ebony cheek bones, and bodies being thrust violently into metal lockers. Contending with such an environment as a student gave me real concern at even disclosing my heritage to an outsider. In fact, the reality I was confronted with by attending a school mired in such dysfunction was a mere survival instinct – to get out, and to get as far away as possible with my diploma in hand. After three miserable years, this personal goal would eventually come to fruition.

These sentiments were reflected with the emotive statements identified within the autoethnographic submission, with nearly sixty-five percent of all tallied remarks being identified as possessing negative characteristics. (See Appendix B)

### *Historical Context*

My understanding of the historical experiences of my people was rather developed by the time I entered high school. A combination of learning from my mother, of hearing about the

direct experiences of my step-father and his family, and through my own investigations by reading historical texts and watching select films, I was familiar more than most with the troubled past existing between my ancestors and the public school system. The impact of this knowledge did not lead to a positive outgrowth. Instead, it fueled my cynicism towards public education in general – and towards regular attendance in a public high school in particular. Owing the ongoing behavioral craziness already present within much of the student body, this historical base of knowledge that I carried with me only caused me to remove myself even further from much of the mainstream activities occurring within the school.

When considering why the public education system was set up the way it was – including the development of departments designed specifically to assist with Native American education – at that time I would have disregarded such developments as nothing more than a hollow attempt at covering up the persistent maltreatment of the Native American students for over a century. Without any concrete example of how such departments were impacting my time as a student in high school, and without any visible example of multi-cultural approaches either in the curriculum or in practice via student-led events, I would have scoffed at the idea that such departments like Indian Education were even real beyond line items on a budget for the district.

When speculating as to the purpose behind such departments now, from the perspective of an older adult professional educator, I still retain several reservations as to their efficacy. However, I can acknowledge in some ways how they have brought changes to the established public education system that were in fact beneficial for Native American students. Some of these more positive developments include ongoing professional development training for non-Native American teachers, allowance for and inclusion of some traditional Native American cultural practices inside of schools during class hours (such as smudging and talking circles), and the

substitution of outdated and insensitive materials with more accurate and culturally inclusive texts and curriculum. In all, the environment for Native American students in today's high schools is much improved from what I experienced during my time.

When assessing the emotional content of the remarks found within the autoethnographic submission, the majority of the sentiment is negative – coming in at sixty-nine percent of the identified content possessing emotional connotations (fifty-one negative remarks versus twenty-three positive). (See Appendix B)

### *Future Visioning*

Looking forward, with a better understanding of why my own education was as dysfunctional as it was, in comparison to the type and style of education I am able to provide as a professional educator now serving as a leader of an alternative school designed to specifically provide services for Native American students, I am hopeful that the public high school system is now entering into a new phase of evolutionary change. Hopefully its next emergence will encapsulate even better methodologies and practices designed to accelerate the potential for all Native American students to achieve academically.

As evidenced within the autoethnographic submission, what I would like to see happen in the near term would be the greater inclusion of indigenous languages as a required course for not just Native American students, but for all who were interested. I believe that there also needs to be a fundamental reassessment of the manner in which high schools deliver their educational services. There needs to be more options beyond the massively large high schools with six period days and four minute passing times. In this context, smaller school settings that have been designed on cultural practices would be hugely beneficial for Native American students, as well as for all other cultures who are not of Western-European origin. Finally, I believe that there

needs to be a more robust engagement of the Native American communities of North America to recruit, train, and employ Native American teachers. I believe it to be of the utmost importance to have educators who reflect the lives and heritages of the students that they serve, and who sit before them on a daily basis.

When considering what my grandchildren might experience once they enroll in high school (my own children have for the most part already completed their high school experience, and unfortunately, the very same short falls that were present during my time as a student also existed during their time – only with markedly less violence) I would like to know that they will be offered a multitude of delivery model options - varying in size, daily routine, and cultural focus. I hope that each of these schools will be staffed with a diverse faculty proportional to the diversity found within our state and country, and that the curriculum they employ is rich with detailed and accurate portrayals of historical occurrences, as well as overt supportive activities centered upon the cultures present within the student body.

If these elements were to be enacted and become part of the milieu of public education going forward, particularly at the high school level, I believe that the environment created within these learning institutions would become markedly more conducive towards both acknowledging and supporting the cultural identities of each and every student enrolled.

With regards to the emotional content found within the autoethnographic submission, it appears that my feelings echo these sentiments with eighty-seven percent of my identified emotive remarks having been positive. (See Appendix B)

#### *Emergent Themes Arising through the Triangulation of the Data Sources*

Through the various coding mechanisms that were employed once the data collection had been completed and the findings analyzed, and after the completion of a triangulation of the data

against all three of the selected data sources, key themes began to arise and were identifiable. Still anchored in the four subcategories used for the coding processes, each subcategory generated its own thematic correlation. Once all four of these themes were examined, a comprehensive theory – grounded in the data – began to take shape.

*Theme One: Clearly Understood Cultural Identities*

Tied to the “Cultural Identity” subgrouping used within the data collection instrumentation, this particular theme speaks to the fact that all of the participants within this study possessed a clear understanding about their culture and how it related to themselves personally at the point of enrollment in a public high school, and that each retained this knowledge throughout the matriculation at their secondary education institution. In addition, in a manner that was almost universal amongst the participants, their cultural identities were transmitted, formed, and furthered through the efforts of their families. Seldom, if ever, were the cultural identities advanced in terms of understanding or practice within the public high school. It is suggestive through the collected data that there remains an inherent shortcoming within our public high schools towards further developing or sustaining the cultural identities of Native American students. According to the data, this appears to be true now as it was in the recent past, as it was also in the distant past. The primary vehicle for learning and developing one’s cultural identity for the respondents in this study remains their family and their home life. This theme is best encapsulated by the following summative sentence: “I know who I am and where I come from because my family taught me at home.”

When incorporating the aggregate emotional connotations, it appears that the participants within this study hold their cultural identity and the manner by which it was developed in very high regard. With a composite positive favorability of eighty-one percent (cumulative total tallies



of one hundred and fifty-three positive, and thirty-five negative), it appears that the participants retain warm feelings about who they are and how they came to understand this truth. (See Appendix B)

*Theme Two: Square Pegs Hammered Into Round Holes*

Derived from the subcategory of “Personal Experience” – regarding either the respondent’s own experience in a public high school, or as it related to a younger family member – the commonality of responses clearly fashioned a distinct theme. When examining the data collected for this particular subcategory, it was apparent that the participants never felt able to acclimatize their own cultural identities within the confines of the academic cultures within their high schools. This feeling of never fitting in, or of having emanated from a world completely different than what was presented to them within their schools, was – according to the participants – only exacerbated by their having to comply with traditional academic regulations and curricula. As a result, the participants of this study felt as though their culture was not meant to fit in with what was being taught in their schools, or they felt that their cultural identities were never truly supported by those who were teaching. In short, one could use the old adage that the participants felt as though they were square pegs being forcibly hammered into round holes during their time in high school. Throughout the responses from all three data groups, each participant identified deficiencies within the school that they believed compromised their ability to further develop their cultural identities. While in only a handful of responses was it indicated that the schools for each participant openly undermined their cultural identities, on the whole all believed that nothing much was accomplished towards supporting or advancing their understanding of their culture.

Time and again, respondents referred to poor and antiquated curriculum, well-intentioned but ill-equipped teachers, as well as a general lack of culturally based courses – in particular classes that taught indigenous languages. For this theme, two summative sentences were arrived at to try to encapsulate the sentiment of the participants. The first being: “Public high schools have had problems contending with Native American culture for a long time, and I doubt anything has changed.” The second summative sentence would then be: “The teachers were nice, but they have no clue as to who I am.”

This relative confrontational and less-than-enthusiastic sentiment was also reflected within the composite emotional content drawn from all three data sources. In the aggregate, over half of the responses were possessing some sort of negative connotation (sixty percent - or one hundred and ninety-nine negative comments out of a total of three hundred and thirty-two identified emotionally-charged remarks). (See Appendix B)

### *Theme Three: Honoring the Past by Succeeding in the Present*

When examining the data drawn from the subcategory dealing with “Historical Context” the responses tabulated were similar in many ways, but did from time-to-time provide some variances relating to the depth of the participant’s historical knowledge beyond their own families. However, when linkages were made between the most recurring data points, a common theme did come to the fore. Across the board, each participant had been informed of the trials and tribulations of their families regarding their ability to achieve within a public high school prior to the participant’s birth – and as such each participant received strong encouragement from their parents and extended family to do the best they could in school so that they – the participants – might earn a better future. To this end, all of the participants signaled their desire and intent throughout their time in public high school to achieve on behalf of their families. This

attitude was taken in part to make their families proud in the present, but also to honor the challenges that earlier generations had faced by making the most of their opportunity when they were enrolled. In effect it was a way in which the participants could honor the sacrifices made by their parents and family members while they – as students – made the most of their own opportunity to achieve success.

With such concepts evident in the information collected from across the three data source groups, the theme of succeeding in high school during their enrollment took heightened importance. This attitude was sustained despite the obstacles that were present, and served not only to fuel their way past the challenges that had befallen their families, but also as an action-oriented way for the participants to express gratitude for all that their parents and extended family had done for them. For this theme, the summative sentence assigned to it was simply: “I am here because of who came before me, and in their honor I shall achieve more.”

What is interesting here is that the aggregate emotional content data suggests that the participants were in fact more pessimistic or hostile with their attitudes regarding this particular subcategory – with sixty-nine percent of identified emotional comments being negative (one hundred and ninety-four negative remarks versus eighty-six positive remarks). (See Appendix B) With the majority of emotional content coming in the negative format, it is suggestive that their determination to succeed was due more as a result of hardened resiliency, as opposed to a joyful act.

*Theme Four: Public High Schools Have an Obligation to the Native American People*

The final theme was derived from the fourth subcategory referred to as “Future Visioning”. As stated prior, this fourth subcategory was an attempt to cause the participants to synthesize their thinking that had already been activated by their responses to the questions from

the previous three subcategories. Through this synthesis, they would hopefully begin to articulate a vision for what they would like to see occur within public high schools in the future, as well as to speculate on their own future, or that of another family member. What emerged from these responses was a consistent insistence upon public high schools to do more in the way of supporting and furthering the cultural identities of Native American students. In this respect, each of the respondents felt that there was a need for public high schools to make a concerted and overt effort to provide support for Native American students in the years to come regarding the development of their cultural identities. Such efforts included the requirement for schools to offer indigenous languages as standard coursework, to hire teachers who were either Native American or possessed a deeper understanding of the Native American perspective, to offer more courses devoted to the Native American culture, or to radically redefine the learning experience delivery model so as to incorporate differentiated environments that were in greater alignment with Native American beliefs and cultural practices (including, but not exclusive to one-room schools with a singular learning cohort, or outdoor classroom experiences).

Throughout all of the responses gathered within this subcategory, each one of the participants made it clear that they believed that public high schools ought to be doing more to support and promote the cultural identities of Native American students, and should be doing so by adopting one or many of the prescribed activities above. In this context, there arose a palpable expectation by the participants that public high schools are in fact *responsible* to be broadening their efforts to engage Native American youth, so long as Native American youth continue to be required to attend such public institutions. For this theme, the summative sentence assigned to it was: “Going forward, public high schools are obligated to teach and

support our Native American culture in ways so that our culture may exist for future generations.”

For this subcategory, the aggregate emotional data is overwhelmingly positive and optimistic. Seventy-four percent of the emotive remarks drawn from this category were identified as positive in nature (one hundred and seventy positive remarks out of a total of two hundred and twenty-nine identified emotive remarks) – suggesting that for the participants in this study, they remain hopeful when envisioning the future of high school education for the next generation. Perhaps, echoing the remarks made by the respondents, this positivity is rooted in a belief that through the incorporation of smart changes, the public high school experience can and will be beneficial for the cultural identities of Native American students in the years to come – but only if schools work in concert with the wishes of the Native American community. (See Appendix B)

#### *The Emergent Theory in Response to the Research Questions*

“I know who I am and where I come from because my family taught me at home.”

“Public high schools have had problems contending with Native American culture for a long time, and I doubt anything has changed. The teachers were nice, but they have no clue as to who I am.”

“I am here because of who came before me, and in their honor I shall achieve more.”

“Going forward, public high schools are obligated to teach and support our Native American culture in ways so that our culture may exist for future generations.”

When stacked together, the four summative sentences generated by the four emergent themes that were drawn out from the data begin form a linear narrative statement, suggestive of an overarching affirmation that could deftly encapsulate all four themes in one all-encompassing

concept. When coupled with the tabulations evaluating the emotional connotations associated with their respondents, the research conducted for this study finds itself in possession of an emotive underpinning suggesting an immediacy and validity to what theory could now emerge from the data. In this regard, the research has finally hit pay dirt, and has finally uncovered a potential theory derived from the research questions that were pursued at the outset of this work.

When the summative thematic sentences are merged together, a new form of theory does begin to emerge from the data that has been collected. This new theory – having been constructed out of the very elements of the data – finds itself inextricably linked to the data, *grounded* to the very information collected from the participants. Once identified, this new, emergent theory can now serve as an instrument for future research, for future action, and for future remedies to address long-standing educational disparities that have plagued the Native American people for centuries. This newly arisen theory can be used as a response to the stated research purpose for this study - assessing the impact of public secondary schools on the cultural identities of Native American students.

Now identified and once stated, this new theory can now serve as a direct reply to both of the stated research questions:

- 1a. How do Native American students that have recently graduated from a public secondary school describe their experiences as it relates to the impact it had on their sense of cultural identity?
- 1b. What are the views held by Native American elders regarding high school today in relation to its impact upon Native American student's cultural identity as they see it - and how do they believe today's experience compares to their own experience as high school students?

In this context, and in response to both the stated research purpose as well as the identified research questions, this new theory can be expressed in the following manner:

Owing to systemic failures within the public high school system – not only historical in nature but that which is also ongoing at the present time – members of the Native American community now believe that there is a responsibility incumbent upon the public high school system to actively support and to further Native American student understandings relating to their own cultural identities. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of such practices as indigenous language revitalization, increased course offerings centered upon Native American practices and history, unique classroom designs that include outdoor classes, and the inclusion of more cultural experts within the classroom as a knowledge resource. In so doing, public high schools will at long last join together with current and future Native American students in honoring the sacrifices made by their ancestors, and earn absolution for past transgressions by ensuring the ability of indigenous cultures to survive for future generations.

### *Summary*

When reflecting on the findings addressed within this chapter, there appears to be a real cohesion shared between the seemingly disparate groupings of respondents, binding them together into this new, singular theory. While it is true that all are Native American, it cannot be true to state that their experiences – or that of their families – were alike. Therefore to arrive here at the conclusion of this chapter with a singular theory that encompasses the stories of each suggests a remarkable journey.

However, this arrival was not by happenstance, or the result of accident. Rather a deliberate pathway was carved out of the wilderness present within the forest of data gathered from all seven participants that led the researcher to the new theory flowering upon the woodland floor. Through the creation of the research questions, the researcher had some idea of what it was he was looking for.

First, through a thoughtful selection process of participants, the ability to triangulate the analysis of any collected data became a reality. By allowing for key variances in ages and

experiences, the research was able to provide a modicum of depth and breadth that gave a viable way in which to analyze the data – akin to selecting the flattest piece of ground upon which to walk.

Second, through the inclusion of logical subdivisions creating four distinct categories that the data collection instrument was constructed from, the research was essentially primed for further groupings, more in-depth analysis of the data, and eventually the provision of deeper understandings. Thus a route had been selected with the fewest trees in the researcher's way.

Third, a series of coding mechanisms – guided by memoranda drafted and consumed by the researcher – were developed that ably sifted the data down to common or recurring responses. Through the application of these mechanisms – namely the four matrices – the study could begin to accurately encapsulate the totality of responses, along with gauging the emotional connotation assigned to each piece of data brought forward by the participants. In this manner, the coding mechanisms pointed the way to a deeper truth like beams of sunlight breaking through the tree-top canopy to illuminate our way forward.

As the coding matrices were then employed, and as the data that was collected was then processed among these prescribed mechanisms, an analysis of the data through a triangulation of the three sources from which the data originated was executed. Common traits among the data were identified, and upon closer examination, four themes began to emerge. It was at this juncture where our journey through the woods brought us into a small clearing possessing a natural floor of moist, rich, black soil upon which flowers of several different colors had blossomed.

Finally, as the themes were then examined in conjunction with one another, a new idea began to emerge. From the analysis of these themes - with an eye to see how all four worked in



concert with one another - bloomed a new theory that effectively responded to the stated purpose of this research, and could be offered up as a viable answer to the research questions that had launched this journey to begin with. This new, emergent theory – one that was grounded in the data that had been collected in its pursuit - offers us all something with which to examine further, and at the very least admire in duality of its complexity and simple beauty. So much the same way as an individual hiker might admire a unique flower with a brilliant bouquet of radiant petals that someone might labor to find, hidden away deep within a lush and fertile forest.

“Everything the Power does, it does in a circle.”

- Lakota Proverb

*Native American Wisdom* (Cleary, 1996, p. 52)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### *Chapter Five Overview*

The final chapter of this work will examine in greater detail the new theory that was constructed from the research and presented at the conclusion of chapter four.

Owing to systemic failures within the public high school system – not only historical in nature but that which is also ongoing at the present time – members of the Native American community now believe that there is a responsibility incumbent upon the public high school system to actively support and to further Native American student understandings relating to their own cultural identities. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of such practices as indigenous language revitalization, increased course offerings centered upon Native American practices and history, unique classroom designs that include outdoor classes, and the inclusion of more cultural experts within the classroom as a knowledge resource. In so doing, public high schools will at long last join together with current and future Native American students in honoring the sacrifices made by their ancestors, and earn absolution for past transgressions by ensuring the ability of indigenous cultures to survive for future generations.

To start, we will see how this new theory might relate to previous research already examined. This will be done by comparing the new theory against that which was explored within the literature reviewed in chapter two. Through this comparison, a better understanding as to how the emergent theory from this work either supports or builds upon these references.

From there, in recognition of the highly personal nature of this work, chapter five will speculate as to what the potential implications are regarding these new findings in relation to the lives of the participants, including the researcher's own life. Specifically, what insights does the newly emergent theory provide for our journeys going forward, how might the cultural identities of our children or grandchildren potentially be impacted, and how might this new theory influence our professional work?

Chapter five will also begin to speculate as to what larger implications could be drawn from the new, emergent theory. Specifically, this final segment will explore how this theory - and the research that produced it – could potentially influence public education at the high school level as a whole as it relates to the relationship between student cultural identities and public secondary education institutions.

Finally, chapter five will also include an examination of the limitations that were present within this particular study, detailing ways in which information of value was not engaged in by the chosen methodologies. Then, to identify suggestions for future research that could either provide added nuance to this work, or advance the concepts that was begun here to new and as-yet identified areas.

*Returning to the Start I: How does this new, emergent theory fit with previous research?*

Owing to systemic failures within the public high school system – not only historical in nature but that which is also ongoing at the present time – members of the Native American community now believe that there is a responsibility incumbent upon the public high school system to actively support and to further Native American student understandings relating to their own cultural identities. This can be accomplished through the incorporation of such practices as indigenous language revitalization, increased course offerings centered upon Native American practices and history, unique classroom designs that include outdoor classes, and the inclusion of more cultural experts within the classroom as a knowledge resource. In so doing, public high schools will at long last join together with current and future Native American students in honoring the sacrifices made by their ancestors, and earn absolution for past transgressions by ensuring the ability of indigenous cultures to survive for future generations.

With the data collection and coding analyses having been concluded, the statement above emerged from the work as a new theory relating to education and the impact it has on Native American students. At this juncture, it is important to understand how this recently constructed concept fits with the research previously examined within the literature review. In similar

fashion, the subdivisions used within chapter two will be employed here again as the new theory is contrasted against the literature.

*Understanding the Concepts of Cultural Identity as it relates to Education*

The understandings of cultural identity in relation to formalized educational experiences - as shared by the respondents during this research - were laced with frustrations. As revealed during the interviews, the respondents held negative emotions towards the ways in which they felt the public education system had been overtly mistreated their families, and their ancestors. In addition, they expressed resentment towards the way in which how elders in their family earned no benefit financially or culturally from having attended a public school, or how their own cultural understandings were either ignored or weakly reinforced when they themselves attended.

Emanating out from their own words arose deep-rooted feelings that public high schools now - as in times past - were continuing to fail Native American students. This failure was attributed to the system's inability and unwillingness to support the development of their cultural identities. Underscoring these sentiments of disillusionment with the public high school system was a sometimes expressed belief that public school systems posed a threat (either through overt action or through omission) to each of the respondent's concept of their own cultural identity. This threat was typically expressed in terms of a frustration or bewilderment felt by the participant towards the ways in which public high schools had set out to educate them.

As shared by Dave during his interview:

"I know in one experience my father addressed the teacher that had stomped on his back and uh, I think that, he said he went up to that teacher when he seen him at a conference and he said, hey, I'm not a skeleton in your closet. And to me that was representative of our people standing up to a system that still today is doing some damage to the minds and hearts of our children so I think their experience, how it influenced me is pretty much how I approach school."

These feelings directly harkened back to the literature review regarding the concepts cultural identity as it relates to education itself. Time and again, each participant related stories suggestive of a profound linkage between their cultural identities and their families, as well as their culture and the shared experiences and history of their community as a whole. Such self-attestation towards the manner in which their cultural identities were learned invokes Sheets and Hollins theory that contends how cultural identities are propagated principally through family connections, and through this transmission of knowledge, the individual then applies this knowledge to their own persona as a means of self-sponsoring their own cultural identification. (Sheets & Hollins, 1999) While existing within the familiar confines of the home, the ongoing growth of this self-sponsorship can continue unimpeded. However, once removed or confronted with a challenge to their cultural base of knowledge, this development becomes contested internally as well. As related by the stories of the participants, either through overt actions or negligence, the public high schools systems were perceived as a challenge to these teachings that were learned at home.

Also discussed within chapter two, the scholar Erik Erikson delineated a sequential process of personality development that mirrored the physiological development of the individual. This sequence – if interposed upon by external events (such as an unsupportive or even hostile learning environment) – could, according to Erikson, potentially constitute a critical moment of self-reflection, and in turn, a potential for positive self-development if the changes are incorporated and processed by the individual successfully. If not, the individual might potentially devolve into an ill-functioning state where what they had come to believe were integral parts of their cultural identity were seemingly being invalidated by their experiences. (Erikson, 1959) Throughout the stories shared by the participants in this study, Erikson's

insights regarding this internal personality conflict were present, and quite possibly quietly influencing the future attitudes of the participants when reflecting upon their time in high school. All throughout the study, it was repeatedly revealed that each participant had to contend with a learning environment that was foreign in some way to their cultural identities and upbringing, and thus a challenge for them and their sense of cultural identity. Hunter related such sentiments when discussing his younger family members currently enrolled in the public high school system:

“I see that the kids have a really, really big ability to adapt either through a lot of their hardships or a lot of the negative things, you know, it’s one of those things where if it doesn’t kill you it’s going to make you stronger. And uh, even the racism part kind of going on still in the world today. It isn’t like it was back when I was a kid. It’s evolved to where it’s probably even worse because of social media and the digital world and how it’s more easier to share ideas and thoughts and kids have just kind of adapted to that.”

Such challenges to cultural identities were in fact present for all of the participants of this study. Each had to arrive at some sort of personal or internal decision as to how they would personally adapt to the situation. For some, they pursued the development of their cultural identities independently of their schooling, relying on ongoing familial experiences and self-directed activities like the formation of Native American drum groups to find a forum through which their culture could come through and grow. For other respondents, particularly the elders, they voluntarily turned their backs on considerations of culture during their time in public high schools, reliant only upon the cultural development as offered through their ongoing contact with their families, or in some instances, finding the development of their cultural identities somewhat stunted as a result of having attended a public high school. In either example, when considered collectively, the participants echoed similar sentiments that the public education system at the

high school level had historically failed Native American students in terms of developing their cultural identities, and perpetuated such failures during their time as students.

When queried about their understandings relating to the historical antecedents many believed created the negative environments they and their families had to endure within formalized education systems, most of the participants in this study possessed a deep knowledge as to why this was. From Dave's interview:

“Somehow and somehow these white teachers still, white teachers still dominate these institutions and administrations are still white and they are still the descendants of the people who created this education system across this country to create one homogenous way of thinking and doing in order to support the civilization that functions off the degradation of the earth and her resources. I still think that this education system today in high schools and colleges are doing a great disservice to Native students.”

In this respect, many of the participants, but not all, understood that the history of public education was not only intended for the intellectual development of the student, but also for the overt conditioning of their cultural identity as well so as to better fit within the construct of a contrived national culture. Such overt acculturation of enrolled students was also discussed by Mondale and Patton, whose work explored how the public education system had been intentionally designed to create a distinct American persona at the expense of expunging former concepts of culture that may have been held by the enrolled population. In so doing, it was believed that the new nation of the United States would benefit from a greater sense of cohesion as result of this new assimilative practices undertaken (Mondale & Patton, 2001) These practices were carried forth by the American public school system over the ensuing decades and was reinforced during periods of high tension such as the Cold War, where being clearly identified as an “American” was considered a requirement in order to maintain national security. (Tyack,



2003). Through the stories related by the participants of this study, it appears that much of these practices of acculturation have yet to be undone and as such still endure. As related by Bob:

“And in those schools I seen that more as a kind of a suffocation of my cultural identity. That was just the way they approached it. As if they want me to be a good citizen, a good American. It made me feel, uh, like, they would like nothing more than my cultural identity, my stuff that I brought up as a young person to just kind of go away, to fade away in this school system.”

Such practices – in whatever iteration present in today’s classrooms - would naturally be a source point for a challenge to be posed by the public high schools towards the participant’s understanding of their own cultural identity. With the possession of such historical knowledge, then joined with the experiences of their families and for themselves directly, it is not hard to see why the subjects of this study shared the sentiment that the public high school system is failing to support the cultural identities of Native American students. When considering the new, emergent theory that arose out of this research, the concept regarding a perpetuated disconnect between public high schools and the development of the cultural identities of Native American students serves as the base from which new recommendations within the context of this new theory can be established. In comparison to the work appraised within the literature review, this preamble of the emergent theory not only becomes understandable, but potentially explainable.

*The historical relationship between Native Americans and the United States school systems.*

The second category of literature review examined the historical relationship between Native Americans and the public education system of the United States - this history for indigenous people has been an evolving journey that continues on to this very day. It began, however, with horror, abuse, and subjugation as a formal system of genocide was executed against these first nations of North America, with schools being the chosen vehicle for the

implementation of such policies. (Adams, 1995) When these approaches failed to produce the intended results for those that had dispatched such methods, there began over the next few decades a slow movement towards the qualified addition of Native American youth within the public school systems located in nearby municipalities. (Eder & Reyhner, 2004)

Here again, in relation to what was shared by the participants in this study, this history was readily present in their responses, a common and dark thread that had been woven throughout each of their stories. While some of the participants possessed a deep knowledge regarding larger historic antecedents that affected the Native American people, most held some form of perspective regarding how the past impacted their community that typically extended no further than to experiences of their own families. However, each respondent at one time or another professed an understanding that the notion of formalized schooling was inherently different from the way they were taught at home, that it had been at times cruel for those Native American students who had come before, and that little had changed during their time in high school. In Bob's words:

“There was a thought in my head – I remember we used to talk about through high school. We said well we're going to get our high school diplomas, we used to say, but we don't want to blindly adopt this white way of life. We don't want to adopt education so much that we become the very thing we want to fight. I says we don't want to take this education at the cost of our Lakota way of life. Cuz [sic] we used to believe that the *lakhól wíchoun*, or the Lakota way of life was the only way we could rely on if we want to live well and good and make our parents proud.”

Here again, when considering the emergent theory born of this study, the foundation from which recommendations within the theory take form are reinforced. The participants collectively held a belief that public high schools continue to provide a disservice to Native American students, in accordance with a long-established series of historical antecedents. When the views

of the participants are compared to the historical record explored within the literature review, it appears that much of their own experiences fit together seamlessly with a long-standing narrative that continues to evolve to this day.

*Cultural inclusivity: current trends in Native American education.*

The final component of the literature review took a look forward towards more progressive approaches currently being implemented within classrooms to incorporate culturally specific teachings from the Native American perspective within the curriculum used. As expressed by Klug, through the utilization of traditional and culturally appropriate materials, the core content areas typically pursued within high schools have become more accessible for Native American students and have engendered greater academic success. (Klug, 2012) In this respect, schools and curriculum refrain from extinguishing the cultural identities held by the students, and instead work towards supporting their development. Inclusion of language classes, accurate historical perspectives, and even engagement of community elders as stakeholders have all become recent strategies used to augment the academic experience of Native American students. (Davis, 2013)

When reflecting on the answers given by the subjects of this study, their responses gave clear support for such new methods – in particular regarding the direct inclusion of indigenous languages as a required subject. In addition, they each called for greater inclusion of such culturally orientated materials (similar to what was referred to by Klug) within public high schools – including the use of new history texts as well as differentiated learning environments. (Klug, 2012) Yet these suggestions as offered by the participants were not merely preferences, for the questions used during the interviews challenged them to envision a future for high school education that they would like to see. In this context, their suggested preferences for

incorporating their culture within the classroom in actuality became something more than a wish list of current methods that they would like to see spread. Instead, each participant put forward actual recommendations for activities that as yet have not been incorporated by public high schools, and to which they believed needed to be. These recommendations put forward by the participants of this study opened up a new perspective that would lead to the most significant recommendation found within the theory that would eventually emerge from the research. Yet articulating this new perspective remained, initially, elusive.

When the findings discussed within the literature review are then collated with the new vantage points as expressed by the subjects of this research, it would be a fair to presuppose that the participants within this study have exhausted their patience with the public high school system. Even with the addition of more progressive and forward thinking pedagogical methods specifically designed to support the cultural identities of Native American students, it would still seem a logical conclusion to arrive at to contend that these changes would not be enough to change the views of the participants. Even now, looking back on their own high school experience, the participants still spoke of their frustrations and – at times – their disdain for the today's high schools. Yet, it was at this very juncture when this study began to break new ground, where the energy central to the development of a new theory would derive its source.

### *Breakthrough*

The breakthrough came when analyzing the participants' view of how the future of public high school education might look in relation to tomorrow's Native American student. This line of inquiry was not directly linked to the areas examined within the literature review, but instead was intended to be a vehicle for the respondents to synthesize all of their previous responses - drawing upon their own experiences, their own understanding of their cultural identities, and

their own understanding of history to suggest potential changes for the future. As a result of this synthesis, a new vision emerged regarding the future relationship between the Native American community and the public high school system. Quite organic in its development, this vision would serve as the central recommendation of the emergent theory that was eventually produced by this research.

As discussed in the previous chapter, each of the respondents had stated clear ideas relating to specific strategies and new curriculum that they believed were absolutely necessary for schools to incorporate going forward. For them, these new initiatives would serve as a means of supporting or further developing the cultural identities of the Native American students who would be attending these institutions. An example of such recommendations can be found in a response given by Beth:

“It’s just like there was to be more curriculum on the Native things for the upcoming kids, I think that would really be great because my grandchildren are mixed. They are Ecuadoran and Guatemalan. So there’s two cultures there but they tend to favor their Native side more. All of my children, all of my grandchildren tend to claim the Native side over the other. But I would love for them to learn more about our culture. I’d like them to learn more about tanning a buffalo hide, things like that, I mean, a lot of stuff go around in my head. Or drumming, you know....”

However, at no point did the participants ever suggest abandoning or relinquishing any further engagement with public high schools. In fact, it was quite the opposite - all had insisted that the public education system was now responsible for implementing these new activities and curriculum. For them, such changes would serve as a means of *sustaining* the culture of the Native American people. Whether it was outdoor classrooms, indigenous language requirements, cross-generational learning groups, the participants believed that the public high school system had a myriad of opportunities with which to step forward and take a more active role in working

to teach and develop the cultural identities of the students that they were serving – in particular that of the Native American youth.

The work of Judy Davis explored how the identity politics of the late sixties had given rise to the American Indian Movement and other like-minded activist groups who targeted their activities towards enacting a cultural renaissance not only in the streets and homes of the communities, but within the schools as well. Only during this time, the Native American community was intent on starting their own schools, beyond the parameters of the public school system that they believed had been so damaging to the Native American people for so long. Unfortunately the outcomes regarding academic achievement were mixed, and the end result for two schools located in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota that were highlighted within the work – the Little Red School House in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis, Minnesota – being their eventual dissolution. Despite the passionate commitment to run these schools as a community based action, both schools would eventually fall victim to financial insolvency (Davis, 2013). Yet despite the closure of these two unique schools, there was no evidence present to suggest that the desire of the Native American community to operate their own educational enterprise for their youth outside of the sphere of public schools had ever subsided. I too believed that this sentiment to “break away to conduct our own version of educational experience on behalf of our own” was still very much the preferred stance shared by members of the Native American community to this day.

However, while within this study, the participants were making similar insistencies that culture be a focal point for the development and implementation of curriculum and core activities within the learning environment. Yet how these insistencies were to be enacted differed greatly. The key difference reflected within this research was that now participants were not seeking

independence from the public school system to do this for themselves. Instead, they were calling for the public school system be the responsible party for incorporating these ideas and implementing them on behalf of their community's youth.

From the viewpoint of the participants here in this work, as repeatedly evidenced by their future visions as to what public education should look like in the years to come, it was now time for the public school to become an equal vehicle – alongside the families of the students - for the transmission and development of culture as a means of ensuring that the Native American culture itself survives. As offered by Dave during his interview, the impetus was for schools to incorporate the culture, rather than the community disengaging from the schools to enact their own preferred methodologies:

“I would say that these schools, schools like Four Directions, would need to really use the knowledge that is available from our people, our elders. What we call experiential learning by having students go out in them canoes, and walk through the trees of our land, getting to see the land as a way of learning about their traditional ways. It is very important for indigenous people to be interacting with the land, with nature as we learn about these things being taught in our schools. And this can be done from any setting, whether it is an urban setting like Four Directions or like the schools we have on the Rosebud reservation or up north. By getting students outside we will have begun a new journey of rediscovering our ways in nature. Having a drum and a space for students to live their culture is very important, too. By having that drum in the school, it brings the students together to learn songs and to learn about each other ... By having that drum the students can sing and learn the stories of our elders and also spend time together with each other and the elders in gatherings when people come together to be with that drum.”

This concept – that the high schools now have equal responsibility in partnership with what is occurring on the home front to provide for the cultural identities of Native American students – is a radical reassessment of the relationship between the system and the community. As expressed by the participants, it would seem only natural for the public school system to acquiesce to such demands, for in large part, it was they (the system) who put our culture in such

existential jeopardy to begin with. Perhaps through a new collaborative model, the public schools of America might atone for their past transgressions, and achieve a real redemption in the eyes of all people here in the United States. This brought forth the central recommendation within the theory that would eventually emerge from the research – how the participants now believed that there is a responsibility incumbent upon the public high school system to actively support and to further Native American student understandings relating to their own cultural identities.

Conversely, this new conceptualization of the relationship between public high schools with a culturally specific community has implications that could reverberate throughout the country – impacting a multitude of ethnicities and cultures now found within the United States. In this new suggested paradigm, we can see how a cultural group (in this instance the Native American community) would reshape the purpose of the United States public education system to its own benefit by transforming it into a vehicle for developing and accelerating its own culture to guide the lives of its own future generations as they seek entry into the greater American society as adults. The idea that individual cultures should be actively taught within public high schools as a means of augmenting the transference of this culturally based knowledge to new generations - in concert to what is being taught at home - is a complete reversal of intentions behind the initial designs of the public school system.

If other cultural groups were to follow suit and insist upon their own cultural considerations within America's classrooms, the public school system in this country would in essence become inverted from its initial design characteristics. Instead of drawing in youth from a multitude of differing global ethnicities with the purpose of "Americanizing" them upon the completion their public education, it would instead become the primary vehicle for creating a pluralistic society. By stating their belief that the public school system should be actively



teaching cultural practices on behalf of all the various cultural identities present within this country, schools would then be tasked with providing sound educational underpinnings for a new society comprised of distinct, defined, and differentiated cultural groups. Perhaps, in the ideal, if the public school system met the demands issued by the participants of this study in a similar vein for all other people, our nation might be able to reconstruct a new paradigm where a multitude of differing cultures could coexist with one another peaceably – each secure in the reality that their culture is being taught and reinforced for their children on equal footing with all others, without preference, and without any valuation being assigned.

When considering this new manner by which schools would interact with differing cultural groups, one cannot help but return to the point of origin for the public school system as a means of reevaluating its purpose. In this sense, the speculation of what could be - as driven by the respondents of this study - has caused us to return full circle to our roots as educators and as parents. The contrast between what was ordained as necessary for education regarding Native Americans in the past and what this same cultural group has now called for as necessary for education to undertake today is striking. We have traveled very far from the historical antecedents where there was a deep desire to “kill the savage in order to save the man” as pursued by Pratt in the Carlisle School. (Adams, 1995) We have journeyed a long way from the days where schools were to “Americanize” incoming immigrants, essentially white-washing their culture away in favor of a more homogenous identity better suited for immediate transition into a fledgling democracy. (Mondale & Patton, 2001)

Instead, the march of time and all the many miles our society has logged from these starting points of public education as written about in the beginning pages of our collective history books, the voices of the respondents today have called us all back, to return full circle.

The subjects of this research have voiced their belief that our society must once again return to the very point of inception of our public school system as a means of repurposing our entire educational experience. These respondents, whose voices also carried the words of their elders and of their elder's elders, insist on something new, and through these demands call on us to redefine the purpose of public school now in light of all that has happened. So, as we ponder this new potential paradigm as elucidated by the emergent theory of this work, we must start again by defining (or re-defining as the case may be) what is the role of public schools with regards to the cultural identities present – so that educators can act in agreement and in partnership with the wishes of the people who will send future generations forth to attend, to learn, and carry on the traditions of their people in accordance with their own cultural identities. In this respect, the new theory that arose from this research echoes the participant's call for public high schools to begin working in direct support with the development of the cultural identities of Native American students – as is already occurring within the homes of Native American families.

*Returning to the Start II: My Journey and My Next Steps*

As discussed prior, I am a professional educator at work in the field today, and my principal clientele are high school Native American students. In light of what I have learned from the participants in this study, I have come to learn even more about myself. My journey was one that mirrored many of the subjects involved with this research. We all were influenced by the experiences of our families. We were all motivated by our parents to do our best in school. We all experienced pain and a form of disillusionment during our time as students in high school. Finally, we all believed that there was a better way to handle the interplay between formalized schooling at the high school level with the cultural identities of the Native American students required to attend.

Whether overtly tangible at the time or not, through the benefit of hindsight, I have come to understand how my experiences as a student in high school influenced my career aspirations and my development as a teacher. Within the inner recesses of my spirit, I held firm to my own memories – using these events as influential indices to guide my decisions as a teacher and as an administrator. Through the exercise of conducting this massive research project, I was brought in close quarters with several others within my own cultural community who not only validated my current activities, but also challenged me to do *more*. This newly emerged notion that public schools have a responsibility to teach culture, to ensure a culture from a minority population can indeed endure, is not only a perspective that I agreed with, but was a notion that I found myself inspired by.

Through our interactions, I began to think deeply as to what else I could be doing to incorporate the visions that were shared with me during the course of conducting this research. What else could I be doing to advance these desires as expressed by the most important stakeholders in education – the people themselves? In this respect, the most readily identifiable answer to such a question would be to advocate on their behalf – to use whatever access I have within the halls of power to share that which I have come to learn through this experience. Perhaps, in some small way, I might effect a positive advance of their visions towards becoming a reality. In so doing, I would hope to be honoring all those of our people who have come before and who have suffered themselves so that the next generation may have a better experience. While I am not suffering, I have no compunction about working diligently in order to do my share. This commitment to the cause is the clearest way I can divine as a means of honoring them. Anything less would be unsatisfactory, and insulting in my eyes.

In terms of my own ongoing personal development, my journey has brought me into contact with many a mentor, and countless new friends within the community who all have served to further my own understandings of my cultural identity. Despite the short-comings of my earlier educative experiences, I have been most fortunate to have been able to participate in new scholastic ventures that have directly contributed to my own base of knowledge as an Native American man.

In light of the research conducted for this study, and the new theory that has emerged from the collected data, I would add my own element to it, as a means of justifying the recommendations asserted therein. When considering the historical record that exists between the Native American community and formalized education, as well as the potential damage being wrought upon the cultural identities of Native American students whenever their culture is not present or has been invalidated in a classroom, there comes a sense that the public school system has a debt to repay. In this sense, as a result of the all the negative effects that have impacted our community from having attended public high schools over multiple decades, I personally believe that the responsibility of these schools to now directly teach our culture as a means of ensuring its survival can serve as an opportunity for the system to absolve itself of past transgressions.

By actively supporting and teaching the ways of our people to our youth, perhaps the practitioners of the public education system today can finally heal long-standing wounds and stubborn enmities that exist between our nation's schooling system and the people of this country - issues that had found their origins in the misdeeds of the past. Maybe then public high school matriculation, formalized schooling overall, and learning in general can take on a heightened honor for all people – not only as a noble enterprise, but one that is uplifting and that brings communities – families – closer together. If at all possible to create such good will amongst the

stakeholders involved with public education through the adherence to such penitence acts as becoming the purveyors of culture, perhaps such positive feeling might engender greater engagement and greater academic accomplishment for all people. Then, through an extrapolation of vision from this point perhaps, just perhaps, by finally untying these longstanding historical knots relating to student's cultural identities within the context of public education, our society can finally begin to effectively close the achievement gaps in public education that so stubbornly persist to this day. In this sense, the emergent theory from this work can then benefit from the final additive element present within its wording – in that absolution for past transgressions can be earned by ensuring the ability of indigenous cultures to survive for future generations.

This project itself also serves as example of such an opportunity. Going forward, while I have much more to learn, I believe that I have begun to chart a new path as an educator by which others could potentially follow. Learning not only from my own experiences as a student, but also as a teacher and administrator, I fully understand the power that formalized education can wield – both in positive and harmful ways. When taken together with what I have come to learn through the research conducted as a part of this dissertation, along with the emergent theory that it produced, a new insight has informed my thinking, and by connection, will also inform how I practice my profession.

As a man, I have gained validation and new wisdom regarding my own experiences by having had the opportunity to share in the stories related by other members of my community. To this fact I will remain eternally grateful, for it has stimulated my creative impulses to begin to envision new ways in which my own cultural identity can continue to be developed, and most importantly, how the cultural identities of my children and future grandchildren can be developed potentially free from the challenges and consternation that I encountered growing up.

As the young people in my family and community continue to come up in this world, I am hopeful that this work will offer each a path to now follow. In this respect, the circle of life will invariably return from the aged back to the young, but perhaps upon the next go around for tomorrow's youth that – very much as expressed by the participants of this study – their journey will be less hurtful and more supportive as they develop their own cultural identities while pursuing their education.

### *Limitations of the Study*

It must be stated here that this particular study did possess a number of limitations. First and foremost the sample size of participants was limited to only seven (with the author himself being included too). In a more robust study, with more expansive time to conduct and complete the research, the process would certainly benefit from several more participants incorporating different age groups - potentially including Native American students currently enrolled within a public high school. Additional research would also benefit greatly through the engagement of participants living around the country beyond the Midwest, where all of the participants for this study heralded from. These added viewpoints would certainly add more depth and potentially new vantage points to research, potentially having a larger impact on the types of data collected, as well as the analysis to be conducted.

Additionally, the nature of the instruments used were limited in scope owing to the amount of time allotted to each interview – a mere 90 minutes with the potential of small follow-up sessions if needed. In future examinations, it might be beneficial to provide a longer session for interaction between researcher and respondent so as to add nuance to the interview process, including the use of multi-media presentations as a means of providing different points of access to historical data or to consider related stories as expressed by other participants. Perhaps when

viewing other people sharing their experiences, it might have a positive effect on the ability of the current participant to remember more, or to recall other related stories that may have been overlooked within the constraints of a sixteen question interview within a ninety-minute time frame - as conducted for this study.

Finally, it might be said that this study could have benefited from the support of additional quantitative data. Such methods that could have been employed to engender a greater quantitative element might have been the use of survey research, as well an historical analysis of the demographics of the Native American student population within the area from which the respondents came from. While this research did include a modicum of such support with its inclusion of mathematically assessing the emotional content of the respondents, a more robust use of empirical data to support the stories being recalled orally by the participants might have added more nuance – and by extrapolation more depth – to the understandings generated by the analysis.

#### *Recommendations for Further Study*

Going forward, I believe that there are, at a minimum, two significant opportunities for future research. The first involves an engagement with Native American students currently enrolled in a public high school but have yet to finish. Their perspectives – living and learning precisely in the moment of impact where the two worlds that this study has involved itself with intersect (public high schools and Native American culture) – would add an additional element of real-time immediacy. This information would prove invaluable towards the refinement or restructuring of the public high school system for future students, and would also provide insights for the parents and elders within these student's families to understand how they might better support their youth in the years to come.

However, more significantly than engaging current students, I believe that their remains an entire half of this investigation that has yet to be explored. In this regard, beyond my own autoethnographic submission, we need to examine the experiences and opinions of educators who either have worked in public high schools, or currently still do. Their perspective, as being on the other side of the proverbial desk or standing at the front of the classroom, would most certainly deepen our understanding of the mechanics of the educational experience, as well as to provide insight as to what the practitioners within these schools believe to be effective practice, or failed policy. Once both sides of this coin are brought into the light, the conclusions so far will remain relegated to only one partner within this hoped-for collaboration for future generations.

### *Final Thoughts*

We began this journey as walk on into a thick forest. We have successfully navigated our way through the trees and along a narrow path that was well worn by footsteps from years past. We were able to sidestep around large boulders and maintain our balance as we moved past the various rocks strewn about beneath our feet. We were, through our efforts, able to discover a small clearing, where, guided by our data, we uncovered a flower of a new, emergent theory. Now, it is time to continue on as this path stretches forward, beckoning us to our next destination.

As I continue on in my career, this dissertation represents a key moment in my journey. It will now – having been completed – represent a moment in my life, a snapshot reflective of my thinking and belief patterns that were present within my mind at the time that this work was pursued. As is inherent in all autoethnographic work, the interpretation of the facts, the ways in which memories are reflected on, will change over time as I continue to evolve as a person.



Further on down this path, I may look back on these very same memories and the work represented within this dissertation and arrive at very different conclusions, very different emotional connotations. Such future conclusions can only truly be understood in that future moment – undoubtedly as a result of my having been influenced by the events that have yet to happened or to be imagined. In this respect, there is an impermanence to the work achieved here. It is significant for the time that it was created in, but truly is only of value for a short duration as the moment that it was created comes to an eventual end in favor of an onrush of new ideas, new experience, and new moments to be lived in. The minute that the flower was plucked from its ruddy soil to be brought forth for a closer and deeper examination, it had already begun its slow and eventual demise.

I have learned a lot having taken on and completed this process. As with all of the experiences discussed through this work by all of the participants, I fully understand that I have become someone new as a result of having lived it. The research certainly informed my thinking in this moment, and will assuredly influence the steps on this path that I will take going forward. For now, there is much work to do, much more of the path to cover in the context of my professional and personal life. From this vantage point, at the conclusion of this major research project, I feel as though I have successfully emerged from the wooded canopy that had for so long accompanied me along the way. Now, as these last words pour forth, I see that the path I am on has pushed forward on into a large, magnificent meadow bathed in the afternoon sunlight. Ahead I can see other incredibly large groves of trees bordering the tall green grasses of the open plain before me, where a gentle sway suggests the presence of a calming breeze. With the right kind of ears, I can hear the rush of swirling waters from an unseen river somewhere far beyond the crest of the horizon, behind those distant trees – on whose other shore wait my relatives who

have already crossed over. I know that directly above are the many stars and planets that will light the night in the very same pattern as they did for my ancestors – reminding me of my direct connection to them during the darkest hour of any given day.

The path is long, yet very inviting, and calls to me to place my newly found flower within my satchel – amongst my other possessions – and move forward one careful step at a time.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Interview Instruments

#### **Dissertation Instrument #1:**

Interview Questions for Native American Students Recently Graduated from a Public High School

*It must be noted that this particular instrument has been developed and tested through two separate pilot applications utilizing two licensed high school instructors who were familiar with and agreeable to this particular research project and who served as stand-ins for the eventual participant selected from this particular identified data source with whom the final iteration of this instrument will be used. Owing to the time limitations established for the interview as being roughly 90 minutes in length, the following list of 12 questions below are the principle guiding questions that would allow for just beyond 7 minutes for reflection and discussion (including immediate follow-up questions or conversational prompts) on the part of the subject and researcher.*

The questions for this instrument were developed within the context of four main subgroupings reflective of the information sought after by the principle research questions. These subgroupings are as follows: *Historical Context (HC)*; *Personal Experience (PR)*, *Future Visioning (FV)*, and *Cultural Identity (CI)*. Through the use of the first three subgroupings, it is the hope that the generated responses will be contextualized within the temporal considerations already explored within the literature review, as well as establishing points of connectivity between the three data sources from which the participants were recruited when exploring the life experiences of each subject as it relates to the overall experiences – or understanding thereof – of the subject's base community. Through the use of these common points of connectivity an evaluative appraisal between all participants can be attempted when coding of the language begins as it relates to the responses given within each subgrouping.

Finally, central to all inquiries is the concept of cultural identity and each subjects understanding of it – hence the inclusion of the final subgrouping focused on that specific area itself. When an advanced copy of this instrument is issued to the participant, the parenthetical reference to the four subgroupings were removed owing to the fact that they are there strictly for the benefit of the researcher and the forthcoming coding of the recorded data.

### Interview Questions

**Question #1 (CI):** Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be? (*Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?*)

**Question #2 (PE):** How would you describe your experiences within high school when you attended as an enrolled student?

**Question #3 (HC):** What do you know about the past experiences of Native Americans within public schools, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you?



**Question #4 (PE):** In what ways (*if any*) did your high school experience undermined or detracted from your cultural identity as you have come to know it?

**Question #5 (CI):** How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?

**Question #6 (FV):** What would you like to see done differently within the high school you attended in the years to come in relation to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?

**Question #7 (PE):** What was your most powerful experience (*either good or bad*) in relation to your high school experience?

**Question #8 (PE):** In what ways (*if any*) did your high school experience reinforce or support your cultural identity as you have come to know it?

**Question #9 (FV):** In the future, how would you describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?

**Question #10 (CI):** What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?

**Question #11 (HC):** Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?

**Question #12 (FV):** If and when you become a parent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child's high school?

**Question #13 (HC):** How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult in your life regarding their time in high school has influenced you? Why?

**Question #14 (FV):** When thinking about what you would like to do with your life, how did your high school experience prepare you for these visions and dreams?

**Question #15 (CI):** Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you have come to learn about it during your time in high school?

**Question #16 (HC):** Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native Americans students are educated within a public school?

## **Dissertation Instrument #2:**

Interview Questions for Native American Elders Relating To Their Own Experiences, or Relating to the Experiences of Family Members Currently Enrolled within Public High Schools

*It must be noted that this particular instrument has been developed and tested through two separate pilot applications utilizing two adult Native Americans who were familiar with and agreeable to this particular research project and who served as stand-ins for the eventual participant selected from this particular identified data source with whom the final iteration of this instrument will be used.*

The questions for this instrument were developed within the context of four main subgroupings reflective of the information sought after by the principle research questions. These subgroupings are as follows: *Historical Context (HC)*; *Personal Experience (PE)*, *Future Visioning (FV)*, and *Cultural Identity (CI)*. Through the use of the first three subgroupings, it is the hope that the generated responses will be contextualized within the temporal considerations already explored within the literature review, as well as establishing points of connectivity between the three data sources from which the participants were recruited when exploring the life experiences of each subject as it relates to the overall experiences – or understanding thereof – of the subject’s base community. Through the use of these common points of connectivity an evaluative appraisal between all participants can be attempted when coding of the language begins as it relates to the responses given within each subgrouping.

Finally, central to all inquiries is the concept of cultural identity and each subjects understanding of it – hence the inclusion of the final subgrouping focused on that specific area itself. When an advanced copy of this instrument is issued to the participant, the parenthetical reference to the four subgroupings were removed owing to the fact that they are there strictly for the benefit of the researcher and the forthcoming coding of the recorded data.

### **Interview Questions**

**Question #1 (CI):** Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be at this time? (*Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?*)

**Question #2 (PE):** How would you describe your experiences in high school, or the experiences thus far for those in your family who might be attending a high school currently?

**Question #3 (HC):** What do you know about the past experiences of Native Americans within public schools prior to your time as a student, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you when you began high school? Or, how do you think it might have affected a family member of yours who is currently attending a public high school?

**Question #4 (PE):** In what ways (*if any*) do you believe that the high school experience either for you or for those in your family who are currently undermined or detracted from their cultural identity as you have come to understand it?

**Question #5 (CI):** How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?

**Question #6 (FV):** What would you like to see done differently within area high schools in the years to come in relation to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?

**Question #7 (PE):** What has been the most powerful experience (*either good or bad*) in relation to the high school experience either for you or for those in your family who are attending a high school as you have come to understand it?

**Question #8 (PE):** In what ways (*if any*) has the high school experience reinforced or supported the cultural identity either for you or for those in your family who are attending a high school as you have come to know it?

**Question #9 (FV):** In the future, how would you describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?

**Question #10 (CI):** What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?

**Question #11 (HC):** Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?

**Question #12 (FV):** If and when you become a parent/grandparent/great grandparent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child's high school?

**Question #13 (HC):** How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult in your life regarding going to high school influenced you as a student? Why do you feel this way?

**Question #14 (FV):** When thinking about what the young people in your family could do with their lives, how do you believe the high school experience will prepare these youth towards accomplishing these visions and dreams?

**Question #15 (CI):** Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you came to learn about while you were in high school? Or, explain the differences between how a family member who is currently attending a high school came to learn about their cultural identity at home versus what they are learning in school?

**Question #16 (HC):** Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native Americans students are educated within a public school?

## Appendix B

### Matrices Used in Coding Analysis – Content Analysis

#### Matrix #1:

*Key and significant responses as issued by each respondent and separated within each data source grouping per respondent*

| Data Source #1                                                                                                                                         | Subcategory 1: Cultural Identity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                          | Question #1: <i>“Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be? (Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?)”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Question #5: <i>“How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Question #10: <i>“What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?”</i>                                                                                                                      | Question #15: <i>“Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you have come to learn about it during your time in high school?”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Interviewee I – Bob</b><br><br>Question #1<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #5<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #10<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #15<br>(Lines - )   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lakota (Sioux)</li> <li>- Came from outstate (South Dakota)</li> <li>- Strong connection (used own Lakota language during interview)</li> <li>- Had some knowledge of ancestral history, and tribal history</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initially from parents at home</li> <li>- Strong historical connection through extended family</li> <li>- Well-versed in tribal history</li> <li>- Possessed a strong sense of purpose born of cultural upbringing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Utilitarian purposes: to develop and guide the individual; can save people from vice</li> <li>- Challenges the person/community to become better (“red road”)</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home was orientated around his family’s cultural identity (Lakota)</li> <li>- High School forced exposure to multiple tribal identities – inter-tribal relationship building (Lakota-Anishanabe)</li> <li>- Reinforced traditional teachings regarding how all tribes are related</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Interviewee II – Dave</b><br><br>Question #1<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #5<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #10<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #15<br>(Lines - ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lakota (Sioux)</li> <li>- Came from outstate (South Dakota)</li> <li>- Strong connection (used own Lakota language during interview)</li> <li>- Had strong knowledge of ancestral history, and tribal history</li> <li>- Believes his cultural identity has been molded by his having been raised in multiple locations (South Dakota; Oakland, CA; Minneapolis, MN)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong historical connection through extended family</li> <li>- Well-versed in tribal history</li> <li>- Strong sense of purpose born of cultural upbringing</li> <li>- From his parents and his extended family – including some language</li> <li>- Never really considered the concept of “culture” or “cultural identity” – rather it just was who he and his family were</li> <li>- His extended family, but primarily his parents instilled in</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His own creation story</li> <li>- The creation story of his people</li> <li>- To use these creation stories as a means of determining/defining his role in life going forward</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His culture was imbued in him/taught by his parents and extended family</li> <li>- School enabled him to learn how to connect/interact with members of different tribes (Anishanabe)</li> <li>- School helped develop a sense of shared collective identity</li> <li>- Home was about him- his people (the Lakota), were school emphasized inter-relatedness</li> <li>- School did not really add to his own understanding of his own culture</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | him a desire to use the ways of the Lakota to develop himself, and to lead                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>Interviewee III – Melanie</p> <p>Question #1<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #5<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #10<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #15<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <p>- Anishanabe (Ojibwe)</p> <p>- Learned about culture from her parents (mother)</p> <p>- Born out of state (in California)</p> <p>- Traveled throughout her youth between California and Minnesota</p> | <p>- Mother taught her</p> <p>- Participated in pow-wows throughout her youth</p> <p>- First Moon ceremony (passage into womanhood) was where she learned a lot about her culture through extended family</p> | <p>- Most valuable is the way in which her culture influences her everyday life and choices</p> <p>- Learned about the way culture really ought to be second nature in her life-style through the teachings of an elder</p> | <p>- Her culture was taught more in home</p> <p>- Her schools lacked NA teachers</p> <p>- Her school did not really incorporate NA teachings, practices, etc. into the curriculum</p> |

| Data Source #1                                                                                                                              | Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                               | Question #2: “How would you describe your experiences within high school when you attended as an enrolled student?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Question #4: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience undermine or detract from your cultural identity as you have come to know it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Question #7: “What was your most powerful experience (either good or bad) in relation to your high school experience?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Question #8: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience reinforce or support your cultural identity as you have come to know it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Interviewee I – Bob</p> <p>Question #2 (Lines - )<br/>Question #4 (Lines - )<br/>Question #7 (Lines - )<br/>Question #8 (Lines - )</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Despite being in an NA-focused school, felt like an outsider (too traditional)</li> <li>- Dressed conservatively and was self-aware of his “rez” accent</li> <li>- Attended a small alternative school in Minneapolis that focused on NA students</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curriculum was poor – lacked NA perspective, history, seemed to perpetuate colonial attitudes/institutionalized racism (manifest destiny)</li> <li>- Lack of NA teachers</li> <li>- Often felt as though some teachers had difficulty separating themselves from the “system” they worked in</li> <li>- Had ongoing debates about tribal history/cultural knowledge with ill-informed staff</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-created experiences</li> <li>- Creation of drum group for school (after-school club)</li> <li>- Inter-tribal exchanges of stories between students</li> <li>- Use of traditional Lakota songs via school drum group</li> </ul>                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drum group</li> <li>- Teachers often asked him to speak of his culture, songs, stories</li> <li>- School was very open to engaging with traditional NA perspectives (teachers just needed to be prompted)</li> <li>- School encouraged new ways for students to express themselves &amp; their stories (video production class)</li> <li>- Actual class that taught Dakota or Anishanabe Culture by a NA teacher</li> </ul> |
| <p>Interviewee II – Dave</p> <p>Question #2 (Lines - )<br/>Question #4 (Lines - )<br/>Question #7 (Lines - )<br/>Question #8 (Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attended alternative high school in Minneapolis that focused on NA students</li> <li>- Felt like an outsider do to his traditional upbringing</li> <li>- Lots of gang activity in the school – very threatening</li> <li>- Felt that teachers were not very good</li> <li>- Spent a lot of time skipping class and sitting in library reading history books of his own choice</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School did little to reinforce or offer any teachings relating to his Lakota culture</li> <li>- Most of the classes were taught by well-meaning but ignorant white teachers</li> <li>- Most classes lacked any NA perspective</li> <li>- Felt that most classes – as well as the school – did little to separate itself from the assimilative practices of the dominant culture</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a drum group with his Lakota and Anishanabe friends</li> <li>- This drum group was then employed by the school for various ceremonies – including commencements</li> <li>- The drum group not only cemented his own understanding of his cultural identity, but helped broaden it as he interacted with</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appreciated the fact that it was small in size, and comprised mainly by other NA students</li> <li>- The friendships created within the school would eventually broaden his relational network to other families from other tribes as his drum group played in various settings</li> <li>- School strongly supported his drum</li> </ul>                                                                                    |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Felt that the lack of NA teachers at the school was a hindrance to his education</li> <li>- Wished that there was an indigenous language course offered</li> <li>- Was supported by his extended family through repeated vacations back to South Dakota where he could reconnect with his family and his cultural practices</li> <li>- Felt strongly that the school was failing the students – particularly in the ways of teaching about indigenous culture</li> <li>- Was considered and outsider – or “traditional” – and felt isolated from rest of student body</li> <li>- Did make friends with students from different tribal affiliations (Anishanabe)</li> <li>- Shared experiences with these students from different tribes (pow-wows, drum ceremonies, etc.)</li> <li>- Started drum group in school as a way of introducing/reconnecting his culture within the school itself</li> <li>- Felt school was little more than a tool to reinforce white ways, the white culture</li> </ul> |  | <p>other members from different tribes.</p> | <p>group – using them in different ceremonies, and allowed them a space to practice</p> <p>- Felt that he was allowed to grow as a NA person merely by being in close contact to other NA students on a daily basis</p> |
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| <p>Interviewee<br/>III<br/>– Melanie</p> <p>Question #2<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #4<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #7<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #8<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First few years were good</li> <li>- Liked her Ojibwe language class (had her uncle as an instructor)</li> <li>- Second two years found her in work-employment tracking course, she would have preferred to take more classes but found herself being channeled into this work program by the high school itself (looking back it was predominantly filled with minority students)</li> <li>- Her mother pulled her from the jobs program, but she was unable to finish High School on time – owing to her need to make up classes she was required to take – felt like the school was not honest with her, and did not have her best interests at heart (she wanted to go to college all along)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Owing to her large family that she was around both in and outside of school, she never really noticed her school harming her sense of cultural identity</li> <li>- Felt lack of support as she entered upper grade levels (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) – felt that the school was not working well to support students of color</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her completion of her Diploma (in Connecticut) was one of her most powerful experiences</li> <li>- Her acceptance into a college preparation program in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>- Owing to her good grades, she was elected as “Bemidji Princess” for a summer season</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having the ability to take Ojibwe language and Ojibwe art classes supported her sense of her culture</li> <li>- Having several members of her extended family working within the school also helped to subtly reinforce her cultural identity and understandings</li> </ul> |
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| Data Source<br>#1                                                                                                                                                      | Subcategory 3 – Historical Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                                          | Question #3: “What do you know about the past experiences of native Americans within public schools, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Question #11: “Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Question #13: “How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult in your life regarding their time in high school has influenced you? Why?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Question #16: “Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native American students are educated within a public school?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>Interviewee I – Bob</p> <p>Question #3<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #11<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #13<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question 16<br/>(Lines - )</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents related their experiences to him</li> <li>- Parents instilled in him that education was an opportunity to improve oneself</li> <li>- Elders in extended family also spoke of the dangers of education – assimilative practice and colonial indoctrination as potential</li> <li>- Elders and parents instilled in him that education was adversarial in nature</li> <li>- Was conscious of these attitudes as he attended high school</li> <li>- Made conscious decision to never lose/forget about his Lakota culture &amp; practices</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An attempt to engage the NA community better</li> <li>- A recognition that they have failed to do so well</li> <li>- An attempt to fix the current system for better NA outcomes</li> <li>- An attempt to better push the current system of schools on into the community</li> <li>- Views it as a progressive development, but only a small step</li> <li>- Insists that these departments serves as a way of further entrenching the system, not really about transforming their practices to better suit NA people in new or revolutionary ways</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instilled a sense of purpose for him to create a NA operation for NA youth</li> <li>- Influenced him to be guarded against assimilative practices of established institutions (like schools)</li> <li>- To rely upon his cultural identity to center himself when challenged</li> <li>- To be focused on working with youth</li> <li>- Had many stories told to him about how school can be destructive to Indian people</li> <li>- Felt obligated/driven to undue the manner by which schools hurt NA students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would have immediately engaged the NA community to design and staff their own schools for their own people from the start</li> <li>- Would have used indigenous teachings as source of curriculum</li> <li>- Would have included more outdoor/experiential modes of learning</li> <li>- Would have focused on language preservation</li> <li>- Would have woven in NA philosophical wisdom to guide behavioral practices as well</li> </ul> |
| <p>Interviewee II – Dave</p> <p>Question #3<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #11<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #13<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question 16<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents had negative experience in boarding schools</li> <li>- Parents and extended family related to him many of the abuses that occurred in those boarding schools</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believes it is to help establish greater inclusive practices in schools for NA students</li> <li>- Believes it as a means of making up for past historical mistakes (brutality exhibited</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents tales of abuse within boarding schools left indelible impression on his thinking – became alert, aware, guarded</li> <li>- Grew up viewing the relationship between schools and NA students as a</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would have engaged the leaders of every tribe to co-create a school system that is best suited for the youth</li> <li>- Would have centered the design of the schools upon a consensus as to what kind of future they</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believes that such stories impacted how he felt about high school – was very disturbed at having to go, concerned and alert for similar occurrences to arise</li> <li>- Felt he recognized these same assimilative practices being employed by many of the non-indigenous teachers who typically work in these schools</li> <li>- Somewhat influenced by his parents, had hard time understanding how he could adapt/succeed within a school system that was not made for his culture</li> <li>- Held onto the brutal history in his mind as he attempted to reconcile the fact that he too would have to attend school</li> </ul> | <p>towards NA students in past)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believes it to be a way in which the dominant culture is trying to absolve itself of its terrible historical record</li> <li>- Views it as a mechanism by which school districts can get more money for the district – not necessarily for NA students</li> <li>- Sees these departments as another attempt to isolate NA students from mainstream classrooms so as to prevent a true account by the “system” for its historical record – as well as to allow the mainstream classrooms from having to teach NA subject matter</li> </ul> | <p>system to establish dominance of the white culture over a subservient indigenous population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Felt pained whenever he witnessed other NA students struggle – not because of being challenged in their development academically, but because of their being challenged to exist in a subservient manner to the power-brokers who were running the schools and teaching in the classes – all interpreted through the filter of his knowing about his parents experiences</li> </ul> | <p>would want to build for their youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would insist upon curriculum that provides for the continual care for all spheres of nature (air, land, water, etc.)</li> <li>- Create curriculum that emphasizes interrelatedness between all indigenous peoples</li> <li>- Would work to creating leaders that would guide indigenous nation-states on equal footing with Western-European colonial powers to prevent colonization of indigenous tribes</li> <li>- Would work towards preserving and protecting NA culture and NA identity in all forms</li> </ul> |
| <p>Interviewee III – Melanie</p> <p>Question #3<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #11<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #13<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question 16<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not really aware of previous NA history with schools</li> <li>- Only concern was completing</li> <li>- No real discussion of previous NA experience</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believed such departments should be based in every school</li> <li>- Believes they are on the whole a good thing – allowing a space for NA students to learn about their culture, to congregate with on another – of particular importance in larger high schools</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only really learned of her mother’s experiences</li> <li>- Did not believe that they were all that impactful – was mainly centered on her own forthcoming time in high school</li> <li>- Mother’s experience was an all-girls school that was regimented with uniforms – felt it was too different to be</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would not have had more overt assimilative practices occur (hair cutting)</li> <li>- Indigenous language would be important</li> <li>- Incorporate more cultural teachings in the curriculum</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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|  |  |  | relevant to her own<br>experience |  |
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| Data Source #1                                                                                                                                         | Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                          | Question #6: “What would you like to see done differently within the high school you attended in the years to come in relation as to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?”                                                                                                                                           | Question #9: “In the future, how would describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?”                                                                                                                                                                                          | Question #12: “If and when you become a parent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child’s high school?”                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Question #14: “When thinking about what you would like to do with your life, how did your high school experience prepare you for these visions and dreams?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Interviewee I – Bob</b><br><br>Question #6<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #9<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #12<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #14<br>(Lines - )   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better curriculum designed specifically for and about NA people</li> <li>- More NA teachers</li> <li>- Undoing perpetuation of institutionalized racist practices</li> <li>- Undoing and eliminating colonialistic views and practices</li> <li>- Further incorporation of NA beliefs &amp; practices to guide behavior codes</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capable story-teller</li> <li>- Experiential learning outside of the classroom</li> <li>- Engaging the natural world</li> <li>- Greater emphasis on teaching indigenous languages</li> <li>- Greater emphasis on youth leadership development</li> <li>- Better curriculum devoid of racist or colonial ideology</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous Language being taught/required</li> <li>- Engaging with indigenous cultures world-wide</li> <li>- Better reflection process for students to help them understand their role going forward</li> </ul>                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diploma enabled him to get into college</li> <li>- Prepared him to navigate through the various systems employed by the dominant culture</li> <li>- Felt empowered by his own cultural understandings and identity as a result of high school</li> <li>- Faculty helped develop a sense of pride that they could accomplish anything that they worked towards</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>Interviewee II – Dave</b><br><br>Question #6<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #9<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #12<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #14<br>(Lines - ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage knowledge base present in our elders more</li> <li>- More outdoor or experiential learning opportunities – interacting with the land</li> <li>- Having a drum for cultural expositions in the school</li> <li>- More NA-focused books (both fiction and non-fiction)</li> <li>- Required teaching of indigenous languages</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More mentorship qualities</li> <li>- More inclined to teach outside in nature</li> <li>- They would need to know an indigenous language</li> <li>- Would need to tie in information learned from elders</li> <li>- Would put the classroom decidedly out-of-doors – including overnight stays</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous language would be present and required</li> <li>- A reformed U.S. history being taught to accurately portray the NA experience</li> <li>- More courses on “nation-building” – governance, philanthropy, economic development</li> <li>- Inclusion of NA cultural ceremonies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By having his family life, community life, and school life being intertwined in some ways- particularly when his drum group would perform – helped prepare him to adjust to city life</li> <li>- Having his community at heart – in mind and in practice throughout his time in high school – helped him develop a sense of having support – which he believes enabled to achieve</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Interviewee III – Melanie</p> <p>Question #6<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #9<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #12<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #14<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More parent involvement with schooling</li> <li>- Teach culture to parents as well</li> <li>- Suggestive of cross-generational learning between parent and student</li> <li>- More cultural trainings for students with more NA driven curriculum</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater diversity of teachers – particularly a more diverse pool of NA teachers</li> <li>- More NA teachers in general</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue on with indigenous language immersion schools beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade (as it is today) to make it through high school as well</li> <li>- To have the immersion experience encapsulate the entirety of the school experience –not just a class or two</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not believe youth are be prepared well</li> <li>- Believes it is more of social-promotion, quick push to move students to graduation and out</li> <li>- Feels that little has changed since her time as student in the ensuing years</li> </ul> |

| Data Source #2                                                                                                                                           | Subcategory 1 - Cultural Identity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                            | Question #1: “Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be? (Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?)”                                                                                                               | Question #5: “How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Question #10: “What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Question #15: “Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you have come to learn about it during your time in high school?”                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Interviewee IV – Hunter</p> <p>Question #1 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #5 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #10 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #15 (Lines - )</p> | <p>- Anishanabe (Ojibwe)</p> <p>- Well versed at early age in NA politics</p> <p>- Extended family taught him ceremonial practices, cultural practices throughout his youth</p> <p>- Traveled extensively between northern Minnesota, five-state region, and California</p> | <p>- Grew up with strong connection to extended family</p> <p>- Spent significant amount of his youth in Oakland, CA (“AIM baby”)</p> <p>- Spent significant time with extended family learning ceremony, and practices (mainly his uncles)</p> <p>- During his teen years he had a car-traveled the pow-wow circuit over summers (“the trail”)</p> <p>- Much of his understandings came from his own inquiries, his own literal journeys to visit relatives, or to experience events (ceremonies, pow-wows, etc.)</p> | <p>- Values the future presented within its teachings</p> <p>- Values that there is a future for it to continue to grow and expand (dominant culture has become a little more tolerant)</p> <p>- Values its inclusivity for bringing in other NA people back into the fold as they begin to discover/rediscover their own cultural identities</p> | <p>- His experiences at home were far more detailed and intense (ceremonies, etc.)</p> <p>- The high school experience was only surface-level in its exploration of the culture</p> <p>- Much of what he learned at home or outside of school was considered privileged information – so there wasn’t much opportunity for cross-over into the classroom</p> |
| <p>Interviewee V – Beth</p> <p>Question #1 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #5 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #10 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #15 (Lines - )</p>    | <p>- Lakota (Sioux)</p> <p>- Extended family taught him ceremonial practices, cultural practices throughout his youth</p>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>- Mother and Grandmother were primary source of cultural knowledge</p> <p>- Stories were shared typically around kitchen table daily</p> <p>- Learned some from interactions with her</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>- Values the ability to participate in pow-wows, to construct regalia for her family, and to witness the dancers</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>- Mainly learned her culture from her mother and grandmother at home</p> <p>- School did very little in the way of overt teaching of culture, however they did allow for small NA clubs for</p>                                                                                                                                                           |

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|                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Came from outstate (South Dakota)</li> <li>- Strong connection (used own Lakota language during interview)</li> <li>- Had some knowledge of ancestral history, and tribal history</li> </ul>                                                                                                        | father and extended family                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | after-school gatherings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Interviewee VI – Shirley</p> <p>Question #1 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #5 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #10 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #15 (Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anishanabe (Red Lake, MN)</li> <li>- Family has lived on Red Lake Reservation for generations</li> <li>- Grew up with cultural ceremonies and practices her whole life</li> <li>- Learned most about her culture from her parents, grandparents, and other elders within the communities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learned most about her culture by sitting with her grandmother</li> <li>- Learned most information by listening to various stories</li> <li>- Most of the ways in which she learned about her culture were through informal gatherings with extended family</li> <li>- Extended family would bring a drum, some would bring regalia, and all would share in stories</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Values most how she is always accepted and welcomed into her family/community</li> <li>- Appreciates how neither time nor distance has ever detracted from this sense of immediate welcome</li> <li>- Appreciates that this continual acceptance and welcome by her family and community also entails that each looks out for the needs of the other at all times – making sure everyone has food, drink, a place to stay, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her schooling never really supported her cultural understanding, nor did it ever really detract from it – neutral in impact</li> <li>- Her school was populated entirely with NA students, so she never really felt apart or separated from others as a result of her culture</li> <li>- Her knowledge of her culture was almost exclusively taught at home, not at school</li> </ul> |



| Data Source #2                                                                                                                                                         | Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                                          | Question #2: “How would you describe the experiences within high school thus far for those in your family who might be attending a high school currently – or from your own experiences?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Question #4: “In what ways (if any) do you believe that the high school experience for those in your family who are currently enrolled – or drawing from your own experiences - have undermined or detracted from their cultural identity as you have come to understand it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Question #7: “What has been the most powerful experience (either good or bad) in relation to the high school experience for those in your family who are attending – or drawing from your own experiences – as you have come to understand it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Question #8: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience reinforce or support your cultural identity for those in your family who are attending – or from your own experience - as you have come to know it?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Interviewee IV – Hunter</p> <p>Question #2<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #4<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #7<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #8<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His own experience was fractured – bounced around a lot between schools</li> <li>- Due to his constant moving, always felt like an outsider</li> <li>- Found some traction at his last school due to its small size (wasn’t so much a face in the crowd)</li> <li>- Was exposed to much violence at larger schools (gangs, rival minority groups)</li> <li>- Spent time at an alternative school for NA students in St. Paul, MN where he first was exposed to a NA culture-focused approach in some of his classes – liked it very much – was aware that there were always elders present in the building</li> <li>- His final school was BIE school focused on NA students – received some teaching</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feels that during his time in high school and now there are no current role-models being offered for students to emulate</li> <li>- Feels that the high school environment – both in his time and now – is toxic with lack of education or oversight regulating racist humor/ideology that exists between the different minority groups that attend</li> <li>- Feels that teachers and school administrators are not – nor have ever – sought to fix these issues, and so students just go on struggling without direction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most powerful experience occurred during his time enrolled in a big urban high school in Minneapolis where he and a group of his NA student friends were attacked by a group of African-American students – the fight solidified the esprit de corps of the NA students, but also highlighted the highly violent and volatile situation that was omnipresent in that school – with the resulting byproduct a calcification of existing cliques and subgroups for protective reasons – all eventually instilling in him a desire to get out</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While in St. Paul, the school used a student drum group at his basketball games, felt empowered by the school to showcase his culture publically</li> <li>- While at the BIE school in Cass Lake, he was able to take culture-specific classes that reinforced what he was learning from his family</li> <li>- At the BIE school – there was a greater focus on Anishanabe culture – owing to the rather homogenous make-up of the student body – which allowed him to dive deeper into his own cultural identity through these academic offerings</li> <li>- Faculty at the St. Paul alternative school and at the BIE school were very supportive in his development academically and his pursuit of college enrollment</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                                                                                         | regarding his culture there that he retains to this day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Interviewee V – Beth</b><br><br>Question #2 (Lines - )<br>Question #4 (Lines - )<br>Question #7 (Lines - )<br>Question #8 (Lines - ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She attended two different boarding schools during her high school years</li> <li>- Schools were filled with NA students from tribes from all over the mid-west and south</li> <li>- many NA languages were spoken, but only English was taught</li> <li>- School was focused on traditional mainstream curricula with separate tracking for boys (industrial) and girls (home economics)</li> <li>- Was also taught living skills so that she could manage an apartment by herself</li> <li>- She and her friends enjoyed what they were being taught, and value it to this day</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She did not believe that her children or grandchildren received treatment that undermined their sense of culture</li> <li>- She felt that the girls were okay growing up</li> <li>- For her children and grandchildren there were opportunities now and again to express their culture in school – never felt there was a problem</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her son was perpetually bullied, and always seeming to be the one to get into trouble. Despite her best efforts to raise awareness of the bullying situation, she felt that the school (which was mostly all NA students –did nothing to fix the situation – for her this was the most powerful experience in a high school to occur as of late</li> <li>(She previously discussed a her own powerful experience as her parents hitched rides out to her school to be there when she graduated)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She doesn't believe that there is much in the way of active or overt support offered to her children or grandchildren.</li> <li>- One of her daughters was able to wear her regalia to school on occasion for special occasions</li> <li>- Most of their cultural teachings occur in the home, not in the school</li> </ul> |
| <b>Interviewee VI – Shirley</b><br><br>Question #2 (Lines - )<br>Question #4 (Lines - )<br>Question #7 (Lines - )<br>Question #8        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to high school on the reservation in a school run by Red Lake nation</li> <li>- Her personal experiences in high school were pleasant – most</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently believes that today's high schools allow too much media to filter into and corrupt NA student's perceptions</li> <li>- She believes that the lack of deterrence of popular culture</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For her children and grandchildren, the most powerful experiences have been centered around how the high school publically recognizes achievements of the student</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For her children and grandchildren who are currently going to public high school up at Red Lake, she believes that through the incorporation of cultural practices within the</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |

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| (Lines - ) | <p>students had an acceptable time while in school</p> <p>- The curriculum almost exclusively focused on the traditional content areas as found in all other high schools</p> <p>- Believed that owing to the relative isolation of the Red Lake reservation, that the expectations of families and students were not too excessive as they really didn't know what high school could be like, or how it could be better or more tailored towards their own benefit</p> | <p>and its influence on youth by the high schools has created an environment where traditional cultural practices have been corroded</p> <p>- She sees a negative impact that the media and popular culture has had on current students in the way they talk and conduct themselves in public – especially in regards to personal appearance</p> <p>-She believes that the high schools could be doing more to shield current students from the more corrosive elements of popular culture</p> | <p>- She believes that these public recognition ceremonies – especially around academic achievement- are a good thing and serve to sustain the achievement of students going forward</p> | <p>curriculum – ricing, sugar-bushing, regalia construction, etc. – that the NA students are receiving direct support towards their cultural identities.</p> <p>- She believes the ways in which the high school in Red Lake supports and sponsors outside-of-school cultural activities – such as pow-wows, ceremonies, etc. – also serves to reinforce the cultural identities of the NA students in attendance there</p> |
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| Data Source #2                                                                                                                                           | Subcategory 3 – Historical Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| Subject Name:                                                                                                                                            | Question #3: “What do you know about the past experiences of native Americans within public schools, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Question #11: “Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Question #13: “How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult in your life regarding going to high school influenced you as a student? Why do you feel this way?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Question #16: “Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native American students are educated within a public school?”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Interviewee IV – Hunter</b><br><br>Question #3<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #11<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #13<br>(Lines - )<br>Question 16<br>(Lines - ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His exposure at a young age to AIM activists contributed to an adversarial stance towards schooling</li> <li>- His mother’s experience was atypical as she was forced to move a lot between schools herself in her youth</li> <li>- He became more aware of the history as a result of the books that he read while in high school – only further made him feel different, or an outsider</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believes it to be a response by the government to previous historic failures with NA people</li> <li>- Believes it to be a positive step, but also believes that it is related to the acquisition of more money by the districts</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His parents did not really have much of an impact – he was left alone for large portions of his life while attending the various high schools he attended</li> <li>- He learned a little about past experiences from an Uncle, but it had little influence</li> <li>-Owing to his highly independent lifestyle, he felt rather divorced from any real understanding of what his elders or ancestors might have experienced</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would have completely removed religion from the development of the schooling NA people were forced into</li> <li>- Would have created a schooling system by having NA elders and NA leaders first experience Western-European schools, then coming back to craft a similar system that would best benefit their own people</li> </ul>                                                                                      |
| <b>Interviewee V – Beth</b><br><br>Question #3<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #11<br>(Lines - )<br>Question #13<br>(Lines - )<br>Question 16<br>(Lines - )    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many of her elders did not go to school, and so encouraged her to do so</li> <li>- Her grandparents and parents worked as ranchers and farmers, and encouraged her to get an education</li> <li>- As she was the first generation of her family to go to school, the boarding schools were frightening to her for she would have to be so far away from home</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wasn’t really sure why these institutions were created</li> <li>- Sited the federal Johnson O’Malley funding as a potential – perhaps as a means of acquiring more money for the district</li> <li>- Also thought that these departments might serve to ensure teachers are getting the proper training or “experience”</li> <li>- Also suggested that their presence</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her parents levels of poverty (even lower than most out on the reservation) inspired her to work hard</li> <li>- Her parents also constantly prompted her to get a good education to escape the poverty of the reservation</li> <li>- Her relationship with her parents also inspired her to do well so that she could take care of them, and to make them proud with her accomplishments</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More available classes/schooling for NA adults and elders – not just for youth</li> <li>- Would have loved to have families learning together in the same space/building (especially her own when she was a child)</li> <li>- When she was younger, she wished to be a little more cognizant of her own cultural identity –like she would eventually become once AIM entered into her life in the early 1970’s.</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | might be due to the need to incorporate NA culture into the schools                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>Interviewee VI – Shirley</p> <p>Question #3<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #11<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question #13<br/>(Lines - )</p> <p>Question 16<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Her understanding of previous experiences were limited to her parents and extended family – with little details as to what happened</li> <li>- Her parents both went to boarding schools, and her mother shared some of the more harsh and brutal details of her experiences with her daughter</li> <li>- Most of her contemporaries skipped high school and enrolled in the military as a means of getting off of the reservation – as they could pursue/obtain their GED while in the military</li> <li>- She did express some fear at having to attend high school as a result of hearing some of the more harsh experiences as related to her by her mother while in boarding school</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believes that this is not much more than a way for school districts to get more money from federal sources</li> <li>- Believes that some good has come of this process, but not much</li> <li>- Believes that if there were not additional dollars attributed to these departments, they wouldn't be around</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Both her parents encouraged her to go to school, which motivated her to attend regularly and to do the best she could</li> <li>- Her grandmother also worked at the school, and would encourage her to attend regularly and do her best – even at times calling home to check to see where she was if she didn't check in with her at school that day</li> <li>- Her parents used encouragement towards the ends of making money and getting gainful employment – thus school was a utilitarian activity to empower her to be able to take care of herself</li> <li>- Both her parents were high school graduates and set expectations for her and her siblings to at least accomplish the same.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater cultural sensitivities for teachers – not only towards NA students, but for all cultures</li> <li>- More accurate portrayal of NA experience within high school history curriculum</li> <li>- More inclusion of NA culture for the emotional and spiritual well-being of NA students today (to counteract influence of popular culture)</li> </ul> |

| Data Source #2                                                                                                                                                  | Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Subject:                                                                                                                                                        | Question #6: <i>“What would you like to see done differently within the high school you attended in the years to come in relation as to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?”</i>                                                                                              | Question #9: <i>“In the future, how would describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?”</i>                                                                                                                                                                 | Question #12: <i>“If and when you become a parent/grandparent/great-grandparent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child’s high school?”</i>                                                                                         | Question #14: <i>“When thinking about what the young people in your family could do with their lives, how do you believe the high school experience will prepare these youth towards accomplishing these visions and dreams?”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Interviewee IV – Hunter</p> <p>Question #6<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #9<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #12<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #14<br/>(Lines - )</p> | <p>- Inclusion of indigenous language as a required course</p> <p>- More inclusion of non-NA cultures so that NA students become more well-rounded and not ethno-centric themselves</p> <p>-Concerned that the focus on NA culture has created a by-product of isolating NA students from others – which has its own negative consequences</p> | <p>- Teacher would be quite knowledgeable regarding indigenous cultures world-wide</p> <p>- Teachers would not have to be indigenous-but rather talented at teaching</p> <p>- Teachers would inspire the act of learning whereby students would take on a more active role to become self-taught (like what he did when he was in high school)</p> | <p>- Inclusion of indigenous language as a required course</p> <p>- Believes that language will become key determinant point for indigenous people towards securing and maintaining their own autonomous cultural identities</p>                                | <p>- Believes that today’s students are being taught to be more resilient and more tolerant of other cultures than what was occurring during his time</p> <p>- Believes that the use of social media is also preparing kids well to adapt and coexist with others more so today than before</p> <p>- Not sure if teachers or schools are contributing much to the development of students today</p> <p>- Feels there continues to be a lack of focus on social and emotional development of today’s students by schools and teachers</p> |
| <p>Interviewee V – Beth</p> <p>Question #6<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #9<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #12<br/>(Lines - )<br/>Question #14<br/>(Lines - )</p>    | <p>- Would like to see a more accurate, truthful portrayal of American Indian history in school curriculum</p> <p>- Would like to see better treatment of NA students in schools today – believes that prejudicial</p>                                                                                                                         | <p>- Teachers would be NA</p> <p>- Would be able to speak their own language</p> <p>- Would be well versed in their cultural traditions (beadwork, sugar-bushing, wild ricing, etc.)</p>                                                                                                                                                           | <p>- Would like to see better treatment of NA students in schools today – believes that prejudicial treatment still occurs in some buildings</p> <p>- Would like to see more cultural education occurring (regalia and teepee construction, drumming, etc.)</p> | <p>- For her children, their schools were more accepting and accommodating by allowing day-care on site for her grandchild while her daughter finished school</p> <p>- The ability to pursue a GED if regular school attendance was</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                           | <p>treatment still occurs in some buildings</p> <p>- Would like to see more cultural education occurring (regalia and teepee construction, drumming, etc.)</p>                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>helpful for her other children to ensure that they graduated.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Interviewee VI – Shirley</p> <p>Question #6 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #9 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #12 (Lines - )</p> <p>Question #14 (Lines - )</p> | <p>- More NA Teachers</p> <p>- Less emphasis on “book learning”</p> <p>- More inclusion of outdoor experiential learning – like in urban gardens, etc.</p> <p>- Outdoor night classes to incorporate star knowledge</p> | <p>- Humble, patient, and artistic</p> <p>- Would like to see more use of creative arts with high school NA students</p> <p>- Needs to be well-educated in the area that they are teaching in</p> <p>- DOES NOT have to be NA</p> <p>- More focused on a teacher who can help develop the individual personalities of the students</p> | <p>- More inclusion and emphasis on team sports – believes it to be essential in developing character in NA students</p> <p>- Believes that sports is an excellent tool of leverage by parents and coaches to keep NA students focused on what they need to achieve</p> <p>- Believes sports helps develop commitment in NA students – which is essential to achieve academically</p> | <p>- Believes that the high schools are doing a good job at creating pathways for NA students to enter into college</p> <p>- Believes high schools are doing a good job in getting NA students connected with counselors for the purposes of preparing NA students for college</p> <p>- Also believes that high schools today are doing a good job with counseling NA students to prepare for a career – if college is not their first choice</p> |

| Data Source #3 | Drawn from Autoethnographic Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                | Joe Hobot                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                | <b>Subcategory 1: Cultural Identity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hunk Papa band, Lakota (mother and grandfather both enrolled at Standing Rock Indian Reservation)</li> <li>- Learned from family (mother mainly, maternal grandfather, and step-father)</li> <li>- Most learning came from stories shared by family, extended family, observances of cultural events (pow-wows), and participation in ceremonial events</li> <li>- Augmented cultural understanding through voracious reading of related texts</li> <li>- Values most the spiritual aspects and inherent reverence for nature, call for peaceful coexistence</li> <li>- Culture was never supported during schooling; high school setting was hostile cauldron of racial tension</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                | <b>Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attended very large high school in Minneapolis Suburb (~ 3,000 students)</li> <li>- Basic education focusing on traditional core content areas</li> <li>- Dispiriting; very hostile environment that was intolerant of non-white cultures</li> <li>- No offerings of courses to support cultural identity or cultural understanding</li> <li>- No offerings of any extra-curricular or after-school activities to support cultural identity</li> <li>- High School did little to guard against racist outburst (sometimes violent); during classes, most faculty did little to dissuade racist remarks or outbursts – all told, created a hostile environment that undermined the further development of cultural identity</li> <li>- Most powerful experience in High School was receiving high praise from faculty and administration regarding a piece I had written urging for cultural tolerance and an end to turning away from overt racist behaviors in the school – only to have the piece buried and ignored, never to be openly supported by school officials</li> <li>- Not much in direct support; indirectly aided in my development of a “thick skin”, as well as to solidify my belief systems to stand up and stand against intolerance and racism in all its forms</li> </ul> |
|                | <b>Subcategory 3 – Historical Context</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possessed some knowledge of historical antecedents relating to the Native American experience with formalized education from what was learned from family (mother, grandfather, step-father)</li> <li>- Learned more about historical antecedents through self-study and reading during high school years</li> <li>- Parents’ personal high school experience did little to influence my time in high school; was more impacted by their sharing of history with me</li> <li>- Was influenced/motivated by parents to do well in high school so that I could not only take care of myself as an adult, but to also out-perform them in terms of income and personal accomplishment</li> <li>- While in high school, held rather cynical view regarding the intentions of formalized institutions (usually nothing more than self-serving, money-seeking interests); now as a professional educator can see some value and positive impacts being created by the educational system (including the various departments of Indian Education)</li> <li>- Looking back, I would have blown apart the whole system and allowed for the Indigenous nations to create what they wanted and felt was most beneficial for our own people</li> </ul>                                                      |
|                | <b>Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous language inclusion</li> <li>- More diverse teachers (including more NA teachers)</li> <li>- Wider variety of education delivery models (classrooms, school settings, etc.)</li> <li>- Better, more accurate curriculum that honors the various cultures of this nation</li> <li>- More culturally relevant activities and courses for all cultures represented within this country (especially for NA peoples)</li> <li>- Further engagement by the educational system with the leadership and community elders of the various cultural groups here in Minnesota, as well as in the nation, to co-create a public school setting that best benefits the youth of the community – no more “top-down”, “Ivory Tower” decisions as to what is best for American Indian people</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



Matrix #2:

*Most common traits within each data source grouping for all three data sources*

| Data Group                                                 | Cultural Identity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Personal Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Historical Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            | Common Traits                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Data Source:<br>Group #1<br>(Young Native American Adults) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learned from family</li> <li>- Learned at home</li> <li>- Actively participated in cultural ceremonies/practices throughout youth &amp; adulthood</li> <li>- Well versed in culture as a result of family engagement</li> <li>- School seldom compared at all in terms of matching the teaching and development of cultural identities of students when compared to what was occurring at home</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to schools with larger than average NA student populations</li> <li>- Disliked Curriculum – felt it lacking/poor regarding cultural teachings/knowledge base</li> <li>- Attended Culturally specific courses when offered</li> <li>- Felt teachers were well-intentioned but not very good, especially when teaching about culturally relevant/ NA topics</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All had clear understanding of historical antecedents – for their families as well as for their local community</li> <li>- Majority (2/3) had clear understanding of historical antecedents – that impacted indigenous peoples throughout North America at their time of enrollment in public high school</li> <li>- Skeptical of public school systems current attempts to address educational issues for NA students</li> <li>- All sought to outperform achievements of parents/extended family</li> <li>- Majority (2/3) believed that they were directly influenced by learning about their parent’s personal experiences in high school</li> <li>- All felt that there was an overt lack of culture within the public education system historically (particularly with language) – all sought to remedy this lack</li> <li>- All possessed some understanding of the assimilative nature of public high schools with regards to NA students in the past</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better Curriculum with more NA cultural focus, NA perspectives, and historical accuracy</li> <li>- Inclusion of NA languages as required offerings for public high schools</li> <li>- Greater diversity in teachers – with need for more NA teachers</li> <li>- More cross-generational education efforts to spur mentorship and future leader development</li> <li>- More outdoor/experiential learning activities</li> <li>- All believed that their high school experience DID NOT prepare them well for achieving their goals</li> </ul> |
| Data Source:<br>Group #2<br>(Elder Native American Adults) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learned from family</li> <li>- Learned at home</li> <li>- Actively participated in cultural ceremonies/practices</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to schools with larger than average NA student populations</li> <li>- All Felt teachers were well-intentioned but not very good, especially when teaching about</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All had clear understanding of historical antecedents – for their families as well as for their local community</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better Curriculum with more NA cultural focus, NA perspectives, and historical accuracy</li> <li>- Inclusion of NA languages as required</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | <p>throughout youth &amp; adulthood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well versed in culture as a result of family engagement</li> <li>- School seldom compared at all in terms of matching the teaching and development of cultural identities of students when compared to what was occurring at home</li> </ul>                                                                                                           | <p>culturally relevant/ NA topics during their time in high school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Felt teachers were well-intentioned but not very good, especially when teaching about culturally relevant/ NA topics currently for their children and grandchildren who are enrolled</li> <li>- Majority (2/3) were enthusiastic about Curriculum offerings during their time in high school – felt it had utilitarian purpose, not concerned with cultural development</li> <li>- All Disliked Curriculum – felt it lacking/poor regarding cultural teachings/knowledge base for current high school students (such as their family members)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Majority (2/3) had clear understanding of historical antecedents – that impacted indigenous peoples throughout North America at their time of enrollment in public high school</li> <li>- All were skeptical of public school systems current attempts to address educational issues for NA students</li> <li>- All sought to outperform achievements of parents/extended family</li> <li>- All believed that they were directly influenced by learning about their parent's personal experiences in high school</li> <li>- All felt that there was an overt lack of culture within the public education system historically (particularly with language) – all sought to remedy this lack</li> </ul> | <p>offerings for public high schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater diversity in teachers – with need for more NA teachers</li> <li>- More cross-generational education efforts to spur mentorship and future leader development</li> <li>- More outdoor/experiential learning activities</li> <li>- All believed that their high school experience DID NOT prepare them well for achieving their goals</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| Data Source:<br>Group #3 (The Researcher) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learned from family</li> <li>- Learned at home</li> <li>- Participated in some cultural ceremonies/practices throughout youth</li> <li>- Somewhat well-versed in culture as a result of family engagement</li> <li>- School seldom compared at all in terms of matching the teaching and development of cultural identities of students when compared to what was occurring at home</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Felt teachers were well-intentioned but not very good, especially when teaching about culturally relevant/ NA topics during their time in high school</li> <li>- Disliked Curriculum – felt it lacking/poor regarding cultural teachings/knowledge base</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possessed clear understanding of historical antecedents – that impacted indigenous peoples throughout North America at their time of enrollment in public high school</li> <li>- Was skeptical of public school systems current attempts to address educational issues for NA students during his time in public high school</li> <li>- Less skeptical of public school systems current attempts to address educational issues for NA students now as a professional educator</li> <li>- All sought to outperform</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better Curriculum with more NA cultural focus, NA perspectives, and historical accuracy</li> <li>- Inclusion of NA languages as required offerings for public high schools</li> <li>- Greater diversity in teachers – with need for more NA teachers</li> <li>- More cross-generational education efforts to spur mentorship and future leader development</li> <li>- More outdoor/experiential learning activities</li> <li>- Believed that his high school experience did</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                             |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  | <p>achievements of parents/extended family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- All believed that they were directly influenced by learning about their parent's personal experiences in high school</li><li>- All felt that there was an overt lack of culture within the public education system historically (particularly with language) – all sought to remedy this lack</li></ul> | <p>somewhat prepare them well for achieving their goals</p> |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

Matrix #3:

*Identification of emergent themes with assigned moniker and summative sentence that apply to all three data source grouping based on the common traits identified as being present in all three data source groups.*

| Data Group                                                 | Cultural Identity                                                                                                            | Personal Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Historical Context                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            | Emergent Themes                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Data Source:<br>Group #1<br>(Young Native American Adults) | - Possessed a strong sense of cultural identity upon enrollment and throughout high school as a result of home life & family | - Self Aware/Cognizant of School deficiencies<br><br>- Teaching Quality poor or lacking during their time in high school                                                                                                                                       | - All inspired by parents and extended family to do well in high school in order to outperform their parents/extended family<br><br>- Had some knowledge of larger historical antecedents for NA people (typically through their extended family) – negatively impacted them (cynical, guarded)                                | - Public High schools hold responsibility for support of cultural identities of NA students (language, teachers, diversity of experience, course offerings, curriculum)  |
|                                                            | <i>“I know who I am and where I come from because my family taught me at home.”</i>                                          | <i>“Public high schools have had problems contending with Native American culture for a long time, and I doubt anything has changed.”</i><br><br><i>“The teachers were nice, but they have no clue as to who I am.”</i>                                        | <i>“I am here because of who came before me, and in their honor I shall achieve more.”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>“Going forward, public high schools are obligated to teach and support our Native American culture in ways so that our culture may exist for future generations.”</i> |
|                                                            | <b>Clearly Understood Cultural Identities</b>                                                                                | <b>Square Pegs Hammered into Round Holes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Honoring the Past by Succeeding in the Present</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Public High Schools Have an Obligation to the People</b>                                                                                                              |
| Data Source:<br>Group #2<br>(Elder Native American Adults) | - Possessed a strong sense of cultural identity upon enrollment and throughout high school as a result of home life & family | - For the most part (2//3) NOT Self Aware/Cognizant of School deficiencies – unconcerned during their time<br><br>- Self Aware/Cognizant of School deficiencies for their family members currently/recently enrolled<br><br>- Teaching Quality poor or lacking | - All inspired by parents and extended family to do well in high school in order to outperform their parents/extended family<br><br>- Had some knowledge of larger historical antecedents for NA people (typically through their extended family) – neutral impacted on them (owing to parents strong support for high school) | - Public High schools hold responsibility for support of cultural identities of NA students (language, teachers, diversity of experience, course offerings, curriculum)  |
|                                                            | <i>“I know who I am and where I come from because my family taught me at home.”</i>                                          | <i>“Public high schools have had problems contending with Native American culture for a long time, and I doubt anything has changed.”</i>                                                                                                                      | <i>“I am here because of who came before me, and in their honor I shall achieve more.”</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>“Going forward, public high schools are obligated to teach and support our Native American culture in ways so that our culture may exist for future generations.”</i> |

|                                           |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           |                                                                                                                              | <i>"The teachers were nice, but they have no clue as to who I am."</i>                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                           | <b>Clearly Understood Cultural Identities</b>                                                                                | <b>Square Pegs Hammered into Round Holes</b>                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Honoring the Past by Succeeding in the Present</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Public High Schools Have an Obligation to the People</b>                                                                                                              |
| Data Source:<br>Group #3 (The Researcher) | - Possessed a strong sense of cultural identity upon enrollment and throughout high school as a result of home life & family | - Self Aware/Cognizant of School deficiencies<br><br>- Teaching Quality poor or lacking                                                                                                                                 | - All inspired by parents and extended family to do well in high school in order to outperform their parents/extended family<br><br>- Had some knowledge of larger historical antecedents for NA people (typically through their extended family) – negatively impacted them (cynical, guarded) | - Public High schools hold responsibility for support of cultural identities of NA students (language, teachers, diversity of experience, course offerings, curriculum)  |
|                                           | <i>"I know who I am and where I come from because my family taught me at home."</i>                                          | <i>"Public high schools have had problems contending with Native American culture for a long time, and I doubt anything has changed."</i><br><br><i>"The teachers were nice, but they have no clue as to who I am."</i> | <i>"I am here because of who came before me, and in their honor I shall achieve more."</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>"Going forward, public high schools are obligated to teach and support our Native American culture in ways so that our culture may exist for future generations."</i> |
|                                           | <b>Clearly Understood Cultural Identities</b>                                                                                | <b>Square Pegs Hammered into Round Holes</b>                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Honoring the Past by Succeeding in the Present</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Public High Schools Have an Obligation to the People</b>                                                                                                              |

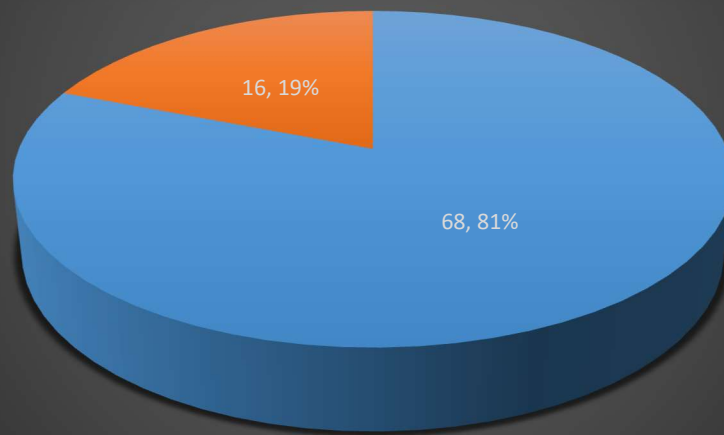
## Appendix C

*Matrices and Graphic Representations Used in Coding Analysis for Gauging Emotional Connotations within Responses Given By Participants*



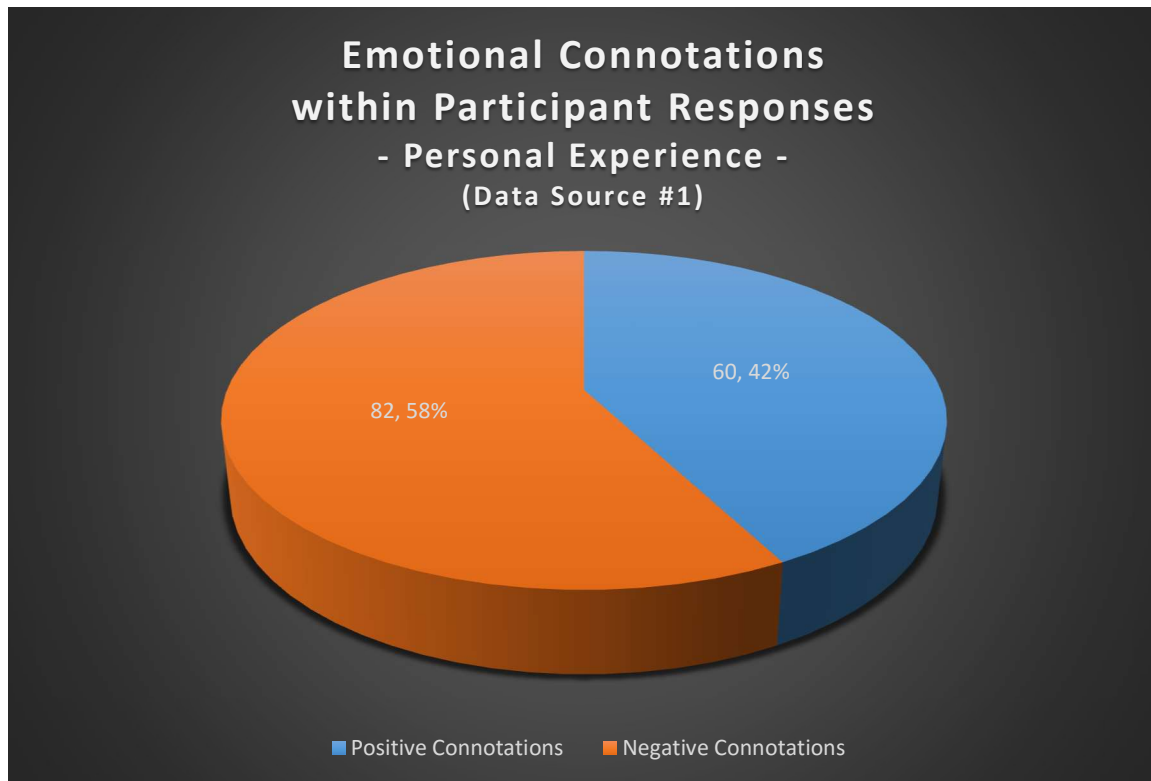
| Data Source #1               | Subcategory 1: Cultural Identity                                                                                                                              |               |                                                                                      |               |                                                                                                       |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |               | Total Tally per Subject:                   |        |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------|
| Subject Name:                | Question #1: “Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be? (Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?)” |               | Question #5: “How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?” |               | Question #10: “What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?” |               | Question #15: “Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you have come to learn about it during your time in high school?” |               |                                            |        |
| Interviewee I – Bob          | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>9                                                                        | Negative<br>3 | Positive<br>8                                                                                         | Negative<br>3 | Positive<br>4                                                                                                                                                                                      | Negative<br>2 | P<br>24                                    | N<br>8 |
| Interviewee II – Dave        | Positive<br>6                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>10                                                                       | Negative<br>4 | Positive<br>8                                                                                         | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>8                                                                                                                                                                                      | Negative<br>1 | P<br>32                                    | N<br>5 |
| Interviewee III – Melanie    | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>5                                                                        | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>3                                                                                         | Negative<br>0 | Positive<br>1                                                                                                                                                                                      | Negative<br>3 | P<br>12                                    | N<br>3 |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | P<br>12                                                                                                                                                       | N<br>0        | P<br>24                                                                              | N<br>7        | P<br>19                                                                                               | N<br>3        | P<br>13                                                                                                                                                                                            | N<br>6        | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P: 68 N:16 |        |

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Cultural Identity -  
(Data Source #1)**

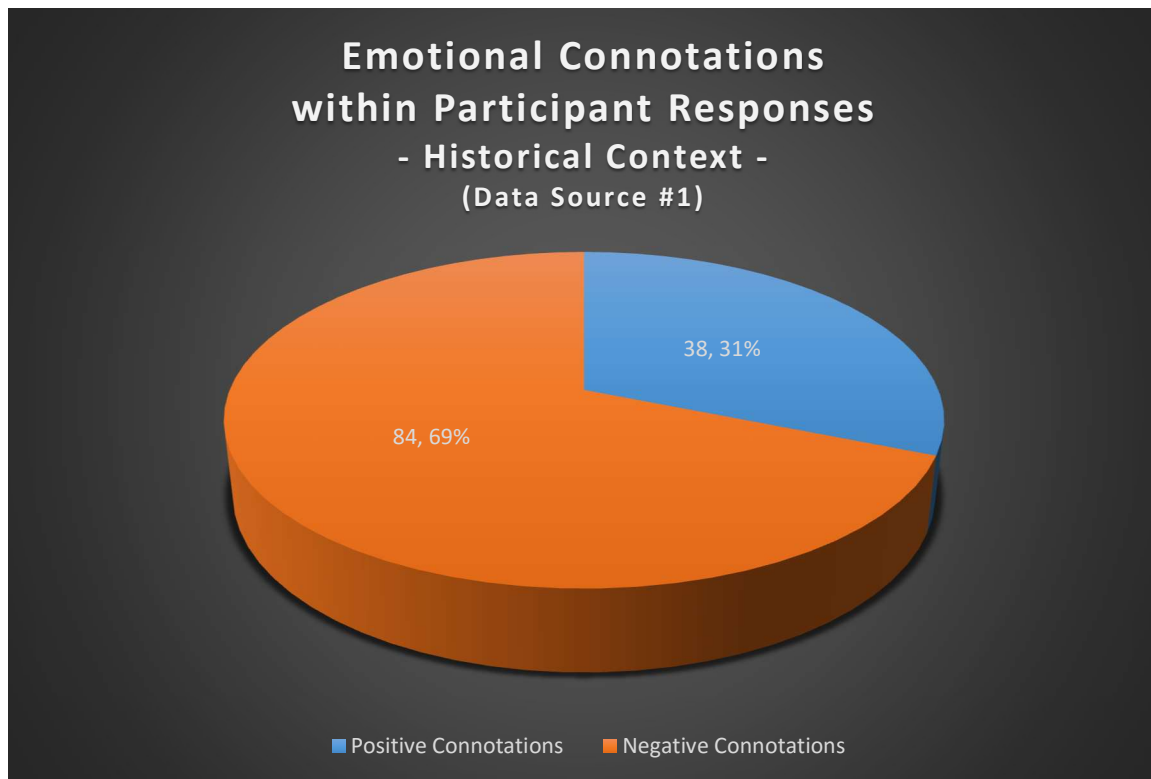


■ Positive Connotations    ■ Negative Connotations

| Data Source #1               | Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience                                                                                 |          |                                                                                                                                                    |          |                                                                                                                        |          |                                                                                                                                               |          | Total Tally per Subject:                     |    |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------|----|
| Subject Name:                | Question #2: “How would you describe your experiences within high school when you attended as an enrolled student?” |          | Question #4: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience undermine or detract from your cultural identity as you have come to know it?” |          | Question #7: “What was your most powerful experience (either good or bad) in relation to your high school experience?” |          | Question #8: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience reinforce or support your cultural identity as you have come to know it?” |          |                                              |    |
| Interviewee I – Bob          | Positive                                                                                                            | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                               | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                      | Negative | P                                            | N  |
|                              | 8                                                                                                                   | 9        | 3                                                                                                                                                  | 13       | 4                                                                                                                      | 2        | 5                                                                                                                                             | 7        | 20                                           | 31 |
| Interviewee II – Dave        | Positive                                                                                                            | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                               | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                      | Negative | P                                            | N  |
| -                            | 11                                                                                                                  | 17       | 3                                                                                                                                                  | 9        | 6                                                                                                                      | 3        | 4                                                                                                                                             | 6        | 24                                           | 35 |
| Interviewee III – Melanie    | Positive                                                                                                            | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                               | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                      | Negative | P                                            | N  |
|                              | 5                                                                                                                   | 9        | 3                                                                                                                                                  | 5        | 4                                                                                                                      | 0        | 4                                                                                                                                             | 2        | 16                                           | 16 |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | P                                                                                                                   | N        | P                                                                                                                                                  | N        | P                                                                                                                      | N        | P                                                                                                                                             | N        | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:60    N:82 |    |
|                              | 24                                                                                                                  | 35       | 9                                                                                                                                                  | 27       | 14                                                                                                                     | 5        | 13                                                                                                                                            | 15       |                                              |    |

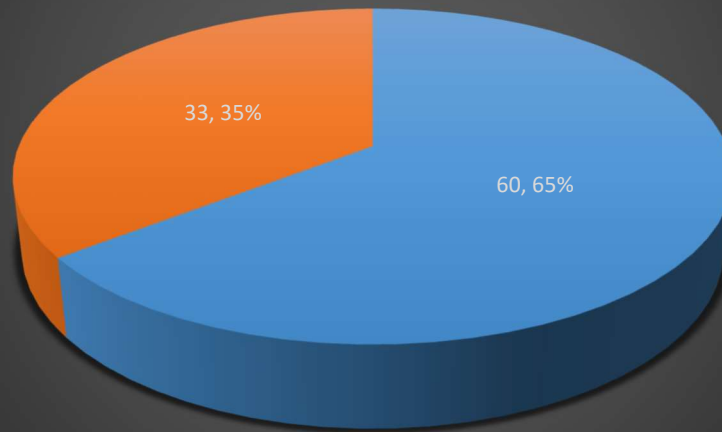


| Data Source #1               | Subcategory 3 – Historical Context                                                                                                                               |                                   |                                                                                                                                                 |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                      |                                   | Total Tally per Subject:                  |                            |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Subject Name:                | Question #3: “What do you know about the past experiences of native Americans within public schools, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you?” |                                   | Question #11: “Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?” |                                   | Question #13: “How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult In your life regarding their time in high school has influenced you? Why?” |                                   | Question #16: “Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native American students are educated within a public school?” |                                   |                                           |                            |
| Interviewee I – Bob          | <div>Positive</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>4</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>3</div>                                                                                                                | <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>7</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>4</div>                                                                                                                                     | <div>Negative</div> <div>1</div>  | <div>P</div> <div>11</div>                | <div>N</div> <div>17</div> |
| Interviewee II – Dave        | <div>Positive</div> <div>4</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>18</div> | <div>Positive</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                | <div>Negative</div> <div>12</div> | <div>Positive</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>13</div> | <div>Positive</div> <div>11</div>                                                                                                                                    | <div>Negative</div> <div>10</div> | <div>P</div> <div>19</div>                | <div>N</div> <div>53</div> |
| Interviewee III – Melanie    | <div>Positive</div> <div>3</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>2</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                | <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>0</div>                                                                                                                                 | <div>Negative</div> <div>1</div>  | <div>Positive</div> <div>3</div>                                                                                                                                     | <div>Negative</div> <div>6</div>  | <div>P</div> <div>8</div>                 | <div>N</div> <div>14</div> |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | <div>P</div> <div>9</div>                                                                                                                                        | <div>N</div> <div>24</div>        | <div>P</div> <div>7</div>                                                                                                                       | <div>N</div> <div>22</div>        | <div>P</div> <div>4</div>                                                                                                                                        | <div>N</div> <div>21</div>        | <div>P</div> <div>18</div>                                                                                                                                           | <div>N</div> <div>17</div>        | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:38 N:84 |                            |



| Data Source #1               | Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                                                                           |          |                                                                                                                                                                             |          |                                                                                                                                    |          |                                                                                                                                                             |          | Total Tally per Subject:               |    |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------|----|
| Subject Name:                | Question #6: “What would you like to see done differently within the high school you attended in the years to come in relation as to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?” |          | Question #9: “In the future, how would describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?” |          | Question #12: “If and when you become a parent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child’s high school?” |          | Question #14: “When thinking about what you would like to do with your life, how did your high school experience prepare you for these visions and dreams?” |          |                                        |    |
| Interviewee I – Bob          | Positive                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | P                                      | N  |
|                              | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1        | 7                                                                                                                                                                           | 6        | 4                                                                                                                                  | 2        | 5                                                                                                                                                           | 3        | 20                                     | 12 |
| Interviewee II – Dave        | Positive                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | P                                      | N  |
|                              | 9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2        | 11                                                                                                                                                                          | 5        | 5                                                                                                                                  | 3        | 6                                                                                                                                                           | 3        | 31                                     | 13 |
| Interviewee III – Melanie    | Positive                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                           | Negative | Positive                                                                                                                                                    | Negative | P                                      | N  |
|                              | 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1        | 1                                                                                                                                                                           | 2        | 3                                                                                                                                  | 2        | 2                                                                                                                                                           | 3        | 9                                      | 8  |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | P                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | N        | P                                                                                                                                                                           | N        | P                                                                                                                                  | N        | P                                                                                                                                                           | N        | Grand Total for Data Source: P:60 N:33 |    |
|                              | 16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 4        | 19                                                                                                                                                                          | 13       | 12                                                                                                                                 | 7        | 13                                                                                                                                                          | 9        |                                        |    |

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Future Visioning -  
(Data Source #1)**

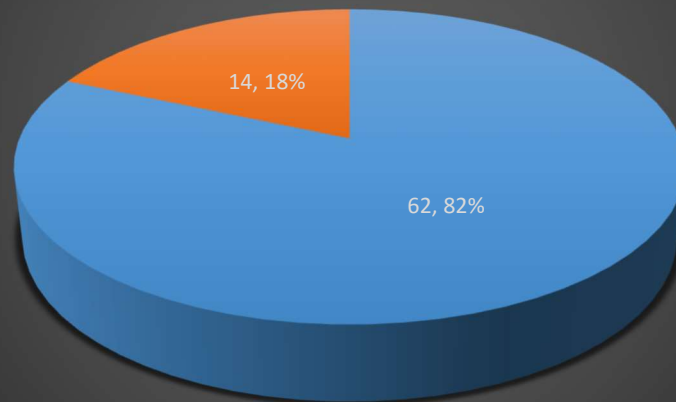


■ Positive Connotations   ■ Negative Connotations



| Data Source #2               | Subcategory 1 - Cultural Identity                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          | Total Tally per Subject: |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|----|---|
| Subject Name:                | Question #1: “Tell me about your cultural identity as you know it to be? (Who are you? Who are your people? From where do you and your ancestors come from?)” | Question #5: “How have you come to learn about your cultural identity up until now?” | Question #10: “What do you value most about your cultural understanding as you have come to know it?” | Question #15: “Explain to me any differences between how you have come to learn about your cultural identity at home versus what you have come to learn about it during your time in high school?” |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Interviewee IV – Hunter      | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>1</td></tr></table>                                                                       | Positive                                                                             | Negative                                                                                              | 7                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>5</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 10                       | 5 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>1</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 5  | 1 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 2  | 2 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>24</td><td>9</td></tr></table> | P | N | 24 | 9 |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 7                            | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 10                           | 5                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 5                            | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 2                            | 2                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 24                           | 9                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Interviewee V – Beth         | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr></table>                                                                       | Positive                                                                             | Negative                                                                                              | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 0 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>1</td></tr></table>  | Positive | Negative | 7                        | 1 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>1</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 3  | 1 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>6</td><td>0</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 6  | 0 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>20</td><td>2</td></tr></table> | P | N | 20 | 2 |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 4                            | 0                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 7                            | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 3                            | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 6                            | 0                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 20                           | 2                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Interviewee VI – Shirley     | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></table>                                                                       | Positive                                                                             | Negative                                                                                              | 5                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 0 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></table>  | Positive | Negative | 5                        | 0 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>1</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 4  | 1 | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>2</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 4  | 2 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>18</td><td>3</td></tr></table> | P | N | 18 | 3 |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 5                            | 0                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 5                            | 0                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 4                            | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Positive                     | Negative                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 4                            | 2                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 18                           | 3                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>16</td><td>1</td></tr></table>                                                                                    | P                                                                                    | N                                                                                                     | 16                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>22</td><td>6</td></tr></table>               | P        | N        | 22                       | 6 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>12</td><td>3</td></tr></table>              | P        | N        | 12 | 3 | <table><tr><th>P</th><th>N</th></tr><tr><td>12</td><td>4</td></tr></table>              | P        | N        | 12 | 4 | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:62 N:14                                  |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 16                           | 1                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 22                           | 6                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 12                           | 3                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| P                            | N                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |
| 12                           | 4                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                      |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |   |                                                                                          |          |          |                          |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                                         |          |          |    |   |                                                                            |   |   |    |   |

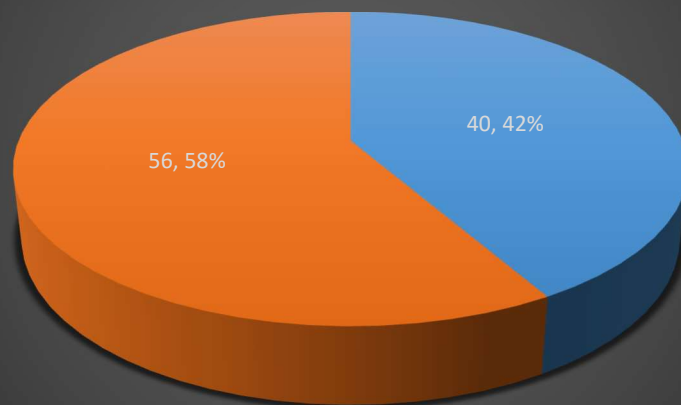
**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Cultural Identity -  
(Data Source #2)**



■ Positive Connotations ■ Negative Connotations

| Data Source #2               | Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience                                                                                                                                                       |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |               | Total Tally per Subject:                  |         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|
| Subject Name:                | Question #2: “How would you describe the experiences within high school thus far for those in your family who might be attending a high school currently – or from your own experiences?” |               | Question #4: “In what ways (if any) do you believe that the high school experience for those in your family who are currently enrolled – or drawing from your own experiences - have undermined or detracted from their cultural identity as you have come to understand it?” |               | Question #7: “What has been the most powerful experience (either good or bad) in relation to the high school experience for those in your family who are attending – or drawing from your own experiences – as you have come to understand it?” |                | Question #8: “In what ways (if any) did your high school experience reinforce or support your cultural identity for those in your family who are attending – or from your own experience - as you have come to know it?” |               |                                           |         |
| Interviewee IV – Hunter      | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>8 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>7 | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>10 | Positive<br>8                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Negative<br>5 | P<br>16                                   | N<br>30 |
| Interviewee V – Beth         | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>3 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>4 | Positive<br>5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>1  | Positive<br>4                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Negative<br>6 | P<br>13                                   | N<br>14 |
| Interviewee VI – Shirley     | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>4 | Positive<br>1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Negative<br>6 | Positive<br>5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>0  | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Negative<br>2 | P<br>11                                   | N<br>12 |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | P<br>7                                                                                                                                                                                    | N<br>15       | P<br>5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | N<br>17       | P<br>13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | N<br>11        | P<br>15                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | N<br>13       | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:40 N:56 |         |

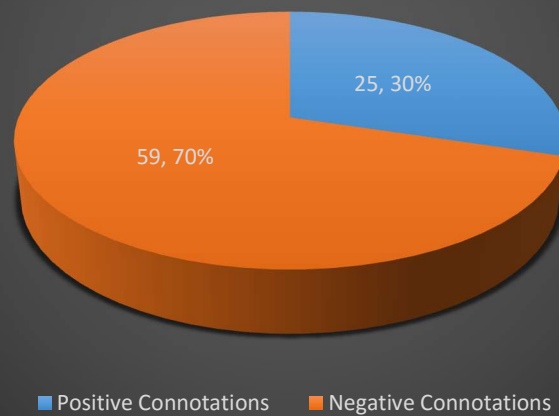
**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Personal Experience -  
(Data Source #2)**



■ Positive Connotations ■ Negative Connotations

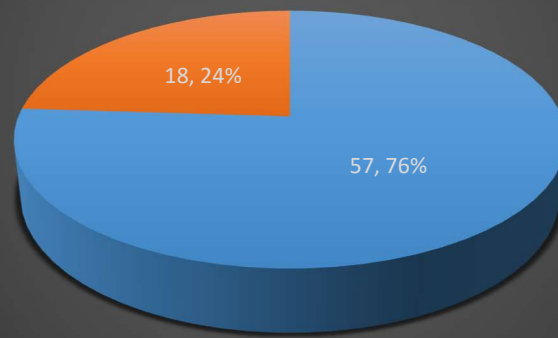
| Data Source #2               | Subcategory 3 – Historical Context                                                                                                                               |               |                                                                                                                                                 |               |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                |                                                                                                                                                                      |               | Total Tally per Subject:                    |         |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| Subject Name:                | Question #3: “What do you know about the past experiences of native Americans within public schools, and how do you think that this knowledge has impacted you?” |               | Question #11: “Why do you believe that so many school districts across the state of Minnesota have a department dedicated to Indian education?” |               | Question #13: “How do you think the experiences of your parents or an important adult In your life regarding going to high school influenced you as a student? Why do you feel this way?” |                | Question #16: “Based on what you know, looking back, what would you have made different regarding how Native American students are educated within a public school?” |               |                                             |         |
| Interviewee IV – Hunter      | Positive<br>1                                                                                                                                                    | Negative<br>7 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>7 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>10 | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                        | Negative<br>3 | P<br>8                                      | N<br>27 |
| Interviewee V – Beth         | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                    | Negative<br>3 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>5 | Positive<br>2                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>4  | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                        | Negative<br>2 | P<br>9                                      | N<br>14 |
| Interviewee VI – Shirley     | Positive<br>1                                                                                                                                                    | Negative<br>5 | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                   | Negative<br>7 | Positive<br>1                                                                                                                                                                             | Negative<br>5  | Positive<br>3                                                                                                                                                        | Negative<br>1 | P<br>8                                      | N<br>18 |
| Total Tally for Data Source: | P<br>4                                                                                                                                                           | N<br>15       | P<br>7                                                                                                                                          | N<br>19       | P<br>5                                                                                                                                                                                    | N<br>19        | P<br>9                                                                                                                                                               | N<br>6        | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:25   N:59 |         |

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Historical Context -  
(Data Source #2)**



| Data Source #2           | Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                      |  |  |  | Total Tally per Subject: |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Subject:                 | Question #6: “What would you like to see done differently within the high school you attended in the years to come in relation as to how the school relates or interacts with the cultural identities of future Native American students?” | Question #9: “In the future, how would describe a high school teacher that would have a powerfully positive effect on the cultural identities of Native American students?” | Question #12: “If and when you become a parent/grandparent/great-grandparent, what kinds of things would you like to see occurring at your child’s high school?” | Question #14: “When thinking about what the young people in your family could do with their lives, how do you believe the high school experience will prepare these youth towards accomplishing these visions and dreams?” |                                                      |  |  |  |                          |  |
| Interviewee IV – Hunter  | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                                                                                          | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>10</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                          | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>3</div>                                                                                                | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                                                                          | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>25</div> <div>8</div> |  |  |  |                          |  |
| Interviewee V – Beth     | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                                                                                          | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>4</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                           | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>3</div> <div>2</div>                                                                                                | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                                                                          | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>17</div> <div>6</div> |  |  |  |                          |  |
| Interviewee VI – Shirley | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>4</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                                                                                          | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>3</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                           | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>5</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                | <div>Positive</div> <div>Negative</div> <div>3</div> <div>1</div>                                                                                                                                                          | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>15</div> <div>4</div> |  |  |  |                          |  |
|                          | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>14</div> <div>3</div>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>17</div> <div>5</div>                                                                                                                        | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>13</div> <div>6</div>                                                                                                             | <div>P</div> <div>N</div> <div>13</div> <div>4</div>                                                                                                                                                                       | Grand Total for Data Source:<br>P:57 N:18            |  |  |  |                          |  |

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Future Visioning -  
(Data Source #2)**

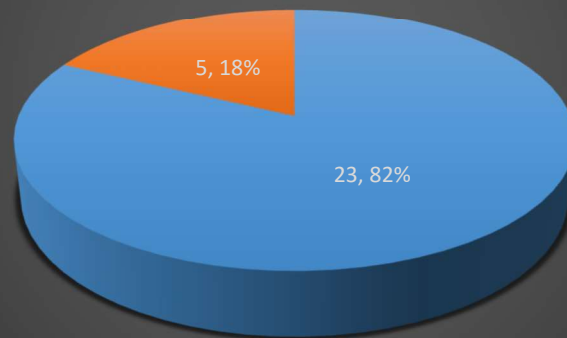


■ Positive Connotations ■ Negative Connotations



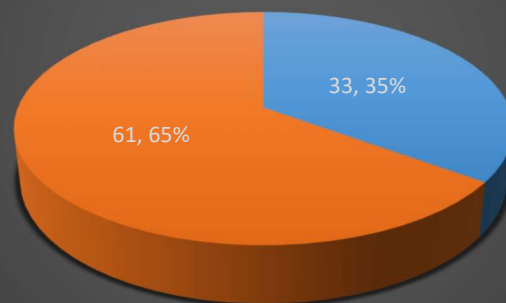
| Data Source #3                      | Drawn from Autoethnographic Analysis |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----|----|
| Joe Hobot                           |                                      |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| Subcategory 1: Cultural Identity    |                                      |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
|                                     |                                      | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>23</td><td>5</td></tr></table>  | Positive | Negative | 23 | 5  |
| Positive                            | Negative                             |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| 23                                  | 5                                    |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience |                                      |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
|                                     |                                      | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>33</td><td>61</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 33 | 61 |
| Positive                            | Negative                             |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| 33                                  | 61                                   |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| Subcategory 3 – Historical Context  |                                      |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
|                                     |                                      | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>23</td><td>51</td></tr></table> | Positive | Negative | 23 | 51 |
| Positive                            | Negative                             |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| 23                                  | 51                                   |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning    |                                      |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
|                                     |                                      | <table><tr><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th></tr><tr><td>53</td><td>8</td></tr></table>  | Positive | Negative | 53 | 8  |
| Positive                            | Negative                             |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |
| 53                                  | 8                                    |                                                                                           |          |          |    |    |

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Cultural Identity -  
(Data Source #3)**



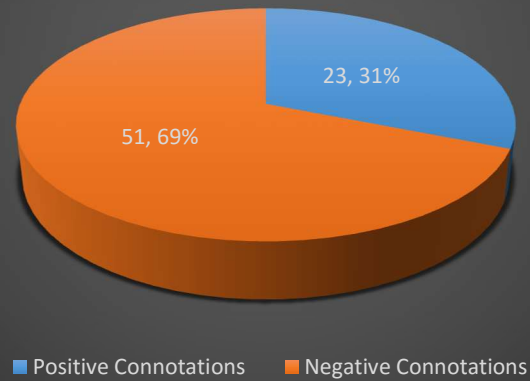
■ Positive Connotations ■ Negative Connotations ■ ■

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Personal Experience -  
(Data Source #3)**

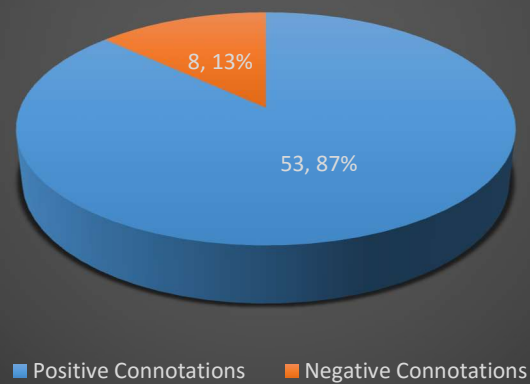


■ Positive Connotations ■ Negative Connotations

**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses**  
- Historical Context -  
(Data Source #3)

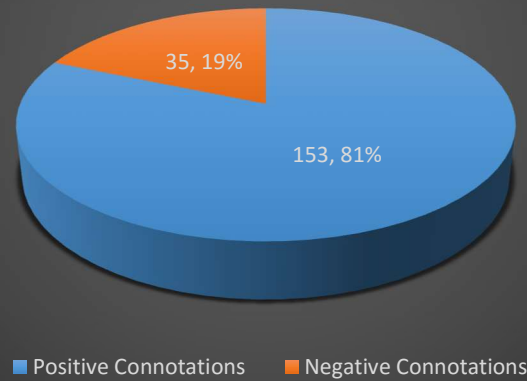


**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses**  
- Future Visioning -  
(Data Source #3)

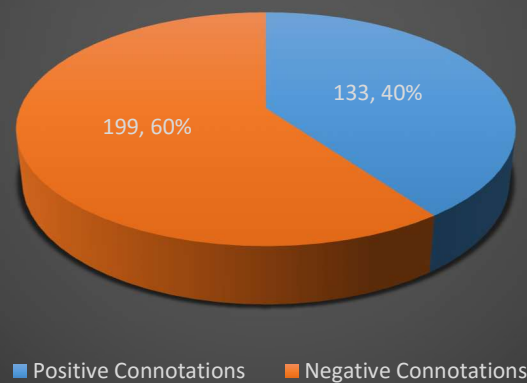


| Aggregate Data – Emotional Content for All Three Data Sources (Data Sources #1, #2, and #3) |          |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Subcategory 1: Cultural Identity                                                            |          |          |
|                                                                                             | Positive | Negative |
|                                                                                             | 153      | 35       |
| Subcategory 2 – Personal Experience                                                         |          |          |
|                                                                                             | Positive | Negative |
|                                                                                             | 133      | 199      |
| Subcategory 3 – Historical Context                                                          |          |          |
|                                                                                             | Positive | Negative |
|                                                                                             | 86       | 194      |
| Subcategory 4 – Future Visioning                                                            |          |          |
|                                                                                             | Positive | Negative |
|                                                                                             | 170      | 59       |

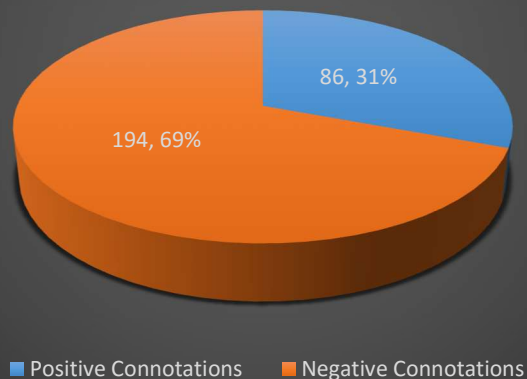
**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Cultural identity -  
(Aggregate Data for All Three Data Sources)**



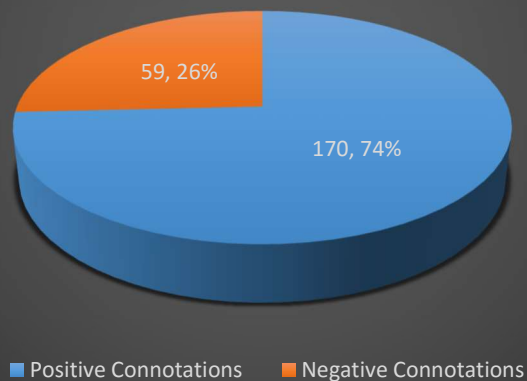
**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Personal Experience -  
(Aggregate Data for All Three Data Sources)**



**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Historical Context -  
(Aggregate Data for All Three Data Sources)**



**Emotional Connotations  
within Participant Responses  
- Future Visioning -  
(Aggregate Data for All Three Data Sources)**



## Appendix D

### *Autoethnographic Submission*

***Four Experiences: An Autoethnographic Narrative***

By: Joe Hobot



“My friend, I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; and if it were only the story of my life I think I would not tell it; for what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow? So many other men have lived and shall live that story, to be grass upon the hills.

It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one Spirit.”

- Black Elk, Lakota Holy Man

*Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt, 1972, p.1)

## ***Four Experiences: An Autoethnographic Narrative***

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|                                                                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
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*Prelude: What is Past is Prologue – Personal Observations Regarding the Complexity of the Autoethnographic Enterprise*

In order to find meaning in this life, one must continually reflect upon that which has occurred before, while simultaneously processing events as they unfold within the present. Through this process, it is hoped that meaning will be derived through the application of an interpretive understanding born of these examinations. However, to be able to navigate between the ongoing need to understand one's own past while living in a conscious manner during the here-and-now is quite a difficult challenge – so much so that too many fail to abide by both, instead fixating on one aspect at the exclusion of the other.

Compounding this challenge, it must also be understood that both sets of experiences within a person's lifespan (past and present occurrences) are inextricably linked to one another, and that each ultimately *do not* reflect static incidents on a linear time scale that are impervious to the change washing past them as the currents of time rush ceaselessly forward. Instead, both past and present experiences remain locked inside a relational dialogue with one another in a manner that transcends traditional concepts of time. Denzin referred to this duality of existence as “consubstantiality” – whereby the past is tied to the present for the author of an autoethnographic work. (Denzin, 2014, p.14) Within such a dynamic, new knowledge acquired in the present can imbue previous experiences with new insights and new ways of understanding them for the individual. Conversely, the past retains the powerful ability to influence current experience on equal terms – insisting its presence upon us through memory and emotional response as we make meaning from that which we are currently living through. (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013) In simple terms, one could argue that because of what they learned today, they are now able to find new meaning in what they experienced in the past. Or, that they cannot help but

see the world today in a certain manner owing to the experiences of their past that made them who they are today. In either context, the interconnectivity of past and present experience – as well as their ongoing relational dialogue with each other - becomes evident. Therefore, it remains logical to assert that who we are today was derived from what we experienced before, as it is equally logical to assert that who we are today is not the same person as compared with who we were before.

An additional factor that adds further complexity towards understanding the processes of human development during the course of a lifespan, concerns the fact that new experiences will continually be had and new knowledge will continually be constructed by the individual so long as they continue to live in a cognizant and conscious manner in this world. As such, our personages thus remain in a perpetual state of evolution through the acquisition of this new knowledge and through the living of these new experiences. So long as we continue to breathe, we continue to develop. Each new encounter influences and lays the formative foundation for the very next lived experience, whereupon the process then repeats itself anew. The inescapable truth resulting from this factor is that we as people are continually changing, and that our understandings of the world – both in terms of how we understand our own history, our present station in life, and our dreamed of future – will evolve and change in synchronicity with this persistent personal development.

The byproduct of this constant change is that our perceptions of previous occurrences are then also subject to ongoing reinterpretation as our lives move forward on into the present. As we continue to grow in wisdom and intelligence through the ongoing collection of new experiences, our own personal histories are irrevocably transformed from inert moments locked in time into dynamic expressions capable of evolving into newer and deeper understandings

about one's own past. Therefore, as we continue to live, to learn, and to grow, the review of our past will always be done with a "fresh set of eyes" - influenced by newly attained perspectives and new knowledge procured within the present. What then manifests is a dynamic exploration of alterable experiences where new meanings of one's existence can perpetually surface.

Owing to this fluctuant process, it becomes incumbent upon the individual to then review their past experiences with a critical eye that actively incorporates present experience within the overall interpretive process. In so doing, the individual will then be able to derive meaning in their life as it is understood within that precise moment – thus balancing the ability for meaningful past reflection in conjunction with conscious living inside of the present. This process itself cannot remain static, for it would then become incongruent with what it aims to examine. Instead, it must remain fluid and ongoing, able to mirror the complexities of the human existence and development as it unfolds. These explorations cannot rest upon the initial endeavor – but instead must be revisited from time to time so as to reflect the ongoing evolution of the individual.

It is my hope that through the execution of this inquiry – in the form of an autoethnographic narrative –I will be able to understand key events within my life in a different and more insightful way filtered through the interpretive lens of my persona as it exists in its current form. Specifically, I am interested to learn how my time within the public school system impacted my cultural identity as a Native American student. By isolating key moments where the issue of my cultural identity was brought to the fore, it is my hope that this assessment could be made through the reflections generated in the here and now, through the application of the knowledge and wisdom possessed by my current persona. Through the generation of new insights as produced by this inquiry, it is also my hope that I will be able to come to new

understandings relating to my life's journey as it stands today, and where it might be headed in the future.

*Purpose of this Autoethnographic Narrative*

As stated before, it is my intention to reflect upon key occurrences within my past that relate directly to my concept of cultural identity and the impact that the public education system has had upon Native American students in this respect (namely that of myself, as well as the Native American students that have attended the public high school where I am the lead administrator). Although the principal focus of the research project that this endeavor has been connect to relates specifically to the high school years, I believe that there is value to share experiences that occurred throughout my life as a necessary precursor to fully understand the occurrence that did occur during my time in high school (as share in the third experience within this submission).

Through the examination of these key events, I intend to explore the rationale for why these occurrences transpired in the manner that they did, and why I reacted to each event as I did at that time. These moments are referred to by Denzin as “turning points” - whereby epiphanies of consciousness had occurred within the author that fundamentally alter the perception they held of their world – particularly along the lines of race, gender, culture, and class. (Denzin, 2014)

Through the process of this reflective inquiry I hope to construct additional or new meanings relating to what I have experienced in the past. Specifically, how did these key moments impact my cultural identity as a Native American person? How was my conceptualization of my culture molded in the wake of these experiences – and what, if any, lingering effects are still present within my psyche to this day? The application of this autoethnographic narrative will serve as the principle vehicle for the generation of new data

regarding my own recollections and interpretations of these turning point events. Through the utilization of the base of knowledge and life experience currently catalogued within my personal lexicon, I will then be able assess the impact that these events within the public school system had upon my cultural identity.

The nature and style of this narrative will take on different literary forms as each event is explored. The reason for the inclusion of such stylistic difference was to allow myself various ways in which my memory could be recalled and retold. By utilizing differing literary applications (as denoted at the start of each segment), it is my hope that the different ways in which I am forced to compose this autoethnographic narrative will continue to stimulate and fuel the process of memory recall, and perhaps be generative of new understandings in and of itself. As John Pelias wrote with regards to the utilization of various literary renderings in the creation of an autoethnographic work: “The literary . . . has the potential for putting flesh on the skeleton of abstraction, for bringing the affective into shared space with the cognitive, for revealing the human heart.” (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 385) It is my hope that through the use of various literary devices and writing styles, I can bring forward what exists within my own heart and mind regarding the occurrences within my life.

As the narrative progresses and these personal memories are explored, there are sure to emerge insights through the execution of the autoethnographic process. In order to capture these insights - as well as to separate their present day formation from that which occurred during the retelling of past events - such revelations will be denoted using through the use of an italicized font framed within their own paragraph structure. In so doing, it will then be clear to the reader that these particular lines are reflective of the inner monologue that I – as author – am experiencing during the actual composition of this piece.

Now to answer the questions raised previously – how did the public school system impact my cultural identity as a Native American student? To begin, we must understand who I am as a person, and how I came to understand my cultural identity as a Native American student. To do this we must return to the past and begin the exploration . . .

*Background and Context: My Cultural Identity*

In order for the following events to have meaning for the reader, it is important to take a moment to describe the environment within which they occurred. These events that are detailed during my time as a student, all transpired within the Minneapolis suburb of Blaine, Minnesota, during the better part of the 1980's and early 1990's. Blaine is a city of roughly sixty-thousand people, 95% percent of which were of Caucasian descent. What little diversity that was present within this city was principally comprised of African-Americans or Asian-Americans. For the most part, the societal fabric of Blaine was one of being a white, lower-middle class, blue-color, homogenized quilt that for all intents and purposes covered one end of town to the other.

The schools that I attended were typically twenty years old, having been built during the big housing boom of the early 1960's, and were primarily staffed by folks who were hired during the opening years of each building. An elementary classroom was on the larger size – typically housing twenty five to thirty students. After primary school, we moved on to three years of Junior High for grades seven through nine. Finally, as we became sophomores (the tenth grade), we transitioned over to our final public education destination – that of the main city high school, Blaine Senior High. The total population within this high school was so massive that it was able to hold its spot within the top five most populous schools in the state of Minnesota during my time there. By the time of our commencement, our graduating class held over eight-hundred people. Yet throughout these series of transitions from one school to the next, the racial and



socio-economic composition remained nearly static in each school - reflective of the static complexion of town itself. During my time living in Blaine, very little changed beyond the fact that more-and-more white families continued to move into newly constructed homes, and there remained an ongoing expansion of retail and fast-food chains throughout the various neighborhoods in the hopes of attracting this new business. Beyond that, the city would easily remain familiar between successive generations from years past, as well as from years to come.

However, our family was different.

By the time I began school at the age of five (Kindergarten), my parents were on the back end of a failing marriage. The direct result of this situation was that neither spoke to each other longer than common-place, daily courtesies. Ultimately, they maintained a sustained distance from each other – with my father typically holding court in the basement den surrounded by his books and his beloved Jacques Cousteau television programs, with my mother in the main floor living room surrounded by her books and her art projects. My father was a school teacher at a Junior High School within the same district that my siblings and I attended – only just beyond the city limits to the west in neighboring Coon Rapids, Minnesota (a virtual carbon copy of Blaine, only their school colors were red, while ours were blue.). My mother was a part-time librarian and aspiring painter. I had two older brothers, one was five years older than me, the other nine. Despite their distance with each other, my parents always had time for my brothers and me.

While we never lacked for anything, it was clearly evident throughout this period of my life that we were not all that far removed from destitution – a notion often and powerfully reinforced during trips to the grocery store or to the mall, the lack of eating out or taking family vacations, or in the form of the turmoil that would saturate our home whenever one of my

parents experienced some sort of automobile breakdown. Stress levels due to finances remained perpetually high, and every member of the family was on strict orders to waste nothing – electricity (lights, televisions, etc. must always be turned off when not in use), food (not because of some starving population in some distant land, but because we did not have enough for snacks – so you must eat what you were served!), water (short showers, efficient dish-washing, clothes worn multiple times prior to washing), and clothes (being the youngest, my wardrobe was almost exclusively hand-me-downs from my two older brothers).

Now to be sure, the discord and estrangement evident within our household due to strained marital situations and tight budgets was not unique within the city of Blaine, or even in our own neighborhood. The fact was that these were actually common points shared amongst most families – in particular between my friends and me. Whenever we would go and play at a friend's house, parents were seldom seen conversing, and on multiple occasions the grand visions put forward by the kids were summarily shot down by the parents due to lack of liquid assets. Now looking back, it was truly a self-contained lower-middle class kind of town, heavily dominated by housewives with rubber gloves and Windex, and blue-collar dads that always came home in some kind of greased overalls to find a hot meal, cold beer, and newspaper awaiting their arrival at five o'clock – precisely at the same time as our after school football or basketball games were breaking up - for the most part.

One of the more intriguing things that arose out of the lack of disposable income in our household – and something that set us apart from my friend's families - was that it actually forced our family to be closer in the form of shared time together – despite whatever growing antipathy was lurking just below the surface between my mom and dad. This is in stark contrast to what has developed in my own house as a father today - where my own children voluntarily

lock themselves away within a digital world of online video games and streaming music – where my wife and I have to constantly lobby for their involvement.

When I was young, our lack of resources made us all powerfully addicted to knowledge acquisition, learning, athletics, and the arts. This was especially true in my case, for being the youngest I had to work extra hard to keep up in conversation with my brothers and parents – a feat that required me to make sure I had my facts right and that I could point to actual sources from where I drew them from. In this manner, we all became frequent denizens of our local library, and avid amateur artists intent on making our own comic book series or sport event renditions for future sale (thanks in no small part to the influence of one of the library employees who presided at our kitchen table nightly, and the school teacher that sat opposite of her.) For me personally, I became quite adept at speaking up only when I was absolutely sure of the verisimilitude of what I was speaking about (a skill that will loom large in the stories ahead). Finally, our competitive sides were always nurtured in an healthy manner with side-yard games of football, whiffle ball, and driveway basketball tournaments. What was certainly foreign to our neighbors was our general acceptance and joy with each other's company. What was foreign to us was watching our friend's fist-fight with their siblings, to see them be totally ignored by their parents, or to be inside a house totally devoid of books or art materials. Our closeness and our hobbies set us apart from the rest of Blaine, and for this I remain eternally grateful.

This togetherness was furthered by one other key element regarding our family – we had a strong connection to our Native American lineage. My mother and maternal grandfather were both enrolled members of the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota – home of our people, the Hunk Papa band of the Lakota nation. My father's side of the family were of Polish descent, but this side of the family was thick with rumors about the dark skinned relatives from rural

Wisconsin – oft speculated as being Ho-Chunk members. Yet owing to the conservative social mores insisted upon by my paternal grandfather, these jaunts into speculative genealogy were often squashed before they became investigated in any real manner. We just were not supposed to talk about such things.

However, with regards to my mother and my maternal grandfather, each took special pride in their Lakota heritage, regaling my brothers and I with all with old stories passed down to them from the elders, or discussions about my grandfather's exploits bringing the polio vaccine back to his people just after World War II. Our Native American culture became interwoven with all of our family stories and histories. We had no trouble accepting this notion for it was shared with us and validated from the highest authorities within our home. It informed us as to who we were, and it was who we were to be once we walked out our front door.

Unfortunately, we never detected that anyone else had any type of diverse lineage occurring in their homes within Blaine – or if they did, they followed the pattern my paternal grandfather did and squelched any such talk before it went “public”. As far as I could tell in those days, we were the only family with any kind of authentic claim to a diverse background within our immediate neighborhood (with one exception that I would not learn about until my teenage years when I came to find out that another Native American family lived about a half mile away from our house, although I was unsure as to when they may have arrived, knowing that they were relatively recent additions to our area and that we never really got to know them). However, it never bothered me that we were essentially isolated culturally – a tiny island of diversity in the middle of a great white suburban sea of blue-collar banality. To my young mind, it was nothing more than an additional family difference existing within the neighborhood – akin to various shapes and sizes of my friend's homes compared to our own, or the types of different

cars that each family owned on our block. It was not until I entered public school where my unique cultural identity took on the more malevolent form as being derisively divisive - rather than the honorable distinction that it was.

So as I grew up, I was provided an informal education within the confines of my own home regarding our family's personal history, as well as the key historical occurrences which involved our ancestors as a whole – the Lakota nation. From the terror of so-called “Indian Wars”, to the massacre at Wounded Knee, both my mother and my grandfather put forward an unfaltering effort to ensure that I was informed of the challenges that had befallen our relatives from years gone by. Although I may not have realized it at the time, in my adult years I have come to understand their passion and commitment towards sharing this information with me at such an impressionable age. They were – in particular my mother who did the lion's share of conducting these living room seminars – intent on providing me with a solid context by which I could evaluate my own role. To my mother, it was a responsibility to instill in me a sound sense of purpose to inform my path going forward. In her eyes, her sons represented the next chapter for our people within this centuries-old drama. If possible, perhaps we might one day be called upon to defend our people from the same forces of darkness that had unleashed the genocidal theology of “manifest destiny”, and that was now ripping apart Mother Earth for raw materials and the blind, addictive pursuit of profit.

In addition, she also took it upon herself to instill a sharp sense of realism within our minds as to the efficacy of public education. A self-professed feminist, my mother also shared with us the often unfair and at times sexist practices that were present within her own high school during her tenure. From such stories we learned how school can be compromised by the failure of the teachers to encourage all to succeed – especially women and people of color. The

combination of what I was learning at home, coupled with my own less-than-positive experiences at school seemed to reinforce the cynicism that came from my mother's stories. This was never felt more acutely than whenever I had an opportunity to share my knowledge regarding my cultural identity with my classmates or teachers. Invariable, such disclosures were met with mocking incivility, if not outright cruel remarks. Such experiences would go on to leave an indelible impression on the make-up of my person, and would play a significant role in shaping my future professional career.

**The First Experience: Primary School Event #1 (*Chosen Style: Third Person Narrative*)**

The earliest such moment where Joey became aware of any relationship between his cultural identity and his compulsory attendance within public school occurred during the late autumn during one of his first years of elementary school. The class to which he had been assigned for the year was preparing for an all-day celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday. Colored construction paper, scissors, glue, and markers had been liberally spread out across the various metal desk tops and nearby tables. The room was alive with the rambunctious voices of little ones caught up in the currents of creativity that splashed the room with bright colors and warm energy – which contrasted sharply to what could be seen just beyond the massive window of the classroom covering the entire western wall. On the other side of the glass was a wind-swept gray morning, pushing soft pellets of rain against the window. It was curious to Joey to see that the gray skies were of such thickness that the street lights standing just beyond the front lawn of the school remained on, even though it was not nighttime.

Muffled laughs, random shouts of appreciation percolated the air as the elder teacher with her bright orange hair and matching cheeks cautiously meandered around the room, eventually calling Joey's attention back from the gray outdoors to the task at hand inside the warmly lit

room. As the teacher walked, she spoke soft words of encouragement that wrinkled her cheeks with an upturned mouth, all at the delights of wonderment at the efforts of the children within her class.

*I truly enjoyed school during this time. The cloudy, rainy autumn days just beyond the overly large classroom windows always provided a sense of security and coziness within the classroom to which I had always felt welcome – if not at home. I also felt that I was smart – potentially exhibiting more ability than many of my classmates in all areas – reading, writing, mathematics, art, athletics, etc. There were many times where such feelings were validated through the public recognition of my achievements. I remember a distinct and palpable feeling of pride at these accomplishments whereby lessons in school became a contest for me to either show off what I already knew, or to show everyone how fast I could learn something new that perhaps I did not yet know. Looking back, this need to openly demonstrate my capabilities perhaps was beginning to aid a developing need for validation that would become a complicating factor in years to come.*

Reaching the front of room and standing before the great, green slate of the black board that ran across the heart of wall, the tall woman with the shock of orange hair pivoted on one foot and gracefully raised her right hand into the air. As though her hand were the final component of a silent incantation, the class quickly fell silent in rapt, spellbound attention.

“All right, class. You are all doing terrific work. I see our group of pilgrims are doing a wonderful job creating their black hats. Julie’s looks absolutely terrific, I must say! Please remember that you only need a tiny drop of glue – nothing should be coming out from underneath. If there is glue squishing out the sides, you have used too much! Also, don’t forget that your buckles go on the very front and center of your hat – just like the pilgrims.”

The teacher stepped forward to the nearest desk and bent at the waist so as to be able to whisper into the ear of the student who sat at attention inside of the conjoined metal piece. After a brief exchange, and smile, the teacher returned to her full height – only now her right hand held aloft a crude Indian headdress – complete with two “feathers” attached to the back of the crown of brown construction paper.

“For our Indians, remember, you can put as many feathers as you wish on your headdresses – just be sure that they all stay glued down and it remains neat and tidy. That way you can put it on your head. This one here is Ryan’s, see what a nice job Ryan is doing? Nice work, Ryan!” She then gracefully twisted from one side to the other, holding her example aloft for all to see – much like municipal royalty riding in the back of a convertible during a parade.

Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*, how does mine look? Is it okay? I used only four feathers, but I used different colors for each.” Joey felt compelled to ask, even though he was quite satisfied with his own work. He just needed to know if his efforts were on pace with Ryan’s – which the teacher had chosen to show everyone as something that she thought was good.

“Oh, Joey, yours is very nice too! An excellent job! Now while you are all working, I want you to listen to me while I talk to you about why we will be celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday next Thursday.”

Obedient and dutiful, the children responded in like manner, quietly working as the teacher continued.

“Many years ago, the Pilgrims came all the way to America from England. They were looking for freedom, especially for freedom from the evil King of England who did not like them. So, just like Christopher Columbus, the Pilgrims sailed all the way across the Atlantic Ocean – a very dangerous and hard trip that took many weeks to complete.



“Once they arrived, at a place near Boston called Plymouth Rock, the Pilgrims found themselves surrounded by wilderness, and they had to set to work right away in order to build their houses, and to survive the winter.”

“What about the Indians, Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*?”

“Hold on Melissa, I will get to that in a moment. First though, we need to hear about how hard the Pilgrims had to work. They had to chop down many trees, and clear out lots of rocks from nearby fields. Why do you think they needed to do those sorts of things?”

Joey continued to work on his four-feathered headdress, content to listen along with Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*’s story. He knew that the work of the Pilgrims that she was describing was so that they could build their homes, and to have cages for their animals. The work in the fields was so that they could grow food like in a farm or garden. He knew that this information would come out at some point, but if it didn’t, he could always share it. In the meantime, he had some more work to do on his feathers . . .

“Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*, was it because the Pilgrims needed wood to build their homes and to make weapons to hunt with?” asked Eric, the smallest boy in the whole class.

What a cool thought – weapons and hunting! Joey couldn’t help but feel impressed that his classmate had suggested something that he did not think of. If he had to have a weapon in order to defend his family from some unknown attacker, Joey would want a laser rifle.

“Why yes, Eric, that is correct. Also, the work in the fields was so that the Pilgrims could farm and provide even more food for themselves. After much hard work, the Pilgrims were able to build their own town, and could live in freedom – just like they had wanted to when they left England.

“Now, while the Pilgrims were working, they had neighbors.”

“The Indians!” shouted the pig-tailed girl sitting closest to Joey, who also was working on a headdress of her own, however with only a single feather.

“Yes, Melissa – see I told you I would be getting around to the Indians! Yes, the Indians were the neighbors of the Pilgrims, only they did not live in houses, they lived out in the trees and in the woods of the wilderness that surrounded the Pilgrim’s new town. Now the Indians were hunters too, using bows and arrows to kill animals that lived nearby. However, they lived a lot like cave people do –without homes to keep them warm in the winter, without tools or books, and without knowing how to farm like the Pilgrims. As a result, the Indians were starving. What happened was that the Indians would sneak into the Pilgrim’s town and steal their food, and kill their animals that were a part of their farms to steal even more food from the Pilgrims. They also would steal the Pilgrim’s things, such as their guns and tools, even though they didn’t really know how to work them.”

“Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*, wouldn’t that make the Pilgrim’s mad?”

“Oh, it did indeed Johnny, so much so that the Pilgrims had to stand guard to protect their livestock and their women and children from attacking Indians.”

“Did the Indians and Pilgrims ever fight?” From what Joey could tell by looking at him, Johnny almost seemed excited by thought of fighting between the two. Maybe he had some thoughts about what some of the class could do during recess later that day – if the rain that continued to lash at the huge class windows from a dark, gray November sky would let up enough to let them outside. However, such thoughts did not remain in Joey’s head for long. A discomfort was growing within him. The words he heard coming from his teacher were not sitting right with him.

“Why yes they did, Johnny. The Pilgrims were a peaceful people, but they had no choice but protect themselves from the Indians, who were out to steal from them, and who would kill them if they had too. You see, like I said before, the Indians were starving, and they were desperate for food. If the Pilgrims got in their way, they would kill them – even the mothers and children, too. The Indians didn’t care who they had to hurt or kill so long as they could get what they wanted from the Pilgrims. That is where the Pilgrims had an idea, and this is where the Thanksgiving holiday would come from.

“Eventually, the Pilgrims, who were weak from working so hard at building their homes and farms, and who were outnumbered by the Indians, came up with a plan. They decided to talk with the Chief of the Indians, and to offer to teach the Indians how to farm and how to make homes just like the Pilgrims did. That way, the Indians could take care of themselves and would not have to steal anymore from the Pilgrims.”

“How did they talk to the Indian Chief, Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*? Did they have to fight their way to him and capture him?” When Johnny asked this question, Joey observed him holding a construction paper feather up to his shoulder as though he were aiming a gun.

“Well, no Johnny, but that is a good question. The Pilgrims decided to send their best men out to find and meet the Indian Chief, and that they would bring a whole bunch of their food as an offering of peace, you know, to show the Indians that they did not come there to fight. Well, the Indians and their Chief were most impressed by the courage of these Pilgrims, and since they were starving, they loved all of the food that the Pilgrims brought to them that day. As a result, the Indian Chief agreed to let the Pilgrims teach his people, and promised that he and his Indians would make peace with the Pilgrims.

“After about a year, the Pilgrims had taught the Indians how to farm and how to build homes, and by the time of autumn, both the Pilgrim’s and the Indian’s farms were producing lots of food. In addition, the Pilgrims taught the Indians how to hunt with guns, and so they had even more food. Once all of the food and homes had been built, the Indians saw no reason to be enemies with the Pilgrims anymore. Instead, the Chief and the Indians wanted to be friends, and so did the Pilgrims!”

“And that’s why we have thanksgiving, isn’t it, Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*? It is, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Tim, that is why we have Thanksgiving. To celebrate all of the bounty that our hard work has brought us, and to celebrate peace and friendship – just like when the Indians decided to become friends with the hard-working Pilgrims, once the Pilgrims reached out to them in peace to end their suffering. So then the Indians and the Pilgrims then got together and ate a terrific feast that included turkey, cranberries, and potatoes – all of the same food that many of you and your families eat at Thanksgiving. So, that is why we celebrate Thanksgiving here in America. You see, it is about celebrating friendship instead of fighting, peace instead of war, and to give thanks for all that we have by living here in this great land called America.”

“Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*?”

“Yes, Joey?”

“Can I say something?”

While Joey was still young (an age that remained in the single digits at that time), he had already been told a very different version of this history by his family – one that involved stories of how the Native American people, specifically those who were in his particular family tree - the Lakota - were proud and powerful hunters, and that *his* people had a civilized way of living no different than any other people – with their own governments, history, religion, and medicine.

In addition, Thanksgiving had already been taught to Joey by his family to represent the earliest moments when Europeans and Native Americans were first attempting to get to know one another and when a truce between the two people was at hand. As his family had related the story to him, the success experienced by both the Pilgrims and Indians was due primarily to the generosity of the Native Americans. As they told it, it was the Pilgrims who were saved from starvation, and it was the Pilgrims who were violent and stealing out of desperation. In fact, as Joey quickly reflected on these stories now, he realized that the way the teacher was telling the story was entirely backwards.

*These family narratives during this time in my life often took place in the living room after dinner, or during the first hours of a Saturday morning (just prior to when my brothers and I would leave the house to go outside to play with friends). My mother would typically be in the middle of reading a book about our people, or had brought home paintings or other various artwork on loan from our local library, and would want to discuss with all of us what she was experiencing. Of particular note were the vast amount of “coffee table books” containing Native American artwork as created by Native American artists – these made quite the impression on me. Often times painted skins depicting adventures or hunting stories would be present within these texts, and along with my two older brothers, we would all sit together munching on our post-dinner deserts talking about these items and their meanings. Not only were these gatherings rich with exciting and new information, they also had a scholarly quality about them as there were always several piles of books around that were repeatedly referenced or read from to inform our talks. Other times, my brothers and I would draw with pencils and crayons as the stories were discussed – trying our hand at matching the beauty so wondrously captured within*

*the glossy pages of the texts presented to us. Never did it ever occur to me that what we were learning about with regards to our ancestors was anything but factual.*

An unforeseen conflict between these two distinct narratives – between what Joey had learned within his home contrasted against what his teacher at school was now telling him and his class – was now surfacing. As a result, it provided a level of discomfort within Joey's thoughts and feelings – this conflict made his hear hurt and actually began to manifest in a physical form of increase in his body temperature. Joey began to sweat, and now had an overall feeling of anxiety. Without knowing exactly why, he had a powerful feeling that this moment was not right, that something very wrong was happening.

*I distinctly remember feeling a pressure upon my two established loyalties – between myself and my family, and that of what existed between me and my teacher. I clearly remember my heart racing and my skin itching as though it were suddenly subject to the intense glare of a summertime sun.*

Somehow Joey knew that this was more than a simple mistake like what he had observed teachers making in the past – such as when they mispronounced a classmate's name, or when a word was accidentally misspelled on the chalk board during a lesson. This had the feeling of something different altogether. The sheer volume of information that he felt was contradictory to what he had been taught suggested a problem of a differing, and larger, magnitude. What Mrs. \*\*\*\*\* was expounding on at length - the resident authority within the classroom and to whom he had been acculturated into demonstrating unwavering obedience to by both his parents and school administrators alike –was profoundly wrong.

*I can clearly recall a burgeoning sense of anger as to how our teacher repeatedly described the Indians as blood-thirsty, feckless savages in her account. Out of the various*

*emotional responses that this presentation had engendered – confusion, frustration, anxiety, and anger – it was anger, if not outright indignation – that rose further faster within my personage. What is curious now looking back, was that a tipping point within my own psyche was eventually reached. While I am uncertain as to how long it took to produce, eventually my feelings told me to stand up for my family in defiance of what was occurring there in the classroom. After some deliberation within my youthful mind, I evidently came to the conclusion that loyalty to the family and to the knowledge shared at home amongst relatives is of greater validity than what is transmitted within the classroom. It was here where I first began to entertain the notion that school ought to take a “back seat” to my family in terms of loyalty. At some point I interrupted my teacher’s Thanksgiving monologue by raising my hand.*

“Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*, that is not how my parents taught me that story of Thanksgiving. In fact the way you said it is completely backwards. It was the Indians who helped out the Pilgrims, and the Pilgrims were doing all of the stealing and fighting. I mean, that’s what my parents taught me.”

“Oh, Joey, I am sorry, but you are wrong! Or maybe you are not wrong, but maybe you just misunderstood what your parents were telling you? Yes there was some people who were starving and stealing, but it was the Indians. If it wasn’t this way, then why wouldn’t we all be living like the Indians used to now, here today?”

“But Mrs. \*\*\*\*\*, that’s not right, that’s not how my parents told me.”

“I’m sorry, Joey, but it was the Pilgrims were the ones who saved everyone. But its okay, Joey, that is why we all go to school, to learn about new things. So please don’t feel bad about being wrong. Anyways, we only have a little time left before math, so let’s all get back to work on our stovepipe hats and headdresses everyone!” With that, the class returned to work in

their rambunctious manner, without comment or response to Joey's protests. Joey too returned to his headdress, only now his face felt hot, and his hands were sweaty. He felt like he wanted to go home.

*To my surprise she had stood her ground, and insisted that it was I who had perhaps been given wrong information, or that I had misinterpreted the knowledge I had been exposed to. My classmates, as I recollect, were indifferent to what had transpired. It was not uncommon for a student to speak up believing that some critical piece of information had been overlooked by the teacher, or that something was not being discussed in a manner that they had come to learn from their parents. Regardless of the reaction of my peers, I felt embarrassed, and angry. She was wrong – and I knew it!*

*At this juncture within this reflective process, another curiosity has surfaced in the wake of this recollected event: She told me that I was wrong - and by extension that my family must be wrong as well - and that I will come to understand this better as I got older. I distinctly remember feeling angry and hurt, as though this authority figure – my first-grade teacher – whom I had been instructed by my family and the school itself to respect and honor each day, had quickly invalidated my family and our discussions, as well as maintained a disdainful air regarding my ancestors. Although I could not quite articulate my emotions then, there was a real sensation that in the eyes of the school, being Indian meant that you came from a line of liars and thieves. As this event unfolded, I believe that this notion was seemingly reinforced in front of my peers once I took issue with what the teacher was saying and in turn had my family's beliefs summarily rejected.*

After this incident, Joey's feelings towards school took a decided turn into a new direction. For the first time, he began to question both his family as well as his teachers as to



what the truth really was regarding his people, all the while never again feeling fully comfortable in any classroom so long as this schism remained.

*As the year progressed, a seemingly innocuous incident aided my developing sense of rebellion towards public schooling. Later on during the winter months, our teacher announced that it was her birthday. The class – myself included – goaded her for most of the day as to how old she was turning. Despite the wild and often insensitive guesses postulated by the students, she refused to acknowledge her age – until the final moments of the day.*

It was a very cold, and very bright, sunny day in late winter. The entire class – quite organically – found itself chanting “please” over and over again as a last ditch effort to get their teacher to confess her age. Finally, with a look of exasperation, she acceded (as the class erupted in cheers and applause).

“I am twenty-four today.” She smiled wide, the bell rang, and all the children went out to their lockers to get their snow pants, clunky moon boots, and other winter gear to prepare for the frigid walk home. Joey left that day and walked home content that free time to play was soon to be his. He could not foresee what would come next.

That night at the dinner table, a rather heated debate was stirred up between Joey, his mother, and his two older brothers.

“Today was Mrs. \*\*\*\*\* birthday.”

“Really Joey? How old is she?” responded Danny, the oldest of the three brothers, in between bites of pork chops.

“She told us that she was twenty-four years old today.”

Much to his surprise, everyone began to openly laugh at the proposition that his teacher was the age she said she was. Joey’s mother spoke first.

“Joey, Mrs. \*\*\*\*\* had taught the same grade for both of your older brothers. Now Danny is nine years older than you. How could this woman be teaching in a school at the age of 15?”

“But Mom that is what she said! Why are you laughing? That is what she said!”

“Joey, she looks pretty old, too, right? About as old as Grandma, don’t you think? I mean, her face is quite wrinkled. Have you ever seen a twenty-four year old with so many wrinkles?” asked the other brother Robert.

“I don’t know, maybe her family is ugly? She said she was twenty-four Mom. Why would she lie to us?” This comment by Joey brought on more bouts of laughter from his family. Feeling slightly disrespected, he could feel the back of his neck become hot and scratchy.

Joey’s mother interjected wearing a soft smile, “Because, Joey, sometimes women don’t like to talk about their age?”

“Yeah, but she does. She told us she was twenty-four!”

Joey held firm to his assertion. She had said she was twenty-four, and why should she lie – especially to the whole class? Maybe her aged face was really because her family was just ugly? His family continued to chuckle, and finally, his father spoke, telling Joey that as a teacher himself, that sometimes teachers don’t always tell the truth to their students – especially about their age. They all seemed fine with the whole situation – even though Joey was not. Here again it seemed that home and school were at odds with each other. The matter didn’t weigh too heavily on Joey, for a lopsided slice of chocolate cake for dessert, coupled with some comic books before bed pushed his thoughts into distant lands of adventure, and away from the age-disclosure controversy that had disrupted Joey’s pork chop dinner.

*At the time, I don't believe that I had made an overt connection between what had occurred during the Thanksgiving festivities a few months prior with this particular "birthday" incident, but I believed on some level each resonated within me on some sort of similar frequency. Now looking back, I can clearly connect the ability for an educator to disseminate wrong and hurtful information about an entire people in the same context as their willingness to openly lie about a given topic (even something as banal as their age). Living within my current persona today, I believe that each event is indeed connected as the manifestation about this particular educator's mindset - or the belief system maintained by an enabling school system that kept her employed for so many years. For me now, these events suggest that the ideas and prior knowledge held by the children within that class (myself included) were not valued, or were held in very low regard. As a result, she had absolutely no compunction to even manipulate the truth in front of impressionable children whenever she wanted. For an educator to indulge in such presuppositions is dangerous – it not only could serve to deter engagement by the student, but it could promote hostile feelings between the student and the institution in the event that the student's cultural identity is called in to question – or in my case, outright invalidated.*

*With regards to the impact that this experience had on my cultural identity then, I interpreted this event at the time as merely a frustrating moment that I could not make sense of – other than my teacher was being "stupid". However, as I sit here today, this event now stands as something more, something a bit more sinister in nature. Wearing this current persona now as I do – that being a full grown adult, parent, and professional educator, I now interpret this Thanksgiving Day foible as chilling indication that something was at work just below the surface of everyday life at school. Within this exchange there was the open denigration of an entire*

*people and their culture, followed by a stubborn insistence that such denigration was not only warranted, but accurate.*

*While at the time such concepts were well beyond my intellectual capacity, what I can discern now was what did occur, what I had in essence experienced, was my first naked exposure to the doctrine of American assimilation – the quaint euphemism that superbly masked the genocidal efforts being executed in its name. The experience itself was ugly and distasteful – immediately souring my attitudes towards public schools. What I didn't realize then was that such assertions that were made by my teacher were not of her own creation, but rather a reflection of curriculum and government policy that predated us both. Here in the teaching of the Thanksgiving within the early years of primary school lies a perfect moment encapsulating many of the internal machinations and intentions of the American public school system. For most of its existence, formalized education sought to “Americanize” the youth of this land into becoming obedient and productive citizens. This desire is perfectly captured in the Thanksgiving myth that was foisted onto our children – including me – for so many years within our public schools.*

*To begin with, Thanksgiving was a federal holiday passed by President Lincoln in recognition of the sacrifices made during the tumult and bloodshed of the U.S. Civil War. As the conflict wound down, the President and his cabinet believed that this holiday would provide a context for families to honor and celebrate the successes of the Union, and the importance of our nation overall – all as a means of mitigating any urge that might lie dormant in the land to seek a negotiated peace prior to the ultimate victory of Northern forces over the Confederacy.*

*In no way was this holiday ever linked or intended to link the traditional fall feast of harvest time with the historic relationship shared between the Western European colonizers of this land and its original indigenous inhabitants. Yet this connection was made – and done so as*

*a means of reinforcing the antiquated codes of manifest destiny within classrooms throughout the land. Through the adoption and dissemination of this new myth - whereby the civility and intelligence of the European invaders was needed to save Native peoples from their own demise – American children to could be taught to recognize and validate the need for the dominant culture to behave as it did towards the Native Americans. In this sense, the Native peoples and their culture were representative of an evil, savage manner of living incongruent with the concepts of “progress” championed by the “American way”. It was the first attempt to influence the youngest and most impressionable as to why genocide is a good thing. It was utterly preposterous and in my opinion, outright evil. Yet it was what was taught within American to so many children within American schools for decades.*

*I had in that classroom - and through that experience in particular -merely gotten a glimpse of this historical beast that consumed so many souls, and thinking about it today chills me to my core. It was not unlike the poor bystander who cannot shake the creepy displeasure of having made eye contact with the sinister glazed expression of a stranger that passed them by on the street, only to learn the next day in the papers that their encounter had occurred just moments before that very same stranger committed a heinous and ugly crime against another human being.*

*The pain and frustration that I felt by this invalidation of my cultural identity – something that was admittedly on only the minutest fraction of a scale compared to what the elders had experienced within the boarding schools during decades prior – was still impactful enough to influence my persona to this very day. Here I am some thirty years later still writing about and analyzing the impact that this exchange had on my development as a student and as a person. The composition of this very piece – in terms of time devoted – dwarfs the actual length of the*

*entire event. Yet I continue to examine it. I cannot fathom what my elders have and continue to endure as a result of their experiences.*

**The Second Experience -Primary School Event #2 (Chosen Style: First Person Reflection)**

The second notable event relating to the potential impact that my public schooling had upon my cultural identity came during the sixth grade, when our teacher was conducting History class. The lesson on this day was focused primarily on events within the history of the state of Minnesota, in particular how Native Americans lived here within the boundaries of the state around the time when we first were granted statehood and union with the rest of the United States. During this lecture – complete with a handout involving illustrations, the teacher informed the class that the Indians of Minnesota lived in teepees and traveled the land by horseback, hunting buffalo. Such an assertion was in direct contrast to what I had been taught at home. No one in the class spoke up, the lesson just continued along unbroken, unquestioned. I immediately felt a swelling within my chest as a need to act came over me.

*By this time, I was cognizant of the fact – even at that age – that the teacher was at least describing the Native people in complimentary terms and without effort to do so. The language was effusive and almost glowing – painting a tragic yet heroic picture of the indigenous people of our state. Gone were the assertions that we were tramps, thieves, beggars, and murders feverish to nothing more than shed white blood. What I remember was a sense of pride swelling up within me, as though a new union had been created between the lessons I was learning in school with what I was learning at home with my family. My only issue was that her facts were simply wrong. Possibly owing to the mild pressures gently imposed upon me by my family to truly have earned the right to speak of facts with supporting citations, I felt that I needed to*

*interject, at the very least to protect against the spreading of any information that I was - by this time in my life – quite certain I could refute and explain properly.*

I was by then 12 years old, and had for years now been given a wide selection of books by my mother about our people (I now believe that the Thanksgiving incident several grades before had also an effect on her as well, as she increased the exposure that I had towards learning about our ancestors). In addition to this, two major developments had occurred on the home front that had served to accelerate my own understandings about my heritage and my cultural identity. As a result of these developments, I felt more empowered and more compelled to speak up.

The first was that my parents had by this time divorced, and in the interim, my mother had met a new man – a full blood Hidatsa from North Dakota. After several months, he eventually moved in with us. He was a traditional dancer who competed professionally on the seasonal pow-wow circuit throughout the Upper Mid-West, and who also sang with his brothers in a traditional drumming group that would also compete from time-to-time during these same events. I had grown fond of my new stepfather, and he in turn spent many hours with me teaching me about the construction and meaning behind his regalia, life on the reservation, and the specifics of pow-wows (including how each dancer was to perform, as well as the origins of each dance). With this new relationship within our family came huge amounts of travel – especially during the spring and summer months – as we all followed in the steps of this man and traveled what is commonly referred to in Indian country as the “trail”, or “pow-wow trail”. We spent many weekends at various pow-wows throughout the 5 state region – mixing and visiting with people from many different tribes, as well as connecting with our new extended family.

*Despite the painful loss of innocence that always materializes in the wake of a divorce, my stepfather brought with him a unique gentleness that was supported by what I felt was some unspoken sense of obligation to teach me things relating to our culture. This engagement eased the painful separation of not having my father living at home. (Also, in addition, by this time my oldest brother had also moved out with friends as he completed college. It was as though my entire family had been scattered to the four winds and something new had suddenly, and unexpectedly, been reassembled in its place). As I sat with him listening to his many stories, I learned of how the elders were so very protective of sharing information with non-Indians for fear of cultural appropriation and commercialization. Yet despite these many instances that were discussed – where ceremony and songs were taught in secret – he had no problem with openly sharing these things with his newly met, white complexioned stepson. Never once did he question my connection to my ancestors, nor did he question my need to learn of these things. He made a concerted effort (at times against the wishes of a precocious pre-teen) to sit me down to share his knowledge. For this I will remain forever grateful.*

The second development was that my mother had, just two years prior, taken a new full time job as the curator of the art gallery located within the Minneapolis American Indian Center. This position essentially placed my mother within the heart of the Twin Cities Native American population, and brought numerous opportunities for her – and by extension her sons (which meant me) – to meet and visit with many elders, Native American artists, and local Native American kids my age who lived throughout the entire region. In addition, many academic luminaries within the field of Native American studies - who either worked at the University of Minnesota, or were colleagues of these individuals - also began to stop by the gallery. They came often, to view the displayed work, and to visit with my mother – either casually during



weekdays, or during formal gallery “openings” and showings. Whenever I was there, either during planned events or during summer weekdays when I wanted an escape from the humid dog day doldrums, I was able to sit and listen in on these conversations, and from time get involved myself. The exposure to all of these knowledgeable and talented people further influenced my thinking and informed my cultural understandings.

*I felt like my mother – and by association me – were rock stars! Almost overnight, I began to meet several people whose names I distinctly recalled having seen printed on the spines of books or as captions beneath photos within the books that sat on our living room coffee table. In addition, I began to meet political dignitaries for the first time. The mayor of Minneapolis (Don Frasier) would repeatedly come to the openings my mother held at the gallery. They spoke to each other on a first name basis – as though each were old, dear friends. Eventually I too was able to call him Don, and he referred to me as Joe. For the very first time I felt as though we had been able to break free of the tremendous gravitational pull of Blaine and were now soaring into new arenas, meeting new, more authentic people who just by living transcended the narrow conception of existence held and exhibited by my home town. We had become what I would today in this persona refer to as cosmopolitan-styled people.*

*As the various professors began to arrive at the gallery, I now found myself with the ability to ask whatever question I felt I wanted to simply for my own personal and intellectual edification. What I quickly came to realize was (despite my mother’s assertion to the contrary during those moments) these high-profile “teachers” did not mind teaching more after hours or during social events. In fact, many were eager to share what they knew with me – despite the often times juvenile nature of the questions that were posed to them. (One particular question I remember with some mild embarrassment was when I wanted to know the impact of baseball on*

*the reservations and within traditional practices. At the time I was a fanatic baseball fan, and so if any opportunity should present itself where I could learn of any new or interesting aspects about this wondrous sport – I could not resist. I was met with a generous, and gentle explanation that the development of baseball was essentially no different than what was experienced anywhere else.) Each time I accompanied my mother to her work, I was quickly surrounded with new and exciting knowledge relating to my people, my heritage, and my cultural identity.*

When the recent developments within my personal life were added together, I knew that not all Indians who lived in Minnesota lived in teepees during the mid-nineteenth century, nor did any massive buffalo hunts occur within the boundaries of our state.

In reality, many bands within the northern Ojibwe nations constructed their homes out of the materials brought forth from the woodlands within which they lived (wigwams, etc.). Also, again drawing from what I had learned from my family as well as on my own, I knew that the buffalo were primarily hunted by the tribes living on the Great Plains out in the Dakotas – namely by our own people, the Lakota.

*From what I recall, I was not at that moment really cognizant of the early episode regarding Thanksgiving, it really didn't come to mind. Instead, I was more motivated by what I was experiencing outside of school and with whom I had been associating during that time. Here as before, I interjected, feeling obligated to share what I knew merely as a method to set the record straight, and not out of any malicious desire to humiliate or "show-up" our teacher. In fact, I was really quite moved at the positive representations that she was providing for the class. Looking back on it now, I am also beginning to think that perhaps my desire to interject was also a vein (and vain) attempt at trying to get some of that respect to rub off onto me.*

Although the teacher did not readily endorse what I shared, she was at least more open minded than her predecessor that the information I brought forth could in fact be real – most likely as a result of the book titles that I cited as having read in reference to what I was sharing at that moment. Yet it was not the lecture and misinformation that made this particular situation so memorable, instead it was what followed. When asked by our sixth-grade teacher why I had read these books, I responded it was because our family is Indian, that I am Indian, and that we as a family find it important to learn about our people (especially my mother). It was then that it happened.

Immediately after hearing my response, my teacher began to involuntarily laugh out loud, taking a moment or two to regain a straight face before stating simply: “Joey, you *are not Indian*, you are white. Your family couldn’t be Indian, I mean look at you. Sorry, kiddo. Sometimes we like to pretend to be things that we are not.”

Soon after these words were spoken by the adult standing at the front of the room, my classmates around me starting laughing out loud, with some doing “war whoops” as a way of mocking me. It got to be so loud that my protests to the contrary reaffirming my identity were drowned out by their laughter - as well as by some stereotyped chanting-singing that had begun. What I was witnessing was too absurd to be believed. It was a scene more apropos of a television sitcom, where such extreme and one-sided bursts of laughter have been theatrically staged for maximum effect upon the studio audience. Here there was no audience, just young students who were all sharing in a unique moment at the expense of one of their classmates. I was infuriated.

The teacher eventually had to raise her hands in order to quiet everyone down and return the class to a proper state of decorum - and to quit laughing herself. Words cannot express the hurt and anger that washed over me. Never before, or ever since, has a point come where I have

had to live through a situation where I was publically degraded and ostracized in only a matter of minutes. It was bad enough having my cultural identity outright negated in a public fashion by the resident authority within the classroom, but from that day forward, I would not be the same person in the eyes of my peers either –from then on I was the weird kid with white skin who fancied himself an Indian. Unfortunately it did not end with this incident. For the remainder of the year, periodic “war whoops” and other negative stereotypes regarding Native Americans (such as being spoken to in broken English) were thrown my way – ostensibly as gentle teasing. However, whenever any kind of teasing is delivered with the ham-fisted sensitivity of a pre-pubescent, the hurt typically outweighs the intended humor as was the case here. Where was the teacher during all of these interactions? Who is to say? I certainly did not feel welcome to bring up the issue or how I felt about it with her – the very person who had unloosed this craziness – and so I avoided seeking her counsel thereafter. The hatred towards school that emerged that day would begin to calcify within my soul, and would last for the remainder of my time within the K-12 system of Blaine, Minnesota.

**The Third Experience: High School Event (Chosen Style: Third Person Narrative)**

It was his birthday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993. Joe was now seventeen and a junior within Blaine Senior High, and had just been called out by his American Studies teacher – Mr.

\*\*\*\*\* - in front of his entire third period class.

“Joe, when you have a minute, could you please see me? I would like to talk to you.”

Joe was unsure as to what the teacher could want. He had always maintained a low profile in this school, as was his want, so much so that many would later claim that he had made himself virtually invisible amongst his classmates. Any thought of trouble or reprimand was immediately dismissed. However, Mr. \*\*\*\*\* had requested to see him, so something was up.

Checking the clock on the impermanent, folding beige wall just above the door, Joe could see that there were only a few minutes of class left, so he quickly placed his materials back into their folder, piled up his belongings, and quietly walked back to the teacher's desk at the rear of the room.

"You needed to see me, Mr. \*\*\*\*\*?" It was the softest voice Joe could muster and still be heard. Whatever this was about, there was no way he would want any of his classmates to know about it.

"Ah, yes, Joe. I wanted to talk to you about this . . ." Amongst the various piles of papers and books on his old metal desk, Mr. \*\*\*\*\* pulled out from the middle of a pile a single manila folder. "It's this here, your essay that you wrote on what America means to you."

Joe's scalp began to turn hot, as did his underarms. While it was nothing outrageous, he had had trouble coming up with topic to write about for this particular essay assignment. Fearing that he was running out of time and desirous of completing the assignment, he decided to write about what he was most interested in at the time – namely addressing the lack of tolerance exhibited within the country. The reasons for this were manifold – but namely were generated out of a combination of Joe's personal life experiences matched by current events that had been occurring within the country. Joe had religiously kept abreast on world events each day via the newspapers from around the country offered within the school library, and through this essay assignment within Mr. \*\*\*\*\*'s class, had now found an opportunity to offer his own commentary.

In addition to these elements, there also had been several fights as of late within the school between white students and the small handful of African-American students. Whether it was in the lunchroom, or at the Friday night football games during the previous autumn, the

racial friction within the school was palpable and growing steadily worse – a sensation that was deeply disquieting for Joe. He was now nervous that he had written something of offense, something that might be misinterpreted as contributing to the charged atmosphere within BHS, and was now being called out by Mr. \*\*\*\*\* to account for what could potentially be seen as a lack of good judgment.

“Joe, I just wanted to say how impressed I was with your work. You obviously took your topic in a somewhat different direction, and were a bit more critical of our nation than your classmates.”

“Well, Mr. \*\*\*\*\*, I just wanted to point out what I felt were some of the things in this country that I thought we all needed to address before we could start waving the flag all proud like, you know?”

“Oh, I know exactly what you were doing, that is why I liked it so much. I especially like how you directly tied in recent events like the siege at Waco, and President Clinton’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy with the United States military. But, to be honest with you, I especially liked how you referred to America’s treatment of the Native American people. This was really special. I particularly liked it.”

As Mr. \*\*\*\*\* continued to speak, he did so while tapping his finger on the words printed on the page of Joe’s work. It was those words that had motivated this teacher to speak directly to Joe, and it was those words that energized his hand to tap-tap-tap away on the pages as he spoke. His voice, while also in muted tone, was a bit louder than Joe’s, again as Joe surmised, propelled by the ink on the pages before him. Joe was beginning to truly understand the powerful effect that speaking out, more specifically what he believed people should speak out on, could potentially have on others if ever carried out. It was then that the bell rang – ending

third period. To himself, Joe lamented the fact that it might have actually been better for this conversation to be broadcast a bit louder so that his classmates could indeed hear what he and Mr. \*\*\*\*\* were discussing quietly in the back of the room.

“Joe, I don’t know if you were aware of this fact or not, but I am Native American myself – my people come from White Earth.”

Joe had suspected as much – owing to Mr. \*\*\*\*\* dark complexion, but he never had the courage to ask. “No sir, I did not know that. I am too, by the way.”

“Really? Who are your people?”

“The Hunk Papa band of the Lakota. Our family is from the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota.”

“Really? Well that is just fantastic, really, just fantastic. Well, listen, I just wanted you to know that I shared your essay with the administration of the school, even with Dr. \*\*\*\*\* himself. Do you know what Dr. \*\*\*\*\* told me? He said that this was some of the best writing that he had seen from a student in a long time, and that he felt the whole school should read it.”

“Really? The whole school? Wow!”

“Yes, he also said that this should be printed on a billboard for everyone to see everywhere – not only here in Blaine High School, but throughout Minnesota. So I won’t keep you much longer, I know you need to get going. But I was wondering if I could keep this?”

“Wow, yes, absolutely. Are you and Dr. \*\*\*\*\* going to post it around the school or something? I still have friends on the school newspaper, with you or Dr. \*\*\*\*\*’s help, we could get it published in next month’s copy of the Blaine Blueprint.”

“No, no, none of that is going to happen.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I am not sure. I suggested it to Dr. \*\*\*\*\*. He was concerned that this might make matters worse – you know, with all of the fights that have been occurring lately. Anyways, that is not why I wanted to keep this. I just wanted it in case another student in the next class or next year might need to see an example of good work, something that could help them complete their own assignment. Would it be okay if I keep it?”

“Yeah, sure. It really would be no problem to get it in the Blueprint, I mean if you endorse it.”

“No, no, that’s okay. I am sure that they have plenty to write about and cover in the next issue. Anyways, thanks for your work, and for letting me keep it. You’d better get off to your next class.”

“Sure, Mr. \*\*\*\*\*, thanks for letting me know you liked my work.”

Joe hiked his book and folder under his arm, gave a quick nod of the head and small smile, then turned on his heels and headed out the door, more puzzled than pleased. If it was so good, why not share it? Maybe it wasn’t that good? Maybe he didn’t believe in what he had wrote about? None of this made much sense to him. By now he only had a few minutes left before his next class started, and so such ruminations would have to wait.

*To be clear, I really did not possess any overt conceit at this point in my life, but I was supremely confident in my writing skills. This particular skill of mine had repeatedly been validated throughout my life by teachers, relatives, and friends alike - and done so in a manner that left no other impression than a sincere response in the affirmative, as opposed to a “pat on the head” patronization. Yet this experience has stuck with me throughout the years. I had*



*consciously taken a bold step by deviating just a bit from the prescribed essay assignment to include current events that were prevalent not only within our country, but within our school.*

*The “race fights” – as they came to be known amongst students – were very troubling to me. I had witnessed first-hand white students bombarding the black students with racial epithets and vulgarities on daily basis. These verbal occurrences were sudden and violent in their impact, so swift that they always caught me off guard. I was at that time rather timid anyways, so protesting these outbursts just wasn’t in my nature. Owing to their randomness and rapidity, I never openly stuck up for the students who were the intended targets of these attacks. Then this essay assignment came along, and on some level I came to believe that this might be my opportunity to speak up and out on behalf of these students who were being verbally accosted on each day.*

*Instead of celebrating America with blind patriotism evocative of the traditional red, white, and blue fever spawned by unbridled nationalism (something that would powerfully reemerge across the American landscape in a profound manner only a scant seven years later), I wanted to point out the inconsistencies as to how we treat one another here in the land where it was once publically declared to the world that all men were created equal. So, as I recall, I began with the attempted extermination of the Native Americans during the previous century – an issue that was of course close to my heart. My inclusion of this attempted genocide was fueled in part at that time by the forthcoming (and much heralded) release of the Steven Spielberg film Schindler’s List - which would arrive with much aplomb in the ensuing winter months of that very same school year. (Spielberg’s film had already saturated the many periodicals held within our school library – as well as dominated the entertainment television programs played nightly. To be honest, at the time I was composing Mr. \*\*\*\*\*’s essay, I felt it an opportune moment to “hit*

*‘em where it hurts” with regards to my writing playing upon the sentiments that this film was already stirring.)*

*Into this mix I also included references to the burgeoning anti-government movements that had exploded onto the American consciousness with events like the Los Angeles riots that occurred a two years prior, the siege of the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, Texas, and the attempted bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City the previous spring. Added to this was mention of the recent surge of anti-homosexual vitriol born of the President’s push to integrate the armed forces along these lines (thus generating the misguided “don’t ask, don’t tell” compromise.)*

*When taken all together, I argued that what would make us great was widespread tolerance of those that differ from ourselves, and that at this moment America was falling further and further away from such ideals. If we did not make a course correction, we could very easily suffer a violent and sudden demise – whereupon the fate of the Native Americans within this country could easily be executed once again, this time against any other minority group that has fallen out of favor with the hysterical masses. The piece closed – as I recall – citing the potential for the development of a great irony where, upon the internal collapse of America unto itself as a result of unabashed violence and rage, the democracies of Western Europe would stand as a last hope for us all – the very architects of our current situation.*

*To be sure, it was laced with accusation, innuendo, and a healthy dose of teenage angst, so in reflection it is not all that surprising that Mr. \*\*\*\*\* and the school administration might have balked at publicly endorsing or disseminating the piece. It came at a highly charged time within the school’s history. These racial episodes would eventually grow to such proportions that two all-school assemblies were convened to address the issue on year later during my senior*

*year, as well as a smaller school-leadership forum for the same purposes. The leadership forum also attracted the local news media – where it received television coverage during that day’s evening broadcast.*

*Admittedly at the time I was a bit chagrined that the piece was not submitted to a wider audience within the school. Partly for egotistical reasons, but mainly for the fact that the lack of action on the part of the faculty and administration suggested to me that they were not courageous enough to confront the latent racism within the school in a more direct fashion. To me, their inaction suggested their willingness to tolerate such behavior – either because they felt powerless, or else because they secretly were supportive of it.*

*The other curious fact was that my teacher - Mr. \*\*\*\*\* - admitted to me that he was in fact Native American. Owing to his countenance, his disclosure really came as no surprise. However, after having had many years where I personally had to grapple with the issue of my own cultural identity within a public school setting, and knowing what I already knew regarding the experiences of many of our elders from what was taught to me by my stepfather and extended family, I really could not fathom why a Native American teacher would take such a passive role in the face of a real and growing racial problem within the very school he taught in. I remember wondering if Mr. \*\*\*\*\* himself was scared of becoming a target – either of the students or by their parents. If this was the case, then why couldn’t he let me take the lead? I really didn’t care about my own standing within the school – my mind was already looking past the horizon towards college – and a world beyond the doldrums of Blaine, Minnesota. Yet he did not, and I could not understand why.*

*What conclusion I did come to was that our high school – and most public schools for that matter – were firmly committed to the concepts of conformity. While my essay preached the need*

*for greater tolerance in its own imitable and adolescent way, the racial tensions that were readily apparent within the hallways and locker rooms of our school was forcibly challenging the long-standing assumption that we are all the same - and must endeavor at all costs to remain so. We were not the same, which is typically okay and accepted within a progressive society. Yet by continuously trying to mask our differences either by disavowing them, or by reinforcing an antiquated and dogmatic adherence to false notions regarding what it means to be an “American” - was only exacerbating this issue and drive the divide to deeper levels. It eventually reached the point where physical violence erupted between students on different sides of that divide, and where actual bloodshed occurred within the school building itself.*

*What I clearly recall was steady disgust growing within me regarding Blaine, and with the operations going on within the city’s schools. The general willingness for a minority teacher and the school administration to pass on addressing this issue – either through the vehicle of a student essay or else by an open engagement with the students – until the issue exploded in violence was, in my opinion, disgraceful. This experience for me essentially served as the proverbial “final straw” whereby I lost all remaining hope that public schools could serve as a means of reinforcing tolerance and diversity. For me, this particular experience was indicative of the entire dominant culture of the United States. It seemed that we were more content to videotape the vicious beating of a black motorist on the side of the road at the hands of the police, than by intervening and putting it to a stop. To me it was an example of cowardice, and it was just one more event that hastened my desire to exit as quickly as possible – not only from the system, but from the city itself.*

**The Fourth Experience: The Professional Educator (Chosen Style: Third Person Narrative – Journalistic “News” Story)**

*Dateline: Friday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007. American Indian OIC – The Career Immersion High School*

### **Local School Celebrates the Winter Solstice with Traditional Native American Feast**

The AIOIC Career Immersion High School – a local alternative high school within the Minneapolis Public School district that focuses primarily on educating Native American students – hosted its first ever Winter Solstice Feast for parents, students, and community members alike. The purpose of this feast was to honor and recognize the heritage of the student’s cultural ancestors, while celebrating traditional practices still in use by Native American families today.

“We want to reinforce the importance of our people’s culture – not only as a way of life, but also as an important supportive feature that will allow our students to become even more successful academically. Through a deep understanding and validation of our people’s history and ways, we can all learn more about the ‘three R’s’ while sustaining these very practices,” said Joe Hobot – the Lead Teacher of the AIOIC’s Career Immersion High School.

Today’s feast and activities included several stories shared by local Native American elders that live in the surrounding community and who were invited as guests so that they could share their knowledge with the students. Stories regarding the importance of seasonal changes, and the day-to-day practices that were traditionally followed by the student’s ancestors in the past were told throughout the afternoon – with many of the parents and students adding their own experiences in concert with the tales of the community speaker.

In addition, a local drum group was present to serenade the participants with traditional drumming and music from the Ojibwe culture – taking several breaks between songs to share their meaning and how the members of the group come to create and learn the music.

The day was capped off with a large spread of food for everyone to enjoy – including many long-standing traditional dishes such as pheasant wild rice soup, as well as some more modern fare that included Indian Tacos (tacos served on a “platter” of fry bread) and homemade blueberry pie.

As students, staff, and elders alike ate their fill, one of the elders who works for the American Indian OIC hosted a game of “Ojibwe Bingo” – where terms and phrases from the traditional Ojibwe language were used in place of the more familiar numeric settings of a standard BINGO card. Participants were treated to door prizes if they successfully completed their BINGO cards first, and all were treated to fun and in-depth lesson regarding many of the student’s traditional language.

The event began and ended with a ceremonial sage purification rite - more commonly referred to as “smudging” – whereby participants stand in circle and take turns “washing” their bodies with handfuls of smoke generated by lit sage burning from within a seashell.

Added Hobot: “The purpose of smudging is to ensure that everyone that is present is here with a good heart and generous spirit. The smoke represents a way to purify oneself from negative thinking or bad feelings. The practice invokes powerful memories of participation within other traditional ceremonies – and so serves as an equally powerful tool to welcome everyone in, and to let them know that our ways will be honored and observed here in this space. It’s just one more way in which we here at the AIOIC Career Immersion High School have utilized an active inclusion of our culture as a means of advancing the academic achievement of our students – and to do so in a community framework.”

Not all students who attend the high school are Native American. A small portion of this small, forty-one student school are comprised of other minority groups, but who are permitted to enroll as a result of the school being a public school under contract with Minneapolis Public Schools.

In response to being asked about the students who were not Native American, Hobot – who himself is a descendent of the Lakota Sioux, stated: “For our non-Indian students, events like today helps to educate them further as to who we are as a people, and hopefully encourages them to share with all of us their culture and who they are as a people. All in all, it creates a very positive atmosphere where all are welcome, and where everyone supports the diversity found within their neighbors.”

At the conclusion of today’s events, as the pre-holiday snow began to fall in large flakes just outside the main entrance, one could not help but to have felt welcome within this warm and inviting space. The jokes, stories, and smiles were many – as plentiful as the hearty supply of home-cooked food. One also could not help but feel a part of this community – despite the differences that may linger just beneath the surface. So much like the diverse snowflakes that fell beyond the windows, the diverse approach to education as employed at the AIOIC Career Immersion High School with their diverse student body gives hope that the Native American experience within public schools has taken on a new and beneficial model heartily endorsed by the community.

“It was always our intention to create a new type of public school experience for our Native American community – one that embraces and empowers Native American students through the

inculcation of our culture directly into the curriculum and physical space of the school. In this way, our school serves as a direct departure from what has occurred before,” explained Hobot.

Judging by the gratitude expressed by the participants as they departed out into the afternoon snow, and by volume of cultural information that was shared during what was essentially an indoor picnic, we believe that the AIOIC Career Immersion High School might very well be what the staff had set out to create - a new type of public school experience for Native American students, and one that embraced the diversity reflected by the residents of the city of Minneapolis.

*Everything that occurred on that day was done so with intentionality and forethought. It was the midway point of my second year as a teacher. I had begun my career as an educator within this very same school – what I continue to view as a tremendous blessing – and I had taken all that I had experienced personally as a student, combined it with what I had come to learn through my training in pedagogy, and influenced the way in which this school would operate. Empowered by the executive team that governed the overall agency in charge of the high school - and who agreed with my general philosophy regarding education - I utilized my post as the Lead Teacher (which is essentially an instructor who also serves as the principle administrator for the school) to create a school where the cultural identities of the students were openly supported and integrated within their overall academic pursuits. Working with the high school faculty to inculcate Native American culture within all aspects of the physical space as well as the curriculum, our small institution embraced the title of being “alternative” in a big way.*

*This particular feast was our first attempt at bringing in parents and guardians, as well as other community members, inside our school during a regular school day for a social and*



*informational gathering. The intent was to reinforce the connection between the school and the community, the students and their community, and the knowledge held by esteemed elders with what is taught within the school. By throwing open our doors and inviting everyone in, we wanted to dismiss any artificial division between the institution and the people by reinforcing that this was in fact their school, and what was being taught within their school honored the people and our culture.*

*As the staff and I prepared for this event, I clearly remember walking around with a head and tongue thick with the memories of my own experience as a student. These events (especially those that have been documented within this autoethnographic narrative) were used as guideposts for what our school would seek to accomplish, and what it would seek to forever dispatch. If you came on that day – irrespective of your own heritage - you were a part of our community for the duration of the event that day. If you were a Native American student, you and your family would have the opportunity to teach alongside the staff, to share your collective wisdom, and to have what you have come to learn within your own household be validated in a public way. By ensuring that such activities would occur, I knew that I would be working in perfect contrast to what I had experienced as a child within the classrooms I had attended.*

*With the establishment of each of the planned activities for the feast – including the date which it would be held, and the food that would be served - was chosen with careful deliberation. Our intention was to honor and validate our culture, and in so doing, hopefully evoke a sense of pride and responsibility within our students so that they will continue on with their studies with a renewed sense of commitment. In addition, by having the family gathered there as well, we hoped that a renewed sense of partnership on behalf of their students would be fostered – potentially dispelling similar feelings of anger and distrust towards public schooling that I had held for so*

*many years. The plan paid off quite well. Many of the connections established that day would last the remainder of their student's time at our school.*

*By the conclusion of the event, it was readily apparent to me that we were successful on all fronts. Time and again throughout the feast, I was approached by community members, parents, and students who all vocalized their appreciation for the school hosting such an event, and the novelty of it all. Often times these conversations (usually over a plate containing a huge Indian Taco) would also include lamentations by the guest as to why their own experience within public schools could not have incorporated their culture in an overt way as we had done. It was by all measures, and by all accounts, a tremendous success.*

*This event would prove to be a turning point in the operations of the school from then on. By emphasizing a supportive focus upon the cultural identities of the student (in stark contrast to what had occurred in years past within Blaine) the staff would be creating a safe space for the students to integrate what they have learned at home with what they are learning in the classroom. This integration would not only prove to be effective in assisting students in learning the traditional core content areas, but would also serve to sustain the Native American cultural practices that had been under assimilative assault for well over one hundred years.*

*I look back with pride at this terrific moment, and consciously use the memories generated from that day as a guide in my decision making practices today. I want to maintain that which we created as a staff and that was so present during that particular day. By drawing upon the lessons learned in preparing and executing that feast, I have been able to anchor our high school within a cultural context supportive of the Native American people, as well as supportive of the cultural identities of each one of our students and staff. Here in our school, there is no great push towards conformity, homogenization, or to "Americanize" our students. In*

*fact the opposite is true. By honoring our first nations, by “indigenizing” our school, we have in fact open the doors wide for all cultures now living upon this land to come forward to find deeper meaning about themselves without fear of rebuke, without fear of public retribution, and without fear of being ostracized from their peers. In short, we have endeavored to create an academic experience whereby the students will never have to experience what I or our elders had to experience in the not-so-distant past.*

### **Conclusion**

As I look back at these varied events through the eyes and understanding that I now possess today, I cannot help but see the manifestation of an evolutionary arc within my own personal development. Although these four events represented a miniscule apportionment of my overall life experiences during this time frame – they continue to stand out as significant for they impacted my thinking and my development in a rather profound way that was not always evident within the moment that each occurred.

Specifically, each event was directly related to the development of my own cultural identity as a person of Native American descent who was required to attend a public school system within a conservative, and often time’s closed-minded suburban city. Much like the single gust of wind within a fierce gale that ultimately proves decisive in altering the course of a ship on the open seas, these four events would serve to push my thinking and awareness on through different passages. I am today who I am as a result of these occurrences. Conversely, the nature of these occurrences are now regarded in a much different manner than how I had originally interpreted them during their time.

Utilizing the knowledge that I now possess, these events have effectively been recast – out from an air of seeming arbitrary bluntness and disrespect, and on into the realm of

personality-molding experiences that turned out to be needed to make me who I am today (a persona, as it turns out, that I am quite proud of). Gone are much of the hurt feelings that plagued my younger days. In their place – surprisingly enough – is a genuine sense of gratitude in recognition of the positive effect that these experiences would eventually generate. Had it not been for the direct and repeated invalidation of my cultural identity – or my understanding of it – I might not have pushed as hard as I did to learn as much as I did as young person. Although purely speculative, had the four experiences explored within this autoethnographic narrative not have happened, would I have been as eager or as engaged with other community members during my mother's time as curator of the art gallery at the Minneapolis American Indian Center? Had I not been openly ridiculed and laughed at by my contemporaries, would I have felt compelled to write the essay that I did during my junior year of high school? Would I have been sensitive to the fact that wrong and racist behavior was being perpetrated each day in high school against minority students? Or would I have been living an uninformed existence in much the same manner as others within my class – blithely unaware or unconcerned with those who are not a part of the acculturated norm housed within the school and tacitly approved of by the surrounding community?

What is absolutely clear to me now as I reflect on these past moments through the vehicle of this activity, was that these handful of experiences ultimately served to tear down previously held understandings that I had maintained towards public education when I was a student. Specifically, I was forced to reevaluate how this public institution either would or would not support the development of my own unique cultural identity. By having to question the learning environment that I was required to attend in my youth, I had to reflect deeply on who I was – possibly igniting and accelerating my own personal development in the process.

What these experiences did teach me was that support for a student's cultural identity is predominantly centered upon the educator themselves, on a personal level, as to how they chose to conduct their affairs on a daily basis through their actions within the classroom. These desires can either effect a positive change that could potentially reverse the trends exhibited by the wider institution, or they could serve to reinforce the established mentality and belief systems embedded within the school. Ultimately, it is up to the teacher themselves as to how the support of a student's cultural identity can or will occur.

As a person who now serves as a professional educator, I have made the conscious choice to lead by example where teachers within my own history failed. I have elected to make the development of a student's cultural identity the central foci of the school to which I serve. Through this commitment, I will not only be working to prohibit what had happened to me during my time as a student, but I will also be living the example of how it can be for a public school to exhibit a positive leadership role on behalf of the diversity present within a public classroom. It is my hope that I am making a difference within the lives of our students, and in some small way, potentially rectifying the hurt that I or elders within their families had personally experienced when we were their age. This has become the mission of the school that I govern, and it has been a philosophy that suits my current persona and mindset. However, as life continues to unfold, I must admit that these views are transitory – vulnerable to change or modification as I continue to develop my base of knowledge, and as I continue to experience additional formative moments in the years to come.

The question remains, however, as to how such instances as what I experienced within the public school system be forever changed on a wider, more comprehensive scale? I alone can lead by example through my current professional exploits, but I am just one man, and our

singular school is quite small. What to do then with respect to this aged and monstrously large behemoth known as the American public school system? Through this exercise, I have come to realize that many of the philosophical attitudes housed within our nation's schools – namely that of its ongoing preoccupation to homogenize or “Americanize” the nation's youth as a result of their matriculation within our country's schools – have become too calcified to be changed suddenly with any strategic application.

However, as evidenced by my own experiences, one teacher or one administrator can begin to effect this change. Ideally, as the general acceptance of tolerant education predicated on diversity continues to develop with each successive generation of new teachers and new students – many more individuals will step forward until a point of critical mass is hit upon. Perhaps then the catalyst that eventually generates the change I wish for will be ignited. Our country is not yet there, but many positive developments have come to pass in recent years in many different regions. The school at which I work stands as an example of the first order of the systems change that is already underway. So while it is perhaps a little too fanciful to wish for outright revolutionary change, I can hope that the change I am desirous of is occurring – if only in small doses, individual by individual. Perhaps one day as I come back and reflect again upon the key moments within my life, the world inhabited by my future persona will look with wonder at how antiquated the public education system was at this current juncture relating to its support (or lack thereof) of the cultural identities owned by the students matriculating through its halls and sitting within its elementary school classrooms working on arts and crafts. Hopefully the comparison to how advanced and progressive this system will eventually become will fuel many more written works as to how the change was implemented. One can only hope . . .

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