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The Higher Education Experiences of Native American Students:
A Qualitative Study of Historical Trauma, Identity, and Institutional Support

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

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The Higher Education Experiences of Native American Students:
A Qualitative Study of Historical Trauma, Identity, and Institutional Support

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By

Keri Bradford (*Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma*)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sv na yukpa — I am happy and forever grateful for my family's love and encouragement. I especially want to honor my wonderful parents (Dick and Patricia Bradford) and Mema (Melba Boman), my awesome brothers (Kevin and Chris Ganote) and sister (Shiela Ganote), and my many sweet nieces and nephews. I especially honor and appreciate Elena Gomez, my *chukvsh champuli* and endless source of joy. *Hachi hullo li chito* — I love you all so much!

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate Dr. Shawn Secatero's poem, "American Indian Scholars," to our AIISA and STANDS families (Secatero, 2014, pp. 14-15):

We are American Indian Scholars
We wonder if we are strong as our elders and ancestors
We envision a time when more young people go on to college
We need a sense of belonging and trust
We think our people are the most resilient on earth

We are American Indian Scholars
We lead our people with pride, knowledge, and wisdom
We feel we can make a positive difference
We worry that we will let our people down
We cry when we think of those we lost along our way

We are American Indian Scholars
We understand the importance of education
We dream of a better life for our children
We try to balance the traditional and modern worlds
We hope our people find the support and strength to succeed

We are American Indian Scholars
We love our people, our mother earth, and our father sky
We pray that all of our surroundings will be blessed
We will soar to new heights in our minds, hands, and hearts
We plan to become prominent leaders

We are American Indian Scholars
We thank those who were part of our educational journey
We must remember who we are
We acknowledge where we are from
We know where we are going
We are American Indian Scholars

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ABSTRACT

The Higher Education Experiences of Native American Students:
A Qualitative Study of Historical Trauma, Identity, and Institutional Support

By

Keri Bradford (*Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma*)

This study addressed Native American students' perceptions of their educational experiences, 142 years after the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened, and their perceptions of how university staff, faculty, and administrators could better serve Native students. Qualitative interviews were conducted with five Native students and two Native alumni who were members of an American Indian student organization at a university that sits on Tribal land in California. Owing to COVID-19 pandemic protocols, 60-90 minute interviews took place online utilizing a video-conferencing tool. Research questions focused on Native students' intersectional identities, experiences identified by students regarding the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools, students' descriptions of challenges and gaps in service at the university, and students' descriptions of how the university might better support Native students. The literature reviewed for the study included how education was brought to Native Americans and its impact, the theoretical underpinnings of Indigenous research methodologies, and belongingness among Native students. Study findings were organized according to major themes, minor themes, and subthemes related to challenges (such as lack of funding, space, and resources), identity, belongingness, and trauma, including first- and second-generational accounts of trauma. Students (termed *Relatives*) relayed the connections they felt to the history of the Indian Boarding Schools and other acts of historical trauma. They indicated there were so few Native-identified students on campus that they sometimes felt isolated, invalidated, unsafe, and deeply dissatisfied, citing numerous examples. Suggestions for

improvements on campus, related to the types of support they wanted the university to provide, also were offered. Findings from this study supported what is authored by other Native researchers and expanded understanding about belongingness and resilience, as well as Native students' desires to practice heritage languages, ceremonies, and Indigenous knowledgeways. Implications for practice included creating a Native student support center/department, creating a full academic program, and initiating partnerships with local Tribes.

Keywords: Native American, American Indian, Indigenous research methodologies, intersectionality, historical trauma, Indian boarding school, higher education

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School built in the United States opened in 1879 with the mission to assimilate Indian children into mainstream American culture and solve the “Indian problem” so the children would grow to become “civilized” laborers and contributors to White society (Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006). Many young children were forcibly removed from their families and Tribal communities and taken into the residential schools, where getting caught speaking their heritage languages or practicing traditional ceremonies often provoked physical, sexual, or fatal abuse by school teachers and headmasters — instead, children were given Anglicized names, their long hair and braids were bluntly cut off, they were to wear militaristic uniforms, and they were required to practice a foreign religion (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998; Churchill, 2004; Pewewardy, 2005; Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006). Some children tried escaping, some were violently killed, and many got sick and died and were buried at the schools’ on-site cemeteries, never being reunited or returned to their families. Some made it back home, but were unrecognizable to their families. Historical trauma took a hold of many (Urrieta, 2019), later in life, in the form of substance abuse and continued violence. Education destroyed the cultural livelihoods of many of our people.

In 1972, almost 100 years later, the Indian Education Act called for a renewed focus on education, but this time the American government supported Indians’ self-determination. Federal funding became available to meet the basic needs of Indian children in all grades and to support parents to form advisory councils for the remaining federally run Indian Boarding Schools. During this time, Tribes also were beginning to take control over some of the old Indian Boarding Schools.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2017), in 1976, American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) made up 0.7% of the total student population enrolled in any college. Forty years later, AI/AN enrollment only increased by one-tenth of a percentage point, while other racial/ethnic populations enjoyed a 5% or more increase in enrollment over time. Table 1 below shows the percentage of college enrollment according to student race/ethnicity, over a 40-year span.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of College Enrollment by Student Race/Ethnicity^a

Race/Ethnicity of Student	1976	2016
White	84.3%	56.9%
Black	9.6%	13.7%
Hispanic	3.6%	18.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8%	6.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.7%	0.8%

a. National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and race/ethnicity of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2016, Table 306.10* [Data file].

When looking only within the AI/AN population, the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college in 1990 and 2000 was roughly 16%. In 2010, that percentage jumped to 41%, but in 2019, it slid down to 24% (NCES, 2020). Table 2 below shows the percentage of 18- to 24-year-old AI/AN college enrollment compared to all 18- to 24-year-old college students, over a 29-year span.

Table 2
Percentage of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Enrolled in College by Student Race/Ethnicity^a

Race/Ethnicity of Student	1990	2000	2010	2019
All Students	32%	35.5%	41.2%	40.7%

American Indian/Alaska Native	15.8%	15.9%	41.4%	23.6%
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a. National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Table 302.60. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity of student: 1970 through 2019, Table 302.60* [Data file].

According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI) (2020), in 2019, 25% of AI/AN students over the age of 25 completed a degree, compared to 42% of all students over the age of 25. Further, PNPI (2020) reports that, “only 16% of Native Americans attain a bachelor’s degree or higher and only 9% attain associate degrees, making the case for a system that is more responsive to the specific needs of these students.” These overall low enrollment and graduation rates might be attributed to Native students feeling a lack of belonging on college campuses, and considering how education was brought to Native people, it would be no wonder.

Background and Purpose of the Study

At a large public university on California’s Central Coast (referred to throughout this study as “the university” or “the campus”), Native undergraduate students grapple with fitting into the mainstream student body (Bradford, 2017). There, Native students make up 0.95% (n=237) of the student body (n=25,057), making them the least represented racial/ethnic group on campus ([university] Campus Profile, 2018). That said, the university enrolls the greatest number of self-identified American Indians and Alaska Natives of any of the 10 schools in its larger school system, although some of the other schools in the system offer an American Indian Studies academic program major, and this university does not. All schools in the school system provide at least limited student support services to Native students, but in the university’s Student Affairs division, only 45% of one full-time equivalent employee is directly dedicated to serving Native students — and that 45% is split by two employees whose majority percentage

appointments are directed to other service areas. I am one of those two employees, and my Native student support role is 20% of my full-time job at the university.

At the university, about 10% of the Native students are members of a 51-year-old registered student organization, created by and for Native students, which is referred to throughout this dissertation as the “American Indian Student Organization,” or “AISO,” (a pseudonym). Although AISO is the oldest and largest Native student organization, there are a few similar organizations to which AISO members also belong. These other organizations — created by current AISO members and alumni — each have a separate focus, such as arts (e.g., beading, weaving) or gardening (i.e., growing traditional foods and plants to be used in ceremony). Many AISO alumni continue to engage current AISO members and even make donations directly to the organization. It is important to note that, while the university sits on several ancestral village sites, there is no formal relationship between the university’s administration and members of a local band of the area Tribe. However, AISO students have enjoyed a close relationship with members of the local Tribe for several years. When the AISO students ask local Tribal members to come to campus to share their wisdom in classrooms or at events, or to come to bring culturally competent care and counseling, the Tribal members provide that support to the AISO students freely.

The present study, titled “The Higher Education Experiences of Native American Students: A Qualitative Study of Historical Trauma, Identity, and Institutional Support,” aimed to explore parallels in Native students’ experiences in education, then and now, to learn how students perceive university staff, faculty, and administrators can better serve Native students. I also wanted to understand more about how current and alumni members of AISO perceive they benefit from support provided to them by members of the local Tribe, as well as how the whole

campus community could benefit from a formal partnership between the university and the local Tribe, on whose land campus sits.

Statement of the Problem

My previous research with AISO students indicated that many experienced conflict, aggression, and culture shock on campus, leading to fears for safety and feelings of loneliness, invisibility, isolation, and frustration (Bradford, 2017). During those experiences, AISO students sometimes chose to engage the hurtful party in conversation or drop the offensive academic course. Other AISO students took no direct action but sought comfort from other AISO members, while some withdrew their involvement in outside extracurricular activities and exclusively participated in AISO-related activities because they found a “family” within AISO that could not be found elsewhere. My findings indicated that students felt a very strong sense of belonging within AISO and that, as long as two or more were together, they felt validated, respected, and safe in most any space.

The solidarity that comes with making a “family” with other Native students while at school is the same approach taken by the young Native students who attended the federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding Schools 142 years ago. Possible findings from this study were viewed as including:

- That the Western model of education is not a good fit for Native students.
- That federal Indian Education policies fail Native students and Tribal communities.
- That there are numerous opportunities to identify gaps in service to meet Native students’ needs and expectations.
- That Native people (e.g., staff, faculty, Tribes, alumni) should be consulted and included in supporting and educating Native students.

Rationale and Professional Significance of the Study

The rationale for this study was in part to expand upon my previous research with AISO students (Bradford, 2017), whom I have been professionally supporting for the past twelve years as a Native staff person employed at the university. In my experience working alongside them, I have witnessed the students' frustration with the university administration for not providing them with equitable resources (e.g., hiring Native-identified counselors) and programming (e.g., creating an American Indian Studies academic department), for not initiating a partnership with the local Tribe (e.g., establishing a Tribal Advisory Council), and other reasons. Other student cultural communities have put forward demands to the university and successfully secured new resources to better support their particular needs, and it has been suggested that Native students take the same approach. However, another rationale of this study was to explore the overarching history of Indian Education to discover what fit there could be for students coming from an Indigenous worldview while studying in a Western-modeled academy that purports to value diversity and inclusion. My intention with this study was to develop recommendations for how universities can better support Native students, informed directly by the voices and identities of the AISO students, recent alumni, and members of the local Tribe. Earlier research found that the relationships developed within this triad go far in meeting the unmet needs of the Native students while they are enrolled (Bradford, 2017), suggesting consideration be given for university staff, faculty, and administrators to educate themselves and be held accountable for working with the triad to co-create meaningful change.

Definitions of Terms and Phrases

- **American Indian, Indian, Native American, Indigenous, Native:** Throughout this study, *Native* people are sometimes referred to as *Native Americans*, *Indians*, *American*

Indians, and/or *Indigenous*. In general, these assorted terms refer to the people whose ancestors first inhabited the lands now called the Americas. When introducing myself, I prefer to say that I am Choctaw (my Tribal affiliation) instead of using another term, but Native people refer to themselves in many ways and throughout history, we have been called many of the aforementioned terms. For instance, many of us say that we work in the field of “Indian Education.” The U.S. Department of Education calls us “American Indian” or “Alaska Native.” As a Native scholar and student affairs practitioner, I tend to refer to the Native students as my (or our) “*student-relatives*” or “*Relatives*.” In this dissertation, the term(s) our Relatives call themselves is used. In short, there is not one generally agreed-upon term used to identify us in the literature about our people or in literature written by our people.

- **Non-Native College or University (NNCU):** The term “predominantly White institution/university” (PWI or PWU) has long been used to describe colleges or universities whose majority student population is White/Caucasian. In Indian Education, many Indigenous scholars have switched to using “non-Native colleges and universities” (NNCUs), coined by a group of Native editors whose intention for using NNCU is to “center our experience as Native people” (Shotton, Lowe, Waterman, & Garland, 2013, p. 4). This phrase is used throughout this dissertation.
- **Urban, Rural, and Reservation Indians:** The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) defines urban Indians as “Tribal people currently living off federally defined Tribal lands in urban areas” (UIHI, 2018). Following that logic, in this dissertation, rural Indians are defined as Tribal people that grew up on or currently live in rural areas and reservation Indians as Tribal people that grew up on or currently live in reservation areas. These

distinctions are not intended to divide Native people, but instead to acknowledge differences Native people might experience in their place-based upbringings.

Research Questions and Themes

This study aims to address the following research questions and themes:

1. What is the university experience like for today's Native American students? That is:
 - a. What do we need to understand about Native students' intersectional identities?
 - b. What do we need to understand about the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools felt by today's Native students? In what ways is that trauma felt?
 - c. What are the present challenges and gaps in service experienced by today's Native students?
2. In what ways do Native students perceive the university could better support Native students?

Overview of Theoretical Framework and Methodology

My approach to this study was to practice Indigenous Research Methodologies, described in Chapter Two (*Review of the Literature*), because they are an appropriate fit for the community explored in this study and because they are rooted in Tribal epistemologies. In the literature review are several samples of different Indigenous methodological practices, but in this study, I primarily adopt Kovach's (2010) approaches. The following are examples of how her practices could be applied (phrases in italics are Kovach's own, from her 2010 book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*) in the present study and earlier (Bradford, 2017):

- Originally, I considered hosting two *research-sharing circles* (i.e., similar to focus groups) in person, with four or five AISO students in each session, in which I would take

a less-participatory role in co-creating the conversation. For example, in an AISO *research-sharing circle*, students might play off each other in the form of expressing agreement, laughing, or exclamations (e.g., “oh, yeah!”) because they know each other well. In that case, any facial expressions, inside jokes/jargon used and understood between group members, or touching observed would have been documented in my field notes and I would have applied *interpretive meaning-making* (i.e., Kovach (2010): “an inductive way of knowing and a subjective accounting of social phenomena,” p. 130) to what was witnessed. However, due to “safer-at-home” restrictions related to the current COVID-19 pandemic, consideration was given to hosting the *circles* online, with students joining from wherever they are currently located. But because AISO students’ natural closeness might not translate well over an online group space, one-on-one interviews were pursued instead and hosted on Zoom, an online audio/video conferencing tool.

- When we spoke together online, AISO students were encouraged to speak from their *inward knowledge*, which is similar to a person’s intuition. In an Indigenous frame, *inward knowing* can come to a person through a dream, a ceremony, a walk, or in silence, for example.
- I am currently living, working, and studying on the ancestral homelands of the Gabrielino Kizh and Tongva people, which is different from the Tribe with which the AISO students have a direct relationship. As best able, local cultural protocols are followed as taught. For example, ceremonial medicines were grown in my personal garden and offered in a bundle to the students (along with a \$15 gift card), as a gesture of respect and compensation for sharing their time and knowledge with me.

- I added my own *self-in-relation interpretation* (Graveline, 2000; as cited in Kovach, 2010, p. 15), because as a Native researcher based at the same university the AISO students attend, I am able to relate with the students' experiences (plus we already have a relationship, as part of my current role at the university) — therefore, as an insider (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000) knowledge can be co-created in a relational way — a *self-in-relation* way.

To borrow Kovach's definition (2010), it might be more accurate to say this study uses a *mixed-method approach*, as both Indigenous Research Methodologies and Western approaches are applied, particularly in the coding and analysis of my interview data.

Issues Inherent Within the Study

At the core of the present study are the following issues concerning sense of belonging among Native students:

- Native identity is important to Native-identified AISO students.
- Native students' cultural identities are complex and intersectional, and their intersectional identities are affected by (and also influence) their sense of belonging to campus.
 - Examples of Native identities explored later in this study include being an Urban, Rural, or Reservation Indian; gender and sexual identities; multiracial and/or multitribal; federally or non-federally recognized; practice of traditional Tribal spiritualities, foreign religions, or no practice of any particular traditions/religions; etc.
- AISO students and alumni have some knowledge about the history of Indian Boarding Schools, either because they have relatives who attended, because there is a school on

their Tribe's land, because oral histories are still spoken, because they have studied the history, etc.

- To ensure a common understanding about Indian Boarding Schools that is important to the present study, supplementary text and an information slide was shared during each one-on-one interview (see Appendices F, G, H, and I).
- A majority of Native students felt out of place in the Indian Boarding Schools and a majority of today's AISO students and alumni feel out of place in the modern Western university. This assumption about Indian Boarding Schools survivors is indicated in the literature (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998; Churchill, 2004; Hill, 2010; Trafzer et al., 2006), and the matching assumption about AISO students was explored during the interviews.
- A majority of Native students were taken away from their families and sent to Indian Boarding Schools. A majority of today's AISO students and alumni also left their families to go away to school. Very few of the Native students enrolled at the university are from the local Tribe on whose land campus sits.
- Native students who attended the Indian Boarding Schools and today's AISO students and alumni found safety and comfort in being near other Native students.
- There is much to be learned by examining the history of Indian Education.

Summary and Organization of the Dissertation

In a 2015 study with AISO students, they were asked to speak to the culture of the student organization, and they used words like "courage," "co-equal," "unconditional," "home," "harmonious," and "family" (Bradford, 2017). In the same interviews, they were asked to speak to the culture of the university and its larger student body, and the AISO students used words/phrases like "culture shock," "conflict," "hard to interact with," "misconceptions" "come

and go,” and “just a place to come to school.” Those sentiments reminded me of accounts from Indian Boarding School survivors (Adams, 1995; Churchill, 2004; Dixon & Trafzer, 2006; Ellis, 2006; Lomawaima, 1999), and it piqued my interest in how much had actually changed in the 142 years since the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened.

The next chapter reviews literature about the history of Indian Education and the impact that Indian Boarding Schools had on Native students, families, and Tribes. Literature about Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks, some of which informed this study’s methodologies, also is explored, as well as literature on “belongingness” (e.g., Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012) and what it means to today’s Native students, whose personal identities are richly diverse. Chapter Three explains the methodology of this study, which was qualitative and a mix of Indigenous and Western research approaches. This chapter shares details about the research site, participants, and data gathering and analysis procedures. Major themes, minor themes, and related subthemes that emerged in the analysis were identified, as well as lessons learned from a pilot test conducted with one of the AISO alumni.

Chapter Four introduces each student interviewed for this study and discusses findings about their university experiences in the categories of Understanding Native Students’ Intersectional Identities; Effects from Historical Trauma of Indian Boarding Schools; Present-Day Challenges and Gaps in Service; and Overcoming Barriers. Lastly, Chapter Five discusses the findings in light of literature reviewed in Chapter Two and how this study contributed to those areas. This dissertation concludes with implications for future research, for higher education, and for Indian educators and other Tribal education partners who support Native students.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

This chapter presents literature related to the history of Indian Education and how education was brought to Native Americans, to include Indian Boarding School history and practices. Attention then turns to the impact of boarding schools on Native American students and families/communities and institutions. A framework built upon an Indigenous and endogenous philosophy of completeness, the Indigenous Stages of Developmental Learning, is then introduced and discussed. Indigenous research methodologies, such as Tribal Critical Race Theory, are discussed in turn. Lastly, the chapter addresses Native American students' intersectional identities, including diversity in place-based upbringings, multiracial and multitribal affiliations, and gender and sexual identities.

History of Indian Education

Education was not brought to Native people in a good way, and the impacts of the Indian Boarding Schools might be affecting today's Native students. The Western education model was brought by Spanish colonists who opened the first-ever Indian Boarding School in what is now Havana, Cuba, in 1568 (Trafzer et al., 2006). Versions of Indian schools (e.g., day schools, charity schools, common schools) dotted North America as colonizers spread across the lands, warred amongst themselves, and established governments with no regard for the Tribes already living with the land. By the mid- to late 1800s, the U.S. government was well-formed and states and territories were being settled, but there was still an "Indian problem." Desperate for a solution, education became thought of as the most powerful tool for enforcing assimilation on Indian populations. Government agents figured if they could force Indians to adopt the Western,

Christian way of life, then Indians might be able to become lesser citizens, and put to work to help advance the settler sprawl (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998; Lomawaima, 1999).

How Education was Brought to Native Americans

Traditionally, Native people learned everything we needed to know alongside our families, clans, and Tribes in ways that served to uphold our communities. This opposes the prevailing Western model of education that promotes competition and individualism (Pewewardy, 2005). “For assimilation to occur, it was necessary that Indians learn to say ‘I’ instead of ‘we,’ ‘me’ instead of ‘us,’ and ‘mine’ instead of ‘ours,” said U.S. Indian Commissioner George Manypenny in 1856 (George Tinker, as cited in Churchill, 2004, p. xvii). This was the mindset forced upon Native children taken into Indian Boarding Schools in the late 1800s, where they would be turned into “productive laborers” and taught vocational and militaristic skills so they could become “useful” (Trafzer, Keller, & Sisquoc, 2006). This tactic was justified with bogus science (e.g., psycho-/biometric evaluations) that would deem Indians “inferior” and “incapable” of doing more (Lomawaima, 1999; Pewewardy, 2005) — a deficit-centered theory used to ensure colonial rule.

From the point of invasion in 1492 until the end of the Indian Wars in 1890, a staggering 95% of the Indian population had been wiped out; by the mid-1870s, enough state-sponsored boarding schools had been built to house half of the surviving Indian children, with the looming goal of “education for extinction” (Adams, 1995; Churchill, 2004). Those words were spoken by U.S. Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who was selected in 1879 by the U.S. government to supervise the “education project.” In 1895, Pratt spoke those famous words, “kill the Indian, save the man,” and within two years, Pratt’s Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened in Carlisle,

Pennsylvania. It became the model for dozens of new Indian Boarding Schools, and families that refused to send their children to school had food and other government provisions taken away and/or they were subjected to violence and threats against their lives (Churchill). For this topic, a deeper history of Indian Boarding Schools and their lasting effects on Native families is discussed.

History of Indian Boarding Schools

There is overwhelming agreement on all sides of the literature about the colonizers' intentions when they created and operated Indian Boarding Schools in the mid-1800s and early 1900s: "Civilize" the Indians by quelling their cultures, languages, and religions (Adams, 1995; Dixon & Trafzer, 2006; Ellis, 2006; Lomawaima, 1999). White lawmakers at the time pointed to clashing worldviews, values, and lifestyles and deemed the Indians "savages" in order to justify displacing their children into violent boarding schools. But the darker goal of colonial education, described by Lomawaima, was to "eradicate Indian self-government, self-determination, and self-education" ... "all fundamental components of Tribal sovereignty" (pp. 5-6).

Lomawaima (1999) explained that in order to defend their violent actions, the settlers first had to convince themselves of "natural truths" about Indians that would make it more convenient and permissible for them to implement colonial education through Indian Boarding Schools. Through analyzing mission and school records, plus various legislative acts and cases, Lomawaima outlined a case for what she called the four "naturalized tenets" for justifying colonial education: 1) Native Americans were savages; 2) in order to become civilized, we needed to become Christians; 3) in order to become civilized, we needed to become subordinate, and that could be accomplished by relocating/resettling us; 4) and we had deficiencies and

disadvantages that only colonial education could cure. These tenets might endure today and would offer explanations deeply rooted in history for the colonialist acts that still happen in classrooms, on campuses, and in textbooks — it seems many continue to hold these “truths” as natural facts.

Boarding School Policies

Many federal acts continue to influence the scope of Indian Education, but this brief subtopic does not detail those acts (e.g., Civilization Fund Act of 1819, Indian Education Act of 1972, Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975). This section surveys internal policies that commonly were put into place at most Indian Boarding Schools (located throughout the United States), such as restricted contact between the children and their families/communities. At some schools, students’ letters were screened before being mailed home, and at most schools, parents were forbidden from visiting their children (Child, 1998). At all boarding schools, students were forbidden from speaking their Tribal languages (Child), and upon initial enrollment, many schools cut the students’ long hair/braids, replaced their regalia with school uniforms, and gave them Anglicized names (Adams, 1995). The colonizers knew well that these policies pained the children, but they saw them as critical steps in assimilating the children’s Native identities — outwardly, at least. Later, in 1904, the Indian Office in Washington, D.C., would begin to reverse this course, instructing some schools’ administrators to “let the Indian keep both his personal and race identity” (Adams). Shortly thereafter, the landmark Meriam Report of 1928 confirmed many of the abuses described by the children and their families, and that report would influence the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and subsequent acts, eventually ending the most abusive schools in the program, while others became

Tribally-controlled. It is important to note here that the students' Native identities and their commitments to family/community were never completely lost, regardless of hairstyle or dress. The schools' officials did what they could to create a community of clones, but they could only control the outward narrative — Indian children largely retained their “Indianness.”

Through document analysis, Adams (1995) recounted several survivors' stories, and three stand out in particular because they make us feel the children's fear, grief, and frustration. In one, upon witnessing another child screaming when his braids were cut off by school administrators, many children jumped through the school's windows and doors in order to escape having their hair cut. In another, one child defiantly cut his own braids in the middle of the school's courtyard and all the children witnessing this act wailed in mourning. In a third account, a child renamed “Conrad” wrote to Captain Pratt to complain that the girls now called him “Cornbread” and “Cornrat,” and he demanded to receive another new name.

Boarding School Practices

Boarding school administrators forced an outward appearance of assimilation, but had a much more difficult time trying to achieve the same results in the hearts and minds of the Indian children. In addition to the rigid schedules and foreign curriculum, at work against the children were practices of overcrowding, starvation, medical neglect, and harsh punishment. When children were caught speaking in their Tribal languages, they were either beaten, locked in the school jail, or had their mouths washed out with lye (Child, 1998). Some schools were so crowded that two children were assigned to each small bed and towels, soap, toilet paper, and/or clothes were not adequately distributed, so diseases were rampant (Child). In a Child Welfare League of America report, a White child living in a residential institution was provided

\$313-\$549 a year to be fed, but an Indian child in a boarding school was only provided \$32.85 a year to be fed (n.d., as cited in Churchill, 2004, p. 30). This report, along with another commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs, produced other disturbing survey findings. For example, 89% of the children lost weight within eight months of enrolling at one particular boarding school, however, administrators called the hungry children “liars” (Churchill). Churchill wrote that when the children refused to eat bug-ridden or spoiled food, they would be physically punished until they ate it, and if they vomited up the food, they would be punished again and made to eat what they had regurgitated. Churchill also cited a letter written in 1923 from a child in residence at Onion Lake Residential School to his father, in which the boy described how he cried at night because he was hungry, while other boys ate cats or anything they could forage (p. 30). While survival was surely at the forefront of the children’s minds, their intentions to return home to family and community were not far behind. Some children reported praying in their Tribal languages so that they would not forget how to speak, or they would vow to relearn any language they might forget while in school (Child). Overall, this demonstrated the children’s unwavering commitment to their Native identities, families, and communities.

Impact on Native American Students, Families/Communities, and Institutions

Assimilation tactics inflicted at Indian Boarding Schools affected all Native students, families, and communities. Instead of learning, the children were trying to survive; “education” was delivered in violent ways. This topic explores literature about the ways in which Native people were impacted by colonial education, areas in which improvements have since been made, and how some of today’s Native students fare in higher education.

Impact on Students

In the early days of Indian Boarding School, students' focus was less on learning than it was adjusting and surviving. Children were suffering the trauma of being away from their families and communities, and this homesickness was punctuated with hostility and assaults coming from the White schoolteachers and administrators (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998; Ellis, 2006). Many children protested and complained, fought back or ran away, and some took matters into their own hands. For example, when in an act of resistance, a young Serrano Indian girl attending St. Boniface Indian School in Banning, California, refused her assignment to wash laundry, a nun slapped her in the face (Trafzer et al., 2006). The girl slapped her back, so the nun told the girl she would be going to hell. The young girl told the nun she would be going to hell, then, too. The frustrated nun left to find a priest who then took the girl aside and whipped her with a leather belt. Other examples include a young girl who sneakily continued to pray in Ojibwe so she would not forget her language, and another child and his sisters vowed to relearn how to speak their heritage language, because they saw that it made their mother so sad that she could no longer communicate with them (Child).

As boarding school curriculum and practices slowly changed, Indian children were taught trades and skills that would direct them toward jobs of labor or homemaking; some schools taught some children a little bit of writing and math (Child, 1998; Ellis, 2006). Some students reported finding value in their time at the boarding schools, despite the harsh conditions, because it taught them how White people and the White world worked (Ellis). These students seemed to understand that this duality would serve them well after they left the school, or maybe they recognized that they had little choice in the matter.

In 2002, Luiseño researcher Dixon asked high school students enrolled at a federally-run-but-tribally-controlled Indian Boarding School in Riverside, California, how they felt about their school's violent history and modern practices (Dixon & Trafzer, 2006). She found that the Native students recognized their school's traumatic history and felt that their current, positive experiences were overshadowed by that history (Dixon & Trafzer). For some students, the school helped Indian students negotiate the larger, dominant Western world while allowing them to maintain and nurture their Indianness. She found that these students appreciated getting to learn alongside other Indians and that the modern boarding school experience taught them responsibility and accountability, while also giving them the opportunity to be an Indian in the classroom. Indications from Dixon's research showed that Native students placed great value on the community they were able to build with other Native students at the school.

Impact on Families/Communities

Indian students kept their families and communities in their hearts and minds, so many parents were greatly affected by the separation, too. As young boarding school children wrote letters to their parents indicating loneliness, some parents contacted the schools' administrators to express concerns about neglect and run-aways (Child, 1998). Some parents expressed alarm to school administrators that their children were starving, dirty, diseased, harshly punished, and inadequately clothed — on top of worries that included sending their children away and losing connection and influence; that their children were expected to assume a completely different (i.e., White) identity; and that their children had to work hard labor in order to maintain the schools' failing infrastructure (Child). However, some families felt an urgency to send their children to boarding schools because they figured that working and living in a White world was

inevitable and they wanted their children to be prepared. From interviews with boarding school survivors of Rainy Mountain Boarding School, in Mountain View, Oklahoma, we learned that the students made up ways to blend Native and White ways (Ellis, 2006). For example, where Christianity was forced, the children tried Indigenizing the sermons to make them fit with their Native values, and they found church tolerable because of the kinship it promoted, when other areas of school life promoted individualism (Ellis). Also, the children reported feeling a sense of belonging through school sports, because participation in them promoted teamwork, similar to community relationships so valued (Ellis).

In some cases, the impact of having attended an Indian Boarding School was long-lasting. Some Native students currently enrolled in Indian Boarding Schools are legacies, meaning their parents, grandparents, and other family members also attended that (or another) boarding school. Some romances even got their starts at Indian Boarding School, and some schools served as the meeting grounds for Indian activists to gather as a community to discuss issues affecting Tribal sovereignty (Dixon & Trafzer, 2006). Even at non-Native colleges and universities, Native students tend to mostly hang out with each other because, despite differences, many share a common worldview that serves as a source of strength, and family and community are often at the center of that worldview (Bradford, 2017).

Impact on Institutions

Of the dozens of old Indian Boarding Schools, only a few remain open, and most are now Tribally-controlled. The high school at which Dixon (2006) conducted her research is still a federally run boarding school with a very violent past, but it is a solid example of an institution greatly impacted by legislative reform following passage of the Indian Education Act. One of the

students participating in a writing assignment given by Dixon in 2002 wrote that Indian Boarding Schools today “understand that you can’t erase the past and that we can only move [on] and work to better boarding schools and use them to unite all the Native American Tribes so that we can stand tall ... fight for everything that we have lost throughout history” (Dixon & Trafzer, 2006, p. 235). Schools such as these now offer courses on Indian histories and languages and Tribal leadership. For some Native students, boarding schools offer new opportunities for development, and for others, opportunities for redemption. What is certain is that Native students feel a sense of belonging when they have opportunities to work together on curriculum developed in support of their identities and the needs of their communities (Bradford, 2017).

Tribes’ Responsibilities Regarding Indian Education

Some Native students still struggle to find their places in Western education, but there are ways that we can all work together to affirm their strengths and shore up their senses of belonging. The Indigenous Stages of Developmental Learning (see Figure 1) is a framework built upon an Indigenous and endogenous philosophy of *completedness* (Cajete, 2015). *Completedness*, or a feeling of being one’s whole self, is encircled by quadrants — *empowerment, spirituality, respect, and sense of tradition* — which are encircled by eight ordered stages that guide a student through a transformative journey of learning.



Figure 1. The Indigenous Stages of Developmental Learning, by G. A. Cajete [Tewa], 2015, *Indigenous community: Rekindling the teachings of the seventh fire*, Living Justice Press, St. Paul, MN, p. 41.

To help individuals draw on the potential healing and whole-making power within them, Indigenous teachers have developed a variety of ceremonies, rituals, songs, dances, works of art, stories, and traditions. ... The goal is to live a life of meaning as a whole human being and to pursue this goal through inner growth (Cajete, 2015, pp. 37-38).

This framework is compelling because it asserts that education is a metamorphic power and it calls upon the community to support the students' lifelong educational evolutions; its eight

stages set out a path during which students come into themselves — not for the sake of self-promotion and advancement, but for the purpose of discovering what gifts and strengths they inherently have or have gained through education and can contribute back to the community.

Some Native students today find their community and a sense of belonging in the very Indian Boarding Schools that earlier disrupted the lives of our ancestors. In 2002, Dixon (Dixon & Trafzer, 2006) visited one of these schools and gave a writing assignment to the students sitting in an English class — the prompt was “Do you believe American Indian Boarding Schools have a role to play in Indian Country today?” In their responses, the students wrote about a new, self-determined view of boarding schools — one where school spirit was fierce and alumni were proud. One where current students were now the legacies of parents and grandparents who had attended the school. One that now provided Native students an opportunity to be independent and also valued members of their school community. One where students could get an education amongst Indians from other Tribes. Some students also discussed how the school gave them an escape from problems they faced back on their reservations and how, in some cases, it gave them one last chance at getting an education.

Dixon’s study showed what has become special about modern Indian Boarding Schools, which are largely now Tribally-controlled: Students get to meet and learn from other Indians, practice their cultures, prepare for futures in serving their Tribes, and — essentially — taking back the schools for their ancestors and future students (Dixon & Trafzer, 2006). Tribes, where they can, should invest in their youth and communities by establishing their own schools; by bringing alternative or after-school Indigenous programming to nearby schools, museums, and Indian clinics; by partnering with other Tribes to create Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs);

or by taking over control of remaining federally run Indian Boarding Schools. In the spirit of nation-building, Tribes that are federally recognized — especially if their economic landscapes include gaming — should support and include non-federally recognized Tribes in their education and development planning (Dixon & Trafzer).

Tribes that can practice frameworks such as the Indigenous Stages of Developmental Learning (Cajete, 2015), for example, or that can influence their students' educations, also should awaken our heritage languages and teach them to the students, who are our Tribes' next leaders. Our languages fall asleep when no one speaks them, endangering our sovereignty. The English language was force-fed into the mouths of babes shipped off to Indian Boarding Schools to become "civilized" (the irony of trying to achieve civilization through kidnapping and coercion is not lost on most), and those who figure out how to control the languages used by others tend to dominate their cultural livelihoods (Crawford, 2000). In the case of the early Indian Boarding Schools, where "linguistic genocide" was committed, generations were forced to swallow the Western worldview and American nationalism as if drinking from a firehose — drink or die, Crawford writes. Our languages and worldviews are encoded in our DNA, and our ancestors' memories live in the blood in our veins. Tribes that bring back our languages will also bring back a renewed self-determination.

Indigenous Research Methodologies

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded in Indigenous research methodologies. There is no substitute for lived experience, and in the past couple of decades, more Native American scholars have made incredibly rich contributions to literature about Native people. As "insiders," we are researching within and according to our communities and their protocols, and whoever holds the pen wields a great amount of authority and should

exercise great care and caution. When we insiders hold the pen, it means we are responsible for privileging our peoples' ways of knowing and worldviews in the accurate telling of our stories. It means we are responsible for carefully gathering and mindfully sharing (or not) knowledge we are gifted. It means returning any gains made off our work back to our people, so that they may benefit from what we have learned. When "outsider" researchers hold the pen, they bear the same responsibilities but likely are coming from different worldviews, and possibly ones in which methods for gathering, analyzing, publishing, and "owning" data/findings conflict with protocols practiced by their Native subjects. These insider/outsider designations are complicated, further (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). For example, as a Choctaw scholar/researcher, my "Indianness" might grant me some insider privileges in approaching and working alongside Native people. However, unless working within my own Tribe, another Native community may still see me as an outsider because our Tribes have different cosmologies, histories, languages, ceremonies, etc. (Brayboy & Deyhle).

Indigenous research methodologies provide theoretical frameworks that are mindful in approach, spiritual in practice, and holistic and altruistic in intent (Lee, 2008). Particularly for Native scholars, Indigenous research methodologies promote self-determination. Regardless of discipline, the majority of academic literature published about Native people has long been written by outsiders who continue to be cited as subject-matter experts. Some of their work is helpful, and some of it objectifies, exploits, or commodifies Native peoples' knowledge, resources, and livelihoods. As more Native scholars persist in Western academia, it is important for us to publish with the authority of our people. In a 1989 report, members of the American Indian Science & Engineering Society, College Board, and the National Dialogue Project on American Indian Education wrote that "American Indian scholars need to become involved in

producing research, rather than serving as subjects and consumers of research. Measures such as these will ultimately introduce more accurate depictions of Indian experiences and lifestyles” (as cited in Swisher, 1998, p. 192). Thirty years later, more insiders hold the pen, along with the trust, cooperation, and approval of members in their heritage communities, who are the true subject-matter experts.

This section discusses the Native scholar’s role in research and why Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks matter. As Native people are storytellers, it begins with a story published by Kimmerer (2013) that situates Indigenous research methodologies (e.g., observation, conversation, storytelling, reciprocity) within a typically formatted Western academic paper. In her chapter, “*Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass*,” Kimmerer and one of her graduate students explores how sweetgrass (a sacred medicine) can be sustainably harvested, and it begins with an Introduction, followed by a Literature Review, Hypothesis, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, and References Cited — all sections typically present in Western academic writing. However, the Literature Review section cites only *stories* from the ancestors as told by one Native elder who successfully and sustainably harvested sweetgrass from the same meadow for many generations, plus it cited the researcher’s own lived Indigenous knowledge about harvesting sweetgrass and her *observations* about how when sweetgrass is ignored and not harvested, it depletes. The Methods section was informed through *conversation* with the sweetgrass plants in the meadow (“Plants answer questions by the way they live, by their responses to change; you just need to learn how to ask. . . . Experiments are not about discovery, but about listening and translating the knowledge of other beings,” p. 158). The scientists Kimmerer consulted for her methodologies were basket weavers who had long been taught to offer tobacco in ceremony to the sweetgrass they would pick, to take only what they

needed, and to remain in kinship with the plants and meadow — traditional teachings her graduate student’s academic committee deemed unscientific and unacceptable when she presented their research plan. One committee member told the graduate student, “I don’t see anything new here for science ... there’s not even a theoretical framework,” and her program’s dean said, “Anyone knows that harvesting a plant will damage the population. You’re wasting your time. And I’m afraid I don’t find this whole ‘traditional knowledge’ thing very convincing” (p. 159).

However, for the next two years, the graduate student observed two plots of sweetgrass in the same meadow. In one, she practiced the Indigenous methodologies of building a relationship with the sweetgrass and minding how much to pick (*observation*). In the second plot, she left the sweetgrass alone, picking none of it and offering it no traditional caretaking — this methodology was more in line with the science familiar to her dean. After charting the birth, death, and reproduction rates of the sweetgrass in both plots, the graduate student’s data showed that harvesting the grass actually stimulated its growth, confirming what the basket weavers and elders always knew and disputing current opinions held by her academic committee, whose members were stunned. “Your experiment seems to demonstrate a significant effect ... are you implying that the grass that was unharvested had its feelings hurt by being ignored?” asked her dean (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 163).

This story illustrates how traditional/Indigenous truths and modern/Western scientific explanations can complement *and* conflict with each other, and how traditional truths can sometimes supplement gaps in knowledge not yet understood or explained by modern science. It is a *story* about a researcher who comes into an understanding about sweetgrass by *observing* it with elders and applying both traditional knowledge and modern scientific knowledge to a

multi-year study on the harvesting and regeneration of the grass; defiance, dismissal, and finally acceptance from her academic committee; and life lessons (for everyone). The following sections share more examples about how Indigenous and Western research methodologies can sometimes blend contextually, and how sometimes it may be differences in language or values that prevent us from seeing their congruence. Also discussed is the Indigenous scholar's role in conducting ethical research and my own reflections on research as a Native scholar/researcher.

Indigenous Research Methodologies and Their Importance

In the typical qualitative realm, Indigenous and Western research methodologies are akin — a researcher sets out to explore a people; gathers and analyzes raw data; determines and discusses findings alongside hypotheses, literature, and theory; publishes and advances scholars' understanding in that particular area. But there are keen differences between the Indigenous and Western approaches, especially when the people being researched are Indigenous. The Indigenous approach recognizes that the source of truth has always been and always will be the keepers of knowledge known to a community since time immemorial — the Native scholar/researcher follows the community's protocols and *keeps* (protects) but does not *own* any knowledge shared, nor does the researcher assume the role of the “expert.” The Western approach typically empowers the researcher, who assumes “ownership” of data being collected according to the researcher's (or sponsoring institution's) protocols, especially if the researcher is not a member of the community being studied. When the researcher does belong to the community, they “have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities,” (Smith, 2012, p. 138). But the Native scholar/researcher typically gives up even more, just by surviving and participating in an academic system in which traditional Indigenous knowledge often is not valued.

Research has never really demonstrated that it can benefit communities because the benefits never reach Indigenous peoples or are used as a ploy or tactic to coerce Indigenous communities into sacrificing their cultural values, leaving their homes, giving up their languages and surrendering control over basic decision making in their own lives. In other words, research exists within a system of power (Smith, 2012, p. 226).

When practiced earnestly within an Indigenous community, Indigenous research methodologies can instill trust where there was none, minimize harms throughout the process, and bring health or lasting benefit to the community (Lee, 2008; Smith, 2012). One way the differences between Indigenous and Western research methodologies can be illustrated is by offering an Indigenous interpretation of terms typically used in Western academic research. The table below shows a sample of research terms learned in my early graduate school research methodology courses (qualitative and taught in a Western frame), as well as an interpretation of each based on my own Indigenous knowledge (informed by my Native communities) and my reflections (Bradford, 2018) on curriculum discussed in an Indigenous Mindfulness Research and Methods course taken at UC Santa Barbara in Winter 2018, taught by Dr. Geneva Becenti.

Table 3
Samples of Western Academic Terms/Approaches Compared with Indigenous Interpretations and Explanations

Western Academic Research Term /Approach	Indigenous Interpretation of Term/ Approach	Examples of Explanations of Difference
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Data	Knowledgeway(s)	<p><i>Data</i> are information a researcher might collect to analyze and publish. Information might be confirmed or disputed, based on the researcher’s methodologies and subsequent findings. In Western academia, the researcher often is considered the “owner” of <i>data</i> collected.</p> <p><i>Knowledgeway(s)</i> is information gifted between Indigenous community members, some of whom may also be considered Native scholars or researchers. Information may come in the form of a story, song, or dance and is typically shared to continue ways of living/being within the community (self-determination). When a Native scholar/researcher is gifted <i>knowledgeways</i>, they become the “keepers” of them — not their “owners” — and have a responsibility to protect them, which might mean not sharing with others outside the community or disputing/altering them.</p>
Informants, subjects	Relatives	<p>In Western academia, qualitative researchers typically refer to those from whom they collect data as <i>informants</i> or <i>subjects</i>. This might imply that the participant is an “other” but one that has specific knowledge as a member of the in-group.</p> <p>In an Indigenous frame, a Native scholar/researcher might refer to the participant as their <i>Relative</i> because all beings (living and nonliving) are considered to be related in the Indigenous worldview. <i>Relatives</i> remain connected by knowledgeways (past and future) by ancestors (past and future).</p>

Field research

Community
research^a

In Western academia, qualitative *field research* occurs on site, where a researcher collects raw data from a group, typically for the purpose of advancing the researcher's studies and career. In an Indigenous frame, the researcher's own interests must take a back seat to advance the good of the community being studied. In this scenario, a Native scholar/researcher should understand that the community's protocols must be honored throughout the processes of receiving, documenting, and sharing gifted knowledge and in returning any gained benefit to the community (spirit of reciprocity).

L. T. Smith writes, “ ‘Community’ conveys a much more intimate, human, and self-defined space, whereas ‘field’ assumes a space ‘out there’ where people may or may not be present” (2012, p. 129). She explains that the processes in Indigenous research methodologies are “expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal, to educate ... and to lead one small step further towards self-determination” (p. 130).

Focus group	Research-sharing circle ^b	<p>In Western academia, qualitative <i>focus groups</i> typically are guided conversations between members of a group selected by the researcher, who serves as the role of facilitator. A <i>focus group</i> resembles what Kovach calls a <i>research-sharing circle</i> (2010), which might also be described as a <i>talking circle</i>. In a <i>research-sharing circle</i>, the Native scholar/researcher gathers the group members but underperforms in the facilitator role, instead letting the group members shape the discussions and length of meeting.</p> <p>Kovach writes that <i>research-sharing circles</i> “normally require the accompaniment of food and there is a meditative acknowledgement of all those who are in the circle, including the ancestors that sit with us. An Elder or cultural person often leads the circle.” She describes the method’s purpose as one to “engender story”; “It is meant to provide space, time, and an environment for participants to share their story in a manner that they can direct” (p. 124).</p>
Experts	Ancestors, Elders	<p>In Western academia, a researcher might be considered an <i>expert</i> of data collected from informants in the field, particularly after the data have been analyzed and the researcher has acquired new knowledge. Typically, <i>experts</i> are recognized as such because their work is reviewed, published, and cited as a generally accepted source of truth.</p> <p>In an Indigenous frame, knowledgeways often are passed along by <i>ancestors</i> and kept for preservation and protection by <i>elders</i>, who instruct the community’s youth with the shared understanding that they are the future <i>elders</i> and <i>ancestors</i>. “Experts” in a community might be members considered to have special gifts in</p>

specific areas, such as in medicine practices or spiritual matters.

- a. Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Zed Books Ltd, London, New York, pp. 129-130.
- b. Kovach, M. (2010), *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, university of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, p. 124.

Sample Indigenous Research Methodologies and Frameworks

“‘Research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary,” (Smith, 2012, p. 1). Throughout history, Indigenous people have been subjected to unethical and violent research practices or had their knowledgeways abused and commodified. Whether this happened as a result of the researchers involved or the methods they used, there are vast differences in Indigenous and Western worldviews and many Native people simply do not trust the Western scholar/researcher that approaches them with inquiry. Native people adapt with the times as we always have, but still realize daily the effects of colonization and the ways in which Native people are systematically disenfranchised. Our traditional knowledgeways are still with us. In the modern-day academy, it is important that Native scholars/researchers be able to work with Indigenous communities using Indigenous research methodologies, which are rooted in respect and responsibility. “Indigenous methodologies are guided by Tribal epistemologies, and Tribal knowledge is not Western knowledge ... those who attempt to fit Tribal epistemology into Western conceptual rubrics are destined to feel the squirm” (Kovach, 2010, pp. 30-31). It may be possible to decolonize some Western approaches, but it is better to Indigenize the entire research process. Below describes a few Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks that privilege Indigenous worldviews.

Tribal Critical Race Theory Framework

In the 1970s, the Critical Race Theory (CRT) aimed to decolonize the landscape for people of color, and Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TCRT) aimed to Indigenize it because the original CRT did not directly include Native Americans. TCRT honors our stories — it acknowledges that Native people have and will always survive because our ancestors prepared us with lessons and stories we will pass along for our future. “(TCRT) is based on a series of traditions, ideas, thoughts, and epistemologies grounded in Tribal histories thousands of years old ... (TCRT) endeavors to expose inconsistencies in structural systems and institutions and make the situation better for Indigenous students” (Brayboy, p. 441). TCRT is based upon nine tenets, and where CRT's basic premise is that racism is endemic in society, TCRT's tenets emphasize that colonization is endemic to society.

Indigenous Well-Being Model Framework

Secatero (2015) defines Indigenous well-being as “the holistic connection to spiritual, mental, physical, and social well-being” (p. 113), and each of these quadrants contains four additional pillars of well-being. Secatero designed this model to represent the inner layers of a tree, which he calls the Leadership Tree for its “ongoing well-being symbol of growth in our everyday lives” (p. 126). The root of the tree is the spiritual quadrant, whose pillars include purpose, culture/identity, language/expression, and art/craft. The trunk of the tree is the physical quadrant, whose pillars include strength/body, cycles/time, environment/place, and medicine/healing. The leaves on the tree represent the mental quadrant, whose pillars include mind, emotion/heart, intellect/wisdom, and technology/change/future. Lastly, the branches of the tree make up the social quadrant, whose pillars include community/relations, professional goals, economy/finances, and politics/leadership. “I connect the Leadership Tree to emerging leaders

and scholars. We must learn to stand tall and grow like a tree. Our family and culture exemplifies our strong and spiritual roots to our way of life. We must be grounded” (p. 126).

Indigenous Research Paradigm and Assumptions

In a Western frame, the basic concept of ontology informs us of “what is real,” while epistemology tells us “here is how I know,” and methodology confirms both with tests or examinations — “this process confirmed/denied what I know,” and axiology controls for the ethics values guiding the methodological process. Wilson’s (2008) Indigenous Research Paradigm is informed by these same concepts, but he applies an Indigenous worldview to each, and rather than running one after the other in a linear fashion, he tightly groups the concepts into a circle, symbolic to Indigenous cultures for expressing their relatedness. In practice, the four interrelated concepts create an Indigenous Research Paradigm that promotes relationality and accountability:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the foundational belief that knowledge is relational; it is shared with all of creation. ... It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond this idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. ... It’s not the realities in and of themselves that are important; it is the relationship that I share with reality (Wilson, 2008, pp. 73-74).

Thus, in an Indigenous Research Paradigm, ontology is not what is real (e.g., an object, like a chair), but it is our relationship with what is real (i.e., a chair can be sat on or it can hold books) (Wilson, 2008). An epistemology is not just a way of knowing (e.g., because I can see it), but it is “our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualities, and our places in the cosmos ... our systems of knowledge in their context” (i.e., I know this is

real because it is a part of our origin story) (p. 74). A methodology is more than a test (e.g., survey); it is a process centered on respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as relational reality is confirmed. Lastly, axiology goes deeper than ethics (i.e., consent forms approved by human subjects boards) or providing burdens of proof (e.g., validity, statistical significance); it deeply guides the whole process so that the research relationship is held in trust, so that the researcher is always a part of those being researched and that the research benefits or contributes to the good of those being researched.

Kovach’s Indigenous Research Framework

Kovach (2010) is less concerned with trying to bridge differences between Indigenous and Western research methodologies, as she calls upon Western scholars to “engage in reflexive self-study, to consider a research paradigm that offers a systematic approach to understanding the world ... to adjourn disbelief and consider alternative possibilities” (p. 29), and when the two approaches are used together, they should be considered a mixed-methods approach and the framework for this study. “If Indigenous methods are being utilized, an Indigenous research framework with a Tribal epistemology ought to be recognized, as opposed to assuming that Indigenous methods can be subsumed under a Western way of knowing” (p. 35). Table 4 briefly describes some components of Kovach’s Indigenous research methods with hypothetical examples of each, some of which were used with Native undergraduate student-relatives in a previous study (Bradford, 2017).

Table 4

Use-Case Examples of Kovach’s Indigenous Research Methods

Kovach’s Indigenous Research Method^a	Hypothetical Examples of Methods in Use with Student-Relatives as Subjects
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Research-sharing circle (p.124)	In this data gathering example, a small group of Native American undergraduate student-relatives have been invited to come together for a <i>research-sharing circle</i> , which can be thought of similar to a focus group (Bradford, 2017). As Kovach describes this <i>circle</i> , food would be provided and the circle would initiate with an opening blessing from a local elder. In this scenario, the aim would be to capture the group’s overall sentiment through conversation and stories they tell.
Snowball sampling (p. 126)	In this example of <i>snowball sampling</i> , the research-sharing circle participants would be invited to participate because of how they identify (in this case, Native American undergraduate students). This method is unlike other types of sampling, because these student-relatives would not have been invited randomly or for a specific reason — it would be because of their identities and characteristics.
Inward knowledge (pp. 126-127)	<i>Inward knowledge</i> is similar to a person’s intuition, and in an Indigenous frame, this inward knowing can come to a person through a dream, a ceremony, a walk, or in silence, for example. “Indigenous researchers count inward ways of knowing as part of knowledge construction and referencing methods, subsequently legitimizing them in academic research” (p. 127). In my use-case example, my student-relatives would be asked to engage in a self-reflective exercise by journaling, taking photos, making videos, etc. as a way of documenting their knowledge and feelings about culture and belonging.
Cultural protocol (p. 127)	<i>Cultural protocols</i> are guidelines that any researcher should be aware of and follow when approaching Indigenous people for study. In this use-case example, a bundle of medicines might be offered to the student-relatives as a token of my respect and thanks to them.
Self-in-relation interpretation (p. 132)	As a Native scholar/researcher, I would be able to relate with my student-relatives’ experiences as being a Native American undergraduate enrolled at an NNCU (in this use-case example) and likely would already have a relationship with them, as part of my current role at the university. These factors mean that I would be able and qualified to co-create knowledge in a relational way — a <i>self-in-relation</i> way.

Interpretive meaning-making (p. 130)

Interpretive meaning-making “involves an inductive way of knowing” and a “subjective accounting of social phenomena as a way of giving insight” (p. 130). In my research-sharing circle example, I might expect to see/hear our student-relatives playing off each other in the form of expressing agreement, laughing, or exclamations (e.g., “oh, yeah!”) because the members in this small group know each other well. Therefore, any facial expressions, touching, or inside jokes/jargon used and understood between group members, would be documented in my field notes.

a. Kovach, M. (2010), *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, pp. 124-132.

The Native Scholar’s Role in Research

Below is a short list of responsibilities a Native scholar/researcher should assume when conducting research, especially within Indigenous communities.

1. **State positionality:** Native scholars/researchers have a duty to clearly state our positionality upon approaching a community to make a research inquiry and later, when publishing or presenting the work that resulted. When Native people meet, it is not uncommon for us to ask where each other is from, and we might answer by sharing our Tribal affiliation(s)/clan(s), hometown, and family names. We can glean much information from that sort of introduction, and this is an example of us stating our positionalities. In research, when we approach an Indigenous community of interest, we should state our intentions for working with (and for) them and make sure our intentions are congruent with their current needs. In the present study, I serve as a university staff member whose work is partially focused on providing American Indian student support services and working with Native American undergraduate students whom I know well as a longtime participant-observer of their student organization (Bradford, 2017), with insider/outsider knowledge about how the group functions. It is important for me to state

this in describing my positionality. Also, as a Native American who attended undergraduate school at an NNCU, I can relate to the students in that way. Lastly, I have long volunteered for the student organization, but have no authority over the group or its members. Some have referred to me as an “auntie” to whom they can come for counsel. Not fully stating my positionality in these ways could create ambiguity with others about bias versus *self-in-relation*. I am thus reflecting on my assumptions and biases for research, while also bringing Indigenous ways of sharing information (discussed in Chapter Three).

One dominant culture position regarding bias in research holds that only outsiders to a culture are free from the bias that could prevent an objective study. This argument is sometimes used to support the idea that minority researchers are not qualified to conduct research within their own culture or community. Of course, if this argument were carried to its extreme, then only minority researchers would be qualified to conduct research within the dominant culture (Guyette, 1983, p. 15).

- 2. Protect knowledgeways and promote self-determination:** Native scholars/researchers have a duty to protect knowledge and stories shared with them. When sitting with another Indigenous person who is sharing stories, language, and knowledge, it is important to honor and protect the sacrality of their words — not everything shared should be penned or archived. “The need to protect a way of life, a language, and the right to make our own history is a deep need linked to the survival of Indigenous peoples” (Smith, 2012, p. 159). Protecting our knowledgeways is an act of self-determination, and so Native scholars/researchers have a duty to heed the guidance of the communities with whom they are working. Indigenous people will best know what work needs done in their

communities and how, if, and when that work should be approached (and by whom).

Therefore, it is our responsibility as Native scholars/researchers to listen well and set aside our research agendas if our work is not needed by the community or adjust it so that it furthers the community's sovereignty and self-determination (Swisher, 1998).

3. **Decolonize and Indigenize academic processes:** Native scholars/researchers must pay attention to their *inward knowledge* (Kovach, 2010) and give credence to gut instincts when something does not quite feel right. In my experience as a Native scholar who has only attended NNCUs, there were moments when I did not know how to present or defend my (Indigenized) approaches to my professors and worried they would view these methods as lesser-than. However, when working within my own Native community and particular approaches or research terms did not “fit,” they would be tossed out and processes would be redesigned to fit Indigenous protocols. Fortunately, professors let me continue pursuing Indigenous approaches, even if all I knew how to say was “but we wouldn’t do it that way!” It became a priority to find and read Indigenous scholars’ work on conducting research responsibly within Tribal communities and to learn how to decolonize and Indigenize approaches so I could continue my work more confidently.
4. **Publish and cite other Native scholars/researchers:** As mentioned in the introduction, more Native scholars/researchers are persisting in higher education and are publishing critical academic research. However, Native voices are still vastly underrepresented in the literature, so it is the Native scholar/researcher’s duty to publish and cite other Native scholars’ work. Swisher (1998) explains the gap in voice this way: “My Indian colleagues and I feel a strong sense of commitment, and the urgency to *do* something for our people overpowers the desire and time it takes to write” (p. 196). That dilemma is well

understood — I wish our literature was more expansive and feel compelled to contribute while also struggling with the feeling of needing to *do* more. Swisher also writes about the “passion” missing from non-Indigenous authors’ research, even if their approaches are carefully and respectfully done. “How can an outsider really understand life on reservations, the struggle for recognition, sovereignty, economic development, preservation of language, and culture? Perhaps they can gain a high degree of empathy, but ... the view from the outside remains the same” (p. 194).

5. **Give back to communities:** In her chapter about activism, Smith (2012) situates Indigenous researchers and activists against those who are non-Indigenous. Whereas, for example, non-Indigenous researchers’ work rarely brings benefit back into the communities they study and whereas non-Indigenous activists’ tactics often are destructive and damaging to those left in the wake, Native scholars/researchers are expected to keep in mind the protection and promotion of their people and knowledgeways. We have an obligation to serve our communities above serving ourselves and others who would drain our knowledgeways.
6. **Be helpful by sharing knowledge:** In the Western academic setting, sharing knowledge typically means publishing findings and results from a study, but the communities being studied may not have access to those findings or to the author, who may have moved onto a different study or community. In an Indigenous setting, “sharing is about demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community” (Smith, 2012, p. 162), and this typically is done orally through discourse, which continues our traditional ways of storytelling and passing along our oral histories. Four of the five conferences at which I recently presented my research were Indian Education-focused

and chosen because those who attend Indian Education conferences are the very ones who inform my work and would likely be affected by my work.

7. **Invite allies to help:** Strong allies can support Indigenous communities' self-determining visions, and to do so, they need to start by being sensitive in listening to community members' viewpoints. This includes, as Guyette (1983) writes, hearing and understanding (and prioritizing) Indigenous members' decisions about what work should be done and how, as what non-Native researchers think of as community "problems" to be tackled might not be seen as problems by the community. In her paper (n.d.), Myers discusses the non-Native scholar's role in listening carefully to Native scholars' speech for possible opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas or to help. She continues by writing that misrepresentations can occur when even well-intentioned non-Native scholars do not properly *hear* what is being said — an outsider to any culture risks getting side-tracked by emotion, assumed knowledge, or bias and difference, even when taking good care not to (pp. 2-4). Therefore, Native scholars/researchers have a responsibility to invite allies to learn more and help, where/when/how appropriate so as to benefit Indigenous communities.

Exploring "Belongingness" with Today's Native Students

At non-Native colleges and universities (NNCUs) where Native American students are nearly invisible, the pressure to assimilate into mainstream campus culture can take over the potential for Native students to develop a true sense of belonging. Ideally, Native students would feel like they "fit in" and could thrive culturally and academically as whole persons. Students who feel that they belong, persist; in order to persist, some Native students modify how they present their identities on campus. During the most violent period in federally-run,

off-reservation Indian Boarding Schools' history (1880s-1940s), education was used as the primary tool to choke out Indian children's cultural livelihoods and assimilate them into White culture. Some Indian children never returned home after school, and most of those who did were unrecognizable by their families and Tribal communities (Trafzer et al., 2006). The government failed in its attempts to completely extinguish our lives and cultures, but some Native students still feel at odds in the NNCU classroom (Bradford, 2017).

When new students are offered acceptance into the university this study focuses on, they are encouraged to adopt an affinity for the school's mascot, which is a goofy caricature of a South American cowboy. Students at the university have a tradition of tossing tortillas onto the soccer field after home-team goals are scored. Corn, a key ingredient in many tortillas, is considered a sacred food by many Tribes, and Indigenous students might feel it is disrespectful and wasteful to toss tortillas onto the ground. Instead of welcoming new students by recognizing their unique cultural identities and promoting spaces and communities on campus that reflect and revere them, the university's school officials ask students to endorse their new identities by posting "I'm Going [name for South American cowboy mascot]!" or "Future [name for South American cowboy mascot]!" to their social media profiles. This expectation perpetuates centuries of assimilation and the erasure of Native students' identities, creating on-set cultural conflict and potentially affecting their sense of belonging on campus (Martin & Thunder, 2013). It might also conjure up other mascot drama, for the "Braves," "Chiefs," and "Redskins" sports mascots are protested by many Native Americans for being racist (e.g., Stubbs, 2020).

However, Native students at the university who find AISO are quickly embraced by members, AISO alumni, and members of the local Tribe, and they are shown a few safe spaces on campus where they can celebrate and practice their cultural identities and begin to develop a

sense of belonging on campus. Relationships that develop within communities and environments become the foundation upon which new knowledge can be built (Wilson, 2008), so these cultural connections are crucial to supporting learning that happens inside the classroom. But the connections also provide Native students unique opportunities for cross-cultural, multi-tribal learning outside the classroom.

Studies indicate that Native students persist when they get involved in cultural extracurricular activities on campus, find informed and supportive staff and faculty, and — most importantly — feel support and encouragement from their families and communities back home (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). At the university, Native students might develop a sense of belonging through membership in AISO because it fills in student-support gaps where Native staff and faculty cannot (because there are so few at the university) (Bradford, 2017). Because Native students make up less than one-percent of the total student body at the university, a lot of responsibility falls on them, such as duties to promote and protect Indigenous knowledgeways that conflict with mainstream worldviews (Smith, 2012). This is burdensome, too, because many Native students are first-generation and just learning how “to do” college — how to make that transition away from family and adjust to the Western academic way of life. Some might feel uncomfortable speaking up in class or producing work on a structured calendar. For example, “Indian Time” is the concept that things happen when they need to and are not schedule-bound (Fixico, 2009) — this approach does not align with a linear, Western way, and Native students’ academic progress could suffer if they do not understand or value seemingly arbitrary timelines and fixed time-to-degree deadlines. Native students might also feel frustrated that much of the work and evaluation thereof focuses on advancing the student as an individual, but not necessarily making improvements for the greater good of their heritage communities.

Native students deserve to feel they belong in their home heritage spaces, too (Little Soldier, 1997). As Native people, we belong to our heritage communities and lands first, but most of us were removed from our original communities and/or lands, severing our initial sense of belonging. The ongoing effects of colonization greatly harm our communities, moving us out of balance and in need of healing. My hope is that Native students, who practice resilience and persistence daily on campus, can bring healing into their heritage communities (if and how the communities decide it is needed, of course). To do this, we would need to learn what methods Native students use to create for themselves a sense of belonging on campus and then see if and how some of these same methods could be used back in their heritage communities. Beyond merely surviving in spaces that do not foster belonging (i.e., campus), some Native students have developed ways to thrive — perhaps these methods are borne from the intersectionality of their rich identities. A cross-section of Indigenous-authored literature did not reveal a deep exploration into Native students' intersectional identities, but we know we can learn from what is hiding in the details and this gap in the literature was interesting in the context of developing this current study.

Native American Students' Intersectional Identities

On that note, I wanted to understand how Native students' lived realities influence and/or are influenced by their intersectional identities (e.g., gender and sexual identities, Tribal affiliations, place-based upbringings); how they navigate spaces where they are nearly invisible; how they feel when they return home to their communities; and ways they develop a sense of belonging in order to persist in these spaces. At the university, AISO students may have an academic advantage over other Native students attending NNCUs because they have a special relationship with members of the local Tribe, who have welcomed the students to their land.

Wilson writes that “knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us ... the very nature of our relationships with the land leads directly to our spirituality and sense of belonging” (2008, p. 88). Therefore, when members of the local Tribe gift AISO students with songs and knowledge about the area’s village sites and say they are now thought of as family, the Tribe makes a tremendous contribution to the students’ sense of belonging (Bradford, 2017), which is foundational to learning in the classroom.

Once in college, certain factors can deeply influence Native students’ decisions to stay in or leave school: Cultural differences, campus context, and paying for college (Brayboy et al., 2012). Regardless if Native students grew up as urban or rural or reservation Indians, studies show they experience great cultural discontinuity in the values, performances, and worldviews displayed by their mainstream peers at NNCUs. Whereas non-Native faculty and staff might believe that Native students are driven to persist because of certain academic offerings or financial aid packages, Native students report persisting because they believe getting an education will help them help their families (Brayboy et al.). When Native students hear racist narratives in their classrooms and dorms, it hurts, and they turn to other Native students for support and they focus on giving back to their communities (Bradford, 2017).

Urban, Rural, and Reservation Indians

Much of the Indigenous-authored literature available focuses on just one or two aspects of a Native person’s identity and not the complexities of intersectional identities. It is important to acknowledge all the aspects of a person’s identity, as all aspects are gifts and strengths that can be used to benefit our Native communities. Two complicated aspects of Native identity are situated in *place* — are you an urban Indian, a rural Indian, or a reservation Indian? — and *face*. One reason many people do not acknowledge Native peoples’ cultural identities is because they

think we no longer exist (Little Soldier, 1997), and it is not possible to feel a sense of belonging where you are made to feel invisible. But Native people are everywhere — in Congress, in neighborhoods, and on campuses — and in just the past 70 or 80 years, a majority of Native families moved away from reservations and territories into urban areas, typically for work. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 71% of Native people live in urban areas. But the “urban” experience does not necessarily mean that urban Indians have assimilated wholly into mainstream culture, for the ways in which we were brought up still follow the patterns and traditions of the generations preceding us. Educators today should not assume that Native students — regardless if they are urban, rural, or reservation Indians — can or cannot speak their heritage languages, are or are not practicing our cultural traditions, and are or are not ready to learn. What educators can safely assume is that rural and reservation Indians likely experience culture shock after leaving home and settling into a new, unfamiliar campus, and that all Native students likely will experience prejudice, racism, and rejection (Little Soldier).

Multiracial, Multitribal, and “Looking Indian”

It is possible that Native students who identify as multiracial and/or multitribal do not feel a strong sense of belonging in any particular community because they may feel they have to switch and present certain aspects over others, depending on which community they are in at any given moment (Horse, 2005). However, being multicultural can also mean a Native student has the unique ability to consider multiple sides on issues across several worldviews (Wildcat, 2001). Little Soldier (1997) writes that many educators make assumptions about Native students’ identities and will not consider their Indigenous identities because many now have Anglo-sounding names and/or because they believe students do not “look Indian” (also see Horse, 2005). Educators might also confuse characteristics of assimilation with identity. In

several ways over time, urban Indians have adopted and participated in elements of White culture (e.g., diet, language, politics), but assimilation *does not* equal identification. For example, whereas Native students might identify with the names of their specific Tribal affiliation(s), others decide if they will call us Native American, American Indian, Indian, etc. And if we do not “look Indian” to others, they might decide we are not. This power to decide is an example of settler privilege and an attempted exertion of dominance over Native people, however we also have the inherent power to defend our identities because of our unique political statuses as citizens of sovereign nations (Horse). Again, these issues might especially impact Native students who identify as multiracial or multitribal, because of assumptions about their heritage and/or because they often are asked to select and use one particular identity (e.g., on demographics forms). Lastly, further complicating this matter is the antiquated concept of blood quantum, or the degree/percentage of “Indian blood” that the U.S. government assigns Native people. This is a false and offensive concept, because we are whole people and our blood cannot be divided into percentages (i.e., it is like being pregnant — you either are, or you are not. You are either Indian or you are not). Regardless if Native students are “registered” or enrolled with a Tribe and have a government-issued Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) or if they are multiracial or multitribal, Native students carry their ancestors’ blood in their veins and their memories in their bones.

Religion and Spirituality

Some Native students may not feel a sense of belonging in their home heritage spaces because they no longer practice the spiritual traditions of their Tribes’ ways of life and, instead, have adopted foreign theologies or none at all, as atheists or agnostics (Deloria, Jr., 1994). When Christianity was forced upon Native students attending the first Indian Boarding Schools, it

replaced traditional Tribal religions for many. In fact, it was not until the 1934 passage of the Indian Reorganization Act when Indians were permitted to practice their ceremonies again, and when the American Indian Religious Act was passed in 1978, Native people gained full legal rights to exercise all traditional cultural practices. Deloria, Jr., writes that Native people nowadays are hungry for their old religions, however so much time has passed (in a liminal sense), and elders who understood our ceremonies and medicines have also passed, so many Native people are in the unique situation of discovering that Christianity does not entirely work for them, but there may not be a way to return to traditional practices.

Gender and Sexual Diversity

Traditionally, many Tribes' practices were to celebrate people who had the strengths and gifts of multiple genders, and in modern Native times, this identity is commonly called "Two-Spirit(ed)" (2S). The 2S designation typically is thought to be connected to the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Trans/Queer/Intersex/Asexual communities (LGBTQIA), and a person who identifies as 2S might also identify as lesbian, gay, queer, etc. Native students who identify as 2S might feel a sense of belonging in their heritage communities if their Tribes' still practice this traditional celebration of the gifted, and they might also feel safe to openly identify as LGBTQ+2S on campus if, for example, there is a resource/support center available to them. However, even in these spaces, 2S-identified students tend to be forgotten by other LGBTQ or queer people of color (QPOC) because 2S peoples' genders and sexual identities are closely tied to their land and communities, and this is not a worldview typically understood or shared by others in the LGBTQ community (Driskill, 2010). This un-seeing of 2S people in QPOC spaces can be especially painful because many people of color share similar colonial histories, and by not honoring 2S identities, QPOC communities are furthering 2S students' erasure and

perpetuating colonialism, even if unintentionally (Driskill). Further, some 2S students feel that QPOC and LGBTQ peers are disappointed if they do not privilege their queer identities over their Native identities.

Summary

This chapter presented literature related to the history of Indian Education and how education was introduced in effort to assimilate Native Americans. It provided foundational knowledge required for this study, which examines experiences identified by students regarding the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools. Chapter Two also presented literature about Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks and their importance when working within Indigenous communities. Differences between Indigenous and Western approaches were noted, as both were used in this present study. Lastly, this chapter addressed aspects of Native students' intersectional identities, including diversity in place-based upbringings, multiracial and multitribal affiliations, and gender and sexual identities, as these aspects affect Native students' sense of belonging at NNCUs. The next chapter in this dissertation outlines methodologies practiced in the study at hand.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

A small portion of my full-time staff position at the university explored in this study is dedicated to helping Native students navigate support services, such as financial aid, counseling, and career-readiness. I have no authority over the Native students or the AISO student group but have spent a lot of time with AISO over the past twelve years and can easily speak to the contributions the students make in our local Native community. This study aimed to learn how AISO students persisted and what they perceived university staff, faculty, and administrators could do to help them thrive academically and culturally. It also explored how Native students navigated spaces (e.g., classrooms, residence halls) in which they felt culturally invisible and whether their family-like bonds to each other, AISO alumni, and members of the local Tribe influenced their sense of belonging on campus. Lastly, this study aimed to learn how experiences on campus *influenced* and *were influenced* by their intersectional identities. To unpack these areas, the following questions and themes were explored.

Research Questions and Themes

This study aimed to address the following research questions and themes:

1. What is the university experience like for today's Native American students? That is:
 - a. What do we need to understand about Native students' intersectional identities?
 - b. What do we need to understand about the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools felt by today's Native students? In what ways?
 - c. What are the present challenges and gaps in service experienced by today's Native students?

2. In what ways do Native students perceive the university could better support Native students?

Research Site

This study was conducted at a large public research university located on California's Central Coast, which is referred to throughout this dissertation as the "university." This particular school sits atop Tribal land and enrolls the greatest number of self-identified American Indian/Alaska Native students in the larger school system to which the university belongs. Because of current "safer-at-home" orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews took place online, using Zoom, a video-conferencing tool. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Research Participants

Five one-on-one interviews were conducted with undergraduate members of a registered student organization, referred to throughout this dissertation as the American Indian Student Organization (a pseudonym shortened to "AISO"). In 2020, AISO turned 50 years old and, in 2016-17, it was awarded Campus Organization of the Year by the university's Office of Student Life. Student-volunteers were recruited with a flyer (see Appendix A) posted in AISO's GroupMe account. GroupMe is an online group text messaging app that AISO members use. Two one-on-one interviews were conducted with AISO alumni who participated in a 2015 study about AISO and its meaningfulness in their lives (Bradford, 2017). The AISO alumni were emailed an invitation to participate (see Appendix B) in the present study. Lastly, two informal phone conversations were had with a local Tribal member about this study, however she was not interviewed. While there is no formal relationship between the Tribe and university, AISO members and alumni have long enjoyed a deep cultural relationship with some of the Tribe's

members. All participants in this study, plus any people they mentioned by name, were given pseudonyms. Details about those pseudonyms are provided in Chapter Four.

General Methodological Design

My methodological design was qualitative and a mix of Indigenous and Western research methodologies. More details are described below, including information about a pilot test conducted for this study.

Data Gathering Procedures

Three interview protocols were created for this qualitative study — one for the AISO students (see Appendix G), one for the AISO alumni (see Appendix H), and one for a member of the local Tribe (see Appendix I), which was not used. Using a Western approach, the protocols were structured in a way that ensured data were collected in a systematic fashion (Patton, 2002) and that each of my research questions and themes would be addressed. Each interview protocol contained *grand-tour* and *mini-tour questions* (Brenner, 2006; Spradley, 1979) as well as *feeling-type questions* (Patton), such as “How often would you say you typically feel like a member of a student minority population on campus?” and “How safely and confidently do you feel you can be yourself on campus?” With Indigenous approaches in mind, all words and experiences shared by our student- and alumni-relatives were honored and carefully evaluated. As discussed in the literature review, not everything shared should be penned or archived — some knowledge and experiences need to be protected, and knowing how to identify that or when to ask about what should remain sacred (i.e., not published) is an example of what Kovach called *inward knowledge* (2010). For instance, one of our AISO relatives shared about an assault experienced on campus that greatly contributed to an early sense that campus was not a safe

space, however, that particular experience was left out of my analysis as it was not within the scope of my research focus.

One purpose of this study was to develop recommendations for universities to better serve Native students, and my reason for wanting to do so was to potentially improve the Native student experience and increase completion rates in higher education. After graduating, the two AISO alumni who participated in this study, plus several other recent AISO alumni, went on to work in fields that serve the wellbeing of Tribal communities. Swisher (1998) wrote that it is the responsibility of Native scholars and researchers to serve our communities and promote our collective sovereignty and self-determination. In part, my choice to work with Native students in higher education fulfills that responsibility (described by Swisher), and as demonstrated by the AISO alumni, it is my hope that current Native students will complete their educational endeavors and also go to work for the benefit of our Tribal communities. Lastly, each student-relative was compensated with a \$15 gift card to their choice of business as a gesture of appreciation for sharing their time and knowledge with me. Each was also mailed a bundle of medicines grown in my personal home garden in the way taught to me by other AISO members and members of the local Tribe during time spent together tending to the AISO gardens on campus.

Data Analysis

Extensive notes were taken during each recorded interview, and an online transcription service was used to supplement my notes. Using a Western approach, two coding techniques — In Vivo and Descriptive — were used in the analysis of my interview data. During the initial analysis of my interviews, In Vivo coding was used to pull out direct quotes from each interview, which is an appropriate method to use for “studies that prioritize and honor the participant’s

voice,” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 295). Then Descriptive coding was used to assign labels to the quotes to summarize them into minor themes. According to Saldaña, a code is a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based data” (2016, p. 4). Then, minor themes were grouped and categorized into major themes to produce findings. My initial thematic analysis was supplemented with additional analysis using Nvivo, a data analysis software. Nvivo allowed me to easily identify, code, and categorize references from the interviews that were relevant to this study, and Nvivo’s built-in chart-making features visually confirmed patterns that emerged within my own analysis. For example, Figure 2 is a tree map produced by Nvivo that shows the themes identified in my findings, which are drawn on in Chapters Four and Five.

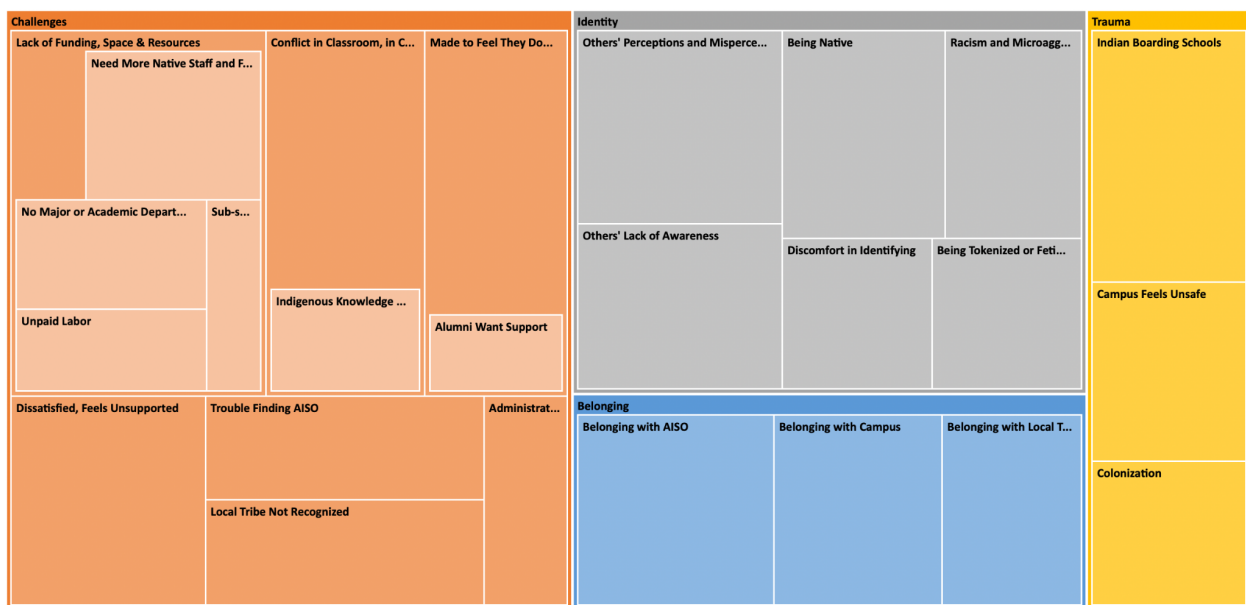


Figure 2. Tree map shows, in hierarchical order, the themes that emerged in this study’s findings.

In the tree map, the major themes (Challenges, Identity, Belonging, and Trauma) are shown in the darker containers, which also hold nested minor themes and, further, nested subthemes (which only occurred within the Challenges major theme). The size of each container indicates the number of references coded to each theme, so the larger the container, the more

references made by our student-relatives in support of that particular theme. All minor themes and subthemes from the Nvivo analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Full List of Major and Minor Themes and Subthemes that Emerged in the Nvivo Analysis

Major Themes	Related Minor Themes and Subthemes
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Others' perceptions and misperceptions ● Others' lack of awareness ● Being Native ● Racism and microaggressions ● Discomfort in identifying ● Being tokenized or fetishized
Challenges to Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of funding, space, and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need more Native staff and faculty ○ No major or academic department ○ Unpaid labor ○ Sub-standard student support services ● Conflict in classroom and curricula <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indigenous knowledge not valued ● Made to feel they don't belong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alumni want support ● Dissatisfied, feels unsupported ● Trouble finding AISO ● Local Tribe not recognized ● Administration talks, but no action
Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Belonging with AISO ● Belonging with campus ● Belonging with local Tribe
Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Boarding Schools ● Campus feels unsafe ● Colonization

Kovach (2010), a Native researcher (Chapter Two), discussed coding and theming as problematic because both conflict with holistic meaning-making. For example, she wrote that when a researcher reduces interviewees' words down to simplified themes, they remove the possibility for the reader/learner to apply their own *self-in-relation* interpretation to the original

knowledge shared. That said, Kovach also used a mix of Western and Indigenous approaches to thematic analysis. In Chapter Four, student-relatives' voices were honored as much as possible through use of direct quotes. My own *self-in-relation* understanding was applied to coding and theming, and the AISO students and alumni member-checked much of my work for accuracy in meaning-making. Vignettes (individual portraits) were written to reflect how AISO students and alumni described their intersectional identities. My goal with doing so was to help readers understand how each Native student worked to secure a sense of belonging that fit their unique needs. In this study, my participants were often referred to as my (or our) student-relatives or *Relatives* in order to take the perspective of the students and reflect methods rooted in an Indigenous worldview.

Pilot Test

In order to help me evaluate my interview protocol (see Appendix H), a pilot test interview was conducted in June 2020 with an AISO alum interviewed in 2015 for a related study (Bradford, 2017). Human subjects approval (see Appendix E) was obtained before she was approached for this study, and she agreed to be interviewed over Zoom, an online audio/video conferencing tool. She read and agreed to all areas in my consent form (see Appendix D) and was assured that she and anyone she mentioned would remain anonymous. The 70-minute-long interview was audio recorded, and extensive notes were taken during the recording. Below are a few of her direct quotes that contributed meaning to my research themes:

The Indian Boarding Schools were designed to strip us of our identity, break us down, and assimilate us into mainstream culture and just disband our ties to our communities, to our heritages, to our traditions, to our languages, to our lifeways ... and I guess the education system hasn't changed. I don't mean to compare our current experience to that

of what our Elders experienced, because that's just immeasurable — the abuse and the grief. What I mean to highlight is just the feeling like it's still not designed for us.

Walking into school and knowing there's the bones of our loved ones' relatives in the basement that are being studied as specimens, like a collection to be studied or an extinct species to learn from. It's deeply painful.

She continued by talking about how problematic History and Anthropology classes were because, in her words, “they are still taught from the perspective of the colonizers.” When asked how she thought today's Native students were faring in school, compared to our relatives' experiences in the Indian Boarding Schools, she said:

They're making it, and I think it's because they've learned how to cope, and they've learned about this new world — they've had time to acclimate, adjust, and also learn from previous generations' traumas. It's almost like “performative assimilation.” Like, we all know that “so, when we walk into this space that's White-dominated, we're going to act this way, and then we're going to leave and discuss and analyze how we can decolonize this space and ...” so, like, we know how to play the colonizers' game in some ways.

She also listed several actionable steps she thought the university could take in order to build trust with the Native students and local Tribe and to build and maintain relationships with Native alumni. After the recording was stopped, we discussed possible areas in which the interview experience could be improved. Some feedback was as minor as her wanting clarification on how to answer a question — i.e., should she give an open-ended response or was there a scale (e.g., Likert) for her to consult — and one piece of her feedback might be significant for me to think about. Because the Indian Boarding School traumas can be painful to

talk about, she suggested future interviewees could be given a heads up to “smudge” before we talk, which might help them feel more comfortable discussing the difficult topic. Without getting into too much detail, smudging is a ceremonial practice that involves medicinal plants, and intentions for this ceremony can vary, but this practice can help put you in a centered place (i.e., in a good way). We continued to talk about the interview protocol and about my not wanting to cause harm to anyone, but she agreed that the Indian Boarding School traumas were important to discuss and that the content in my consent form was explained well. She also shared that it was a good gesture on my part to remind her that we could leave that topic any time, if she felt uncomfortable. The day after our interview, she was emailed a \$15 gift card to her choice of retail shops and mailed a bundle of medicine grown in my home garden.

After the pilot test, the order of a couple of questions in my interview protocols was reshuffled and another question was added to the AISO alumni protocol (e.g., “In what ways could non-Native students, staff, and faculty benefit from a better-supported Native student body?”). Before conducting the rest of the interviews for this study, I revisited my three interview protocols and identified possible major themes that could be expected to emerge, as related to my research questions. Although this step was not necessary at that point in the process, it helped me evaluate the robustness of this study.

Ethical Considerations for this Study

In addition to proscribed research protocols regarding consent, confidentiality, compensation, voluntary participation and optional withdrawal, and more, there were ethical considerations for which I felt responsible as a Native scholar and researcher:

- Throughout designing and conducting this study and in writing this dissertation, my positionality is stated. I am Native (*Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma*) but not

native to the lands on which I live, work, and learn, where traditional teaching and learning has happened since time immemorial. As a proponent of education, I also acknowledge the violent ways in which formal education was brought to Native people and bear witness to the ongoing conflicts reported by our student-relatives in this study.

- When designing this study and before recruiting participants for it, I informally consulted with a member of the local Tribe about my intended research goals and approaches. We had two heartfelt discussions about our shared concerns that often when research is done within Native communities, the communities rarely see any benefits from those studies. She also shared some local Tribal protocols of which researchers should be mindful.
- Findings for better serving Native students will be submitted to the university examined in this study, and recommendations for preparing Native youth for college (see Appendix K) will be shared with Tribal education programs. Findings and recommendations also will be shared with the Indian Education community, as I plan to propose/write articles to be published in journals such as the *Journal of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association* and the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*. Lastly, I plan to continue sharing my research at Indian Education conferences, as done in the past at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association conference, the National Indian Education Association conference, the NASPA Multicultural Institute, and Indian Education conferences at two University of California schools. Those experiences

produced rich conversations and idea exchanges with other educators serving Native students.

Reflexivity

As a participant-observer of AISO, I have insider/outsider knowledge about how the student group functions, and my Native identity and educational experiences at NNCUs allows me to relate to our student-relatives. In addition to my professional work focused on providing Native student services, I have long volunteered for AISO and its student members frequently reach out to me for counsel. It is important for me to actively reflect on my own assumptions and biases as a Native scholar when conducting the analysis for researcher credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), but nonetheless, I am also to bring Indigenous ways of sharing information.

Limitations

There are four primary limitations to the present study. First, although this study revealed similarities in Native students' experiences in education over the past 142 years, that generalizability is a limitation — seven members of a Native student organization at one university (AISO) were interviewed, and not all students who identify as Native American have the same needs and expectations of their time in school. There is variation in their needs and expectations currently, but also in past-familial experiences. Second, other Native students enrolled at the university who are not members of AISO were not included in this study. These students would have had a different perspective. It should be restated that AISO members comprise only about 10% of all students at the university who indicated an American Indian identity on their admissions application.

Third, only members and alumni of AISO who identify as Native American were interviewed for this study, however AISO has long had non-Native members considered to be

allies. These members would have offered different perspectives. I also informally talked with a member of the local Tribe who acts on the Tribe's behalf as a liaison to the AISO students, but she was not interviewed for this study.

Lastly, the interviews only occurred within one state's university system. As with Castro (2018), the transferability of findings is best suited to higher education institutions that have similar contexts to those in this university system.

Summary

A purpose of this study was to understand the modern Native American student experience, 142 years after the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened. The original goal of Indian Boarding Schools was to separate Native youths from their families and "civilize" them using a Western education model that introduced a new language, religion, dress, and worldview intended for replacing those of their existing Tribal livelihoods. At the Indian Boarding Schools, Native students experienced malnutrition, neglect, and abuse. Indian Boarding School survivors have reported how those traumas took hold in their lives and how they struggled with Western concepts, like competition and individualism. In my previous research with Native students enrolled at a large public university on California's Central Coast (Bradford, 2017), they reported experiencing culture shock, loneliness, conflict, and misconceptions (about their cultural/intersectional identities) from others on campus. Some said they felt like they were "walking between two worlds" and felt a general lack of belonging to the campus community, except for when they were with other Native students. The present study aimed to explore parallels in Native students' experiences in education, then and now, and to learn from them ways that they perceived that university staff, faculty, and administrators could better serve Native students and increase their sense of belonging and safety on campus. I also

wanted to understand more about the relationship between these Native students and members of the local Tribe and how members of the general campus community could benefit if Native students felt more supported by the university. Examining these issues in one-on-one interviews, and using a mix of Indigenous and Western research methodologies, could create implications and recommendations for university staff, faculty, and administration to better serve Native students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand Native American students' perceptions of their experience, 142 years after the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened, and how university staff, faculty, administrators can better serve Native students. Results of this study are discussed within an Indigenous research framework. After brief vignettes (individual portraits/portfolios) are presented for each student interviewed, often referred to as my (or our) "Relatives" in this study, demographic information is provided about the Relatives regarding their university backgrounds as well as their identities. The presentation of findings are then organized around the research questions: a.) Native students' intersectional identities, b.) experiences identified by students regarding the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools, c.) how students described challenges and gaps in service, and d.) how students described the university might better support Native students, including students' perceptions of the sense of belonging that Native students create with each other and local Tribe members.

As noted in Chapter Three, all Relatives and other people they mentioned directly by name were given pseudonyms. The pseudonyms assigned to our Relatives in this study were the names of actual leaders from our Relatives' Tribes, with the exception of the pseudonyms assigned to the AISO alumni, who were reassigned the same pseudonyms given to them when they participated in a related study conducted in 2015 (Bradford, 2017). Our Relatives were given these pseudonyms in honor of admired Native leaders because, in them, I recognize our Relatives' own leadership qualities.

Vignettes: Meet Our Relatives

In these short vignettes, a picture of each Relative's background (using pseudonyms) is provided, including how they identify, relate to family and upbringing, and experience the education system.

Margo (named in honor of Lipan Apache poet Margo Tamez) is 20 years old, going into her fourth year, and a Sociology and Communication double-major. She is a first-generation college student with a 4.0 GPA, and she lives and works on campus. Margo is from the Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas and is a descendant of the Lemhi Shoshone people. She also identifies as Mexican and White but identifies more strongly as Native. She grew up in an urban area and is not able to practice her Tribe's ceremonies as much as she would like, but she has learned how to introduce herself and say numbers, animals, and colors in her heritage language.

Margo identifies as queer and said that, growing up in a Catholic household, she did not learn about identifying as Two-Spirit. Her mother and grandmother went to Catholic school, where Margo implied there was a lot of pressure to assimilate. In college, she felt really lonely before she connected with friends in AISO who "just became my family so, so quickly" and expressed that AISO has been paramount to her identity. Margo's experience will provide insight into key relationships (e.g., a "mom" figure within the local Tribe) on campus and locally, as well as microaggressions and gaps in service experienced on campus.

Theda (named in honor of Blackfoot healer Theda New Breast) just turned 23 years old, and she is entering her fifth year as a Sociology major, with a minor in Education. She is a first-generation student with a 3.2 GPA and does not currently live or work on campus. However, she used to work in the campus Housing department and the Recreation department, and she has served on several campus committees. Theda identifies as Blackfoot, Apache, and Mexican. She also is Spanish, but she "doesn't really claim that part ... I just bring up the colonization aspect

of [being Spanish] because that explains why I look how I look.” Theda remarked that both of her parents have brown eyes and brown hair, and “for whatever genetic reason,” she has a lighter complexion and green eyes. Her Native identity gets questioned all the time and she feels more connected to her Mexican identity because it was more easily accessible for her to learn about in the rural California town she grew up in. Theda would like to become more connected to her Native identity, but that has been difficult to do on her own because some family members on that side no longer speak to each other. Her maternal great-grandparents both attended Indian Boarding Schools and their son — Theda’s grandfather — told her that when he was little, his mother always wanted him to have long hair.

And he was like, “Why? All the boys have really short hair.” ... and his dad talked about how [the boarding school] cut his hair really, really short, and it was super traumatic. ... He even talked about how [his dad] said, “No, we want you to have what I couldn’t have.” And I think he kind of saw how that was something so menial to people, like “Oh, it’s hair,” but he was like, “No, it’s my dad.” It meant something very powerful and it hit a hard spot, you know?

Theda taught herself to speak some of her heritage language by reading books, and expressed happiness to have connected with the Native people of the lands she grew up in and in places she has since lived. In recent years, through the help of one local Tribal member, she got connected to more elders in the area and those connections are “very, very important and near and dear to my heart.” “The elders have all this knowledge and tips and tricks on how to navigate life as a Native, and when you move into new spaces and onto new land and need to get connected ... ah, I needed that,” she noted. Theda always felt that she was on her own before she got connected and that she was scared to go to her first AISO meeting, but then “I don’t even

know how to explain it, but it was like an instant comfort. It was like, ‘Oh, I belong here. I can be me.’”

Phyliss (named in honor of Mississippi Choctaw chief Phyliss Anderson) is 20 years old and is going into her third year as a History major, with a minor in Education. Her father is an alum of the school, and Phyliss had a chance to visit campus while she was a sophomore in high school. In fact, we are from the same Tribe — the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma — and I had the privilege of getting to meet her during that visit and share more about the school. During her junior year in high school, she was invited to attend AISO’s annual college exploration program, called STANDS (Students Taking Action for Native Dreams of Success). She attended and started building relationships with AISO members before choosing to apply to this school. “After STANDS, I was like, this is where I want to go to school because this is where I can see myself having Indigenous family that's going to accept me for who I am and help me learn about my culture,” she shared.

Phyliss grew up in an urban area, speaks some of her heritage language, and participates in some of her Tribe’s cultural practices. She identifies as “mixed” and sees herself as “White-passing,” which sometimes makes it feel difficult for her to express her Native identity. “When I’m existing outside of AISO, it's hard for me to embrace that part of myself. ... It's a big part of my life. But who I choose to share it with? Depends.” She continued,

The thing that bugs me is, in order to prove my Indigeneity to White people, I have to bring out my CDIB card or my Tribal membership card, which in itself is a gross expression of colonialism. It's like, “Here's this paperwork that the government gave me to validate my Indianness so that I can prove to you — a White person — that I am indeed Native.” That bugs me so much.

In her sophomore year of college, Phyliss joined a national honor fraternity, and although her Native identity was questioned at first by some other members, she said she “almost 100%” feels like she can now be herself in that space. She shared she sometimes tries to turn challenging moments like those into educational ones, but overall, her feeling on this is, “Why should I have to validate myself to you? Because the people who matter — my community — know who I am.” She finds unconditional support in AISO and in members of the local Tribe, calling a particular member “everyone’s second mom” and “the MVP” because she has shared members of her family with the AISO students and has always shown Phyliss kindness. She is “very satisfied” with her academic program and professors, but feels that “as far as minorities go, I personally feel like we’re very much ignored in the university’s eyes.” Phyliss provided insight into what the university could do to acknowledge more fully the local Tribe and Native students, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Jean (named in honor of Arawak environmentalist Jean La Rose) is 22 years old and just graduated with a 3.87 GPA and majored in Global Studies and Feminist Studies, with a minor in German. In June 2020, she won the top campus honor, which is awarded to an undergraduate student for outstanding scholarship and service. During her four years at the university, she held a few paid positions on campus. This past year, she worked as a mentor to the Native American student community in a position funded by a student affairs department that does outreach to low-income and underrepresented student populations. Another year, she was the first-ever elected Native American to serve in an undergraduate student government role, and during her term, she introduced programming and student legislation that moved Native issues forward. Jean was “satisfied” with her experience at the university and that it was “definitely the best choice” for her, although she felt isolated at different times in her tenure. Often, she found

herself in an educator role, doing the labor of explaining Native culture to her classmates and instructors.

I usually ignore when people ask about cultural identity, because I don't want to fit into whatever someone's perception of the box is, because their perception of the box is almost always wrong. I don't really think it's important unless they're caring about the actual things that are harming us. I don't really tell someone about the Native worldview, unless they're actively participating in helping with undoing racism and standing out and speaking out. Otherwise, it feels like they want to take the good parts of our culture and don't want to even think about the bad.

Jean is Arawak and also has European citizenship. She feels her Native and Dutch identities are in balance. She identifies as bisexual, but around other Native people, she might also identify as Two-Spirit. She grew up in an urban area, and when she's with her family, she is able to practice some of her culture. She asserted her heritage language is "mostly gone," and when talking about historical trauma, she noted that hers was connected to Christopher Columbus' invasion of the Caribbean, where her Tribe is located. Of the Indian Boarding Schools, she commented that her grandfather was really afraid of being kidnapped and taken away, so he and the other children all held hands when walking to school.

Marcos (named in honor of Pascua Yaqui neuroscientist Marcos Moreno) is a first-generation student beginning his fourth year as a Political Science major, with an emphasis in Comparative Politics and a minor in American Indian & Indigenous Studies. He is biracial (Pascua Yaqui and White), 20 years old, and laughs about some parts of his identity: "I was born on Thanksgiving. So take *that*, colonization!" ... and "'Pascua' in Spanish means 'Easter,' and 'Yaqui' in the traditional language means 'people,' so technically we're called the 'Easter

People,' which is very ironic because our Tribe has a long history of assimilation with Catholicism.” Marcos lives off campus but holds two on-campus jobs, one for which he is in a leadership position to bring cultural programming to campus.

Marcos has a 3.4 GPA, which recently dropped from a 3.7, in part due to very negative experiences he had in a “super problematic” Anthropology course, titled California Indians. In fact, Marcos asserted that he is “very dissatisfied” with courses taught at the university and, in terms of its academic offerings, he endured “multiple instances of just pure bullshit” in the form of misconceptions and gross acts of racism.

After doing some research, Marcos believes some of his ancestors attended an Indian Boarding School in Riverside, California, after migrating from Tucson, Arizona and their original homelands. He claimed that the negative impacts of the Indian Boarding Schools are “a hundred percent” still felt by today’s Native students and that it mostly feels like “defeat” from getting shut down. He shared that he often feels this, too, but he is very proud of his Native identity and that he enjoys practicing his Tribe’s cultural customs with his family. He finds comfort in his relationships within the AISO and local Tribal communities, and he perceives his experiences may be informative about how the university could truly honor the local Tribe. “There's a certain amount of privilege you have to be in such a sacred place that should not be taken for granted,” he remarked.

Winona (named in honor of Ojibwe environmentalist Winona LaDuke) is 27 years old and primarily identifies as Snohomish, but also has Lummi and Haida heritage. She grew up in a rural area near several reservations and is able to speak some of her traditional languages and practice her cultures. Winona was a first-generation university graduate, and she attended a couple of different colleges before transferring to the university, from which she graduated in

2016 with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies, a minor in American Indian & Indigenous Studies, and a 3.6 GPA. While a student, she lived in university-owned family housing, held many on-campus jobs, and was deeply involved with AISO. In 2015, Winona was interviewed about her experience as a Native student, and she expressed that AISO was “especially very meaningful” to her (Bradford, 2017).

Because being away from family, you're kind of isolated from your culture and your traditions, and it can feel like you're in this transitory space. So being able to have AISO, which is a grounded space that recognizes, respects, and celebrates your heritage, that's really cool for a Native college student. (Bradford, 2017)

Since she graduated, Winona has remained consistently involved with AISO — many recently-graduated AISO alumni do, and that is likely because AISO members describe each other as “family,” and not friends (Bradford, 2017). Winona has worked at a local Indian clinic since she graduated, and her role is to help provide resources and cultural programming to those in the Native community, including members of AISO. Winona's experiences contribute to understanding about ways gaps in service can be filled for Native students.

Dennis (named in honor of Ojibwe activist Dennis Banks) is 25 years old and graduated from the university in 2017 with a Bachelor's in Sociology and minors in American Indian & Indigenous Studies and Applied Psychology. He had a 3.3 GPA and was a very active member of AISO. He transferred to the university, lived in university-owned housing one year, and worked an on-campus job. He identifies as Chiricahua Apache, Wukchumni, and also Mexican, and stated there are many similarities between those three cultures. Dennis grew up in a rural area close to two reservations, where his elders and some family members lived. He speaks his

heritage languages and lives his cultural practices. He identifies as Two-Spirit and takes this responsibility to heart, saying

Even if you are part of the LGBTQ+ community, that does not necessarily mean you are *spirited*, because you have to earn that title. And once you're in that title, you're kind of honored and you're going about a good path. Even if you stray away from that path, you know you could always go back to that path, in order to live with life and help out the community in a good way.

When he was younger, Dennis would sit and listen to elders' stories about the Indian Boarding Schools, and when he was at the university, he always felt that he did not belong. He experienced a "giant culture shock" but was determined to feel a belonging. "I took the exact same tests as everyone else. I scored exactly the same ... you know, I might have even scored better." Dennis' experiences may be helpful in understanding the benefits of AISO to Native students.

Demographics of Our Relatives

Table 6 below provides a broader snapshot of details about each Relative's backgrounds, primarily in relation to the university, gathered during our one-on-one interviews. All seven Relatives are active members or alumni of AISO. Five Relatives (Margo, Theda, Phyliss, Jean, and Marcos) are undergraduates, between the ages of 20 and 23, and began as freshmen at the university. Both AISO alumni (Winona and Dennis), ages 27 and 25, transferred to the university from other colleges. Five of our seven Relatives identified as first-generation students, meaning they were or will become the first in their immediate families to graduate with a Bachelor's degree from a four-year university. All seven Relatives' majors earned or are earning their Bachelor's of Arts degrees, and three Relatives minored or are minoring in American Indian &

Indigenous Studies. As a reminder, there is no major program in American Indian & Indigenous Studies at the university.

All Relatives' GPAs ranged between 3.2 and 4.0. All seven Relatives were asked if they lived or worked/interned on campus because I expected that those who spent more time on campus might feel a greater sense of belonging to campus. All but two Relatives have worked or interned on campus, and at the time of our interviews, only one of the undergraduate Relatives (Margo) was living on campus. Both AISO alumni (Winona and Dennis) lived on campus while they were attending the university. It is noteworthy that, similar to many university students, a majority of lower-level undergraduate students choose to live in university-owned housing, whereas many upper-level undergraduate students do not. Instead, many choose to live in apartments or shared housing just outside of campus, in a bordering one-square-mile unincorporated community. All but one of the undergraduate Relatives who participated in this study were upper-level students at the time of our interviews, and the one lower-level undergraduate Relative (Phyliss) also did not live on campus.

Table 6
Demographic Information About Relatives in the University Context

	Margo	Theda	Phyliss	Jean	Marcos	Winona	Dennis
Age	20	23	20	22	20	27	25
First-Gen Student	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transfer to University	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Major(s)	Sociology and Communication	Sociology	History	Global Studies and Feminist Studies	Political Science	Environmental Studies	Sociology
Minor(s)	N/A	Educational Studies	Educational Studies	German	American Indian & Indigenous Studies	American Indian & Indigenous Studies	American Indian & Indigenous Studies and

						Applied Psychology	
GPA	4.0	3.2	3.6	3.87	3.4	Alum; 3.6	Alum; 3.3
Live on Campus	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Work / Intern on Campus	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Length of AISO Membership	3 years	1.5 years – joined w/ Marcos	2 years; plus 2 in high school	3.5 years	1.5 years – joined w/ Theda	3 years; plus 4 as an alum	2 years; plus 3 as an alum
Had Trouble Finding AISO	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Feels Safe, Confident to be Self on Campus	No	No	Yes, if she “tucks away” her Indigeneity, “which is really sad that I have to say that”	Yes, but “the more I expose myself, the more I have to answer stupid questions”	Yes; “very, very proud to be myself on campus”	No	No

As shown in Table 6, Relatives’ lengths of membership in the organization include membership time beyond university enrollment, if applicable. For example, AISO alumni typically are considered as continuing members of the organization, and some Relatives are considered members even before they enroll at the university, as is the case with Phyliss, who was in high school when she became involved with AISO. However, except for Margo and Phyliss, all five other Relatives reported they had trouble finding AISO, learning about the organization by happenstance. AISO is an essential theme that comes through in the findings and is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

When asked if they felt they could safely and confidently be themselves on campus, four Relatives said “no”; two replied “yes,” but with reservations about identifying as Native (see the last row of the table above); and only one answered “yes” without condition. For example, Dennis, who did not feel safe to be himself on campus, attributed a lack of safety to the general

student population but conveyed that AISO made him feel more comfortable. Similarly, Theda affirmed Native students were “not met with open arms.” Additional discussion about these challenges appears later in the chapter, under a discussion of the gaps in services at universities and how Native students overcome barriers.

Table 7 provides additional details about each Relative, centered on elements of their Native identities and other aspects of their backgrounds.

Table 7
Demographic Information About Relatives’ Identities

	Margo	Theda	Phyliss	Jean	Marcos	Winona	Dennis
Tribal Affiliation(s)	Lipan Apache and Lemhi Shoshone	Blackfoot and Apache	Choctaw	Arawak	Pascua Yaqui	Snohomish, Lummi and Haida	Chiricahua Apache and Wukchumni
Identify with Other Race / Ethnicity / Culture	“Mexican” and “Caucasian”	“Mexican” and “Spanish”	N/A; does not identify as another	“European”	“White”	“White”	“Mexican”
Identity to Which Feels Most Connected	Native	Mexican; “I don’t claim the Spanish part”	N/A	Identities are “pretty balanced”	“Native-Mexican”	Native	Indigenous, but “likes to balance them out”
Area-Type in Which was Raised	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural/Near Reservation	Rural/Near Reservation	Rural/Near Reservation
Pronouns	She/They	She/Her	She/Her	She/Her	He/Him	She/Her	He/Him
Two-Spirit or LGBTQ	Yes; Queer	No, “but an Ally”	No	Yes; Bisexual	No	No	Yes; Two-Spirit
A Relative Attended Indian Boarding School	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Relatives avoided being kidnapped	Yes	Unsure	Elders
Speak Heritage Language(s)	Yes	Some	Some	No	Some	Some	Yes
Practice Culture(s) / Ceremony	“Not able to”	“Trying to learn”	Yes	“Not yet — just my family”	Yes	Yes	Yes

About one-half of the Tribes to which our Relatives belong are currently federally recognized by the United States, and some of the other Tribes noted in Table 7 might be recognized by the state or territory that was established around the Tribes' existing lands and people. For many complex reasons, it also is possible that some of the Tribes to which our Relatives belong either lost or never received federal or state recognition, however, the Tribes are considered sovereign entities by Native people, who respect each Tribes' lands, people, and protocols. As shown in Table 7, with the exception of Phyliss, all Relatives also identified with another race, ethnicity, or culture. Most felt most strongly connected to the Native or Indigenous part(s) of their identities.

Three of the seven Relatives grew up in an urban area, while four grew up in a rural area, and three of those rural areas were also near reservations. Four of our Relatives do not identify as Two-Spirit and/or LGBTQ+, but Margo identifies as queer, Jean identifies as bisexual, and Dennis identifies as Two-Spirit.

All of our Relatives knew about the history of the Indian Boarding Schools. Margo and Winona were unsure if their own relatives had attended, and Jean commented that her grandfather and other children were afraid of being kidnapped and taken to an Indian Boarding School, so he held hands with the other children so they wouldn't "get taken." Theda, Phyliss, Marcos, and Dennis knew stories about their own relatives or Tribal elders who attended an Indian Boarding School. Margo's grandmother attended Catholic School, "where there was a lot of assimilation." She continued,

I'm pretty sure that my ancestors were put into these schools to learn Catholicism, because now our whole family is Catholic and speaks Spanish. So it's like, okay, where did that come from? But they don't talk about it. My family just doesn't talk about that.

As discussed in Chapter Two, it was forbidden for Indian Boarding School attendees to speak their heritage languages, however, it seems important to today’s Native students to re-learn their traditional lifeways. Six of our Relatives can speak at least some of their heritage languages, having learned from relatives or Tribal elders or from self-study. Lastly, six of our Relatives practice the cultures and/or ceremonies of their own Tribe(s) or those of other Tribes, as they were taught. When asked how she thought today’s Native students were doing in this context, compared to our relatives that attended the Indian Boarding Schools, Theda answered, “I’d say we fare a lot better, because we’re in an age where we’re able to recognize these things and still challenge them, and we’re not being killed or we’re not being locked away for expressing ourselves.” Her perspective connects to a theme presented later in this chapter about the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools.

In the following sections, and in accordance with the research questions, I discuss findings related to today’s Native students’ university experience in the categories of Understanding Native Students’ Intersectional Identities; Effects from Historical Trauma of Indian Boarding Schools; Present-Day Challenges and Gaps in Service; and Overcoming Barriers. Within this last category, ways that Native students suggest universities could better support them are discussed, as well as the senses of belonging that Native students create with each other and local Tribal members. Table 8 identifies categories within the research questions that are discussed in the remaining sections of the chapter.

Table 8
Research Questions and Categories

Research Question	Categories
What to understand about intersectional identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being Native and others’ lack of awareness ● Colonization and choosing to identify ● Misperceptions and feeling fetishized

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Racism and microaggressions
Effects from Historical Trauma of Indian Boarding Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accounts of intergenerational trauma (first-hand) ● Accounts of intergenerational trauma (second-hand)
Experiences of present-day challenges and gaps in service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feelings of isolation, identity invalidation, dissatisfaction ● Lack of Native perspectives in curricula and classroom discussions ● Lack of culturally-centered resources ● Lack of recognition of local Tribe ● Support AISO students wish they had
Improving support of Native students (related themes experienced and how students overcome barriers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of belonging within AISO ● Sense of belonging with the local Tribe

Understanding Native Students' Intersectional Identities

On today's college campuses, many Native students are confronted with misperceptions and assumptions about their cultural identities, and this general lack of awareness likely stems from colonization (Chapter Two). I will present findings related to this theme from the interviews that uncovered Native college students' feelings of discomfort in identifying and risking, which they feel risks tokenization and racist acts. Four themes reflecting intersectional identities (ethnicity, gender, sexuality) are drawn from the Relatives' reflections: 1) being Native and others' lack of awareness; 2) colonization and choosing to identify; 3) misperceptions and feeling fetishized; and 4) racism and microaggressions. When intersectionalities among ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality are mentioned by Relatives, they are highlighted below.

Being Native and Others' Lack of Awareness

"I've met several people that have told me, 'I've never met a Native American in my life.' And I was like, 'you've probably seen some in passing. You just never knew. You just can't expect that we're all gone,'" Marcos (Pascua Yaqui) remarked. According to our Relatives, a lot

of people in the general campus community assume that Native people are no longer here, and professors often talk about Native people exclusively in the past-tense, if at all. Our Relatives noted that many people on campus believe Native-identifying people should exemplify specific characteristics and traits (e.g., looks, abilities) and some believe a certain degree or amount must be present and proven for a Native-identifying person to be sufficiently “Native enough” (e.g., blood quantum). “We're one of the few groups that almost needs to ‘prove’ our identity. Like, ‘Oh, you're Native? So, like, how much?’ Or, you know, ‘Oh, you don't look like one’,” Winona (Snohomish, Lummi, and Haida) said. She continued,

Yes, we carry other identities with us. Yes, I am also White — but that doesn't take away from me being a Native person, sharing in those struggles, and still needing those special supports and culturally relevant services or spaces. Just know that we present in different ways and we come from different communities and that being Native isn't a catchall.

We're not *just* Native — we're different Tribal identities. There's a lot of diversity and nuances and different needs based on our identities, too. Just know that we're here. We're not extinct. We exist and carry on our traditions in different ways. And, maybe we're Native and we know that much, but we don't really know any more. That doesn't necessarily mean that we have any less right to claim our heritage, to honor the pain that's been caused, or to acknowledge our will to reconnect and honor those traditions.

Similarly, Theda (Blackfoot and Apache) relayed,

I get those questions all the time and I hate having to justify myself. I shouldn't have to, but it's always the, ‘Oh, well, I can't tell what you are’ or ‘Oh, you're Native? Well, you don't look Native.’ I've had someone say I don't ‘sound Native,’ and I was like, ‘what does that mean?’ I was like, ‘Excuse me? I never realized that we have a sound!’ ... So it's something, and I don't know why, but it's such a taboo thing to be Native.

As discussed in Chapter Five, these reflections align with literature regarding lack of awareness on the part of the campus community and experienced isolation of Native students (Bradford, 2017).

Colonization and Choosing to Identify

Communities of color have long had their identities heavily policed and governed by United States laws. For example, in the 21st century, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bureau was created to detain and deport people without immigration papers — ICE primarily targeted Brown and Black communities. In the early 20th century, the so-called “one-drop rule” was used to determine Black ancestry, reinforcing segregation. Later, “one drop” of Japanese ancestry could be used to sentence a person to internment — the “one-drop rule” eventually was dissolved. In the 19th century, the U.S. created a “Certificate Degree of Indian Blood” (CDIB) to certify whom it determined to be Indian, based on blood quantum. The theory of blood quantum is problematic for many reasons, and Tribes have different ways of determining membership. However, the U.S. still requires a CDIB for participation in some federal programs. For example, Native people who do not have a CDIB are not eligible to apply for certain college scholarships. Our Relatives see this divisiveness as a symbol of colonization. Phyliss (Choctaw) asserted,

In order to prove my Indigeneity to White people, I have to bring out my CDIB card or my Tribal membership card, which in itself, is a gross expression of colonialism. It's like “Here's this paperwork that the government gave me to validate my Indianness so that I can prove to you — a White person — that I am indeed Native.” That bugs me so much. ... You don't go around asking other people how much *whatever* they are. Quite frankly, it's none of your business. Why should I have to validate myself to you? The people who matter — *my community* — know who I am.

Jean (Arawak) agreed, “Just the issue of blood quantum and having to prove yourself is a Western construct. ... This Western notion of Tribal cards and forced assimilation — these things are just a way to make us feel invalid.” To this researcher’s knowledge, Native people are the only people whose identities are measured in degrees of blood and are certified with a card issued by a government. Not only is that practice incongruent with how our Tribes and lands traditionally recognized us, but also, these are our ancestral homelands and the U.S. government is a foreign entity. Colonization persists and continues to hurt our families, our Relatives conveyed. “It’s like our people are trying to stand after we’ve been kicked to the ground, and before we can fully get up, the next generation is kicked down again. And you try and stand up, and they’re kicked down again,” Margo (Lipan Apache and Lemhi Shoshone) remarked. She continued,

I see the same cycles of violence and abuse that happened to my great-grandmother — ever since colonization, ever since contact — happening now in my generation and my mother’s generation. And it’s not even a question ... it just feels normal almost, like in this sick way. It’s like, of course there’s substance abuse. Of course there’s alcoholism. Of course there’s like sexual abuse. Like this happened to my mom. This happened to her mom. Why wouldn’t it happen to me? It’s just this awful cycle. You know why it’s here. Sometimes it feels like there’s nothing you can do about it, and you just have to try to try to break out of it.

These findings are important for the study’s topic of Native students’ experiences in higher education or earlier in school, i.e., the students’ comments are connected to the Indian Boarding Schools topic discussed in Chapter Two.

Misperceptions and Feeling Fetishized

Many sources of misinformation about Native identities and cultures exist in elements of popular culture, from romance novels and old Westerns to sports mascots and “tribal” tattoos (Chapter Two). These perpetuate ignorant assumptions and expectations for how Native people should live and look. The U.S. government issuing CDIBs only reinforces ideas about who is a “real Indian,” and those fallacies do a disservice to all, including Native people trying to learn more about their heritage. Sometimes it takes another Native person to break down the stereotypes, such as Jean:

I'll have people come say, “Oh, but I don't have a Tribal card.” So it's like, “Well, you don't need that.” And then people are like, “Oh, but I don't know how to recognize it.” It's like, “Well, do you recognize yourself?” Or like, “Oh, but I'm not really connected to the culture.” It's like, “Well, what do you mean by *connected to the culture?*” Because historically, when we're taught in classes, we're always positioned as a historical past. And so, it's like if you don't know how to tie a bow and arrow or make some rope out of animals, it doesn't mean anything. But that doesn't mean that you're not Native.

According to our Relatives, their Native identities are mocked, erased, and sometimes desired, making them seem open to exploitation and abuse. These statements serve to reduce the humanity of our Relatives, especially the women who are already marginalized or viewed as “less than.” Theda noted, “They think we're some myth of the past. Some Halloween costume to wear. Some prop ... pop culture. *'Oh, they have cool feathers.'* Like we don't exist. Like we're non-existent.” She reflected,

If we *are* acknowledged, we're met with a really weird fetish or fascination that goes beyond appreciating our cultures and into appropriating them. That's what we're met with. And it's very, very inherent on this campus, especially as a woman with the White men — it's very, very obvious and it's disgusting.

Margo affirmed,

They fetishize it. They'll be like, "oh my God, that's so *cool*. Like, tell me *everything*.

How do you say stuff in your language? What is it like *being an Indian*?" It's either fetishization or misinformation — or they just fixate on it. And I feel like it wouldn't be that way if someone was like, "oh yeah, I'm Vietnamese" or "oh yeah, I'm Mexican," or something like that. So it just becomes this central point — it's all they see, in a weird way.

Jean shared about a time when she directly confronted two men on campus who were wearing clothes from the Washington national football team,

So a quick story is that, when I was running for campus elections, I saw two guys who had on Redskins apparel. ... One of the big justifications is always that they're *honoring us*, right? I talked to both of them and said, "I'll be the first Native American on Exec," and they were two of the rudest people to me. They just slammed the door and ignored me. And I was like, "Well, it's not really about honoring me, then, is it? Because you don't want to actually honor me."

The above quotes speak to the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender by speaking to the added challenges and barriers Native women have faced when accessing and experiencing higher education.

Racism and Microaggressions

Our Relatives' reflections indicated they consistently faced racism and microaggressions in interactions and experiences on campus, and they voiced this discomfort. For example, some no longer felt comfortable wearing certain clothing items or did not feel they could be their true selves.

“I feel like when I'm with non-Native folks, I always have to make the decision: Do I talk to them about being Native? Because I can pass as ethnically ambiguous or Latinx, and I don't really have to share,” explained Margo, who identifies as queer. “It's always a decision because it's risky information. Sometimes you open yourself up to microaggressions and sometimes to outright aggression.” She continued,

There've been a few times when I've been wearing my ribbon skirt or beadwork on campus, and something always happens — some kind of microaggression. Like, I wore some beadwork and I had a professor ask me to stand up and spin for the class because she just thought it was "so pretty." I knew she was coming from a good place, but I felt kind of uncomfortable with that. ... It's never really something you forget because these universities weren't created for us, and the way they continue to operate to this day makes it clear that being Indigenous, being a woman, being queer — all of these things are intersections that would have prevented me from being able to go to a university a hundred years ago. And also being a first-gen student. I just never forget that this institution was not made for me.

It is noteworthy that the above quote speaks to the complexity of the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in Native communities, which are already distinct (from Tribe to Tribe), but which also may be more fluid than in other cultures. For example, “with Two-Spirit, it comes from the Indigenous perspective of having both the male and the female spirit inside of you and other spirits, too, depending on what type of Native population you're part of and what your Tribe's beliefs are,” explained Dennis. The quote from Margo also speaks to the barriers women in education face when looks are focused upon, rather than knowledge. Other quotes mirror this issue and provide additional examples of microaggressions and racism.

“When you’re wearing your braids or wearing your jewelry or things like that, you’re always pointed out. Or when you want to talk about our Native tongues and it’s, “well, that’s so weird,” or you’re being ridiculed,” Theda said. “You’re hearing racist remarks. You’re being belittled, and that’s still very alive these days.” She later reflected,

A conversation I had with a professor was, “Well, you know, you’re generations down from your relatives who are full-blooded, and so you’re Native, but you don’t count like they did in the past.” And I’m like, “No, that makes zero sense.” I just wish that they would recognize that sometimes things that are brought up are going to be triggering to you — they’re going to be painful and hurtful. ... And sure, I know some of them won’t, just because they’re so set in their ways and they might be older and more old-school — quote, unquote — as they like to put it. “Well, I’m old school.” It’s like, “no, you’re racist.”

According to our Relatives, remarks like these are pervasive on campus, and just knowing professors and classmates might have these thoughts causes some Relatives great anxiety. “You don’t have to fit the stereotypes that people expect from you to be Native,” Phyliss explained. “It’s about if you practice your cultures, if you learn your language, if you surround yourself with that mentality.” Phyliss only identifies as Native, but contended she has White privilege because she can be read as looking White. She continued,

I’m afraid that if a White girl like me raises her hand in class and says, “I’m Indigenous, and here’s my feelings on it,” people are going to be like, “that White girl is *not* Indigenous! Who is she to speak about those issues?” Does that make sense? I mean, people think that I’m a box-checker. That’s been my biggest fear since day one, especially starting with my college applications. I was like, “I know I don’t look the way that people expect me to look, and I don’t want them to think that I’m a box-checker,” because I’m

not. ... I always feel like I'm having to prove it to other people. It's so complicated. My brain hurts when I really start to think about it.

In a later section about overcoming barriers, I discuss how our Relatives find solidarity and strength through their AISO membership. "I came to some of the meetings, and it definitely has become a comfort zone and a safe space," Marcos reflected. "Not only to voice my opinions, but for us to voice our vulnerability as Native students on this campus, and also to uplift all the other Native students who might not feel a sense of connectedness with the university." Our Relatives' experiences connect with Native students' higher education experience and the main focus of this study because they confirm that Native students have feelings of vulnerability and sometimes feel they lack the opportunity to express their voices. In the next section, however, I discuss how our Relatives connect their current experiences on campus to the experiences of our ancestors and elders who attended the Indian Boarding Schools with the most harmful practices.

Effects from Historical Trauma of Indian Boarding Schools

As discussed in Chapter Two and according to our Relatives, the effects of historical trauma from the Indian Boarding Schools are still being felt today. Significantly, all Relatives were knowledgeable about the history, and many of our Relatives knew of an ancestor or elder who had attended. In our interviews, many examples emerged to bridge the educational experiences of today's Native students to 142 years ago, when the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened. In this section, I share our Relatives' vivid recounts and reflections of this historical trauma.

First-Hand Accounts of Intergenerational Trauma

Our Relatives' feelings about historical trauma vary, based on their family's experiences in the Indian Boarding Schools and their own experiences in the university setting. This variation ranges, where some Relatives feel the violence happening to them again and some feel more of

an out-of-body experience associated with the trauma. Further, some felt it instantly as “survival” and others felt it more mildly.

“You know, they say evil doesn’t go away ... it just shifts forms,” said Dennis, who felt the trauma happening again. He learned about the history of the Indian Boarding Schools from some of his Tribal elders who attended. “I would hear some of their stories and, yeah, it’s really brutal,” he remarked.

Theda learned from her grandfather that both his parents attended Indian Boarding Schools.

My grandpa always talked about how when he was a kid, his mom always wanted him to have really long hair. And he was like, “why? All the boys have really short hair.” And I guess she talked about how they cut his dad’s hair really, really short. And it was super traumatic, because [my great-grandfather] was like, “no, that’s very sacred with our Tribe.” It was very sacred for the men to have really long hair and have their hair braided, and so, [my grandpa] even talked about how they were like, “no, we want you to have what I couldn’t have.” I think he saw that ... how something to some people was so menial and didn’t matter — like, “oh, it’s hair” — he was like, “no, it’s my dad.” It meant something very powerful. It hit a hard spot.

Theda was told about the physical labor the young Native students had to perform. “They were put in to help build the facilities or deal with the sewage stuff,” she stated. “They were forced out there to be doing all of this really hard manual labor and they were getting punished for speaking.” She continued,

I remember [my grandpa] saying that his dad told him it was almost like they couldn’t be themselves. They had to forget who they were, you know? And I could only imagine how traumatic it was to live through that. And I don’t understand why the U.S. government

thought that was okay ... it's crazy. It's honestly so crazy to think that this was real. This is not a Hollywood movie. This actually happened to our people. ... Honestly, I wish I would have known when I was younger ... maybe I would have been able to understand that there is this generational trauma that will still trickle down and that we'll have to combat and deal with. I think it would have helped me understand what I was navigating and what I *would be* navigating. We still see the after-effects a hundred years later, which is kind of crazy to think about.

Marcos' grandmother told him that "some days" her uncles "went to school somewhere ... I don't remember." After doing more research, he believes his relatives attended Sherman Institute (now Sherman Indian High School), in Riverside, California. "I think way back then, it was not a good place," he suggested. When Marcos thinks about what life must have been like for his relatives and other young Native students back then, he feels powerless.

We were considered savages and uneducated and we weren't allowed to read. We weren't allowed to have our own thoughts. And I just go back to thinking about how these students — these children, these babies — were in school. Like, you don't stop developing your brain until your mid-twenties or so. Even then, there's still a lot more going on. They were speaking their Native language — that's all they knew — and having soap put in their mouths or being hit. Like, oh God, like I said, putting yourself in that situation and just thinking of how I act now ... if I was in a situation like that, that would not be tolerated. And to see it not tolerated in a different aspect, it kind of puts it into perspective, you know? It's just a multitude of things and emotions and feelings. And that's why I, ultimately, just settle in defeat ... because I just feel like I have no more power or, you know, they have more power over me.

Phyliss did not learn about her Choctaw heritage until after her great-great-grandmother passed away. After she died, Phyliss' father found some paperwork from the Bureau of Indian Affairs that included a check and other documents that indicated Phyliss' great-great-grandmother had actually run away from an Indian Boarding School. Phyliss has since learned about the history and remarked she believes other Native students today feel the repercussions of that intergenerational trauma, but she personally does not.

However, Dennis strongly connects the trauma of the Indian Boarding Schools to the contemporary university environment and the possible outcome of retaliation, impact on grades, and an expectation to conform to a particular way of sharing knowledge.

I'm just seeing the similarities between the Indian Boarding School practices and the university's practices. Even though it's mild — well, quote-unquote, "mild" — it still is triggering in a way where it's like my mind automatically goes into survival mode. Like, "okay, what do I need to do in order to survive this classroom?" You know? It may not be life-and-death-situation for me, but my mind automatically went to life-and-death. Like, "all right, what do I need to do? What do I need to do? And I'll do what I gotta do in order to make sure I pass this class. 'Cause I cannot — *I cannot* — fail, since I don't have all the time in the world." So I kind of went into survival mode and made sure I played the game, you know — the way of the colonizers, you know? — in order to make sure I pass that class, even though I didn't agree with the practices or the things that they would say, because I didn't want to get my instructors mad if I disagreed with how they were representing Indigenous people or certain types of things, you know? Because if I made them mad, that might affect my grade. So I didn't really feel safe in that way.

Theda confirmed,

Yes, we're not in boarding schools, but we're still having some of these ideas pushed down our throats. Everyone talks about, "oh, this was a thing of the past," but here we are in 2020, and this is still, in some ways, alive. We might not be in a boarding school, but you know, the way they're treating us and acting and trying to get us to conform to these ways is still very alive and well.

In a similar vein, Marcos maintained,

I feel like the system of forced assimilation that had been implemented within boarding schools is applicable to a university structure in terms of how academia is presented and how — more often than not — you're trying to fight back against something that's wrong. I feel like a lot of those parallels can be brought back and can have a form of trauma toward Native people — whether they're, you know, sensitive, or if they have relatives with those experiences, stuff like that — just because of the way that the system has systematically oppressed Native people in this country.

This researcher suspects that most college students today do not feel connected to the educational experiences of their ancestors, but according to our Relatives, today's Native students do feel that certain weight related to intergenerational trauma. "I wish that staff and administration had more of an awareness of intergenerational and historical trauma — just generally how it impacts our students and how we come to campus already carrying a lot," Winona said. Similarly, Theda noted,

We still talk about what happened to our relatives so that it's not forgotten. And we talk about how, in our own way, we're experiencing things that are similar. Not the same, because they're not equivalent. You can't equate them. ... We're still feeling the effects generations later, and it's not an easy pill to swallow. If anything, sometimes I think there might be some guilt that we weren't put into the situations to the extreme that they were,

you know? It's just very tragic and sad to know that so many of them were forced into these god-awful places and stripped from their families. I would have to say a lot of us feel it. And honestly, I would also say a lot of us feel angry about it, too. We're still angry about it. Like I know I didn't live through it, but I can still be angry about it because it was terrible. It's terrifying that that happened ... that it was allowed. It's a tough reality to live in — to consider that a lot of us still feel these things, and we talk about these things, and we know that they're still around and they're still going on. I think sometimes we're left with a hopelessness of like, "when will it end?" Or, "how will we end it or fix it?" But we're just the little people. What can we do?

The findings in this theme indicate how trauma is intergenerational (e.g., discomfort in identifying, feeling forced to assimilate) and the above quotes illustrate that. In the following theme, our Relatives with second-hand knowledge about the trauma reflect further on its lasting effects.

Second-Hand Accounts of Intergenerational Trauma

Even though our Relatives in this section did not have family with first-hand experience in the Indian Boarding Schools, they are still highly aware of the intergenerational trauma and feel it in their everyday educational experiences on campus. Many noted that trauma comes up for them because they still feel that they do not belong in today's educational system and they blame the system for the feeling that they lost some of their cultural connections. Winona does not directly know any relatives that attended Indian Boarding Schools, but according to her grandfather, it is likely that some elders in their family attended the Tulalip Indian Boarding School, on the Tulalip Reservation, in Washington. Regardless, Winona, like our other Relatives, feels the impact of that trauma:

It just feels as though the Western education system was not designed for us. Our first entry into it was these boarding schools, which were designed to strip us of our identity, break us down, assimilate us into mainstream culture — and disband our ties to our community, to our heritage, to our traditions, to our language, to our lifeways — so that it would essentially eradicate our communities. And I guess the education system hasn't changed.

Jean also knew the history of the Indian Boarding Schools but did not have relatives who attended. She has tried to help other Native students work through their feelings about the negative consequences of the trauma:

I was talking to someone when I was doing my research about how they were saying that their mom has “assimilated,” and they were kind of pissed off about it. Like, “why would you assimilate to this country that hates us,” and like, “why would you do that?” It was clearly bothering them, and I asked, “well, has anyone in your family been in a boarding school?” They said, “yeah, my grandma was,” and I was like, “okay, so your grandma was in the boarding school, forcibly assimilated, and now you're mad that your mom's assimilated?” And they're like, “well, yeah, I didn't really think about it like that.” Where I was like, “well, there's a reason ... it's not like your mom just automatically loves America. Like, why does she love America? Think about it.” So I think that there is that trauma and it doesn't necessarily show itself in the same ways. Like, sometimes it's just anger and a frustration of not understanding.

Dennis, whose immediate relatives did not attend Indian Boarding School but whose Tribal elders did, strongly connects with their educational experiences and he blames the schools for the loss in culture:

You know, it's a healing process. It's definitely felt by the Native students today. All Native people. Even the ones who weren't directly or whose families weren't directly affected by it. Their families are still affected by it — just knowing that this history is part of who they were and that this history is a part of Native people, you know? And what I see, too, is a lot of people lost a lot of their Indigenous identities. It's still there, but they lost it. They just need to try to find it. And a lot of the Indigenous peoples' families who went to the boarding schools, you know, they kind of renounced their language. They renounced anything Indigenous.

The findings in this theme illustrate the lasting effects of historical trauma from the Indian Boarding Schools, but our Relatives are determinedly navigating the university system. “If you want to compare how they are faring compared to the first generation who had to go through the trauma of boarding school, then yes, they're making it,” Winona observed. “And I think it's because they've learned how to cope. They've learned about this new world, and they've had time to acclimate, adjust, and learn from the previous generations' traumas.” Most of our Relatives say they do not feel a sense of belonging on campus, but all credit AISO and the local Tribe for having created a safe and supportive environment in which they can thrive. They understand how education was brought to Native people, and they help each other process the emotional impacts of that trauma. In the next section, I present findings about present-day challenges and gaps in service at the university, and later, how our Relatives overcome some of those barriers, which indicate how universities can better support Native students.

Present-Day Challenges and Gaps in Service

Although most of our Relatives say they do not feel a strong sense of belonging on campus, as noted, all credit AISO and the local Tribe for creating a safe and supportive environment in which they can thrive. In this section, I present five subthemes about Native

students' experiences with present-day challenges and gaps in service at the university, beginning with feelings of isolation, identity invalidation, and dissatisfaction, that appear connected to the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools.

Feelings of Isolation, Identity Invalidation, Dissatisfaction

As previously discussed, our Relatives feel connected to the history of the Indian Boarding Schools and other acts of historical trauma. Many of them carry that invisible burden, and because there are so few Native-identified students on campus to bear the weight, our Relatives sometimes feel isolated, that their identities are invalidated, and/or dissatisfaction generally with the university experience. Theda often felt “on her own” and that she did not belong on campus.

I always kind of felt like I was on my own, like I've been floating around. We are already in a space that's been taken away from us. Then they don't even want to do the land acknowledgment. It's like we're constantly having to be reminded that we're ... forgotten about. ... It is such a White institution. It is just inherently obvious, day in and day out, that it wasn't meant for me. That's how I felt. Like, “I shouldn't be here.” That's how it felt all the time, and that sucks. I wish it didn't have to be like that. ... I don't feel like there were a lot of resources to support me as a Native student, and instead I was always met with more and more reminders of, “Oh yeah, I shouldn't be here. This isn't meant for me. This is not my place.” ... At times I really questioned, “should I transfer?” But it was like, “I'm the only person to go to college in my family,” so I was like, “no, I have to finish. I'm not going to drop out.”

AISO alum Winona commented, “It's like a tug-of-war. On one end, I'm listening to our students' struggles in the classroom, then I'm comparing it to their White or non-POC (people of color) student counterparts, and it's not a good experience.” She continued,

There's not a space for them. They're dealing with all of these issues, trying to find their way in a world where we're talking as though colonization and cultural genocide and these things are a thing of the past, when they're not. Our lands are still occupied. Our women are still going missing. Our lands are still being colonized, and environmental racism is still a very real issue. And so our youth are still living and walking with that.

Margo spoke directly of her Indigenous identity when she reflected, “I maintain a level of distance from the campus community because, in the past, I’ve talked to professors about my Indigeneity, and I've found that I either become tokenized or exploited in a way that makes me feel really uncomfortable.” Similarly, Phyliss felt “a hundred percent” like she could safely and confidently be herself on campus with her “Indigeneity removed.” “But once you add that aspect in, that's something that I tuck away from a lot of people. Which is really sad that I have to say that,” Phyliss imparted. She stated,

I don't feel like the classes that I take are conducive to a safe environment for me to express my Indigeneity. ... It's a big part of my life, but who I choose to share it with? Depends. I certainly have people in my life that I don't like to talk about it around because I feel like I'm going to be questioned about it. And I just don't want to deal with that, because I deal with it every day at school and it's exhausting. So I do share it with people that matter to me, and I make it very clear that this is a big part of my life. This is something that's important to me. This is a part of me. And if you don't like it, then that sucks for you. But yes, I am careful about how much I share with others, depending on how I think they're going to be receptive of it.

Theda would agree. “I don't think campus perpetuates a safe environment for minority groups — especially Natives. We can be met with a lot of insensitivity, derogatory language, or physical means. It can be very scary,” she maintained. Unfortunately, an anti-Indigenous culture

persists, and it can feel like little has changed in the educational system since those first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding Schools opened, 142 years ago. In large part, our Relatives are made to feel they do not belong on campus. “Especially at a predominantly White institution, there's sometimes when you just can't relate to people in the sense of culture. In that sense, you feel like an outcast,” explained Marcos. He continued,

In terms of representation, if you're not actively being included in discussion, there's no room for you to actively speak. And if there's no representation of Native people — or, in particular, your Native personal home, Native community — then that could also feel like some sort of defeat because you feel like you just don't belong. I have felt super defeated sometimes. I'll just be like, “it's not worth fighting over. It's not worth getting worked up about,” and I shouldn't feel like that. I shouldn't feel like my voice is not valid, in terms of *my* experiences in *my* heritage, where *my* people come from, in a space that's supposed to be inclusive of everybody. If we're talking about the university motto, diversity is a key factor. I think that's what a lot of Native students particularly have to navigate.

Further, some of our Relatives express dissatisfaction with their university experiences. When asked about their undergraduate experience, “It was pretty mediocre. I'd give it a ‘five’ or a ‘four’ (out of 10), honestly,” responded Theda. She continued, “As a Native student, I never really felt supported at all. Not in the academic sense. Not by our counselors. Any of that. I feel the only reason it's not a ‘zero’ is because I met AISO.” Similarly, Marcos commented,

I'm very dissatisfied in the academia portion and — I'll give it to you — I feel like expressing my Nativeness has given some sort of recognition to others that, “Hey, there's Native people here. You know, we should maybe listen to what they say and take that into account.” I think that personally I have done a very gracious act of telling everybody,

“Hey, just remember, don't be anti-Indigenous today! And, hey, remember, it's Indigenous People's Day or it's Native Heritage Month! You better get on it, everyone!” AISO alum Winona reflected, “I didn't have access to [cultural] medicine or a place to pray that felt safe.” She continued,

I think, more than anything, the students need to have safe spaces. Sometimes going to the classroom cannot even feel safe, because you're going into this place where you think you're in the role of the student — as like, the one who's going to learn. Then, oftentimes, you're called to instead be the teacher and be teaching your peers and even your instructors, which is even more frustrating and can be traumatizing or triggering. So, even in your own classroom, to not feel safe? That can definitely play a factor in retention and well-being at school.

Finally, AISO alum Dennis assessed his college years favorably overall, but believed the university could have offered more support. He reflected, “Yes, my college years were the best years of my life, however, I feel a little bit of bitterness because the university did not properly support me, and I had to advocate for it.”

Lack of Native Perspectives in Curricula and Classroom Discussion

According to our Relatives, the classroom experience can be particularly problematic, especially during discussions about Native and Indigenous issues. Often, the curriculum feels problematic because they indicate it is presented through a Western lens and does not accurately portray the Indigenous experience. “History is a horribly White-washed subject now. Everything, all of our History books ... you don't learn about Native experiences. And if you do, it's very brief,” Phyliss contended. She continued, “Like the Indian Wars and how ‘Indians were in the way of Western expansion.’ It's stuff like that. I don't see myself or my Indigenous side reflected in the education I get.” As Jean pointed out as well, for instance, all students enrolled in the

university's College of Letters and Sciences and the College of Engineering are required to take a course in European Traditions — that is roughly 90% of all undergraduate students. “Everyone has to take European Traditions, but no one freaking knows that we're on [Tribal] land?! How does that make sense? European traditions? That's Europe! We're in America, so why are we not learning about the place where we are?,” asked Jean. Winona would agree,

What comes to mind is History and Anthropology ... they're not taught from the perspectives of our people, from decolonized or Indigenous worldviews. They're told from the perspective of the colonizers, the Western society. So it's *their* account of history. It's *their* account of our communities through *their* worldviews, through *their* experiences. So then we show up and we're like, "wait, the way you're telling that this account happened is *maybe* true, according to *your* perspectives and experiences, but to us, it's *not*." A perfect example is about the missions, right? To the Western worldview, it's like, "yeah, we came in to help, you know, save these people and to develop this land that was undeveloped, unused, undiscovered, whatever." But to *our* people, that's not what happened. It was genocide. It was slavery. It was abuse. It was decimation. A time for mourning. It *wasn't* this time of development or growth or discovery.

Furthermore, when our Relatives protest the discussions happening in their classes, they are at times met with eye-rolling and racist remarks. “In terms of the academics, I have had multiple instances of just pure bullshit,” Marcos said. He continued, elaborating that

In classes where you speak up and are like, “well, from the *Native* perspective,” and they're like, “Oh, so *now* we have a Native in the class.” I'm like, “see, like that ... that's gotta go. Hang it up. That can't be your immediate response when someone's identifying actively and saying that “that's not right” or giving you their perspective as a Native person.” ... Anytime Indigenous issues are brought up, it's like a sensitive topic.

Similarly, Theda remarked, “We're constantly having to defend ourselves. We're constantly having to be like, ‘well, no, *this* is why *this*, and *this* is why *that*’ We're playing this constant battle, day in and day out.” She continued,

When I was taking my GE (general education) World History classes, they shoved “Oh, well, the Europeans came over and they helped these savages” — it is shoved down your throat, day in and day out. I have no problem being outspoken and standing up and saying something, so I would get into ... not *arguments*, but like kinda arguments ... with professors. They would say, “Oh, well, no, no, you don't understand.” I'm like, “no, well, *you* don't understand.” I would always argue with them and be like, “well, actually, did you consider *this*? Why don't we tell the class about *this*?” And then I would be approached by the professor: “Oh, come to my office hours and then we'll talk or dah, dah, dah.” And they would try to silence me and push me out. And it's like, “no, I'm going to say something. You're not going to make all these remarks and think it's funny or whatever.” ... I just wish they would take a moment to understand that when they talk about Native people, that we aren't a thing of the past. We are still here. That's a big issue that I've seen at [the university] — a lot of professors and faculty speak of us in the past-tense.

“Bottom line, it's racism,” said AISO alum Dennis. “Like, if we say, ‘Hey, this is how we *actually* represent ourselves,’ there's a lot of eye-rolling. Not only with TAs (teaching assistants), but with classroom members and, like, freaking professors who have tenure.” According to Margo, it is “definitely weird” and “uncomfortable” to learn about the history of Native people from non-Native professors. In an Environmental Science class she took, her classmates were talking about how Indigenous people were at the forefront of environmental justice movements, but their reverence did not seem sincere.

The students didn't really seem to want to speak up and talk about it that much. And when they did, it was kind of in a, “yeah, we should help the Indians. Like, let's listen to Indigenous knowledge. Let's decolonize,” but in a quirky kind of way, and never in a real “let's open our wallets and open our mouths and talk about how we can *actually* support Native people and listen to Native people in a respectful way.”

Another example is Marcos' experience in a History of Public Policy course, during which one classmate was discussing parallels she saw between the occupation of Palestinian lands and Native lands, and another classmate spoke up with disparaging words. Referring to this classmate, Marcos reflected, “I see him to this day, and he still runs away from me every single time, because I know I lost my cool on this one — I was going to get kicked out of the class.” He continued,

But this kid, well, he just sat back in his chair, all smug, and was like, “well, I just think that Indigenous people should be lucky to be alive and grateful for any reparations that they're given.” It was 8 a.m. on a Monday. I already don't want to be there. ... And I'm just literally, like, my eyes were shut — I said, “excuse me?!” I said, “can you repeat what you just said — loudly? I didn't hear you. I'm sorry. I was not paying attention.” I lied. He repeated it. And I said, “are you serious?!” I say, “who's lucky? Oh, no, no, no, no, no. So *this* is what we're doing today.” So I'm, like, angrily yelling at this kid. And then my [teaching assistant] was like, “[Marcos], we need to calm down. You need to just calm down.” I was like, “[Teaching assistant], you need to chill, because last section, you should have checked this kid when he said some racist-ass stuff. They were talking about how being killed for your religion is worse than to be killed for your race. You should have just shut that down from the jump. So now I gotta do it for you.” And so I'm going in on this kid, and the [teaching assistant] had to end class 30 minutes early, cause I was

just so angry — like, angrily yelling at this kid. And it's funny because I had run into somebody else from that class last year during fall, and they were like, “Oh, you're the kid from the class who yelled at the kid! And they had to end section early! I remember you yelling at that guy.” I was like, “yes, that was a memory you just shot back to the front of my head.” I was like, “I just, I don't even remember.” I was like, “that was a traumatizing day for me.” I remember just being so angry. I was on the phone with my dad after that class, and I was like, “dad, I'm gonna go to jail 'cause I'm gonna beat this kid up! I'm so angry!” My dad was laughing. He was like, “I don't know what to tell you. People are just stupid.”

A common theme between our Relatives' stories might be that Native people and knowledge are devalued. The remainder of this section speaks to the significance of Indigenous knowledge being respected and actively included in how the university operates. The following quotes indicate that Relatives see many of their peers and professors benefiting from living, working, and learning on Tribal land without acknowledging their privilege or the continued contributions that Tribal members and Native scholars make to the campus community.

“Native students make up less than one-percent of the population at [the university], so to them, we just don't exist,” asserted Phyliss. “It's always ‘the [Tribe] *was*’ Right? No, the [Tribe] *is*. I see them all the time! I have their cell phone numbers — I can call one up right now! People see Natives as a thing of the past.” For Margo, the opportunity for the university to create a partnership with the local Tribe could not come sooner:

The university is like a capitalist organization. They care about money, but I think we're getting to a point where hopefully they realize we need to be protecting our land and our natural resources. The only way to do that is to turn to the original caretakers of this land

who have the knowledge — the ancestral knowledge — about taking care of this place and keeping this place thriving so that the people here can thrive and be happy.

Likewise, Winona believes it is time to return to Indigenous knowledgeways. “Wouldn't it be nice to hear someone else's voice? Isn't academia tired of hearing its own same perspective over and over and over again? Like, what if we were able to decolonize it? Or go further and Indigenize it?” This quote underscores the need to include Indigenous knowledge — and to decolonize higher education spaces — and the education system, as Native students “do not feel it was made for them.”

Lack of Culturally-Centered Resources

“Supposedly [this university] has the largest Indigenous population, however for me speaking with [those in] other universities, it has the least resources and the least funding for Native students,” observed AISO alum Dennis, who has Native-identified staff and faculty connections at other California universities. While our Relatives perform well academically and have created a close community within AISO and the local Tribe, results indicate that they are frustrated by the university’s lack of Native and Indigenous culturally-centered resources. For example, the university offers an American Indian & Indigenous Studies minor, but not a major or academic department. In this subtheme, our Relatives discussed their needs and wishes for greater support from the university and why. It is noteworthy that many of our Relatives said the Native campus community simply needed “funding,” and when asked further about that, our Relatives responded that the Native community would do a better job of using the money to create infrastructure (e.g., make appropriate hiring decisions, meaningfully develop courses and programs) than the university would, if it was to do so without Native consultation.

“We bring so much to our classes and to the people we encounter. There is literally no negative to providing us with greater support and greater funding,” Margo remarked. “We should

be given those resources because we matter. ... The university would see that if they invested those resources into the Native student community. They'd see us thriving. They'd see the good work we can do." Similarly, Theda wishes the university offered "a real Native department." "We hardly have any classes that are offered with regards to being Native," she said. "And when they are, they're not offered by a Native professor, and I think that's very insensitive." Phyliss maintained, "I have only taken one class — in the Religious Studies department — that had to do with Native topics. I haven't taken any others because they 'aren't relevant' to my major. They *should* be, considering I'm a History major."

To Jean, Native students could focus on their own studies if an academic department was created because then, when people wanted to learn about Native identities, they could go to the department and not take up the Native students' time. She suggested,

I think a program or department would do a whole lot because, often with other students of color, you'll find if they get stupid questions — like, if it's a Black person and they get some question regarding Black people, they can say, "go take a Black Studies class or go ask the department," or something like that. And that's your resource. They're getting paid. And while everyone might not do that, some people might answer the question by themselves. They still have the option to do that ... versus Native students.

Further to Jean's point, Margo agreed, "I've had so many professors call me out in class whenever we're talking about anything related to being Indigenous and ask me my thoughts or ask me to speak on something." A professor even asked her to give a lecture. "I was like, '*Oh ... educating the class and educating you and sharing my knowledge? We love that,*'" Margo recounted sarcastically. According to our Relatives, it would not be enough to establish an academic department or a major if the university did not also hire Native-identified faculty. "Not only do I wish we had a department that we could be a part of on our own solid two feet,"

Marcos commented, “but I also wish there were more Native faculty that we could rely on to just, you know, teach courses about *actual* Native people and not some Eurocentric, White-washed history.” Margo suggested that if faculty needed help making their curriculum more “Native-friendly,” they could talk to Native staff members. But she also pointed out that the university has not hired many Native-identified staff members. Bottom line, Dennis affirmed, “they just need more resources. Basically, staffing and money. And make sure they include the AISO students and the general Native population, because if it's not community-based, it's not good for long-term sustainability.”

Unsurprisingly, many of our Relatives shared their wish for the university to hire Native-identified counselors who innately understand issues of trauma and who could offer traditional methods of care. For example, Winona shared, “There's no cultural advisor or spiritual advisor on staff for Native students to go to if they need a smudge, need someone to sing them a song, offer a prayer, or help provide some community counseling, you know?” Marcos echoed this: “I wish there were more active resources for the Native community to deal with intergenerational trauma. Such as, like, maybe Native psychologists.” Theda recalled a time during her first year when she went to the counseling center on campus to talk about how she felt like she was not fitting in, and how she would now warn other Native students that they might have a negative experience. She recounted,

I remember going to [the counseling center], and that was one of the few times I went and told them how I just didn't feel like I belonged. I was experiencing a lot of what I now know as Imposter Syndrome. They were just like, “yeah, maybe this isn't for you. Just drop out.” I was like, “are you serious?” So, honestly, it was not the best experience as a Native student, and that sucks. But that's why when I'm asked by people, “should I go there?,” I'm very transparent and honest and I say, “we have fantastic educational

opportunities.” We do. I can't deny that. I will say, “we *do* have fantastic educational opportunities,” however, if it's another Native or person of color, I do make them aware that “you're going to experience *this, this, and this*, just so you know,” because no one told me that. I didn't know. I came in here bright and ready. And then it was like a little slap in the face. It was like, “Oh, my gosh. Maybe I shouldn't be here.”

Furthermore, when AISO alum Dennis thought back to his time as a student at the university, he expressed frustration because he had to pay general student fees for services he did not value or have time to use. He said,

I've seen all the little nooks and crannies of what y'all charged me. It's like some fancy country club. I remember when I was there, I thought [the university] was like an overpriced country club that everyone's paying for, you know? It's like, I won't freaking use half of the services 'cause I got no damn time. I have to work. I have to study. I have to go home. I don't have enough time to use all the services that y'all have to offer because, one, I don't know how to go there and do it. And two, utilizing all the services that [the university] has is like another full-time job because I have to figure out what they are. I have to figure out how to use them, you know? What's the purpose and stuff like that.

Dennis and fellow AISO alum Winona both recognized that the university offered a lot of support services, but according to Winona, they did not appeal to Native students. She suggested, You have to provide culturally-centered programs and services that help meet those social support and mental support needs, behavioral support, or however you wanna refer to it. What's offered on campus is so amazing — like, I'm not bashing on [the university] — there's so many wonderful retention and support services. They just don't meet *our* needs, as Native people. Our needs are different. A lot of the clinical services that are available,

for example, at [the counseling center], they don't have culturally responsive, trauma-informed clinicians who can meet us in the way that we need to be met. There's no spiritual advisor and support.

Another opportunity to provide culturally-centered support would be if the university created and offered a “Native student house,” Winona said. She imagined it would be a housing opportunity for Native students and that it would be a one-stop shop with resources, cultural counseling, and a safe space.

Lack of Recognition of Local Tribe

None of the AISO Relatives interviewed for this study are members of the Tribe on whose land campus sits, but all of our Relatives feel a strong connection to the members of the local Tribe and to one member in particular, whom I call “Deb.” For the past six or seven years, Deb has served as the Tribe’s liaison to the AISO group and has introduced our Relatives to her family and other Tribal members, who provide support with loving hearts, making our Relatives feel like welcomed guests on the Tribe’s land. This has endeared our Relatives to Deb, her Tribe, and their land, but despite feeling support from the local Tribe, there remains a salient feeling among our Relatives that Native students and the local Tribe are invisible to the campus community. Based on findings, our Relatives feel frustrated that they perceive the university does not do enough to acknowledge the Tribe. As AISO alum Winona explained, “The [Tribe] are the caretakers and stewards of this land and are doing a lot of the unpaid emotional, community, grassroots, whatever-you-want-to-call-it labor that serves the students and the community. It's just not recognized as service or compensated as such.” Phyliss agreed,

To [the university], we just don't exist. And, in my history classes, it’s “Oh, well, the [Tribe] *were*,” right? No, the [Tribe] *are* ... they’re *current*! I see them all the time. Like, I have their cell phone numbers — I can call one up right now. It bugs me that people see

Natives as a thing of the past. then there's the whole deal of land acknowledgements. Those are problematic.

She continued,

The university has done kind of — excuse my French — a *shit-job* as far as acknowledging that it is built on [the Tribe's] villages. They have one-hundred percent taken bones of ancestors and sacred objects and put them in display cases and said, “look how cool these things are.” If the university was willing to foster a relationship and really listen to the [Tribe] say “*this* is how we would like you guys to pay us back. *This* is how we would like to be treated. *This* is how we'd like our land to be treated,” and the university would actually listen to that? Then I don't see how anyone could lose, except the university — they'd probably lose money, but you know.

Margo added that she has found a local “mom” figure in Deb, for whom she is “really thankful,” and she remarked, “I see no reason why we don't have more members of the [Tribe] actively involved in helping this campus become an Indigenous-friendly place for students to learn and thrive.” According to Margo, the university should pay Deb and other Tribal members for the work they do to help the AISO students. For example, Deb has helped our Relatives with their class projects and she occasionally guest lectures in their classes, almost always without pay. “I don't understand why that is even a question. [The university is] like, ‘Ooh, do we foster good relationships with the [Tribe]? What a conundrum!’ ... It's completely bonkers and they just don't get it,” Margo expressed.

Furthermore, Jean asserted, “Everything the [Tribe] knows will directly impact the university, so there definitely needs to be a *paid* Tribal liaison position where they can consult with Native students and admin and professors.” Jean explained that she has spoken up about

Indigenous issues in classes because there is no one else there to do that, and she also has witnessed Deb speak up. Jean said,

That's work that the professors definitely want, and we are always asked to do it, but never with payments. It's in really high demand, partly because there's no one doing it, but it ends up that students and [Deb] have to do it, while unpaid. So it's almost like we're just taken for granted.

Marcos confirmed,

Professors and faculty should know better. They've been to school so many times and they should know right from wrong when talking about Indigenous issues. ... The only time we talk about the [Tribe] at this university is when there's a convocation or commencement ceremony, which is the beginning and the end of the year. And it's only a generic, "this *used* to be [the Tribe's] land." ... A lot of people just know, "Oh yeah, [the Tribe's] people *used* to live here." It's like, "No! They're actively involved in the community that is *still here*. They *still* do their practices." I feel like if there was an established relationship with the [Tribal] community, it would foster a lot more growth and a lot more advocacy for the Native community.

Our Relatives are quick to speak up for the local Tribe because, based on results, the university does not have a formal policy or practice of acknowledging the Tribe. However, our Relatives are not always as quick to speak up for themselves because they are so aware that they are in the minority of minorities on campus and speaking up can sometimes feel scary and exhausting. For example, Marcos said,

It's hard being an obviously small percentage of a group of students. ... You just feel as if ... how do I put this? ... It's hard because you're trying. You have surpassed all of the obstacles in your life. You were told you were not going to be at the level you're at. You

were told that your people never made it to this particular level. And then you get to this “promised land” and are like, “Oh, I made it! I overcame so much,” just to be met with contention and constantly met with backlash.

This overall invisibility and lack of acknowledgement puts our Relatives in an awkward and uncomfortable position, triggering feelings of past traumas. Many feel they are being pushed back down after having overcome so much.

Types of Support AISO Students Want

Our Relatives expressed that the types of support they wanted the university to provide included allied faculty, an academic department, and a safe space in which to do ceremony. Representation and visibility are lacking — our Relatives report that many on campus think of them as “extinct,” so there is no real understanding about what it means to be a Native student today. For example, Margo conveyed,

I would love a place where I can smudge without worrying about setting off my smoke detector, because when I go outside and do it, people look at me like I'm insane. And when I do it inside, I set off the smoke detector, and it's super embarrassing to have the fire department come out, and I'm like, “Oh, I was just smudging.” And they're like, “is that a drug?” I'm like, “no, it's not a drug.”

Ceremony is an important way for many of our Relatives to stay connected to their cultures and traditions when they are away from their families and Tribal communities (Cajete, 2015). For the short time that they are students, the campus is supposed to feel like their home-away-from-home, but Jean contended, “It's difficult living in dorms because you can't burn sage.” Dennis would agree,

I wish there were more ceremonial spaces and I wish there was more Indigenous art and visuals. If Native people were properly represented and supported on campus, then

non-Native faculty and staff — and just, in general, the university — we'd see an increase in test scores, higher graduation rates, and an increase in the attendance of UCSB applicants. And also, there would be a little stronger sense of belonging on campus and a better connection with the school.

Furthermore, Theda wishes her professors would not talk about Native people in the past-tense, question her Native identity, tell her she was wrong and shut her down when she inserts a Native perspective into class conversations, or praise the Indian Boarding Schools for “evolving” Native people. She wants “a real Native department” of study, wherein courses are taught by Native faculty. Margo would agree,

Knowing how to be an ally as a professor and as a faculty member is really important because you, as a professor or a staff member, have a big impact on whether that student feels comfortable and wants to stay at that campus. ... You need to be actively engaged in supporting the community and understanding the community to know how Native students are going to need support. And you need to talk to your Native students in a way that doesn't make them feel like an outsider — like the odd one out.

Similarly, Phyliss suggested Native students would feel more comfortable speaking up in class if they felt better supported and represented. This might require some extra work, according to Theda. “Professors need to be educated on all of the different backgrounds that they're going to be working with,” she asserted. She continued, “They should be forced to take some sort of training or have a conference so they can be a little more sensitive.” If professors became better allies, Theda explained, then they could create an environment in which Native students would “positively express themselves ... maybe even better, feel comfortable enough to approach professors and faculty.” Dennis wishes the university would hire more Native-identified faculty

who could teach more culturally appropriate and accurate Native-centered courses. Thinking back on his time as a student, he reflected,

It was kind of frustrating, because as an Indigenous person, even though I was taking the American Indian & Indigenous Studies minor, a lot of my papers were geared toward correcting the information taught in the classrooms. Luckily, I was skillful enough to meet the essay's criteria while also educating the teacher. So, it's like the students are becoming the educators, which is good and bad, because I am paying money to learn. But yet, I have to be the teacher, so it's kind of like, "where's my paycheck? Where's my stipend?"

Jean expressly wishes the university would create an American Indian and Indigenous Studies academic department so that Native students would not have to do so much educating of others and could, instead, focus on enriching their own studies. She said,

It's like, "okay, do I want this person to actually learn and become a better person and do less harm to our community in the future?" It's about protection. The reason why we answer the questions is for protection for our future youth. We want to protect them. So it's like, do I answer that question *now*? Or do I just let them go into the world not knowing, because they're *not* going to Google it. Versus, if there was a department, you could maybe say, "you know, take a class or go ask the department chair."

And Margo wishes the university would create a department "solely dedicated to Native student retention and recruitment" and for the campus' American Indian resource center to serve only Native-identified students and allies. "We only have one space on campus, and non-Native students — White students in particular — have all of the spaces," she observed. Although Winona already graduated, she wishes the university would establish a way to "check in and take the temperature for the students' needs and make sure that there's no gaps in services in meeting

their needs.” Perhaps this could be an opportunity for the university to conduct a needs-assessment survey for Native students, and Winona would want the university to also consult the local Tribal community. She suggested,

Another way to help improve relations would be to invest in Native communities and divest from projects that are hurting our communities. That's another important step for building that trust. Showing that it's not just another Public Service Announcement without any meaning behind it — but like, there's real intention and meaning behind trying to build those relationships ... that we're valued. Help negate those feelings of like, "Oh, this wasn't made for us. We don't belong." But to put your money where your mouth is. You can't say you care about our communities and then desecrate our land. It doesn't match up.

Dennis was a senior and preparing to graduate when he attended a meeting in 2017 with the university's chancellor and other administrative staff, during which he took the opportunity to express the wishes and needs of Native students, but he feels that he has not seen progress since that meeting. He complained,

They all mentioned that they would be able to put some type of Native representation on campus, but where the fuck is it? It's been three years, you know? ... I think that meeting — even though we were able to implement some of the things, I think — a lot of the simple things that we wanted were not met. And it's really been three years, you know? I think they were just talking and talking and making wishful promises that they weren't going to keep. So in a way, they were just continuing that Western ideology of treaty-breaking, you know? Breaking treaties is part of their culture. It's part of their blood.

Margo and Jane, plus other Native students, who additionally had a meeting with the university's chancellor in 2019, also perceived a lack of progress. Margo maintained,

I feel like nothing happens. I don't know. [University officials] were like, “we hear you, we hear you,” and then they never do anything. I'm like, “do something!” I just want to see them do *something* — *anything* more than what they're doing now would be an improvement. ... But they basically tell us, “we don't care enough about you because you're such a small percentage on campus that we're not going to give you the funds or the money to do anything and to support y'all.” It really just feels like they don't care about us.

Phyliss would agree. She said,

Of course there's things I wish they did differently — especially when it comes to the Native community — because as far as minorities go, I personally feel like we're very much ignored in the university's eyes. They do the bare minimum they can to keep us off [the chancellor's] back.

Regardless of perceived lack of progress, our Relatives insist on holding the university accountable to making change. A concrete validation of these perceptions is in the lack of increased enrollment of Native students, cited in Chapter One. Margo expressed,

I think it's definitely very important because if we don't — the few of us that are here — if we don't talk about it and if we don't speak up and advocate, no one is going to do it for us. That's something this university has really taught me. If you don't speak up for yourself and what your community needs, no one's going to care. No one's going to do anything for you. Even like the allied professors. None of them are just gonna wake up one day and be like, “you know, I'm going to make this campus a better place for the Native students.” It's up to us to do that.

When our Relatives first came to the university, they likely did not set out to take the university's highest administration on. It is enough for them to do well in their classes, try to hold down jobs, secure internships, and get involved in extracurricular activities — but they are not going to school for just themselves. They are thinking about their ancestors, their relatives in the Indian Boarding Schools, and the future generations that might one day pursue higher education. In the next section, findings are discussed about how our Relatives are overcoming some of the barriers experienced in a higher education context.

Overcoming Barriers

This section presents findings related to additional themes experienced and how our Relatives overcame barriers that have implications for how universities could better support Native students. Among the findings, AISO membership was a valuable resource in overcoming barriers. The relatives know the confidence-building that comes with AISO membership is an important part of building resilience, and our Relatives expressed that in different ways.

Sense of Belonging within AISO

According to our Relatives, AISO is a “family” and it provides a safe space for celebration, comfort, and ceremony. Members remain part of the family, even after graduation, and for many, AISO remains their connection to the local Tribe and land. These relationships foster resilience and persistence, which are key to retention and also to the strength and support of each “family” member. In 2015, when Winona was first interviewed, she said AISO was “especially very meaningful” to her (Bradford, 2017). At the time, she was preparing to graduate, and she reflected,

As a Native and a White person, you kind of walk between two worlds. I was kind of walking the White world coming here, and my Native side was just my family. I didn't know that I could bring the two together at [the university]. So having AISO and

realizing there *is* a Native community on campus helped me bring them together and kind of reconcile things about my identity, as well. It made me feel more like there actually *is* a place on campus that can help me understand my experience.

Now an alum, Winona believes her AISO experience was more important to her development than she understood it to be, when she was an undergraduate. This realization influences the type of support she now provides as an alum. “Coming away from your reservation or your communities can be very different,” she remarked, “so we have created makeshift spaces so Native students know we'll understand them or we'll know how to pray with them or smudge with them, whatever is familiar.”

In 2015, Dennis shared that, “If you find out someone else is Native, you’re kind of like, ‘hey, I’ve got your back.’ So I am really close to a lot of the AISO members in my personal life” (Bradford, 2017). During our interview for this study, he shared that when he first attended the university, he experienced “a big, giant culture shock.” “But then it came to me: “You know what? I *do* belong here. I took the exact same tests as everyone else. I scored exactly the same, you know? I might've even done better.” Now, he affirmed, “I feel like some of these AISO students feel like they don't belong at the university until they actually meet other Indigenous people and bind together. That's what helps get them through college.” Dennis graduated in 2017, and reflecting back on his time at the university, he said,

I felt like even though the university had a lot of services and resources, they were just for the general student population and really problematic, still. I didn't feel safe. I didn't feel comfortable going to those resources, and the only resources I really took advantage of was whatever AISO offered, just because there was a strong Native connection there. People in AISO were real, you know? ... I still feel that great sense of belonging with AISO because a lot of them still keep connected with each other and it's really powerful. I

feel like we're kind of like a sorority. I still do check-ins with the other AISO members and also alumni. It seems like we have this family that just keeps on growing, you know? We have a lot of good resources, and I feel like we create a very, very good sense of belonging — to the point where people want to stick around and stay connected. And they do still refer to AISO as their family-away-from-family. I know from talking to different AISO alumni that they actually feel *more connected* to our AISO family than to their own families sometimes, which is very powerful once you think about it. ... There's a lot of good healing work that AISO does, just by being involved. Even the people who don't show up every meeting or who show up once in a blue moon — they still all stay connected with the people at AISO. Once they're in, they're in forever, you know?

Phyliss first met AISO during its annual Students Taking Action for Native Dreams of Success (STANDS) college exploration conference, and after participating in STANDS, she knew she wanted to attend the university. Now as a student, she shared,

Seeing [AISO members] on campus makes me feel more welcome and like I have a safe space on campus. And a big thing for me is constantly having my Indigeneity questioned — like all the time, from absolutely everybody. The group that doesn't ask me questions is *my fam* (AISO family) because everyone knows who I am and they all share those similar struggles of being, you know, *mixed*. And so that's really nice and really comforting to have. ... When I'm existing in a space with other AISO students, with [Deb], and with the [local Tribe], I feel a hundred-percent comfortable being myself.

According to our Relatives, it can be difficult to find AISO, and members find it in different ways, but often through word-of-mouth from other Native people they meet on campus. Margo met me at a cultural social held on campus at the beginning of her first year. We talked about being Native and I invited her to join AISO meetings, but it took a while for her to begin

attending frequently. “Toward the end of my sophomore year, I was really realizing how isolating it was to be a Native student on campus,” she recalled, “I barely knew any other Native students, and I felt really lonely. I missed connecting to other people who are Native. I thought ‘Maybe I’ll meet someone from my Tribe. That would be really cool.’ ” At the beginning of her third year, Margo attended an AISO meeting and met other new members. “After that, I just started going every week, and I made really fast friends with everyone. They just became my family so, so quick.” Theda, who joined her junior year, valued AISO and wished she would have known about it sooner. A professor teaching Native American History told her about AISO. “Honestly, I didn’t know that they existed. And maybe that’s just because I had been in my own little bubble. I don’t know. I guess I just never heard anything,” she recalled. She continued,

I remember that first meeting and being super scared, but we [Theda and Marcos] got there and it was really cool because — I don’t even know how to explain it — it was like an instant comfort. I didn’t feel like I was an invader to this space or that I was an outsider. It was like, “Oh, no, I *belong* here. I can be *here* and be *me*.” And it was cool. Everyone was super welcoming and super inviting and very helpful. And it was like, “yeah, let’s all hang out after meetings.” ... It was just like, “Whoa, this is what I’ve been missing out on and what I’ve been looking for.” That connection was one-hundred percent what I was looking for, and it was really cool to just find it.

Jean also had difficulty finding AISO and worried that other Native students needed that kind of support, but either could not find the group or suspected it was not for them. She implied, I think that the support always makes things better. It never makes things harder. But we don’t know what’s going on. There could be trauma. There could be isolation. There could be feelings like our community won’t be the same as theirs back home. ... There’s a lot of

reasons why someone might not join AISO. And it's possible that the ones that don't come to AISO are the ones who actually need a lot of help.

Marcos, who joined AISO in his third year, felt the meetings were a safe space for the Native students to voice their vulnerabilities and uplift each other. “In AISO, we embrace everyone's diverse richness, in our own cultures,” he shared, “It's just so beautiful how we're all diverse and we promote that diversity, but we all are a collective one and relate to each other as Indigenous people, as Native people.”

Margo agreed that AISO is “the only reason that I’ve been able to stay at this school and thrive here.” She said it was important to find other Native students who understood what it felt like to “be a minority of minorities” on campus. “AISO is paramount to my identity. It ended up helping me figure out what I want to do in grad school and what I want my career to be. It's really been pivotal for me,” she explained. Jean stated that her relationship with others in AISO is “unconditional” and that she “never expects any of them to leave [her] life.” “It’s a little bit more how I would feel about a family,” she shared. She continued,

I feel confident that if I don't talk to people in AISO for a couple months because I'm busy or whatever, those people are still going to be around and treat me the same. ... Since finding AISO, I’ve felt a little bit more confident and not alone on campus.

The confidence-building that comes with AISO membership is an important part of building resilience, and our Relatives expressed that in different ways. For example, Dennis suggested that by being very involved in AISO and speaking out about Native issues, he became recognizable by others on campus. That made him feel both connected and “semi-disconnected” at the same time, because while he felt good about meeting different people on campus, he also realized, “AISO is my family, and our family is *way different* than the other types of families.” Marcos would agree. He explained that wherever Native students are, they are there to make a

difference “not only for ourselves within our communities here, but for when we leave here and go do what we want to do to bring it back to our community as a whole.” The conviction Marcos has to defend the Native community is very strong, and just when he is feeling worn down, he remembers the resilience of his ancestors and that drives him to keep going. He reflected,

I feel like a lot of times when I was met with defeat or backlash for voicing my opinions about Native issues or speaking from the Native perspective — if I've been met with *this much* backlash and *this much* contention and *this much* defeat at this point in my life — I can only imagine how hard it will be the future, when I'm actively trying to do work that makes the community better and actively going against the oppressive systems and the oppressive structures within this country to make our community better. Oftentimes I'm like, “is it worth it? Is it worth, you know, going to the boiling point every single time?” And it's just that our inner-demons are telling us that, “maybe they were right. Maybe we weren't supposed to make it this far,” you know? These are just little tiny battles you have in your head, but then you realize the perseverance stuff. The Native community, as a whole, and the perseverance of your ancestors — to be at a place where no one thought you would be. I feel like that outweighs the bad scenes that you find in your head. ...

Theda, who joined AISO with Marcos, recalled that even though she felt Native students were not “necessarily given open arms” and “not really necessarily welcomed” on campus, she was determined to make others acknowledge her. “I kind of just think it comes down to my personality,” she asserted, “I'm kind of like ‘I'm here, and I'm here to stay, and you're going to know I'm here’.” She contended that if Native students are not like that, then they get “just brushed under the rug, straight up,” although at times, making herself connect to others on campus was “exhausting, very exhausting.”

Winona described a coping tactic that she and other AISO students sometimes used in order to get through situations that felt culturally incongruent:

It's almost like performative assimilation. I don't know. Like, we all know we're okay, so when we go into this space that's White-dominated, we're going to act *this way* and then we're going to leave and discuss and analyze how we can decolonize that space. So we know kind of how to play the colonizers' game, in some ways.

However, this tactic seemed necessary to Winona and the other Native students because if they could get through adversities on campus, they knew they would come out stronger. “We're going to get this paper (degree). We're going to get this education and learn the Western way so that we can take it and serve our communities,” Winona said. Now as an alum, Winona sees how today's AISO students are thriving and she is so proud. She reflected,

I look at the resiliency of the students and they're awesome. Like, they're killing it. They're making waves in all the different fields that they're going into, with all the work that's being done for our people. And even if they're not working for our people, just having them be happy, healthy, successful in whatever it is they seek out to do — not in the Western sense of success, of like money or whatever — but just success with finding their balance in the world and knowing their path and walking in a good way. *That's* success. That's stopping the cycle of trauma in its tracks so that the next generations can live that same healthy, balanced lifestyle.

She continued,

And I'm reflecting on this year and how the top two awards in the university went to Native students, but that's not really advertised or known about. We just know that because in our small community, we keep tabs with each other. We talk about it. We find ways to celebrate and advocate and amplify one another, when there's not really space to

do that otherwise. Like, the ones who make it to university, they are resilient. They're strong. Whether by their own work or their family's work or grandma's work, whoever it is, they've made it. And they make the most they can out of that opportunity. I have so much pride for our youth who are doing that.

AISO alum Dennis also feels proud of today's AISO and Native students. He observed, I think our students are doing okay. I think every generation that passes by, the healing journey that these students take is getting better and better. Previous AISO members were able to kind of create a space for those Indigenous voices, so I feel like the healing journey is getting better with these current AISO students. I also feel like there's a lot of work that still needs to be done. I feel like the AISO students don't feel a sense of belonging at the university itself. That's why they had to create their own separate space and their own separate family.

When he and Winona were undergraduates at the university, other AISO alumni and members of the local Tribe took care of them. Just as our Relatives described trauma as intergenerational earlier in this chapter, so is the caretaking and nurturing provided for healing. "That's just how our culture and communities do it," Winona explained. She reflected,

It was really impactful for me having those people show up and be present and hold space, and so I try to carry that forward in my new role as an alum and as a community member. I just try to be present, to be called on for support as needed.

Dennis shared that a particular AISO alum, whom I will call "Ofelia," modeled the type of actively involved alum he wanted to be. He commented,

I really looked up to [Ofelia], you know, and now I want to be there for the AISO kids. Even though I was a kid, [Ofelia] was just there. She would show up randomly and be like, "Hey, I'm here. Just remember," and it was always amazing to have her there. So I

kind of went with that philosophy and just showed AISO, "Hey, I'm here. Don't forget I'm here. If you need anything, just let me know. If you want me to teach you how to make frybread or a new recipe, just use me as a resource." ... So I'm just being there, making sure that they continue down their path of healing.

Sense of Belonging with the Local Tribe

For the past six or seven years, local Tribal member Deb has reached out to new AISO students to welcome them to the Tribe's land and to offer them love and support through their university tenure and beyond. Our Relatives enjoy this very special relationship with her and described it as "maternal," and as discussed earlier in this chapter, our Relatives have come to feel protective of the Tribe. The relationships our Relatives develop and maintain with the Tribe create a unique sense of belonging to the community that benefits the university, even if the university, according to our Relatives, does not actively facilitate those relationships between its Native students and the local Tribe. In this subtheme, findings are presented about how our Relatives report benefitting from this sense of belonging with the local Tribe and how AISO students believe the university and others on campus also might, for example, by providing cultural understanding and teaching.

Theda was introduced to Deb and other members of the local Tribe shortly after she joined AISO, and she appreciated how they were "super welcoming and friendly and helpful" to her. She remarked,

I remember them coming in, doing blessings for us, and it was just a really, really nice way to feel connected to the land and the land's people. Like, "Okay. I'm okay to be here. I got the blessing." It was honestly just really important to me. ... And it's been very enlightening and honestly educational for me to learn more about the land and everything here and what they have going on. And it's really nice to talk to them because they're

older than me, and the elders — they have all this knowledge and input and tips and tricks on how to navigate life as a Native. I needed that. So yeah, [the Tribe is] very, very important and near and dear to my heart.

Deb, who did not participate in this study, but with whom I enjoy a close relationship, reinforces that family-feeling that already grows inside AISO. For example, Phyliss expressed, [Deb] is kind of everyone's second mom, you know? She comes to our AISO events and she always makes sure that we have what we need as far as support. She offers us rides to places. She's the MVP, as far as people go. She's just a wonderful human being. ... Having her and her family at all of our events, it is so very important to have them at everything that we do because this is their land that we're on. And a lot of people don't know that. They're so welcoming and kind to us, even though we're in their space. Like they're just good people. They have such kind hearts, considering all the horrible things that have happened and the way that they're still treated, the way that the university treats their land. They are so, so amazing and resilient and beautiful people, and I love them very much. And [Deb] is a very important person to me. She's always shown me kindness, always from the get-go.

Similarly, Margo looks to Deb for a maternal kind of support. She recalled, I know of a lot of folks within the [Tribe], but I don't know anyone as close as I know [Deb]. She's just kind of been my local mom, and that's it. Just super welcoming and always made me feel included, like I was a valued member of AISO, and like I was welcomed not only at this school, but on her land. I've just been really thankful to kind of feel adopted by her for the time that I'm here. And I know that even after I'm gone, I hope we'll have a really good relationship because she's just so warm and welcoming, and I am

very appreciative of her and all the support that the entire [Tribe] gives us. She just always made me feel welcome and I'm really thankful for her and for the [Tribe].

Deb has even helped AISO students with their coursework. "I got to know [Deb] very well, and we worked on a project together for [the student government] and she taught me a lot. Since then, we've been really close," Jean shared. Winona, who met Deb while she was still a student, continues to nurture a close relationship with her. She suggested, "Everybody needs a [Deb] in their life. Like, my gosh, I think about the sense of community that it would cultivate!"

As a designated land-grant institution, the university, according to our Relatives, has a responsibility to be in a consulting relationship with the local federally recognized Tribe, and the particular Tribal band on whose village sites the university sits is not yet federally recognized. Regardless, and perhaps even more so, our Relatives feel very strongly that the university has responsibilities to the local band. "If you're going to be on this land, you should know about the history. You shouldn't get to ignorantly just go about your lives," asserted Theda. Marcos speculated that if the university partnered with the Tribe's local band, the quality of education would improve. He remarked,

I've definitely had some times where I'm like, "man, I just want to leave this place." But if there was more support for our (Native) community, then there'd be better things going on on this campus, you know? There'd be an establishment of a relationship with the [Tribe]. There would be better services offered to Native students. There'd be better education about Native cultures, whether it be the generalized American Native culture or Indigenous cultures around the world.

Similarly, Dennis implied, "If the university had a *real* relationship with the [Tribe's] people, I feel like [the Tribe] could provide a little more cultural teaching and cultural understanding." He continued,

I know a lot of the American Indian & Indigenous Studies classes at [the university] base their teachings and materials off of books that are written by non-Native people who don't properly represent Indigenous populations or who kind of make assumptions about Indigenous people, when, in reality, they might be totally off, you know? And if [Tribe's] people were to have a *real* relationship with the university, in a positive way, where the university wasn't trying to exploit the local [Tribal] people, then I feel like there'd be a lot better understanding and cultural teachings in those classrooms. I feel like the university should invite professors to reach out to the [Tribal] people and be like, "Hey, teach this class. I know I'm a White guy or a non-Indigenous person teaching this class, but I really want to have your voices in this class."

A point of agreement among our Relatives is the desire for accurate, appropriate, land-based education and a belief the university cannot provide them that without consulting, partnering, and perhaps also hiring members from the local Tribe. "I'm like, why would the university *not* want to foster good relationships with the [local Tribal band]? That would help Native students to be able to thrive," attested Margo. Our AISO Relatives believe that non-Native campus community members would also benefit if the university had a relationship with the local Tribal band. "I think it would create a more harmonious connection between the students and faculty," Theda implied. "They would get to learn about this land that our school sits on. They would get to learn about the plants and the animals here, and they would get to learn the history — the *real history*." She continued,

They would gain an appreciation and maybe be more considerate of the land and what they do and how they act toward it. ... They would be able to take a moment, and hopefully realize all of the lost lives that came from when this land was taken over. ... I think they would benefit by learning more about our experiences and how to navigate life

in *our* ways. And learn how to, if anything, empower us and be positive allies and encourage us to reclaim our spaces and encourage us to be vocal.

Winona expressed that she is “desperate” for non-Native people to learn the history of the land on which the campus sits and to develop their sense of purpose and connection there. “I speculate that a lot of students who aren't connected in a way that our Native students are to their culture are just kind of *floundering*, trying to find a purpose and a sense of belonging to *something*,” she said. Phyliss simply wants non-Native campus community members to give relationships with the local Tribe and Native students a chance. “I don't see how anyone can lose by being more of an educated, compassionate, human being. How are you losing anything, you know?,” she asked. “Also, please listen to us, because we're the authorities on this issue. And, like, stop talking about us in past-tense.”

Summary

This chapter introduced our Relatives (family background, education) and identified four areas of findings: intersectional identities, historical trauma, challenges and gaps in service, and overcoming barriers with implications for better serving Native students. A key point about Native students' *intersectional identities* is that many Native students already feel that their Indigeneity is questioned, overlooked, or is not safe to express on campus. When the students are further evaluated by others for their genders and/or sexual identities, ethnic identities, or place-based upbringings, our Relatives' sense of belonging on campus increasingly suffers. Many Native students are aware of the *historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools* and some feel it in different ways. Significantly, all of our Relatives were knowledgeable about the history, and many knew of an ancestor or elder who had attended. All of our Relatives, through first-hand and second-hand accounts, report intergenerational trauma. Among the *challenges and gaps in service* are that modern curriculum, presented through a Western lens, does not accurately

portray the Indigenous experience. Regarding *better serving Native students*, our Relatives are quick to speak up for the local Tribe because, based on results, the university does not have a formal policy or practice of acknowledging the local Tribe. However, our Relatives are not always as quick to speak up for themselves because they are so aware that they are in the minority of minorities on campus and speaking up can sometimes feel scary and exhausting. Actions our Relatives suggest include hiring Native-identified counselors who understand issues of trauma and who might offer traditional methods of care. Our Relatives continue to turn to each other and members of the local Tribe for cultural care and support in processing and overcoming these barriers. The following chapter discusses these findings in light of existing literature and implications for future research and practice are identified.

CHAPTER FIVE

Moving Forward: Discussion of Results and Implications

Using the overarching history of Indian Education as a lens, this study explored how students perceive the university experience coming from an Indigenous worldview while studying in a Western-modeled academy. My intention with this study was to develop recommendations for how universities can better support Native students, informed by the voices and identities of the AISO students, recent AISO alumni, and members of the local Tribe. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the university experience like for today's Native American students? That is:
 - a. What do we need to understand about Native students' intersectional identities?
 - b. What do we need to understand about the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools felt by today's Native students? In what ways?
 - c. What are the present challenges and gaps in service experienced by today's Native students?
2. In what ways do Native students perceive the university could better support Native students?

Summary of Study

Chapter One introduced the background, purpose, and professional significance of this study. My previous research with AISO students indicated that many experienced conflict, aggression, and culture shock on campus, leading to fears for safety and feelings of loneliness, invisibility, isolation, and frustration (Bradford, 2017). Those findings echoed accounts in the literature about Native students' experiences in the Indian Boarding Schools, so the study was designed to look at the overarching history of Indian Education and to learn what the university experience is like for today's Native students. Further, I wanted to understand how Native

students' intersectional identities influenced and were influenced by their university experiences and how the students perceived the university could better support them. Chapter Two reviewed literature about the history of Indian Education and the impact that Indian Boarding Schools had on Native students, families, and Tribes. Much of the literature reviewed was penned by Native authors. Literature was reviewed about Indigenous research methodologies and frameworks, some of which informed this study's methodologies. The last section of Chapter Two reviewed literature on "belongingness" (e.g., Brayboy et al., 2012) and what it meant to today's Native students, whose personal identities are richly diverse. To honor their intersectional identities, literature was reviewed about the influence of Native peoples' place-based upbringings (e.g., urban, rural, and reservation Indians); Tribal and other ethnic, racial, and cultural affiliations; religious and spiritual beliefs or practices; and diverse gender and sexual identities.

Chapter Three explained the methodology for this study, which was qualitative and a mix of Indigenous and Western research approaches. This chapter shared my research questions, details about the research site, participants, and my data gathering and analysis procedures. Major themes, minor themes, and related subthemes that emerged in the analysis were identified, as well as lessons learned from a pilot test conducted in June 2020 with one of the AISO alumni also interviewed in 2015 for a related study (Bradford, 2017). Lastly, I explained ethical considerations and reflexivity as a Native scholar and researcher. Chapter Four detailed findings from this study that reported seven Native students' perceptions about their university experiences in the categories of Understanding Native Students' Intersectional Identities; Effects from Historical Trauma of Indian Boarding Schools; Present-Day Challenges and Gaps in Service; and Overcoming Barriers. Each Relative interviewed for this study was introduced in a brief vignette, with a discussion of ways each suggested the university could better support them.

The belongingness they created with each other and local Tribal members was also described as influencing their persistence in school. In the following section, findings in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two are discussed.

Discussion of Findings

As noted above, in Chapter Two, a review of the relevant literature presented several key points and these points informed my research questions. As Table 9 below shows, findings from the existing literature align with several of this study’s findings, as reported by our Relatives. Table 9 presents summaries of findings aligned with existing literature and areas of literature. Further, each area of literature is aligned with a particular research question. In the section following Table 9, questions raised in an expansion of the existing literature are answered, with particular attention paid to possible administrative solutions for providing better support for Native students.

Table 9
Consistencies in Findings from Existing Literature and New Research with AISO Relatives

Area of Literature	Findings from Existing Literature	New Research with Relatives
Boarding School Practices (RQ1b)	Ellis (2006) found that some students in Indian Boarding Schools valued learning how the White world worked.	Winona said, “We know kind of how to play the colonizers' game, in some ways. ... We're going to get this paper (degree). We're going to get this education and learn the Western way so that we can take it and serve our communities.”
Boarding School Impact on Students (RQ1b)	Adams (1995), Child (1998), and Ellis (2006) found that students in Indian Boarding Schools were suffering from homesickness that was compounded by hostility and assaults from White teachers and administrators.	Dennis remarked, “I’m just seeing the similarities between the Indian Boarding School practices and the university’s practices. Even though it’s mild — well, quote-unquote, “mild” — it still is triggering in a way where it’s like my mind automatically goes into survival mode. Like, “okay, what do I need to do in order to survive this classroom?” You know? It may not be life-and-death-situation for me, but my mind automatically went to

		<p>life-and-death.” Theda agreed, “Yes, we’re not in boarding schools, but we’re still having some of these ideas pushed down our throats. Everyone talks about, ‘Oh, this was a thing of the past,’ but here we are in 2020, and this is still, in some ways, alive. . . . The way they’re treating us and acting and trying to get us to conform to these ways is still very alive and well.”</p>
<p>Boarding School Impact on Students (RQ1b)</p>	<p>Dixon (2006) found that students who attended modern, Tribally-controlled Indian Boarding Schools enjoyed learning alongside other Native students and building community together.</p>	<p>Margo said, “[AISO] “just became my family so, so quickly.” Phyliss confirmed, “Seeing [AISO members] on campus makes me feel more welcome and like I have a safe space on campus. And a big thing for me is constantly having my Indigeneity questioned — like all the time, from absolutely everybody. The group that doesn’t ask me questions is <i>my fam</i> (AISO family).” Dennis shared, “It seems like we have this family that just keeps on growing, you know? . . . I feel like we create a very, very good sense of belonging — to the point where people want to stick around and stay connected. And they do still refer to AISO as their family-away-from-family. I know from talking to different AISO alumni that they actually feel <i>more connected</i> to our AISO family than to their own families sometimes, which is very powerful once you think about it.”</p>
<p>Boarding School Impact on Families/Communities (RQ1b)</p>	<p>Dixon and Trafzer (2006) found that Native student activists used school sites as meeting grounds to discuss issues affecting Tribal sovereignty.</p>	<p>Marcos explained, “I feel like the system of forced assimilation that had been implemented within boarding schools is applicable to a university structure in terms of how academia is presented and how — more often than not — you’re trying to fight back against something that’s wrong.” Winona asked, “Isn’t academia tired of hearing its own same perspective over and over and over again? Like, what if we were able to decolonize it? Or go further and Indigenize it?”</p>
<p>Boarding School Impact on</p>	<p>Dixon (2006) found that students</p>	<p>Phyliss, who attended an AISO</p>

Institutions (RQ1b)	<p>who attended modern, Tribally-controlled Indian Boarding Schools felt they had to unite with other Native students so they could fight and regain what was lost.</p>	<p>program as a high school student, recalled, “This is where I want to go to school because this is where I can see myself having Indigenous family that's going to accept me for who I am and help me learn about my culture.” Dennis implied, “It’s definitely felt by the Native students today. ... Just knowing that this history is part of who they were and that this history is a part of Native people, you know? ... A lot of people lost a lot of their Indigenous identities. It’s still there, but they lost it. They just need to try to find it.”</p>
Tribes’ Responsibilities Regarding Indian Education (RQ1c)	<p>Dixon (2006) found that students who attended modern, Tribally-controlled Indian Boarding Schools learned from each other, practiced cultures with each other, and worked to take back their schools for their ancestors and future students.</p>	<p>Marcos lamented, “I can only imagine how hard it will be in the future, when I'm actively trying to do work that makes the community better and actively going against the oppressive systems ... Oftentimes I’m like, “is it worth it? Is it worth, you know, going to the boiling point every single time?” And it's just that our inner-demons are telling us that, “maybe they were right. Maybe we weren't supposed to make it this far,” you know? These are just little tiny battles you have in your head, but then you realize the perseverance stuff. The Native community, as a whole, and the perseverance of your ancestors — to be at a place where no one thought you would be.”</p>
Importance of Indigenous Research Methodologies	<p>Swisher (1998) cited a 1989 report that stated Native students needed to produce research, rather than serve as subjects and consumers of research, so more accurate depictions of Native people could become known (also see Kovach, 2010).</p>	<p>Jean attested, “When we're taught in classes, we're always positioned as a historical past. And so, it's like if you don't know how to tie a bow and arrow or make some rope out of animals, it doesn't mean anything. But that doesn't mean that you're not Native. ... We are not the same people we were 500 years ago. And it's just really frustrating that people expect us to be.” Winona said, “What comes to mind is History and Anthropology ... they're not taught from the perspectives of our people, from decolonized or Indigenous worldviews. They’re told from the perspective of the</p>

		<p>colonizers, the Western society. So it's <i>their</i> account of history. It's <i>their</i> account of our communities through <i>their</i> worldviews, through <i>their</i> experiences. So then we show up and we're like, "wait, the way you're telling that this account happened is <i>maybe</i> true, according to <i>your</i> perspectives and experiences, but to us, it's <i>not</i>."</p>
<p>Native Scholar's Role in Research</p>	<p>Guyette (1983) argued against a dominant research position that only outsider-researchers were free from biases that would prevent objective studies by saying the extreme position would mean that only minority researchers would be qualified to research within the dominant culture.</p>	<p>Phyliss pleaded, "Please listen to us, because we're the authorities." Dennis maintained, "It's like the students are becoming the educators, which is good and bad, because I am paying money to learn. But yet, I have to be the teacher, so it's kind of like, "where's my paycheck? Where's my stipend?"</p>
<p>Belongingness with Today's Native Students (RQ1c)</p>	<p>Wilson (2008) found that relationships developed within community and shared environments are the foundation upon which new knowledge can be built.</p>	<p>Marcos recalled, "I came to some of the [AISO] meetings, and it definitely has become a comfort zone and a safe space. Not only for myself to voice my opinions, but for us to voice our vulnerability as Native students on this campus, and also to uplift all the other Native students who might not feel like there is that sense of connectedness with the university." Theda affirmed, "I was introduced to people in AISO and our community, and it was just like, 'Whoa, this is what I've been missing out on, and what I've been looking for.'"</p>
<p>Belongingness with Today's Native Students (RQ1c)</p>	<p>Smith (2012) wrote that Native students make up less than one-percent of all university students, so they have a lot of responsibility to promote and protect Indigenous knowledgeways that conflict with mainstream worldviews.</p>	<p>Phyliss implied, "Native students make up less than one-percent of the population at [the university], so to them, we just don't exist." Jean wondered, "It's like, 'Okay, do I want this person to actually learn and become a better person and do less harm to our community in the future?' It's about protection. The reason why we answer the questions is for protection for our future youth. We want to protect them. So it's like, do I answer that question <i>now</i>? Or do I just let them go into the world not knowing, because they're <i>not</i> going to Google</p>

it.” Margo agreed, “The few of us that are here — if we don't talk about it and if we don't speak up and advocate, no one is going to do it for us. That's something this university has really taught me. If you don't speak up for yourself and what your community needs, no one's going to care. No one's going to do anything for you. Even the allied professors.” Theda explained, “It's very tough because we only make up around 1% and are kind of like the forgotten group. ... We're constantly having to defend ourselves. We're constantly having to be like, ‘well, no, *this* is why *this*, and *this* is why *that*’ We're playing this constant battle, day in and day out.” “Bottom line, it's racism,” declared AISO alum Dennis. “Like, if we say, ‘Hey, this is how we *actually* represent ourselves,’ there's a lot of eye-rolling. Not only with TAs (teaching assistants), but with classroom members and, like, freaking professors who have tenure.”

Native Students' Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)

Wilson (2008) wrote that the “nature of our relationships with the land leads directly to our spirituality and sense of belonging.”

Winona shared, “I'm desperate for people to know the history of the land and be able to feel their own sense of purpose and connection. I speculate that a lot of students who aren't connected in a way that our Native students are to their culture are just kind of floundering, trying to find a purpose and a sense of belonging to something.” Margo responded, “I think that students need to know they're on Indigenous land, because that's a real shocker to them — that all land is stolen land. They're like ‘What?’ But, just from my experience, being connected to [Deb] and being connected to the [local Tribe], it brings me such a sense of belonging and family.” Theda reflected, “I remember [members from the local Tribe] coming in, blessing us, and it was just a really, really nice way to feel connected to the land and the land's people and be like, ‘Okay, I'm okay

		<p>to be here. I got the blessing.” Marcos explained, “If there's no representation of Native people — in particular, your Native personal home and Native community — then that could also feel like some sort of defeat because you feel like you just don't belong, especially being at a university so far away from home.”</p>
<p>Native Students’ Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)</p>	<p>Brayboy et al. (2012) wrote that Native students persist in school because they believe getting an education will help them help their families.</p>	<p>Theda recalled, “I don't feel like there were a lot of resources to support me as a Native student, and instead I was always met with more and more reminders of, “Oh yeah, I shouldn't be here. This isn't meant for me. This is not my place.” ... At times I really questioned, “should I transfer?” But it was like, “I'm the only person to go to college in my family,” so I was like, “no, I have to finish. I'm not going to drop out. ... Being forced to be in these uncomfortable environments and situations helped push my passion for wanting to go into even higher education to help fix this, and that's why I want to get a Ph.D. in Indigenous Studies.” Margo agreed, “I'm just trying to find the things that are going to help me be happy and successful and use my privilege, being in higher education, to give back to my community and lift my community up so we can help break these chains of violence and trauma.”</p>
<p>Native Students’ Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)</p>	<p>Little Soldier (1997) wrote that many people today do not acknowledge Native peoples’ cultural identities because they think that Native people no longer exist.</p>	<p>Jean noted, “When we're taught in classes, we're always positioned as a historical past.” Phyliss confirmed, “To [the university], we just don't exist. ... It bugs me that people see Natives as a thing of the past.” Theda contended, “They think we're some myth of the past. ... Like we don't exist. If we <i>are</i> acknowledged, we're met with a really weird fetish or fascination.” Marcos recalled, “I've met several people that have told me, ‘I've never met a Native American in my life.’ And I was like, ‘You've probably seen some in passing. You</p>

		<p>just never knew. You just can't expect that we're all gone.” Margo voiced, “If you don't know that we exist, then you just don't get me.”</p>
<p>Native Students' Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)</p>	<p>Little Soldier (1997) wrote that educators should assume that rural and reservation Indians will experience culture shock on campus and that all Native students likely will experience prejudice, racism, and rejection.</p>	<p>Dennis reflected, “It was kind of a culture shock coming from a rural area to an urban area and seeing urban-Native perspectives compared to the rural-Native perspective. I was seeing both sides of the coin, you know, and whatever's in between the coin.” Winona explained, “Coming away from your reservation or your communities can be very different.” Marcos, also from a rural area, affirmed, “For a lot of people, this is a culture shock. I can speak for myself, coming from a not-so-financially-stable background, that being in college brings financial stress, which leads to mental stress, which then leads to emotional breakdowns, mental breakdown, and stuff like that.” Theda remarked, “A conversation I had with a professor was, ‘Well, you know, you're generations down from your relatives who are full-blooded, and so you're Native, but you don't count like they did in the past. And I'm like, ‘No, that makes zero sense.’”</p>
<p>Native Students' Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)</p>	<p>Little Soldier (1997) and Horse (2005) found that educators may not consider Native students' Indigenous identities if they have Anglo-sounding last names or if they do not “look Indian.”</p>	<p>Marcos asserted, “As a White-passing person, my identity gets brought up because I ‘don't look Native.’ And I'm like, ‘See, a lot of Natives come in all shapes, sizes, colors, shades ... there's no particular way to look. And the way that you think that we should all look is very stereotypical and low-key kind of racist.’” Phyliss lamented, “People think that I'm a ‘box-checker.’ That's been my biggest fear since day one, especially starting with my college applications. I was like, ‘I know I don't look the way that people expect me to look, and I don't want them to think that I'm a box-checker,’ because I'm not. ... I always feel like I'm having to prove</p>

it to other people. ... There is no blueprint for how a Native person looks. The very first thing that people process when you say you're Native is that you aren't matching up to the stereotypes they have in their heads about what a Native person looks like." Theda responded, "I get those questions all the time and I hate having to justify myself. I shouldn't have to, but it's always the, 'Oh, well, I can't tell what you are' or 'Oh, you're Native? Well, you don't look Native.' I've had someone say I don't 'sound Native,' and I was like, 'what does that mean?' I was like, 'Excuse me? I never realized that we have a sound!'" Winona remarked, "We're one of the few groups that almost needs to 'prove' our identity. Like, 'Oh, you're Native? So, like, how much?' Or, you know, 'Oh, you don't look like one.' ... Yes, I am also White — but that doesn't take away from me being a Native person." Margo wondered, "I feel like when I'm with non-Native folks, I always have to make the decision: Do I talk to them about being Native? Because I can pass as ethnically ambiguous or Latinx, and I don't really have to share. It's always a decision because it's risky information. Sometimes you open yourself up to microaggressions and sometimes to outright aggression." Jean declared, "I usually ignore when people ask about cultural identity, because I don't want to fit into whatever someone's perception of the box is, because their perception of the box is almost always wrong."

Native Students' Intersectional Identities (RQ1a)

Driskill (2010) found that Two-Spirited (2S) people feel closely connected to the land and their communities, which is not a worldview typically understood or shared by those in the LGBTQ community, to which sometimes 2S people are assigned.

Dennis explained, "Even if you are part of the LGBTQ+ community, that does not necessarily mean you are spirited, because you have to earn that title. And once you're in that title, you're kind of honored and you're going about a good path. Even if you stray ... you could always go back to that path, in order

to live with life and help out the community in a good way.”

Table 9 illustrated how several findings were consistent with existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two, but some findings expanded what was already reported in the literature. These expanded findings, which still relate to the study’s Research Questions 1 and 2, are presented below.

The first area of literature addresses the university experience for Native students (e.g., identities, historical trauma, gaps in service) (RQ1). In the area of literature about Indian Boarding School practices, Child (1998) found that at the risk of punishment, some children in the Indian Boarding Schools continued to pray in their Tribal languages so they would not forget how to speak or they vowed to relearn any language they might forget while they in school. Child wrote that this demonstrated the children’s unwavering commitment to their Native identities, families, and communities. More than a century later, findings from the present study indicate that today’s Native students also feel compelled to learn their heritage languages. Further, six of our seven Relatives speak at least some of their languages, although some are turning to books and websites to learn. Whereas Child found that young Indian Boarding School attendees forgot their languages because they were removed from their family members who were fluent, many of our Relatives do not have fluent speakers in their families or Tribal communities or have access to those who do speak because our Relatives do not live in their Tribal communities.

Theda, whose great-grandparents attended Indian Boarding Schools, was told about how they “lost a lot of their language” and “were not allowed to even be with their own people” in the schools. She has been teaching herself to speak by reading books. “I’d like to learn more and

... I think it'll take me meeting the people that can actually teach me the proper ways to say things and guide me in the right way," she said. Marcos, whose grandmother's uncles attended Indian Boarding Schools, shared that he thinks about "how these students, these children, these babies, were in school ... speaking their Native language — that's all they knew — and having soap put in their mouths or hit" and how he is determined to learn *Yoeme*, the traditional language of the Yaqui. Marcos knows the words for "mother" and "father" and knows various greetings and catch-phrases, and he is using a website to teach himself more, but finds it very hard to learn — subjects are inverted and the placement of articles in sentences is "really weird." Marcos, who also speaks Spanish, explained that part of the challenge is that *Yoeme* was first translated into Spanish, then translated into English, and overall, he gets frustrated because he cannot remember what he learns.

Margo, whose mother and grandmother attended Catholic school, where "there was a lot of pressure to assimilate," knows how to introduce herself in her heritage language and can say her numbers, animals, and colors. "I hope I'm making the ancestors proud with that, but we don't have any fluent speakers of our language left," she lamented. Dennis learned about Indian Boarding Schools from Tribal elders who attended, and he also has spent time with his elders to learn his heritage language. According to what his Tribal elders told him, "A lot of the Indigenous peoples' families who went to the boarding schools, you know, they kind of renounced their language. They renounced anything Indigenous." However, Dennis, now an AISO alum, feels determined to help other AISO students connect to their own Tribes and language resources so they can keep their languages alive, and he is even making attempts to "push away some of that colonized language" he learned at the university and "go back to where [his] roots are."

One of my teachers taught me that his elders taught him ‘speak the White man's tongue with an Indian heart.’ So I took whatever knowledge I was able to get at [the university], and then I was able to speak the White man’s tongue, and now I’m trying to use all that knowledge and go about it with Indian heart. I had to translate a colonized language into a decolonized practice. ... So if you hear me cussing or talking a little more — quote-unquote — *ghetto* nowadays, it’s because my work and the way I speak is a representation of where I come from, you know?

The above examples support and also further Child’s (1998) findings about Native children remaining committed to keeping their heritage languages awake because, while many of our Relatives do not have access to elders who still speak, they are determined to teach themselves by modern means, such as books and websites.

In the area of literature about the impact that Indian Boarding Schools had on students, many attendees were forced to convert to Christianity in the schools, and that is the religion they passed on to their next generations. However, Deloria, Jr., (1994) found that many Native people today feel that Christianity does not entirely work for them and they want to return to their old religions and traditional practices, but elders who once understood these ceremonies and medicines have passed on. Five of our seven Relatives either practice some of their Tribes’ cultures and/or ceremonies or they are trying to learn how to. One Relative explained she is not able to when she is on campus because she is not with her family, and another Relative responded her family practices but she does not “yet.” However, most AISO students, including these Relatives, have participated in smudging; sang a song gifted to AISO by the local Tribe (sung in that Tribal band’s heritage language); participated in a blanketing ceremony (whether they were the honoree/recipient or they were honoring someone else); grew and maintained ceremonial medicines; or danced, sang, or spoke at ceremonial gatherings and/or powwows.

When our Relatives talked about practicing their own Tribes' cultural or ceremonial practices (Cajete, 2015), they talked about their families. For example, Marcos, who is Pascua Yaqui, explained "*Pascua*" in Spanish means "Easter" and "*Yaqui*" in his traditional language means "people," and he finds being called the "Easter People" ironic because of his Tribe's history of assimilation through Catholicism. He recalled participating in a certain ceremony in which a blend of traditional Yaqui and Catholic symbols were present.

So on the Holy Sunday, or Easter, there's a ceremony which is obviously a day of remembrance, of culture, history, and rejuvenation. I didn't grow up with an immersive culture within the Yaqui people, but I grew up with Yaqui aspects of Yaqui culture. There were festivals we would go to with deer dancers and traditional foods and music and stuff like that. So although we are quite far, far from the reservation, we still do our own little thing at home and make food and stuff like that.

Phyliss, Dennis, and Winona participate in their Tribes' cultural or ceremonial practices, too. Dennis, an AISO alum, recalled that one of his cultural needs that was not being met when he was a student was having space on campus to do ceremony. Winona, also an AISO alum, had the same concern when she was a student and she continues to worry about the spiritual health and wellbeing of current Native students.

I didn't have access to medicine or like a place to pray that felt safe. Like, okay, you can go out to the lagoon, you can go to the beach, whatever. But you might see some kids out drinking beer on the beach or whatever — it is not a safe space. ... There's no cultural advisor on staff, you know? Or spiritual advisor on staff for Native students to go to if they need a smudge, need someone to sing them a song, offer a prayer, or help provide some community counseling, you know?

Theda and Margo's families do not talk much about what was culturally lost after their family members left the Indian Boarding School and Catholic School, respectively. Regarding cultural or ceremonial practices, Theda shared that her mother no longer talks to her own father or his side of the family, so "it's not something we were necessarily able to easily access." Instead, Theda has tried to learn about her Tribes' practices on her own and Dennis told her he could introduce her to a friend who is also Blackfoot, who might be able to help her. "He showed me a bunch of her pictures and wants to get us connected. I hope to someday visit the land and learn more," Theda commented. In the meantime, she respectfully participates in other Tribes' cultures or ceremonial practices. "That is all I have ever been exposed to — the peoples of the lands that I've either grown up on or that I've lived in," she said. Margo was sure her ancestors were sent to Catholic school to learn Catholicism and that her whole family is Catholic and speaks Spanish. "It's like, okay, where did that come from? But they don't talk about it. My family just doesn't talk about that," she shared. Margo's mother was the first to move away from their Tribe, creating some distance — while Margo knows some of her Tribe's cultural and ceremonial practices, she is not able to participate as often as she would like. Jean Tribe's practices are "very scattered" and that "things have only started to grow within the last recent years," and while she does not "yet" practice, her family does.

The above examples support and also further Deloria, Jr.'s, (1994) findings about Native people being hungry for a return to the old religions and traditions because, while some of our Relatives do not have easy access to learn or practice their own Tribes' ceremonies, they are taking it upon themselves to try and learn. Also, most, if not all, have participated in ceremonial aspects of other Tribes, including those taught to them by members of the local Tribe.

In the area of literature about Indigenous Research Methodologies, Kimmerer (2013) wrote about an experience one of her graduate students had when she chose to honor the

traditional knowledgeways of harvesting sweetgrass (a ceremonial medicine) in order to produce a healthier plot, which contradicted the predictions of her academic committee. One committee member told her “I don’t see anything new here for science ... there’s not even a theoretical framework,” and her program’s dean said, “Anyone knows that harvesting a plant will damage the population. You’re wasting your time. And I’m afraid I don’t find this whole ‘traditional knowledge’ thing very convincing” (p. 159).

Similarly, all seven of our Relatives reported that Indigenous knowledgeways were ignored or challenged in their classrooms and that they sometimes felt they had to defend themselves. Theda explained, “We’re constantly having to defend ourselves. We’re constantly having to be like, ‘well, no, *this* is why *this*, and *this* is why *that*’ We’re playing this constant battle, day in and day out.” AISO alum Dennis affirmed, “Bottom line, it’s racism. Like, if we say, ‘Hey, this is how we *actually* represent ourselves,’ there’s a lot of eye-rolling. Not only with TAs (teaching assistants), but with classroom members and, like, freaking professors who have tenure.” Dennis, whose mother taught him traditional perspectives around a fire when he was little, continued with an account about a History course he and another AISO student took together because it would count toward the completion of their minors in American Indian & Indigenous studies.

A lot of the students were making assumptions about Indigenous people. An example would be when they were talking about women when they’re *on their moon*, but they said “period.” The professor asked “So, why do you think that the women can’t smudge or go into a sweat lodge when they’re on their period?” And a student raised her hand — she was a Caucasian girl — and she said very sarcastically, “Because women are evil and anything that bleeds is bad, is the devil,” you know? And the professor agreed, but I was like, “Hold up. Hold up.” My hand shot up so freaking high, so fast, and I was like, “I

don't know how it is in other tribes, but when I was talking to my elders in my tribe, whenever women are *on their moon* — and I explained that moon is when a woman's on her period — whenever women are *on their moon*, the reason why they can't participate in smudging or they can't go to sweat lodge or, you know, be blessed by a medicine person is because they have so much sacred energy in them. If somebody tried to smudge them or tried to do things like that, it could make the medicine person sick because they can't handle that. . . . So it's actually kind of like honoring the woman that has a lot of sacred power each time they're on their moon — it can affect the people around them.” And the professor kind of just rolled his eyes because he was used to me talking and explaining things from a different perspective because a lot of history is colonized.

AISO alum Winona also reflected back on her experience as a student at the university and recalled that Indigenous knowledgeways were disregarded in her courses.

Our people are scientists. We've been doing research and documenting it. We just have different protocols than Western science, but we've got protocols, you know? Like, we know how to make up our medicines, our teas, create senses of belonging, how to take care of our people, how to doctor people, how to take care of our land, how to take care of her animals, how to feed one another. We're economists. We're agriculturalists. We know how to live in a different way, think in a different way. Pray in a different way, whatever. But that's not a viewpoint or a methodology that's accepted or seen as equal to that of Western protocols in academia.

The second area of literature addresses how the university could better support Native students (RQ2). Kimmerer (2013) wrote that “Getting scientists to consider the validity of Indigenous knowledge is like swimming upstream in cold, cold water” and that there was an “unblinking assumption that science has cornered the market on truth” (p. 160). Winona and a

few of our Relatives take Kimmerer’s position further by imagining ways that the campus community could benefit from privileging Indigenous knowledge, land, and people. “If [university administrators] were to elevate Native student perspectives — of course, that’s going to come hand-in-hand with decolonizing and Indigenizing some of the studies — think how different the world would be if people knew how to act as allies,” Winona wondered. Marcos suggested non-Native students would also benefit if the university promoted Indigenous knowledge. “They would be better educated on issues. There’d be a class you could take about our issues and about our history, without it being in the context of genocide or the White-savior complex,” he said. “Whenever marginalized people thrive, everyone thrives. I feel like it would lead to possibly more retention of Native students.”

Further, if the university initiated a partnership with the local Tribe, Theda implied that the campus community “would get to learn about this land that our school sits on. They would get to learn about the plants and the animals here, and they would get to learn the history — the real history.” She continued, “They would get to have an appreciation and maybe be more considerate of the land and what they do and how they act towards it. I think it would promote a healthier environment.” Margo challenged the university to do better, “I think we’re getting to a point where hopefully [university administrators] realize we need to be protecting our land and our natural resources.” She suggested, “The only way to do that is to turn to the original caretakers of this land who have the ancestral knowledge about taking care of this place so the people here can thrive and be happy.”

The above examples support and also further Kimmerer’s (2013) findings about how Western academia does not honor Indigenous science and worldviews, and they also illustrate how our Relatives stand up for traditional knowledge, even when it is uncomfortable. Our

Relatives also imagined the university's role in reversing that position and doing so in a way that all members of the campus community would benefit.

In the area of literature about the Native scholar's role in research, Kovach (2010) wrote that Native scholars and researchers needed to pay attention to their *inward knowledge* and give credence to their gut instincts when something did not feel quite right. Winona touched on this in a recent example in which she talked about the possibilities of decolonizing and Indigenizing the academy. Some of our other Relatives support Kovach's work and take it further, not only honoring their guts, but also sometimes confronting those they believe are offensive. "More often than not, you're trying to fight back against something that's wrong," asserted Marcos. He continued,

I tell you I was in utter shock to listen to this kid say, with this whole chest, that, "Well, what rights to the land did [Indigenous people] have in the first place?" I was like, "You, at your grown age, are saying this in a class where you *know* there are Native students and that it's being taught by a Native professor, are saying "What rights to the land did we have in the first place?!" I was just like, "You, sir, have lost your marbles, is what you did."

Marcos told another story about a time when he confronted a professor.

One of the pre-reqs to get into the American Indian & Indigenous Studies minor was the History of Latin America. We had gotten to the portion about Mexico and the Yaqui, and I was like, "Oh, what?! That's me!" [The professor was] like, "Yeah, the Yaqui just willingly fought for the Mexican war." I was like, "That's not true. No one willingly fights for war — unless you're super-patriotic, like America is currently — but no. A lot of the documents had been falsified to make it look like the Mexican government was in

support, when actually they were just killing us off, one by one.” And I had given an account of my great-grandma's experience as they fled. They actually fled during the war to escape persecution because my grandma's uncle had been kidnapped to fight in the war. They would go into the Yaqui areas late at night to take people to become soldiers and stuff like that, so they fled. Then I was like, “Yeah, not everyone. That’s not necessarily true. I suppose maybe there were a few that were feeling gung-ho about it. But in all, a lot of Yaquis actually fled the area, and that's why there's a reservation there in Arizona, because they all went there.” And she goes, “No, you're wrong.” And I was like, “Actually, I'm not wrong. I'm glad that you're telling me that my history is wrong. As a professor, that's crazy ... that's not true.” It was 7:30 at night, and I was like, “Yeah, I'll say you won this one. I'm going to let this one go because I cannot argue with you this late.” And then she started speaking in Spanish! I was like, “I can speak in Spanish, too.” I was talking to her in Spanish, like, “You're wrong! What do you want me to tell you?!” Later, I was telling my aunt on my dad's side, who's Yaqui, and she goes, “No one willingly fights for war.” I was like, “See? That's what I was thinking too!” It's like, we were just out there with them — *gung-ho, yo, go Mexico* [sarcastically]. It's like, we didn't forget what they did to our lands, poisoning our water, you know?

Theda also spoke up in class when her gut told her something was wrong, but she also took her writing assignments as an opportunity to address some inaccuracies.

I wrote a paper about the Invisible Red Man theory and how they think we're such a “mystical myth” — but we're not, you know — and how they think we're a thing of the past. It's like, no, we are here. You're going to know we're here. And you're going to help take baby steps to try and fix everything that was wrong. We can't change the past, but we

can make efforts to positively change the current state and the future and make moves for the future generations.

AISO alum Dennis recalled that when he was a student and enrolled in the American Indian & Indigenous Studies minor, he also used his writing assignments to “correct the information that was taught in the classrooms.” He continued, “Luckily, I was skillful enough to meet the essay’s criteria while also educating the teacher. So, it’s like the students are becoming the educators, which is good and bad, because I am paying money to learn.”

While he faced a lot of conflicts in class, Marcos also developed allies along the way. Our history has been suppressed for generations. To this day, there's a lot of rhetoric talking about Native and Indigenous people in the past-tense, as if we were here *once*, but we're not here *now*. And I feel like that continues the rhetoric of genocide and anti-Indigeneity. Also, I feel like, since a lot of people don't have interactions on a daily basis and they don't know what it's like for a Native person to live as a Native person within the current political and social spheres ... I'm more than willing to talk to somebody all day and just explain some things, you know? Correct them when they're wrong. A lot of people have asked me questions and then became better allies, and mainly because they know that I'm a go-to source because I'm so advocating about being Native and so advocating about Native issues within our communities and within this university.

These examples support and expand Kovach’s (2010) work about how Native scholars and researchers need to pay attention to their *inward knowledge* and give credence to their gut instincts when something does not feel quite right, and further, some of our Relatives confronted those they believed were in the wrong. Overall, this study’s findings were largely consistent with

the existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two, and that is likely because I privileged literature that was authored by Native and Indigenous researchers who could write authentically from lived knowledge. In four areas — Indian Boarding School practices, the impact Indian Boarding Schools had on students, Indigenous Research Methodologies, and the Native scholar’s role in research — my findings expanded beyond what was already reported in the literature.

Limitations and implications for research are discussed in the next section.

Limitations and Implications for Research

As outlined in Chapter Three, there are several limitations to this study that have implications for future research. First, this study examines parallels in Native students’ experiences in education over the past 142 years, but that generalizability is a limitation — not all students who identify as Native have the same needs and expectations of their time in school. Chapters Two and Four discussed Native students’ intersectional identities. While all of our Relatives have unique and diverse identities, in our interviews, they were asked to speak from their Native perspectives. Future research with Native students could explore how other aspects of their identities influence their educational experiences. For example, had a study asked a hypothetical Relative to speak from their whole identity, a student who identifies as Native and gay may disclose that their greatest needs were for more LGBTQ2S+ support on campus, and not necessarily for more support as a Native student. Such research might uncover other areas of need or, at the very least, provide a more holistic view of who today’s Native students are and how they source their resilience. Also, in the university explored in this study, graduate students comprise about 13% of the total student body, and it might be reasonably inferred that the university’s support services are geared more toward undergraduate student development. A future study could focus on Native graduate students’ needs and educational experiences, and it

might reveal graduate students' different expectations of their time in school as compared to undergraduate students.

Second, in this study, I only spoke with Native students and alumni of AISO, and not with other Native students enrolled at the university who are not members of AISO. A larger and more diverse set of Native participants likely would provide a different perspective of the university experience. Utilizing a quantitative approach, future research could survey a larger sample of Native students about their identities, experiences, needs, and expectations for their time in higher education. For example, a survey instrument (see Appendix J) was drafted but not utilized in this study — future research could use such an instrument to explore Native-identified students' connection to culture(s) and campus. Such a study could compare the findings from that quantitative survey to the qualitative data gathered in this study to explore differences between Native students who choose to participate in AISO or other Native cultural organizations and those who do not. In the present study, there were compelling reasons to focus on this particular university. Research occurring at colleges and universities all over the country — especially at non-Native colleges and universities (NNCUs) — could provide future opportunities to replicate and/or expand this study at the other universities within this same California school system and to compare findings between the schools. Or, perhaps a study could be done to compare the experiences of Native students enrolled at NNCUs and at Tribal colleges or universities (TCUs), although it should be noted that there are no TCUs currently in California.

Third, this study did not have participation from the local Tribe. In future research, it would be interesting to learn what expectations the Tribe might have of the university, which sits on the Tribe's land. For example, in another California region, the Tribe expects the university to initiate a formal partnership with its members, perhaps similar to the Native Advisory Council

that the California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM) created with its neighboring Tribes (CSUSM, 2021). Additionally, since 2007, CSUSM has partnered with the San Ysabel Indian Tribe to increase the number of Native students enrolled at the university, and in 2017, CSUSM entered into memorandums of understanding with two Native high schools in the area to guarantee admission to all students who meet CSUSM's eligibility requirements (CSUSM, 2017). A future study that includes local Tribal members' voices could influence the university examined in this study to intentionally expand its recruitment and retention of Native students, including those from the area Tribe.

Fourth, the interviews in this study only occurred within one state's university system. As with Castro (2018), the transferability of findings is best suited to higher education institutions that have similar contexts to those in the university system. Perhaps in future research, this study could be conducted within another state's university system, such as the University of Oklahoma (OU), the University of Arizona (UofA), or the University of New Mexico (UNM), and then compare those results to the findings of this study. These four states are mentioned because they have the greatest number of Native-identified residents (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Also, OU, UofA, and UNM schools offer strong Native American Studies majors and academic programs.

Lastly, while minor compared to the above, other limitations of this study can be raised that have implications for future research. For example, the present study should be considered as a single snapshot in time, thus producing a limited perspective. The interviews for this study took place in 2020, and the AISO students have made progress in making their needs known to the university since then. This is discussed in the conclusion of this chapter, but the point stands that a longitudinal study would provide a fuller picture. Also, none of the current undergraduate students interviewed for this study were transfer students. In the Fall 2017 quarter, 40% of the

incoming class of Native-identified students transferred into the university in this study, but no currently enrolled Native students who transferred volunteered for this study, so those voices and experiences are missing. Also, when the two AISO alumni were interviewed for this study, they were asked to recall how they felt as students in 2015 as they were reread statements told me during those interviews, conducted for a related study (Bradford, 2017). The limitation, however, is that one of the alumni indicated she was having difficulty remembering exactly how she felt when she was a student four years prior. Lastly, and perhaps the most obvious limitation, is that by the time the interviews for this study took place, our Relatives had transitioned to remote learning, due to COVID-19 and the safer-at-home orders. This means that the experiences they shared with me could have been influenced by the recent change in environment, and if the interviews had taken place while the students were still participating in learning on campus, it is possible that their responses could have been slightly different and could be explored post-pandemic.

Implications for Higher Education

The following implications are informed by findings from this study and from my experience as a Native scholar and staff person working in higher education for twelve years. These implications largely center on helping the university explored in this study, however, they might be considered helpful to any non-Native college or university (NNCU).

1. **Create a Native student support center/department.** Recent developments in the university under study inform implications for ways of providing support for Native students. The university explored in this study recently created an Office for Black Student Development, which might serve as an appropriate model on which to develop a similar center or department for students who identify as

Native or Indigenous. To address some of the concerns expressed by our Relatives, the university could consider creating a physical space or center that houses Native student support services, cultural and recreational activities, and gatherings with the local Tribe and Native community members. Many of our Relatives also implied they needed a safe place to do ceremony, which is supported by the literature (Deloria, Jr., 1994), so perhaps a private greenspace for ceremony and gardening could be established near the center, along with nearby accessible parking. For example, AISO alum Winona recalled when she was a student she “didn't have access to [cultural] medicine or a place to pray that felt safe,” and Margo maintained, “I would love a place where I can smudge without worrying about setting off my smoke detector, because when I go outside and do it, people look at me like I'm insane.” University administrators might also consider providing Native students longer access to the center and staffing it with Native-identified staff members and counselors who understand the nuances and intersectionalities of Native identities (Little Soldier, 1997). An ideal center, not just in this university but others, could be outfitted with lockers, a small kitchen (e.g., refrigerator, microwave, stove, sink), couches, several tables and chairs, computers and printers, phone charging stations, a television, a radio, sewing machines, and a closet in which to store supplies (e.g., beading materials, gardening tools, kitchen supplies). This space could also be used to hold community dinners, planning meetings, and even small classes — perhaps as part of the university's curriculum or to teach each other how to bead, sew regalia, learn heritage languages, and more, and for that, it might be smart if the furniture

was easily rearrangeable. Native-identified psychologists might also bring their services into the center, and if the center could be made private for such services (i.e., easily pull shades down over windows and doors). Several Relatives expressed a need for Native psychologists and counselors, and specifically ones who are trained in providing traditional forms of care and in healing trauma. The implications of providing Native students a space in which they feel safe and can connect with each other and Native community members could provide great benefit to the students. AISO alum Dennis suggested, “If Native people were properly represented and supported on campus ... there would be a little stronger sense of belonging on campus and a better connection with the school.” Lastly, such a center or space would be well complemented by a similarly-themed housing opportunity, perhaps akin to a sorority or fraternity house, in which an Elder-in-residence could also live, similar to the arrangement of a sorority’s in-residence “house mom.”

2. **Create a full academic program.** The university under study offers an American Indian & Indigenous Studies minor, but all of our Relatives expressed a strong desire for the university to create a complementary major program. Perhaps a full academic program could also include a Ph.D. emphasis and various certificate programs (e.g., heritage language studies, Tribal law, Tribal leadership). Again, in this university and others offering a minor, such a program could be supported by Native-identified academic advisors and faculty, but perhaps the university could also hire educators from the local Tribe. Currently, in the absence of a full academic program, our Relatives are not able to take many courses about Native

or Indigenous identities, histories, languages, or issues. When Native topics are brought up in class, our Relatives often are met with conflict — even from the professors, which the literature supports (Horse, 2005; Little Soldier, 1997).

Theda commented, “I wish they would take a moment to understand that when they talk about Native people, we aren't a thing of the past. We are still here. ... A lot of professors and faculty speak of us in the past-tense.” Jean confirmed this: “When we're taught in classes, we're always positioned as a historical past.”

Dennis asserted, “If we say, ‘Hey, this is how we *actually* represent ourselves,’ there's a lot of eye-rolling. Not only with TAs (teaching assistants), but with classroom members and, like, freaking professors who have tenure.” There is also, perhaps, room to revisit the curriculum being taught about Native people and issues, and in addition to hiring Native-identified faculty, maybe it would also be helpful if the university's current faculty worked with the local Tribe to redevelop the curriculum. Phyliss observed, “History is a horribly White-washed subject now. Everything, all of our History books ... you don't learn about Native experiences. And if you do, it's very brief.” Theda agreed, “We hardly have any classes that are offered with regards to being Native. And when they are, they're not offered by a Native professor, and I think that's very insensitive.” Winona explained that History and Anthropology courses were “not taught from the perspectives of our people, from decolonized or Indigenous worldviews. They're told from the perspective of the colonizers ... It's *their* account of history. It's *their* account of our communities through *their* worldviews, through *their* experiences.” All of our Relatives talked about the burden of taking responsibility

for correcting misinformation in their classrooms, which the literature supports (Smith, 2012). Perhaps new courses could be created, such as courses on Indigenous research methodologies, since the university explored in this study is a research institute. Lastly, perhaps the center or department could create and publish an academic journal to promote Indigenous knowledgeways and research.

- 3. Initiate a formal partnership with the local Tribe.** All of our Relatives strongly felt the university under study was obligated to develop a relationship with the Tribe's local band, on whose land campus sits. According to Winona, "The [Tribe's members] are the caretakers and stewards of this land and are doing a lot of the unpaid emotional, community, grassroots, whatever-you-want-to-call-it labor that serves the students and the community. It's just not recognized as service or compensated as such." Margo contended, "I see no reason why we don't have more members of the [Tribe] actively involved in helping this campus become an Indigenous-friendly place for students to learn and thrive." Marcos suggested, "I feel like if there was an established relationship with the [Tribal] community, it would foster a lot more growth and a lot more advocacy for the Native community," and this view is supported in the literature (Wilson, 2008). Perhaps the university's top administrative leaders and other like universities could initiate the process by reaching out to the area bands of the local Tribe and invite them to share a meal and a conversation about their respective needs and goals for sharing the land and serving Native people. Our Relatives already believe the university has that responsibility, as it is designated a land-grant institution, and as such, Jean believes the university should pay Tribal members to

work with them. She asserted, “Everything the [Tribe] knows will directly impact the university, so there definitely needs to be a *paid* Tribal liaison position where they can consult with Native students and admin and professors.”

As mentioned in the previous section, other NNCUs have established Tribal Advisory Councils made of members from area Tribes, and some also offer guaranteed admissions acceptance to the Tribes’ youth. Perhaps, to be good guests on the land and to honor land-grant obligations, the university could consider these initiatives, which would mean a lot to the Native students. Further, perhaps the university could consider waiving tuition and/or fees and/or housing costs for accepted members of the local Tribe. Phyliss implied if the university was willing to foster a relationship with the Tribe and listen to its members say “*this* is how we would like you guys to pay us back. *This* is how we would like to be treated. *This* is how we'd like our land to be treated ... then I don't see how anyone could lose.” Perhaps the university could also lend support (i.e., financial, research) to activities and initiatives important to the Tribe (under the Tribe’s direction) and/or collaborate with the Tribe on developing curriculum or research practices (e.g., help the Tribe develop its own human subjects research protocols).

4. **Create a path of services from pre-college to career.** Many of our Relatives talked about how they felt like the university was not made for them. It might be helpful if universities worked with (i.e., consulted and paid) Tribes, current Native students, and Native alumni to reimagine services that went beyond recruitment and retention to include continued education or career. For example, university Admissions departments could hire Native students to work directly with Tribes

to prepare and recruit pre-college youth. Perhaps Admissions recruiters could expand their typical areas and networks to recruit Native youth at Indian clinics and schools, powwows, and Tribal assistance or education programs. Then, when Native students commit to attending the university, it could be helpful if Admissions quickly connected them to AISO, the local Tribe, or other cultural services, as many of our Relatives had trouble finding AISO. The literature indicates that Native students will experience prejudice and racism (Little Soldier, 1997) and connecting with Native communities is crucial for building new knowledge (Wilson, 2008). Further, Winona commented, “I wish that staff and administration had more of an awareness of intergenerational and historical trauma — just generally how it impacts our students and how we come to campus already carrying a lot.” If universities addressed the implications in this section (i.e., developing the center, hiring Native staff and faculty, creating an academic program, working with the local Tribe), it could be reasonable to expect a positive impact on the retention of Native students and an increase in their satisfaction. It might also be helpful if universities developed diversity training materials and/or first-year seminars that included information about modern Native identities and experiences, in order to increase awareness. It could also improve retention and satisfaction if the university provided funding for programs that supported Native speakers and cultural activities (e.g., powwow). Lastly, perhaps universities could extend their paths of services by connecting Native alumni to careers in Indian Country. The following section provides implications for staff working in Tribes’

education programs, who could become natural partners in helping the university connect early with Native families considering college.

Implications for Tribal Education Programs

In my staff role, I occasionally work with Tribal education programs, Indian high schools, and school districts' Indian Education Consortiums to consult with Native youth and their families about how to choose a college, apply for admission and financial aid, transition to campus life, navigate areas of study, and more. When this study began, one of my intentions was to share my findings in a way that might benefit Native communities (Smith, 2012). Below are implications informed by findings from this study and my twelve years working in higher education. These implications were reformatted into a poster of friendly tips (see Appendix K) to be shared with Tribal education programs and other agencies that help prepare Native youth for college. My hope is that these implications/tips will help Tribal education staff determine if universities would provide their Native students with meaningful support services.

- **Suggestions for Tribal staff who support pre-college Native youth:** A helpful way to learn more about a university is to participate in any college exploration programs offered on campus. For example, at the university explored in this study, AISO students created a culturally-centered college exploration program for Native youth called STANDS (Students Taking Action for Native Dreams of Success), which they host each year alongside Native staff (myself included) and members of the local Tribe. The AISO students created STANDS in 2012 to fill what they perceived to be gaps in the university's Native recruitment strategies. Phyliss, who attended STANDS as a sophomore in high school, recalled, "After STANDS, I was like, this is where I want to go to school because this is where I

can see myself having Indigenous family that's going to accept me for who I am and help me learn about my culture.” If a culturally-centered college exploration program is not available at a university, Tribal education staff could connect with a university’s Admissions department to find out if a counselor has been assigned to recruit Native students. If no Admissions counselor has been assigned to recruit Native students, then perhaps Tribal education staff could search the university’s website to find other staff who work with Native students (i.e., a non-Admissions staff role similar to mine) who can explain resources available to support the Tribes’ youth (e.g., scholarships, cultural programming). Questions Tribal education staff might want to explore include:

- Does the university offer a Native-centered academic program? For example, is there an American Indian & Indigenous Studies major or minor? If not, do students have the flexibility to create their own major or emphasis? All seven of our Relatives expressed wishes that the university in this study offered a full academic program.
- Does the university offer a Native-centered living and learning community (i.e., dormitory or residence hall)? This might be important to an incoming Native student, as Wilson (2008) wrote that in-community relationships become the foundation upon which new knowledge can be built.
- Does the university have a Native cultural resources center or Native student support services department? Is there a safe space on campus where Native students can have ceremony?

- How many of the university’s students identify as American Indian or Alaska Native? How about the university’s faculty and staff? Are there any Native-centered staff or faculty professional organizations on campus?
- Lastly, does the university actively engage area Tribes? Does the university have a formal practice of acknowledging its local Tribe(s)? All of our Relatives expressed a need for the university to acknowledge and work with the local Tribe, whose members provided cultural support for AISO students in areas the university could not. Theda said, “The elders have all this knowledge and tips and tricks on how to navigate life as a Native, and when you move into new spaces and onto new land and need to get connected ... ah, I needed that.”
- **Suggestions for Tribal staff who support Native youth enrolled in college:**
 After students are enrolled, attention shifts to retention, and the availability of culturally-centered support services offered on campus could impact Native students’ satisfaction, engagement, and sense of belonging. In this study, we learned that many of today’s Native students feel the impact of historical trauma from the Indian Boarding Schools and many do not feel like the university system was made for them. Some of our Relatives felt unsafe expressing their Indigeneity on campus and/or felt fetishized or tokenized when they did. All reported a lack of Native representation among staff and faculty and in course curricula. A few of our Relatives thought about dropping out of college at some point, but they also felt compelled to complete their education out of duty to their families and Tribal communities. Questions Tribal education staff might want to explore include:

- Are there cultural clubs or organizations that Native students can join? All of our Relatives referred to AISO members as “family,” and these close cultural connections can greatly influence a sense of belonging (Bradford, 2017; Dixon, 2006; Wilson, 2008). After attending her first AISO meeting, Theda reflected, “I don’t even know how to explain it, but it was like an instant comfort. It was like, ‘Oh, I belong here. I can be me.’” “I came to some of the meetings, and it definitely has become a comfort zone and a safe space,” Marcos shared. “Not only to voice my opinions, but for us to voice our vulnerability as Native students on this campus, and also to uplift all the other Native students who might not feel a sense of connectedness with the university.” If there are no cultural clubs or organizations on campus, Tribal education staff could encourage their Native students to create one. As mentioned in the previous section, AISO members greatly enjoy their relationship with members of the local Tribe, so perhaps it would be helpful if Tribal education staff reached out to Tribes living near universities to introduce their Native students as new guests to the land.
- Are courses offered in which Native identities, histories, languages, and experiences are current and accurately reflected? It might be helpful if Tribal education staff showed Native students how to examine course catalogs and syllabi when registering for classes. For example, students might review syllabi to see if any of a course’s required readings are authored by Native or Indigenous writers or if faculty ever invite Native

guest speakers to lecture in their classes, especially if they are from area Tribes. Tribal education staff might also encourage Native students to consult each other or online student reviews of courses in which Native issues are taught, as others' opinions and experiences are sometimes helpful.

- Do universities' LGBTQ+ centers recognize Two-Spirit (2S) relatives? Driskill (2010) cautioned that LGBTQ+ and Queer People of Color (QPOC) communities tend to un-see 2S people, further erasing their identities. Perhaps Tribal education staff could help Native-identified LGBTQ2S+ students find resources on or near campus that affirm their full identities.
- Do social justice, racial justice, and/or diversity and inclusion trainings offered on campus include modern and accurate information about Native identities and experiences? All of our Relatives expressed frustration that many on campus talked about Native people in the past-tense or in relation to harmful stereotypes. Perhaps Tribal education staff could help Native students identify or even participate in developing trainings that accurately reflect Native people today.
- Lastly, are there Native-identified clinicians and psychologists on staff? Many of our Relatives expressed wishes for receiving culturally-informed and/or traditional methods of care, particularly from trauma-informed professionals.

I believe that universities bear responsibility for engaging with Tribes and organizations that help prepare Native youth for college, but in my experience and in my research, many universities do not have formal partnerships established with their local Tribes. My hope is that universities will consider the implications for higher education discussed earlier in this chapter, but in case they do not, my hope is that Tribal education staff will find the above implications helpful for better preparing Native students for success and satisfaction in their university experiences.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand Native American students' perceptions of their educational experiences, 142 years after the first federally-run, off-reservation Indian Boarding School opened, and how they perceived university staff, faculty, and administrators could better serve Native students. Findings revealed new realizations about today's Native students and the connections they feel to the experiences of Native youth who attended the Indian Boarding Schools. Findings also revealed that the Native students interviewed for this study think about the different aspects of their intersectional identities and do not necessarily feel safe to identify as Indigenous while on campus. Our Relatives in this study identified specific ways they thought the university could improve its relationship with the local Tribe and with Native students. They even considered ways non-Native campus community members might benefit if Native students were better served by the university. The value of this study is that it shows how Native student organizations, such as AISO, and relationships with Tribal communities can help Native students feel a sense of belonging while in college, when there are perceived gaps in service provided by the university. As evidenced by reports from AISO alumni, the student organization and Tribal relationships have a long-lasting impact on students' lives. There are not many studies about

Native student organizations, so in that way, this study contributes to the literature. Also, it adds student-voices by way of Indigenous research methodologies applied in a study at a non-Native college or university (NNCU). Lastly, findings from this study can be used to inform services provided to Native youth by Indian educators and Tribal education partners (see Appendix K), which is personally important to me as a Native scholar and researcher.

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that an area of future research could be to revisit this study over a period of years. For example, it began in 2015 with interviews from now-AISO alumni who were interviewed again for this study, and a longitudinal study of AISO members might show different results. In January 2021, AISO published on Change.org, a petition website, a list of demands for administrators at the university examined in this study. The list included demands for the creation and full funding of a full academic program, department, and research center. It also called for the hiring of Native faculty and staff (particularly in the Admissions department) and funding for research initiatives. As the Native students are unified behind their call for university action, it would be critical to follow up on any changes the institution might make. Further, it would be important to ask the Native students if the added support improves their sense of belonging, reinforces all aspects of their intersectional identities, and impacts the historical trauma still felt from Indian Boarding Schools.

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Research Study

UC Santa Barbara Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

About the Study:

This study is titled “The Native American Student Experience, 160 Years After the First U.S. Indian Boarding School Opened.” The purpose of it is to understand parallels in Native students’ experiences in education, then and now, and to learn how university staff/faculty/administrators can better serve Native students. Another purpose of this study is to learn how members of a Native American student organization benefit from support provided to them by members of a local Tribe. A final purpose of this study is to explore how the whole campus community could benefit if Native students felt more supported by the university and if a formal partnership was initiated by the university with members of the local Tribe, on whose land campus sits.

Who is Eligible?

- Students who identify as Native American, and ...
- Are members of the [Native American student organization], and ...
- Are at least 18 years old

What Will You be Asked to Do?

- Spend up to 90 minutes in a one-on-one interview conducted online, via Zoom
- Consider allowing the researcher (Keri Bradford) to record interview audio and/or video (captured by Zoom), for transcription and coding purposes. Only the researcher will know the identities of participants.

Potential Benefit of Participation

- The results of this study may be used to improve support services for Native students.

You will receive a \$15 gift card for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions or are interested in participating, please contact:

Keri Bradford at 805-258-9840 or email keri@ucsb.edu

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Email to AISO Alumni

Dear [Name],

I hope you are staying safe and healthy during this time. I am writing to you because I am conducting a research study with the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, at UC Santa Barbara. This study is titled **“The Native American Student Experience, 160 Years After the First U.S. Indian Boarding School Opened.”** The purpose of it is to understand parallels in Native students’ experiences in education, then and now, and to learn how university staff/faculty/administrators can better serve Native students. Another purpose of this study is to learn how members of a Native American student organization benefit from support provided to them by members of a local Tribe. A final purpose of this study is to explore how the whole campus community could benefit if Native students felt more supported by the university and if a formal partnership was initiated by the university with members of the local Tribe, on whose land campus sits.

I am reaching out to you because you were a member of the [Native American student organization]. For this study, I am seeking volunteers who identify as Native American, who are or were members of the [Native American student organization], and who are at least 18 years old. The potential benefits of this study are that the results may be used to improve support services for Native students.

What Will You be Asked to Do?

- Spend up to 90 minutes in a one-on-one interview conducted online, via Zoom
- Consider allowing me to record interview audio and/or video (captured by Zoom), for transcription and coding purposes. Only I will know the identities of participants.

You will receive a \$15 gift card for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions or are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at 805-258-9840 or keri@ucsb.edu.

Thank you,

Keri Bradford
Doctoral Candidate, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
UC Santa Barbara

APPENDIX C: Recruitment Email to Tribal Relatives

Dear [Name],

I hope you are staying safe and healthy during this time. I am writing to you because I am conducting a research study with the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, at UC Santa Barbara. This study is titled “**The Native American Student Experience, 160 Years After the First U.S. Indian Boarding School Opened.**” The purpose of it is to understand parallels in Native students’ experiences in education, then and now, and to learn how university staff/faculty/administrators can better serve Native students. Another purpose of this study is to learn how members of a Native American student organization benefit from support provided to them by members of a local Tribe. A final purpose of this study is to explore how the whole campus community could benefit if Native students felt more supported by the university and if a formal partnership was initiated by the university with members of the local Tribe, on whose land campus sits.

I am reaching out to you because you have lended support to members of the [Native American student organization] for the past several years, as a [Tribal] liaison. For this study, I am seeking volunteers who identify as Native American, who are/were members of the [Native American student organization] or who support members of the [Native American student organization], and who are at least 18 years old. The potential benefits of this study are that the results may be used to improve support services for Native students.

What Will You be Asked to Do?

- Spend up to 90 minutes in a one-on-one interview conducted online, via Zoom
- Consider allowing me to record interview audio and/or video (captured by Zoom), for transcription and coding purposes. Only I will know the identities of participants.

You will receive a \$15 gift card for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions or are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at 805-258-9840 or keri@ucsb.edu.

Thank you,

Keri Bradford
Doctoral Candidate, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
UC Santa Barbara

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

UC SANTA BARBARA

English ▾

Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM

Purpose:

This study is titled "**The Native American Student Experience, 160 Years After the First U.S. Indian Boarding School Opened.**" The purpose of it is to understand parallels in Native students' experiences in education, then and now, and to learn how University staff/faculty/administrators can better serve Native students. Another purpose of this study is to learn how members of a Native American student organization benefit from support provided to them by members of a local tribe. A final purpose of this study is to explore how the whole campus community could benefit if Native students felt more supported by the University and if a formal partnership was initiated by the University with members of the local tribe, on whose land campus sits.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a one-time interview that could take up to 90 minutes, and you might receive follow-up communication from me if I need to clarify any of your remarks. In the interview, I will ask you questions about the subjects described above, and because of current COVID-19-related safer-at-home measures, your interview will be conducted online, via Zoom. It is anticipated that up to 20 participants will take part in this study. As I continue to study Native student satisfaction, engagement, and retention in higher education, I may wish to re-contact you after the end of this particular study.

- I AGREE to be contacted after the end of this study.
- I DO NOT AGREE to be contacted after the end of this study.

Confidentiality:

Results from this study may be published in the future. Your individual responses will be used in reports, but you and anyone you mention will be given a pseudonym. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, since research documents are not protected from subpoena. However, to ensure confidentiality, I have taken the following precautions:

- Your name (any anyone you mention) will not be revealed at any point during this study and will not appear in any publications. Although quotes from your interview may be published, all identifying information will be removed from the quote(s).
- For transcribing and coding purposes, I ask your permission to record our interview via Zoom. Any digitally recorded files I collect from your interview will be stored on a secure, password-protected computer and in a cloud-based storage space into which only I can authenticate. Please be aware, however, that due to Zoom's terms and conditions, Zoom may have access to audio and/or video recordings. Your voice or image will never be published or shared without your expressed consent, which I would request separately from you, should that ever become necessary. You do not need to agree to be recorded in order to participate.

- I AGREE to have my interview recorded.
- I DO NOT AGREE to have my interview recorded.

Risks:

There are no foreseeable major risks to participating in the study. However, there might be minimal risk for discomfort in discussing this study's topics. Minimal risk, in this regard, means "not greater than risks encountered in everyday life."

Emergency care and treatment for injury:

N/A

Benefits:

The results of this study may be used to improve support services for Native students in higher education.

Compensation:

You will receive a \$15 gift card for agreeing to participate in this study. The \$15 gift card will be issued to you within seven days of the interview. Please provide your email address and your mailing address below — if the gift card cannot be emailed to you, it will be sent to the mailing address you provide below.

Email Address	<input type="text"/>
Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Apartment or Unit Number (if any)	<input type="text"/>
City	<input type="text"/>
State	<input type="text"/>
Zip Code	<input type="text"/>

Right to Refuse or Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at no penalty and still receive any possible benefits you would receive if you were not in the study. At any time, you may change your mind about participating in the study and withdraw at no penalty after the study has started.

Questions:

If you have any questions about this study or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact: Keri Bradford, keri@ucsb.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at 805-893-3807 or at hsc@research.ucsb.edu. Or you may write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara 93106.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You agree that you are at least 18 years of age. You are aware that you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time for any reason.

YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW WILL INDICATE YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

- I CONSENT (AGREE) to participate in this study.
- I DO NOT CONSENT (DO NOT AGREE) to participate in this study.

Please type out your **full name** and **today's date**.

Full Name

Today's Date

Please sign below.

SIGN HERE

clear

UC SANTA BARBARA

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APPENDIX E: Human Subjects Board Letter of Approval

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

SANTA BARBARA
FWA#00006361

Office of Research
Human Subjects Committee
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050

Web: <http://www.research.ucsb.edu>

06/12/2020

VERIFICATION OF ACTION BY THE UCSB HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

RE: HUMAN SUBJECTS PROJECT NUMBER 51

FROM: UCSB HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE

PROTOCOL NUMBER 51-20-0377

TYPE: NOTICE OF EXEMPT DETERMINATION

TITLE(S):

The Native American Student Experience, 160 Years After the First U.S. Indian Boarding School Opened

INVESTIGATORS:

Sharon Conley

Keri Bradford

The above identified protocol may commence on 06/12/2020. Exempt protocols do not expire.

The research activities under this submission qualify as Exempt from the Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.104(d) under the following Categories: 2

Although your study qualifies as exempt research, investigators are expected to adhere to UCSB policies and conduct their research in accordance with the ethical principles of Justice, Beneficence, and Respect for Persons as described in the Belmont Report.

AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS/CHANGES:

Any change in the design, conduct, or key personnel of this research must be reviewed by the UCSB HSC prior to implementation. Changes may result in a reevaluation of eligibility of an Exempt Determination.

UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS/ADVERSE EVENTS:

If any study subject experiences an unanticipated problem involving risk to subjects or others, and/or a serious adverse event, the HSC must be informed promptly. An e-mail or phone call must be received within 7 days. Further reporting requirements will be determined by the HSC at that time.

RECORDS RETENTION REQUIREMENTS:

Please remember that signed consent forms must be maintained for a minimum of three years after the end of the calendar year in which the research is completed. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities.

If you have any questions about the above, please contact the Human Subjects Committee Coordinator at: (805) 893-3807; (805) 893-2611 (fax); hsc@research.ucsb.edu

For more details on this protocol, go to the ORahs website: <https://orahs.research.ucsb.edu>

APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol Slide (“Survivor Accounts: Indian Boarding School Trauma”)

Survivor Accounts: Indian Boarding School Trauma

- Youth were **taken from their families** to be sent away to school, where they were assigned **Anglicized names**, dressed in **militaristic uniform**, and their **appearances were changed** (e.g., long hair/braids were cut short).
- Some youth experienced **homesickness** and **trauma** from being taken away from their families. When some returned home, their **families did not recognize them**.
- Youth were **not allowed to speak** their heritage languages or practice ceremony, facing **punishment** if they were caught doing so.
- Youth were required to **practice foreign religions** (e.g., Christianity).
- Some youth were subjected to **physical, sexual, and fatal abuses**.
- Youth were taught vocational and militaristic skills in support of the **spreading colonization**. Many youth were made to **perform hard labor**.
- Youth experienced **malnutrition** and **food insecurity, medical neglect**, and housing **overcrowdedness**. When they complained, many were **accused of lying**.
- Survivors report feeling a shift in the Western education model that promotes **competition and individualism**.
- Some Survivors report that historical trauma took hold of their lives, later, in the form of **continued violence and/or substance abuse**.

APPENDIX G: Interview Protocol for AISO Students

Greet student-relatives and give my pronouns; ask what pronouns they use. “Thank you so much for joining me today. My study explores the Native American student experience in education, 160 years after the first Indian Boarding School opened. During our conversation today, we will be talking about a variety of subjects, including Indian Boarding Schools. When we get to that point, I’ll share some information with you so that we have a common understanding about that time in history. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me? And is it okay if I record our conversation?”

1. Tell me about your relationship with AISO — when and how did it develop? How meaningful is it, and why?
2. Tell me about your relationship with the [Tribe] — when and how did it develop? How meaningful is it, and why?
3. How do these relationships compare to your relationship with the rest of the campus community (students, faculty, staff)?
4. Native students make up less than one-percent of the student body here on campus. We also make up about one-percent of all college-going students, nationally — how often would you say you typically “feel” like a member of a student minority population on campus?
5. Does your Native cultural identity get questioned by others on campus?
 - a. **If so:** Tell me more about that.
6. What do you wish others in the campus community understood about Native students and their intersectional identities?
7. In what ways do you think the university could better support Native students?

Keri to shift focus to Indian Boarding Schools by reading prepared text and showing slides:

“I want to talk now about the history of the Indian Boarding Schools. I’ve studied them pretty extensively, and I have relatives who attended them. There aren’t many open today, and those that are now Tribally-controlled. My research interests are specifically about the Schools’ violent beginnings, starting in 1879, when the first federally-run Indian Boarding School was opened.

I have studied historical accounts from boarding school survivors, school teachers and administrators, child welfare agencies, and other groups. During the Schools’ darkest days and in the decades since, the following traumas were reported (show slide):

- *Youth were taken from their families to be sent away to school, where they were assigned Anglicized names, dressed in militaristic uniform, and their appearances were changed (e.g., long hair/braids were cut short).*

- *Some youth experienced homesickness and trauma from being taken away from their families. When some returned home, their families did not recognize them.*
- *Youth were not allowed to speak their heritage languages or practice ceremony, facing punishment if they were caught doing so.*
- *Youth were required to practice foreign religions (e.g., Christianity).*
- *Some youth were subjected to physical, sexual, and fatal abuses.*
- *Youth were taught vocational and militaristic skills in support of the spreading colonization. Many youth were made to perform hard labor.*
- *Youth experienced malnutrition and food insecurity, medical neglect, and housing overcrowdedness. When they complained, many were accused of lying.*
- *Survivors report feeling a shift in the Western education model that promotes competition and individualism.*
- *Some Survivors report that historical trauma took hold of their lives, later, in the form of continued violence and/or substance abuse.*

*There is some research out there about the inheritance of historical trauma, and I believe that is possible. Today's Native students might experience some of the same traumas, even if they don't have close knowledge about the history of Indian Boarding Schools. Before we continue, I want to ask if you already knew about some of this history? **If yes:** Do you have relatives that attended Indian Boarding Schools? Did you hear about their experiences?"*

8. Do you think today's Native students feel the traumatic effects of our relatives who attended the worst of the Indian Boarding Schools?
 - a. **If so:** Tell me more about that. (What does that feel like? Why do you think so?)
 - i. **And:** How do you think Native students are dealing with those effects, and how well?
 - b. **If not:** What do you think changed?
 - i. **And:** How do you think Native students are doing, compared to our relatives in the Indian Boarding Schools?
9. Is Native culture or identity discussed in any of your classes?
 - a. **If so:** Is Native culture represented in your class syllabi or readings, or does it come up in class conversations?
 - i. **If so:** What feelings do you typically feel when Native culture is brought up by others in class?
 1. How strong would you say those feelings are?
 2. What tone does the conversation typically take? Are Native people talked about in the present tense or the past tense?
10. How interested in Native culture would you say your professors seem to be? How about your classmates?
11. Do you talk about your Native cultural identity in class or other campus spaces?

- a. **If so:** How do those conversations go?
 - i. **And:** What feelings do you typically feel when you do? How strong are those feelings?
 - b. **If not:** Do you think your professors and peers are aware of your Native cultural identity?
12. How important do you feel it is to share about your Native cultural identity with others, and why?
 13. What kinds of perceptions do you think the campus community at large has about Native people?
 14. How safely and confidently do you feel you can be yourself on campus?
 15. How connected do you feel to the general campus community?
 16. In what ways could non-Native students/staff/faculty benefit from a better-supported Native student body?
 17. In what ways would non-Native students/staff/faculty benefit from a partnership with the local [Tribe]?
 18. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

DEMOGRAPHICS:

1. What year are you in college?
2. Did you transfer to [university] from another college?
3. Are you a first-generation college student? Meaning, has anyone in your immediate family already graduated with a bachelor's degree from a 4-year university?
4. Do you currently live on campus?
5. What is your estimated GPA?
6. Do you currently have a job or an internship on campus?
7. What is your Tribal affiliation(s)?
8. Do you identify with additional ethnic or racial cultures?
9. Do you identify more strongly with a particular part of your identity? If so, which?
10. Do you identify as Two-Spirit and/or a member of the LGBTQ community?
11. Do you identify as a Native person who grew up on a Reservation, in an Urban area, in a Rural area, or other?
12. Do you participate in your Tribes(') cultural or ceremonial practices?
13. Do you speak your Tribes(') heritage languages?
14. Do you have Native cultural needs that are not being met at [university]?
15. As a Native student, how satisfied are you with your experience at [university]?

APPENDIX H: Interview Protocol for AISO Alumni

Greet Alumni-relatives and give my pronouns; ask what pronouns they use. Remind them they were interviewed in 2015 about AISO (if true), and let them know the first few questions will be reflection questions. Get permission to record.

1. In 2015, I asked you to describe how meaningful your membership was with AISO, and why. Five years later, how do you feel about AISO and your time in it?
2. I also asked if your membership in AISO influenced your sense of belongingness to the larger student body at [university]. Now how do you feel about your time as a Native student at [university]?
3. In 2015, I asked you how you thought your membership in AISO might go on to influence your life and career beyond graduation. Has AISO influenced your life and career since you graduated, and how?
4. What special knowledge do you have about AISO students that you wish university staff, faculty, and administrators knew?
5. Based on that special knowledge, how do you think the university could better support AISO and Native students?
6. What do university staff, faculty, and administrators need to understand about Native students' intersectional identities?
7. Since you graduated, have you intervened to support AISO students?
 - a. If so, how and why?

Keri to shift focus to Indian Boarding Schools by reading prepared text and showing slides:

“I want to talk now about the history of the Indian Boarding Schools. I’ve studied them pretty extensively, and I have relatives who attended them. There aren’t many open today, and those that are now Tribally-controlled. My research interests are specifically about the Schools’ violent beginnings, starting in 1879, when the first federally-run Indian Boarding School was opened.

I have studied historical accounts from boarding school survivors, school teachers and administrators, child welfare agencies, and other groups. During the Schools’ darkest days and in the decades since, the following traumas were reported (show slide):

- *Youth were taken from their families to be sent away to school, where they were assigned Anglicized names, dressed in militaristic uniform, and their appearances were changed (e.g., long hair/braids were cut short).*
- *Some youth experienced homesickness and trauma from being taken away from their families. When some returned home, their families did not recognize them.*
- *Youth were not allowed to speak their heritage languages or practice ceremony, facing punishment if they were caught doing so.*

- *Youth were required to practice foreign religions (e.g., Christianity).*
- *Some youth were subjected to physical, sexual, and fatal abuses.*
- *Youth were taught vocational and militaristic skills in support of the spreading colonization. Many youth were made to perform hard labor.*
- *Youth experienced malnutrition and food insecurity, medical neglect, and housing overcrowdedness. When they complained, many were accused of lying.*
- *Survivors report feeling a shift in the Western education model that promotes competition and individualism.*
- *Some Survivors report that historical trauma took hold of their lives, later, in the form of continued violence and/or substance abuse.*

*There is some research out there about the inheritance of historical trauma, and I believe that is possible. Today's Native students might experience some of the same traumas, even if they don't have close knowledge about the history of Indian Boarding Schools. Before we continue, I want to ask if you already knew about some of this history? **If yes:** Do you have relatives that attended Indian Boarding Schools? Did you hear about their experiences?"*

8. Do you think the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools is felt by today's Native students?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
9. Compared to our relatives in the Indian Boarding Schools, how do you think today's Native students are faring?
10. In what ways could non-Native students, staff, and faculty benefit from a better-supported Native student body?
11. In what ways could the university better its relationship with AISO and Native alumni?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

DEMOGRAPHICS:

1. Did you transfer to [university] from another college?
2. Were you a first-generation college student? Meaning, before you first enrolled in [university], did anyone in your immediate family graduate with a bachelor's degree from a 4-year university?
3. When you were a student at [university], did you live on campus? How long?
4. What was your estimated GPA when you graduated from [university]?
5. Did you have a job or an internship on campus when you were a student?
6. What is your Tribal affiliation(s)?
7. Do you identify with additional ethnic or racial cultures?
8. Do you identify more strongly with a particular part of your identity? If so, which?
9. Do you identify as Two-Spirit and/or a member of the LGBTQ community?

10. Do you identify as a Native person who grew up on a Reservation, in an Urban area, in a Rural area, or other?
11. Do you participate in your Tribes(') cultural or ceremonial practices?
12. Do you speak your Tribes(') heritage languages?
13. When you were a student at [university], did you have Native cultural needs that were not being met?
14. As a Native student, how satisfied were you with your experience at [university]?

APPENDIX I: Interview Protocol for Tribal Relatives

Greet [Tribal] Relative(s) and thank them for sharing their time with me. Get permission to record.

1. Tell me about your/[Tribe] relationship with AISO*. (When/how did it develop? What's it like?)
2. What special knowledge do you/[Tribe] have about our AISO students that you wish university staff, faculty, and administrators knew?
3. Based on that special knowledge, how do you think the university could better support AISO and Native students?
4. How have you/[Tribe] intervened to support AISO students? Why?
5. What has your/[Tribe] relationship been like with university staff, faculty, and administrators?
6. What could a partnership/relationship between the [Tribe] and the university look like? And why is that important?
 - a. What could the university do to initiate and sustain that relationship?
 - b. What could the [Tribe] do to sustain that relationship?

Keri to shift focus to Indian Boarding Schools by reading prepared text and showing slides:

"I want to talk now about the history of the Indian Boarding Schools. I've studied them pretty extensively, and I have relatives who attended them. There aren't many open today, and those that are now Tribally-controlled. My research interests are specifically about the Schools' violent beginnings, starting in 1879, when the first federally-run Indian Boarding School was opened.

I have studied historical accounts from boarding school survivors, school teachers and administrators, child welfare agencies, and other groups. During the Schools' darkest days and in the decades since, the following traumas were reported (show slide):

- *Youth were taken from their families to be sent away to school, where they were assigned Anglicized names, dressed in militaristic uniform, and their appearances were changed (e.g., long hair/braids were cut short).*
- *Some youth experienced homesickness and trauma from being taken away from their families. When some returned home, their families did not recognize them.*
- *Youth were not allowed to speak their heritage languages or practice ceremony, facing punishment if they were caught doing so.*
- *Youth were required to practice foreign religions (e.g., Christianity).*
- *Some youth were subjected to physical, sexual, and fatal abuses.*
- *Youth were taught vocational and militaristic skills in support of the spreading colonization. Many youth were made to perform hard labor.*

- *Youth experienced malnutrition and food insecurity, medical neglect, and housing overcrowdedness. When they complained, many were accused of lying.*
- *Survivors report feeling a shift in the Western education model that promotes competition and individualism.*
- *Some Survivors report that historical trauma took hold of their lives, later, in the form of continued violence and/or substance abuse.*

*There is some research out there about the inheritance of historical trauma, and I believe that is possible. Today's Native students might experience some of the same traumas, even if they don't have close knowledge about the history of Indian Boarding Schools. Before we continue, I want to ask if you already knew about some of this history? **If yes:** Do you have relatives that attended Indian Boarding Schools? Did you hear about their experiences?"*

7. Do you think the historical trauma of Indian Boarding Schools is felt by today's Native students?
 - a. If so, in what ways?
8. Compared to our relatives in the Indian Boarding Schools, how do you think today's Native students are faring?
9. In what ways could non-Native students/staff/faculty benefit from a better-supported Native student body? And from a relationship between the [Tribe] and the university?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

*AISO is a pseudonym for the Native American student organization on campus.

APPENDIX J: Draft of a Quantitative Study for All Native Students

Start of Block: Identity

Q39 Do you identify as a Native American?

- Yes (23)
- No (24)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you identify as a Native American? = No

Q40 Do you identify as a "Reservation Indian," a "Rural Indian," an "Urban Indian," or other?

- Reservation Indian (1)
- Rural Indian (2)
- Urban Indian (3)
- Other (4)

End of Block: Identity

Start of Block: Connection to Culture and Campus

Q1 Before attending [university], how connected did you feel to your Native cultural identity?

- Extremely connected (1)
- Somewhat connected (2)
- Neither connected nor disconnected (3)
- Somewhat disconnected (4)
- Extremely disconnected (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q2 How significant is your Native cultural identity, compared to your other identities?

- Extremely significant (1)
- Very significant (2)
- Moderately significant (3)
- Slightly significant (4)
- Not at all significant (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q3 Now that you are on campus, how connected do you feel to your Native cultural identity?

- Extremely connected (1)
- Somewhat connected (2)
- Neither connected nor disconnected (3)
- Somewhat disconnected (4)
- Extremely disconnected (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q4 As a Native student, how often do you feel like a member of a minority population on campus?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q5 How important is it that [university] acknowledges the [Tribe] people, on whose villages campus is built?

- Extremely important (1)
- Very important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Slightly important (4)
- Not at all important (5)

Q6 How often are Native people represented in any of your classes (in syllabi, readings, discussions, etc.)?

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q7 In general, how comfortable do you feel about participating in class discussions?

- Extremely comfortable (1)
- Somewhat comfortable (2)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (4)
- Extremely uncomfortable (5)

Q8 How comfortable do you feel talking about your Native cultural identity in class?

- Extremely comfortable (1)
- Somewhat comfortable (2)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (4)
- Extremely uncomfortable (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q35 How comfortable do you feel when Native culture is brought up by non-Natives in class?

- Extremely comfortable (98)
- Somewhat comfortable (99)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (100)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (101)
- Extremely uncomfortable (102)

Q9 In any given quarter, how often do you attend *optional/non-required* academic events on campus?

- Three or more times a week (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Once a quarter (4)
- Never (5)

Q10 Would you prefer to take classes with Native-identified faculty?

- Prefer a great deal (11)
- Prefer a moderate amount (12)
- Do not have a preference (13)
- Prefer slightly (14)
- Do not prefer (15)

Q11 Would you prefer to receive student support services (e.g., counseling) from Native-identified staff members?

- Prefer a great deal (1)
- Prefer a moderate amount (2)
- Do not have a preference (3)
- Prefer slightly (4)
- Do not prefer (5)

Q12 Since coming to [university], how many friends have you made on campus?

- Many (1)
- Some (2)
- Not many (3)

Q13 How important is it that your peers know that you identify as Native?

- Extremely important (1)
- Very important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Slightly important (4)
- Not at all important (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q14 How often do you interact with other Native students at [university]?

- Frequently (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Rarely (3)
- Never (4)
- I do not know any. (5)

Q15 In any given quarter, how often do you participate in Native cultural events on campus?

- Three or more times a week (1)
- Once a week (2)

- Once a month (3)
- Once a quarter (4)
- Never (5)
- I do not know about any. (6)

Q36 How comfortable do you feel sharing about your Native culture with non-Natives on campus?

- Extremely comfortable (72)
- Somewhat comfortable (73)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (74)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (75)
- Extremely uncomfortable (76)
- This question does not apply to me. (77)

Q16 How often do you participate in conversations about Native culture?

- Frequently (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- Rarely (3)
- Never (4)

Q17 As a Native student, how comfortable do you feel on campus?

- Extremely comfortable (1)
- Somewhat comfortable (2)
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (3)
- Somewhat uncomfortable (4)
- Extremely uncomfortable (5)
- This question does not apply to me. (6)

Q19 How connected do you feel to the general campus community?

- Very connected (1)
- Somewhat connected (2)
- Neither connected nor disconnected (3)
- Not at all connected (4)

Q18 On campus, have you experienced or witnessed racism toward Native people?

- Yes (1)
- I am not sure. (2)
- No (3)

Q38 In general, how positively do you think others on campus feel about Native students?

- Extremely positive (25)
- Somewhat positive (26)
- Neither positive nor negative (27)
- Somewhat negative (28)
- Extremely negative (29)
- I feel like others do not think about Native students at all. (49)

Q37 As a Native student, how safe do you feel on campus?

- Extremely safe (55)
- Somewhat safe (56)
- Neither safe nor unsafe (57)
- Somewhat unsafe (58)
- Extremely unsafe (59)
- This question does not apply to me. (60)

Q20 Have you purchased any [university]-branded clothing or accessories for yourself?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q21 In the future, if you are financially able to, how likely are you to make a donation to [university]?

- Extremely likely (1)
- Somewhat likely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- Somewhat unlikely (4)
- Extremely unlikely (5)

Q22 What year are you in college?

Q23 Did you transfer to [university] from another college?

Q24 Has anyone in your immediate family already graduated with a bachelor's degree from a 4-year university?

- Yes (33)
- No (34)

Q25 Do you currently live on campus?

- Yes (47)
- No (48)

Q26 What is your estimated GPA?

Q27 Do you currently have a job or internship on campus?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q28 Are you currently a member of any registered student organizations?

- Yes (23)
- No (24)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently a member of any registered student organizations? = Yes

Q29 Are you a member of any Native/Indigenous registered student organizations?

- Yes (23)
- No (24)

Q30 Please list what tribe(s) you are affiliated with.

Q31 Do you participate in any cultural practices of your tribe(s)? (Select all that apply.)

- Yes (13)
- No (14)
- I would like to. (15)
- I do not know my cultural practices. (16)

Q32 Do you speak the heritage language(s) of your tribe(s)? (Select all that apply.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I would like to. (3)
- I do not know my heritage language(s). (4)

Q33 Do you have Native cultural needs that are not being met at [university]?

- Yes (25)
- No (26)
- I am not sure. (27)

Q34 As a Native student, how satisfied are you with your experience at [university]?

- Extremely satisfied (18)
- Somewhat satisfied (19)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (20)
- Somewhat dissatisfied (21)
- Extremely dissatisfied (22)

End of Block: Connection to Culture and Campus



Tips for Preparing Native Youth for College

Indian Educators and Tribal Education Partners can play a special role in helping Native youth develop a sense of belongingness in school

A study in 2020 asked Native & Indigenous college students what kind of support they needed to safely and confidently be themselves on campus.* Educators can help Native students “find their fit” in school by exploring the following questions (hint: school staff can help you find the answers).

SUPPORTING PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH STARTING TO EXPLORE COLLEGE

- ▶ Does the college/university offer any culturally-centered college exploration programs? The university explored in this study offers a pre-college program for Native youth called STANDS (Students Taking Action for Native Dreams of Success), and a recent attendee said the program helped her decide to apply to the school because it was “where I could see myself having Indigenous family that’s going to accept me for who I am and help me learn about my culture.”
- ▶ Does the school have an Admissions counselor dedicated to recruiting Native students? If not, does the school’s website mention other staff who work with Native students and who can explain supportive resources (e.g., scholarships, cultural programming)?
- ▶ Does the school offer a Native-centered academic program? For example, is there an American Indian & Indigenous Studies major or minor? If not, do students have the flexibility to create their own major or emphasis?
- ▶ Does the school offer a Native-centered living and learning community (i.e., dormitory or residence hall)? This might be important to an incoming Native student and according to research, in-community relationships become the foundation upon which new knowledge can be built (Wilson, 2008).
- ▶ Does the school have a Native cultural resources center or Native student support services department? Students who participated in this study reported the need for a safe space on campus where they could connect with each other and participate in cultural and ceremonial practices, and research confirms this (Deloria, Jr., 1994).
- ▶ How well are Native people represented on campus? How many of the school’s students identify as American Indian or Alaska Native? How about the school’s faculty and staff? Are there any Native-centered staff or faculty professional organizations on campus? Students who participated in this study said it was important to them to take courses taught by Native faculty and to receive support services, such as counseling, from Native staff.
- ▶ Does the school actively engage area Tribes? Does the school have a formal practice of acknowledging or working with the Tribe(s) in its area? All of the students who participated in this study expressed a need for the university to acknowledge and work with the local Tribe. One student said, “The elders have all this knowledge and tips and tricks on how to navigate life as a Native, and when you move into new spaces and onto new land and need to get connected ... ah, I needed that.”

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHILE ENROLLED IN COLLEGE

- ▶ Are there cultural clubs or organizations that Native students can join? If not, does the school offer students the opportunity to create their own? The students enrolled at the university explored in this study belong to a 51-year-old Native American student organization, and they enjoy a “family”-like closeness. One student said, “I don’t even know how to explain it, but it was like an instant comfort. It was like, ‘Oh, I belong here. I can be me.’” It might also be helpful if Tribal education staff reached out to the Tribes living near schools to introduce their Native students as new guests to the land.
- ▶ Are courses offered in which Native identities, histories, languages, and experiences are current and accurately reflected? Sometimes students need help examining course catalogs and syllabi when registering for classes. For example, review syllabi to see if courses’ required readings are authored by Native or Indigenous writers or if faculty ever invite Native guest speakers to lecture in their classes, especially if they are from area Tribes. Tribal education staff might also encourage Native students to consult each other or online student reviews of courses in which Native issues are taught, as others’ opinions are sometimes helpful.
- ▶ Do schools’ LGBTQ+ centers recognize Two-Spirit (2S) relatives? According to research, sometimes LGBTQ+ and Queer People of Color (QPOC) communities leave out 2S people, further erasing their identities (Driskill, 2010). Tribal education staff might help Native LGBTQ2S+ students find resources on or near campus that affirm their full identities.
- ▶ Do social justice, racial justice, and/or diversity and inclusion trainings offered on campus include modern and accurate information about Native identities and experiences? All of the students in this study expressed frustration that people on campus talked about Native people in the past-tense or in connection to harmful stereotypes, and research confirms this (Little Soldier, 1997). Tribal education staff might help Native students identify or participate in developing trainings for the campus community that accurately reflect Native people today.
- ▶ Are there Native-identified clinicians and psychologists on staff? Many of the students in this study wished to receive culturally informed and/or traditional methods of care, particularly from trauma-informed professionals. If no information is available, Tribal education staff might help Native students figure out if they are living within the service areas of any Indian clinics, Tribal TANFs, or other Native-serving agencies.

*Tips based on interviews with Native college students who participated in a study done at a California university in 2020. For more information, contact Kerl Bradford (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) at kerl@ucsb.edu. Sources cited: Deloria, Jr., V. (1994). *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*; Driskill, Q. (2010). *Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies*; Little Soldier, T. (1997). *Is There an ‘Indian’ in Your Classroom? Working successfully with Urban Native American Students*; Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*.

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