An Innovative Response to Enhance Native American Educational Success and Advancement in Higher Education

by

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This thesis argues the need for major change in higher education options currently available to Native American students in the United States. Universities and Tribal Colleges represent the most common choices that Native students opt for in seeking degrees in tertiary education. However, for the most part, Universities and Tribal Colleges are not working effectively enough to produce the levels of success that are significantly transforming of the wider social, economic and cultural crisis conditions within many Native American communities. This thesis will focus on how to develop a major transformation of the higher education sector generally, a focus which also positively includes the underdeveloped potential that lies within the Tribal Colleges and Native programs in various university sites.

This thesis attempts to clarify what has gone wrong in the higher education of Native Americans and to propose a national, innovative strategy for intervention. Identifying what is problematic in existing approaches will build critical insights that will inform the new strategies for change. The overall argument is that new institutions which are more sensitive and responsive to Indigenous aspirations first and foremost, need to be considered as a key in transforming Native American higher education performance.

Rather than define absolutely all of the possible ingredients of what might be included in a new higher education model, this thesis works first to identify and aggregate a number of key barriers and constraints by collating different information streams. Once identified these critical elements, practices, values and structures that are deemed to be the major barriers to Native success are then used to inform the proposed new institutional framework. While a single institution model is ultimately proposed by this thesis, it should be regarded as ‘an’ answer, not ‘the’ answer. A broader intention of this thesis is to bring more focus to this area of concern and underdevelopment within Higher Education and suggest that there are different answers and possibilities (as the Maori examples have demonstrated) that are truly innovative, and which can profoundly impact Native American individual and community social, economic, cultural and political development and advancement.
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This research focuses on the United States Native American context, however, Native Americans are not a homogeneous, single thinking or acting, collective group. Native communities are diverse and are spread throughout the United States. They often have quite different cultural nuances that are shaped by the particular landscapes and territories in which they are located. They constitute a rich variety of different tribal histories, traditions, customs, languages, locations, spiritualities, politics and numerical strengths. Identity formations are also varied, some of this being the result of external labeling and categorizations of colonial and later political derivation. There are also differences between tribes and Nations that are formed around economic capacity – some tribes have strong economic and resource bases, others do not. Many tribes have some control over their own educational responsiveness and in this area as well, the responses by different tribes is often irregular. Some have a strong economic base from which to construct their education and schooling responses and others do not; some have very good existing educational resource personnel and again, others do not. The picture of Native American education and schooling is also uneven within tribes and across tribes, on reservation and off reservation.

However, a strange anomaly emerges in the higher educational area, given that wealth and resources in some Native American tribes and Nations is in fact no indication that there will be a strong correlation with educational success or satisfaction in these same communities (c.f. the Harvard Longitudinal Study by Cornell and Kalt, since 1987). The point here is that educational success, progress – however one might name it – is also patchy across tribes. If money is not necessarily the main problem then in my view this raises critical questions that draw attention to the processes of how we are educating and schooling. My own experience of the existing system endorses this view as well – successful Native education responses do not necessarily depend on wealth or beautiful buildings and facilities – while they can help, Native (dis)satisfaction with higher education (this is explored in more substantially later in the thesis) is usually expressed around elements such as the extent to which there is cultural alignment within the
institution and with the Native communities whom the institutions are purporting to serve.

Levels of satisfaction also depend on the institution understanding the politics of education and then being able to negotiate the existing colonizing imperatives on behalf of Native students. The satisfaction of Native peoples often correlates with the extent to which education and schooling is tailored to the specific needs of the Native learner – to meet both to their community and personal aspirations. Native satisfaction with education may also be shown to depend on the extent to which there is provision of educational opportunities that allow the Native American learner to have excellent cultural skills that fit them for a community and cultural existence. At the same time the education should provide opportunities that develop excellent skills to allow students to have the same skills and opportunities that all American students receive. The choices between tribally based ‘cultural knowledge’ and ‘world knowledge’ opportunities should not be constructed as an ‘either / or option’ – which many conventional institutions do by not fully or wholeheartedly valuing, including and supporting cultural needs of Native Students. Many of the Native programs and Tribal Colleges do not have a coherent or rational response to forming the bicultural expertise that many Native students need to exist in contemporary America. This is what is termed by Natives as the need for a more holistic education.

Certainly I have had few choices from the existing American education and schooling options. There have been few if any positive schooling or educational options which I have had, that truly reinforce, incorporate and positively value Native American students or their cultural existence. Overwhelmingly, the experience of American education and schooling for Native Americans is one of assimilation and continuing colonization. My concern at this point is to suggest that many of the current Native programs within University institutions and many of the Tribal Colleges are in fact also contributing to the ongoing assimilation and colonization of Native students. Often this is a structural issue – and I do not wish to denigrate various individuals who struggle to make some of these programs work against the odds. Yet other academics have simply
capitulated and dance and perform to the ‘drum beat’ of the institution (and have no connection or responsibilities to community aspirations). Many of these individuals, who receive ‘pay packets’ to develop ‘Native’ programs have become what Graham Smith describes, in his paper, *The Development of Kaupapa Maori: theory and praxis* (1997), as ‘privatized Native academics and intellectuals’ or what Devon Mihesuah, in her book, *Indigenizing the Academy* (2004), calls ‘Academic Gate-keepers’, who in the end are working against Native aspirations.

The time has come to take a critical look at Native institutions and other Native American Higher Education responses and the lack of significant change in Native American social, economic, cultural and political landscapes. There is a need to acknowledge that the ‘status quo’ approaches are on the whole, not working sufficiently to develop the changes that are needed. Therefore there is a need to seriously rethink what we are doing and come up with something different, innovative and more successful. One of the areas we need to begin with is examining ourselves and what we are doing – this is the part where we have some agency (albeit a limited autonomy) already. We also need to critically examine and understand our own complicity in constructing the ongoing conditions of assimilation, colonization, oppression, exploitation, and persecution. We need to understand more profoundly the limits and capacities of our skill sets and knowledge and where needed, build the necessary talent and capability for meaningful transformations. We need to begin the difficult task of beginning to do what Paulo Freire (1972) has suggested as the prerequisite to undoing colonization – that we must first ‘free ourselves’.

This thesis begins with my own story. This is done in order to make explicit my personal limitations with this research project, and yet at the same time, show the potential and capacities. This project is premised on a fundamental assumption – it takes for granted (what I believe to be the majority Native American position) – that Native Americans want a successful education and schooling experience that fits them for opportunities anywhere in the world and equally an excellent education that fits them for their cultural needs and existence. The bottom line is that Native Americans still want to
be Native Americans and to be able to continue to exist and to maintain their languages, knowledge and culture. They do not want to be assimilated. Despite this message being repeated over and over again by various national voices, academics, Native leaders, educators and so on – the overwhelming response within education and schooling has been to do very little and simply reproduce different models of the same assimilatory forms of education. My personal stance and that which underpins this thesis argues against assimilation and for the recognition and maintenance of the distinctive cultural characteristics that make up Native American identity. I believe that Native Americans can have excellence in both knowledge codes and that neither has to be sacrificed for the other.

My own experience of being Native American within the American schooling and education system has profoundly affected me. It has continually and consistently been experienced as a force that is always attempting to change me into a ‘white person’ (a non-Native American with predominantly European or other exotic cultural values, practices and outlook). I freely admit, it has influenced my perspective and views of education and schooling and indeed, this is the very reason that I am sharing my personal story as a preliminary commentary to this thesis. It is important in my view to declare my subjectivities and interests. The schooling and education options I experienced have made me highly suspicious of its assimilation and colonizing tendencies and I have some reservations as to whether or not existing forms of education and schooling can be changed sufficiently to potentially work in the interests of Native Americans rather than against them. As such I wish to openly acknowledge my subjective positioning when undertaking the role of academic researcher when clearly I am one who puts Native American aspirations, language, knowledge and culture as a first priority. However, I would make the point, that the role of ‘academic researcher’ can not be separated out from who I am and my cultural identity (despite researcher claims around ‘objectivity’ and that we should be able to be objective). Despite any charges of overt bias – and while I also acknowledge the social constructed-ness of knowledge, I still intend to be as objective as I possibly am able, while arguing for developing realistic and transformative educational opportunities in order to increase Native American success in higher
education. What researchers concerned with objectivity seem to overlook is the charge that the study of knowledge itself, along with research practices are highly politically embedded activities. Thus I would argue that my position is not ‘neutral’ – nor do I claim it to be so given my overt support for maintaining Native cultures, identities, and aspirations. However, I would claim to try and work at presenting the arguments as objectively as possible.

**My Story**

As I sat in my introductory American Indian Studies class at San Francisco State University on the very first day, I remember hoping that the instructor for the Native Studies course would in fact be an Indian. I guess I did not want some ‘white’ – person (non-Indigenous) teaching me about being Indian. I was worried about such a prospect because it in fact happened often and still happens to this day. As luck would have it my instructor was a Lakota elder. I was relieved and happy to start this class and anxious to hear what he had to say. At the end of class that first day something unexpected happened; the instructor walked up to me and asked in a very matter of fact manner, “I know you are Indian. Who are your people?” I was taken by surprise and not sure how to answer him. I had been expecting to just sit down in the back and hide in the class throughout the semester and learn what I could about something I felt was taken from me and missing in my life – my Native cultural identity. My physical features are obviously Indian, and I felt really awkward at having to respond to someone who was clearly proud, and strongly entrenched in his culture and upbringing. How do you say that you are Indian but you are still finding your way? How do you speak without shame about your family who rejected their traditions and in some cases wanted to hide our Indian-ness and who we are? How do you answer the question, “Who are your people?” when you are not an enrolled member of your tribe? How do you navigate the politics of being Indian without a ‘card’? How do you answer such a direct question when you are trying to inconspicuously and unobtrusively rediscover and re-learn your cultural being? I felt great shame and embarrassment of my situation and I did not know what to say to him.
Eventually I responded and told him that I am Southern Ute but that many of my family are ashamed of it. I told him that my grandfather was Southern Ute and my grandmother was Mexican (they have both passed many years ago). Most of my aunts and uncles seem to want to remove themselves from any aspect of ‘native-ness’ or ‘color’ and even try to say we have direct ties to Spain. All my life I grew up with different family members who hated who they were. It has been very difficult to listen to those family members who continued to insist that we should ‘just be American.’ As I have stated my physical appearance is visibly Indian and I have attempted never to be ashamed of it. But at that particular moment, I was ashamed of not being Indian enough. At that moment, in my mind (in my life) I resolved never to be put in this position again and my intense learning journey to find my cultural being and my Native political activism began in earnest.

Going to San Francisco State University opened my eyes to the politics of identity. My Native instructor\(^1\) quickly became a friend and mentor and he understood and empathized with my desire to re-generate and nurture my Native identity and cultural roots and he set about helping bring me into the larger Indian community. For a while I wasn’t comfortable because I felt like a ‘late-comer’ and that I had to apologize for this. (It is difficult to describe my emotions and feelings about doing this. I do know it was a most uncomfortable feeling – and I was often overcome with an array of emotional responses from feelings of inadequacy to those of worthlessness and shame). I worried that I would never be fully recognized or accepted as being native and that I would be seen as ingenuous and a ‘token Indian’. However, as time passed and I slowly started attending more and more cultural based events and social gatherings and met a range of other people in the community my fears and anxieties began to fade. To my surprise I found that ‘acceptance’ by others was relative to how I perceived myself. As I became more confident in myself, I was able to move and interact within the cultural settings and within the culture itself more easily. I also met many people who understood, and in some cases shared similar cultural identity dilemmas and experiences to myself.

\(^1\) I am not using my instructors name in this text because I do not want it to appear that I am using him to validate myself. Furthermore, as he has since passed, I think it would be disrespectful to pull him in to my ‘politics’ while he cannot speak for himself. Those who know me know who it is I am speaking of and those who knew him will put the pieces together as they read along.
As I took more courses and subsequently became more culturally knowledgeable and politically aware, (San Francisco State is renowned for its political approach and overt activism), I became more and more angry. While I acknowledge our own family complicity in our assimilation, I came to understand how this kind of reaction also occurs within a societal process of colonization. In particular, I came to see how the education and schooling system was implicated in developing and reproducing colonization processes. I was angry at the lies I was taught in my k-12 years, I was angry at the brainwashing I received in the public school system. But most of all I was angry at the racial climate that my family lived in, which, coupled with public schooling, drove them to internalize that racism. That anger prompted me to switch the focus of my studies in school from Broadcast Communication Arts to Education. I wanted to understand more about the education and schooling system and also understand how education might be used as a tool, not for the destruction of Indian cultures, but the re-construction of them. I have since committed myself to making positive change for and through, Indian education and schooling.

Around the same time I became the President of the Indian student organization on campus (Student Kouncil of Inter-Tribal Nations) and also worked as a student outreach representative for American Indian Outreach and as a Teaching Assistant in American Indian Studies. I then started my Masters program in Education with a special interest in American Indian Studies. I found some great Native faculty support and a powerful Native learning environment at SFSU and finally started to feel more confident and secure in myself.

Growing up in a single parent household, I never had a father figure in my life and this has had various impacts with respect to the dislocation of my upbringing from my home tribal territory and therefore ready access to my own Ute tribal language, knowledge and culture. My cultural mentor quickly became a ‘father’ figure in providing cultural teachings and guidance. He became the cultural teacher/mentor I had never had and he wanted me to learn more and more about the Lakota way of life as these teachings were the seat of his own traditional knowledge base and learning. He grew up
with his traditions and language and ceremonies, and I was honored that he chose to support my personal quest for ‘cultural sustenance’ and to share some of his teachings with me. At the same time, however, I was somewhat uncomfortable with it because I am not Lakota by descent. Especially in matters of ceremony, I was very hesitant because ceremony is sacred and very powerful – I was afraid to do something wrong or to misrepresent myself or the Lakota people. But many of the Lakota people I met through this elder at various cultural events and gatherings were very open and willing to accept me for who I was and they also contributed to my learning. I owe the Lakota people a large debt of gratitude for their generosity towards me and I will always treat the teachings I have been given with the greatest respect. These teachings are not an end in themselves – they are a pathway to help me eventually re-discover my own Southern Ute tribal heritage, language and culture. I also know that these teachings have been shared with me to assist with my own personal healing journey and are not for me to use without the proper tribal safeguards, acknowledgements and sanctions of the Lakota elders.

As time passed my elder-mentor, in the customary and traditional cultural manner, offered to adopt me. While the cultural support factor was an obvious benefit of this relationship there were other pluses as far as I was concerned. As I never had a ‘father’ figure in my up-bringing, the prospect of having a surrogate father made me very happy and I discussed this with my mother who gave her support and approval. Such ‘adoptions’ were common in more traditional practice in order to apprentice learners to particular teachers. It was also made clear to me that if I accepted this adoption, I would need to be willing to accept the ways and teachings of the Lakota people without question. I agreed and to this day I follow this path – albeit a somewhat convoluted pathway that in fact has led me back to my own original ancestors (only recently reconnecting with my tribe), cultural ways and teachings that are my Southern Ute heritage. My original Lakota mentor has since passed and I now have other Lakota spiritual leaders and mentors to guide my development. To be clear and unequivocal about my cultural background – I am Southern Ute by birth, my cultural ‘upbringing’ is of the Lakota. I am also well aware of the limits and capacities of such an arrangement.
I have said all of this, which has not been easy, not only to situate myself in this study, but in the Indian community as well. Who I am may be an important political question to some and it is important to answer. Although I am visibly Indian (and therefore do not attract questioning when I am in a face to face situation) I do not have ‘enrolled member’ status due to my geographical, social and cultural dislocation from my Southern Ute relatives and territory. Some people care about this distinction and some people do not. I have found that most do not use enrolment status to exclude ‘voice’, but mostly to differentiate resource allocations. However, when it comes to getting a PhD and applying for Native American Studies jobs, people might care more. These issues around identity are complicated and complex when they are used to differentiate varying levels of authority to speak, they go directly to the critical questions of ‘Who can speak?’, ‘With what authority?’, ‘In whose interests?’, ‘Who can listen?’, ‘Who is the audience?’ (These are issues I pick up around the discussion of Spivak’s work).

Do I have a right to write about Indian higher education if I do not have a card? Are my fifteen years working in different areas of Indian higher education enough to demonstrate my allegiance and commitment to Native struggle? Is my acceptance in the larger ‘Indian community’ different in the context of higher education? Does my Indian birthright and genealogy count for anything? The question of who you are and where you write from is always important in the context of Native politics. They are also important questions to try and answer when one becomes involved in research and therefore assumes a research authority to comment on Native issues. This is why I have explained my location. Some of the Native readers, the primary audience of this work, may require such an assurance in respect of their ability to be able to evaluate the validity and legitimacy of the thoughts and ideas that are expressed and shared here.

In this dissertation I do not purport to speak for the Southern Ute, (as I am only beginning to learn these ways), neither will I purport to speak on behalf of the Lakota because, although I accept and have had training in the Lakota ways, it is not my place or role. Neither do I speak as an ‘urban Indian’ as I find this term equally marginalizing
– it is a term that has some derogatory connotations in that it can invoke notions of indifference towards traditional Indian culture on the part of those who are removed from the ‘Rez’. Again I want to reiterate that I own my urban-ness but I am also deeply locked into a journey to re-cover my cultural identity. In this thesis I speak from my position as a Native American student and educator who has a unique set of experiences and views. This is my perspective. I own my own words – this is my truth as I have experienced it, as I have studied it, as I have been pained and hurt by it. I know that my situation and many of the views that I will express are at various junctures shared by many other Native Americans. Even so, I will speak for myself first and where I am confident, generalize my views as part of the wider Native American experience.

My intention in this thesis is to argue that higher education as it is currently practiced (and experienced) in the U.S. is not serving the interests of most Native Americans very well and that social, economic, cultural, political disparities between Native Americans and other Americans is not improving. Something new, innovative and transformative needs to occur across the whole spectrum of education and schooling in America to produce more Native American success that reflects not just learning or credential outcomes but also promotes Native aspirations with respect to sustaining Native languages, knowledge and cultures while at the same time, also developing progressive change with respect to the socio-economic conditions of community contexts. A particular and important site of struggle for transformation (and also ‘transforming education’) that still has much undeveloped potential to deliver Native aspirations is in Higher Education. As such the writing of this thesis is a continuation of my commitment to seeking positive change, greater institutional improvement and higher levels of success in the outcomes of higher education experience for more Native American students and their communities – no matter which communities they are from. This is my passion and I know, unequivocally, this is what I am supposed to do.

Thus, I invite the reader to engage with this thesis further knowing the information about myself and my aspirations for this work ‘up front’. As I have already said, I am not going to argue a case that this dissertation will be totally objective or
indeed politically neutral. I purposely position myself within this pro-Native stance as a counter strategy to the societal situation of unequal power relations in which most Native Americans live out their daily existence in the United States. Accordingly I invite the reader to assess the merits of this case from a social justice perspective, to make up their own mind - to exercise their own judgment about the fairness of the case I am arguing and by also bringing to bear their own knowledge and experiences of what is happening in respect of the current crises that accrue to Native American education and Native American society more generally.
PART ONE

**** SEEING ****
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
The Purpose of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to examine critically the current Higher Education responses that are available to Native students. This thesis looks at these institutional responses from three perspectives, namely, what is working, what is not working and what might be done by way of improving the existing outcomes of high and disproportionate levels of underachievement and underdevelopment. With respect to what might be done – it is intended to develop an innovative intervention model of higher education that will transform institutional structures and function with respect to pedagogy, administration, curriculum, policies and so on. A prerequisite understanding here is that statistical evidence suggests Native American students are still doing disproportionately more poorly than non-Native students. As Michael Pavel has noted;

Native American increases in degree attainment, while consistent with rising shares of American Indian and Alaska Native enrollment, do not yet match enrollment shares. Attainment increases have also failed to keep pace with Native American population growth. By 1994, Native Americans composed 1 percent of all Americans 20 to 24 years old, the ages when college graduation typically occurs. Native Americans matched this population representation only in their share of associate's degrees (0.9 percent). At all other degree levels, they did not attain a share of degrees equal to their share of the population aged 20 to 24.

(1999, p. 5)

Indeed one might argue that Native American students are doing progressively worse and that the educational gap between Native American students and non Native students is in fact widening. (see figures 1&2, pg 3) What is also alarming is that Native American communities have developed a significant number of Tribal Colleges and other Higher Education opportunities and yet collectively they are not making much impression in terms of producing a critical mass of Native intellectual talent that tracks back into the social and economic improvement of Native communities. While there have been some isolated successes in these Native schooling options, generally speaking the potential
Figure 1: Post Secondary Attainment of 1992 12th Graders by Race/Ethnicity (Pavel, 1999)

Figure 2: Number of Degrees Awarded to American Indian/Alaska Native Students by Level of Degree: 1976-77 to 2002-2003 (Institute for Educational Stats, 2005)
impact is largely underdeveloped. This issue raises questions about the form, function and purpose of Tribal Colleges and other Native educational entities within higher education. Having made this generalization about underdevelopment, we must (and I do) recognize and acknowledge that some of these institutions have outstanding success components; that many have dedicated and hard working staff, and that the communities within which they operate have the will, desire and aspiration to provide an outstanding education for their young people. However, despite this effort the status quo situation within Native American higher education is not working successfully to change the socio-economic profiles of communities. This situation is, I believe, one of crisis for Native Americans. There is a need first to acknowledge the failure of the current structures and strategies in order that changes can be contemplated and something new is developed. As situations change strategies must follow suit.

This dissertation focuses on the current university programs and the tribal colleges as being somewhat problematic. It is certainly not intended to engage in ‘victim-blaming’ of these and other Native controlled institutions – many of which are doing well in the face of many structural and systemic obstacles and constraints. However, these two types of institutions represent the most common options taken up by Native students seeking degrees in tertiary education. In particular, this first part of the thesis will interrogate the institutional frameworks of the university and Tribal College in an effort to understand some of the structural and institutional impediments and subsequently to gain an insight into why these two institutional types have mostly failed to transform Native American communities.

In the latter part of the thesis, I argue for, and attempt to envision, the development of a different type of institutional framework. Such a model might develop its institutional purposes, structures, practices, curriculum, pedagogy, administration, culture and language nuances around the aspirations of the Native communities whom these institutions are purporting to serve. The point here is that most Native Americans still want to be Native American; for them it is not an either / or choice, they need to maintain cultural skills and knowledge and they also want access to knowledge that will
lead to employment, social betterment and prosperity. In this sense, there is a need for Native knowledge related to language, culture, history, politics, economic and social development as much as there is for ‘world knowledge’ – by this I mean skills and knowledge from the world at large that any individual may need to survive in a global society.

As simple as this point may sound, many institutions fail to recognize and to support meaningfully these dual aspirations; rather they have been very busy attempting to assimilate the students into the dominant, mono-cultural Anglo-American culture. This certainly describes what has been my own experience. The irony is that the more Native Americans fail in the system – the current answer seems to be to give them even more of the same unsuccessful schooling! If they are seen to have ‘low achievement’ in Western institutions the more intensified the efforts become at ‘socializing’ them into the ‘institutional milieu’ (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 2004, p. 4). Thus education and schooling for most Native American students has mostly been about assimilation into ‘mainstream’ American culture; into the ‘melting pot’ of the American society; into a culture that is not their own and at various points, hostile and unwelcoming. Two effects are occurring in learning settings, an impetus to assimilate and to accept the new dominant western culture as ‘the’ culture and a second impetus that moves proactively and antagonistically to denigrate and marginalize Native culture. The outcome of such neglect by the education and schooling system tends to create Native ‘hate’ and ‘indifference’ to their own language, knowledge, culture, and in some cases hate, distrust and withdrawal on the part of Native American individuals and communities.

This negative approach that is implicit in various forms of American education and schooling must not be tolerated. This situation must be challenged. In this thesis I draw heavily on the New Zealand example of Maori education and schooling transformation, and specifically lean heavily on the works and insights of the Maori scholars, Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith. Both of these educators have had practical involvement at all levels of the alternative Maori education structures, both also work within conventional educational systems, both have produced
prolific amounts of written material on the practical and theoretical dimensions of developing change in Maori educational and schooling crises; both are leading international voices in the field of critical education politics and model positive ways in which critical elements can assist Indigenous development and change; both are full Professors and very experienced academics who specifically work within the area of education and schooling. The Maori have developed a strong alternative Maori schooling and educational options, both within the conventional system and also outside of it, from pre-school (Te Kohanga Reo – language nests); through Maori Immersion Elementary Schools (Kura Kaupapa Maori); through Maori Immersion Secondary Schools (Te Whare Kura); through Maori Higher Education and Maori University structures (Wananga). These alternative sites are options that Maori individuals and communities can take up – notwithstanding that not all Maori are homogenous in their thinking or aspirations and not all take up these alternative options. However, more and more Maori do have real options ranging from immersion Maori language schools to the existing conventional schools. The point that not all Maori think the same way is also true of Native Americans; but they do deserve some real choices in education and schooling that are all excellent.

I should also note at this point that I am fully aware that Native Americans do not all share the same aspirations or all desire the same type of schooling options or indeed, think exactly alike. However, from time to time I will generalize the experience of Native Americans, understanding the dangers of doing so, and given that Indigenous and Native writers occasionally need the space to generalize our experiences and hopes from a ‘collective’ point of view. I am well aware of the ‘essentialism’ critique and the need for research objectivity (notwithstanding my previous critical comments on this issue). However, I invoke the Spivak (1985) notion of ‘strategic essentialism’ – and indeed widen it to include ‘strategic subjectivity’ (this is reflected in the strategy of putting myself in the text, in a political sense, identifying with the people who I am also simultaneously writing about). With strategic essentialism it is recognized that ‘essential attributes’ within a group do exist, however, those essential attributes are defined by the particular group and not by outsiders. Another aspect of strategic essentialism, however,
is the recognition that those attributes are constructs and not natural (or intrinsically essential), but are merely invoked when it is politically useful to do so (Arnold, 2005). This strategy keeps the power of ‘defining’ out of the hands of the oppressor and allows the group to express its own definition of identity.

Ultimately I argue for Higher Education interventions that are organized by and for the interests of Native people. Native interests might be variously described as political, educational, spiritual, economic, social, historical, power relations, social justice, and ideological. This broadening of the higher education mandate to cultural inclusiveness is not intended to be misinterpreted as simply a retrenchment to traditional knowledge, language and culture. The focus on centralizing Native languages, knowledge and cultures are also vital elements for contemporary Native existence and are at the core of what might be defined as ‘the Indigenous institution’. This is certainly the view expressed by many Indigenous authors, for example a number of Maori (e.g. Smith), Hawaiian (e.g. Meyer) and other Native American authors (e.g. Mihesuah, Wilson, and Deloria). However, these institutions are not only about traditional cultural elements, they must also engage with contemporary world knowledge. It is not an either / or situation.

Native students ought to have many options within higher education that are based on their own cultural domain as well as knowledge that will allow them to engage cross-culturally within and outside of the U.S. In this context I am using Graham Smith’s definition of ‘world knowledge’ as that knowledge which sits outside traditional, Indigenous knowledge forms and which Indigenous students also need to enable access, participation and success in engaging with the world at large (Interview, 2004). The Indigenous higher education model that I will argue for in this thesis for Native America is not an entirely new model; there are many examples of similar types of institutions in various parts of the world. The unique elements for the Native American application derive from our own Native American cultural issues and contexts. The proposed model would need also to work with the best elements of the existing system, while simultaneously, enhancing the performance of the other underdeveloped components. In this sense, while it is intended to examine critically and challenge what we are currently
doing – some aspects are working well and need to be supported. However, there is much that needs to be changed.

**An Introduction to Underlying Themes, Issues and Assumptions.**

I now move to give a general introduction to some of the important underlying themes, issues and assumptions that are embedded in the arguments and discussions throughout this work.

1. The Need for a Distinctive Native American Higher Education Response

It is not intended to suggest that an Indigenous University or other higher education institution is a ‘new idea.’ As a matter of fact the call for a Native American university dates back to 1911 when a mixed blood Menominee named August Bruener pushed for a congressional bill to support the idea. He believed that Native people should accept the best of both societies but should hold onto their traditions and beliefs. However, there was a strong backlash by assimilation advocates such as Captain Richard Pratt (founder of the off-reservation boarding school system), who stated “We want them to quit being Indians…. Therefore I am unalterably opposed to any movement in their interest that does not merge them.” (Crum, 1989, p.20-21). It is this assimilation view, although not quite so blunt or strong today, that has encouraged others to push for the creation of an Indigenous University. Some contemporary people have written about this kind of development such as Manu Meyer (Dissertation, Harvard, 1998) in relation to Native Hawaiians, Ray Barnhardt (Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education, Harvard, 1988) in relation to Native Alaskans. In the Canadian context there have been talks in this direction as well. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) recommended the development of an Aboriginal Peoples International University. In the commission report they also spoke to previous initiatives to create an International Indigenous University of the Americas by the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College and the Canadian Council on Aboriginal Business. The unique
contribution of this thesis will be in the innovative model proposed in this dissertation for a Native American higher education institution focused at the graduate level.

As statistics bear out, many Native American students are not successful in their pursuit of higher education (see chapter 4). There are two contesting explanations for this; first is the ‘victim blaming’ scenario which posits that there is something wrong with the students (or families, culture, life-styles), or second, that there is something wrong with the structures of schooling (e.g. – curriculum, pedagogy, economics, policy etc.). Both of these explanatory trends also sit within a wider set of politics related to structural issues such as economics, unequal societal power-relations, and culturally based ideologies. The varied needs of the students are not being fully met by either universities or tribal colleges. In the commodified American society many universities are moving toward becoming big businesses that have wares to sell and must reach the largest audience possible to make a profit. Therefore, they lack the ability to focus on any one particular group. Native American students attending universities rarely find an education that is relevant to their particular cultural context.

As Cajete points out in his article, “Land and Education,” the Native American cultural context is local – it is fundamentally entrenched and imbued with a sense of ‘place’ (1994). In that ‘place’ Native American students find identity, culture, language, and knowledge. Therefore, a more localized response is necessary. Tribal Colleges are able to provide local responses, and impact their communities in positive ways such as adding to reservation infrastructure, providing libraries, technology and housing community programs. But there are still questions about their ability to significantly impact the socio-economic conditions of Native American communities.

Significant barriers remain to economic development on reservations, and building skills and technical expertise, and encouraging entrepreneurship will not be enough if more jobs do not become available. A broad-based, diversified economy – including small business, manufacturing, agriculture and more – is necessary to ensure long-term success. (Boyer, 1997, p.27)
While some tribal college communities have had positive impacts in socio-economic development, the impact is limited and narrow. One of the problems is that the communities need more Native professionals and therefore, the availability of 4-year (or higher) degrees. However, tribal colleges are limited in their capacity to provide them (see page 92).

There are also questions about tribal college structures. Originally the colleges were created to provide a more responsive and relevant alternative to Western institutions. But most have replicated a Western structure (and hierarchy) within their own institutions. Often these structures have also replicated the problems that students were facing in the Western institutions.

This study is not intended to ‘blame’ tribal colleges or universities for the problems that exist in Native American communities. It is intended to find which aspects of these institutions are helping to alleviate the problems and which may not be so effective. The intention is to work toward a better outcome for all of Native higher education.

2. The Need to Reference Maori and Other Indigenous Insights

This thesis draws on the Maori example as a case study. Other international strategies are also examined in order to produce a ‘model’ for intervention into the Native American context. The theoretical work that creates the space for such a development is inspired from the Maori *Wananga* example in New Zealand. Two of the most prolific commentators, not just on Maori developments, but on Indigenous education issues generally are Maori educationalists G.H. Smith, who has written on transforming Higher Education (‘Kapaupa Maori Theory as Transformative Praxis’, 1997) and L. Smith who has written about the need for distinctive Indigenous research methodologies (*Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2000). I have been fortunate to interview both of these academics and expert voices on this topic and consequently have learned much of the
Maori strategies. The Maori revolution in education which began in the early 1980s and which is continuing today – has led to the formation of three Maori Wananga (tribally located, Higher Education Institutions). They are all different, but at least one has its own PhD granting rights, Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi (benchmarked with various universities, including the University of Auckland) – this of course is more advanced than any Native institutional responses in the U.S. I will draw heavily on insights from the New Zealand Maori case to inform both the critique of what is going wrong and to inform how we in the U.S. might reposition the Higher Educational sector and responses for a more productive and successful engagement. A key understanding from the New Zealand example is that transformation is possible and that such transformation in Higher Education can have a profound impact on the development of wider social, economic, cultural and political change within tribal communities and the general Native societal context.

3. The Need to Draw on Multiple and Diverse Sources of Information.

This project utilizes information collected from many sources. The information thus sought is intended to identify those elements which limit Native American success at the Higher Education level. Once this set of impediments is able to be identified and verified by cross reference, it will serve as a key set of elements that will be used to shape the structures and processes of the proposed intervention model. In other words the intervention model will attempt to respond directly to those issues that are perceived as being problematic in Native American Higher Education success. These issues will of course be discussed in more depth in the Chapter on Methodological issues.


I make the statement that Natives still want to be Native often – this is a message that can not be said enough in the face of the colonizing emphasis of schooling. Mono-cultural, Anglo-American schooling, is contributing to the loss of Native American languages not just by omission and the failure to develop culturally inclusive curricula,
but also because the validity and legitimacy of Native culture is undermined as its usefulness and worth is relegated to a second class status by the very act of its exclusion. Indigenous peoples around the world argue for the inclusion of their languages, knowledge and culture in the school curriculum. These sentiments are built into the United Nations Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples and into the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001). I define a culturally sustainable education as an education that not only protects the cultural identity of the student/community, but also gives it space to grow and change. It does this through the inclusion of the community’s language, knowledge and cultural elements. More importantly if one is genuinely interested in making a transforming impact on the socio-economic conditions of Native communities then we need to enhance learning opportunities in their own cultures and to grow the communities’ capacities and capabilities through their own teachings, Native languages, knowledge, and cultures that derive from their community context.

5. The Need for ‘Multiple Interventions’

In the past Native American educators have tended to use single strategies to deal with problems in higher education. They have attempted to change, circumvent, and fix the existing programs through singular policy and funding initiatives, e.g. heavy funding support for ‘early childhood education’ etc. While some of these singular strategies have helped, most have been temporary, non-transformative and have not recognized that simply ‘plugging up one hole has not stopped the water rising’ as there are many ‘holes’ in the system that must be dealt with simultaneously. As Graham Smith noted in his PhD thesis (1997), there is a need to develop multiple strategies of resistance and transformation to respond to multiple forms of colonization. Most Federal and State approaches have thus far been too narrow. In seeking to develop change in Native American higher education there is a need to move beyond the single intervention approach. Intervention strategies need to be widened and multiple strategies must be applied in many sites within education and schooling. This is what Indigenous people imply by using the term ‘holistic’ approaches to learning and education. This focus on multiple sites of transformation is an underlying assumption built into the approach taken
in this thesis. By thinking this way, educators can continue to intervene on two broad fronts; firstly, by attempting to fix existing structures and processes to function better for Indigenous and Native students, and secondly, by developing totally new and innovative strategies and models.


Transformative Praxis is the term that Smith, (1997), uses to describe change processes. This term encapsulates the need to emphasize the ‘buy in’ to the proposed transformation by the group for whom the change is intended. Praxis describes a dynamic and ongoing cycle of ‘action, reflection and re-action’. Over time this critical cycle of transformation develops a more and more refined transformative process and outcome. Smith (Ibid) has argued that praxis is particularly important for Indigenous communities as it represents a way in which transformers, academics, and researchers must be accountable to the communities they are purporting to serve, given that the critical reflection must occur with those who are being implicated in change – the communities themselves.

7. The Need for Structural Change.

This thesis is not just arguing for ‘culturalist’ types of change. Structural change is also important. A certain amount of the change that is required falls within the power of individual agency. However, there are other issues related to ‘structuralist’ concerns; issues related to economic inequalities, unequal power and social relations, hegemonic controls and so on. Transformation needs to occur at both in the schooling and education arena as well as society at large. Schools and education institutions are also reflections of society. Schools tend to produce and reproduce the dominant interests of society and this is problematic for minority and marginalized populations. Hegemonic understandings of democracy uphold the interests of majority and dominant groups – for example ‘one person one vote and majority rules’ works against numerically underrepresented groups.
In American higher education, where attempts are being made to be culturally inclusive, most of these institutions design their responses around additive, ‘tokenistic’ types of change. These strategies do not challenge the heart or core of the curriculum which remains mostly mono-cultural. Any cultural changes tend to be fitted around this core. Many of these initiatives do not and are not intended to actually make change – they are intended to ‘domesticate’ dissent. Native knowledge and practice is almost always very much positioned at the lower end of a hierarchy of knowledge within the institution, to the larger, more prestigious, more relevant, more scientific Anglo forms of knowledge. Of course from the sociological perspective, knowledge is socially constructed phenomenon. A curriculum, in this sense represents a ‘selection of knowledge’ by particular interest groups to serve their needs.

In order to deal with deeper structural issues and impediments and not simply make surface change by altering what is taught and how it is taught – there is a need to also engage with structural change. For example, the organizational structure of hierarchies within the institutions of higher education often are in direct contrast to the interconnected organizational structures of Native communities. There is a need to change not just the structures of the institutions but to attempt to also change higher order structures within society more generally. At the very least these structural impediments need to be identified and understood, even if they cannot be totally changed. However, a small example of what is possible can be seen in the way in which tribes in San Diego are using their casinos and the larger economic context to their advantage. They have carved out their space in the ‘economic’ community by using their casino earnings to sponsor many local charities, health and community services, and even to influence political policies. However, one might also argue that they have become more interested in economics structure and neglect cultural needs, in that they have done less to preserve or sustain themselves culturally. This reinforces the need to struggle for both ‘culturalist’ and ‘structuralist’ forms of change.
In education it is important to not only understand the issues from these two perspectives but to also develop transformation on both fronts. It is important, on the one hand, to seek cultural inclusion into the programs and to develop institutional change at faculty, curriculum and pedagogical levels, but it is also important to work for transformation at the wider societal and policy levels. There is a need to design transformative interventions that make ‘structural space’ related to elements such as economics, ideological framing, power relations and so on outside of the constraints of the existing Academic structures in order to enable a more successful implementation of Indigenous ‘cultural’ aspirations, and spaces (G.H. Smith, 1999) within the academy. If this can be achieved there is a greater chance to develop more meaningful and effective change of the wider community condition.

**8. The Need to Understand and Resist New Modes of Colonization.**

Smith has also made the observation that colonization of native peoples has not gone away, it has merely changed form (1999). I agree with this view; where once colonization was overt and unapologetic, today it is hidden and more subtly enacted within and through the manipulation of the larger structures of society. From neo-liberal economics and the ‘New World Order’ to intellectual property issues and the commodification of knowledge – economic colonizing forces continue to impact Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples around the world: “It is precisely at the intersection of economic exploitation and cultural oppression that new and hybrid forms of colonization are produced.” (G.H. Smith, Interview, 2004)

Native American people have fought against the old forms of oppression and understand how to undertake those battles. This has involved struggles over land, rights, education, spiritual elements, language and culture. These struggles continue, but now as Smith has identified, there are new formations of colonization and assimilation that need to be understood and resisted. In this regard, new modes of colonization require new critical ‘literacies’ to enable understanding and subsequently new resistances to these colonizing imperatives. These new battlegrounds are at the highest levels of universities
where elite knowledge and privilege are produced, legitimated and reproduced within the public sphere. Power and control over knowledge by dominant interest groups are at the core of this issue and it is this arena, the new ‘front-line’, in which Native Americans must contend. This is a further reason why educational problems must be approached with a structural analysis and intervention approach and why transformation will only be limited and short-term as long as we simply argue and change cultural formations – this point being captured in the metaphor of ‘merely rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic’.

9. The Need to Understand Higher Education as both a Site of Resistance and a Site of Transformation.

Higher Education and Universities in particular are important sites of struggle in this new millennium. It is here that society’s ‘elite knowledge’ is created and legitimated. This knowledge becomes taken for granted or hegemonic. It justifies and validates the accepted social practices, norms and behaviors in society. These norms, social practices and cultural behaviors are culturally and socially constructed and laden. Native American culture is often excluded from these ‘societal’ norms; in this sense Native culture is often by contrast, constructed as ‘abnormal’, ‘deviant’ or even ‘exotic’. As such there is need to critically engage with Higher Education institutions - there must be resistance to those forces where they are produced rather than after they are already interwoven into society. Therefore, the university must be a part of Native American higher education, at least to some degree, although not in its existing form. This position is adopted, even though the proposed intervention in this work is leading to problematizing the existing institutions and moving to develop an alternative stand-alone model. The response here is that there are many sites that need to be transformed and struggled over – there is no single answer. We need several intervention strategies and approaches. Thus, I am not arguing against the notion of the University or Academy per se, I am arguing for a different and inclusive institutional model – one that can genuinely accommodate Native interests and aspirations as well as develop change of community crisis. In order for this to happen we must first acknowledge the deep divisions between
universities and our communities brought about by damaging research, researchers, and some of their questionable activities.

The act of resisting can bring about transformations of a physical or mental nature. It can be a simple ‘shift’ of paradigms in one’s mind or it can be an act of defiance. But all forms must be addressed and given the space to act. According to Graham Smith, most transformation we see in education takes the form of a linear, singular, ‘silver bullet’ approach. The problem with this is that it can lead to the formation of hierarchies of struggle. It may also presuppose an instrumental order to the process of transformation – when in fact transformation can occur in multiple places in many different ways. Finally, a the linear change model can often privilege particular groups within a community; this in turn can often lead to divide and rule amongst communities as they evaluate individuals on their commitment to struggle. The counter to this is the need to create inclusive models of struggling and of developing change.

![Silver Bullet Approach](image)

*Figure 3: Silver Bullet Approach*

![Circular Praxis Model](image)

*Figure 4: Circular Praxis Model*  
(GH Smith, 1997)
Smith (1997) suggests a second model of transformation – what is termed a circular praxis model. The model because it is arranged in a circle formation is dynamic and ongoing (as opposed to the linear model), anyone can enter into the change cycle from any position. The model may be more appropriate for Indigenous transformation because it accentuates inclusiveness rather than exclusivity (and as such, works against creating hierarchies). The circle formation allows every Maori / Native American / other group to be plotted somewhere in the circle. The circle allows for backward and forward movement and thus can accommodate those members of the community who are politically advanced, those who are dormant and those who are regressing (going backwards). The important thing in being able to plot everyone in the circular praxis model is to be able to speak to all Maori as potentially being in the struggle and eventually moving in the same direction (even though some may be politically asleep) and yet others may in fact be moving backwards rather than forwards (Smith, 1997). The point is that there is a need to construct change strategies that are hopeful, positive, proactive and as inclusive as possible. There is a major lesson to be learned from the Maori example in New Zealand.

An important set of critical questions must also be asked when we speak about transformation of Indigenous and Native peoples. Whose interests are served by the transformation? Transformation for what outcomes? What is actually transformed? Who will be transformed and why? Will the transformation make a positive difference? How does the transformation impact our language, knowledge and cultural interests? How do our communities of interest benefit? What damage, if any, is caused by this transformation? Who is proposing the transformation and how are they accountable?

11. The Need to Develop a Critical Consciousness.

An important task of developing change in the Higher Education arena is the need to produce graduate students who have a critical consciousness. That is to produce students who have critical understandings of their social and economic positioning in
society. They need to have some understanding of how outcomes of marginalization are produced and reproduced.

This critical consciousness also needs to infuse all Native American academic circles and the community at large. A critical consciousness is a prerequisite to being able to undertake critically informed transformations. As such one of the elements underpinning the writing of this thesis is to develop a critical consciousness about how colonization is produced and reproduced by dominant interest groups (and by Native Americans as well through hegemony). The proposed institutional model will need to take account of this element and how to embed into the curriculum and structures, practices and governance of the institution.

**Thesis Outline and Progression of Chapters.**

The progression of the thesis story-line is reasonably straightforward. I begin with a Prologue discussion. In the Prologue I am concerned to put myself in the text and the research. I am simultaneously a cultural participant and a researcher. There are many issues related to the status and authority of my right ‘to speak’ and my ‘voice’ which this section attempts to mediate if not solve. Some of these personal dilemmas remain unresolved – but none the less they need to be brought in to the open and made transparent.

In **Chapter One**, I introduce the project and purpose of the study. In the Introduction I also deal with some thematic issues and tensions – providing an overview of some of the underlying contestations and sub-texts that are not always tracked out in the body of the thesis work, but are useful for the reader from two standpoints, first to show that I am aware of these issues and second to provide a quick portrait of the issue.

**Chapter Two** addresses issues related to Method and Methodology. The methodologies used in this study are not a straightforward issue. I necessarily draw on a variety of
methodologies partly in response to the different information sources I am canvassing, for example;

- a literature search
- b. interviews with experts
- c. focus groups with Tribal College and University students
- d. statistical analyses
- e. my own family experience – of myself, my children and my mother


In **Chapter Three** I discuss the theoretical terrain in which I am working and the theoretical issues that relate to the project. One of the key points to be addressed is the issue of developing a theoretical understanding to the issues related to transformation. There is a need to take a stronger theoretical approach to Indigenous transformation – both in coming to understand and explain what is going wrong and also with respect to developing a theoretically informed transformative intervention. This move to also inform their change strategies by understanding the theoretical underpinnings is very much a key element of Maori success in the New Zealand context and it is something that has not been seriously used in Native American strategies for change. Thus while one theme is to develop and engage with Indigenous theorizing, a second theme is to engage
with all theory that may be relevant to aiding understanding and developing intervention. Thus I lay out how I am also drawing on and engaging with existing European theoretical ‘tools’; for example, selected Critical Theory insights, selected elements from the New Sociology of Education and the Sociology of Knowledge, and selected concepts from what has been generalized as Post-colonial theory. In summary, I am interested in using theory as a tool to aid understanding – at various points I can use existing theoretical instruments and at other times when I am working on an Indigenous cultural issue, the existing tools do not quite fit or cope with the task I am working on – in these instances I am open to using different culturally-based theoretical insights – such Kaupapa Maori approaches and theorizing as has worked in New Zealand. Any such borrowing of course needs to be done carefully and not uncritically. A second strategy here is to develop our own Native theorizing, although I have not gone too far down this pathway.

In **Chapter Four** I examine more closely the Tribal College response and existing Native programming that is being undertaken in ‘mainstream’ sites. I attempt to paint the picture of what is going on in various parts of the country and to assess the range, scope and impact of the current activities. This information will provide the basis for the next chapter which will focus more critically on the potential (or not) to make the changes necessary to dramatically change current Native American social, economic and cultural existence.

**Chapter Five** takes on a more ‘in depth’ critique of the Tribal Colleges and University responses. Once again, although this chapter aims to identify the ‘short-comings’, the intention is not to completely implode these entities – rather the stance is to help bring about a consciousness of the barriers and constraints and to hopefully enlist these organizations and programs in a renewed effort to undertake change. Some of the elements they are currently supporting may in fact be shown to be too problematic and will need to be abandoned; other elements may be in need of transformation; yet other new initiatives and strategies may also need to be developed – in a value added way to their existing work. The bottom line is that most of our Native American talent as it exists
in the education sector (and as meager as this may be at this time), is mostly currently involved in responding to Native American needs and aspirations in some way. However, what is critical is to be able to evaluate this effort against the questions that Native Americans must ask themselves; Are these efforts working to the extent of developing change in our communities? Are our cultural interests being served by these efforts?

**Chapter Six** examines some success models and ideas from other international contexts, namely the three Maori Higher Education responses in New Zealand, the Alaskan response developed around the work of Barnhardt and Kwangley and the new Indigenous Studies program at the University of Kansas led by Michael Yellow Bird. Each of these examples needs to be translated carefully into and across the very different cultural and educational contexts within the United States. However, a key issue is to understand that things can be transformed and that there are some major gains to be had through an appropriate Higher Education framework for Native American communities of Interest.

In **Chapter Seven** I move to examine the interview and focus group data to hear a selection of voices from faculty, staff and students as they discuss what they perceive to be the most pertinent and contemporary issues in Indigenous higher education. Common themes will be drawn out and discussed.

**Chapter Eight** critically examines various data streams; namely the literature review, interviews with experts and the researcher as a participant observer. Again common themes will be drawn from these data sources and aggregated with information derived from chapter seven. Together this information will create a list of critical issues that ought to be addressed by a new models that aim to be responsive, innovative and transformative.

**Chapter Nine** proposes a new model/strategy/framework to develop an intervention in Native American Higher Education. It is formed out of answering the question – *If these are indeed the key barriers and constraints to Native American success in Higher Education and also to community development and advancement – what structure can we*
build that might intervene?’ It will also review the model and its intervention capacity against each of the nominated barriers that have been identified and aggregated out of the information streams and analysis/discussion in Chapter Two. What I attempt to show is the intervention capacity within the proposed new structure and framework – again I am conscious that I am not producing ‘the’ answer to all the ills in the system – I am simply arguing for a more profound and informed approach to intervention and transformation. In this sense the model proposed is ‘an’ intervention; other strategies also need to be developed. I reiterate, Graham Smith’s observation, that there is a need in the Native American context to pursue multiple strategies for transformation in multiple sites, because colonization is not coming at Native Americans in one way or in one place. Colonization is a multidimensional, multifaceted phenomenon and therefore needs many responses.

In Chapter Ten I summarize the overall thesis and make some tentative suggestions of how such a model/intervention/framework might be advanced on the ground for implementation. I also propose a need for a Native Education Policy to help focus efforts in Native American higher education.

Summary.

The current Native American higher education responses are performing in a limited way at best. Whether university or tribal college the strategy to make progress and change has usually aimed to ‘fix’ or ‘adjust’ the existing structures by using additive measures. What is needed is a more profound change strategy that affects education in multiple ways in multiple locations, and in multiple communities. Such an intervention model must simultaneously confront culturalist constraints (the elements that derive from human agency, such as the selected curriculum, pedagogies and attitudinal issues) and structuralist constraints (the impediments that are embedded in societal structures such as economics, power relations etc). These are the issues that need to be considered within the intervention model which I am ultimately arguing and building towards.
Intervention strategies must take into account the larger structures of the institutions and society itself. These have a tremendous impact on education and must be fully understood by those in Native education because this is where the newest forms of colonization have taken hold, for example, those issues that derive from neo-liberal, free-market ideologies. A Native presence of community oriented transformers is essential at the highest levels of university to assist in developing more effective strategies to mediate the debilitating effect of these often neo-colonizing forces. However, the reality is that Natives are absent from the institutional hierarchies. Transformation can only take place with a conscious awareness of what one is doing. In resisting the effects of colonization and its power in education, educators must utilize all of their resources and employ a more inclusive, non-hierarchical, praxis to move change along faster. There is need also to be keenly aware of both structural and cultural impediments so that they do not end up recreating the colonizing effects within their own, ostensibly, transformed institutions. Successful institutions from the Native perspective are ones which provide a culturally sustainable education, not an education that destroys Indian identity.

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2 That is they must constantly review, reflect and make informed change.
CHAPTER TWO

A DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES, TENSIONS, PARAMETERS AND DIRECTIONS
A Discussion of Some Methodological Issues, Tensions, Parameters and Directions

“…..the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research,’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary.” (L. Smith, 1999, p.1)

I. Introduction

This Chapter is developed in two broad sections. Section A provides a critical overview of Indigenous issues related to research. This sets the critical platform for Section B which contains a description of the Methodologies used in this study.

Section A.

In this Section I outline some of the tensions and issues that arise within the research project and with respect to the way in which these issues have determined the methodologies used in this study. Four things are addressed in this first Section. First, I canvass some of the historical tensions that have arisen for Indigenous people attempting to engage in the educational research domain and processes; second, I develop a critical discussion around issues of power and bias with respect to objectivity; third, I examine the notion of the ‘Indigenous Researcher; and fourth I conclude with a discussion on Indigenous perspectives related to research ethics.
This study argues the need for a more successful and culturally inclusive form of higher education for Indigenous students. A major assumption underpinning this argument is that Western higher education has often been inadequate to the task of fully educating Indigenous students. By this I mean, that while on the one hand Indigenous students ought to have ‘opportunities to access knowledge and skills that fit them as useful and contributing members of society, in the same manner as all students’, on the other hand, many Native American students also need opportunities to avail themselves of an education that fits them for their cultural existence within their communities.

In general however, the cultural ‘shape of’ and ‘shaping by’ education and schooling in America, is overwhelmingly mono-cultural. Western knowledge constructions, views, concepts, and values underlie and dominate most aspects of schooling and education in America. Western cultural forms are usually taken for granted as the ‘norm’. Such a narrow cultural emphasis is in turn problematic for the Indigenous researcher and for Indigenous focused research within education. Such problems as may be related to social and cultural ‘narrowing’ and reproduction are not new; these trends have a history and a genealogy. One needs to unpack some of this history in order to show how this particular research study, not only understands how these problems and impediments have been historically entrenched, but that this research is also working in genuinely new ways to create more appropriate research methods and ultimately more appropriate and effective interventions and transformations.

II. Historical Issues and Tensions Related to Indigenous Research

….it is surely difficult to discuss research methodology and Indigenous peoples together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices. (L. Smith, 1999, p. 2)
From the earliest meetings between Europeans and Native Americans, there have been accounts sent back to Europe about the strange peoples - the ‘Indians’ who inhabited the Americas. These early stories, along with official reports and amateur ethnographic studies, aroused the curiosity of others to come and see the new continent for themselves and to pave the way for these ‘strangers’ to come into Native communities. Over time they have imposed their opinions, values, language, culture and social norms upon tribal nations. Looking back retrospectively and also critically, we now understand much of these behaviours as ‘colonization’. These early value judgments of Native lives have been systematically reinforced over and over again, including within formal education and schooling processes. In her book, Decolonizing Methodologies, Linda Smith makes clear, how through colonization, researchers played vital roles in (re)defining both the Indigenous peoples and the landscapes of North America.

One of the issues examined relates to the way research became institutionalized in the colonies, not just through academic disciplines, but through learned and scientific societies and scholarly networks. The transplanting of research institutions, including universities, from the imperial centers of Europe enabled local scientific interests to be organized and embedded in the colonial system. Many of the earliest local researchers were not formally ‘trained’ and were hobbyist researchers and adventurers. The significance of travelers ‘tales and adventurers’ is that they represented the Other to a general audience back in Europe which became fixed in the milieu of cultural ideas. Images of the ‘cannibal’ chief, the ‘red’ Indian, the ‘witch’ doctor, or the ‘tattooed and shrunken’ head, and stories which told of savagery and primitivism, generated further interest, and therefore further opportunities, to represent the Other again. (L. Smith, 1999, p.5)

The discovery of the ‘new’ continent of America fed European curiosity and interest in the mysterious inhabitants of these lands, variously described as native, savage, strange, unusual, exotic – all terms which constructed the Indigenous peoples as the ‘others.’ As Said has noted in his book, Orientalism, this defining of the Americas simultaneously assisted the West to define itself. This is what Edward Said describes as the phenomenon of ‘orientalism’; it is a process of increasing power and superiority over the ‘other’ in the very act of “…dealing with it, making statements about it, authorizing
views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.” (1978, p.3). In a similar manner to what was happening in respect of the East/ Orient, the West was also exerting its cultural superiority over the Natives of the Americas (L. Smith, 1999, p.78). Right from the outset of contact and then settlement, Westerners have consistently assumed that their culture was the center, the norm from which all others should / could be judged and measured against.

The colonial mindset of the West is perhaps what allowed these newcomers to believe in their superiority over this new land and its people (Spring, 1997). This new place was theirs to define and to create in a manner that fitted into their imaginings. Research served to re-affirm their definitions and solidify their views of Natives as primitive, savage, or mysterious (L. Smith, 1999). It has been these views of America that have allowed governments, churches, and educators to believe that Native Americans were in need of ‘change’ and used these institutions to ‘civilize’ them (Spring, 1997).

These patronizing views that have shaped (and continue to shape much of the schooling and education experience of Native Americans) is of course problematic from the Indigenous perspective. The lack of respect shown to Native Americans throughout this history of colonization has left much anger and distrust towards Western researchers in Indigenous societies. Many governmental and educational decisions have been made based on research outcomes as defined by the West. Many of these decisions have brought pain and suffering upon the Native communities. For these communities, research never seemed to benefit them. The research was often only to the benefit of the researcher who could then wield it as an instrument. It was not so much that the researchers themselves were disliked; in fact, many were well liked by the local communities, but it was the way in which the research was used that was harmful. This is why many people in Indigenous education are critical of many things written about Indigenous people. There is a need for critical questions to be raised around these issues such as who is doing the writing and why? Are the subjects in agreement with this study
and the outcomes (Wilson, 1998)? These are moral and ethical considerations that need to be addressed.

The view of many Indigenous people is that researchers are often only out for themselves and the research they do will have little benefit for Indigenous communities. Often these researchers become known as ‘Indian experts’ who are then sought after, consulted and quoted in studies or in governmental reports, while the real ‘experts’, the people themselves, are often ignored and their voices diminished and relegated to being ‘anecdotal’ commentary.

As Linda Smith (1999) has noted, the West often rejects the views of the people who are the very creators of the language, knowledge, culture, ideas and life ways being studied. Some researchers within the Western academy justify their involvement in Indigenous research on the basis of the belief that their research is a service to humanity; that their findings add to ‘the’ knowledge pool of the ‘greater’ or ‘common’ good, (usually narrowly interpreted to being of the West). Furthermore, they often claim that the research has been conducted in a scientific, objective fashion, and that this also justifies their involvement in undertaking such research – they are also implicitly making statements about relative authenticity, authority and relevance of the research that they do. A more sinister issue perhaps, is the deliberate exclusion of Native voice and authority in research. For example, a common tactic is to make a claim that Indigenous researchers are often ‘too close’ to their topics, their subjects and so forth, to be able to be completely ‘objective’, and therefore the research that they do is ‘questionable’ with respect to it being ‘authentic’, ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’. The corollary of this is that an outsider’s view (e.g. a non-Indigenous researcher view) is more likely to be objective and truthful (even though the issue of objectivity is still debated even within Western research). This attitude needs to be critically scrutinized and challenged, for as Linda Smith observes it is an attitude that “offends the deepest sense of our [Indigenous] humanity” (L. Smith, 1999, p.1).
II. Power, Bias and Inequality

“Researchers should not be afraid to focus attention on the issues of power and who controls it.” (Marker, 1997, p.17)

When Western researchers study who they have defined as the ‘other,’ an imbalance of power is created in the simple act of making the choice to study ‘them.’ ‘They,’ are not us, as defined by the West; however ‘they’ will be viewed and judged through a Western lens. It must be understood just how critical it is to have the power to be the observer in the context of academic research. The question is not just who is observing whom, but also, what tools are being used, what they measure, and who created the tools. Also, what assumptions were made in making the tools? Referring to Scheurich and Young’s article (1997), we must look at the epistemologies themselves to examine what, if any bias, may be found within the foundation of Western academic research methodologies, thinking and practices.

…epistemological racism comes from or emerges out of what we have labelled the civilization level – the deepest, most primary assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the ways of knowing that reality (epistemology), and the disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values (axiology) – in short, presumptions about the real, the true, and the good. (Scheurich, 1997, p.6)

Often Euro-American modernist thought and subsequent understandings of morality and life, become the defining force behind methodologies used in research on people whose realities may be differently defined. Ensuing epistemologies tend to come from a particular social history and a particular social group. Different groups, races, cultures, etc., therefore evolve differently and have their own unique epistemology; that is to say that no ‘epistemology’ is context free. Yet, most of the epistemologies validated
in our education system today arise from White writers who presume the dominance of their own cultural backgrounds in a taken for granted way and who therefore do not even question the perspective that they may be culturally biased (Scheurich, 1997).

North American history is filled with elements of domination, subjugation, and oppression. Although these elements may no longer be overt in nature, they do exist today in different (often submerged) forms (G. Smith, Interview, 2004). But more importantly, those elements (domination, subjugation, and oppression), defined society, morality, and, eventually, who would benefit from those definitions. Indigenous North Americans were subjected to these definitions not only in the realm of academic research, but also in governmental decisions, concepts of expansion, ideas of economics (personal property, etc.), and public opinion.

As Scheurich (1997) points out, whenever one group within a large complex society, significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the dominant group’s epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies become not only the dominant ways of that society, but they are so deeply embedded that are seen as ‘natural’ or normal rather than historically evolved social constructions. The dominant group, therefore, becomes the center to which others are viewed against and the conceptual framework that constrains all thought.

If, then, ‘normal’ is defined by what the West sees as natural, and what the West considers to be the ‘center,’ the implication for those ‘others,’ or non-Westerners, is that they are ab-normal. These assumptions can often be seen in research but they also become part of mainstream consciousness through this normalization process. If minorities, for example, are labelled in studies as disadvantaged or at-risk, then society as a whole is able to internalize these labels so that they become the ‘truth’. Minorities then become disadvantaged because they lack the advantage of being White or of having
the qualities that the West defines as ‘normal’. They are also at-risk of not performing up to the standards as defined by the West.

….. ‘social science knowledge production about racial minorities still dwells on the pathological and on the sensational.’ A result of this is that these negative distortions pass into the dominant culture as ‘truth’, thus becoming the basis of individual, group, and institutional attitudes, decisions, practices and policies (i.e., institutional and societal racism). (Scheurich, 1997, p.9)

Native Americans have been endlessly labelled by the outcomes of Western research and mainstream society. The affects of Western research does not stop at the academic or research level, it follows into larger society and the daily lives of Indigenous people who face these labelled ‘truths’ about themselves each day. The power that research has to affect Indigenous people’s lives is enormous. This is why researchers have become so suspect in Native communities. What is written about these communities has more power than the individual researchers might comprehend, but they need to do just that; become aware of the power and influence and responsibility they hold. In research it is true that “never before have a few, by their actions and inactions, had the power of life and death over so many members of the species…” (Nader, 1974, p.470).

III. Indigenous Researchers

With respect to my previous comments the notion of the ‘Indigenous researcher’ is almost a contradiction in terms. However, if a Native American student wants to obtain a graduate degree, they will be confronted with the issues discussed in this chapter. It is difficult to navigate such a complicated and dangerous path. If, as an Indigenous student, you understand the history, bias, and harmful affects of Western research upon your people, how can you participate in it? The problem in the North American context is that the power and control over research as discussed previous sections, is mostly in the
hands of dominant, non-Native interest groups. For example, in order for a person to be taken seriously in academia and much of larger society, they often must have a university degree. In order to obtain the degree they must participate in a process and system that has been historically destructive to Indigenous cultures. It is a system based on the reification of research.

Indigenous researchers often have a dual dilemma. Not only are they participating in a system that has caused harm to their people, but they also have personal battles to face within their academic institutions. If, in attempting to be more culturally appropriate, the Indigenous researcher works within his or her own epistemological framework, he or she risks not being understood and, more importantly, not being taken seriously. Another problem they, and scholars of color in general, face is that the traditional Euro-centric perspective is used to evaluate their scholarship. This disadvantages non-traditional (race-based) research because predominantly White male academics lack the cultural perspectives from which to judge the research’s true merit (Scheurich, 1997).

Research approaches are not a homogenous set. Indeed the term ‘research’ generalizes many different methods, debates, disciplinary boundaries and hierarchies that are abroad in the Academy. Although some ground has been made in advancing ‘alternative’ research models, there is still the prevailing feeling that ‘true’, ‘authentic’, ‘real’, ‘scientific’ research rests within the Western science-oriented models of research based on positivism. The Indigenous researcher must comply, at many levels, with the ‘standard research model’ and methodologies that derive from these culturally shaped approaches. However contradictory the dominant research epistemology might be to the Indigenous researcher, he or she must learn it, accept it, and use it, or risk failing. Schuerich and Young have stated this dilemma quite eloquently and clearly:

…the dominant research epistemologies – from positivism to postmodernisms – implicitly favor White people because they accord most easily with their social history (J.A. Banks, 1993: B.M.
Gordon, 1993; Stanfield, 1985). Thus, even though it may be unintended, the ‘clothes’ that an epistemology wears could be said to fit better and are more comfortable to White researchers because White researchers themselves are a product of the social history of Whites, just as the dominant epistemologies are a product of White social history. That is, the range of epistemologies that have arisen from the social history of Whites ‘fit’ Whites because they themselves, the nature of the university and of legitimated scholarship and knowledge, and the specifications of different research methodologies are all cultural products of White social history. While scholars of color have to wear these ‘White’ clothes, (be bi-cultural), so they could succeed in research communities, however sociologically, historically, or culturally ill-fitting those clothes might be, White scholars have virtually never had to think about wearing the epistemological clothes of people of color or even to consider the idea of such ‘strange’ apparel. The negative consequences for scholars of color, however, is that they must learn and become accomplished in epistemologies that arise out of a social history that has been profoundly hostile to their race and that ignores or excludes alternative race-based epistemologies because mainstream research communities have assumed that their epistemologies are not derived from any particular group’s social history, i.e. are free of any specific history or culture. That scholars of color have successfully become epistemologically bi-cultural to survive as scholars is a testament to them – their strength, their courage, their perseverance, and their love of scholarship – rather than a testament to the race/culture-free nature of mainstream research epistemologies. (1997, p.9)

So much is taken for granted by Western scholars because most have never had to think about their research process in terms of personal cultural, racial or social biases. More often, White researchers are able to externalize these issues as a problem embedded in the research process – in this sense they are not questions that are raised against them as researchers of color, operating within a societal, historical, social, institutional, and research position of subordination. Native researchers often have to spend inordinate amounts of time defending themselves against multiple assumptions about themselves, their cultural influences, their approaches and so on. This I would argue is a ‘hidden curriculum’ of racism that is often overlooked as being part of the research process in colonized societies such as North America.

The research process for Native and Indigenous researchers is not a level playing field. While great emphasis is placed on looking at the research method to be unbiased
and neutral, the contradiction is that the politics of the research process overall, for Indigenous peoples and Natives, is fraught with cultural bias, prejudice against their interests. For example, let us consider in some detail the issues related to literature and sources. Usually when an Indigenous researcher takes on a research project, the first thing they are taught to do is examine the literature. Most likely a Western scholar would rarely take issue with this step, and have no question as to its necessity and benefits. For an Indigenous researcher, doing research within Indigenous communities, the problems are automatic and two-fold. First, there is a lack of literature in many areas of Indigenous research, and secondly, what does exist is often inaccurate, distorted, or demeaning. Indigenous students, not just at the graduate levels, but all throughout their schooling, face a gamut of exclusion, racism, and insensitivities in books.

Once an Indigenous scholar has looked through the literature, it is possible that he or she will find very little in the way of accurate research data, or in some instances, any data at all. Much of what is out there in the social sciences about Native Americans, as well as Blacks and Latinos, ignores or deems them and often presents distorted interpretations of minority potentials and conditions (Scheurich, 1997). In these cases it is very difficult for the scholar to adhere to the Western methods of validation. Within Western standards the researcher must back up his or her claims through previous research and ‘known’ authors. The problem for the Indigenous scholar is the lack of progressive and culturally based research on the topics he or she is choosing. They are sometimes stuck referencing only a few authors or only one journal or text because there is so little else that is accurate or relevant (although the area is now starting to grow). There are some Indigenous journals on a few different topics that students can access. However, access may be limited as most universities do not carry a large variety of Indigenous authored books, journals, newsletters, etc. Indigenous scholars are extremely lucky if they go to a university such as the University of British Columbia which has its own First Nations library. Of course there is a downside to the need for a separate library. Often the need arises because the main libraries do not carry the type of holdings that a specialty library will; they are not seen as critical materials (this has certainly been my experience as a student). These issues related to Native access to a range of literature,
what counts as relevant literature and so forth are going to be key issues when considering structuring an institutional response later in this thesis. The main point here is that existing institutions put in place a large variety of barriers and constraints related to access to Indigenous literature and knowledge. This issue needs to be dealt with.

Another problem is that specialty libraries often, as is the case at with the First Nations Xwi7xwa library at UBC, are not part of the main library system and do not receive the same kind of funding, maintenance, and support from the university as do the ‘scientific’ libraries. [note: This situation has recently changed in January 2006, after more than 10 years of lobbying by Aboriginal faculty and staff]. This lack of acceptance or validation of Indigenous knowledge, is one reason why special journals had to be created to fill the research gap in areas that Indigenous people themselves find important. Another reason is the lack of accuracy in existing sources. These journals are often times the only ones which will accept culturally-based research from Indigenous scholars because their epistemological frameworks are not accepted in the mainstream. Of course these journals are then given less credibility than their Western counterparts which can be a problem for scholars looking for tenure who tend to have been published in these ‘marginalized’ journal publications.

As Indigenous scholars struggle to find relevant literature for their research, many have to make do with what non-Indigenous scholars in, often in other disciplines, have written. Not only what has been written, but, also, how it has been written. In learning to write research papers, students are given examples from mainstream Western research. Other writing styles, while they may exist, are less acceptable in academia. So even when an Indigenous student has the good fortune to find an Indigenous instructor at the university, the chances are that the instructor was trained and is teaching the Western research approaches. That is not to say that none of them are teaching alternatives, but they too are bound by the constraints of the Faculty, University and Disciplinary boundaries and regulations; so for now it is the exception rather than the rule. Any faculty must first be trained in and expected to teach dominant Western research theory.
It is critical for Indigenous scholars that research methodologies expand and become more responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse world. “Despite the extensive literature about the life and customs of Indigenous peoples, there are few critical texts on research methodologies which mention the word Indigenous or its localized systems” (L. Smith, 1999, p.5). Because of this lack of alternatives, Indigenous scholars have to come up with their own methodologies. Whether or not they are accepted is another question. This is not to set up an either/or situation between Western and Native methodologies, (there are many useful Western methodologies), it is to explain that the Western methodologies do not often account for the cultural nuances of Native communities. So until Indigenous scholars can find a venue to explore, expand, and develop these theories, they will continue to battle the system. And it is important to do so. Although students find these struggles within the system, it is important to stay there as a presence with the goal of transforming, even in small amounts, the status quo of the system and to stake a claim to their cultural space in academia and research.

There are many more Indigenous researchers paving new paths and developing new ways of doing more appropriate and relevant research in communities. The critical element is for Indigenous researchers to define the parameters for respectful research and design the research within an appropriate Indigenous framework. For example the First Nations House of Learning sponsored a research project carried out by a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Archibald, J., Selkirk Bowman, S., Pepper, F., Urion, C.), and in their design they defined their belief in an appropriate methodology for their project stating: “First Nations educational research must involve the stakeholders in the design and implementation phases and that they must ultimately benefit from the research experience” (Archibald, 1995, p.3).

It is also important for non-Indigenous researchers to work in a more appropriate manner within the context of Indigenous research. Currently there is no national guideline of professional ethics or scholarly responsibilities, defined by Natives themselves, that researchers should follow while conducting research in Native communities (Fixico, 1998). A code of ethics needs to be defined by Native communities.
and researchers so that there is some control over the way research affects the communities locally in terms of practices and assessment. In an article entitled, “Reliability, Validity, and Authenticity in American Indian and Alaska Native Research”, Lomawaima and McCarty talk about the type of assessment that should occur when a research project involves Native communities. “….. assessments must be based not only on Western notions of scientific quality but also, in the case of American Indians and Alaska Natives, on a separate set of criteria prescribed in the interest of sovereignty. ‘Sovereignty’, refers to the inherent as well as the constitutionally recognized, rights of self-government, self-determination, and self-education” (2002, p.1).

A few individual tribes such as the Tohono O’odha, Pasqua Yaqui and Hopi have established their own rules for researchers in their communities (Lomawaima, 2002). The Akwesasne Task Forces on the Environment (ATFE) created a research advisory committee which developed ‘Protocols for Review of Environmental and Scientific Research Proposals’ (ATFE, 1996). The ATFE was reacting to what they considered threats to their environment from endless numbers of studies in their region. In Canada the Micmac have established research principles and protocols (http://mrc.uccb.ns.ca/prinpro.html). So have the Kahnawake through their School’s Diabetes Prevention Project (http://ksdpp.org/code.html). These rules are intended to safeguard the cultural and political well-being of communities by establishing their own standards for quality research. In 1998, President Clinton signed an executive order to require the development and implementation of a research agenda for American Indians and Alaska Native education. The research agenda, developed by Native Americans in conjunction with the federal government ‘set out to identify a limited set of high-priority research topics that could serve as a framework and guide for federally sponsored research over the following decade’ (Strang, 2002). These efforts are a small step in the right direction given the fact that tribes have even been consulted. It is also hopeful given that this process may signal a slowing of the current approach that seemingly is a total capitulation to entrepreneurial research or institutional interest driven research. Given that Natives have had input in selecting and influencing government priorities related to
Native Americans is important; however, one still worries that the Government and other agencies can potentially manipulate which questions receive priority by focusing funding allocations in specific areas.

**Section B.**

**I. Methodological Issues, Tensions and Parameters.**

This work will draw on a range of research methodologies. These methodologies are substantially related to the gathering of information streams from diverse sources and sites. These different ‘information pipelines’ will assist in establishing a comprehensive overview of some of the key impediments that militate against Native American success in higher education. The methodologies used in this research, although they are predefined in the research literature – need to be constantly re-examined and as appropriate adjusted and modified by the Indigenous researcher and the research participants to meet and conform to the specific (and sometimes different) Native American cultural expectations and contexts. This is something that has been learned by Indigenous researchers across the world – you can not assume the validity of the existing ‘text book’ approach with Indigenous communities – there is often a need to be prepared to adjust the techniques and approaches to better fit the cultural nuances of those who are the subjects of the research. The issue for educational researchers generally is that there is a need for researchers and research methodologies to be flexible. For example, Native American focus groups are likely to have members of all ages from the community (including young children sitting in the circle) – all may be joining in the discussion; different members may be ‘coming and going’ some leaving the circle to do other things as they arise. This flexible circle is not what is recommended in the textbooks about ‘good’ focus groups. Rather than having a set of participants who remain faithfully part of the group until the task is completed – the Indigenous context may differ. For example the numbers in the circle may constantly be changing with some core people remaining; rather than individual answers being the ‘norm’, sometimes in the Indigenous focus group some answers may be negotiated by the participants and offered to the facilitator as
a consensus opinion on some issue – in this sense you may be offered ‘an agreed group
response’ to a particular question. Even when interviewing the expert commentators,
mutual linkages, digressions and humour, sharing food and drink and so on may all be
important elements of an Indigenous interview process. This has consistently been my
research experience and I suggest that such elements require specific techniques that need
to be considered as part of the skill set for Indigenous oriented interviewing methodology
and interview technique. I would also argue that the Indigenous research methodologies
call the researcher to being ever alert and ready to alter ‘taken for granted’, pre-defined
standard research methodologies to conform to the cultural expectations of Indigenous
groups.

The methodologies used in this study are necessarily diverse because the
methodologies are used to glean information from very different sources (e.g. community
people, literature sources, expert commentators, teachers and students, personal
experience) and from within very different contexts (the educational community, the
academy, policy, tribal contexts, cultural settings, etc). The methodologies need to be
interpreted loosely (as facilitating instruments), in order to enable the Indigenous
researcher to make cultural adjustments and mediations in order to accommodate cultural
nuances as alluded to above. The research methodologies that are used in this work are
also diverse as the information is being gleaned from distinctly different sources which
require distinctly different approaches. For example;

a. **Autobiographical Input**. (utilizing my personal experience, both my own
educational and schooling experience and also my encounters with significant
other Native Americans who have shared insights about their educational and
schooling encounters).

b. **A Critical Indigenous Education Literature Survey**. First, a scan of the critical
Native American literature, in particular, a range of critical writings around
the theme of ‘the crisis of Native American education’ e.g. Taiaiake Alfred,
Greg Cajete, Dwayne Champagne, Ward Churchill, Vine Deloria, Don Fixico,
Iris Heavy Runner, Oscar Kawagley, Manu Meyer, Devon Mihesuah, John

c. **Expert Interviews.** Selected interviews with experts who have built particular interventions in the Higher Education sector. These interviews have leaned heavily on Maori input, given that they are probably the most advanced in terms of developing practical intervention strategies. The following experts (all hold specialist public positions in education) were interviewed; Maori – Dr. Graham Smith (Chairman of the Council of Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi); Dr. Linda Smith (CEO of the National Centre of Research Excellence for Maori Development and Advancement); and Dr. Michael Yellow Bird (Director of Indigenous Nations Studies at the University of Kansas) were also interviewed – both have significant views on the development of Native higher education.

d. **Focus Groups.** A small number of focus groups were conducted with a small sample of Tribal College and University students (the identities of which are confidential so that students, faculty and staff could speak freely). These discussions canvassed the issues inside the particular college and ‘ideas’ for change and improvement. This sample attempted to ‘drill down’ into an institutional context and although conducted in the very early stages of this research are I believe, still relevant. I have decided to subsequently include these discussions, as the information shared closely aligns with and therefore confirms the other sources of information.

e. **Faculty and Staff Interviews.** The interviews were conducted with Indigenous faculty and staff, at one university (with a large Native program) and one tribal college. Discussion centered on problems and benefits of the structures and curriculum at their respective institutions.
As discussed in the previous sections above, there are many difficulties and tensions in the act of doing ‘Indigenous research.’ The ‘standard’ methodologies that are employed in research are often fraught with layers of colonial influences. For example, issues may range from the socio-political contexts in which the research methods and ethics were developed to critical questions about who has defined and normalized what is taken for granted as being ‘real, true, and good’ (Scheurich, 1997) in relation to research.

The Indigenous researcher may also be heavily influenced in all aspects of their lives by colonization. These colonial influences come in many forms and shapes and may construe a research project in many ways. As such there is a need for researchers to examine their own practices and biases. In this sense the use of eclectic methodological approaches can also help to mediate these potentially distorting influences. To this end, there is no one methodology that can meet such a task on its own. In this regard there is a need to utilize multiple information streams (and therefore multiple methodologies to collect the information from different sources) and then to apply an interpretive analysis to the aggregated information from the various information sources. The overview of the methodological issues and ultimately the aggregation of the diverse information sources are illustrated in Diagram 1.

I now move to discuss the multiple methodologies as shown in Diagram 1 (page 44) in more detail.
Figure 5: Multiple Methodologies

Multiple Methodologies

- Focus Groups
- Faculty & Staff Interviews
- Expert Interviews
- Personal Experience
- Literature Review

Aggregation of Information & Data

Apply Interpretive Analyses using Eclectic set of Theoretical Tools

- Critical Theory
- Indigenous Tools
- New Soc of Education
- Post-Colonialism

Identify Key Barriers and Constraints that Need to be taken into Account when Developing a New Model for Intervention
A) Focus Groups and Interviews

The interviews and focus groups were conducted with Indigenous faculty, staff, and students at one university (with a large Native program) and one tribal college. They were asked questions and asked to think about the positive and negative aspects of their higher educational experiences. Based on their answers they were then asked what they like to see in a ‘dream’ institution, an institution that would meet all of their and their students’ needs and aspirations. They were asked to pretend they were in charge of developing an Indigenous institution of higher learning and they had no limits on money or resources. What would their goals for the institution be and how would they accomplish them? They were also asked about their personal interest in the work they were doing.

The student focus groups were conducted with students in education departments so that they would already be familiar with the educational issues involved. They were conducted in a fashion which would bring the individual student’s experiences to the forefront and then bring those experiences to the group for discussions on the positive and negative aspects of Indigenous higher education. From here they worked together to form a needs/desires assessment for their ‘perfect’ institution. They were asked how they would design it if they had no restrictions (monetary or otherwise). It was important to include the idea of having no restrictions so that the students did not limit their ideas based on common limitations faced by Native programs.

The interviews were conducted with a total of eight faculty and staff members, all of whom are in the field of Native education. The focus groups were run in the same manner at both the university and at the tribal college however there were two sessions at the tribal college due to the scheduling issues. A total of 12 students were involved in the tribal college focus groups and 7 at the university focus group. The age range of the students varied from 18 to 50 years old and from single to married with children.
B) Interviews with Experts

These interviews were conducted with three individuals who are working in the area of developing new and innovative higher education programs in Indigenous education. They were chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the issues and concerns in Indigenous higher education as well as their successes in developing programs and institutions that are transformative in nature.

The interview questions focused on the content of their programs, design of their institutions and the positives and negatives encountered during that process. Also discussed was their view of what has been happening in Indigenous higher education and their views of where it needs to be going next. (Because each interview was focused on different programs/institutions/topics, there was no interview schedule developed).

The individuals interviewed in this context represented a mix of local and international efforts in Indigenous higher education and are widely known and respected in their respective contexts as well as world wide.

C) Personal Experience

As stated earlier in this dissertation I am privileging my own experiences as a Native American student and as a Native American higher education professional. As such I have experienced much of what is spoken to in this study in many different capacities and in many different settings. As a student (K – 12) I experienced the strong colonizing and assimilating forces that most other Native children did. As a college student at San Francisco State University I had many experiences typical of what is
discussed throughout this paper. My experiences and my reactions to them give me insight into what issues are necessary to focus upon for this study in terms of student needs.

As a professional in Native higher education I have held positions at San Francisco State and at the University of New Mexico which have given me great insight into the benefits and the frustrations that Western institutions hold for Native faculty, staff, and students. These experiences give me insight into which issues to focus upon in this study in terms of faculty, staff, and student needs. It has also given me the opportunity to work with Native communities associated with the institutions and understand better some of their desires and goals for their students and also their distrust of some higher education institutions.

D) Literature Review

This dissertation does not contain a chapter dedicated to a formal literature review. Instead the literature review is spread throughout the total text; in this sense it has become part of the evidence sprinkled throughout the text and is used to back up many of the assertions made in the study. These become the voices of many community members (as well as others) who have something to contribute to this discussion of Native American higher education.

The content of the literature spans from those who are writing specifically to the issues of Native American higher education to parallel issues involved with theories and methods in education generally that are helpful to a Native American perspective in education. It should also be noted that there is not much literature on the specific topic of Native Higher Education alternative models. While there is a reasonable amount of critique of the problems and issues, very little has been written on new institutional approaches. As a consequence, I have looked at other Indigenous contexts where this work is being done, such as in New Zealand.
Interpretive Analysis using an Eclectic Set of Theoretical Tools

In order to interpret all of the data (from various sources) gathered in this study there need to be multiple tools to engage them all. I will not outline each of the theoretical tools here as the next chapter will do that in great depth. However, there needs to be an understanding of how these tools will be used.

As some of the theoretical tools used might, on the surface, seem to be countering each other, or critical of each other, it must be understood that the theories in total are not being used, but there are parts of these theories that will be tapped into. Because there is no one theory that is on its own able to deal with Indigenous education issues and the effects of colonialism in that specific context, Indigenous researchers have to make do with the theoretical tools available. To that end there are specific parts of critical theory and parts of the New Sociology of Education that are helpful ‘tools’ to aid understanding and insight. A further theoretical body of thinking that is helpful to this thesis is contained within Post-colonial theory – this is because we need to constantly be aware that colonization has not ended and that it needs to be critically understood with respect to how it continues to impact our lives within our contemporary Native American existence.

Indigenous theorizing as an emerging set of theoretical tools is only just emerging within the academy – again the substantive contributions in this area are coming out of the Maori context in New Zealand. This is another reason why this thesis has leaned heavily on the Maori example and in particular the work of Linda Smith and Graham Smith. However, Indigenous theorizing is still in its infancy and is growing and building but it has not had enough time, or in some cases, acceptance, to provide all that is needed for this study. While there is acknowledgement of the importance of Indigenous theorizing and the use of some of that work, it too, on its own, cannot fully provide the necessary analyses and understandings.
SUMMARY

Engaging in research can be problematic for Native American researchers and their communities. The historical relationship between western researchers and Native communities has been, on the whole, a negative one. From developing incorrect assessments about Native cultures to using research as a way to define, name, and claim a people, research has been a tool in the colonization process. There is a great imbalance of power when one culture decides it is the center by which all other cultures can be judged. Native Americans have been subjected to this kind of hegemonic research for too long. Today as more Native Americans engage in research many may find it difficult to navigate their way through the historically negative process. Fortunately, many Native researchers are making inroads and finding innovative ways to make research a more positive activity for themselves and their communities. There are also more institutions who are accepting of these new approaches which help advance Native research in a positive direction.

Until such a time as we have the appropriate tools available as Native researchers, we will have to be creative and employ whatever methods can help us the most. In the case of this study I have chosen to use multiple methods to address the plural engagements encountered in this research. In the next chapter I develop a discussion of issues and tensions that surface with respect to the theoretical elements woven into the thesis.
CHAPTER THREE

A DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL ISSUES, TENSIONS, PARAMETERS AND DIRECTIONS
A Discussion of Some Theoretical Issues, Tensions, Parameters and Directions

“It is the theory that decides what can be observed” …. Albert Einstein

Introduction

The theoretical tools available for Indigenous research within the academy are overwhelmingly Western defined and oriented, and subsequently are often limited for dealing with many of the specific cultural, social and contextual issues and situations that may arise from Indigenous research contexts. This is not to set up an either/or dichotomy with respect to Indigenous and non-Indigenous theory. Rather it simply makes the point that whereas on the one hand there is a large body of research methodologies and theoretical tools tailored to non-Indigenous contexts, on the other hand there is very little that is specifically shaped to deal with Indigenous elements. This important point, which is obvious to most Indigenous researchers, is often missed or deliberately ignored by many non-Indigenous researchers and research administrators. This issue needs further discussion.

I will argue that there are three broad ways to engage with Indigenous research. One is within the Western framework using Western methodologies and theories. A second way is to be seen in an emerging trend related to Indigenous researcher’s development of cross cultural methodologies and theorizing – this development often being generalized as ‘Indigenous theorizing’. A third way is to utilize theoretical tools from both traditions – in this sense to simply draw on the best tools that provide the best fit with respect to issues such as application, understanding, usefulness, cultural relevance, respect and so on. It is this third approach that I use in this thesis, however, the area that is very much fledgling and underdeveloped (and which is presumed to be implicit within this third approach) is that which is related to Indigenous theorizing. This is a further reason why I have had to lean on a select few of Indigenous expert sources in this area of critically engaging with higher education. There are a few Indigenous educators who work in the area of Indigenous theorizing and who are articulating,
animating and writing it – particularly as it pertains to Higher Education. As a consequence the works of Taiaiake Alfred, JoAnn Archibald, Greg Cajete, Duane Champagne, Vine Deloria, Devon Mihesua, Graham Smith, Linda Smith, and Jay Stauss are key sources for this work. There are others who write about Indigenous theorizing, but this particular group focuses in the area of Education as a discipline and on Higher Education issues specifically.

Indigenous theorizing is still struggling to find full validity and legitimacy in the academy amongst non-Indigenous researchers. This thesis supports and draws on both theoretical traditions because in my view Native researchers need access to all the best theoretical and methodological tools and skills irrespective of their origin. A key issue here is the Indigenous researcher’s autonomy to choose the tools that fit best. More importantly when the Indigenous researcher is faced with a particular Indigenous issue which the existing range of Western theoretical and methodological instruments are unable to adequately deal with, then Indigenous researchers need other ‘Indigenous tools’ that may be more culturally compatible and appropriate for engaging in Educational research in cross cultural contexts.

A key understanding to the theoretical disposition of this thesis is that as Graham Smith has noted, ‘Indigenous transformation in education is not a singular, linear struggle; it is a struggle that needs to be developed in multiple sites and in multiple ways, sometimes simultaneously’ (G.H. Smith, 1997, p.62).

There are two points to be understood here. One is that we must value everyone’s contribution to struggle – that there are many struggles and that different people are struggling in different ways; we can not create hierarchies in the struggle where some peoples’ efforts are regarded as more authentic or more important. Everyone has a contribution to make and we need as many of our people as possible making a positive contribution somewhere. The second point to be understood relates to the individual researcher in positioning themselves to multiple needs that impact within an individual research project. The same issues arise here. An individual researcher must be alert to multiple forms of colonization, coming at us in multiple sites and multiple ways. Accordingly we need to develop research approaches, methods and theoretical tools that are able to cope with multiple engagements. (G.H. Smith, Interview, 2004)
Once this is understood, one will soon realize that there is a need to develop strategies for transformation in different sites, in different ways. Thus an eclectic theoretical approach is needed. To this end this thesis will draw on several theoretical insights drawn from different approaches. Given that resistance and transformation is contested in multiple sites then we have to engage with several different elements simultaneously. By engaging with different types of theoretical understandings this dissertation will attempt to engage with these multiple elements and sites to which Smith refers. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter I will discuss some of the non-Indigenous theoretical approaches that are helpful in developing a critical foundation to this work and in the second part I will discuss the importance and relevance of the emergence of Indigenous theorizing.

A. Critical Theory.

Critical theory is useful to this study because of the societal context of Native Americans. Native Americans are a colonized set of nation tribes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), Native Americans are only .87% of the total U.S. population. This means that Native Americans exist in a situation of unequal power relations, in a tension between dominant non-native interests and subordinate native interests. Furthermore, because of the ‘hegemony’ of the democratic ideals of ‘one person one vote’ and ‘majority rule,’ Native Americans have limited access to power and influence. They are often subject to the goodwill of the majority population interests – although these may not be the same – they tend to have a similar stance towards Native American politics, culture, languages, and issues. In this sense democracy and democratic processes are hegemonic and domesticating rather than a fundamental instrument for ‘freedom’ and ‘social justice’. There is a need to adopt theoretical approaches within this research study that can respond appropriately to such variables.

3 Note – ‘critical theory’ is a term that actually embraces several theories; it is a method that recognizes multiple sites of engagement needing multiple theoretical tools.
I would argue that there is a need by Indigenous researchers to critically understand the current pre-occupation by dominant cultures with preserving their position – political, cultural and economic dominance. Critical theory is particularly relevant with regard to explaining some of the submerged dangers that are embedded in the neo-liberal economic context and the hazards for minority interest groups such as Native Americans. This is not to essentialize the argument, as there are many Native Americans who are complicit in the neo-liberal way of life, promoting free-market, anti-welfarist, libertarian and authoritarian policies. However, there are also many critical elements that need to be understood when seeking to develop a transformative outcome for Native Americans within education. The education system itself is reflective of the current policies that have been couched within neo-liberal economics. Critical elements such as ‘scientific reification’, ‘positivism’, ‘instrumentalism’, ‘technocratic rationality’, ‘structural analyses’, ‘reproduction of unequal social relations’, etc. are all notions that are scrutinized by critical theorists working in education and schooling (and will be discussed in a little more detail in this chapter). Critical theory is also a theory of transformation. This is important for Native higher education because it is in need of transformation; it needs a theory that will help bring forth change.

While critical theory does not explain or inform Indigenous knowledge, language and culture, or for that matter Indigenous values and/or epistemologies, it does, however, create ‘space for change’ by calling into question many facets of Western educational dominance and the production and reproduction of Western cultural, social, and political interests. These forces are often submerged and are covertly developed within a colonial society. From the subordinated, oppressed, marginal, Native American viewpoint, these subversive elements need to be exposed, challenged and eliminated if progress is to be made with Indigenous interests. The fact that many transforming efforts have not taken these elements into account, with regard to their strategies, has ultimately resulted in many of these initiatives having little to no effect in making change. Ignoring these issues has created barriers and constraints with respect to achieving meaningful change in Native education. It is therefore a key issue that needs to be considered in any reformation of Native American higher education.
Several aspects of critical theory are particularly insightful and reflective of Indigenous struggles in Western education. In his book, *Critical Theory in Education*, Rex Gibson (1986) has created some useful headings under which to discuss the core elements of critical theory. For example;

1. *Rejection of Naturalness*

One of the most difficult stumbling blocks that Western education puts before Indigenous education is its stern view that Western knowledge is objective and comes from a natural progression of humanity and time. The West sees itself as ‘the norm’ to which all else is judged because its knowledge is scientifically gained and therefore objective and correct. There is an underlying belief that science is the only way to acquire knowledge and positivism is accepted without question (Gibson, 1986). There is no ‘space’ in that equation for Indigenous knowledge or Indigenous ways of knowledge production and implementation.

Critical theory, however, assists us because it rejects the naturalness of science. It calls into question scientists’ claims of objectivity. Some critical theorists, such as Michael Apple, bell hooks, Rex Gibson, Henri Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Linda Smith, question the basic tenets of the notion of ‘objectivity’ and reveal its social constructedness.

It is from this location (Critical theory), that Indigenous educators can claim that many research studies, findings, and ‘facts’ about Native people (conducted by Western researchers), are biased and incorrect. It is also from these insights that Native educators argue for a foothold for their own cultural interests to be included in the academy and into higher education more broadly. If positivism (doctrine which asserts that the only true knowledge is scientific), is called into question it opens the door for Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous scholars can use a Western theory to question and dismantle some of the fiercely held, culturally construed positions of Western academia.
2. Enlightenment – Disclosure of True Interests

Critical theory is important for Indigenous researchers to use because it is a powerful tool for uncovering whose interests are truly served in education. Being that science is not context-free and is value-laden, then it follows that education, using science as its foundation, is value-laden as well. Questions can then be asked such as; who made the curriculum and whose interests are served by it? Why are certain texts privileged over others? Why does one not find Native American authors as a standard in American literature courses? These questions bring to light the issue of power and control over knowledge. Knowledge is not free-flowing facts naturally occurring and just waiting to be classified. Knowledge is socially constructed and used as a method of keeping power and control over others.

Thomas Mc Kinney’s belief in the power of schooling to culturally transform Native Americans reflected the growing conviction among many Europeans that education was the key to social control and improvement of society. (Spring, 1997, p.16)

This is a key issue for this dissertation. I believe that Western universities do not serve the interests of Native Americans. They serve the interests of those who control the institutions. Dominant interest groups intuitively act to reproduce the existing conditions of dominance and privilege. At the same time they also create subordination and marginalization of others. It follows that dominant groups want to preserve the status quo of their dominant social and economic relations and that subordinate groups are interested in changing theses circumstances (Gibson, 1986).

This tension between dominant and subordinated interest groups that Gibson speaks of is a daily part of university life for Native American faculty, students, and staff. There are constant struggles to enact change so that Native Americans may have a voice – a space – in academia, but the voice is marginalized.

In pursuing this objective, (Indigenizing the academy), whether as students trying to integrate traditional views and bring authentic community voices to our work, or as faculty members
attempting to abide by a traditional ethic in the conduct of our relations in fulfilling our professional responsibilities, we as Indigenous people immediately come into confrontations with the fact that the universities are intolerant of and resistant to any meaningful “Indigenizing.”

It is not simply that universities are founded and function on premises that are different from those that underlie Indigenous cultures, which if it were true would imply a somewhat benign posture to our knowledge and ways of interacting with each other and the world. It is that they are adamantly and aggressively opposed to Indigenous ways. Our experiences in universities reflect the tensions and dynamics of our relationships as Indigenous peoples interacting with people and institutions in society as a whole: an existence of constant and pervasive struggle to resist assimilation to the values and culture of larger society. (Alfred, 2004, p. 88)

In Gibson’s outline on critical theory he, as well as other critical theorists, claim that critical theory also has an emancipatory effect. Because, as Paulo Freire believes, one is enlightened by understanding whose true interests are served, that in itself is supposed to help set you free of those bounds. For our example, once Native educators realize whose interest Western education truly serves, that then enlightens the educator and gives them a place to start. No longer do they wonder why ‘we fail’ in education, but they can now see that the system is not set up for them to succeed.

According to Dr. Graham Smith (2002), this is a necessary step, not only in the educational setting, but also in the larger societal and economic setting. It is important to understand the political and economic impacts of policy and programs upon our Indigenous cultures worldwide. This battle takes place in multiple locations and must be addressed and understood at each level if we hope to have success in making change. Therefore, it is critical to have the ‘enlightenment’ occur at multiple sites. When it is understood whose interests are served at every level, then Indigenous people can have a plan of attack – a direction to move toward in order to effectively enact change.

Another critical ‘site’ is at the highest levels of academia (in the university) where society’s elite knowledge is created. There is little hope of making space for Indigenous knowledge if there are too few Indigenous educators on these front lines. It is here that some of the most important struggles take place and here that some of the largest strides
are ‘possible’. It is also here where the most danger lies for Indigenous people if the
hegemonic forces are not understood or reckoned with.

Our experiences in universities reflect the tensions and dynamics of our relationships as
Indigenous peoples interacting with people and institutions in society as a whole: an existence of
constant and pervasive struggle to resist assimilation to the values and culture of the larger society.
In this, contrary to what is sometimes naively assumed by us and propagated by universities
themselves, universities are not safe ground. In fact, they are not even so special or different in
any meaningful way from other institutions; they are microcosms of the larger societal struggle.
But they are the places where we as academics work – they are our sites of colonialism. And, they
are our responsibility. Like all Indigenous people, if we are accountable to our nations and truly
cognizant and respectful of our cultures, we have as a responsibility to do what we can where we
are to ensure the survival of our culture and our nations. Being in the university, we as Indigenous
academics have the responsibility to work to defeat the operation of colonialism within the
university and to reorder academe. (Alfred, 2004, p.89)

Native Americans will benefit greatly from recognizing the truth about whose
interests are not only served but protected in the creation of ‘elite’ knowledge.
Universities can be places of wonderful growth but they also should be recognized as
places of resistance. Of course it could be the resistance that creates growth, both for the
student and the institution.

3. Critique of Instrumental Rationality

Instrumental rationality represents the preoccupation with means in preference to ends. It is
concerned with method and efficiency rather than with purposes. Instrumental rationality limits
itself to ‘How to do it?’ questions rather than ‘Why do it?’ or ‘Where are we going?’ questions. It
is the divorce of fact from value, and the preference in that divorce, for fact. It is the obsession
with calculation and measurement: the drive to classify, to label, to assess and number, all that is
human. As such, it is the desire to control and to dominate, to exercise surveillance and power
over others and over nature. Because of its preference for the intellectual over the emotional, it
represents the devaluation and marginalisation of feeling. (Gibson, 1986, p.45)

Although there may be individuals in the Native American communities who
have taken on instrumental rationality as a way of thinking, on the whole it is almost the
polar opposite of Native American epistemology. Each Native American tribe, nation, community, has its own very unique belief system and one is cautioned not to generalize; however, in this case it is safe to say that you will not find an Indigenous group in North America, and perhaps beyond, that would fit into the mind-set of instrumental rationality. It goes against much of what Native Americans believe and how they know the world.

To use one example, the desire to control, dominate and exercise power over others and nature is just not part of traditional Native American epistemology. At the risk of being accused of being essentialist, overly ‘romantic’ and uncritical, Native American cultures do not believe they have the right to totally dominate their relatives (the natural phenomena). Nature is not some separate ‘other’ entity to contend with – ‘you are of the land and the land is of you’ is an often-quoted saying. Such a concept as ‘dominating and controlling the natural environment’ is antithetical to a traditional mindset (a survey of traditional stories from across different tribes will confirm this). And battles between tribal peoples, for the most part, had to do with resources, making sure there were enough resources to survive not to purely dominant the other people. However, colonization has impacted the traditional mindset of many people and urban and cross-cultural lifestyles have created a new set of circumstances where some Native Americans do not live by their traditional teachings and mindsets. (That is not to say that there are no ‘urban’ Natives living within their traditions, just that ‘urbanization’ has had an impact on many people). Some communities and individuals are also being implicated in damaging ‘mother earth’. To live in the larger American society and work in universities is to confront this kind of disjuncture on a regular basis. Critical theory allows us to question and enter into discussions about the assumptions made by instrumental rationality.

It is difficult to present an Indian view of the environment because there is such a difference in the way Indians and non-Indians look at the world. Indians get very confused when non-Indians come up to them and try to engage in a dialogue on nature and the environment. More traditional Indians have a devil of a time communicating to non-Indian audiences exactly what their relationship with nature is.
For the most part Indians do not “deal with” or “love” nature. In the Western European context human experience is separated from the environment. When Indians are told that they “love nature,” they cannot deal with this because nature is not an abstraction to them.” (Deloria, 1999, p.225)

By the nineteenth century, we (American/Western society), had grabbed that quarter chunk of the world of science and said, ‘We are going to investigate all of human reality, or all of world reality, and we are going to begin interpreting all experiences according to the workings of the physical world. We’re going to create social science in which we can treat our own selves and our own psyches as if they were something objective that could be observed and described scientifically.’

We have reduced our knowledge of the world and the possibility of understanding and relating environment to a wholly mechanical process. We have become dependent, ultimately, on this one quarter of human experience, which is to reduce all human experience to a cause-and-effect situation. When we then look at nature and environment through Western European eyes, that is really what we are looking at. That is not the ‘nature’ Indians understand. Indians never made any of those divisions. (Deloria, 1999, p.226)

It has been difficult for Native Americans in academia to express their relationship to the surrounding world. It is equally difficult to be required, in research, to change your relationship with the world to one so opposite. That is where critical theory can help Native scholars bridge that gap and call into question some of the basics of instrumental rationality – not from their own points of view necessarily, but from a different stance within the scientific community.

**Concluding Comments on Critical Theory:**

Critical Theory is used in this research project and is relevant to the aim of the project (to produce a new alternative model of Higher Education) in the following ways:

First, and perhaps most importantly, critical theory is a theory of transformation. The alternative model proposed in this paper is also intended to be transformative of Native American higher education. The model hopes to bring about change in a positive and sustainable manner. Secondly, through its rejection of naturalness, critical theory creates a space for ‘alternative’ knowledge and knowledge production. The new model
intends to be a ‘space’ specifically designed for the acceptance and production of Indigenous knowledge. Third, its critical nature allows us to ask questions such as whose interests are being served in the current design of Western higher education, who wrote the curriculum and to what end? These are important questions to ask and reflect upon when designing a new model so that the Western model, with all the problems it carries for Indigenous education, is not simply replicated. And finally, with its critique of instrumental rationality, critical theory calls into question taking a means over and ends approach to research and education. Uncritically employing “means” to produce the highly valued ‘facts’ of Western education has often been detrimental to our communities. The new model hopes to avoid the overemphasis of fact over emotion and hopes to produce an environment which is more inline with Native American world views and values.

B. The New Sociology of Education

A second theoretical approach, the New Sociology of Education, will also be helpful in examining some of the complexities involved in Native American higher education. As a sociology of knowledge, the New Sociology of Education is particularly relevant to Native education when we talk of curriculum and what is being taught to whom and why. Native Americans historically have had little say over what is being taught to their children and how it might affect their ability to keep their culture intact. The New Sociology of Education questions how knowledge is selected and struggled over. This theoretical approach looks at the way in which unequal power and social relations are contested and/or struggled over between dominant and subordinate interest groups in particular educational sites. It also looks at the issue of intellectual property in terms of academia co-opting Indigenous knowledge.

The New Sociology of Education came about as an alternative to the ‘old’ sociology of education which looked at education as an input-output relationship and focused mostly on the learners as being the ‘problem’. The new version of the sociology of education looks at the school structures, such as the curriculum and processes as
agents of students success or failure (Young, 1998). It goes beyond the ‘scientific’ views of neutrality and focuses on the social issues and impacts involved in educating students.

…with its separate single subjects, its hierarchies of valued knowledge and its exclusion of non-school knowledge, the academic curriculum was seen by the ‘new sociology of education’ as an instrument of social class exclusion. The ideological power of the academic curriculum was identified by the success with which it was able to convince people that it was the only way of organizing knowledge that enabled students to develop their intellectual capacities. It therefore gave legitimacy to the view that those who did not succeed in its terms were, in effect, ineducable. (Young, 1998, p.44)

As statistics bear out, (see chapter 4), Native Americans have not had great success in Western schooling. One theory to explain this is that Native Americans lack the ability to be educated or are culturally deprived and therefore cannot learn properly. Theories like this have abounded in education for many years. Native American educators have been limited in dealing with the issues in research without a ‘legitimate’ Western research theoretical approach to validate their claims. The New Sociology of Education has become a vehicle in which to give alternative explanations to these failures and take the research in a more proactive direction. Native educators can now look at the curriculum and demonstrate the impact of a non-neutral, socially constructed knowledge that underlies the structure of Western education.

The issue of knowledge and who controls it is important to Native educators and students. As suggested in the last chapter, what is represented in a research project or indeed a thesis is a ‘selection’ of knowledge. Who determines which knowledge is acceptable? Who controls the decision making processes and why? What are the social factors that enable one group to force another to accept and be defined by their specific cultural definitions? Why is there so much resistance to allowing different knowledge into the framework of acceptability? What larger structures are implicated in the current set of power relations that Native Americans and Western academia are involved? This section of the chapter will address all of the questions above and how they are relevant issues for Native American higher education today.
1. **Knowledge and control**

Working within the Western academy Native researchers, and for that matter, students all the way back to kindergarten, have to deal with a set of standards, cultural norms, that are not their own. To be successful at any level of schooling means that one must understand how to ‘acculturate’ to someone else’s defined parameters. This is the reality for Native Americans because someone else has control over the legitimacy of knowledge.

Schools do not only control people they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be ‘legitimate knowledge’ – the knowledge that ‘we all must have,’ schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups. But this is not all, for the ability of a group to make its knowledge into ‘knowledge for all’ is related to that group’s power in the larger political and economic arena. Power and culture, then, need to be seen not as static entities with connection to each other, but as attributes of existing economic relations in a society. They are dialectically interwoven so that economic power and control is interconnected with cultural power and control. (Apple, 1990, p. 64)

This fact, that schools confer cultural legitimacy on knowledge of specific groups, is one of the reasons this dissertation is being written; because the power to legitimize has been out of Native American control and that needs to change. I start from a place in which the understandings and knowledge that I carry are not accepted by or legitimated under the current academic structure. The larger economic and cultural structures place Native Americans at a disadvantage due to their small numbers and the democratic value of majority rule and the values imposed by representative democracy. Under this system, a minority group as small as Native Americans will rarely have the ability to change anything within the larger system. It is for this reason that struggles at the school level are so slow to change or will likely never change enough to meet the needs of Native students. That is not to ignore the fact that individuals within and out of the Native communities have made important changes at their individual schools or maybe even at a district level, however, on a national level these changes are not obvious. That is also why any kind of movement for change in Native education has to be made at multiple sites, so that change will come faster.
According to Dr. Graham Smith, one of the most important places to struggle for change is in the arena of academia where ‘elite knowledge’ is constructed. It is here that hegemony plays a significant role in defining whose knowledge becomes acceptable. When knowledge comes out of research at the university it is almost automatic in its societal acceptance. If a ‘scientific study’ deems it so – then it becomes the truth. However, this truth was never contested beyond the scientific method, a Western methodology. If there is no language or theories (Western) to combat hegemonic information about minority groups, this information becomes the ‘truth’ whether or not the ‘subjects’ agree to the truth of the results. That is why it is important to stay in the academic arena and utilize theoretical methodologies such as critical theory and the new sociology of education until such time that Indigenous theories are accepted.

2. Unequal Social and Power Relations

Many researchers have discussed the issue of cultural transmission through schooling. Apple, Bernstein, Bourdieu, etc, all view the school system as a vehicle to pass on cultural meanings and systems so as to keep the current structure, economic and social, in a condition of stasis. The schools manufacture, in a sense, the type of individuals who understand the system implicitly because the teachers, school, and curriculum teach it to the students. Bernstein speaks of this as overt and covert curriculum and implicit and explicit transmission. Some curricular materials are overtly teaching to a specific outcome which is open and understood. However, some of the processes and practices of the classroom and teachers are more covertly passing on cultural rules.

This transmission of culture is of great importance to Native Americans whose cultures differ in many ways from mainstream America. The New Sociology of Education is useful in examining cultural transmission and its effect on students.
The specific role of the sociology of education is assumed once it has established itself as the science of the relations between cultural reproduction and social reproduction. This occurs when it endeavors to determine the contribution made by the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes, by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes. (Bourdieu, 1977, p.487)

This cultural reproduction is particularly important on a structural level. While many Native and non-Native educators have been using an additive approach to education in order to make schooling more appropriate and relevant to Native students, they are simply rearranging small pieces of a much larger, more complex puzzle. The larger structure is more rigid and resistant to change because of its covert nature. It is the cultural foundations, and their connection to social power, that is most problematic to Native communities.

The schools act as mechanisms for cultural distribution in society (Apple, 1990). In other words the schools select, preserve, and distribute mainstream culture and structure. If Native Americans are concerned about preserving our own cultures and identity, then it is the larger structures we should be most concerned about. Controlling the knowledge producing and preserving institutions of society is a way of insuring the ideological dominance of certain classes or groups as Gramsci describes in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971). This hegemony is difficult to counter by those, such as Native Americans, who have no control of these institutions.

Hegemony, the ideological/cultural domination of one class (or group) by another, occurs in many arenas besides education; it occurs in all the main institutions of the society. Therefore, Native Americans contend with hegemonic forces in all the major institutions involved in their lives such as the government, health, and law, to name a few. These institutions serve the interests of the group in control and not necessarily anyone else.
In the social and power relationships with dominant American culture, Native Americans come out wielding little influence on policy or practice in schooling. The school system, historically, has rarely served the interests of Native Americans. In today’s neo-liberal economic climate Native interests are not only marginalized, they are in even more jeopardy in the global market which diminishes national interests and cultural differences. In the United States Native Americans are a minority population which means our interests often go unheard and unheeded because of our democratic majority-rules system. To take that minority population position and place it not just against the US population, but the whole world, then Native American issues really fall away. This also decreases our ability to fight for intellectual property rights and the commodification of our cultures within and outside of the education system.

3. Educational Inequalities and Domination

The imbalance of power socially, economically, and culturally places Native Americans in a compromised position leading to educational inequalities. With President Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* program (2002), the inequality becomes greater because he wants no child left behind “the standard” (www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml). The government’s stated goal is to have every student conform to and meet the standardized evaluation. However, as discussed above, the interests of many groups are not served by the ‘standard’ and forcing each child to meet or fail that standard just might be to their detriment.

What Native educators are calling for is an education that serves their communities without having to put their children through schools that are culturally oppressive. And at the tertiary levels they want to open up what has been the guarded set of ‘elite’ knowledge to allow for ‘different’ knowledge, and in the end, curriculum. Opening up this area of elite knowledge is threatening to many who fear losing control of it. Questioning its ‘rightful’ place is a threat. That is why the New Sociology of Education can be seen as problematic to those who want to keep the status quo.
In the nineteenth century England religious leaders were largely successful in keeping geology out of the school curriculum on the grounds that it might undermine young people’s faith in God. However, in the 1970’s it was not faith in God but in Western Civilization that was the issue. In suggesting that the academic curriculum might not be a benign selection of the ‘best in culture’ but a particular elite’s selection of knowledge largely in the interests of preserving its own position – the ‘new sociology of education’ was seen as challenging something almost sacred. (Young, 1998, p.40)

This deeply ingrained belief that curriculum is benign and comes from a very ‘natural’ progression of knowledge and science is very difficult to combat. Within the United States the federal government certifies the accreditation bodies, which in turn evaluate and accredit schools who meet the curriculum guidelines for accreditation (Education U.S.A., 2006). If other groups want to make their own schools, they are free to do so; however, they will not qualify for federal aid or be an accredited institution if they do not meet the federal guidelines.

Internationally the United States and other Western European countries employ the same tactics when it comes to the World Bank. In order for ‘third world’ countries to ‘develop’ (as defined by the West), they may borrow money to build schools and infrastructure, so long as they meet the standards that these Western capitalist societies set forth (Carnoy, 1974). It is this kind of cultural imperialism that is such a distinct threat to Native communities.

Concluding Comments on New Sociology of Education:

The New Sociology of Education is relevant and useful to this particular project and contributes to the overall aim of developing an alternative higher education response by examining how knowledge is selected and struggled over in unequal social relations. This area of questioning is important to the development of an alternative model because the model will exist within an unequal relationship to Western society and academia in general. Specifically, in the area of knowledge and control, legitimacy is an issue. The
Western academy has tight control over what knowledge is considered valid. The new model is being developed, in part, to combat that situation.

Unequal social and power relations are also critical to understand. It is important to be aware of the effects of cultural distribution so that when a new model is formed it does not, uncritically, recreate a mechanism of Western cultural distribution (which then reproduces problems and issues for students). And finally, the model must take into account how educational inequalities and domination could affect an alternative model.

The reality is that any institution is faced with meeting standards and accreditation criteria; those standards and accreditation criteria are developed and imposed by Western academia and Western cultural values. Those standards are not written to the benefit of Native Americans and we must be prepared to contend with and creatively work with those restrictions because in some cases those standards run contrary to Native cultural values and will impact students and communities.

C. Post-Colonial Theory.

A third approach will come from post-colonial theory. Native Americans are intimately affected by colonialism and its residual affects in a way that non-Natives are not. Colonization has had a major influence on how and why Native education has been structured and why it must be restructured today. A post-colonial analysis “draws upon a wide variety of theoretical positions and their associated strategies and techniques. Moreover, the field seeks to develop adequate and appropriate approaches to material that is itself diverse, hybrid, diasporic. Its terminology, then, functions in a highly charged and contestatory atmosphere of intellectual exchange and cultural negotiation” (Ashcroft, et. al., 1995, p.1).

It should be recognized that all three of these theories, from their own unique vantage point, look at the issues of power and oppression. But none by itself covers the whole spectrum of how power and oppression affect Native Americans. That is why
there may be some overlap between them but I feel it is necessary to employ all three in order to cover as many areas as possible which impact Native American life.

Post-colonial theory is important to this dissertation topic because colonialism is the context in which Native American reality exists. Every aspect of Native life is affected by it including education. There are several aspects of post-colonial theory that are particularly insightful for this study such as naming, cultural power relations and re-identifying self.

1. Naming

The terms aboriginal, aborigine, and Indian (among others) are names used by the West to identify various Indigenous peoples they have come into contact with. These names have derogatory connotations because those names/terms were placed upon them without their choosing. Their own names for themselves were not used and as such it was a patronizing act of ‘othering’ in which the European distinguished itself at the ‘center’ from which all others stood apart. Said, describes this act of naming as a way to claim, define, and control the ‘other’ (Said, 1978).

In a similar way the idea of the American ‘frontier’ was developed by early settlers seeking to justify or glorify their move westward. According to American history the frontier represented freedom in this new vast land of opportunity (Ashcroft, 1995). Of course this was the invented history of America and not the reality of the Indigenous peoples of this land. Invented or not, however, the concept of a vast ‘empty’ land pervades American ideology and defines the role/position of Native Americans in history. So through naming, claiming and defining, colonialism had an immediate impact on Native Americans that reaches into the history books and political arenas of today.
2. **Power Relations and Cultural Capital**

Post-colonial theory also gives a language with which to define specific power-based issues. Terms like colonial patronage, decolonization, and hegemony (not exclusive to post-colonial theory), are useful in identifying particular issues confronted by Native Americans.

Colonial patronage helps identify and to some extent explain why Native American culture is not valued in American society. The holders of economic and social power are able to ensure which cultural institutions and cultural forms will be valued and promoted. Because Native Americans hold little power and the appropriate levels of social, cultural and economic capital, their ability to influence change of the system or change what is to be counted as essential components of American education and schooling, will be limited. The control over the ‘selected curriculum’ reproduces dominance both within the school and ultimately within society. In this sense schooling and education are important sites for struggle. Bourdieu’s notion of the cultural and social capital that is embedded in taken for granted ways within schooling often disconnects from the social and cultural capital of different groups of marginally positioned groups. Schools, because they connect and reflect the cultural capital of already advantaged groups, tend to reinforce existing social, cultural and economic structures of those already privileged in society.

Decolonization is the response to this unequal power relationship between Native Americans and the American government. It is an act of resistance which is critical for Native education. There is a resistance to the assimilating practices of the American education system. Graham Smith, however, rejects the notion of decolonization on the grounds that it puts the colonizer at the center and becomes a reactive approach. He suggests that the term ‘conscientization’ is more appropriate and a more proactive approach to counter assimilative forces (Interview, 2004). Conscientization speaks to the change (becoming conscious of the forces at work in society and its impact on oneself) that the individual goes through and how it frees that person by their own act of learning.
and growing. Decolonization on the other hand gives the colonizer the central role in the focus of that change by having them as the impetus – which is not always the case.

3. *Redefining Native America*

In the struggle against colonizing forces Native Americans have struggled with redefining themselves. Who they are has changed since European influences arrived. However, some people want to use those pre-colonial descriptions to define and make claims of an ‘authentic’ culture. The fear is that non-Natives will use the changes and the transculturation as a way to de-legitimize them as no longer being ‘real Indians’. But to define the culture by pre-colonial terms can lead to essentialism and limit Native cultures to a very narrow notion of who Native people are and *should* be.

This is an important issue in this dissertation as it calls for a culturally sustainable education. And as defined earlier in the paper, cultural sustainability means an education that not only protects the cultural identity of the student/community, but also gives it space to grow and change. America has tended to freeze notions of Native Americans in time and space to exist only in the way they were when the two groups originally met. They do not allow for the fact that Native cultures were and are dynamic cultures that change with time and influence. This authenticates the cultures; it accepts the reality of the cultural dynamics. To use pre-colonial descriptions to authenticate Native identity is to legitimize the American stereotype of ‘the Indian.’

**Concluding Comments on Post-Colonial Theory:**

Post-colonial theory is particularly insightful in terms of this project and is relevant to the aim of developing an alternative model for Native American higher education. There are three areas of post-colonial theory that impact the process of developing a new model.
First there is the context in which Native Americans live. Post-colonial theory draws attention to the impacts of colonialism and its all-encompassing effect on the daily lives of Native Americans and their educational experience. This new model, unlike mainstream institutions, must be aware of and take into account those lingering affects and not be another agent of these colonial forces. Secondly, post-colonial theory brings to light the issue of naming and the patronizing nature of defining, naming, and claiming the ‘other’ as Edward Said puts it. This new model will give the power of defining back to Native Americans and their respective communities. Thirdly, post-colonial theory sheds light on the issue of whose culture is valued, passed on, and in control in this society. It gives us language to speak to those issues such as colonial patronage and decolonization (at least a place to start from). But as Graham Smith stated, conscientization is a better word, especially for a new model designed to create change in Native American higher education. The people must be aware of the forces at work in society and how those impact them and their communities.

The last area, in fact maybe the most important area, is the issue of redefining Native America. How the new model chooses to define itself, students, tribal members (status and non-status), has a critical impact on how it can affect transformation in the community. Do Native American educators want to allow the definition of who they are to be imposed from the outside or designated from within? This will be an important area of development for an alternative model.

D. Indigenous Theorizing.

Fourth, we must speak to the idea of Indigenous theorizing. As mentioned before, the Western tools for research are not completely adequate to the task of Indigenous research. Indigenous theoretical approaches need to be developed to provide a complete set of tools for Indigenous researchers and Indigenous research. There are Indigenous researchers in the process of developing these theories but they are still in the early stages of development. For example there is Linda Smith’s work on Indigenous research methodologies in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), and Dawn Marsden’s
work in extending the Western theory of holism and modifying it to account for Indigenous theories of holism (2005), which she terms Indigenous holism, and of course, Graham Smith’s Kaupapa Maori theory as transformative praxis (2002).

Indigenous theorizing is an important part of Indigenous higher education. Indigenous theory development is the direction that Native Americans need to move toward so that they will not be restricted to using ill-fitting Western theoretical approaches in their research. However, Indigenous theorizing is still in the beginning stages.

The first of these stages is to critique Western theory from an Indigenous lens. Manu Meyer, along with many other Indigenous researchers, has done this in her work called *A-cultural Assumptions of Empiricism: A Native Hawaiian Critique* (2001). She discusses the fact that no theory is culture-free. Every theory was written by some specific person/persons living in a specific cultural place and a specific time in history. All of these things impact not only the theory but also the cultural assumptions embedded in the studies using these theories. This, she believes, causes many problems for research in Indigenous communities. Linda Smith has gone into even more depth in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* and takes a serious look at the effects of colonial-based research and discusses the implications of Indigenous researchers. She goes further to articulate an Indigenous research agenda which involves: community research, tribal research, training of Indigenous researchers, and insider/outsider research.

Another step or strategy of Indigenous researchers has to been to take Western theories and alter them to fit the Indigenous context as Dawn Marsden has done in her dissertation (2005). She has modified the Western version of scientific holism to account for Indigenous theories of holism which she terms *Indigenous holism*. This idea actually speaks directly to this study. As stated earlier, this study utilizes an interpretive analysis calling from many sources to understand the various pieces that comprise the whole of this study. In contrast a common Western approach is the ‘silver bullet’ approach where one single approach is considered appropriate. However, in this thesis the multiple
The greater points of view that can be included, the closer one gets to a more comprehensive sense or understanding of the whole.” (Laura and Heaney 120 in Marsden) Indigenous Holism, according to Marsden, takes this one step further to include Indigenous ways of knowing which often include (simultaneously) the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical.

The final step of course is to develop complete Indigenous theories for use in Indigenous research. As theories are being developed other Indigenous researchers continue their work on Indigenous methodologies. Mary Hermes’ work outlines a methodology based on reciprocity and respect (1997). Her methodological work developed out of the process of community research – in other words her interaction in her research directed the methodology. Another researcher, Jane Martin, in her dissertation, (2001, Univ of Alberta), developed a methodology based on the Medicine Wheel. And Michelle Pidgeon’s research (2001) on Aboriginal students and student services based her methodology on Kirkness and Barnhardt’s ideas of the four R’s – respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity to improve Native education. There are many more who have created and/or applied Indigenous methodologies, the point is that this is a move in the right direction and should be continued.

These are examples of the movements in Indigenous theorizing. It needs to be taken further to develop complete theoretical frameworks that will compliment the work of Indigenous researchers.

**Concluding Comments on Indigenous Theorizing:**

Indigenous theorizing is important to this thesis and is particularly relevant to the aim of producing an alternative model of Native American higher education. One of the reasons this thesis has to use a varied set of methodologies and theoretical basis is due to the lack of relevant tools available for Native American research. More appropriate tools need to be developed so that Native American research does not have to be pieced together in such a way.
However, Indigenous theorizing is only in its beginning stages and until such a time that there are plenty of theories and methodologies, we do the best we can. The alternative model proposed in this thesis will be a model that can provide the space and support needed in this kind of development. It should take into account the value of the Western models already in existence, but also push and assist in the development of more appropriate models.

**Summary**

Although there are no theoretical approaches made specifically to work consistently for the Native contexts I had to choose the theories which would be helpful, at least in part. Critical Theory and the New Sociology of Education and Post-Colonial Theory were the most appropriate for this type of study.

Critical theory has many elements that are helpful to Native research such as: rejection of naturalness, disclosure of true interests, and critique of instrumental rationality. These elements shed light on many of the difficult issues Native researchers come up against in their work. The Sociology of Education gets into the topic of curriculum. It asks important questions about who makes the curriculum and who is it designed for. It also delves into the larger structural issues of knowledge and power which is a critical discussion for any minority group in an educational context. Post-colonial theory gives us a language and a more accurate context from which to examine external forces upon Native Americans generally and specifically in education. And finally Indigenous theorizing is in the beginning stages of developing theories that will be a better fit for Indigenous contextual research.

It is from these three theoretical bases that this study will examine the issues involved in this dissertation as we take a look at the university and tribal colleges and the complex array of factors that impact Native American education within those institutions. But before we get into a critical analysis of the institutions we first need to get a general
overview of the tribal colleges and university programs involved in this study. To that end we move to Chapter Four and a general overview of the programs.
PART TWO

**** THINKING ****
CHAPTER FOUR

AN OVERVIEW OF NATIVE AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT WITH HIGHER EDUCATION
An Overview Of Native American Engagement With Higher Education

The creative potential of building upon and enhancing what students bring with them culturally has been explored at a number of Indian educational institutions. The development of Tribal community colleges and the evolution of contract school governed by tribes offer plausible structures for developments of this nature. Such structures are, however, only a first step toward a much more comprehensive vision of what Indian education can be. (Cajete, 1994, p.188)

Introduction

As Native Americans move into the 21st century they bring with them some of the most varied higher educational needs in America. Some of these needs are quite different than those seen in mainstream American society. For example, there are tribes who are taking control of their utility, health, and educational systems and need to educate their members to fill these new jobs on the reservation. Other tribes have found that their most basic and urgent need is to heal some of the ‘historically created’ social ills that have plagued reservations for the past century, such as alcoholism, mental health issues, and violence. Still others have discovered that higher education is a useful tool in bringing back their traditional cultures, which ironically is what Western education had been so successful in the past at taking away.

To fill these higher education needs tribes have had to look beyond adult education and technical/vocational certificates as their students need university degrees to qualify for the new jobs that are opening up in their communities. They need to fill those positions with people from within their own communities to ensure that the systems are built and managed in their own vision. In order to obtain these degrees, the majority of Native American students look to a university or tribal college education.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the university and tribal college as they relate to Native American students and programs. It is important to have a good background of their respective histories and statistical representations.
Furthermore, there are many aspects of Native American higher education at these institutions that need to be understood before a more in-depth analysis of the institutions can be made, which will occur in chapter four. This chapter will look at the historical relationships between the institutions and Native Americans as well as the socio-political contexts from which they emerged. It will then outline the type and number of programs available at each institution. Finally it will conclude with Native American student enrollment trends and retention statistics for these two institutions.

UNIVERSITY

1. History

Historically the relationship between Native Americans and Western education has been negative. From the elementary grades and up through university, (for those few who made it), assimilation was not only the goal, but a U.S. government policy. For those who did go to university, they entered an institution that was created by and for the elite, dominant, White society members. Those who were of different ethnic background were, and are still, expected to accept and take on those norms, (in other words assimilate). (Boyer, 1989). Under these circumstances Native American enrollment was very low and the number of graduates even lower.

However, Native activists took advantage of the atmosphere of change created by the civil rights movement. Through these struggles university campuses were forced to
change and allow new programs and departments to grow with ‘ethnic’ content. American Indian/Native American studies departments were born; bringing the hope of a more culturally appropriate and relevant curriculum. According to a US Department of Education report on American Indians and Alaska Natives in Postsecondary Education, Native student attendance has risen steadily since the early 1970’s and so have the number of graduates (3-4). Many of the big names in Native higher education were born out of this movement as well as the programs they then spawned. And many Native American students, (myself included), may not have made it if it were not for these programs. In Garrod and Larimore’s book entitled *First Person, First People: Native American College Graduates Tell Their Life Stories*, many students credit their school completion to Native programs, just as this student does:

> The student organization, Native Americans at Dartmouth (NAD), also had a great impact on me. I personally don’t think I would have gotten my diploma if NAD had not existed. My closest friends and sources of support at college were American Indians from the Lower 48. …It was a comfortable feeling to be welcomed in NAD; they wanted to help me not only with academics but with housing, food, mail, and all the little things that make it easier to settle into a new place. (Garrod, 1997, p. 209)

Today some universities can even boast having a PhD in Native American studies, (University of Arizona and U.C. Davis), albeit very few. This increase in more relevant programming has definitely had a positive impact on the number of Native Americans enrolling in higher education institutions. In 1976 only 76,100 Native Americans enrolled in higher education institutions. Almost twenty years later enrollment reached 127,400, which is a 67 percent increase. During the same time total higher education enrollment increased by only 30 percent (US Dept of Ed, 1998, p.3-4)

In terms of meeting the needs of Native American students, universities have definitely made progress since the 1960’s. However, the programs and departments are still problematic. Native American programs were rarely inspired from within the institutions themselves most came out of radical social movements, which, by and large forced the universities to add ethnic content. (Churchill, 1979). Because of this history
universities and ethnic studies departments were most often engaged in ‘difficult’ relationships. This has evolved today into lack of institutional commitment to the programs, lack of funding, and most importantly, the programs and their content are not always taken seriously by the academy.

…tribal knowledge is often regarded by many educated people as simply for ‘fun’ or ‘quaint’ because it is so exotic, suggesting great mysteries which we have not yet unraveled. Very few people accord this knowledge the status it deserves and hardly anyone can articulate the principles which lie at its foundation. (Deloria, 1992, p.14)

Some universities have marginalized ethnic studies programs to the point of near extinction. However, other programs have grown and more Native American studies programs are trying to grow from offering only minors to developing full degree programs. In many cases Native faculty have to fight stereotypes and staunch opposition to their goals.

After only seven years as a history professor I can attest to the reality that Indian scholars still endure accusations that courses on Indians are not important, that our lectures are “too politically correct,” and that we obtained jobs because of our race. …We must also contend with academics who are distressed when sessions at scholarly conferences are composed of Indian people, and with those who believe that Indians cannot accurately write about themselves because they are too close to the topic. (Mihesuah, 1998, p.16)

Today programs have very different levels of success. Some are growing while others are barely surviving. Much of it depends on the political climate of the institution and the number of Native faculty on a given campus who can push for more programming. Unfortunately the numbers of Native faculty is quite low (see Table 1 and Figure 7 pg 82), with little institutional support Native programs marginally survive whether that means they are barely accepted or they are growing – but only incrementally as the institutions will allow.
### Table 1: Distribution of Native American and Total Full time Staff in Institutions of Higher Education, by Primary Occupation; Fall 1993 (Pavel, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Occupation</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Staff</td>
<td>1,783,510</td>
<td>9,229</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive, Administrative and Managerial</td>
<td>137,834</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>545,706</td>
<td>1,997</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional (support and Service)</td>
<td>355,554</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonprofessional Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Paraprofessional</td>
<td>142,846</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and secretarial</td>
<td>351,962</td>
<td>2,026</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled crafts</td>
<td>60,926</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service and Maintenance</td>
<td>188,682</td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7: Distribution of Full-Time Instructional Faculty in Degree Granting Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity in Academic Rank (2001) (Institute of Ed Stats 2005)
2. **Description of University Programs and Statistics**

Universities, generally speaking, have three types of programmatic responses to Native American educational needs; (1) cultural support centers, (2) Native studies programs offering courses with Native American content (as in Native studies minor or Native content in courses from other faculties), and (3) Native American Studies Departments offering full degrees in Native American Studies. It should be noted, however, that most universities have none of these programs.

**Cultural Support Centers:**

These centers act as gathering places for Native American students and usually have technical support such as computer labs, study areas, and reference materials. They usually employ staff to help with advising or to act as liaisons for students, and also to run programs to support recruitment and retention. It is also, and perhaps most importantly, a ‘cultural space’ within the university where students can feel a sense of belonging and comfort. For students who might be far away from home, these centers can often make the difference in a student staying in school or leaving.

**Native American Programs:**

Native American programs come in two forms; as academic support within a larger academic department (Engineering for example), or an academic program which offer courses with specific Native American cultural content. Usually the courses in these programs can be used to either fulfill general education requirements or as a Native American Studies minor or emphasis in another field. These programs do not offer full degree programs.
Native American Studies Departments:

There are a few universities which have Native American Studies Departments that offer full degree programs from Bachelors to PhD’s. It is important to understand the statistics involved in these programs to fully comprehend the marginalization of Native American academic interests. Below is a statistical run down of Native American Studies degree opportunities in the United States. (see appendix C for full list of programs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE DESCRIPTION</th>
<th># OF UNIVERSITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA in NAS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in NAS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA w/ emphasis in NAS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in NAS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD w/concentration in NAS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Number of Universities with NAS degrees*  
(Nelson, 2004, p.1)

As you notice when you look at the numbers, some of the degrees are not Native American studies degrees but a degree in another field with an emphasis in Native American studies. For example, it could be a degree in Education with an emphasis in Native American education. This is done because there are not enough courses to provide a full degree in that field.

When you look at the total number of universities offering these programs it comes into focus the extent to which Native Americans studies is marginalized at universities. Since some of the institutions offering Bachelors degrees are the same ones offering Masters and or PhD’s, the total number of institutions offering these degrees is actually only 36. According to the Department of Educational Statistic 2003, Chapter 3 –
Post Secondary Education, there are over 4000 accredited universities in the United States (accredited by organizations recognized by the US Dept of Education). This means that only 36 universities out of 4000, or .009%, provide degrees in Native American Studies, some of which are only an emphasis in that field.

TRIBAL COLLEGES

1. History

When the Navajo Nation created the first tribal college their motivation was the need to build an institution of higher education that was responsive to the economic and cultural needs of the student and the tribe (Boyer, 1989, p.11). By controlling their own institutions tribes hoped to be more responsive to local needs in a culturally appropriate way.

The objectives of the Navajo Community College as listed in the 1975-77 Catalog were to provide: basic programs for students who plan to go on to a bachelor’s degree; vocational-technical training programs; community services and development; assistance and consultation to the public, church, and BIA schools and organizations; encouragement to Indian students to develop and preserve a pride in their heritage; and service as a center for the development of Indian culture with an emphasis on the Navajo. (Oppelt, 1990, p.37)

Many tribes agreed with the Navajo Nation and felt that they could provide a more relevant and appropriate education for their students. They also felt that federal funds being used to support federal institutions and Indian programs at white institutions could be better spent in other ways to better meet the needs of tribes. The few who were completing degrees at those institutions were not coming home because their education was not relevant to the work on reservations except for the few government jobs available (Oppelt, 1990). And perhaps some were assimilated into the mainstream.

Many tribes followed the lead of the Navajo Nation and today there are 32 tribal colleges in the US and Canada. As these institutions developed they recognized the
benefits of working together as a united front. In 1972 the leaders of the colleges got together and created the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. One of the most important roles AIHEC has played has been the role of advocate in Washington, D.C. (Stein, 1999). Their job was to represent the colleges as unique.

What is so unique about tribal colleges is their ability to interact and serve community needs. They fill a large void that universities cannot reach. In fact the community’s problems are impossible for tribal colleges to ignore. Even though the age of tribal college students is beginning to drop, the typical tribal college student is still a single mother in her late twenties (Ambler, 2001). Therefore, if a tribal college does not provide child care, they are not going to have a large number of students enrolling.

While many mainstream universities are growing more alienated from the people they are supposed to serve, as a result of globalization, tribal colleges have a direct commitment to their communities (Ambler, 2001) Tribal colleges were developed to be more responsive to local needs, and they were, and are, when they are able. However, their collective history is one of low funding, struggling for mere existence, and a battle for autonomy. As tribal colleges rely on federal funding, their very existence has often been uncertain. (Boyer, 1998) That is where AIHEC’s ability to serve as a group has helped them the most. In 1978 they scored their biggest victory by convincing Congress and President Carter that funding tribal colleges was part of their trust responsibility based on treaty agreements (Stein, 1999). The Tribal College Act secured funding, but it did not promise a regular amount of funding. Congress could fund the tribal colleges at which ever level they desired. When the political winds swing left or right, so the funds increase or decrease. With this lack of stability it has been difficult for programs within the colleges to maintain themselves, never mind grow. Funding has been so low in fact that sometimes they struggle to even exist. The Navajo Community College, for example, was funded through a special Navajo Community College Assistance Act, from 1971-1978, along with allocation from the tribe itself and decreasing donations from private agencies. (Oppelt, 1990). However those allocations are different each year.
causing much uncertainty to faculty and staff who did not know whether or not they would have a job each year.

The colleges discovered the difference between authorized funding and actual appropriations. Congress had authorized $4,000 for each full-time Indian student in the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act. But appropriations – the amount actually released – are determined by each year’s budget negotiations. It is perfectly legal to appropriate far less than the amount authorized. It is even possible to appropriate nothing at all. …In 1980 when funding was first released, appropriation was slightly more than $2,000 per student. It climbed to nearly $3,000 the following year. But then it began an uninterrupted decline until 1989, when a mere $1,900 was appropriated. (Boyer, 1998, p. 21)

Money has always been a problem for tribal colleges, but in 1994 congress granted tribal colleges land grant status (Stein, 1999). This status will help expand a financial base for tribal colleges. Another boon for the colleges was a program called “Capturing a Dream” funded by the Kellogg Foundation and gives the colleges $22 million dollars for tribal college initiatives. (Stein, 1999). It is important for the tribal colleges to take advantage of this kind of funding because of the unreliability of their other sources.

Aside from stability there are other issues to confront; such as autonomy. As stated above, the Navajo Nation created their own institution to try to provide their students with a more culturally appropriate education that they controlled. However, with the issue of funding at hand they, and the other tribal colleges, were left with a choice of accreditation or no money. Not only does accreditation make institutions eligible for federal student loans, but it also assists with eligibility for transferring degrees and credits to other institutions (although it does not guarantee it). Additionally, private philanthropic organizations often use accreditation as an eligibility criteria when distributing funds. And finally, accreditation helps provide legitimacy to institutions within the higher education community (Mennell Putnam, 2001).
In order to provide degrees they must be accredited, in order to be accredited, they must meet government standards, which are Western standards. If they do not want to abide by these Western standards then they lack the ability (and validity) to provide degrees to their students. It is quite a conundrum for the tribal colleges.

Today most of the tribal colleges have become accredited institutions in order to provide degrees for their students. However, their offerings are still limited with only five of the tribal colleges providing Bachelor’s degrees, only one offers a Master’s degree, and to date none offer a PhD, (Robbins, 2002). These are degrees that tribes need available to their students. Students sometimes have to choose between the more culturally relevant institutions and ones that provide a wider range of degrees.

2. Description of Tribal College Programs and Statistics

Tribal Colleges and Tribal Universities are two or four-year institutions that provide their students with (1) degree programs (if they are accredited), (2) certificate programs and (3) many community based programs designed to meet the needs of the larger community rather than students specifically.

Degree Programs

Accredited tribal colleges and universities offer Associates degrees in a wide range of subjects. Some of the students will end their studies with the Associate's degree while others will take it on to a four-year institution to continue work on a Bachelor’s degree. Of course there are some tribal colleges that offer Bachelors degrees and fewer offer Master’s (see statistics at end of section).
One of the institutions only offers their associate’s degrees through agreements with local universities and colleges. And others offer Bachelor’s degrees through the same method.

Certificate Programs

All of the tribal colleges offer certificates in many and varied subjects. Much have to do with the jobs that are available locally.

Tribal colleges offer these students several important advantages. First, they are located, in most cases, within reservation communities. Education does not mean leaving home and having greater financial burdens. Second, tribal colleges reflect the culture of the surrounding community and are more sensitive to the unique needs of Indian students. Third, they tailor their curricula to the needs of the reservation. Most students want employment that allows them to stay on their reservation. Tribally controlled colleges provide both degrees that allow for direct employment in the community and a general education for those who plan to continue their education elsewhere before returning. (Boyer, 1990, p. 6)

These certificate programs can be offered by non-accredited tribal colleges as well as accredited ones. The certificate programs, however, do little to meet the larger needs of the community in terms of filling the new professional positions that are opening up on reservations.

Community Based Programs

Tribal colleges bring services to the community that would otherwise not be available such as libraries, radio stations, training facilities, and even community gardens (Ambler, 2001). Local community members and programs use these facilities to promote community health and well-being. Little Big Horn College, for example, has an Institute for Children and Families. It sponsors meeting of parents on school issues, seminars on
drug abuse, and even a seminar training volunteers to work on a crisis line for the Indian Health Service. (Pease-Windy Boy, 1991).

Academically, tribal colleges have come a long way since their inception in the 1970’s when few had the ability to offer full degrees to their students. Today most are fully accredited institutions while some are in the process of seeking accreditation. There are even a couple who have become Tribal Universities and offer Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. The breakdown of degree offerings is listed below. (for a full list of institutions and degrees offered see appendix C).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE OFFERED</th>
<th># OF TRIBAL COLLEGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree only</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(offer degrees through agreements with local univ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Types of degrees offered at Tribal Colleges*  
(Tribal College Profiles, Robbins, R. 2002)

As the numbers indicate tribal colleges fall short in providing their students with advanced degrees. These are degrees that students need in order to make lasting change in their communities. Another interesting statistic is that 8 of the 32 institutions do not offer any kind of degree or certificate in Native studies. Perhaps they do not offer a degree program because cultural content is imbedded in the general curriculum or it could be that they want the institution to focus on meeting Western standards seeing that as more important than cultural content.
C) Enrollment Trends and Retention

1) Data Background

It is exceedingly difficult to get comprehensive statistics on Native American students in higher education. As a small proportion of the student body often times Native statistics fall under the overarching category of ‘other.’ Those that do attempt to gather statistics have to confront issues of status and blood quantum when deciding whom to include in the statistics. Additionally, many Native students have a tendency to leave school temporarily and return at a later time, often to a different school. Statistically these students may be classified as drop-outs because they did not follow the dominant standard of starting and finishing a program within a specified time frame and location.

With these difficulties noted this study utilizes the most comprehensive data available on Native Americans, which is still limited in scope, but much better than what has previously been available. The data comes from the National Center for Education Statistics, which is part of the U.S. Department of Education – Office of Educational Research and Improvement. The report is entitled, *American Indians and Alaska Natives in Postsecondary Education*, and was printed in October of 1998. This report goes into much detail as to the limited availability of data and the reliability of such small samples, as Native students tend to be underrepresented at the institutions surveyed.

Native students are unique in the way they attend higher education. This affects how they choose an institution of higher education. To gain a clearer picture of Native student attendance it is important to examine their enrolment trends.

As noted earlier there has been a 67 percent increase in Native American attendance since 1976. When looking at data it is important to examine the whole picture
and not just individual numbers due to the relatively small number of total Native students and to the non-traditional educational trends of the students. For example, although enrolment increased by 67 percent for Native students and only 30 percent for all others (combined), it must be noted that the majority of Native students attended 2-year institutions while the majority of the general student population attended 4-year institutions (US Dept of Ed., 1999). Equally, it must be noted that as enrolment numbers increased for both Native students and all others, the percentage of Native students attending public institutions was larger, 87 percent, than that of all other students of whom 78 percent attended public institutions. This could be a reflection of the fact that Native students more often attended two-year institutions, which are generally public institutions. (US Dept of Ed., 1999)

Whether it be a two or four-year institutions, a major source of the increased enrolment in the Native communities has been American Indian and Alaska Native women. Enrolment jumped from 37,000 in 1976 to 74,000 in 1994, which is a 98 percent increase. Men also increased over this same time period but not so dramatically. By 1994 women comprised the majority of both Native American and overall enrolment (US Dept of Ed, 1999).

At two and four-year institutions there was a similarity in the attendance status of Native students and ‘all other’ students. Generally speaking full-time status was higher at four-year institutions than at two year institutions for both groups. Conversely, part-time status was higher at two-year institutions than four-year institutions for both groups. However, being that more Native students attend two rather than four-year institutions, then it can be extrapolated that there is a larger percentage of Native students attending on a part-time basis than non-Native students. Again, women figured largely in this trend: “An examination of students attending part time revealed that the majority of these students enrolled in 2-year institutions, attended public institutions, and were female.” (US Dept of Ed., 1999, p.3-11)
As more Native students are attending two-year institutions, the majority of the increase in enrolment has been at the undergraduate level. Enrolments at this level have increased 68 percent from 1976 to 1994. Graduate and professional enrolment has increased as well, but with fewer numbers. Degree earnings follow similarly. According to NPSAS:93 data, during the 1992-93 academic year Native American students were less likely to enrol in bachelor’s degree programs than the general student population was. Only 31 percent of Native Americans were enrolled in bachelor’s degree programs compared with 43 percent of all undergraduate students. The majority (51 percent) of American Indian undergraduates were enrolled in associate’s degree programs.” (US Dept of Ed., 1999, p.3-12)

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant enrolment trend of Native students is where they choose to attend higher education. Many students may choose institutions because of their program offerings, prestige, scholarships, resources, etc., but for Native students it seems as though the most important element in choosing an institution of higher education is location. According the US Dept of Education (1999) the institutions of higher education with the highest Native American enrolment in 1994 were concentrated in areas where Native Americans most commonly reside. The University of New Mexico-Gallup branch had the largest Native enrolment with 2,041 students, followed by Navajo Community College in Arizona (1,899), Northeastern State University in Oklahoma (1,899), Northland Pioneer College in Arizona (1,325), and Southeastern Oklahoma University (1,268). In percentages the enrolment ranged from 21 percent of total enrolment at Northeastern State University to 94 percent at Navajo Community College.

Although tribal colleges were created from the needs of their communities, this does not translate into larger numbers of students attending tribal colleges than other institutions. However, it does follow the supposition that community is a vital factor in Native student’s education. Students are choosing to attend institutions close to home.
whether they are universities, general community colleges, tribal colleges, or any other, because what is seemingly most important to them is to stay within or near their communities. Tribal colleges are great for those communities that have them, but not many do. Currently there are only 30 tribally controlled colleges scattered across the country, (mostly in isolated geographic areas), but there are approximately 360 federally recognized Indian reservations (US Dept of Ed., 1999).

The small number of tribal colleges is reflected in the low percentage of Native students attending them. According to the US Dept of Education (1999), only about 8 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary students attended tribal colleges in 1994. Of those tribal colleges Navajo Community College enrolled over two times as many Native students as any other tribal college (1,899). Next came Oglala Lakota College with 853 students, Haskell Indian Junior College with 793 students, Salish Kootenai Community College with 659, and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute with 615.

When Native students have the option, however, they are increasingly choosing to attend tribal colleges over other institutions. In a report called, *Tribal Colleges: An Introduction*, written by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), enrolment at tribal colleges is shown to be steadily increasing and at a rate higher than mainstream institutions. In 1982 enrolment was approximately 2,100 at the colleges. By the 1995-96 school years, however, enrolment reached 24,363 undergraduates and 260 graduates. That is a total increase of 62 percent. In comparison enrolment at mainstream colleges over the same time period only increased by 36 percent. The growth in Tribal College enrolment was concentrated in a few states such as California, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. (AIHEC, 1991)

Students who attend tribal colleges are increasingly successful in their academic pursuits whether that is an associate’s degree, bachelors, or transferring to a university.
According to the AIHEC report, although the data is limited in regard to degree attainment, available data suggests a significant number of Tribal College students are completing degrees. Of the sixteen colleges that reported completion data for 1996-97 showed that 936 degrees were awarded, including 409 associate’s degrees, 58 bachelor’s degrees and two master’s degrees. Out of this total number 84 percent went to American Indian students and 67 percent to women. A Salish Kootenai College study found that Native students who attended the tribal college and then transferred to the University of Montana earned higher grade point averages and had higher graduation rates than those American Indian students who went directly to university from high school. (AIHEC, 1991)

Those students who do attend 4-year colleges and universities have varying degrees of success. Post-secondary retention statistics are difficult to find but there is one organization which collects persistence and graduation data, the NCAA. The sample is small, however, collecting data from only 900 institutions (US Dept of Ed., 1998). What the data does show is that American Indian and Alaska Native persistence rates were consistently lower than for other students. For example, one study by the NCAA found that both the 1995 and 1996 6-year graduation rate for incoming freshman at Division I schools\(^4\) was 56 percent. But for American Indians and Alaska Natives it was only 34 percent in 1995 and 36 percent in 1996. For Division II institutions the statistics are similar. In 1995 fifty four percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives stayed in college after their first year. That is compared to 68 percent of all undergraduates nationwide. Three year persistence rates were 33 percent compared to 49 percent nationwide (US Dept of Ed., 1999).

Perhaps these low success rates are contributing to the increased number of Native students enrolling in tribal colleges. It might also be why more Native students attend 2-year over 4-year institutions. These students tend to gravitate towards smaller more community-responsive institutions. However, even the smaller more responsive institutions are still structured around the Western form of education. Many cultural

\(^4\) Note: Division status in NCAA schools as levels I, II, or III, is based on their institutional athletic sponsorship.
elements are at these smaller institutions (much more so than at universities), however they are still teaching curriculum that follows the American accreditation standards. Some of the institutions are becoming more creative in involving Indigenous knowledge and teaching in traditional manners; however, they are limited by the confines of accreditation/legitimacy.

**Analysis of Statistics**

With growing numbers of Native American students opting for two-year institutions over four, their ability to obtain an advanced degree is limited as the numbers do not support the supposition that students will transfer, and then upon transfer, complete a four year degree. The numbers do support the fact that students are looking for local responses to their needs and would rather go to two-year institutions than to relocate to larger less responsive universities. The fact that a large portion of the students are women and the median age of Native Americans students attending tribal colleges is 29-30 years of age, (Ness, 2002), one can extrapolate that there may be many students who are also mothers and therefore less likely to want to, or be able to, relocate to larger institutions where they would have less childcare support, increased child care costs, and increased tuition expenses (along with the fact the government aid has decreased steadily in the past two decades). Tribal colleges allow the students to stay near home where their support systems exist and where costs will be lower.

**SUMMARY**

On the surface Tribal colleges appear to be more effective in meeting the contextual needs of the students such as: cultural values, language, tribal knowledge, and identity. All of these aspects of the student’s lives are reinforced, to a degree, at a tribal college. The universities, on the other hand are not able to respond on such a local level. However, they can provide advanced degrees, a wide selection of subject choices, the prestige/validity that comes with the institution, and an almost guaranteed advancement socio-economically (Day, 2002).
In summary, this chapter served as an introduction to the two institutions in the context of Native American higher education and gave the reader a general sense of what people perceive are the benefits and drawbacks of these institutions. Also, some of the basic issues were touched upon and statistics were given. In the next chapter a more in-depth analysis of program effectiveness will be offered. Program effectiveness in this context means the ability to provide Native American students with a successful (as defined by Native Americans and not necessarily the institutions) and culturally appropriate education.
CHAPTER FIVE

SOME PROBLEMS AND ISSUES WITH NATIVE AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENTS
Some Problems And Issues With Native American Higher Education Engagements

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is bitterest.” (Confucius)

Introduction

Now that we have a basic understanding and sketch of the issues and statistics of these two types of institutions, we can move to a more thorough examination of the issues. This chapter will critique Native American higher education responses as they pertain to the university and the tribal college. It will attempt to assess how well they are doing at meeting the current needs of Native American students and their communities.

It will not, however, look at only what has gone wrong, but also what is succeeding. In order to move forward we must take into account the positive aspects of both of these institutions in order to keep those benefits intact. With that in mind this chapter is organized into two sections; one on the tribal college and one on the university. Each will include a section on the positive impacts they have made in higher education as well as areas that are problematic.

Tribal Colleges

A. Positive Impacts

In assessing the educational responses of the tribal colleges, I must make it clear that it is not my intention to gloss over or take lightly the impact that tribal colleges have had in Native American education. Tribal colleges are more than institutions; to many Native Americans they are a symbol of a movement to take back control of their own
education. They are part of tribal, community, and individual dreams and passions to make a change in Native education, and through extension, to our communities. They have served to give people hope and direction and I do not intend to disrespect the hard work of my colleagues who have spent years at their endeavors. They have fought many battles, have made many sacrifices, and unfortunately had to make compromises just to get their ideas off the ground. There was so much doubt in their ability to develop a truly academic institution that they had to battle perceptions first instead of focusing on the new direction they wanted to take.

In this climate of doubt, tribal college leaders believed that they first had to prove that Indians could, in fact, create a ‘real’ college. Those in the movement who believed an Indian college should be different in some way from mainstream institutions bowed to the wishes of constituents who were not interested in attending an ‘alternative’ institution. (Boyer, 2002, p. 16)

Even though tribal colleges had to bend to pressures going against the intentions of some of the founders, they have been able to impact the communities in many positive ways. From community service to cultural enhancement to creating legitimacy, tribal colleges have contributed to the forward momentum in Native American higher education because of their unique qualities. They have been able to meet more of the specific and ‘unique’ needs of Native American students in a way universities have not.

Tribal colleges offer these students several important advantages. First, they are located, in most cases, within reservation communities so education does not mean leaving home and having greater financial burdens. Second, tribal colleges reflect the culture of the surrounding community and are more sensitive to the unique needs of Indian students. Third, they tailor their curricula to the needs of the reservation because many students want employment that allows them to stay on their reservation. Tribally controlled colleges provide both degrees and programs that allow for direct employment in the community and a general education for those who plan to continue their education elsewhere before returning (Boyer, 1990).
Tribal colleges understand that their student population is different from the national norm. Generally speaking the students are older and many have families already. Women tend to outnumber men in enrollment, and unemployment or underemployment is a real factor for many students which in turn makes college a real financial struggle (Boyer, 1990). In order to serve these students the tribal colleges have to cater to their specific needs or they will have no students enrolling in their programs. Universities pull from a larger sector of society so they do not have to cater to the needs of Native American students the way tribal colleges do.

Tribal colleges are true models of ‘community’ colleges in that they serve the community as a whole in ways that even traditional community colleges do not (Stein, 1999). There are many reservations which lack basic infrastructures which would allow more programs and services to exist. In some instances tribal colleges have been able to provide that structure and have been a place for programs and services to exist and grow. In some cases the colleges link to existing services in the community which enhances their ability to serve the community.

Blackfeet Community College (BCC) in northwestern Montana has a track record of linking with the community to enhance existing services, and now the college is working closely with the Blackfeet Head Start Program. BCC President Dorothy Still Smoking, Ed.D., brought extensive experience in Head Start and early childhood program development when she became president in July 2000. She immediately saw the potential of bringing head start services to campus to serve the families of tribal college students. (Blackfeet, 2001 p. 24)

For some communities the most important aspect of tribal colleges has been the renewal of interest in the traditions and language of the community. For some students seeing their culture in the curriculum of a higher education institute gives it a sense of importance and validation that perhaps they needed to feel. In many Native communities, Western education has educated their students away from their culture (Cajete, 1994). Tribal colleges are an opportunity to reverse that trend.
Some tribal colleges, such as Dine College provide courses in their own language, history, culture, arts and crafts, and psychology. Dine College has also integrated their heritage into every level of the curriculum which allows the students to see their life-way reinforced and validated at the post-secondary level, giving it a certain level of importance (Oppelt, 1990).

Traditional life ways and values are given a place of respect and honor in most tribal colleges at a level which a Western university would find difficult to reach. This validation, if you will, gives students an opportunity to grow in their own culture as well as in academics or ‘world knowledge.’ Tribal colleges have given cultural knowledge a starting place for validation and the possibility for more.

All that being said, there is another aspect of validation in which the tribal colleges have in the past and today continue to struggle with: legitimacy. Very few people believed that tribal colleges would survive, and some have not. (DQ University lost its accreditation and closed its doors in 2005 and Si Tanka’s Huron campus closed due to lack of funding - also in 2005). However, others such as Sinte Gleska University and Haskell Indian Nations University have flourished and grown to become four-year universities. Securing their land grant status and other private funding has helped solidify the legitimacy of the institutions which has in turn increased their enrollment numbers. Total enrollment at tribal colleges now stands at over 30,000 which is about 18% of all Native Americans in higher education. And more are going straight from high school into tribal colleges as their prestige grows from being a last resort to a first choice (Boyer, 2002).

B. Problems

It is difficult to evaluate the status of tribal colleges as some speed forward and develop research and international programs and others close their doors due to accreditation and funding issues. The tribal colleges have yet to become a cohesive movement heading in the same direction at a similar pace. So that leaves us with the
question – how do we assess the success tribal colleges are having at meeting the educational needs of Native American students?

Western assessment uses an outcome based measure for success. However, many researchers, such as Boyer and Ortiz (2004), have suggested that Western ‘outcomes’ are based on hegemonic mono-cultural definitions of quality which are ill-suited to evaluate institutions grounded in non-Western traditions. These researchers suggest that an assessment should be based on community accountability. Are they making a difference in the community? What do the communities define as success?

In an article entitled, “Defying the Odds: Tribal Colleges Conquer Skepticism but Still Face Persistent Challenges”, Paul Boyer, (a veteran writer on tribal colleges), touches on this important issue. The following is an excerpt from his article that is lengthy but also a poignant reflection of the issues at the heart of this research.

These are impressive achievements for what is still a very young movement (tribal college movement). But with age and experience come some sobering realizations. Several years ago Twila Martin reflected on the changes taking place in her community. After leaving the college she remained active in the reservation and was twice elected chair of the Turtle Mountain Band in the 1990’s. But after 30 years of public service, she still worries about the fate of her community. The problems of the tribe have not disappeared, she believes.

‘They’re not getting better,’ she said. ‘They’re getting worse.’ While self-determination empowered tribes politically, it did not erase social, educational, or economic inequity, even in areas targeted for reform. The persistent problem of school achievement symbolizes the disappointment some feel. ‘Twenty five years ago, one of the problems we saw was the lack of Indian educators,’ Martin said. ‘People believed we had a high dropout rate because we lack Indian teachers that motivate our kids, who understand who we are as a people. You know what’s so sad today? Our schools are filled with Indian teachers. And yet our dropout rate is higher than it was 20 years ago. That is what is so discouraging.’

Nor has the concern abated over the loss of tribal languages and culture. A primary goal of the tribal colleges was to help sustain the language and culture of their communities. To their credit, the colleges have helped restore respect for cultural beliefs and practices in tribal
communities. Many people now participate with pride in ceremonies and cultural events that were once derided as ‘backward.’

But, as time passes, concern over the survival of cultural knowledge has not abated. The status of tribal languages is especially worrisome. Although language courses are being offered, very few programs succeed in producing fluent speakers. Meanwhile, an alarming number of languages, including languages spoken on reservations with tribal colleges, are on the verge of extinction.

The concern here goes beyond the failure of colleges to reduce school dropout rates or restore languages. **Instead, it suggests that the larger goals of the tribal college movement – to nurture strong, healthy, and sustainable communities- are not yet fulfilled** (emphasis added). The rise of new social ills and the persistent loss of tribal languages suggests to Twila Martin and other leaders that the assumptions and strategies employed 30 years ago must be reassessed. (Boyer, 2002, p.17-18)

The outcomes of tribal college’s efforts have been positive in small areas but meaningful change in the communities has yet to come. Twila Martin outlined how the educational and cultural outcomes they expected to produce have not occurred and in fact have worsened in her community and they have a tribal college. There are also socio-economic changes that communities hoped would occur because of tribal college efforts, but those too seem to have evaded meaningful change. (see Figures 9 & 10, pg105)

The contribution of the colleges to their communities have been enormous, but the challenge of sustained economic development on many reservations has thus far resisted any solution. Reservation Indian people are still among the poorest of the poor in the U.S.” (Bordeaux and Houser, 1989, p.45)

One cannot generalize the outcomes of tribal college communities because each has had its own successes and failures. What one can say, however, is that the tribal college movement as a whole is not providing broad ranging positive changes throughout Native America. Of course it is not the sole responsibility of tribal colleges to change the socio-economic status of the communities and, further, there are many contributing factors to socio-economic problems such as federal and state policies that have made the work of tribal colleges more difficult. However, the tribal colleges are in a good position
to have a positive impact, but there needs to be a larger coordinated effort. The tribes in the United States will not benefit from higher education unless and until there is a large-scale cohesive movement forward from which each community can benefit.
Figure 8: Unemployment Rates for Persons Ages 16 & Over, By Race/Ethnicity: 1994 to 2003 (Institute of Ed Statistics, 2005)

Figure 9: People Below Poverty Level by Race, Sex & Age: 1999 (US Census Bureau 2004-2005)
Why have the tribal colleges lacked the ability to create meaningful and lasting change? Although there may be many contributing factors, there are three that stand out as major issues for the tribal colleges: 1 – inappropriate model, 2 – curriculum focus, and 3 – lack of cohesive direction.

**Inappropriate Model**

When Native Americans called for a new type of educational institution, they did so because they wanted a more relevant and responsive education. They wanted something different from the West, something Native. Somehow that vision got lost in the attempts to prove to the ‘West’ and higher education specifically, that Native educators could make a ‘real’ college. They focused, out of need, on being able to provide students with an education equal to that of the other institutions. However, instead of creating an equal alternative they re-created a Western model with Native staff.

In Boyer’s article (referenced above), he states, “For some leaders, the tribal colleges must recall the early vision of the movement’s founders. The goal is not to mimic mainstream institutions but to reflect a unique tribal identity” (Boyer, 2002, p.18).

Other Native educators, such as Deloria and Cajete, have been speaking of the need to move away from Western forms of education and move toward more traditional forms.

It is singularly instructive to move away from Western educational values and theories and survey the educational practices of the old Indians. Not only does one get a sense of emotional stability, which indeed might be simply the impact of nostalgia, but viewing the way the old people educated themselves and their young gives a person a sense that education is more than the process of imparting and receiving information, that it is the very purpose of human society and that human societies cannot really flower until they understand the parameters of possibilities that the human personality contains. (Deloria, 1999, p.139)
However, the need, is not only to move away from Western forms of education, but to also create a more contemporary vision of Native education to fit the needs of Native students and communities as they exist today.

The need for a contemporary perspective of American Indian education that is principally derived from, and informed by, the thoughts, orientations, and cultural philosophies of Indian people themselves. The articulation and fulfillment of this need are, I believe, essential steps in Indian educational self-determination. (Cajete, 1994, 21)

Tribal colleges, and indeed any effort in Native education, needs to critically examine what it is the institutions are teaching to their students and how they are doing it. I think the critical difference in teaching in a culturally sustainable manner is this; you must not teach *about* our cultures, but *through the eyes* of our cultures. In other words when universities offer courses about Native culture the course is almost always taught through a Western epistemological framework. To teach through the eyes of a specific Native culture is to teach through their epistemological framework. When Western institutions teach ‘about’ Native cultures they have created the ‘other’. Native culture is the ‘other’ they are examining because they perceive themselves as the center. When Native colleges or schools teach ‘about’ Native culture, we are acknowledging the West as the center and ‘othering’ our own cultures. For example, instead of tribal colleges offering a few classes about traditional society or languages or art in addition to their regular ‘academic’ courses (most of which are carbon copies of what is found in any western institution), instead you teach all of the courses through the epistemological framework of the people. This is our ‘taken for granted’ knowledge. Instead of teaching a course on language, teach the courses through the languages. Instead of teaching an individual course on Native plant use, teach all the courses from the epistemological framework of the people and look at Western biology, and psychology, and math, etc., through that lens. To maintain the culture you must remain in contact with it and live it. The cultural relationships and epistemology must be alive in the institution as well as in the communities.
Traditional education gives us an orientation to the world around us, particularly the people around us, so that we know who we are and have confidence when we do things. Traditional knowledge enables us to see our place and our responsibility within the movement of history. Formal American education, on the other hand, helps us to understand how things work, and knowing how things work, and being able to make them work, is the mark of a professional person in this society. It is critically important that we do not confuse these two kinds of knowledge or exchange the roles they play in our lives. (Deloria, 1999, 143)

The western schools that the majority of Native Americans attend, break-up life into fragments which is antithetical to traditional knowledge ways.

Indians have found even the most sophisticated academic disciplines and professional schools woefully inadequate because the fragmentation of knowledge that is represented by today’s modern university does not allow for a complete understanding of a problem or of a phenomenon. (Deloria, 1999, p.146)

The structures of tribal colleges may also be problematic. The fragmentation of knowledge is contrary to most, if not all, Native American world views. It may be advantageous to find a new model of organizing the knowledge (subjects) within the institution. I do not have the ‘answer’ to this question of reorganization but believe that it is an essential area of inquiry. There are ways to envision an institution other than what we have been trained to accept. Perhaps traditional organizational frameworks and/or teaching formats could guide a new vision.

Curriculum

In the last section I spoke of the perspective through which teaching occurs in tribal colleges and Western institutions and now I want to speak to the content of the teaching (no matter how it is organized). Tribal colleges are positioned very well to be the pulse of the community. Native American tribal college administrators know what is going on in their communities and what their needs are in a way that universities
probably never could. They need to be leading the way by focusing less on additive curriculum (see more in the university section below) and more on a curriculum that gives Native students and communities tools for their cultural and political survival.

Some of the tribal colleges, as noted in chapter four, do not have any courses in Native studies. Some have very basic history, language and culture courses. And even fewer, such as the Oglala Lakota College, have courses in tribal law, treaties, politics, natural resource management, etc. These are the types of courses that are relevant and give students the skills to move forward. Courses about the past are important because our students need to be grounded in the past so that they are stable and strong enough to move into their future. But in order to live in that future they need to be aware of the realities of today. They need to know where they stand socio-politically on a global scale in order to understand where the important battles have to be waged. It is not just about the problems with the BIA or with government funding anymore, it is about how global politics and economics affect our standing in the new world order. In order to be competent in both cultural and world skills/knowledge, they need to know about power, bias, control, hegemony, and most importantly, where they and their communities stand in relation to the West.

Modern education provides tools essential to the survival of Indian people and communities, but this education must be within the context of a greater cultural whole. In support of cultural preservation, Indian educators and Tribal leaders also need to advocate for a culturally based education to achieve the foundational goals of self-determination, self-governance, and Tribal sovereignty. (Cajete, 1994, p.18)

A curriculum that provides students with carbon copy course offerings and the additive curriculum (see Self-Esteem Theory p. 118), that they could get in a Western institution, will turn out students who may be more respectful toward their traditional ways (Boyer, 2002), but they will also still be subjected to the hegemony of Western structure and knowledge. That is not to say that they should not learn Western
knowledge, only that it must be taught in context and with the understanding of where Native Americans are socio-politically positioned.

As simple as it may seem to those of us who have worked in Native higher education for years, students may not be fully aware of the socio-political and cultural differences between themselves and the university culture. There are differences in cultural assumptions about education, protocol, and expectations. Western science is held up as the only means to true knowledge and Indigenous knowledge is often seen as simplistic and primitive. I did not know these issues existed when I was young. There is also a certain amount of cultural capital that is lacking for many Native students. For many Native students, like myself, we were the first generation in universities, and we had to learn it all by ourselves.

I was very naïve about education; I assumed that the purpose of education was to give everyone equal opportunities. I did not know the history of assimilation in our American school system. I also never realized how political it could be to be Native American at a university. I learned about it through professors, some courses, and experience. It took me a while to put it all together myself, but I believe the curriculum should be very honest about the politics of higher education. However, they should go beyond that and give students tools with which to help change the situation.

Lack of Cohesive Direction

For the most part tribal colleges were developed individually and in the interests of their respective communities, so it is not appropriate to always group them together on issues. In fact, tribes have often had to fight the ‘lumping together’ of ‘Indian’ interests to force the maintenance of tribal sovereignty. However, even the founders of the first tribal colleges recognized the benefits of pulling together for strength when they created AIHEC (American Indian Higher Education Consortium).
In today’s increasingly global society, not only Native Americans, but Indigenous people all over the world need to work together on common causes in order to be a force strong enough to be heard. Tribal colleges might need to come together more than they have to date. Uniqueness to individual colleges and cultural practices should in no way be compromised, but there are larger societal structural issues that all tribal communities need to protect themselves from and it would behoove them to work together to combat them. There are positive examples of working together such as the seven tribal colleges working together in a project funding by the Kellogg foundation called, “The Learning Lodge Institute.” This project was developed to increase fluency in traditional languages. This is a good example, but it would be even better if there was a collective effort of all tribal colleges to increase fluencies. As a united front they will have more strength.

If tribal colleges can come up with a solid direction, a clear set of goals that they all can strive toward, and work together within those efforts, it could give those working within the institutions and those partnering from without, a good sense of what needs to happen next and where the ‘train is heading,’ so to speak.

Thus far there has been no specific direction for Native American higher education. There is talk about sovereignty, about Indigenous knowledge, about traditional teaching styles, etc., but often when looked at, the curriculum offered by the tribal colleges shows no common direction.

No recognizable contemporary theory of Indian education exists to guide the implementation or direction of educational curriculum development. Instead what is called ‘Indian education’ today is a ‘compendium of models, methodologies, and techniques gleaned from various sources in mainstream American education and adapted to American Indian circumstances, usually with the underlying aim of cultural assimilation. (Cajete, 1994, p.28)

Some tribal colleges are moving forward in certain areas and others are closing their doors. A better idea would be to work together to develop a cohesive direction; one
which allows for cultural differences so that there is a strong Native education movement. And in the larger structural framework, Native American education must take quick and decisive steps together before globalization and the neo-liberal values of the West completely paralyze us with continuing bouts of reactionary politics and educational struggles. This will not be easy with all of the cultural and historical differences between peoples, but it is a necessity if tribes want to survive as sovereign nations.

I view the next phase of Indian education as requiring the collective development of transformative vision and education process based on authentic dialogue. This development requires that new structures and practices emerge from old ones through a collective process of creative thought and research. These new structures and practices can only be generated by an ongoing and unbiased process of critical exchange between modern educational thought and practice, and the traditional philosophy and orientation of Indian people. (Cajete, 1994, p. 218)

In order for Native communities to more consistently develop positive changes in their communities there needs to be a more appropriate model from which to work. One that does not mimic Western institutions but that provides a truly Native alternative such as following the traditional governing structure of a tribal group. The curriculum needs to more accurately reflect contemporary issues in Native America and give students the ability to be proactive within their frameworks. And finally there is a need for the colleges to come together to develop a more transformative vision of themselves for all Native communities.

**Universities**

A. **Positive Impacts**

In assessing the educational responses of the universities, I also must take time to acknowledge the efforts of those who came before me and broke down walls and opened
doors for Native students, like myself, who have had it easier than the generations before us. The efforts of activists, students, faculty and staff are not to go unrecognized, for if not for them, we most likely would not have our programs in universities today. Those currently in universities know, as I do, the many obstacles they confront on a daily basis. Many of the obstacles are institutionally driven and some are driven by our own conflicts in purpose and direction.

We must take a look at the positive achievements and efforts in universities as well as what has not worked. It would be unjust not to acknowledge the positive aspects brought about through the efforts of many Native American educators and those who stood with them.

The most obvious positive development was the creation of Native American studies programs. These civil-rights inspired programs gave Native Americans hopes of finding a more relevant curriculum and a better environment in which to study. It also served as acknowledgement that Native Americans and Native American Studies did belong in higher education. Of course not everyone agreed with that, especially in the beginning:

….there were criticisms from the traditional disciplines who were being threatened. To many, American Indian studies was not thought worthy of independent departmental/discipline status within the academy. The first criticism was that Indian Studies lacked a distinct methodology which employed unique abstract concepts it could call its own. (Duffie, 1997, p. 436)

That did not, however, stop students from enrolling in universities in increasing numbers as the programs established themselves. Correspondingly more students were graduating from these four year institutions. For example, in 1961 (pre-civil-rights) only 66 Native Americans graduated from four-year institutions. However, in 1976, after the civil rights movement, 3,410 Native Americans graduated with Bachelor’s degrees (Carnegie Foundation, 1989 4-5).
As the programs grew in the institutions, so did the student support systems for Native students. Often it is the support programs, more than the academic programs, that help retain Native American students who face challenges and barriers to their success at universities. In a book entitled, *First Person, First Peoples*, the editors, Garrod and Larimore, interview students at Dartmouth (well known program for Native American students), about their experiences as Native Americans at an Ivy League institution. This is what one student had to say about his experience with the Native programs there.

The Native American Program was the reason I chose Dartmouth, and it was the reason I stayed. When I speak of the Native American Program, I am also including the Native Americans at Dartmouth student organization and the Native American studies department. NAP was the basis upon which I received my education. NAP ensures that Native youth who were raised in remote areas on Indian reservations, often living in poverty, and not able to receive the best education money can buy, are given a chance to excel at an institution such as Dartmouth. Many students are at Dartmouth because they know that with such an education they will be better equipped to serve their home communities or other Native communities. I am such a person. (1997, p.62-63)

These support programs give students who are far away from home a surrogate community and family. It is a place where they can be themselves and share the issues and conflicts they come up against with others who understand and share their experiences. Another Dartmouth student explains it this way:

My transition from Alaska to college would not have been as comfortable, nor as successful, without other Indians. My friends through the Native American programs became my surrogate tribal members. Without connection to other Indians, my self-confidence and identity would have been severely challenged. (1997, p.73)

Over time some of the fledgling Native programs, which were normally housed in other departments such as Ethnic Studies, gained enough acceptance to branch out and become a department unto themselves. As these departments have grown in number and success, more Native students have been drawn to them and the universities that house them in general. However, there is a question to be asked. Are the students attending universities because they have developed programs which have drawn them in? Or are
these programs being developed because there is already a large population of Native students on campus? As you recall from chapter three, one of the main factors in Native student choice in higher education is location. Where there are larger numbers of Native people, there are larger numbers of Native students enrolled at universities.

In 1984, only Arizona, California, and Oklahoma enrolled more than 5,000 American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary students. Ten years later, New Mexico and Washington had joined these states in enrolling more than 5,000 Native American students. Nineteen states enrolled 1,000 to 5,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students in 1984 compared with 26 states in 1994. (NCES, 1998, p.3-17)

It seems most likely that the universities develop Native departments when there is a large population of Native students and faculty pushing for its development. For example, in Michigan State University the Native students and faculty had been working toward the development of a department but it was not until they were able to gain a critical mass of faculty, both Native and non-Native, before they could get the support from the university (Krause, 2001). Since universities are business minded, they are not going to develop programs for which there is not a large audience to support the program. What this means to Native communities is that unless there is a large population of Native Americans in their area, there probably will not be much in the way of Native American programming in their local universities.

Students will travel, however, if they think a program is good enough. In the earlier example of Dartmouth where the school has a reputation for having a great program for Native American students. These are the programs, and other more local universities, that draw in and graduate Native students. The graduation rates for Native Americans at four year institutions is still much lower than the general population (see chp 4), but the graduation rate has steadily increased bringing more graduates to our communities.

These graduates are very important to the larger needs and goals of Native American communities. They have been pushing the envelope and opening doors as they
get involved in research. As time has progressed Native researchers (students and faculty), have been able to move away from ‘traditional’ Western styles of research to make advances in Native American research methods. These advances, one by one, have created a slow-moving acceptance of these new research methodologies.

The increase in Native Americans with doctorates and other professional degrees has also made an impact on communities. First it gives the tribes the ability to hire their own people, or other Native Americans, into positions that benefit from a tribal or Native perspective (understanding the socio-political ‘location’ of Native Americans in today’s society, etc.). From medical professionals, to lawyers, engineers, and business leaders, tribes can employ members of their communities instead of hiring people from the outside to run tribal programs.

Another benefit to the increase in PhD’s is the expansion of the intellectual base at universities. These new PhD’s, if committed to the development of a culturally sustainable education, will build toward a critical mass at more institutions allowing for their work and ideas to be heard in more places. Native Americans need people in these positions to secure their intellectual space in the knowledge-producing ‘factories’ of the universities. This is where the critical battle with hegemony takes place; this is where the influence will be more effective – it should be made before the studies take place by defining research protocol in Native communities and creating a discussion around the dangers of research in the communities.

B. Problems

Universities do contribute to the forward movement in Native American higher education. From the creation of Native American programs to the growing intellectual base in Indian country, universities have met some of the educational needs of Native American students and their communities. However, the positive changes have come in small and sporadic victories in some institutions and not at all in others. The educational
responses at universities are less effective than they could be because they do not meet all of the educational needs of Native students. In particular, there are three major areas which are problematic for universities: 1- local/cultural needs 2- structure/content of Native American programs and 3- institutional hegemony.

Local/cultural needs

Tribes need their students to be competent in both their own culture and in ‘world knowledge’. Universities do not have the ability to increase cultural competencies of students as well as tribal colleges do. Tribal colleges are specifically located and can reinforce local community values and traditions. Universities lack the ability to direct their education to specific local communities.

Colleges and universities have traditionally served large geographic areas (e.g., an entire state). In consequence, it has been difficult if not impossible for them to establish a sense of “community” even with people living nearby. The result has been indifference and strengthening of the concept that they are exclusively compounds for educating young people. (Harlacher, 1969, p.8)

The issue of community is not important to the majority of universities, they do not see themselves as community driven entities. A telling point is the fact that there is very little research on the topic of university and community relations. Author, David Nichols, is one of the few to research the topic. In his book titled, *University-Community Relations: living together effectively*, he discusses the functions of the university as universities define them. Simply stated, institutions of higher education serve three main functions: (1) to transmit higher learning, (2) to expand its limits, and (3) to put its results at the public’s service. Generally the mission is to provide education, research, and resources for society and in a sense they are industries competing for and marketing toward the student consumer (Nichols, 1990).

As ‘industries’ universities probably could not afford to market themselves only to the small local Native communities and their needs. They have to provide the ‘student consumer’ with a wide range of products to meet the job market needs of society. In
order to stay profitable they have to educate to the masses, not to a small interest group. They cannot cater to the specific needs of Native students such as the need for transportation, daycare, and local campuses. This does make a difference in student attendance.

The most consistent effort the university makes at providing culture and community for the students is the student services programs for Native students. These, as mentioned earlier, act as a connection to home and a sense of place for many. Without the land base that tribal colleges have students at universities can feel isolated and alone as a sense of place is often what they need.

Traditionally, Indian people have expressed in multiple ways that their land and the maintenance of its ecological integrity is key to their physical and cultural survival. The importance American Indians traditionally put on connecting with their Place is not a romantic notion which is out of step with the times. It is rather the quintessential ecological mandate of our times. (Cajete, 1994, p.43)

Universities do not have the same kind of relationship to place and neither does most of our Western ‘American’ society, which is quite mobile. This connection to place would probably never enter the minds of the administrators, or most of the rest of the university community, in terms of serving Native American students.

Structure and Content of Native American programs

The historical beginning of American Indian Studies (AIS) programs, and the discipline that evolved from them, goes back to the turbulent political climate on the campuses in the 1960’s. Their creation was reactionary. Initiated quickly, without structural forethought, university administrators responded to militant students who demanded the institution of AIS programs as a component of the larger civil rights movement. (Duffie, 1997, p.435)

Although a positive outcome in most respects, Native American Studies programs have been problematic from the beginning. They were forced onto campuses which
meant there was very little inherent institutional support. The programs had to fight for whatever they received. Coming out of a political movement with little time to plan there were problems with direction. “It was a difficult beginning; there were huge political problems as everyone seemed to have their own agenda regarding the direction that these novice programs should take.” (Duffie, 1997, p.435) Many of the Indian activists wanted to use the programs as a platform for political activities in connection with the civil rights movement. Although at the time the civil rights movement was advantageous to Native Americans, at least on the educational front, some, like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, feel there are more pertinent issues such as Indigenous rights and treaty rights (Cook-Lynn, 2005b).

As Native studies programs settled into their places on university campuses and the civil rights movement faded into the past, the focus for the curriculum became more culturally additive (teaching ‘about’ Native Americans as subjects) and less critical or political. And there are two problems with this kind of curriculum approach. First, the content was not accepted as true ‘knowledge’ bound by the laws of science. In other words, Indigenous knowledge lacks validity in the eyes of the academy. As this faculty member recalls during her university education, “At this one institution that I went to it was hard trying to convince people that had control of the curriculum, particularly those who were in charge of articulation of course material, very hard to convince them that we have relevant Native content.” (Interviewee #1 – pg 3) Unless the knowledge was produced by the Western scientific method, it is considered non-legitimate.

One reason that scientists examine non-Western knowledge on an ad-hoc basis is the persistent belief held by Western intellectuals that non-Western peoples represent an earlier stage of their own cultural evolution – often that tribal cultures represent failed efforts to understand the natural world (the Incas had wheels, why didn’t they make cars?). Non-Western knowledge is believed to originate from primitive efforts to explain a mysterious universe. In this view, the alleged failure of primitive/tribal man to control nature mechanically is evidence of his ignorance and his inability to conceive of abstract general principles and concepts. (Deloria, 1999, p.41)
Secondly, the way the content is utilized – as an additive approach to university curriculum, is too simplistic and does not confront the questions of hegemony in university education. The way Native American content is used follows Graham Smith’s Self-Esteem Theory (G.H. Smith, 1985). His theory, simply put, is: adding cultural content meets the needs of the students by recognizing, valuing, catering for, and practicing cultural differences, which leads to positive identity, cultural reinforcement, and self-esteem. This, in turn, creates a more comfortable environment where learning is more likely to occur. While this might be true, Smith asks the question, “What learning is ultimately facilitated?” (G.H. Smith, 1990, p.190)

In the United States, most ethnic studies programs in the universities are prime examples of the Self-Esteem Theory in action. The programs help value the cultural differences, etc. of minority groups in order to facilitate their learning of Western knowledge. The problem here is that not enough people are asking what the affects are of learning Western knowledge. Is this knowledge safe? Educators need to stand back and ask themselves if this knowledge creates a culturally sustainable education or is it implicated in the destruction of Native identity. In other words, does this knowledge reflect the realities of Native student context and does it validate Native identity and knowledge? It is not just the university who that is promoting this additive curriculum, but Native faculty who might not have stopped to consider to what end they are working. Even though some of them are working in Native programs, the university itself is the machine that drives those programs and that can be problematic.

Modern American education is a major domestic industry. With the impending collapse of the cold war, education may well become the industry of the American future. Since education significantly impacts Indian communities and has exerted great influence among Indians from the very beginning of European contact, it is our duty to draw back from the incessant efforts to program educational opportunities and evaluate what we are doing and where we are going in this field. (Deloria, 1999, p.137)
Although it is true that Native Americans need to have a presence at the university to fight for their space in academia, it needs to be in a capacity that is fully conscious of the societal and structural impacts that a Western university education can have on cultural sustainability. If we send our students to the university how will that specific type of education affect our students, particularly if our own curriculum in simply additive and not critical? Greg Cajete warns of the possible dangers.

Over time, the emphasis on Western oriented curricula will erode Indigenous ways of life. Indian educators and tribal leaders must understand that the unexamined application of Western education can condition people away from their cultural roots. (Cajete, 1994, p.18)

Cajete also warns that we must think of what price we may pay for this kind of education.

….in spite of many (Indian people) that have succeeded by embracing Western education, Indian people must question the effects modern education has had on their collective cultural, psychological, and ecological viability. What has been lost and what has been gained by participating in a system of education that does not honor our unique Indigenous perspectives? How far can we go before that system literally educates Indian people out of cultural existence? (Cajete, 1994, p.22)

That is why Native programs at the university need to be cognizant of how they are affecting students. Are they teaching them the current and relevant information about their socio-political realities to help them better understand and navigate their way through the university? Or are they only teaching them about the past injustices without giving them a way to move forward? Are we teaching them to be reactive or proactive?

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has had some harsh criticism of Native American Studies programs. She thinks the courses lack in dimension and relevance. In a recent keynote address to Native American educators at the 5th Annual American Indian Studies
Consortium (2005) she spoke of this lack of relevant courses. She had been looking at courses offered at UNC – Chapel Hill and noticed that there were no courses on Indian policy, treaties, Native languages, law or society. She believes they are sins of omission and they exist everywhere. After discussing the kind of additive courses they did provide at Chapel Hill, such as Southwestern Indian history from 1200-1880 and American Indian Society, she had this to say: “I find this ‘curriculum development’ entirely lacking, and worst of all, they are courses that have simply been pirated from history, sociology, women’s studies, and anthropology.” (p.184) Some of this may be due to the fact that Native studies programs are often a small part of other programs such as Ethnic Studies. The courses are merely a collection of courses related to Indian history or culture, some of which were pulled directly from other disciplines such as anthropology (Duffie, 1997). This leads way to questions of validity. What exactly is the field of Native American studies? How is it different than what the university is already offering?

Faculty have a difficult time as well because many of them are actually appointed in other disciplines but are ‘borrowed’ to teach Native studies courses. How can they build a proper program that can lead to its own department if they are assigned and have expectations elsewhere? The curriculum and departmental development have to come from Native studies faculty and not from the larger institution or it will never go in the direction that serves Native students and communities. Native faculty need to come together to discuss where they are now and where they are going. Today there are few programs which have made it to departmental status and the issues that confronted programs then are still a problem today. Cook-Lynn outlines them in her keynote address:

….everyone in this room is cognizant of those issues (with Native American studies): irrelevance, of course is one of them, tokenism is another, marginalization; domination; co-optation; the attempt to discredit Native American scholars and their work; the New Historicism based on ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘colonialism’; and how the disciplinary work in Native American studies has been neglected, and what must be done about it. (2005b, p.182)
Native American studies programs and departments have much to do to gain real acceptance on campuses and they must come together and develop a cohesive direction for the field. There must be principles and methodologies for Native studies that are not borrowed from other fields. It must stand alone as its own unique discipline and not get subsumed under the blanket of multiculturalism. So far, this has not happened and Native American studies programs are not making the differences that Native American higher education needs to make to create meaningful change in our communities. There are some who have started to change their curriculum and focus, such as Northern Arizona University and University of Kansas, but it is too early to see what kind of difference they will make. Cook-Lynn bemoans the fact that Native Studies programs are just that – programs. There are too few that have made it to departmental status and without that status there are few faculty with status, tenure, and there is no one to take the place of faculty when they leave. Programs die and courses subsumed into anthropology or history departments when the stability that comes with the status of being a full department is lacking (2005b).

Native programs will hopefully grow and change from discussions held on the topic by groups like the American Indian Studies Consortium. Without this kind of self-critical reflection the programs will be so busy with interdepartmental issues that they will not have time to tackle larger structural issues such as institutional hegemony.

**Institutional Hegemony**

Outside of the issue of Native American studies is the larger more pervasive issue of institutional hegemony. Universities expect Native students to take on and accept the Western cultural framework under which the university is designed and it functions. This framework can be at odds with the cultural framework of the student and often it is not clear to the student (or the institution) what the problem really is.
The less Native students are aware that others around them are playing by a different set of social and moral rules, the more confused, angry, alienated, and off balance (emotionally, physically, and spiritually) they can become. A Native American program must be in place to help these students articulate the values with which they were raised and identify those contradictions that trouble them in the larger campus culture. Students must realize that people of another culture often proceed from vastly different assumptions as to what makes a successful student, functional community member, and a good decent human being. Once Native students recognize that a predominantly white college is not run according to a Native cultural frame of reference, they can begin to use their own upbringing and beliefs as a moral compass with which to navigate a path through school. (Garrod, 1997, p.12)

Native students can experience this incongruity at different levels depending on the cultural capital they have gained in their experiences and upbringing. Where tribal colleges infuse their campuses with a Native cultural framework, universities do not and students have to learn the rules of the system. Pierre Bourdieu explains more succinctly how cultural capital affects individuals in educational settings.

The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and sections of a class) in that the culture which it transmits is closer to the dominant culture and that the mode of inculcation to which it has recourse is less removed from the mode of inculcation practiced by the family. …. An educational system which puts into practice an implicit pedagogic action, requiring initial familiarity with the dominant culture, and which proceeds by imperceptible familiarization, offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the system of predispositions that is the condition for the success of the transmission and of the inculcation of culture. By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (Karabel and Halsey, 1977, p.493-494)

Bourdieu explains this transmission of cultural capital in a way that suggests that the ‘recipient’ always wants to receive the ‘message’ of the sender. In other words, that the non-dominant group is at a disadvantage for not having the cultural capital and they would like to have it. There is no question that having the necessary cultural capital in a
given situation is a benefit to the holder, however, in education, especially Native American education, that question is more complicated. Native Americans do not want to replace their culture with the dominant culture. They want to keep their own culture while being competent in mainstream society. At the universities, however, there seems to be little room for multiple cultural competencies. There is one dominant way of perceiving and relating to the world and that is most closely akin to the dominant group in society.

Aside from the cultural framework or landscape of the university there are other forms of hegemony at work. The curriculum, aside from Native American programs, is full of the rhetoric of the new neo-liberal world order of today. Neo-liberalism is the revival of economic liberalism that pervaded U.S. policies before the Depression. In economic liberalism the market rules and fewer controls on business and profit making is the emphasis in policy making. These ideas are seen in the form of deregulation, free-trade, reduction of wages, de-unionization, elimination of workers rights, etc. Socially it is visible in the reduction of social programs and a movement away from the ‘common good’ to a staunch individualism (Global Exchange, 2006). The fact that these ideas are taken for granted and accepted ‘positive’ attributes, makes them insidiously dangerous to others who do not benefit from these ideals. Universities are complicit actors in the larger structural scenario validating and normalizing concepts that are uncritically taught to students who in reality will lose from the perpetuation of policies based on these ideals. Universities are gatekeepers, if you will, of the new neo-liberal language and knowledge. If it comes from the university then the forces of hegemony go to work and the public takes it as fact. Few people question the neo-liberal ideologies because they are filled with vocabulary that Americans hold dear. However, to many Native Americans the words have a much different meaning. The list below demonstrates some of these differences:
Democracy = serving dominant interests
Equity = level playing field theory (however field is not level)
Individualism = possessive individualism (contrary to Native ways)
Devolution = illusion of power sharing (responsibility w/o resources)
Choice = w/in defined parameters (not defined by Native Americans)

(G.H. Smith, 1997)

This new language goes against the basic beliefs of Native Americans (generally speaking), and has negative impacts upon most Indigenous peoples. In this age of globalization Indigenous people are threatened by these new political ‘buzz’ words. For Native Americans the differences are at the core of their epistemologies. These new words and ideas are, for the most part, contrary to the foundational beliefs of many tribes. Below is a sample of some of these contradictions:

Free Market vs. State responsibility
Competition vs. Cooperation
Individualism vs. Collaboration
Choice vs. Responsibility
Commodification vs. Knowledge as Sacred
Entrepreneurial vs. Development

(G.H. Smith, 1997)

The political and socio-economic climate is an extremely important element to consider in Native American higher education. Universities need to be aware of the impact these ‘ideologies’ have upon Native American communities and their ability to survive and maintain their cultures. When students are taught, covertly or overtly, these
messages within the curriculum they are being told that they are positive forces and normal and natural progressions of society. This can be detrimental and undermining to tribes who send their students to learn these messages which could possibly ‘educate’ their students away from their traditions.

The fact that schools normally seem neutral and are usually overtly insulated from political processes and ideological argumentation has both positive and negative qualities. The insulation has served to defend the school against whims and fads that can often have a destructive effect upon educational practice. It also, however, can make the school rather unresponsive to needs of local communities and a changing social order. ……These critiques of the ideologic world-view being legitimated in the schools have been incisive, yet they have failed to focus on a prevailing characteristic of current schooling that significantly contributes to the maintenance of hegemony. There has been, so far, little examination of how the treatment of conflict in the school curriculum can lead to political quiescence and the acceptance by students of a perspective on social and intellectual conflict that acts to maintain the existing distribution of power and rationality in a society. (Apple, 1990, p.83-84)

This state of ‘insulation’ is one reason universities fail to meet the needs of Native students on a large scale. There is very little recognition of the fact that the institution is not neutral and that it acts, at times, as a colonizing and hegemonic force against Native American cultural sustainability. Therefore, a university education can be dangerous to Native Americans and their communities if these elements are not taken into account. That along with the universities’ inability to meet the local cultural needs of students and the problematic issues of Native American Studies decreases the universities ability to create meaningful change in our communities.
CONCLUSION

There have been positive changes and growth in both the tribal college and university in terms of Native American education. There has been much hard work by Native educators in both locations, however, neither has produced the hoped-for community transformation. That is not to say that these institutions should be abandoned or are failures; it just means that there needs to be a new focus and strategy in Native American higher education.

How will we know when our strategies are working? When fluency in languages reappear, when cultural competency levels increase, when drop-out rates decline, when more students obtain higher level degrees, when social problems abate, and when economic conditions on the reservations change for the better in a sustainable manner. And this is not yet the case today.
CHAPTER SIX

SOME INNOVATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENTS: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EXAMPLES
Innovative Programs

“Innovative Programs

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only at the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

John. F. Kennedy

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed what was not working in Native American higher education. This chapter will look at a few examples, locally and internationally, in Indigenous education, where progress and innovation are occurring. The programs we will look at were chosen for their innovative qualities, qualities that much of the research has pointed to as missing in Native American education. I asked my colleagues in the field which programs they felt were the most innovative and progressive and did my own searching via the internet and found that there were three programs that exemplified the kind of innovation needed in Native American education.

First the chapter will look at innovative curriculum in university programs, then it will examine the cultural standards developed in the Alaska Native schools, and finally it will look internationally at the entire Maori school system (K- University) and how much transformation and success they have seen.

Through this survey of innovative programming this chapter hopes to gain insight that may inform a new direction in Native American higher education.

Innovative University Programs (University of Kansas)

In the last chapter we discussed a lack of relevance in the curriculum of many Native studies programs and how universities tend to mostly use an ‘additive’ approach to their curriculum. These problems have left Native students without the tools they need to be transformative agents in their home communities. In the past, the additive historical reviews of Native Americans have taught many people about the previous injustices
placed upon Native peoples, but gave them no skills to deal with that information or to make a change for the future.

Native educators like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and others have called for a more relevant and proactive curriculum. For the most part Native American studies have not changed their curriculum much, but we are starting to see more courses in treaties, tribal law, and a few other contemporary courses. There are a few Native programs out there who have revamped their curriculum altogether to provide courses that are more immediately relevant and applicable to their needs and their lives. One such place is the University of Kansas where they have a Center for Indigenous Nations Studies. Their program is different than a Native American studies program in that it includes studies on issues affecting Indigenous peoples around the world.

The goal of the program, according to a review of the program written by Donald L. Fixico, in the Indigenous Nations Studies Journal, is

…to maintain an interdisciplinary focus that allows students of Indigenous and non-Indigenous descent to conduct academic and applied research relevant to the concerns of Indigenous communities. These goals are consistent with the Program’s aspirations and values. Specialized training and course work will enable students to build bridges between Indigenous communities and institutions of higher learning. Simultaneously INSP students become catalysts for the creation of new and innovative outreach programs that are relevant and responsive to the special needs of the Indigenous people of the Americas. (1998, p.88)

According to their website the Center for Indigenous Nations Studies’ mission is to “contribute to the survival, strengthening, self-sufficiency, and mutual support of Indigenous peoples within and beyond the borders of the Americas.” (www.ku.edu/~insp/). The way they intend to do that is by providing students with the skills necessary to enact change. Students in the program get to choose from four different tracks of study. They are; General Indigenous Nations Studies, Linguistics and Language Teaching, Museum Studies, and Sovereignty Development. Below is a summary of each track as provided by the CINS website:
**General Indigenous Nations Studies:** This track helps students develop critical thinking and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, linguistic, political, and social needs of Indigenous nations. Course offerings reflect a diversity of perspectives, as well as methodological and theoretical foundations, relating to Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

**Linguistic and Language Teaching:** The training in this study track provides theoretical as well as practical and hands-on experience in the development of curriculum and materials involved in Indigenous language teaching. Native speakers will learn how to develop professional teaching materials for their language programs at schools and within communities. The curriculum in this study track provides the foundation necessary to be able to evaluate a community’s language situation, form a team of language planners, formulate an action plan to meet challenges of language revitalization, implement and evaluate the plan. The ultimate goal is to train language teachers who, in turn, will produce a new generation of speakers who bring life to the ancestral languages of Indigenous peoples.

**Museum Studies:** This study track trains professionals for positions in institutions responsible for collecting and caring for the material record of the natural and cultural world; and for sharing the results of these activities through exhibits and public education. As Indigenous nations continue in their efforts at self-determination, the need to provide for care of cultural patrimony arises.

**Sovereignty Development Studies:** This study track prepares students for the practical challenges associated with exercising Indigenous rights of self-determination and the preservation and strengthening of tribal sovereignty. The curriculum provides the foundation necessary to implement sovereignty development initiatives by using a dual focus: (i) study of the law, politics, and economics affecting indigenous nations and surrounding states and (ii) study of broader societal phenomena.
These tracks of study prepare students for the hands-on tasks that they will encounter in their work within their communities. This is work that is transformative and relevant to issues particular to the needs of Indigenous communities around the globe.

The two most unique aspects of this program are the international focus and the applied focus of the curriculum. In an interview with the director of the Center for Indigenous Nations Studies, Dr. Michael Yellow Bird stated his belief in the need for Native Americans to look at the global situation of Indigenous peoples.

We told the administration ‘we are not interested in doing the typical Native American Studies program we are interested in the world because we understand that a lot of Indigenous people had to suffer and survive under colonization. And we are interested in decolonization and global perspectives and research that would help us get connected to the rest of the world because of course we believe there is a much bigger world than just the United States.’ So that is what we did and we started in about ’95 or so and we pushed for that and the faculty was with us. (Yellow Bird, Interview, 2005)

This global perspective of the ‘Indigenous struggle’ is missing from many Native American studies programs which have focused mostly on local issues. But as stated early in this paper there is a need to understand the larger structures that influence and impact Native lives and that does have to include a global perspective. First Nations in Canada tend to have more of a global outlook than Native Americans and Canada is where Dr. Yellow Bird gained his new perspective.

When I came back from Canada, I was teaching at UBC, I got a much different view of the world, a lot of Maori people were coming in, I was getting a chance to see what First Nations people were doing in Canada, I got a chance to visit with folks outside of the country, (the United States), and soon began to see a much larger Indigenous world. And, of course, then I was reading stuff on the fourth world’s development and reading about Indigenous people. That was the first time I really got a chance to start really focusing on colonization as a way to analyze the world of Indigenous people. (Yellow Bird, Interview, 2005)

Along with a global perspective, the Indigenous Nations Studies Program is focused on the application of what is being taught. The tracks available and the courses
within them are designed to give the students skills that they can leave the university with in order to apply them in their communities. Often in the past Native studies programs left students with a lot of information ‘about’ Indians and the injustices of the past and present, but few offered any tools to make a difference. Dr. Yellow Bird was quick to point out that “…we are not about studying Indians, we are totally off that, we are interested in empowerment, nation building, we are interested in decolonization, and all of those kinds of things” (Yellow Bird, Interview, 2005).

Native programs have been criticized in the past by people like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn who say that many of the courses available to students are not relevant to their experiences today (2005b). The courses need to be relevant and they need to have an application for the real world. When asked about the focus in their program, Dr. Yellow Bird stated:

It does have a very strong applied focus and the applied focus has to be students understanding what is happening in communities, you know, what communities want rather than what some of the literature tells people what they want. So, I think, it’s really a way that we are able to produce a level of success with tribal communities, in that we hope that students understand their communities. If not then they go out to really work to understand their communities even more and then they begin to develop creative methodologies and approaches that they can use which may be partially found in some of the curriculum but they too can develop and create along the way. What we are talking about here, our focus most of the time, is on empowerment, sovereignty, self-sufficiency and decolonization. We are trying to use strategies that are appropriate, that are sensitive, that are sustainable, that help the community and so it is whatever works in many instances. Of course students read the literature. There is such a dramatic shift in the availability of perspective (from when he was in college) and conceptualization of new ideas. (Interview, 2005)

The Center for Indigenous Nations Studies is one of the few Native programs in American Universities to have such a strong applied focus and certainly the only one that has an international directive. The program offers their students a Masters Degree in Indigenous Nations Studies with a choice of emphasis depending on the track they choose (as outlined above). They also offer a joint MA and JD degree in conjunction
with the University of Kansas School of Law. The student would pursue their law degree and at the same time take the INS courses and most likely the sovereignty track studies. According to Dr. Yellow Bird they are in the process of developing two more tracks which would be Indigenous Nations Resource Management (environmental), and an Indigenous Women’s Studies and Leadership track.

The Center for Indigenous Nations Studies is unique and innovative and an example to be closely looked at when it comes to rethinking how we carry out Native studies in universities. Its acknowledgement of the global issues and influences of power and interrelation are important aspects that Native students need in to be presented with to provide them with a more rounded education. The applied nature of the degree is giving the student and communities tools and resources to make changes in their communities as they see fit.

**Alaska Native Education**

The majority of Native Americans do not want to educate their students away from their culture. They need their students to be just as competent in their tribal/cultural skills as they are in their world knowledge skills. In order for that to take place Native families must have the opportunity to attend institutions of higher learning that acknowledge, provide for, validate and enhance their cultural knowledge and skills.

Modern education provides tools essential to the survival of Indian people and communities, but this education must be within the context of a greater cultural whole. In support of cultural preservation, Indian educators and Tribal leaders also need to advocate culturally based education to achieve the foundational goals of self-determination, self-governance, and Tribal sovereignty. (Cajete, 1994, p.18)

The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) is an organization comprised of Alaska Native educators who have come together to advocate for Native Knowledge systems. It is designed to assist Native people, government agencies, educators and the
public in gaining access to the knowledge base that “Alaska Natives have acquired through cumulative experience over millennia” (ANKN, 2005) They also advocate for their communities within the State of Alaska education system. ANKN understands the need for a culturally responsive education and they have developed a set of standards to be used in the schooling of their youth. These standards “were predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally responsive educators, curriculum and schools” (ANKN, 2005, p.2).

These standards were developed specifically for K-12 education but they could easily transfer to the higher education context. Standards have been created in five areas: students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. For the purposes of this study we will omit the community section as cultural standards for communities are not part of this study. Below is an outline of the other four standards as provided by Alaska Native Knowledge Network’s website:

**STUDENTS**

Culturally knowledgeable students are…

- Well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community
- Able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life.
- Able to actively participate in various cultural environments
- Will engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.
- Likely to demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.

**EDUCATORS**

Culturally responsive educators….

- Incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work
• Use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the students.
• Participate in community events and activities in an appropriate and supportive way.
• Work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.
• Recognize the full educational potential of each student and provide the challenges necessary for them to achieve that potential.

**CURRICULUM**

A culturally responsive curriculum…..

• Reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.
• Recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.
• Uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.
• Fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems.
• Situates local knowledge and actions in a global context.

**SCHOOLS**

A culturally responsive school……

• Fosters the on-going participation of Elders in all aspects of the schooling process.
• Provides multiple avenues for students to access the learning that is offered, as well as multiple forms of assessment for students to demonstrate what they have learned.
• Provides opportunities for students to learn in and/or about their heritage language.
• Has a high level of involvement of professional staff that is of the same cultural background as the students with whom they are working.
• Consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.
• Fosters extensive on-going participation, communication and interaction between school and community personnel.
This kind of detailed list of expectations written into standards is a great way to define expectations and create a strong outline as to how to get those results. It spells out exactly what the community’s expectations are of the schools and gives people, within the community and without, a compass with which to guide the direction of the education. To simply state, ‘we want a more culturally appropriate education’ gives educators little idea of what that actually includes. The level of specificity given by the cultural standards developed by ANKN, with some room for interpretation between communities, lets all those involved know what their job is and roads to take to get it done.

It would be ideal if more communities developed cultural standards based on their needs and desires for their community’s future. This idea could be transferred to the Tribal College context or to MOU’s between tribes and universities. This is a notion that needs more discussion and development.

**Maori Education System**

Parts one and two of this chapter come from the United States context and their ability to ‘inform’ a new direction in Native American higher education is obvious. However, the Maori context is quite different and that must be kept in mind when attempting to transfer the practices to the North American context.

This section will, therefore, be divided into three parts. The first part will be a comparison of the socio-political situations of the Maori and Native Americans. Part two will briefly outline the changes and programs developed in Maori education. Part three will outline the theoretical linchpins of creating change that the Maori had to understand and utilize to bring about real change to their new programs and education system.
It also should be noted that this section will be relying heavily upon the writings of Dr. Graham Smith. He is one of the few Indigenous educators writing in the higher education field who is involved at many key levels;

a) He is Maori and speaks his language.
b) He is a trained educator and has extensive teaching experience at all levels both in indigenous and non-indigenous contexts
c) He brings together indigenous theoretical work and non-indigenous theorizing as it applies to Higher Education
d) He has worked at a very senior level in University Administration
e) He has a track record of developing innovation and change in different Higher Education contexts
f) He is developing new indigenous theorizing around transformation utilizing Higher Education as a key site.

Graham Smith has been involved in the Maori education revolution from its very beginnings and his understanding of the needs and directions of Indigenous higher education, I believe, are critical to Native American Higher Education and its future.

I. **Comparison of Socio-Political Situation of Maori and Native Americans**

It is important to understand that the Maori situation is applicable at many levels to that of Native Americans. In order to generalize and utilize the Maori model in the American situation we must be able to see that there are enough areas of similarity to allow the model to hold up in a transferred context. The following excerpt is taken from a chapter in a book entitled: *Political Issues in New Zealand Education*. The chapter was written by Graham Smith and is a critical look at the New Zealand education program targeted to Maori pupils called, “Taha Maori.” The chapter itself is entitled:
“Taha Maori: Pakeha Capture”. Pakeha is the word in Maori language which means non-Maori.

The curriculum initiative of Taha Maori is a Pakeha defined, initiated and controlled policy which serves the needs and interests of Pakeha people. Education policies such as Taha Maori are concerned with surface level, ‘additive’ or ‘sticking plaster’ solutions to the burgeoning schooling crisis affecting many Maori pupils. Liberal responses to this crisis have generally advocated changing Maori pupils to fit into the prescribed mould of the existing Pakeha schooling systems. The provision of equal opportunity focuses upon equalizing the life chances of individuals by changing individuals. The school is perceived as an agent of individual change which is seen as necessary for the social goal of equality. The problem of Maori underachievement, in the liberal view, is more likely to be explained in terms of the deficiencies, faults or lack of opportunities of Maori pupils and not the result of wider structural impediments such as dominant Pakeha ideology (such as the belief in ‘the superiority of Western knowledge’), and/or the debilitating effects of the selection of ‘knowledge’ within schools. The liberal approach takes for granted that schooling is intrinsically good and acts in the best interests of its pupil clients.

Ironically, the current crisis in the schooling of Maori is directly attributable to the ongoing effects of liberal views and policies which in fact perpetuate inequality. In this way, Pakeha social, economic, cultural, and political dominance, both within schooling and within society in general, is maintained. Thus, the schooling crisis enveloping Maori is worsened rather than eased by liberal reforms.

A radical approach is necessary to even begin to fully understand and to act on the present Maori education crisis. Fundamental structural change is required to overturn this situation. Taha Maori as a liberal curriculum initiative aimed at ‘meeting Maori needs’ and thus ‘solving’ this crisis will simply and inevitably perpetuate the status quo of Pakeha dominance. (1990, p.183)

Except for the language and the people, this excerpt could have easily been written about Native American education in the United States. Attempts in the United States to meet the educational needs of Native pupils has predominantly been additive and in alignment with the idea that the pupil needs to have more educational opportunity by changing who that pupil is. It is a classic deficit model which is based on the belief that Western knowledge is superior. If the student does not fit in the rigidly shaped education block, then they are figuratively ‘cut to fit’.
Maori and Native Americans also share a similar history of invasion and colonialism. The experiences have resulted in both peoples ending up in compromised socio-political situations which have had detrimental effects to cultural sustainability. Both groups are also grappling with an ever increasing ‘global society’ and the effects of neo-liberalism.

Given these similarities it is reasonable to believe that Native Americans might find the Maori example to be quite useful in terms of learning new strategies for their own battle for educational freedom. However, it must be made clear that there are differences in the two situations as well.

The lessons learned from the Maori example do have relevance and meaning in other indigenous contexts. However, one must be careful in adopting these strategies uncritically or without proper consideration of the specific cultural context in which they are being re-applied. Some bits will be useful other elements may not be so relevant. It is also important to understand that the Maori political context is circumscribed by a single Treaty agreement signed in 1840 between Maori tribes and Crown and also that the Maori have a single language spoken across all tribes with some minor variances. Both of these elements enabled tribes more easily to develop a unity that cut across individual tribal situations and develop a ‘national front’ on these issues. (G.H. Smith, 2003, p.4)

The obvious consideration for Native Americans is that we do not have one treaty, we do not have one language and our tribes cannot be grouped into a single cultural framework. With these issues being clear and accounted for, I believe, the Maori context has much to offer in the way of a positive example of change. Of course, as we discuss next, there has to be strategy and knowledge of larger structures in order to capitalize on what is available to Native Americans.

II. Maori Educational Advancements

The 1980’s was a time of socio-political change in New Zealand. It was the beginning of an era of free-market economics and governmental devolution of responsibility. With the Maori in the midst of an educational crisis, and public opinion
against them, the Maori people were profoundly affected by the socio-political changes. In short, the language of free market policies and the changes from devolution of responsibility, left the Maori with much more responsibility for their education with much less power to make it their own.

The politics of the entire situation are too much to go into for the purposes of this paper; suffice to say that being placed in such a no-win situation frustrated and angered enough Maori that it inspired them to go outside the current system which was failing terribly at meeting their needs. However, the up side of the turmoil was that within some of the political language used by the government, the Maori were able to capitalize on some of the ideas and use them to their advantage. Eventually the state took up these new schools that the Maori developed outside of the system and today they are fully recognized and distinct parts of the New Zealand educational system. Of course the change was not easy or quick as this synopsis might make it sound; it took a lot of hard work, dedication, strategic adeptness, and risk-taking to make these changes come about. And the situation is not perfect and always changing, but it is miles ahead of the educational advances made by any other Indigenous groups and therefore a model to look at.

Below is a time line of advances and change in Maori education:

1980 – Maori in educational crisis

Free Market & Devolution era begins

1982 – First Maori run pre-school is established (Te Kohanga Reo)

1983 – 148 Kohanga Reo have been developed

1984 – Taha Maori Policy introduced (Pakeha developed)

1985 – Te Whare Waananga o Raukawa begins with unofficial status (Maori Univ)
1987 – First Kura Kaupapa Maori (primary) established
   480 Kohanga Reo

1989 – Education Act enacted
   * Gov’t funds alternative schools (including Maori schools)
   * Established separate category for Kaupapa Maori schools
   * Provides for the establishment of Waananga

1990 – Now 6 official Kura Kaupapa Maori schools

1993 – First 2 official Waananga established

1994 – 28 official Kura Kaupapa Maori schools

1995 – 775 Te Kohanga Reo

1996 – 43 Kura Kaupapa Maori

2005 – 630 Te Kohanga Reo
   80 Kura Kaupapa Maori
   3 Waananga

These accomplishments are very impressive. A full Maori school system is now available to Maori students. These schools provide Maori cultural immersion as well as what Graham Smith calls ‘world knowledge’ with the intent of providing excellence in both areas. The changes that led to these developments did not just happen, the political, economic, and intellectual landscape had to be put into motion at the same time. And that is what the next section addresses – just how that change came about.
III. Creating Change

The Maori and Native Americans both live in a complex relationship and context within their homelands. The effects of colonialism and hegemony have made change a very difficult goal to achieve in many aspects of life including education. Smith argues that there are specific theoretical understandings that must be engaged in order to enact change in Indigenous Higher Education. For the Maori people these acts of engagement were the linchpins of successful change. The following are the critical theoretical concepts that Smith feels are necessary for change:

a) Multiple sites of Engagement and Transformation

Education is a very large and complex institution which may seem like an old juggernaut when it comes to making changes. Even for those within the mainstream dominant belief system change is not easy to come by. For those in Indigenous higher education it is even slower and more resistant to change. That is one reason Smith argues that change must be made in many places at once. To speed up results there should be change going on in many places instead of putting all the effort into one place.

Many educators in the past focused solely on making changes in the existing system which is quite limited and limiting. However, it is necessary to continue to push for these changes within the system to keep an Indigenous presence in higher education. The academy is an important site because it is a large player in the creation of societal hegemony. What comes out of research in the academy most often becomes society’s taken for granted truths. It is critical that Indigenous academics make a space for Indigenous knowledge and must therefore keep working for change within the existing system.

At the same time the battle for change is waged within the existing system there needs to be work going on developing new more appropriate systems for Indigenous
students. The new programs/institutions can grow as Indigenous students graduate from the programs within the academy and go to work for the new institutions.

As these changes are taking place at the academy there is another place where transformation needs to occur. That is at the grassroots level. The community needs to be involved in making the changes as well. As in Gramsci’s (1971) view there is the intellectual struggle for the mind and the organic struggle for the state. These battles must be waged simultaneously so the whole society undergoes a transformation that will propel their goals as one cohesive force comes together.

b) Heal the divide between the Academy and our communities

Historically the university has treated Indigenous communities with little respect and has had a hand in creating situations that are detrimental to the existence of some tribal groups. Inaccurate and biased research has led to grave misinterpretations which then led, in some cases, to governmental policies that have hurt Indigenous people. For example labeling Native people as savages or primitive allowed for educational policies to ‘uplift’ the Native to White standards by using the boarding school system. The academy’s attitude has mostly been that their research is unbiased and adds to the vast knowledge base (of Western thought) and assumes that this knowledge is inherently positive for all. The academy also comes from the standpoint that Western knowledge is superior to all other knowledge.

This kind of attitude and behavior has led Indigenous groups to have a strong mistrust of the academy. In some cases it is very difficult to get Indigenous people to work with local universities because of this mistrust. It is, however, very important to heal this divide and educate the universities on the consequences of their actions and offer them a more respectful and helpful way of engaging in research. This healing between the two is very important because the academy is a necessary element of Indigenous higher education and it needs to be a positive part of it. The academy itself is an important player in global society and the ‘new world order’ and the neo-liberal
movements around the world. If Indigenous groups have any hope of surviving they must be involved at this level of research and that cannot happen if this divide is not healed.

A proactive approach to this problem in which Indigenous academics lead the way by developing Indigenous research methodologies, guidelines, and theories, will bring about much needed change and a way to make a space for Indigenous knowledge in the academy and then society.

c) Challenge Western Theoretical Hegemony

Indigenous academics have another job to do in the academy and that is to challenge the status quo Western theoretical core of the university. It is taken for granted that the theoretical tools available to all students are the only tools that are valid and that they should work for everyone. Many Indigenous researchers find the selection of Western theoretical tools to be lacking and even completely inadequate to the task especially in areas of research involving cultures that are non-Western.

As mentioned in chapter two, this is not to set up an either/or situation, only to explain that there need to be more tools available to the researchers. Western tools are not invalid or incompetent; it is just that they are limited in situational applicability. Indigenous researchers merely need to have more tools added to their selection so that they can do the job properly.

Indigenous academics need to develop these tools but in the meantime need to use some of the Western theories to question the taken for granted assumptions of Western science and education. If these assumptions are not questioned Indigenous theories will not be seen as ‘needed’ and will not be considered valid methodologies and theories. Many things must happen at the same time for this change to occur. Smith’s view of multiple sites and multiple strategies is played out here as well. Both of these actions need to be taken at once in order for either of them to be successful.
d) The Indigenous Intellectual

The Indigenous academic community needs to develop its growth potential for Indigenous intellectuals. This distinction is more than a simple label of identification but a distinction between the ‘privatized’ intellectuals produced by Western education with all the emphasis on individualism and the Indigenous intellectual who would hold fast to the cultural emphasis of group responsibility.

For the most part the traditionally trained Western academic is taught and accepts the concepts of the private individual, private property and individual gains. These are culturally imbued ideas based on democratic capitalistic values that are socially constructed and not neutral. Western critical theorists and some sociologists also question the neutrality of the Western position (Apple, Giroux, etc.) They are value laden, but also, taken for granted within mainstream society. The problem for many Indigenous academics is that these values, under which they are trained, run contrary to their traditional teachings of group responsibility.

Of course, the Indigenous academics will each fall on a different place along the individual – group responsibility continuum based on their specific upbringing and circumstance. However, their training will be Western which is guided by the value of individualism leading to more Westernized intellectuals.

What large research institutions and research cultures offer are the programmes, resources, facilities and structures which can, if the conditions are appropriate, support and train indigenous researchers. Although communities have a critical perspective of universities and what they represent, at the same time these same communities want their members to gain Western educations and high-level qualifications. But they do not want this to be achieved at the cost of destroying people’s indigenous identities, their languages, values and practices. (L. Smith, 1999, p.134)

Smith points out a very important point. Indigenous communities recognize the value of the university training, but are also aware of the destructive effects of its
hegemonic practices. Without specific programs geared to Indigenous students there is always the risk of identity and culture loss.

Indigenous intellectuals need to have training available to them (if needed) in how to incorporate Indigenous values into their research protocol and methodologies so that they will not have to set aside their identity; that is too high a price to pay. Another important advantage to Indigenous based training is being able to develop theories and methodologies which take into account collective responsibility; more than that they will be able to work on developing whole institutions based in Indigenous philosophies and education. The reality, however, is that they will need to be versed in both Western and Indigenous training because they will have to work in both worlds. That will make them more flexible with a wider knowledge base and the ability to see beyond a single monocultural framework; and that is critical for Indigenous education in a global society.

e) Control over Indigenous Research

Research about Indigenous peoples and/or their cultures needs to be controlled by Indigenous people. For too long there have been misrepresentations, culturally biased research, and exploitation. The majority of Western researchers involved in research ‘on Native peoples’ were trained in the scientific method of positivism. They often lack the ability to see beyond the narrow scope of Western research. That is why Indigenous scholars need to take the lead in developing new theories and methodologies as well as fighting for ‘intellectual space’ in the academy.

This kind of movement or struggle is huge. David’s among Goliaths are Indigenous researchers going against the rushing river of Western research ideology. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes about this struggle in her book entitled, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

…research is highly institutionalized through disciplines and fields of knowledge, through communities and interest groups of scholars, and through the academy. Research is also an integral part of political structures: governments fund research directly and indirectly through
tertiary education, national science organizations, development programmes and policies. Rich nations spend vast amounts of money on research across every dimension possible to imagine. Poor nations also spend huge amounts of money on research. Corporations and industries fund their own research and are sometimes funded by governments to carry out research. Their research programmes can involve large amounts of money and resources, and their activities take place across several parts of the globe. Non-government organizations and local community groups also carry out research and involve themselves in the analysis and critique of research. All of these research activities are carried out by people who in some form or another have been trained and socialized into ways of thinking, of defining and making sense of the known and unknown. It seems rather difficult to conceive of an articulation of an indigenous research agenda on such a scale. To imagine self-determination, however, is also to imagine a world in which indigenous peoples become active participants, and to prepare for the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead. (1999, p.124)

The struggle will be a difficult one, but one that must occur because too much of contemporary life is influenced and directed based on ‘scientific’ research. There needs to come a day when Indigenous research has its place among all other research, in which it is given (or reclaims) its due respect. There is no positive outcome for Indigenous peoples opting out of research. The more Indigenous people opt out, the more they allow others to define them. This is a tide that Indigenous educators must ride and become full participants in.

Until the day when there are Indigenous institutions which can and will fully support Indigenous research methods and models, Indigenous researchers need to work within the Western academy. There are pockets of hope and positive movement within some more forward thinking institutions. Curtin University in Western Australia and Auckland University in New Zealand are two such institutions trying to meet the research needs of Indigenous researchers (L. Smith, 1999). In Canada and the United States there are also small programs and developments in the same direction. In Canada there is growing First Nations scholarship at both the University of Victoria and at the University of British Columbia. In the United States the University of Kansas and Northern Arizona University have new and growing programs as well. This proactive movement by Indigenous educators and selected local communities is a push in the right direction.
Research will not fully benefit Indigenous communities until it is Indigenous led and that will take time and effort.

For now the efforts made in the academy all work towards the larger goal of inclusion. In the meantime there are many benefits to the communities as more students have access to programs and build a stronger voice to be heard. The more Indigenous students, faculty, and staff are present and heard, the more they become part of the process of building a space, not only within the academy, but within the larger population.

f) Shift in Mindset

Above we have listed many actions that must be taken in order to create change in Indigenous higher education; however, Graham Smith believes that none of this can occur without the proper mindset (Interview, 2004). As colonized peoples, for Maori and Native Americans alike, the federal governments took over control of decision making and resource management for the communities. The power to make their own decisions was removed and a culture of dependence and acceptance of fate was developed. This is not to say that there have not been battles waged to fight for rights and power, but many of the battles have ended the same way, going nowhere fast.

In order for action to be taken there must be buy-in from the community to believe that these changes can actually occur. In order for people to believe it, there has to be a shift in mindset, there has to be the belief that efforts will not be wasted and that it is not better to accept what has been handed to them. This is what happened in New Zealand with the Maori in the 1980’s.

The ‘real’ revolution of the 1980’s was a shift in mindset of large numbers of Maori people – a shift away from waiting for things to be done to them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on reactive politics to an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation. These shifts can be described as a move away from talking simplistically about ‘de-colonization’ (which puts the colonizer at the center of attention) to talking about ‘conscientization’ or ‘consciousness-raising’ (which puts Maori at the center).
These ways of thinking illustrate a reawakening of the Maori imagination that had been stifled and diminished by colonization processes. (G.H. Smith, 2003, p.2)

As stated above, there had been battles waged in the past, but they were reactive battles always moving in the direction, or by the direction, of the colonizer. These battles keep Indigenous groups busy and away from developing true self-determination. When the Maori shifted their mindset they were then able to stop reacting to politics and policies and start designing their own future. They took responsibility for their educational futures and just simply started working on their plan. Of course this should not be understated – it was not and still is not so simple a task to accomplish. Because of the effects of hegemony there are those Indigenous individuals who have taken up the beliefs and mindsets of the colonizer and that must be part of the plan for change. They need to battle for freedom of their minds.

The lesson of the Kaupapa Maori approach from New Zealand is that transformation has to be won on at least two broad fronts; a confrontation with the colonizer and a confrontation with ‘ourselves’. This is what I have labeled as the ‘inside-out’ model of transformation – in this sense, as Paulo Freire (1971) has reminded us, ‘first free ourselves before we can free others.’ (G.H. Smith, 2003, p.2)

In the United States there is a similar situation with peoples whose minds have been colonized for generations. In order for any change to begin there must be a core group of people who are willing to make the mind shift and help bring others to the same place. It is a matter of learning about colonization about the larger structures and what will happen ‘to us’ if we do not create the change in our own vision. If there is no shift in mind-set there will be little belief in the programs and the community will accept that the programs probably will not last very long.
SUMMARY

The programs and institutions we have looked at in this chapter are all examples of innovation in the area of Indigenous education. What they have in common is that they have taken a proactive stance in the world of Indigenous education and politics. Each in their own way has taken responsibility for making their own unique path in the educational landscape. Instead of reacting to policies and status quo they are enacting a new way of doing education despite what else might be going on. These changes are not easy and require much commitment and critical thinking, as discussed in the Maori example.

With these examples, however, Native American educators can look at and learn new ways of approaching their own higher education systems which are fraught with problems, but at the same time, full of potential. That is not to say that all is bad, there are pockets of great innovation and pressing forth. We need to keep what is beneficial and be courageous enough to self-reflect on what has not worked and make a change.

It also needs to be said that there are other programs in the United States and Canada that bear mentioning for their unique and progressive directions. In Canada, the Indigenous Governance program at University of Victoria has a strong vision and an applied focus. Trent University in Canada also has some outstanding contemporary and applied courses in their curriculum. In the United States, the University of Arizona, as well as Northern Arizona University, are both moving toward more contemporary and applied focus coursework.

In the next chapter we will reflect on the multiple perspectives we have gained through the research and define some specific areas of need based on the results.
PART THREE

**** LISTENING ****
CHAPTER SEVEN

VOICES

Interviews and Focus Groups
Introduction

This chapter focuses on interviews with faculty and staff and the focus groups with students.

Interviews and Focus Groups

a. Methodology

This chapter will focus on the one-on-one interviews I conducted with Native faculty and staff at one university (with a large Native program) and one tribal college. This chapter will also incorporate the data gained through the focus groups conducted with students at those same institutions.

The interview questions were designed with two purposes in mind. One was to find out how current faculty and staff would envision an Indigenous University of their own design. Secondly, through that visioning we also see what they believe to be the problems and advantages of their current institutional settings. Likewise, the focus groups were meant to flesh out what the students like and dislike about their institutions and what they would like to see in an Indigenous University (for a list of the exact interview and focus group questions see appendix B).

When using direct quotes I will be using numbers rather than names (issues of anonymity) to identify respondents. I will also address everyone as ‘she’ for further anonymity. I have changed tribal affiliations to a generalized term of Native or Indigenous and institutional references to either the generic terms of university or tribal college. This is to protect the identity of institutions and respondents – an agreement which was made so that interviewees felt able to speak freely about their institutions.
Focus group data was not collected in the same manner as the interviews. Data was collected onto flip charts and aggregated. I also have my own field notes. When referencing focus group results I will indicate whether it is from the aggregated data or my field notes.

b. Voices of Native Educators and Students

There were many topics discussed throughout the interviews and focus groups ranging from academic standards to institutional racism. There were also many different opinions on what is beneficial or problematic in the current institutions. However there was one theme that ran throughout these discussions and it was a story of disenfranchisement. In many different ways faculty, staff and students experienced a disconnection and/or lack of acknowledgement of Native issues and experiences in their institutions. After reviewing the transcripts and data it is clear that there are three areas in which this disenfranchisement stood out: institutionally, culturally, and structurally. I will examine each one individually.

Institutional Issues

There are many ways in which the institutions themselves posed difficulties for the respondents but it came out most clearly when I asked them questions about what has frustrated them most in the field of Indigenous higher education. Limitations in numbers of Indigenous faculty, staff, and programs and general inflexibility seem to pervade the answers particularly when Indigenous staff and faculty tried to open up new options for students or simply tried to get the institutions to understand the needs of Indigenous students. This was apparent when I asked interviewee #4 about what frustrated her most as a professional in this field.

Hmm, … lots of things are frustrating, which one is worst I don’t know (laughter). Probably getting Indigenous students into graduate studies and specifically my area. It has been very frustrating, and what I finally did in my department is get some seats reserved, which hasn’t been the greatest because the program itself is accredited by all these American accrediting bodies, so
the program is very inflexible, so there is not much flexibility for Indigenous students or … it is very mainstream and that is what is so frustrating, not being able to change the program to make it more useful for Indigenous students, so um, that has been the most frustrating. Do you want to hear other frustrations?

C: Sure.

Ok. Just the usual ethnocentrism of the institution of the faculty and department. It is always frustrating because... um in a bill of health it is always mainstream biomedical model and in education it is mainstream educational philosophy and pedagogy. And the lack of awareness that what people believe in is culturally biased and people are unaware of that and that is frustrating because they don’t see that this is just one perspective.

Respondent #4 is expressing what has been discussed in earlier chapters – that there is little room or acceptance of Native ways of knowing and understanding. Even with faculty in the system to advocate for the students there is no guarantee that they will either be heard or their needs accommodated. Respondent # 1 echoed these same feelings.

At this one institution that I went to it was hard trying to convince people that had control of the curriculum, particularly those who were in charge of articulation of course material, very hard to convince them that we had to have relevant Native content. Just as an example, I developed a Sociology and an English course where I worked and it was the second year that the articulation went before this college board that was in charge of accreditation and the first year they totally rejected the English curriculum and so the second year I still insisted on having the Native content in it because what do Native people need Shakespeare for? And they didn’t understand it anyway and so at that time there was a lot of literature coming out by Native authors and it was excellent literature also and so I insisted that content remain Native people and I sort of had to conform in other ways.

Respondent #1 demonstrates how the institution can create a feeling of disenfranchisement by not acknowledging the different needs of Native students and the validity of their own knowledge. There is little flexibility within the institutions to allow for differences. Change does not come easily in many university settings and it is quite frustrating for faculty and staff to have to constantly wage these battles and get very little
movement out of their efforts. Since the inception of Native studies programs in the
sixties many of the problems remain the same and unfortunately little has changed. There
are still problems of stability, irrelevant or few course offerings, racism, bureaucracy, and
too few Native faculty and staff.

Making change, however, as Graham Smith asserts, requires large numbers of
Indigenous educators. There is strength in numbers and while some institutions have
larger numbers of Indigenous faculty and staff (most likely at a tribal college),
universities can rarely boast effective numbers of faculty and staff. Some do have
growing numbers of Indigenous faculty and staff; however, not all of those who are hired
are committed to making institutional and educational changes, which is also a key issue.
So whether through a basic lack of numbers or a lack of committed numbers it makes the
work of those who are in the system even more difficult because their work load becomes
unmanageable. Respondent #3 names this as her biggest frustration in the field of Native
higher education.

…. the limited number of Indigenous academics. And there are a handful of Indigenous
academics in this institution and that limits, just the numbers limits our ability to create change
and it puts a huge stress on people to do everything. If one wants an Indigenous historian to work
with them in the university, there isn’t one, so whichever Indigenous professor you can get you’re
happy with, right? That places an overwhelming load of responsibility on the few Indigenous
professors and I think the students aren’t served as well as they could be. So I think intellectual
leadership is lacking. By saying that I don’t mean to say that those individuals aren’t doing
outstanding jobs, they are, it’s just a numbers issue.

It is important to point out what respondent #3 was saying. She was not
condemning the work of her colleagues but rather pointing out that we need more
Indigenous educators to do the job because it is a huge task to make changes in the
institutions.

The students in the university focus group echoed similar concerns. From the
aggregated flip chart data they noted that the biggest drawbacks to life at the university
were: limitations in what forms of knowledge the university accepts, limited knowledge about Native people, only accept Western standards, and institutional racism. They also pointed out that since there are few Native students on campus they are often asked by instructors to speak on behalf of all Native people – they did not think this was fair or respectful of tribal diversity.

At the tribal college students also pointed to limitations such as limited number of programs, courses offered less often, lack of resources, lack of facilities and lack of prestige. It seems that where Native higher education is concerned there are critical gaps in the students’ ability to attain a complete education. Even at the tribal colleges there is a need to increase opportunity. There is a need for change. One of those changes would be to address more of the student, faculty and staff needs – including cultural issues – and that is the topic of our next section. Is it possible to address all needs of each and every student, faculty and staff?

### Cultural Issues

Disenfranchisement comes in many forms, one of which is in the lack of acknowledgement of who a person is and what hi/her life entails. At Western institutions mainstream values and life-ways are acknowledged, catered to, and even promoted, such as learning individually, student seminars on money management, investments and business opportunities, pubs, chapels, and fraternities and sororities. Also the fact that there are limited family housing and day care resources in many institutions demonstrates that the institution focuses on students with no children and the financial ability to support them through school. The perception of the ‘typical’ student at a Western institution is young and childless, who lives in a society that espouses individualism, capitalism, Christianity, and materialism. While there are certainly some Native students who have taken up some, or even all, of these values and pursuits, the majority do not fit this profile. If your reality is not acknowledged, or worse, looked down upon, you feel left out and not fully part of the institution.
In the interviews I asked the respondents about the role of community in an institution. In particular I asked them to define what they feel the role should be between the community and the institution. Everyone did agree that the community and culture should play a part in the institution – but not everyone agreed on the degree. The following are examples of the range of answers.

Respondent #2 was one of the ones who felt that the community should be fully integrated into the institution.

There should be total involvement because as I look upon the design of educational systems from the past and there has been no acknowledgement, no involvement, no respectful interchange of ideas or anything. So I would say as much involvement as possible from the community.

Respondent #2 is pointing out that in the past there has been very little respect for or acknowledgement of our communities and their respective value systems. To make a change she advocates for total involvement to insure the needs of the students and community are met. Respondent #7 also agrees that you need to have community involved in an Indigenous institution. After all what sets it apart from Western institution is the role of community.

I wouldn’t send wood carvers down to a place that has no trees. Nor would I have sandstone carvers go to a place where there is no sand stone. I wouldn’t let basket weavers go to a place with no reeds right? So it would have to specific to, not only to the people, but to the raw materials and resources that are available to them.

She can see that Native students have particular needs and they must be incorporated into the institution or what is the point? She sees the students as members of their communities who have specific cultural circumstances and realities. Those realities include tribally specific values and respondent #1 speaks directly to those values.

I think the university values should be the cultural and community values they shouldn’t be separate because I think that is what is so alienating for a lot of Native people that come because
there really isn’t any of what we value that seems to be incorporated into the university …. …. when I was going here I felt totally alienated…

It is clear that respondent 1, 7 and 2 feel that community and culture are necessary parts of an Indigenous higher education. The same can be said for almost all of the students in both focus groups. The university focus group listed many ways in which culture should be incorporated into the institution: language should be implemented, total language immersion should be the ultimate goal, culture should be fully integrated, gatherings and ceremonies from that culture should be held, more than entry level jobs for Native people should be provided, and it should be based on ideals of culture it serves (aggregated data). Similarly the tribal college focus group felt the community should be very involved: decision makers from the ground up, culture imbedded into system, culture serves to reinforce student identity, and strong healthy relationship between institution and community (aggregated data). It is also interesting to note that each and every one of them sited culture as a major role in why they picked their respective institutions. At the tribal college students picked their institution because of its relative immersion in the local culture and understanding of the community. At the university students picked their institution because of the Native programs and faculty.

Out of all the students involved in the focus group only one expressed a desire for the community to simply be an advisory group. Perhaps the student was a bit wary of mixing the two too much like respondent #5.

Have the community involved, but also have some outside input, because I think you can get kind of closed minded.

This particular respondent came from the tribal college setting and was concerned about their institution becoming too insular. In her experience at the tribal college she was kept at arms length because she was from another tribe. She felt that outside influences could be helpful and should not be tossed aside. The fear here is of a retrenchment back into a singular way of doing things more of an either/or scenario
where an institution has to choose to be either totally Western or totally Native (and perhaps even too specifically tribal).

In this next example from respondent #3 we see a person who sees that there should be clear lines drawn over who is responsible for what. In this there is the assumption that the community and the university are clearly two different entities.

I think it is really important to work in a collaborative relationship with community members, but around things like philosophy and program goals, you know the bigger things. And the offering of these things on a day to day basis is the responsibility of the professors and the staff, maybe shared by community members and professors or however, but that things need to be well defined so that people understand the various responsibilities.

In her analysis, however, is a realistic sense of the larger structures within the institutions and how they work. In our current university system she recognizes that there are some things faculty and staff cannot control or are bound to. In her words again she states,

…this speaks to the importance of defining roles and responsibilities really clearly, uh, because it is not just institutional values or community values, its also laws. For example, a really easy example is the freedom of information and privacy laws, and those have to supersede, by law, community… community desires. So if a mom comes to me and says, “How is Johnny doing in school?”, which isn’t an uncommon thing to happen, those are some things that happen and people have to understand that there are different values that exist and those values may be the institution’s values or they may be values of the province or whatever may govern the situation. … I think there is an accommodation that you work towards, ideally you work towards accommodation so that we can incorporate some of our traditional values and some of the values we can’t and I know that can be frustrating for some people. So, again, understanding in a deep way the constraints on any institution of higher education.

She succinctly states the challenges of dealing with multiple layers of accountability that impact on the functioning of an institution. However, the questions were being asked about designing a brand new institution with no constraints of any kind,
not about the realities we face in our current situation. I found it very interesting that the faculty and staff had a more difficult time thinking ‘outside the box’, as it were, about designing an institution from scratch. The students were more able to come up with new and innovative versions of an institution. For example in the student’s discussion about what kind of administrative structure they would build most students wanted to do away with the hierarchical structures and separate departments. They spoke of the desire for a model based on talking circles, councils or however the local tribes were traditionally structured. Also they spoke of the interconnectedness of all knowledge and how departmentalizing knowledge was a bad design for an institution and how they would like to see a more interdisciplinary structure. With the faculty and staff, however, there were a few people who had difficulty even considering anything different. For example respondent #1 when asked how she would structure an Indigenous institution replied thusly:

Well, I’m a pretty organized person and I guess I am sort of contaminated by bureaucratic methods I guess and organization. I think we always have to have a semblance of order and it is hard to…you know… envision I guess, what a university would be like because we only have this one model in our heads – a president, v.p. and all of these department heads and so on.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the impact of the larger structural issues and how far embedded they have become as we are immersed in them. In the next section on structural issues, we will take this up in more depth.

**Structural Issues**

It is very true that some of the difficulties faced by Native educators and students are not necessarily created by the professors or the administrators. Many of these difficulties are created by the larger institutional and societal structures. In the example given above the Native staff member cannot simply give out information about the student to the parent even though culturally that would be expected. The staff member is bound by the laws of the local and federal governments. Here two cultures and their
protocols collide. In the Western world this young student is an adult who is an individual with inalienable rights to privacy - even from his family members. In the Native world (generally speaking) this young student is part of a family and larger community and it is the job of the family and community to check in on him, find out how he is doing, and help him if he needs it. Again, in the example above, (and in my own personal experience), the Native faculty or staff member is caught in between. As we spoke of earlier, the institution is often too inflexible to change protocol for Native values, so Native faculty, staff, and students have to adapt to the institutional demands. In other words assimilate to the individualism of Western society and all that comes with that (privacy laws, property laws, freedom of information, capitalism, etc.)

In the interviews and focus groups structural issues came through as a mechanism for disenfranchisement. When the larger structures prevent you from living and behaving in your own cultural ways, then you are disengaged because you are not included in the institution unless you change. These are colonizing forces at work. How has this impacted the faculty, staff, and students? It is interesting to note that some people were very aware of this agency of colonization and they were adamant not to be a party to it and others also recognized it but saw it as partly necessary. And a third group covered the middle ground of being aware, to not aware, of its functioning. First let us take a look at those who were aware and opposed to it. Respondent #8 was concerned about Native people being forced to follow rules and protocol that are not their own.

I’d seen this happen you know being in the higher education, Indian ed, here we are bunch of Indians sitting in a meeting and you know we have somebody saying I make a motion to pass that or whatever, I hear a second whatever, and you have Indians saying, we’re following a Western standard, it doesn’t make any sense. I second that…yeah, you know, it’s a phony, it’s a circus really, we’re puppets really we’re trying to fit into this mold, and that’s not how decisions are made in Indian country.

Respondent #8 is making a similar point to the one above stating that we are stuck in these rules and regulations that are not of our making and it does not work for our cultural values (and she is from a tribal college). So are the tribal colleges recreating the
same system that the West has? Each case would have to be looked at individually but it is something that respondent #6 is keenly aware of.

…we have been colonized and so our values have been altered in a hundred years. Our belief systems have been unlinked in many places, so I think that it requires a lot of real critical well thought out, ‘why are we doing this?’ Because my question here is at this college, and this is our college, and my question always is here, are we an agent of assimilation? Just tell me now, because if we are, I’m in the wrong business here and I always have to put that out front, because I’m one of two Indian faculty here. And if that’s what we’re doing here, then I’m in the wrong meeting. But I think that that has to be at a real conscious level. It has to be very conscious and very deliberate. Because a lot of times assimilation in the last 100 years in the United States has been almost very unconscious. It had been charted out it had been very deliberate and now it’s sort of taking its toll. And so I think that we have to be very deliberate about how we… our attempts to de-colonize. And it can’t be, and it also puts I think its really important and it deserves a lot of thought and input, because we also can’t be the oppressor, we can’t force people to be Indian, and accept their roots identity and heritage, because if we do then we’re the oppressors. So, you know all those things are very important and they have to be at the core of any institution like this one is doing.

When I spoke with this faculty they told me about community members who did not want to go to the tribal college because of its cultural emphasis. Some of them thought it was backward or obsolete. She is very concerned about this attitude, although she states that just as many do want to learn their culture and do want to be at the college. She is also quite aware of the necessity to be very deliberate about what you are doing so that the institution does not become complicit in its own colonization. For example if you recreate the same institutional structures (as the average university) within the tribal college you might recreate the same oppressive forces as faced in a Western institution, thereby reinforcing the colonizing effects of the very system you were trying to get away from. As you may recall from chapter five there were many who in the inception of tribal colleges wanted to do something different than colleges were doing; something that reinforced Indigenous values, education, and knowledge. However, bowing to pressures to prove themselves to the outside world, many recreated the internal structures of Western institutions into their own. Mohatt summarized the dilemma most early tribal college leaders faced. “Even if our alienation made us want to start from scratch without
using any existing models, that was not what the majority of the board or the community wanted. They wanted a certified, validly accredited institution of higher education. So we decided to go with the board’s wishes.” Even today there is still a need to make efforts to keep culture in. Respondent #6 reacts to this as well.

We’re always trying to put in culture, trying to put culture in; it’s like catching up, like a train. If we would have had enough foresight into the foundation of this college and knowing more about being a college, we’d prepared ourselves better. But now, we look around here and we think, how do we put the Indian back into our College? That’s not easy, because this is an institution, an accredited institution. And that’s not easy, that’s not easy to do.

Not everyone had the same concerns about structures. Some did not feel that it was an important issue, that it was secondary to other concerns. Respondent #3 was one of those who felt that way.

Gosh, you know I am probably so co-opted by the institution itself that I don’t even have a vision for that. Um…. In a sense I don’t think it matters, really whether an institution is structured in a hierarchy or not doesn’t matter. What matters is the relationships between people. So more important than structure would be the culture of the institution, … how we treat each other.

Respondent #3 was being very honest about being co-opted by the institution. If you only have experience doing something in one way or in one structure, you may not stop to think how it might be done differently – especially if you do not see it as a big concern.

The issue here is not whether or not a person is right or wrong but that they start to think about the impact of the colonizing forces of our current education system. If our own educators are finding it difficult to imagine something different how does this impact our ability to create new images of a more successful education? If the West defines for us what our boundaries are, we are limited in making change for ourselves and in danger of becoming complicit in our own colonization.
Interestingly enough the students in the focus group seemed much more able to come up with different visioning of an institutional structure. In both groups most felt that we should move away from the rigid structures of Western education and departmentalized learning and move toward integrated learning programs and an administrative structure that is based on the traditions of the local community. The one dissenter felt that the administration should be more on the American/Western principles of democracy.

However, that does not mean that colonial forces are not at play with the students in other ideas. For example when asked what would make the institution successful two students stated that it must graduate a high percentage of students who can attain careers like those of the Ivy Leagues and have a prestigious reputation.

Conclusion

All of the respondents in one way or another and to differing degrees experienced a type of disenfranchisement in their work or in their studies. Institutionally they felt it through the lack of flexibility in programs and protocol as well as through the limited numbers of faculty, programs, and facilities available to meet their needs. They pointed to the lack of acknowledgement of their cultural needs and desires. Every respondent stated that they wanted culture to be acknowledged and preferably an integral part of their institutions. Finally, disenfranchisement was apparent structurally by the larger societal impacts on Native faculty, staff, and students.

Although there was agreement on which issues were pertinent to Indigenous higher education and what the respondents felt needed the most work, there was not such an agreement on how to go about making those changes or to what degree they are needed. Most people felt that adding more cultural elements was a needed change and some also were concerned about keeping up the academic rigor in our institutions.
You could see this throughout the respondent’s answers. You could hear the yearning for more culture and more Indigenous knowledge and more Indigenous structures. Yet they were also concerned about the need to have a high quality education and the prestige of a degree from a big university. This was most clearly played out in the focus groups. From my field notes I described the differences between the tribal college and university focus groups.

Stepping back to look at the results of the focus groups, you can see there are differences between the groups. Generally speaking the tribal college students advocate for an institution that reflects their reality – living in two worlds – life on the reservation and life off of it. The university students, on the other hand, would like to see a total departure from Western standards. They want to define their own standards and move toward more traditional values as their educational outcomes rather than Western values. (Field Notes 3, pg 6)

What is very interesting about this situation is that the university students chose to go to an institution which has much less emphasis on culture yet that is exactly what they focused on in their answers. On the other hand many of the tribal college students focused on the need for a good degree to get a job on or off the reservation; and yet they chose the institution with less prestige and fewer degree options. Of course some of these students may not have had the prerequisites necessary for university.

It seems as though the students felt they had to choose between culture and strong academics. Each group made their choices but then long for what the other has. It was also apparent in the faculty and staff interviews in how they struggled to get as much of both worlds into their current institutions against tremendous barriers in some cases. They too faced the same contradictions. At the university they wanted the institution to be more flexible and acknowledge their cultural differences and accept traditional knowledge and ways of knowing. And at the tribal college they were trying not to reproduce the Western structure but also provide their students with relevant degrees. It is a situation of duality; duality of options and duality of needs.
In either situation, tribal college or university, there was also the issue of colonization and its impact on our ability to create something new and better for ourselves. If our own educators are finding it difficult to imagine something different (as was demonstrated in the interviews) how does this impact our ability to create new images of a more successful education? If the West defines for us what our boundaries are, we are limited in making change for ourselves and in danger of becoming complicit in our own colonization? But how many other people have just accepted the boundaries set by others and let it define the possibilities for them? This is part of the colonization process. That is not to say that sharing or borrowing is always a bad thing but it has to be consciously done and for specific outcomes which need to be defined. There is a real caution that needs to be taken and a well informed plan that should be made before taking any steps in creating new programs and institutions in Native higher education.

In the next chapter we will look at the final three streams of information; the literature review, the expert interviews and my own experience. From here we will see what connections, if any, can be made amongst all five streams of knowledge.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Voices: Literature and Experts
Introduction

This chapter will look at the remaining streams of information which are: the literature review and interviews with experts. The approach I have used in this chapter is to look for and summarize the most contemporary and relevant information in relation to the development of a new higher education institution (the goal of this research). I did this for two reasons; first, because I have presented findings from the literature and interviews extensively throughout the dissertation and, secondly, I wanted to try to aggregate the data in a way that could find common themes – or to put another way, to find out what people in Native higher education think are the most pressing issues of today. I will, therefore, discuss these streams of information in a way that will examine each individually with the goal of bringing out the pertinent and relevant information to this study. After I have completed the review of these streams there will be a final section to this chapter which will bring together and aggregate all the different streams of research in the context of the entire study. These results will then be taken as a whole and from this we will look at the repeated themes and issues which have emerged throughout the study. These issues represent the most pressing and urgent needs to be addressed in Native American Higher Education.

I. Literature Review

The ‘literature review’ in this paper is really spread throughout the paper. I used the literature to inform this study in every chapter and the breadth of the literature can be seen in the bibliography. However, for the purposes of discussing such a broad literature review I had to focus on what I felt is most relevant to this study. Being that this paper is about moving Native higher education into the future I chose to focus the formal literature review on the newest, most contemporary writings on the topic of Indigenous higher education. In other words what do the Indigenous educators, writers, and researchers, consider to be the most vital discussions in higher education today.
In reviewing the literature I found there to be three over-arching categories being focused on by contemporary Indigenous authors. Those three areas include: 1) Decolonization and self-determination 2) The university as a battlefield 3) Revisiting the curriculum. In the rest of this section on the literature review, I will briefly discuss the three above mentioned categories as well as refer to some of the key authors writing in these areas. I will also try to focus on what is being said rather than analyzing it or commenting on it because the purpose of this section is to inform the reader about what the literature is saying.

1) Decolonization and Self-Determination

Decolonization is not a new idea in Indigenous education, but it is an idea which is being taken more seriously and critically as an urgent issue in Native American higher education. More people are concluding that the only way to achieve true self-determination and true sovereignty is to engage in the process of decolonization. Colonial structures affect Native Americans in many ways through various sources. Our education, therefore, must reflect this reality. Many of our scholars point to Friere and Fanon’s ideas as impacting their understanding and directing their work. Cajete believes that there is great similarity between Friere’s notions of education and American Indian education. More specifically this similarity is most pronounced in the transformation of the social consciousness of American Indians as they strive for self-determination in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century. (Cajete, 1994b, p. 215)

Michael Yellowbird has also found Friere’s work to be important when we understand what is happening in Native communities. In this short excerpt he speaks of the keen differences between the way First Nations and Native Americans were handling issues of oppression.
And for the first time I really began to understand Paolo Freire’s work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and that people there (Canada) were breaking what they call the “culture of silence” by talking about their suffering under colonialism. In the United States I didn’t see people talking about that. You could see it in the communities, but you didn’t see it in the textbooks or in the mainstream discourse. And this new discourse enlightened me to that fact that indigenous people in this country didn’t just wake up one day and decide to have alcohol problems. They didn’t wake up one day and decide to abuse their wives and their children. They didn’t wake up one day and decide to have splintered, fractionated infighting among themselves and their tribal governments. I began to understand that these problems were part of a process of colonization and of colonization taking many different forms: emotional, political, psychological, or spiritual. All these different aspects of colonialism then began to make sense to me, and a conversation about them seemed to be missing in a lot of the writing and works here in the United States. I think one of our major challenges today is to begin to operationalize and conceptualize what those terms mean. We talk about colonization and decolonization a lot, but we have yet to define what those terms really mean. (Yellow Bird, *Second 190*)

One of the reasons Friere’s ideas resonate with many Indigenous scholars is because of its change making focus. What our communities need is change, not just theories to discuss and debate. Angela Cavendar Wilson (1998) speaks to this issue in her chapter entitled “Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge,” in the book *Indigenizing the Academy* (Mihesua and Cavender Eds.) She believes Friere and Fanon’s argument of the necessity of decolonization and the overturning of the colonial structures in realizing freedom resonates strongly with the situations in Native American communities. Further she asserts that Friere’s commitment to the notion of praxis is critically important to the work we do in Native American education. As she says, “After all, for what had I been continually seeking an education if not to transform the world around me and create a place where justice for Indigenous people is more than an illusion?” (p.69).

This idea of praxis is a crucial element of decolonization. Change needs to occur in our community, but only as defined by the community, not by the oppressor. For too long tribal communities have been subjected to outside ‘cures’ to what ails them. Bush’s ‘No Child Left Behind’ policy is another in a long list of outside forces deciding what we want, need, and should strive for. And for too long communities have accepted,
uncritically for the most part, what is given. But there is a push to change from reactionary to proactive behavior. The people, not just scholars, must look critically at their situation and not be afraid to ask the difficult questions. This reflection is paramount to the decolonization process.

Cree scholar Winona Wheeler believes that decolonization is a strategy for empowerment through its focus on developing a critical consciousness regarding the causes of our oppression, the distortion of history, our own collaboration in it, and the degrees to which we have internalized colonist ideas and practices. She believes that decolonization requires auto-criticism, self-reflection, and a rejection of victimage. Decolonization is about transformation and the belief that it can change (Wilson, 1998).

The Maori in New Zealand have made great strides using this model of praxis. It was/is central to their education revolution and their ability to determine their own educational destinies. In *Beyond Freire’s Political Literacy: From Conscientisation to Transformative Praxis*, Graham Smith discusses the importance of this model in the Maori context and their ability to begin the process of Maori educational theorizing.

It is important to understand the evolution of Kaupapa Maori theory within a process of ‘praxis.’ Kaupapa Maori as an educational resistance strategy has grown out of an ongoing struggle that occurred both within Maori communities and with Pakeha dominant institutional contexts. The notion of ‘struggle’ is important to the overall development of Kaupapa Maori theory in that the notion of ‘struggle’ connotes the significance of ‘praxis’ in making and remaking this theory. In this sense, ‘struggle’ has helped shape the structure, thinking, commitment and the political conscientization of Maori with regard to the ‘critical’ issues and understandings that needed to occur in order to make the theoretical components both robust and effective. (2002, p.2)

With the educational changes that the Maori have been able to make following this transformative praxis model, it would behoove Native American scholars to keep working and developing this area of inquiry in the context of the United States.
2) University as a Battlefield

Native Americans have been subjected to many overt forms of colonization throughout their historical relationship with Western society. As Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples come to grips with the far-reaching impacts of colonialism in all aspects of their lives, they still have to be alert for the newest forms of colonialism. As many scholars are pointing out today, the newest frontlines in the battle against colonialism are in the academy. As the knowledge ‘broker’ of today’s global society, what comes out of the academy in terms of research, political theory, and technology, has the potential to profoundly affect the world.

In order to survive and persist, Native communities will have to manage the technology and science so critical to the global society and use it to their advantage. The globalization processes are not going away and in order not to become victims of it, Indigenous communities need to find ways to use it and manage it in a way that is in concert with community sustainability. (Champagne, 2005)

That is why, according to Graham Smith, Indigenous educators must be within the academy (Interview, 2004). Even though the system is fraught with problems for our students and faculty, it is imperative to stay within the system in order to influence it. We cannot walk away and remove ourselves from the academy because if we are not there to carve out a space for ourselves, someone else will do it for us as defined by them. And as Champagne stated above, we need to manage our own technology and information. Research is at the cornerstone of that ‘information.’ There is a need to control our own research and manage the issues surrounding it. For example, Champagne (2005), in the same article, raises these questions:

1. Who should have access to and financial benefit from Natives’ traditional knowledge about the medicinal uses of plants found in their ancestral territories?
2. Who should have access to and financial benefit from DNA information about members of Native nations, when that information might prove useful for the prevention or treatment of diseases?

3. Who should have access to and financial benefit from research conducted on the remains of Native nations’ ancestors, research that might bear on matters of health, diet, and group history?

4. Who should have access to and financial benefit from Native stories, songs, and ceremonies that have sacred value to their communities but also artistic or academic value to outsiders?” (p.49)

That is one reason why Linda Smith wrote her book entitled, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People. Her book is the first ever written for Indigenous researchers about the issues involved with doing research. She discusses the history of imperialism and research and how that has negatively impacted Indigenous peoples, but she also calls for more Indigenous researchers to be trained to do a more positive transformative research. Smith, and other Indigenous scholars such as Champagne, Lomawaima, Mihesuah, Swisher, , and others, understand the impact that research has on our global society and how important it is for us and all Indigenous people to stay involved and gain control of our own research as well as developing guidelines for non-Indigenous researchers doing research within our communities. As Lomawaima contends “Power is at the crux of the matter, after all. In Indian America today, power means sovereignty, and sovereignty means self-government, self-determination, and self-education. Today – and in the future – sovereignty means that tribes should and will make the rules that researchers must respect and follow” (2000, p.8). Champagne even argues that we should formulate our own set of ethical guidelines as the universities do not account for the cultural protocols of our communities. We must, then, stay present in the academy.

More than ever before being in the academy is incredibly important to Native American interests. The role of the Native American academic is changing as well. In the literature there is much discussion over the role of the contemporary Native American
There is also some criticism that in the past (and even today) there are many Native scholars who are not committed to the collective good of their people. They are, say critics, looking out for themselves and their own personal status (Wilson, 1998). Or, as Graham Smith, has stated (Interview, 2004), they get involved in the politics of distraction. They get so busy with the departmental infighting and political maneuvering that the real work and goals get lost in this ‘busy-ness.’

Taiaike Alfred (2004) agrees believing that immersing ourselves in battles for personal gain and withdrawing from the larger issues is playing the assimilationist’s endgame. The important battles are not in the low-stakes fights over prestige, recognition or departmental resources. He believes that those are all selfishly rooted battles that are premised on an individualist value system.

There is a new call for Native scholars to remember that their work should be for the greater good of their communities. With what is at stake today, the effects of globalization and neo-liberal politics and the decline of our culture and language competencies, there is a call to refocus ourselves as Indigenous academics and assume a new role that is more ‘conscious’ of what is at stake and more committed to a collective vision of Native American educational advancement.

In working for the collective, James Riding-In (2005) cautions that American Indian Studies never become a ‘handmaiden’ of colonialism. The work we do, information we gather and synthesize must be for the purpose of defending “….sovereignty, lands, economic well-being, human rights, and religious freedom for our peoples and nations” (p.169). Many Native American educators see the university as a critical site in this ‘battle’ and that Native American scholars need to honor their responsibilities to their communities by being ‘warriors’ in the institutions (Alfred, 2004).

Native American educators need to be very clear as to what it is we are doing in the university. We have to look at processes and outcomes and make sure that we are
actively creating our own path rather than simply reacting to the positions of the institution. As Angela Cavender-Wilson (1998) so aptly pointed out, we cannot simply reject that which is unacceptable in the academy – we have to challenge it and carve a place for our own knowledge and traditions and legitimate these areas of study on our own terms. These challenges are critical at a time when many tribes are threatened with loss of their languages, ways of life, health and well-being, etc.; Native scholars are put to answer the question asked by Taiaiake Alfred (2004), “are we part of the process of destruction of Indigenous cultures and nations, or are we upholding our responsibility to contend with it” (p.93). It is our responsibility as educators to ask ourselves this question and make sure that we are working towards the greater good of our peoples.

This means we need more scholars in the academy. We need to grow a base of community minded educators who are also willing to step forward and lead the way with publications, research, and community service. These scholars need to ‘…keep a presence in higher education to ensure a space in American intellectual life” (Deloria, 2004, p.30). If we are not there to ensure this space then someone else will do the research and the defining and claiming in our names.

As the stakes get higher in this new world order of global politics, neo-liberal individualism, and knowledge as a commodity, Indigenous academics are calling on our communities to get more Indigenous intellectuals into the system, not just any one, but those who will be committed to their communities and take a stand even when their jobs are at stake. There is a need to regroup and refocus seriously on what is at stake if we do not work together for a collective common good. I will end this with a very poignant quote by Taiaiake Alfred (2004).

“Our freedom and independence and the integrity of our traditional cultures have been nearly decimated, and colonialism’s newest turn strikes even deeper than land loss and political control ever could. Today they are after our values and our vision of the future, and universities are the front lines. This is a fight for the future, sometimes open and sometimes subtle, but always ongoing.” (p. 92)
3) Revisiting the Curriculum

Concurrently with the discussion of the new role of academics in the embattled universities is a discussion about what is being taught in our programs, be they in the universities or at tribal colleges. With all that we as Native American academics have to confront in the universities and what our students need to be able to contend with, are our courses giving our students the tools they need to make change? As you recall back in chapter 4, Twila Martin spoke to the fact that even after having a tribal college on their land for all these years, the socio-economic situation of the tribe had not gotten any better, in fact it had gotten worse. What is it that we are doing in our Native studies programs and in our tribal colleges?

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn wrote an article called “Who Stole American Indian Studies?” In the article she bemoaned how the original intentions of American Indian Studies have been lost and what we are doing now is not serving the people. In a series of meetings of the American Indian Studies Consortium, Native educators gathered to discuss the future of American Indian Studies. (This forum was put together about American Indian Studies programs but the discussion is also relevant to tribal colleges who have Native studies programs of their own.) They asked questions such as who are we and what is our goal? What should we be teaching? Who should we be working for and what should we be working toward? Other scholars such as Duane Champagne, John Red Horse, James Riding In, Michael Yellow Bird and more, also spoke to these issues.

What is our goal?

American Indian Studies (AIS) programs had many things to contend with when they first started out. For example, since many were created strictly from the political pressures of the civil rights movement, there was not much time for detailed planning for
the programs. There were many hopes of what they would be but first they had to deal with external issues such as legitimacy. The institutions and many of the established faculties did not see AIS as a true discipline and did not afford the programs much credibility. As a result the programs ended up borrowing methodologies and practices from other disciplines to establish themselves as ‘legitimate.’ Looking back this is probably what had to be done at the time, but many today feel that this needs to change because it is not meeting the needs and challenges of our contemporary context.

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (2005a) argues that AIS still has not decided what AIS really is and that we are still confused about its mission. In some institutions we see AIS under the umbrella of Ethnic Studies and often thrown into ‘multi-cultural’ or ‘interdisciplinary’ education. At the AIS consortium meeting the majority of discussion around goals focused on the need for AIS to become its own discipline. “Many of us in attendance today are committed to the development of AIS as a discipline, not as a stepchild of anthropology, history, English, social work, or sociology, among others” (Riding In, 2005, p.169).

As its own discipline AIS needs to develop its own methodologies and structure. To stand alone it must not be seen as ‘ethnic’, ‘multi-cultural,’ or ‘interdisciplinary.’ It has to create its own future by developing a distinct direction apart from its former ‘step-parents’. The fact that today AIS programs and departments still tend to use methodologies of ‘traditional’ disciplines of anthropology, history, sociology, etc., is considered by some to be one of AIS’s biggest failings (Holm, 2005).

What Should We Be Teaching?

Given that the movement seems to be going toward redefining AIS as its own discipline, how does that impact what should be taught in AIS? There has already been criticism of the kind of courses being taught in AIS and questions concerning how useful a degree in AIS is to students. For example what is one qualified to do if they hold an
AIS degree? What knowledge and skills have they acquired through the programs? This image that AIS programs lack ‘functionality’ is one of the reasons the Indigenous Studies program at University of Kansas avoided defining themselves as an AIS program. “We felt ‘American Indian studies’ described more of a voyeur program, where you didn’t really have to do anything except learn about Indians” (Yellow Bird, 2005, p.191).

If it is true, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, that the next great battlefield is in the university with the futures of our languages and cultures at stake, then the focus of AIS must change from simply learning ‘about Indians’ to the more critical issues around sovereignty and intellectual space. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (2005b) happens to think “… that Indian studies is about indigenous rights, the treaty rights of those Indian nations that have survived the holocaust of the nineteenth century” (p. 174).

In order to prepare our students for the battles they will encounter we must provide them with a much different curriculum than they have been offered in the past. It must give students the skills to fight the intellectual battles of colonialism. It should also provide them with job skills reflective of the contemporary social and political contexts of today’s world. Students need to be able to analyze colonization in all of its forms and start the process of deconstruction. This means that ‘criticality,’ social and intellectual, of our curriculum is essential (Yellow Bird, 2005).

What Should We Be Working Toward?

Up until very recently, and often still, most AIS programs and Native higher education in general, have been working independently from each other in their own directions without a cohesive vision or purpose. AIHEC, is one example of a collaborative effort in higher education (between tribal colleges), but even in that case there has been little in the way of a larger cohesive academic movement. AIHEC has been more successful in the realm of funding and development of tribal colleges.
At the consortium meeting several people spoke to the need of a specific direction for AIS and Native education in general. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn spoke about how a set of norms needs to be developed throughout AIS and how it needs to be ‘consensually communicated.’ “That means we decide what the courses are and what is required and what is not. It means that a core curriculum has to be taught, and we must direct research and writing toward specific ends” (2005b, p. 182).

David Wilkins (2005) suggested establishing a research consortium that would link Indigenous colleges, faculty, students, elders, and NAS programs. It is important to have our research more directed to meet the needs of our people and this includes working with our communities to define those needs. If, again, the newest battlefront is an intellectual one, then the community must also be given new tools to fight with. Michael Yellow Bird suggests challenging our communities to think about colonialism. “As I look back, it’s important for us to begin to challenge our communities to think. I believe in this idea of understanding deeply the effects of colonialism” (2005, p.192). And if there is to be a larger movement in Native higher education, the community has to be involved in deciding what that is, so they need to be reached out to and asked to participate in the movement as well.

Coming to a consensus about a collective goal or direction will be challenging with all the different tribal and educational interests involved. Luckily there are people out there working on it such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. “…I am working on a couple of manuscripts. The latest one is called, tentatively, Gateway to Consensus, because I do think we have to come to a consensus sooner or later about what we’re doing in Indian studies, and that’s one of the reasons the work we did yesterday concerning the organization of the consortium is so important to me” (2005b, p.175).

It is good that these discussions happen. It is important to ask the questions and do self-reflection about our purposes, goals, and success levels. It is often hard to find critical reports from within the Native American higher education community. It is easy to find Native scholars who are critical of Western programs or ‘outsider’ behavior, but
in surveying the literature it seems there are few who want to be critical of our own programs. We only want to speak of what is good and positive about our own programs. However, improvement will be slow if we do not acknowledge that we have some problems in certain areas. It is understandable to want to focus on the positive; however, the critical element of praxis is looking at oneself and making adjustments until it works.

Some of the people quoted above are doing just that. They are asking the hard questions and even making the adjustments they see necessary. Hopefully this will come more often and in more coordinated efforts.

II. Expert Interviews

In this study I interviewed experts in the field of developing innovative Indigenous higher education programs and institutions. I chose to interview these people because I wanted to speak with professionals who have actually had experience in the planning, strategizing, developing and implementation of new and innovative programs. If this study is going to look at the development of a new and innovative institution then I thought it important to speak to those who have experience in this area and get their feedback on what they see as most problematic and how they are trying to mediate those issues? I wanted to have people who were local and who were international. I chose New Zealand as the international site because they have unarguably made the most progress in this area. I chose University of Kansas programs after searching for unique programs in the United States and hearing about them from several colleagues.

As I used the literature throughout this paper, I have also used the interviewees input extensively in this paper. I want to be careful to avoid redundancy of their interviews so I have chosen to take a look at all of their interviews in a combined fashion to see if there were any themes that ran through what they were saying. I did find a strong connection between what all three interviewees said.
The theme that ran through all the interviews was self-determination. In particular it was self-determination through the development of a critical consciousness which will lead to decolonization. Each person spoke to this theme in different ways by defining the most important issues we face in higher education and how we might mitigate those issues. The following section will highlight each interviewee and a summary of the issues they define as being most critical.

**Dr. Graham Smith**

The reason I chose to interview Graham Smith is because he has been intimately involved in the development of the Maori education system. As the Maori have made extensive progress in the field of higher education it was obvious that I needed to interview someone who was involved with their development.

In our interview Dr. Smith’s main focus was on the academy and the integral part it can play in developing a critical consciousness, defending Indigenous knowledge, protecting our peoples from hegemonic research and focusing scholars and community members on what is most important in the fight for self-determination. He felt that even though the universities, historically and presently, have not done well by our students, there is a need to stay in the university to work against the many threats such as intellectual property rights, combating incorrect and hegemonic research, creating a space for Indigenous knowledge, and fighting colonialism in its newest forms.

In our talk Dr. Smith pointed to several issues that he believes are important to confront and mitigate if we are to meet the challenges of self-determination and ‘conscientization,’ as he refers to it. First we need to acknowledge that there are not enough Indigenous intellectuals to create positive change in higher education and our communities. With multiple sites of colonialism we need to greatly increase the number of community-focused educators in order to make quicker and larger impacts in the system. Dr. Smith also cautions that we not only need more intellectuals but specifically
community-minded intellectuals and not ‘privatized’ ones who are more concerned about their own careers and personal gain than in the needs of the larger community.

Secondly, Smith points to the fact that reactive behavior in tertiary education, as well as generally in our communities, is what keeps us from moving forward. We must stop reacting to the policies and politics of local and world governing bodies. It is essential that we define for ourselves where we want to go and start moving in that direction in spite of what policies come along. Our Indigenous intellectuals particularly need to heed this warning. We cannot let the institution define us or confine us by simply reacting to their decisions, instead we need to bring forth our own agendas and push them forward.

One way to reduce reactive behaviors and increase proactive ones is to fully comprehend the political and social contexts we live in today. Although the university may be the frontlines of the battle it is important that the whole community understand the new political context of our world and how that will impact our people today and in the future. Everyone in our communities from political leaders, teachers, business owners, grandparents, and medicine people, need to work together toward the same ends. If everyone in the community can clearly see the true threats to our people then we can proactively set a plan of action – or actions.

Finally, I say ‘actions’ because as Graham Smith made it clear, it is better to combat colonialism with multiple responses rather than with a silver bullet approach. For example, yes, we should stay within the university system, but we should also be developing our own institutions at the same time. And yes, we should prepare and educate our students and faculty, but we also need to be in the communities doing the same thing for the general populace. The university can be an agent to reach out to the communities and help educate those who are interested in fighting this battle.
Dr. Linda Smith

I interviewed Dr. Linda Smith because she, like Dr. Graham Smith, is deeply involved in the changes and higher education efforts of the Maori. I wanted to speak with Dr. Smith about her experience being on TEAC, which is the Tertiary Education Advisory Committee in New Zealand as well as her highly regarded work in Indigenous research (her book called *Decolonizing Methodologies*).

Smith focused on the importance of research, the control of research, structural changes, and leadership as leading to self-determination. In controlling our own research it puts an end to some of the hegemonic forces in higher education. It is a proactive way to move forward (as Graham Smith speaks to above).

Smith believes that research is where the knowledge brokers control what is thought and what is ‘true’. This has had incredibly harmful impacts on our communities in the past (and present) and must be confronted. We must be able to combat the effects of negative research by countering and questioning it, especially questioning its validity in the context of unequal power relations. As it stands there is a state of unequal power relations between Indigenous communities and the West, it is important for our scholars, as well as the community in general, to understand where we sit politically and how to best utilize our strengths in order to make a space for Indigenous knowledge.

Continuing on the theme of research, Smith stated that it is vital to control our own research by using our own researchers who are trained in Indigenous methodologies. She also felt that we should create our own research centers to which communities can come for assistance rather than outside sources. These centers could develop ethical standards for community specific research which would have to be followed by non-Indigenous and Indigenous researchers alike. This takes away the control from outside influences and puts it back in the hands of the people.
Of course, as Smith pointed out, there will need to be many more Indigenous researchers trained in Indigenous methodologies and Indigenous knowledge. These researchers must also be schooled with a critical consciousness which is necessary to make meaningful change. Once the researchers are trained and seasoned through time, there needs to be an effort by those current academic leaders to train new incoming leaders as each generation progresses so that there is continuity and forward movement unhampered by an interruption of untrained leaders.

Finally, Smith cautions that none of these changes suggested will move us significantly forward if the structures are not also changed as well. Without changing old structures or creating new ones the same problems will continue to plague our educations and our communities. We must continue to work on all fronts at the same time.

Dr. Michael Yellow Bird

When looking for innovative programs in the United States I was referred to the Indigenous Nations Studies Program at the University of Kansas. I found it to be very unique in design and focus so I arranged an interview with the director, Dr. Michael Yellow Bird.

Dr. Yellow Bird’s focus in his interview was heavily on developing a critical consciousness. His reasoning came from his experience working at the University of British Columbia in Canada and how it had opened his eyes to the international Indigenous world. He spoke about how insulated most Americans are in terms of international politics and events and that many Native Americans are the same. In Canada they were doing much more critical work and hosting Indigenous people from around the world. He said he was in “a political coma” until he came to Canada and then understood how important it was for Native Americans to become more globally aware and connected. That is why he, and others, at University of Kansas, pushed for an international focus in their program.
Dr. Yellow Bird felt that there is not enough discussion about colonialism and decolonization in Native America. The discussion about colonization and its effects as well as processes of decolonization need to spread beyond the confines of university classrooms. In order for us to change the situation everyone in the sphere of colonial influence (the entire community) must understand it so they can come to an agreement as to how to combat it.

In order to even begin looking at a plan to combat colonialism, Yellow Bird believes we need to better prepare our students (and faculty) with more critical thinking skills. There is not enough emphasis in our Indigenous curriculum on critical thinking skills. These skills are prerequisite to analyzing our current political situation and developing new strategies. That is why he feels that courses which only teach about Indians do not serve our students needs. It is fine to understand the past but a course on American Indian Music will not provide a student with the skills she needs to protect the natural resources on her tribal lands or fight treaty infractions in court. Our students need courses that will show them how to set up a language immersion program, or skills for treaty negotiation, etc.

Dr. Yellowbird concluded with reiterating his stance about being more globally aware as Native Americans. Surviving in a global world means understanding the impacts of new structures and finding strategies for controlling our own destinies. Working with other Indigenous groups around the globe brings strength in numbers and sharing of strategies.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the literature review we looked specifically at the most contemporary and relevant works as they pertain to this study. In that review we heard that there are three very prominent issues being discussed. Those are: 1) decolonization and self-determination 2) the university as a battlefield 3) revisiting our curriculum. These are the issues that scholars in this field are writing about today. These issues are also
pertinent to the development of a new institution of higher education and critical to understand.

In the expert interviews we also looked for common themes and connections between what the experts in program development had to say. Although each had different areas that they emphasized (and some similarities) they were all connected to the same theme of self-determination. Graham Smith felt that we needed to stay within the Western academy to protect ourselves from hegemonic research, build our scholarly base, and combat colonialism in its newest forms. Linda Smith saw research, specifically, controlling research as a means to self-determination. And Michael Yellow Bird asserts that our communities and students need to develop a strong critical consciousness so that we can fully understand and deconstruct colonialism.

In both data streams we find much discussion about self-determination as being important in moving our educations forward in a more successful way. In most cases the language centered around change and struggle and control. In the conclusion of this chapter we will discuss the results from chapter seven in conjunction with those from chapter eight to see if there are any connections.

I. Conclusion /Critical Issues

As you recall from chapter seven we found a strong theme running through the faculty interviews and student focus groups. The theme was disenfranchisement. All of the respondents in one way or another and to differing degrees experienced a type of disenfranchisement in their work or in their studies. They felt it institutionally, culturally, and structurally. From lack of flexibility in programming to lack of cultural acknowledgement to larger societal impacts on faculty and students; disenfranchisement has come from an unequal power relationship between the Western academy and Native educators and students. Educators (and students) feel disconnected from the institution because they are not equal participants in it. There is a feeling that someone else controls our educational destinies.
In chapter eight we see that the articles, books, and experts echo the concern about the lack of control we have in our education by discussing the need for self-determination in our educations as well as in the larger tribal contexts. They each offer their own particular view of how to gain more control but all are after the same end goal of self-determination. So in chapter seven we heard the problems confronted on the ‘front lines’ of higher education and how that leads to a sense of disenfranchisement; and in chapter eight we heard the discussion and movement to mediate these problems.

I discussed the issue of control and self-determination in broader terms in the two data chapters. Now I move to aggregate this data into a more useful format that can be utilized in the development of a new and innovative institution. And as you recall, I used much of the literature and interviews in the larger body of the paper. So in the aggregation process I used not only data from chapters 7 and 8, but also from the rest of the paper. Below is a list of the 18 most frequently and commonly expressed issues in this study. These issues were repeated throughout the study in many different contexts (much of it from chapters 7 and 8). Therefore, one can assume that these are the most pressing issues in Native American higher education and that they must be taken into account in any effort toward improving Native American higher education. Those efforts can be within institutions such as universities or tribal colleges or in the development of new institutions.

1) Rapid loss of cultural knowledge and language competencies
2) Most universities do not reinforce students’ Native American cultures
3) Universities not responsive to community needs
4) Too few Native American professors to do the work needed
5) Not enough professors are dedicated to the collective visions of community
6) Lack of critical discussions about decolonization in higher ed and in community
7) Many AIS courses are borrowed, voyeuristic or irrelevant to community needs
8) Critical courses lacking in AIS and tribal college curriculum
9) Students need tools and skills to take back to community

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10) University is newest site of colonization – knowledge broker
11) Students need top quality degrees
12) Lack of global perspective and political awareness
13) Lack of Indigenous research conducted by Indigenous researchers
14) Tribal control of research/guidelines needed
15) Need more Native American/Indigenous theorizing
16) Lack of coherent direction or coordinated movement in Native American higher education
17) Socio-economic conditions not improving in many communities
18) Too much reactionary work rather than proactive work

In the next chapter I will propose a model of an Indigenous higher education institution. The institution is different in many ways from the programs and institutions that already exist, but it also incorporates many of the elements from the existing programs and institutions because there are many positive aspects from which to draw.
PART FOUR

**** DREAMING AND VISIONING ****
CHAPTER NINE

A NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN GRADUATE SCHOOL:

A MODEL
A National Native American Graduate School

“Our very willingness to take on a very big goal will offend some people who will think that you are too big for your britches and crazy to boot.”

Watson, J.D. (1993)

Introduction

I now move to propose a model of higher education for Native Americans based on the issues listed in chapter six which came from the five streams of research collected in this study. This proposed model is not purported to be ‘the one answer’ to solve all of the concerns in Native American higher education nor is it intended to take the place of the existing options in higher education. The model is proposed as an additional option, at the graduate level, that would work together with the existing Native American institutions and programs.

The model was developed to respond to the issues addressed in chapter six, which in turn were derived from the principles and issues discussed throughout this study. These are issues that have not been able to be addressed fully by the existing options. The structure is designed to be a national institution to bring together the dispersed and valuable resources available in Native American higher education.

The design of the institution will allow for a culturally sustainable education; one that enhances a student’s identity and connection to their tribal communities. This is done by providing the students with competencies in cultural knowledge as well as world knowledge. This dual competency set will provide communities with highly credentialed community members who are fully prepared to deal with the global nature of our world today in order to protect and preserve our cultures.
This model is not entirely new as it is derived from similar models used (successfully) internationally. The unique aspect to this model is its development for the specific issues involved in Native American higher education.

The length of this dissertation precludes me from drawing out a completely detailed blue print of the institution. Therefore, what will be presented in this chapter is an outline of the institution including the goals, descriptions, structure, key elements, and considerations. Following the outline will be a section which will demonstrate how this proposed model and its specific design features, could potentially meet the critical issues that were identified and laid out at the end of chapter six. As this is a proposed model and as yet not a real institution, the responses suggested here are possibilities based on the design and structure as I perceive it at this stage. Again, there is still some consultation that needs to occur – and no doubt there will be other thinking and suggestions added in as the project becomes manifest. The final section of the chapter I move into a discussion on federal education policy and its implications on the development of the proposed graduate school intervention.
**Vision:** To Establish a National Graduate School of Excellence for Native Americans

**Goals:**

1) To produce a critical mass of Native intellectual leadership to assist in transforming community contexts.

2) To develop and enhance current tribal college education by providing an excellent culturally oriented graduate opportunity to which Tribal Colleges can staircase undergraduate qualifications.

3) To produce highly skilled and credentialed Native graduates who will have excellence in cultural, community, and world knowledge competencies.

4) To establish a National entity to enable a more productive and centralized response in Native American higher education given the current dearth and widely dispersed population of Native academics, programs, and graduate students.

5) To develop both Indigenous research and researchers that are producing positive and transformative innovative research as well as highly skilled research competencies to work in both Native and non-Native contexts.
Figure 10: Native American Graduate School (Medicine Wheel)
I. THE MODEL

A) Description

This will be a graduate institution focused on Native American aspirations and needs; more definitively the plan is to create an institution that will be responsive to Native American students, faculty and their communities. It’s aim will be to develop excellent students with all around skills and competencies to enable them to work confidently and productively in Native American community contexts as well as (where appropriate) any other ‘world’ contexts. Such an institution will add something innovative and new to the current range of higher education options available to Native American students.

The institutional focus on Native American elements is deliberate and strategic. The goal is to make meaningful shifts in the full range of negative socio-economic indicators that currently describe Native American education and community existence. This strategy is a top down approach following Smith (1997) whereby the intention is to create a critical mass of highly credentialed Native American intellectual leadership that also has a consciousness about working for the collective/public good of community advancement and development. This top down approach is not meant to replace the need to also work for change from the bottom up.

The development of this graduate institution is not intended to create a divide between the academy and the community in its creation of a new force of intellectual leadership. This institution will attempt to take this issue into account by seeking creative and innovative ways to recognize, value, and as appropriate, utilize traditional educators and teachers from within organic community contexts.
A further intention is to position this institution to respond to the variable standards that are found to permeate some of the tribal college institutions. A nationally oriented institution developed at the graduate level could work in concert with tribal colleges in a give-and-take effort to assist each other while also advancing Native American higher education as a whole. Equally it intends to work closely with Native scholars and programs of excellence that are scattered throughout many institutions across the United States. The graduate school would negotiate special relationships with individuals and programs that are like minded in commitment.

It is important to recognize that Native American students need multiple opportunities in higher education and that Native American students are not a homogeneous group with respect to their educational aspirations and needs. No single institution has a monopoly on all the answers. What is being argued is that a national graduate entity focused on Native American aspirations and needs provide opportunities in a more holistic manner than current Native programs have been able to achieve. There is also a need to be able to strategically drive educational development of Native Americans in a more coordinated and collaborative manner. It is hoped that this national institution can be a driving force in developing a collective vision for Native American higher education.

There is a need to have at least one national entity of excellence that creates a total institutional context and puts Native American interests first and center with respect to governance (membership and structure), faculty membership, curricular offerings and choices, administrative structures, financial arrangements, community interface, buildings and architecture (design), credential pathways, and student accommodations.

A key issue in developing this institution pertains to the quality of the credentials produced and the overall positioning of the institution as being a graduate school of excellence. While the goal is to remain a mostly independent institution, it would be advantageous to become an ‘attached’ entity of an existing graduate school. The credentials would then be benchmarked with the other graduate school ensuring the level
of excellence. This relationship model would allow the national graduate institution to borrow (with adjustments) the infrastructure and some policy features. Eventually it is hoped that the institution would stand-alone without need of a benchmark institution. This is one of the accommodations that need to be made in the beginning.

In this relationship model it is important to develop the institution independently from any other before entering into a contract/MOU with another entity. In this way the institution can develop with the reality that the validity and legitimacy of being Native American would sit at the center of the total institutional structure. Being Native American and belonging to a particular tribal group would be a taken for granted part of the everyday experience of the students and faculty.

As stated earlier there is not enough room to draw a full blueprint of the institution within the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, I have briefly outlined some key elements to the institutions (and related issues) and bullet pointed some desired features within each category in order to give an indication of the transformative potential of such an intervention.

B) Elements

**Governance:** An important issue is to maintain the power of Native Americans over the key decision making aspects of the institution. However, since ‘Native American’ is a generalized term representing many tribal cultural groups, it would be good to mediate this issue by gaining the support of a national body such as NCAI.

- **75 % Native American:** this will ensure that Native American interests are kept in the forefront of decision making, but also allow non-Natives who are like minded to share their expertise and knowledge with the institution.
- **International representation:** it is important for Native Americans to have a global perspective and to work with others who might have experience in this area.
• **Student representation:** students must have a voice and be able to be part of the decision making processes in their own education.

• **Balanced male/female representation:** women and men must both be represented in order that the different needs and concerns of each are met. It goes along with the need for a balanced life and balanced education.

**Faculty:** It is important that faculty members are significantly Native American and that a wide range of tribal groups are represented. However, it is also important to center the issue of quality faculty. The faculty is perceived as being within the institution as well as in other sites, e.g. adjunct professors, community internships, other sites of Native American interest.

• **Native American scholars of excellence who are committed to collective goals of community:** It is not enough to have faculty that are Native in heritage; they must also be committed to the collective goals of community and not privatized individuals out only for their own good. Our communities need collective work in order to heal, develop and sustain themselves.

• **Other Indigenous scholars of excellence committed to collective goals of community:** faculty members would be welcomed from outside of the American context as long as they too are committed to the collective goals.

• **Other scholars of excellence who are committed to collective goals of community:** faculty of excellence from every background are welcome as long as they understand and work towards the institutional goals of community commitment.

• **Native American and other Indigenous faculty from other programs of excellence:** At the beginning the graduate school may be limited in funding so it would work well to utilize adjunct faculty until it grows. Also, bringing in other faculty will allow the students to have the best faculty Native America has to offer and lends to the need for all of our educators and programs to connect and work together.

• **Need small core to start with and then grow through time (can use adjunct faculty):** to begin the graduate school will need a small core of like minded
individuals to get the programs off the ground. As mentioned above, adjunct faculty members are important at this stage.

**Students:** Native American Students would be selected from a wide range of tribal backgrounds and would be expected to meet a minimum standard and have fulfilled the prerequisites. Other Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students would have the same requirements. It is expected that many students would be drawn from the tribal colleges and other Native American education programs.

- **Entry requirements of 3.2 GPA:** to benchmark with another institution of excellence we have to have credible standards. It is also important that the students meet this requirement because they have to be prepared to handle to course work.
- **Need community support letters:** the student will need to show that they are committed to community by having a letter of support either from their tribe, a Native American organization, or urban Native program/organization.
- **International students:** these students will have the same requirements but their letters will come from their communities or organizations.
- **Non-native students:** can also attend as long as they have support of a tribal community or Native American organization.

**Credential Pathways:** In order to meet the individual needs of our students there will be flexible credentialing opportunities. Approved courses from collaborative institutions will be cross-credited. There will also be learning opportunities within the communities themselves. And student’s course work will be approved on an individual basis based on the needs of the student.

- **Student’s course work is individually approved:** because the institution will have flexible credentialing opportunities, each student’s course work will be examined individually to determine if their requirements have been met.
Courses can be taken from other institutions: cross-credentialing will be allowed so that students have more options and the ability to work with faculty who are specialists in their area but perhaps not working at the graduate school.

Community based options: there may be occasions where students can be in their home communities and get credit for internships, research, or courses taken in their own community.

Internship in community or organization required: students will be required at some point in their programs to complete an internship either in their community, another Native community, or a Native American organization/business.

Buildings and Architecture: The facilities should reflect the socio-cultural needs of the student as well as the academic demands of a graduate school of excellence. The cultural aspects of ‘community’ need to be built into the design so cooperative work and community gathering spaces are incorporated into the design. Family-friendly housing and structures need to be incorporated as well as childcare facilities.

Flexible classroom furnishing: classrooms should be built and furnished to reflect the dual competency agenda of the institution. It should have space for technology as well as traditional teaching methods.

Group work accommodation: in Western institutions the classrooms are often designed for individual work. In this graduate school there should be space and designs made for group work as that is a more common approach in Indigenous education.

Indoor/Outdoor facilities: to incorporate traditional values connected to land and ceremony there should be facilities that allow for indoor as well as outdoor activities.

Facilities for food preparation and dining: it is not a truly Indigenous institution if there are no facilities for cooking and eating! Every community has traditions of feasting and the importance of eating together either socially or for ceremonial purposes.
• **Family housing with common gathering and meeting areas:** our students and our communities are very family oriented and the housing situation must reflect that. The graduate school should have a large family housing facility as well as gathering and meeting areas to accommodate a community oriented life-style.

• **Single student housing with work rooms (24hr access):** there will also be single students and they need to be accommodated as well. Because many will have to work and have odd schedules it should also provide work rooms with 24hr access.

• **Childcare facilities or share opportunities:** childcare absolutely must be designed into the institution. It could be a business or cooperative or a preschool, but it must be available to the students.

• **Technology centers:** as we want to produce students skilled in world knowledge we need them to have access to the finest, most up-to-date equipment they might need for their schooling.

**Finance:** The issues involved in financing an institution are complex. There are many sources of financing to consider including those listed below.

• **Tribal support:** this could come in either large monetary commitments, or guaranteed scholarships for their students attending the graduate school, or in donating equipment, expertise, etc.

• **Philanthropic support:** there are organizations such as the Kellogg foundation which regularly support Native American programs. These should be sought and utilized.

• **Government programs (where appropriate):** government support comes in many forms. The two most important for the institution will be in financial aid packages for the students and research grants. If the graduate school can build the research programs along the ‘direction’ of government programs (but developed to our advantage) this could be a great resource for the institution.

• **Call for a national gaming fund:** in calling for a National movement in Native American higher education there needs to be a ‘larger community’ commitment by every tribe. That is not to overshadow tribal sovereignty or individual tribal
interests, but it would be easier for one tribe to move forward if all tribes were working together. That being said, there are quite a few gaming tribes who are making substantial amounts of money and they could easily support a good portion of the institution – which would ultimately be to their benefit.

**Programs (proposed):** The intention here is to start small with a core of programs and courses and then branch out as the faculty, facilities and finances increase. It is probable that the first programs will be in education, resource management, community health, and Native law.

- **MA** – education, tribal economics, community health, resource management
- **JD** – Native American law specialties – Indian child welfare, sovereignty, treaties
- **MBA** – Native focused Business degree
- **PhD** – in education, Indigenous leadership, various Arts programs

**Research Units:** In having an institution dedicated to the needs of Native Americans it could focus its research programs to the most critical issues in our communities. The graduate institution could work directly with communities and/or on a national level on issues of most importance.

- **Diabetes:** there are a tremendous amount of health and wellness concerns in our communities and diabetes is one of the most widespread. This research unit could focus on diabetes and other health issues (including mental health).
- **Economic development:** tribes need socio-economic change, but they need it in a way that is consistent with their cultures. This unit could work on developments that are consistent with the traditional values and structures of the communities – and then they could train students to be able to do this in their communities.
- **Language:** it is essential that languages be revitalized and protected. This unit could help this revitalization and protection process as well as looking at language in a less western fragmented way. This unit could also archive information for
tribes who are quickly losing their speakers to hold onto it in hopes for revitalizing it.

- **Traditional ecology and other Native sciences:** Native Americans look at the land, the ‘ecology’ very differently than Western science. This unit could help develop programs for communities using Native based approaches to land and ecology.

**International Center on Indigenous Knowledge:** This center would bring together traditional educators and philosophers from Indigenous peoples around the globe. It would give space and respect to traditional ways of knowing and allow them to expand. It is critical to understand our communities as dynamic and not static entities, therefore, our knowledge must be allowed to grow and be influenced by ideas of other Indigenous groups. This does not mean a ‘de-authentication’ of tribal knowledge, rather it is more real and alive if it moves and expands. The center would also be a place to work within the Western arena to develop:

- **Indigenous methods:** there is already some great work being done in this area and it would be wonderful to be able collect and share those methods with all Native American educators. It would also be a place for new methodologies to be created.

- **Indigenous theorizing:** this area is just beginning to develop and this center would provide a validating and supportive environment in which to build and grow in this area.

- **Research guidelines:** there has been a call for community research guidelines. Some communities have their own, some have borrowed them, and others have none. This center could develop a national standard which tribes could choose to adopt or not. They would be developed by a national group to try to be as broad based as possible.

- **Research ethics:** there has also been a call for research ethics specifically for research done in our communities because although some research may meet
university ethical standards, that does not always account for the concerns and standards of the community.

Community: The institution probably will not be located within one specific Native community in order to keep its ‘National’ direction. It might be seen to focus on one group over another if it was located in one specific cultural context (however, it is still an option). It will be important, then, to put an emphasis in bringing community to the institution on a regular basis. Some ideas are listed below:

- **Elders in residence:** elders from every community would be invited to be elders in residence at the institution. They would come for pre-determined amounts of time and be housed in a special elder’s residence and treated with the respect they deserve. There would be several elders in residence at one time. As one elder returned home another elder from a different community would come in.

- **Daily ceremonies:** each community will have representation in the ceremonies as often it would be the elders in residence leading the ceremonies or visiting community members.

- **Community members as regents:** the Board of Regents will be partially made up of community members who will represent not only their particular community but Native American higher education interests as a whole.

- **Yearly review by community:** each year the institution could hold a conference and a pow wow to gather community members and educators in a review of the institution. This will give the graduate school the feedback it needs to fulfill its goal of transformative praxis.

Location: Where the institution is physically located will be determined mostly by two factors; which states have most beneficial higher education policies (more later in this chapter) and which institution the graduate school will benchmark with. If the graduate school benchmarks with an institution in Arizona, for example, it may want to be located nearby to take advantage of the institutional synergy that can be developed. Where it is located is less important than providing housing for the students. As stated earlier in this
thesis, students will travel if they know their needs will be met (housing, childcare, financial aid, etc.). And students who prefer to stay close to home as much as possible can take advantage of the cross-crediting efforts of the institution with tribal colleges.

- **Examine state higher education policies:** each state has its own higher education policies that would be either more flexible or restrictive to the needs of the graduate school. These need to be examined before any benchmark institutions are chosen.

- **Graduate institutions that would be possible benchmark candidates:** we need to look for a benchmarking institution that would understand our mission and agree with it or one that would benefit from their affiliation to our institution (or both). They also need to have a reputation of excellence.

**C) Section Summary**

While this model will not cure all that ails Native American higher education, it will provide students with another option with new, innovative and exciting programs of excellence. It will bring together the best of Native American higher education and allow students the flexibility to make the best choices for their education. The students will leave the institution as community-oriented scholars competent in their own cultural knowledge but also in world knowledge. The students will be able to attend an institution that will address their needs as Native Americans in a global society and give them the tools to make positive changes in their communities. This kind of culturally sustainable education can revitalize and protect Native American culture, language, and communities.

Because a variation of this model is already in use and is successful in New Zealand, it is reasonable to expect success in this new context as the differences in contextual settings (issues) have been accounted for. In the next section I will draw point
by point how this model addresses all of the critical issues that were identified and aggregated from the various research sources.

II. CAPACITY OF THE MODEL

Introduction

As you recall from chapter seven, after sifting and analyzing all of the different information streams, I aggregated the 18 most frequently and commonly expressed issues. These are the issues, coming directly from the research, which must be taken into account when designing a model for a new institution. This section will demonstrate how this proposed model addresses these critical issues. Each of the issues has been re-written into a positive action statement and is identified in bold print. How the proposed graduate entity might intervene in that particular issue is discussed beneath each one

A) Critical Issues and Interventions

1) The need to protect and grow cultural knowledge and language competencies amongst many tribes.

The National graduate school would address this issue in several ways. First, it would incorporate space for cultural knowledge(s) and languages within its curriculum and structures. This knowledge(s) would be a taken for granted part of the institution’s mission – to enhance all Native tribes, their languages, and culture. Second, there would be courses, research, and programs directed at the recovery and preservation of cultural knowledge and traditional languages. Third the institution would develop and support cultural practice, custom and knowledge in its organization, pedagogy and practice – not
exclusively, but it would make space for different tribal elements to be practiced and included as appropriate. Fourth, the institution would require that incoming students have a certain level (to be determined) of culture and perhaps language competency before they are admitted. This will help ensure several things:

a). – that the student is committed to a community (rather than only an individualistic agenda)

b). – that the institutions filtering students into the graduate school will need to focus on assisting their students in cultural competencies as well.

c). – that every one will be aware up front that the institution is committed to both tribal development, growth and success as well as to a collective vision of Native American educational success and therefore students and faculty will be expected to be as well.

d). that students ought to be ‘sponsored’ by a tribal community, and/or tribal college, and/or a recognized urban Native community, or Native American organization as important selection criteria in order to assist acceptance into the graduate school. This is another way of ensuring the community commitment and connectedness is valued. Furthermore it will be an expectation that graduate doctoral programs and the related research will be connected back to the sponsoring community of interest. To assist this there is potential to link with tribal colleges and to accredit staff and courses (providing they meet the standards set by the National Graduate entity). This would enable students to potentially complete part of their individual coursework within the community context from which they come. There is also opportunity to develop arrangements with existing University programs and to allow students to complete a percentage of their individual program with other Native academics within selected and accredited programs – these arrangements could be developed through Memorandums of Understanding with existing University institutions and programs.
2) The need an institution that will reinforce students’ cultural identities.

This graduate school will be a national endeavor so it will not be focused on one particular culture like so many of the tribal colleges. It will have to be more like the inter-tribal tribal colleges. However, the institution will reinforce student’s individual tribal cultures by providing them with resources, structures, programs, that are designed to compliment as well as allow them to connect to their own cultural base. The pedagogical practices will also be designed to reinforce the culture and identity of the individual student but additionally it will teach students about the needs of other tribes. In this sense the National school has a responsibility to support all of the tribal cultures in Native America. They will also have faculty and staff who reinforce these same ways. It will be a taken for granted part of the institution that they are Native American and that their world views, socio-political realities, and cultural frameworks will differ (to varying degrees) from what is normative in Western universities.

Having specifically designed curriculum, as well as research programs directed at preserving and protecting cultures, will act as a validating instrument for students. If they see the heavy emphasis and value placed on their cultures by a graduate institution, it will allow them to see their cultural identity as one of importance and not insignificance as is often the case at Western universities.

Another way the institution would reinforce the importance of cultural identity is by understanding and allowing for ceremonial leave, cultural rites, and other spiritual needs as expressed by the students and their communities. There may also be times when students, faculty or staff have to take a leave of absence to fulfill community responsibilities such as holding appointed offices or attending to clan responsibilities, etc. These must be accepted and accommodated for every tribe equally.

A further potential of this National entity is that it could possibly, by arrangement with individual universities, provide existing institutions with a Native focused graduate program.
3) The need for an institution that can be tailored to Native needs and aspirations and that can be responsive to community or local tribal needs.

The graduate school design should allow for a much more responsive relationship with communities by: 1- directing the degree programs towards specific needs of communities, 2- maintaining relationships to communities through programs such as ‘elders in residence’ 3- Maintaining a Board of Regents consisting of Native Americans 4- institution understands our student profiles and will work to assist, as appropriate, and link to community representatives (ie: financial aid, higher ed reps, tribal officials, etc.) 5- hold an annual review of the institution by all of the involved communities.

A key aspect in providing what is suggested above is having an acute understanding of the student and community profiles. The graduate school will understand and allow for the fact that a great percentage of our students are returning female students with children. This means that childcare and family housing must be provided for. The graduate school will also take into account the socio-economic crisis from which many students will come. These are issues that the graduate school can be structured to acknowledge, provide for, and/or proactively work towards changing.

4) The need to grow the Native American intellectual base.

By providing a graduate school of excellence that is more responsive to student needs and dedicated to the collective good of Native Americans it is hoped that the institution will attract and matriculate an increasing number of Native Americans with advanced degrees each year to develop a critical mass of Native American intellectuals. In order to attract students the graduate school will provide:

• Degree programs that are in the areas of need and interest to students and their communities
• Linkages to other institutions attended by Native Americans: some coursework may be done closer to home, etc.
• Courses that are more relevant to issues faced in Native communities
• Provide mentoring
• Research opportunities that are proactive and respectful
• Individualized programs

Education would be one of the first programs developed in this institution with the goal of increasing our numbers and influencing practices in universities as well as our own institutions. In this graduate school students would be trained and highly skilled in their area of expertise as well as in research, theory development, and critical thinking skills.

5) The need to produce more Native faculty who are dedicated to the collective visions of community.

This issue ties directly to issues number one and four. This institution is designed and dedicated to developing students and scholars who are dedicated to the ‘collective good’ of Native American communities. It will do this by: 1) ensuring that faculty have a track record of working for the collective good of Native Americans as well as experience working with and in communities, and 2) while training new faculty the graduate school will have made sure that students have met all prerequisites, (involving community knowledge and sponsorship), and that courses provided will be focused in training students to be community minded.

The community emphasis will permeate the institution through the coursework, internships, community volunteer requirements, community research requirements, and training students in collective visioning.

6) The need for an institution which understands, teaches, and analyzes the structural impediments in higher education and in community contexts.

It is critically important for educators, students, and community members understand and take part in a process of decolonization. If there is hope for self-
determination and true sovereignty, then the graduate institution should take a strong role in making that happen. It could influence the discussions of decolonization in several ways. 1) provide workshops and on-going discussions for faculty 2) teach courses specifically on colonization/decolonization as it affects Native Americans to all students (no matter their field of study) 3) provide community outreach programs including workshops in decolonization 4) provide location and sponsorship of meetings/conferences on the topic of decolonization for Indigenous scholars from all institutions.

It is equally important for the graduate school to be consciously critical of its own development to ensure that it does not simply replicate Western university structures that are assimilative in nature. The graduate institution must not act as an agent of colonialism by being unconscious to the effects of the larger structures in higher education.

7) The need to develop courses that are specific, applied, and relevant to community needs.

The graduate institution would not teach courses ‘about’ Native Americans but courses that are ‘applied’ in nature. These courses would not be borrowed from anthropology or other disciplines but would be unique to Native American concerns. They would be relevant to the current issues and needs in the community such as courses in tribal governments, sovereignty, resource management, tribal economics, etc. These courses would not be added to a general degree program as an ‘emphasis’ like in so many universities. These courses would be part of a specific degree program such as Native American Law or Native American Resource Management, etc.

8) Students need knowledge and skills that are relevant to enhancing their communities; this is necessary in order to intervene in the underdeveloped socio-economic conditions in many tribal communities
Following on the heels of the last issue, the courses at the graduate institution will not only be geared toward the needs of contemporary Native American concerns, but it will give students tools and skills to take back into their communities to make change. The students can then be ‘change makers’ in their communities and will be provided with a transformative education. It is not enough to discuss the issues of tribal government or resources management or economics, etc.; the students must also be given the skills to take that information and make positive change in their communities.

As some of the skills needed in the community are new and growing it may be the case that students are involved in developing the new skills and the programs to deliver them. The graduate school then can become a center for the development of directly responsive programs and students gain leadership skills that are so necessary in the communities, especially in light of the socio-economic crisis that affects so many communities.

9) The need to teach the politics of cultural survival for students given strong anti-cultural elements embedded in ‘one size fits all’ types of educational policies such as ‘no child left behind’; these issues also apply in the tribal college context.

In another issue of curriculum, the graduate school would teach courses not only in critical thinking, but also expect the students to use those skills throughout their studies. Most courses would contain elements of criticality (as appropriate). The goal is to have students, and eventual faculty and other professionals, who not only have work related ‘skills’ but who are also intellectually very strong. Hopefully this will impact the tribal college and AIS curriculum (if needed in some instances) to develop stronger critical courses in order to properly ‘staircase’ students into the graduate school.

The graduate school is positioned to prepare culturally competent students but our communities also need students who are strong in world knowledge and who are strong in their intellectual and critical thinking skills. The graduate school can provide students with those skills through curriculum and structural design.
10) The need to keep a presence in the highest levels of education in order to challenge the hegemony involved in ‘knowledge production.’

The graduate institution is designed in such a way that it can impact this issue in many ways. First, the institution will try to develop a critical mass of intellectuals to send back into the universities to fight against the newest forms of colonization and to create a space for Indigenous knowledge. As society’s ‘knowledge makers’ universities must be challenged at the source.

Second, as an institution benchmarked with a Western institution, faculty and students at the graduate institution can make a difference with their work and writings in an institution developed for excellence. Benchmarking gives the student’s writing and research a status they might not have without it. Even though the student’s research may be critical of Western institutions, it will not be a unique position in the sense that there are other fields such as feminism that take similar positions. Hopefully having the research at an institution of excellence will bring more attention to it.

Thirdly, the work, writings, and research coming out of the graduate institution should counter the hegemony of Western theories as well as provide a place for Indigenous theorizing to develop.

11) The need for high quality degrees and associated competencies

Unfortunately, in the past, there has been the perception that if a degree came from a Native American institution it was a less valuable watered-down version of degrees granted in Western institutions. There has also been the perception that degrees in Native American Studies, (no matter what institution they come from), are less valuable than the ‘classic’ science degrees of Western institutions.
Those perceptions need to change and the graduate school can do this by doing two things: (1) benchmarking its degrees with another institution of excellence. This will provide the graduate school with a positive reputation from the beginning and not have to wait to ‘prove’ itself. (2) providing top quality faculty, staff, curriculum, resources, and programs to support the development of both cultural and world competencies.

Our students will be facing many difficult issues and problems within their communities and they need and deserve the finest and strongest educations possible. The graduate school will attempt to provide that.

12) The need for more cross-cultural interaction and net-working with other successful indigenous projects/programs. There is also a need for a critical appreciation of the potential impacts of globalization on our communities.

The graduate institution will be positioned to bring together Indigenous people from around the world to speak, visit, and teach. This kind of networking is critical in a global world as Indigenous nations need to band together for strength in combating the negative affects (that may impact all Indigenous nations) of globalization. Indigenous nations could share their political and economic strategies with each other and educators could share curriculum, language and literacy strategies, and student access, retention and success strategies.

Within the institution courses and degree programs would be taught to increase the political awareness and indigenous global perspectives of our students, faculty, and by extension our community. These could be provided to communities in workshop form if desired. The graduate school should take a large role in providing access to information regarding globalization and its affects on our communities.

It would also be the graduate school’s intention to provide opportunity for student exchange programs with other Indigenous institutions around the globe. It would also
welcome and encourage students from other Indigenous nations to study at the graduate school.

13) The need to grow more indigenous research expertise, more indigenous researchers and to encourage local research initiatives.

14) The need for more research that is responsive to what tribes need and want; that is research that is meaningful and addresses indigenous questions and needs.

As the issues in #13 and #14 are so closely related they will be covered together. The graduate school, as a national institution, should be the forefront of Indigenous research with its International Center on Indigenous Knowledge. It would be focused on developing Indigenous researchers, Indigenous research, and Indigenous research methodologies.

It can give student researchers the support and freedom to develop appropriate methodologies for their research initiatives or to work with other Indigenous methodologies or researchers. This interaction will provide communities with access to the highest quality of appropriate and respectful research possible.

Communities should be able to contact the institution for assistance in conducting needed research because they will know that the graduate school trains their students in Indigenous research methods and ethics. They could also assist communities in developing guidelines for research in their communities so that Native Americans control what research happens, by whom, and how. Of course the students would also be well versed in Western research methods to assure they had competencies in both fields.
15) The need for more intellectual leadership in the area of Indigenous theorizing

Along with teaching Western theory, (because that is necessary as well), the graduate school would teach alternative theorizing and promote the development of Indigenous theorizing. Indigenous scholars will be given the opportunity to develop their ideas and use them in their work at the institution without the problems or roadblocks one might find in a Western institution. The International Center on Indigenous Knowledge will be a place for scholars to meet and work together in the development of new theories. There is great potential here to innovate and develop new frontiers of knowledge at the intersection of Western and Indigenous theorizing.

Gatherings, such as conferences and workshops can take place to share ideas and assist each other in these processes. The more theories that are developed and used in multiple locations, the more credibility they will gain in the larger research communities.

16) The need for a more co-ordinated, collective commitment within Native American higher education responses.

With the graduate school being a national center, it would hope to bring Indigenous educators from across the country together and continue to speak about the possibility of having an over-arching philosophy of education for Native Americans (broad enough to allow for tribal differences). A collective philosophy and direction could help tribes collectively combat national governmental efforts that are assimilative in nature or destructive in any other way. It could also challenge existing educational organizations that are interested in preserving the status quo by pressuring them to move beyond naming the problems and actually doing something about them. A further benefit of a collective philosophy would be the ability for tribes to work collectively with other Indigenous peoples and organizations instead of piece meal efforts by individual tribes without the support or resources of a larger group.
The structure of the graduate school will be designed so that the existing programs (tribal colleges and Native programs in universities) can track their programs and students into the graduate school. Through this design it is also hoped that the institutions would develop a strong interconnected working relationship. Perhaps this could help some struggling institutions find a model to structure themselves to until they get back on their feet and going in a direction they are happy with or inspire the development of new institutions that are designed to directly track into the graduate school.

17) The need for positive and proactive action rather than reactive and negative responses and initiatives.

Reactionary work comes mostly when people are unaware of the larger picture. They simply react to what is happening at the moment and get caught in the bickering and in-fighting that unfortunately describes many of our programs. When people become aware of the larger structures and the political implications of those structures, they understand that the battles need to be waged at higher levels than departmental. The critical consciousness that the institution wants to develop in its students, faculty, staff, and connected communities, should help focus our efforts on being proactive change makers. Knowing the rules of the game and being able to play it strategically is much more effective than arguing about the problems after they have already been established.

Through the example of the Maori we can see how their proactive efforts have moved them forward to be trailblazers in Indigenous control of Indigenous education. This graduate school model is also an attempt at proactive work in Indigenous education. Instead of simply ‘reacting’ to what is placed upon us in Native American higher education, it is an attempt to create what we want on our own terms.
18) The need to improve the socio-economic conditions and crises that disproportionately affect our communities, reservations and tribes.

This issue was placed last because addressing this issue is going to take the combined efforts of all of the elements listed above. If the other seventeen issues are mediated to a minimum successful level it is projected that the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities would change for the better. This is supported by research undertaken by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. They “consistently find that effective exercise of sovereignty, combined with capable and culturally grounded institutions of self-government, are indispensable keys to successful, long-term development of Native communities.” (www.ksg.harvard.edu/hunap/research.html)

Through specifically responding to all the issues discussed above, the graduate school hopes to produce not just Native graduates, but graduates who are also capable leaders in their communities. These leaders will take back with them knowledge and understanding of what is behind the problems in their communities as well as the tools and skills to begin to make the needed changes. As the Harvard Report noted, sovereignty and self-government are keys to this progress. The graduate school needs to produce excellent students who can take on these very large and very important roles.

B) Tribal College Support

A further capacity of this model is to partner with willing tribal colleges to help address some of their needs (as defined by research conducted by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium). Two of the studies conducted by AIHEC were *Building Strong Communities: Tribal Colleges as Engaged Institutions* and *Tribal Colleges’ Contributions to Economic Development*. At the end of these studies they gave a list of recommendations to policy makers, university officials, and private sector organizations to help further tribal college progress in the areas of community building and economic development.
In the *Building Strong Communities* report there are ten recommendations; seven of which the National Native American Graduate School could possibly assist with. Those recommendations (in brief) are as follows:

1. Increase support for faculty development at Tribal Colleges (and related curriculum development).
2. Strengthen and increase resources to improve the participation and success of American Indians in teacher education programs.
3. Continue support for the new National Center for Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities.
4. Provide more opportunities for Tribal Colleges involvement in Head Start, TRIO, and other early intervention programs.
5. Support private sector initiatives, such as the Cultural Learning Centers, that help expand traditional values, etc.
6. Expand technology grants to Tribal Colleges to leverage private sector investment in Information Technology Infrastructure.
7. Promote and support partnership development and collaboration with other Tribal Colleges as well as with mainstream institutions, through adding resources and encouraging cooperative arrangements.

(AIHEC, 2001)

There are many ways in which the graduate school could possibly address these recommendations. The first recommendation for support in faculty development is a big issue for tribal colleges.

…geographic isolation of reservation communities, the low salary levels the colleges are able to offer, and the substantial amount of work, dedication, and involvement in their students’ lives to which Tribal College faculty must commit make recruiting and retaining faculty a difficult task. (AIHEC, 2001)

The turnover rate is high for tribal colleges with only 56% staying only five years or less. “Contributing to high faculty turnover rates at many of the Tribal Colleges are inadequate resources and low salaries” (AIHEC, 2001). There is, however, potential for
the National Native American Graduate School to assist. Through hiring of adjunct faculty at the tribal colleges the faculty would increase their income and have access to more resources. Similarly, in the second recommendation, if a tribal college partners with the graduate school, their students will have access to graduate level teacher education programs.

The third recommendation asks for support for their health related research program. While the graduate school may not be able to fund this program, it could partner with them in research initiatives. The fourth recommendation is focused on expanding opportunities with early intervention programs and might be addressed through the benchmark institution itself since most institutions of higher education have TRIO and early intervention programs as standard. In the fifth recommendation AIHEC calls for support of private sector initiatives such as Cultural Centers, etc. The graduate school is positioned to provide education on campus as well as in the community. Perhaps these can be sites for community internships and development projects.

The sixth recommendation calls for an expansion of technology grants. The graduate school may be able to help collaborating tribal colleges by providing more access to technology for, as well access to, some grant applications by way of their connection to the graduate school. And finally, the seventh recommendation called for more collaboration between tribal colleges and amongst all institutions. This is a great move in the right direction and the graduate school is positioned perfectly to assist in the development of collaborative efforts.

In the second report, Tribal Colleges’ Contributions to Local Economic Development, there were six steps outlined for policymakers and other leaders to take leading roles in support of tribal college efforts. Out of the six steps there are elements of three in which the graduate school could potentially assist and they are listed below:

1. Land continues to be one of the greatest resources of reservation communities. Through targeted education and training and information
dissemination, Tribal Colleges can help tribes become self-sufficient in the management of their land and natural resources.

2. To assist in creating sustainable reservation communities, the Tribal Colleges must collaborate with a range of partners in regional development.

3. Ultimately, leaders and policymakers must be aware of the Tribal Colleges as a community development resource. Past government economic development failed because they did not recognize the underlying structures of the local economy.

(AIHEC, 2000)

The National Native American Graduate School could potentially impact these issues of economic growth in positive ways through collaboration with willing tribal colleges. If the communities served by the graduate school decide that land resource management was an important area to focus on, then the graduate school could work toward developing degrees in this area so that it might provide communities with experts from within Native America. It could also create a research specialty in land management which could assist communities in the creation of sustainable economic development plans. The graduate school could also play a role in educating businesses and governments to the cultural issues involved in economic development. This kind of collaborative effort could greatly increase the impact tribal colleges, university programs, and the graduate school has on the socio-economic conditions of Native Americans today.

Section Summary

The model given for the national Native American graduate school was designed based on the needs of the communities as defined by the listed issues aggregated from the research data. However, it must be reiterated that this is just a thumbnail sketch of a model and therefore it is not possible to detail each and every aspect of the institution and how it will or might mediate all of the critical issues.
The concerns and issues of contention raised by the various sources and which scope the existing problems of the current higher education responses available to Native Americans need to be engaged and mediated by the new proposed National Graduate entity. The creation of a national site of excellence for Native American Graduate Studies provides an opportunity to revisit the structures of the total institutional setting to make them more relevant and successful. Moreover, it is also an opportunity to engage with and uplift the performances of existing options, across various tribal colleges and existing institutional programs.

This model is not intended to be a prescriptive intervention – it is intended to layout the possibilities for transforming the whole of the higher education sector through the singular act of creating a National Graduate entity of excellence. What is important then and what I have tried to demonstrate in the second part of this chapter are some of the multipliers that would ensue from such an intervention.

I now move to discuss the policy environment that needs to be understood and engaged with in order to initiate an institutional intervention of this scale and scope.
III. FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The graduate school, no matter how well it is able to address the issues above, will not exist in a vacuum. Therefore, there will have to be consideration given to the external influences upon it. It will need to ‘fit’ somewhere within the sphere of American higher education. The more that the limits and capacity of the existing policy context is understood, the more likely that the aims of the project can be successfully achieved. By that I do not mean that it should assimilate into the existing frameworks of what counts as a higher education institution and therefore into the Western cultural oriented mainstream, what I mean is that one should look at the surrounding political landscape and see where it can work within existing policy and frameworks to achieve its aims, or where necessary to engage with policy makers and officials to see the merits of the proposal. In effect this is what the Maori did in the New Zealand context. Government and officials came to see the merits and benefits of the Maori proposal and responded positively. According to Graham Smith, (Interview, 2004);

A key understanding on the part of the New Zealand education officials was a recognition that the status quo offerings and structures in higher education were having little traction and limited success for Maori. Allied to this was a growing and overt expression of dissatisfaction by various Maori communities and interest groups at the under-performance of most of the existing system. Now, some ten years after the establishment of the three tribal Higher education entities in New Zealand, one of them – Te Wananga o Aotearoa – has become the largest institution in terms of enrollments in New Zealand, with some 40,000 student enrollments. However, more recently the Government has directed the institution to control its growth. In my view, the very existence (and now the enrollment success) of these institutions perform an overt critique of the existing higher education options for Maori.

Of course there is a large difference in the political structure and climate of the two countries, and any proposed Native American Graduate School would have to understand and carefully navigate its ‘location’ in the American higher education political and policy landscape.
While federal education policy will have to be an important contextual consideration during the development stage of such a graduate institution, the very first element needs to be a collective ‘vision’ that has wide ‘buy in’ from Native American communities and interest groups. Graham Smith (Interview, 2004), in response to the question ‘How do you start a tribal University?’ stated;

Most of our communities had no resources – we started with nothing other our imaginations. We had experience of what had not been working that well. We also had a positive vision of what we wanted and aspired to, and that is the most important thing – that people can see the vision and support it. Thereafter, the process, for our Wananga (Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi: Tribal University) was straightforward. If you follow our process, once you have the vision, all you need is a pot of paint, four nails, a piece of wood and any old empty building. You then paint the name of the institution on the wood and nail it up on the wall of the building – this is how you start. You do it – you act. We knew we needed funds, we needed a CEO, we needed courses, credentials and Faculty and lots of other things. All of these elements are important – but once we had a vision and a name, we could then develop a strategic development plan around the vision to incrementally grow all of these elements, and we have. Today, ten years later Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi is a tribal university. It is a multi-million dollar enterprise. It is just received support to be a PhD granting institution – one of two institutions who are not traditional Universities who can grant PhDs in New Zealand. If the vision is right and it is positive and proactive and it’s done for the right reasons, people will get in behind it and it will happen!

With respect to Native America, there is a need to look at where the institution might align itself, in positive ways, with the federal policies in order that it gets national support and acknowledgement and therefore potentially eligible to receive national support, from power brokers, if not funding resources.

In the United States, however, in comparison to some other countries, the federal government has minimal ‘control’ over postsecondary education. As a matter of fact the 10th Amendment to the US Constitution gives all authority over education to the individual states. Each state, therefore, can have their own distinct way of structuring and regulating higher education. But the federal government does support higher education through legislation such as the GI Bill in 1944 and the Higher Education Act of 1965. It does recognize a national interest in higher education and in the past half
century the federal and state governments have invested substantially in its programs. (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2003)

The Higher Education Act demonstrated the federal government’s commitment to postsecondary education. It does not control higher education institutions, but it does impact and influence them in other ways, mostly monetary.

Formal federal influence over institutions of higher education occurs in such areas as: (a) congressional legislative enforcement under the Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection); (b) research and development appropriations; and (c) matching funds generated by federal legislation in the area of loans for postsecondary students. (Prisco, et al, 2002, p.3)

Financial influence by the government has grown as close-to-market research fields tend to get more support.

The federal government influences higher education behaviors and outcomes primarily through altering the terms under which financial resources are made available. To achieve national objectives, the federal government funds: (1) individual students directly via student financial assistance, and (2) individual institutions through incentive grants based upon a competitive proposal process. Attached to funding streams are regulatory requirements.” (Prisco, et al, 2002, p. 3)

The interesting aspect of federal policy is that although, as stated above, it does not control higher education, its monetary influence reaches far into the daily workings of higher education institutions. As Prisco, et al, point out (above) the federal government influences institutions by what it chooses to fund and under what terms it will fund. In the 1960’s through the 1970’s the government was focused on two things – on equal access for students of all races and providing tuition assistance to increase access for low income students. From the late 1970’s through today there has been a move away from access concerns and a large increase in costs (Orfield, 1993). This move away from access was typified by Reagan-era supply side economics which was promoted through tax policies, deregulation, privatization, and commercialization of government bodies
(Slaughter, 1998). All of these factors greatly impacted universities because in order to gain federal dollars they had to focus on the areas the government was focused on – and that was anything close to the market. Departments and fields of study that were considered close to the market flourished while those who were not fought for stability.

Today we can still see this ‘market value’ emphasis at the universities where research has become big business and departments that are not close to the market are, in some cases, fighting for their funding. Currently the government funds student aid and R&D (research and development). An interesting fact is that “R&D for academic science, the bulk of which goes to research universities, annually provides approximately the same amount of federal dollars to higher education as does student financial aid” (Slaughter, 1998, p.209).

Financial aid is also different than it was in the 60’s and 70’s where most of it was in the form of grants to students in need. As universities started paying more to professors working in R&D and research expenses increased, there was a middle class backlash fearing that they could not afford to send their children to college. In time this led to the government focusing their financial aid toward middle class concerns. They did this by reducing the availability of grants to the poor and increasing eligibility for student loans to middle class families (Orfield, 1993). This was reflected in the reauthorization of the HEA of 1992:

HEA ’92 is important because it authorized what by now is more than three-quarters of all financial aid available to students enrolled in post-secondary education in the United States (College Board, 1993). And the politics of HEA ’92 are important because they resulted in a significant shift in federal policy from an historic commitment to promote access to postsecondary education through grants based on need to a broader strategy of insured loans regardless of family income. (Hannah, 1996, p.498)

This shift in financial aid policy has led to a serious access problem for low-income student. This obviously includes many Native American students who can ill afford to build up student loan debt. But many low income students are affected by this
change in policy so much so that there is a large gap between the college going rates of the highest and lowest income families. According to an article written about student access, by Stephen Burd (2002), there is a 32% difference between high and low income student attendance, which is the same as it was in 1970. Eighty-five percent of high school graduates from families earning $75,000 dollars or more go to college, while only fifty-three percent of graduates from families earning lower than $25,000 go. Many students choose not to go because they believe they cannot afford it and of those who do many do not finish because of the demands of working long hours to accommodate the cost of school.

Both the financial aid and research funding policies of the federal government will have to be taken into account by the graduate school. Loans are already a problem for Native American students who can end up graduating with huge amounts of debt (I know this because I am one of them). Therefore, the graduate school needs to think about alternative forms of funding for students such as tribal funding, organizational sponsorships, and perhaps a broader based fund from casino tribes.

The second area of concern, the funding of institutions through research grants, is very important and could be a source of revenue to fund projects particularly important to our communities. The federal government tends to support research it finds of ‘national’ interest.

The Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) has close ties to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), which together provide a significant share of research and development support to higher education. The NSF supports, through grants and contracts, fundamental research and education in academic institutions. This NIH, the principal health research agency of the federal government, uses grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to pursue its objectives. In addition to its ties to the NIH and NSF, OPE works in conjunction with several cabinet-level departments and federal agencies in areas ranging from information, analysis and dissemination to research in a broad spectrum of disciplines. Key collaborators in the current 449 programs that offer funding or services for postsecondary education include: The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Energy. (Prisco, et. al., 2002, p.9-10)
The good news here is that the graduate school, and the interests of the communities they serve, could easily align with the research interests of the federal government. NIH grants could be used to support the research on the many health issues of concern in our communities from diabetes to heart disease to mental health issues. The NSF grants could be used in many different ways to support the technology programs and science based programs of excellence that the graduate school will want to offer. The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy also have a wide range of applications for the needs of our communities.

The federal research funding has its good and bad points. The graduate school will have to try to work in at least partial alignment with the federal government to take advantage of the funding. However, the government can also be influenced as to its direction in educational funding. According the Prisco, et. al., there is an important group which influences federal policy, (and funding), and therefore impacts postsecondary institutions; and that is higher education advocacy organizations. The six most influential, (out of hundreds), are: the American Council on Education, the American Association of Universities, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the American Association of Community Colleges. There are four more groups that have become more influential of late and they are:

- Organizations that depend on the student loan program – Consumer Bankers Association, the National Council of Higher Education Loan Programs, Sallie Mae (largest private lender of student loans in the U.S.)
- Other influential associations – National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, National Educational Opportunity Associations, United Negro College Fund, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, and the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
• Campus lobbyists hired by larger and more complex individual institutions to deal with specific their associations do not address
• “Hired Guns,” usually from for-profit law firms, consulting firms, and lobbying firms, who are employed by postsecondary institutions to provide assistance with policy analysis and to provide substantive expertise and influence on the intricacies of federal policy issues.

(Prisco et. al., 2002, p.11)

It will be important, not only for the graduate school, but for Native Americans in higher education generally to work together as a united force (as mentioned in Chapter Seven) to exert some influence on policy. It would behoove us to become a known ‘player’ on the political higher education scene. This is especially important since the higher education act is reauthorized every 4-5 years. This means that there are chances to get our needs addressed in the reauthorizations. It also means that there needs to be someone there all the time looking after our interests so we do not lose what we might gain. This is one more way Native Americans need to understand the broader implications of higher education and be involved to a point where we are actors in the game and not reactors to policy change. This is not to over look the work that tribal college representatives have done and the headway they have made in their dealings with federal policy and appropriations. Their experience and expertise could be invaluable assets to the graduate school. But the next step in this direction would be to form a larger national Native American movement which could exert more influence on these policies.

In the meantime, the graduate school must be aware of the policies and their implications. Taking a page from the tribal colleges, the graduate school will need to examine each section of the Higher Education Act to see where it might fit in terms of monetary appropriations. In an article written by James Shanley in 1991, he discussed how AIHEC had done just that. The tribal colleges wanted to know whether they should try to become an actual section of the Higher Education Act (HEA) or if they were better off the way they were – in a separate Tribally Controlled College Act. They took the HEA section by section to see what the implications were for tribal colleges. In the end
they felt that they risked too much by becoming a section and losing their Tribally Controlled College Act provisions.

The HEA has sections on Historically Black College’s (HBC’s) in which special consideration and appropriations are given to those institutions (Shanley, 1991). There are many other sections which would be of interest and could be capitalized upon such as the Title III- Institutional Aid section. This fund is intended to help schools other than HBC’s to improve academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability “… in order to increase their self-sufficiency and strengthen their …contribution to the higher education resource of the Nation” (Shanley, 1991). One could argue that the graduate school was trying to increase self-sufficiency to all of Native American higher education and that would make a great contribution to the higher education resource of the Nation. There are many more sections with even more implications, but it is not my intent to go into a full examination of the HEA; only to say that is must be done in the development stages of the graduate school in order to give the institution the strongest position it can get from the start.

Although the HEA is certainly important for the graduate school to consider, it is also important to remember that federal policy and the federal government do not control higher education in the United States, but they do certainly influence it in varying ways. It is important to understand how that influence works and how to productively and strategically use it to the advantage of the graduate school. The states actually wield more control over an institution than the federal government does but as we do not know where the graduate institution will be placed there is no way to analyze those politics or potentials yet. However, when it comes to making a decision as to where to locate the graduate school, it would be wise to consider which states would be most beneficial to work with before making the decision.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed a model for a new Indigenous institution, discussed how that model might address the critical issues laid out in chapter seven, and I have tried to anticipate major areas of concern or impact upon the National Native American Graduate School. I have not answered all of the questions or concerns but this chapter has not intended to do so – as a matter of fact it would be impossible. Until an institution of some type is up and running we will not know precisely how effective it might be, but we already have a good sense of what is possible, by virtue of Maori experience. In this chapter, I have also tried to indicate specific problems and how these anticipated issues might be addressed within a new model of higher education designed to lift the general performance and outcomes within Native American higher education, within the socio-economic conditions of Native tribes and communities, and with respect to the cultural aspirations of Native Americans more generally.

In the epilogue, I will discuss the next steps of implementation which include a National Native American philosophy of education and a call to all those who may be interested in participating in the institutional development.
EPILOGUE

MOVING FORWARD: THE CHALLENGES AHEAD
This dissertation argued that the current responses in higher education are limited at best at meeting the current educational needs of Native American students and their communities. The lack of educational successes and the lack of substantive socio-economic changes in our community are evidence of this problem. This study also looked at positive and proactive examples nationally and internationally that Native Americans might be able to borrow from or re-develop in their own terms. Finally the dissertation offered a proposed solution – the development of a model for a National Native American Graduate School. Now that there is an outline for an intervention model, what are the next steps and what are the challenges in getting there? This short epilogue will briefly touch on some of these issues.

I. National Native American Educational Policy

In undertaking such a large project as a National Native American Graduate School it is important to be able to clearly communicate what it is that Native Americans want, need, and strive toward in their education. There will be many times in which the graduate schools will work with outside entities which will need to know what we want and how we want to get there. This could be facilitated by the development of a National Native American Higher Education Policy. If such a policy were forwarded to government, higher education, business, and private sectors it would be much easier for those agencies to assist us and for our communities to have a common direction and cohesive movement forward.

The Maori already have a national education policy which actually goes beyond education into the business and government sectors as well. Their policy comes from the “Maori Framework” which was commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and developed by the Maori Tertiary Reference Group (New Zealand’s Ministry of Education website: http://www.minedu.govt.nz). This framework has assisted them, and those they work with, focus their goals and also keep up their strategy of making change in multiple locations.
I have drawn heavily on the Maori example in guiding the changes outlined here. It is understood that the Maori and the Native American context are quite different. The Maori are one people with one language and one treaty while Native Americans are many different cultural and linguistic groups as well as having many and varied treaty arrangements. This means that we cannot transfer the ideas directly from their context to ours. It also means that it may be more difficult, take longer, and have to be much more general policy than what the Maori have. That does not mean, however, that something similar cannot be accomplished here.

There may be concern from smaller tribes that their interests will be overshadowed by larger tribes. This is why there must be great effort taken into considering every tribes concerns and making a policy broad enough to allow all interests to be covered by some aspect of the policy. In the Canadian context, for example, there is Kirkness and Barnhardt’s work on the Four R’s of education. As a reminder the Four R’s refer to: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility. Kirkness and Barnhardt believe that these elements need to be incorporated into First Nations education in order to be successful (in Native terms). This has not become a policy, nor has any government entity used it for the entire Canadian context, however, it is broad enough for everyone to work with and perhaps could be used as an educational policy framework in Canada. Native Americans could also use the Four R’s, or something similar to develop a national education policy.

In my own graphic illustration (chapter nine) of the National Native American Graduate School, I also borrowed from Kirkness and Barnhardt’s Four R’s. I believe it is possible and I believe it is something that should be pursued. There is a great need for a cohesive Native American movement in higher education. This would be a good place to start.
II. Innovation and Change

As stated earlier in this paper the idea for an Indigenous university is not a new one. Many people have the same or similar ideas since back in the early 1900’s. Others, like the Maori, have actually built them. What is new/innovative about the institution proposed in this paper is simply that this particular model was designed specifically for the Native American, tribal, socio-economic, and political context of today.

Because transformation has come at a painstakingly slow pace it is time to try something different, time for a change in perspective and practice. In terms of perspective Native American higher education would benefit from stepping back and looking carefully at its existing structures and ask if they are productive or destructive. We have to be aware of where we are going, what we are doing, and what the outcomes have been and/or should be. We need to look internationally for positive examples and to work together with other Indigenous groups who are confronting the same battles locally and globally. And most importantly we need to employ a praxis model. If we are to move forward we have to be willing to revisit our programs and admit when change is needed and then do it (on a regular basis). Without a critical eye upon our own structures they may not meet their maximum potentials.

Finally, it must be reiterated that the change called for in this study is not intended to disrespect the hard work and successes of existing institutions, programs and educators. As a matter of fact the model put forth in this study is meant to build upon those successes and hard work and use those together to create and grow more successful programs in the future. It hopes to bring all that is positive and all those community oriented educators together so that we can move forward and help redevelop areas of weakness. This new model will learn from the tribal college experiences and be able to use that which has been successful and avoid that which has not worked. From the university programs it will learn how to create a more positive interaction with Western institutions and governing bodies (especially when it comes to benchmarking). This
model will depend on Native American educators from all areas and institutions who have the commitment to our communities.

III. The Next Step: A Call To Our Communities

The outline given of this new model for a National Native American Graduate School is in no way complete. It is merely a start towards building the conceptualized elements. There will be additions and changes made to what was offered in this paper. Those additions and changes will be made in further meetings with interested Native American educators who want to be a part of its development. And again, it is not ‘the model’ to correct all the woes in Native American higher education, but one part of the larger answer (which includes all institutions and programs in Native American higher education).

The model would serve inter-tribal interests and will therefore need representation from across the United States including Native Alaskan and Hawaiian interests, (which is a taken for granted position for me but should be made clear to all). A national body, such as NCAI, would be a beneficial organization to partner with so that all native interests are served rather than only one tribe or community. NCAI could bring the institution to the attention of all tribes and provide an unbiased (where tribal interests are concerned) platform for work to begin.

**********

To end I would like to take this time to make a call to all those who are interested in becoming part of this project. All of those who are community focused are welcome to come help take this model to the next steps of development to create an institution that will bring together our vast resources in a good way to make a positive change in Native American Higher Education. I also call on those tribes with casinos and other financial resources to support this effort and give the institution a viable financial footing to start. For me this is not the end, it is the beginning.
Bibliography


Champagne, D. and Strauss, J. (2002). *Native American studies in higher education: models for collaboration between universities and indigenous nations*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


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Wicazo Sa Review 20.1, 163-168.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Focus Group and Interview Questions
FOCUS GROUP

WORKSHOP

Introduction – discuss my study and brief outline of what the workshop includes.

Discussion Questions:

1. As Native American people what are our options in terms of higher education? (ie: university, technical colleges, tribal colleges, etc.)
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each?
3. What was it that made you choose to attend a Tribal College rather than the other options we discussed?
4. What role did culture play in your decision?
5. What has been the most challenging/difficult aspect of college (in terms of culture and goals)?
6. What has been the most exciting or have liked the best about college?
7. Going back to question #1 – look at the list of benefits for each one; What would you combine from each list to make the best higher educational experience?

(Introduce idea of International Indigenous University as my study defines it)

8. You are in charge of designing an International Indigenous University here in Washington. Thinking about the issues we have discussed, how would you do it? What would it be like? What issues would you consider?

**Break into workshop groups to work on areas defined in question #8**
Interview Schedule for Faculty/Staff

GENERAL

• Why did you choose to work in Indigenous higher education?
• What is your personal goal for your work in this field?
• Do you feel you have made a difference? If so, how? If not, why not?
• As a professional in this field, what has frustrated you the most?
• What has given you the most hope in this field?

PHILOSOPHY

• If you had control over the design of an Indigenous university, what would you like it to stand for? In other words, why would students choose to attend your university?
• What would a successful Indigenous university accomplish? (give example of western accomplishment ie: degrees, research, money)
• What would a graduate from your institution possess?
• If you had to put together a ‘think tank’ of people to help you in your design, who would they be? (ie: educators, community, etc.)

ADMINISTRATION

• If you were designing an Indigenous university, with no concerns about finances, how would you design the administration? What would it look like? (example of west)
• Who do you feel should be involved in the administration?
• What would your model be based on?
• Would this differ from what you have experienced in your work? If so, how?

CURRICULUM

• If you were in charge of curriculum design at your university, how might you structure courses/majors/etc.. (example west university)
• Where would you get your materials?
• How would your curriculum affect the students?
• Who would you hire to teach?
• Would teaching credentials be an issue? Why or why not?
• What about accreditation of the university? How would you handle that?

COMMUNITY/CULTURE

• If the university was set in amongst a specific community, (tribe/band), how involved do you feel the community should be in the design and implementation?
• In what capacity should they be involved?
• What would the relationship between the community and university be?
• What role would the community’s culture play in the university (if at all)?
• How would you deal with cultural values and university values?

FINAL QUESTIONS

• Define success in terms of your Indigenous university. In other words, what would your university be doing to be seen as successful?
• Is there any aspect of Indigenous higher education not covered in this interview that you feel would be important to an Indigenous university?
Appendix B

List of Institutional Programs
## Tribal College Degree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribal College</th>
<th>Degrees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAY MILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE</td>
<td>Associate's</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLACKFEET COMMUNITY COLLEGE</td>
<td>Associate's</td>
</tr>
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<td>CANKDESKA CIKANA COMMUNITY COLLEGE</td>
<td>Associate's</td>
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<td>CHIEF DULL KNIFE COLLEGE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMANCHE NATION COLLEGE</td>
<td>Associate's</td>
</tr>
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<td>CROWNPOINT INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY</td>
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<td>DINÉ COLLEGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOND DU LAC TRIBAL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
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<tr>
<td>FORT BELKNAP COLLEGE</td>
<td>Associate's</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY</td>
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<td>INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CULTURE</td>
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<td>KEWEENAW BAY OJIBWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE</td>
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<td>NORTHWEST INDIAN COLLEGE</td>
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<td>SALISH KOOTENAI COLLEGE</td>
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<td>SI TANKA UNIVERSITY-EAGLE BUTTE CAMPUS</td>
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<td>SISSETON WAHPETON COLLEGE</td>
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<td>SITTING BULL COLLEGE</td>
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(AIHEC, 2006)
Universities with Native Studies Degrees

Ph.D., M.A.

U of Arizona (Ph.D., M.A.)
U of California, Berkeley (Ph.D. w/ concentration in N.A. Studies)
U of California, Davis (M.A., Ph.D., D.E.)
U of California, Los Angeles (M.A.)
U of California, Riverside (major or minor Ph.D. fields)
Cornell U (Graduate Minor in American Indian Studies)
The Evergreen State C (M.A.)
U of Hawai'i at Mānoa (M.A.)
U of Kansas (M.A.)
Montana S U (M.A.)
U of Nebraska, Lincoln (M.A., Ph.D. w/ NA emphasis)
U of Nebraska at Omaha (M.A. w/ NA emphasis)
U of Oklahoma (M.A.)
U of South Dakota (M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies)
SUNY at Buffalo (M.A. and Ph.D. in American Studies with a Focus in Indigenous/Native American Studies)
Western Carolina U (M.A. in History, Cherokee Studies Track)

Baccalaureate Major

U of Alaska, Fairbanks
Arizona State U
Bemidji State U
Black Hills State U
U of California, Berkeley
U of California, Davis
U of California, Riverside
Colgate U
Creighton U
U of Connecticut (indiv. major)
Dartmouth C
The Evergreen State C
U of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Humboldt State U
U of the Incarnate Word
Mills C
U of Minnesota, Twin Cities
U of Montana
U of Nebraska, Lincoln
U of New Mexico

(Steele, 2006)
Appendix C

Ethics Form

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The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services and Administration  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

**Certificate of Approval**

<table>
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<th>Department</th>
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<td>Rubenson, K.</td>
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**Institution(s) Where Research Will Be Carried Out**

Montes, Claudine, Educational Studies

**Sponsoring Agencies**

Indigenous University

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<th>Term (years)</th>
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<th>Amendment Approved</th>
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The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of:  
Dr. I. Franks, Associate Chair  
Dr. R. Johnston, Associate Chair  
Dr. R. D. Spratley, Director, Research Services

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.