

“It Celebrates Our Culture!”: Re-Storying Historical Healing in Education

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education

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Fall 2024

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education

Title: “It Celebrates Our Culture!”: Re-Storying Historical Healing in Education

This dissertation explores how accurate Native American curriculum and implementation can support healing from the deep wounds left by colonial education systems. Looking specifically at Tribal history/shared history (TH/SH) curriculum in Oregon, this research highlights the importance of incorporating culturally sustaining curriculum in addressing narratives that perpetuate harm and erase Native histories and current lifeways in schools. After a review on current and foundational literature on healing and Native American curriculum throughout what is now known as the United States, this study emphasizes how Native studies curriculum can foster a resurgence of Indigenous knowledges. To examine the healing potential of TH/SH curriculum, the author turns to the self-developed theoretical framework, Stinta (Love) as theory, which is informed by Indigenous and Chicana feminist theories, including felt theory and cultural intuition.

Through a series of sharing circles with Indigenous educators, and a process of Collaborative Storying, this research centers Indigenous Methodologies of storytelling to showcase how this curriculum can actively promote healing and Indigenous joy. Including Native perspectives in school curricula isn’t just about telling the truth about history, it is about creating a space for healing and empowerment for students, educators, and Tribal communities. By involving Native educators directly in curriculum implementation, research, and professional development, this research shows that accurate Native American curricula can offer a path to

healing and resilience, if it is fully embraced and implemented across the state. Moreover, through stories of Native teachers implementing the TH/SH curriculum and the wealth of knowledge and lived experience they bring to their classrooms, this study highlights the importance of Native teachers and Native teacher preparation programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and always, I want to thank Creator for this beautiful gift of life and all the lessons along the way. To all my ancestors, thank you for your resilience, power, and knowledge. I miss you every day, JCS, thank you for being the best guardian angel ever. I want to thank my family for teaching me the importance of remembering where you come from and to keep going no matter what. My brothers and cousins for being my first best friends in life. My mom and dad, you always knew what I was capable of, even when I didn't see it. I want to thank my chosen sisters for consistently holding it down and holding me up (you know who you are); you are warriors and I wouldn't have survived this journey without you. You too, Jimmy. I want to thank all my nieces and nephews who remind me to lean into joy and freedom dreaming. To my committee, thank you for believing in me and sharing your powerful gifts and brilliance with me and the world. I want to thank my research participants; you are all so inspiring and I'm grateful for your time, friendship, and deep wisdom. And finally, to borrow words from one of the greatest: "Last but not least, I want to thank me. I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for doing all this hard work. I wanna thank me for having no days off. I wanna thank me for, for never quittin. I wanna thank me for always being a giver and trying to give more than I receive. I wanna thank me for trying to do more right than wrong. I wanna thank me for being me at all times. Roshelle [Snoop Dogg], you a bad motherf**ker."

DEDICATION

To my nieces, Hazel Rae, Lila Ruby, and Xilani Eva. To my nephews, Cruz Illahe, Waluxpykee Walter, Lukwaiya Elias, and PowTykes Mitchell. The work I do in this world is for you. You are our Indigenous future. You are our strength and power. To my loves, David Iziah Amhar, Lily Pepper, and Benjamin Henry – this is for you too. Brown and Black Lives Matter. You all deserve the very best of us, and I strive every day to be the auntie and Jah-ma you will always be proud of. Mo amsni stinta.

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FOREWORD

In my practice as a classroom teacher, I always tried to ensure my students had the background knowledge they needed to approach new material. Similarly, I offer the following guide (Figures 1-3) to provide context and support to my readers, as they move through this dissertation. My research question is embedded as the “essential question.” I provide the state legislation for Tribal History/Shared History as the “standard.” The “materials and resources” provide additional background knowledge and will be accessible via QR code, and the “self-assessment” questions are meant to help the reader approach the material self-reflectively and with an open mind and heart. In terms of the “key vocabulary,” many of these terms are not easily definable, however I offer these fluid definitions to support you as the reader, while you navigate my study. It is my hope that by providing a reader's guide as a resource, you as the reader will be able to fully engage with my dissertation and heart-work.

Figure 1

A Dissertation Reader's Guide Page 1



A Reader's Guide:



"It Celebrates our Culture!": Re-Storying Historical Healing in Education

"Colonialism has only created a loss of life... Resurgence movements then, must be movements to create more life, propel life, nurture life, motion, presence, and emergence."

-Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011, p. 143)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Since schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how and in what ways can implementation of the Tribal History/Shared History (TH/SH) Native American curriculum serve as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools?

STANDARDS

OR 329.493 Curriculum relating to Native American experience in Oregon.

(1) The Department of Education shall:

(a) Develop a curriculum relating to the Native American experience in Oregon and make the curriculum available to school districts; and

(b) Provide professional development to teachers and administrators relating to the curriculum.

(2) The curriculum required by this section must be:

(a) For students in kindergarten through grade 12;

(b) Related to the Native American experience in Oregon, including tribal history, sovereignty issues, culture, treaty rights, government, socioeconomic experiences and current events;

(c) Historically accurate, culturally relevant, community-based, contemporary and developmentally appropriate; and

(d) Aligned with the academic content standards adopted under ORS 329.045.

(3) School districts must implement the curriculum developed under subsection (1) of this section for students in kindergarten through grade 12.

(4) The department may contract for the development of the curriculum under this section or for the provision of professional development.

(5) The department shall ensure that the federally recognized Indian tribes in Oregon are given the opportunity to collaborate in the development of the curriculum and the provision of professional development, and may make moneys available to those tribes to support collaboration efforts. [2017 c.632 §2]

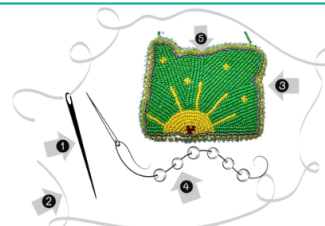


MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- An open heart and mind
- TH/SH Lesson Links Spreadsheet*
- Native Youth Wellness TH/SH Resource Padlet**

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Who are the key partners in your practice?
- How are you treated in your practice? How do you treat others?
- What are important values in your life? What are they in your work?
- What is your relationship with place?
- How do you honor the land you are on?
- How do we honor each other's stories and seem them as truth?
- What does it look like to practice refusal in a good way?
- Where do you see healing in your practice?



THEORY OF STINTA (LOVE) COMPONENTS
 1. Needles as Key Partners
 2. Threads as Key Axiologies
 3. Beading Foundation as Relationship with Place
 4. Beads as Stories
 5. "Spirit Bead" as Refusal



Figure 2

A Dissertation Reader's Guide Page 2

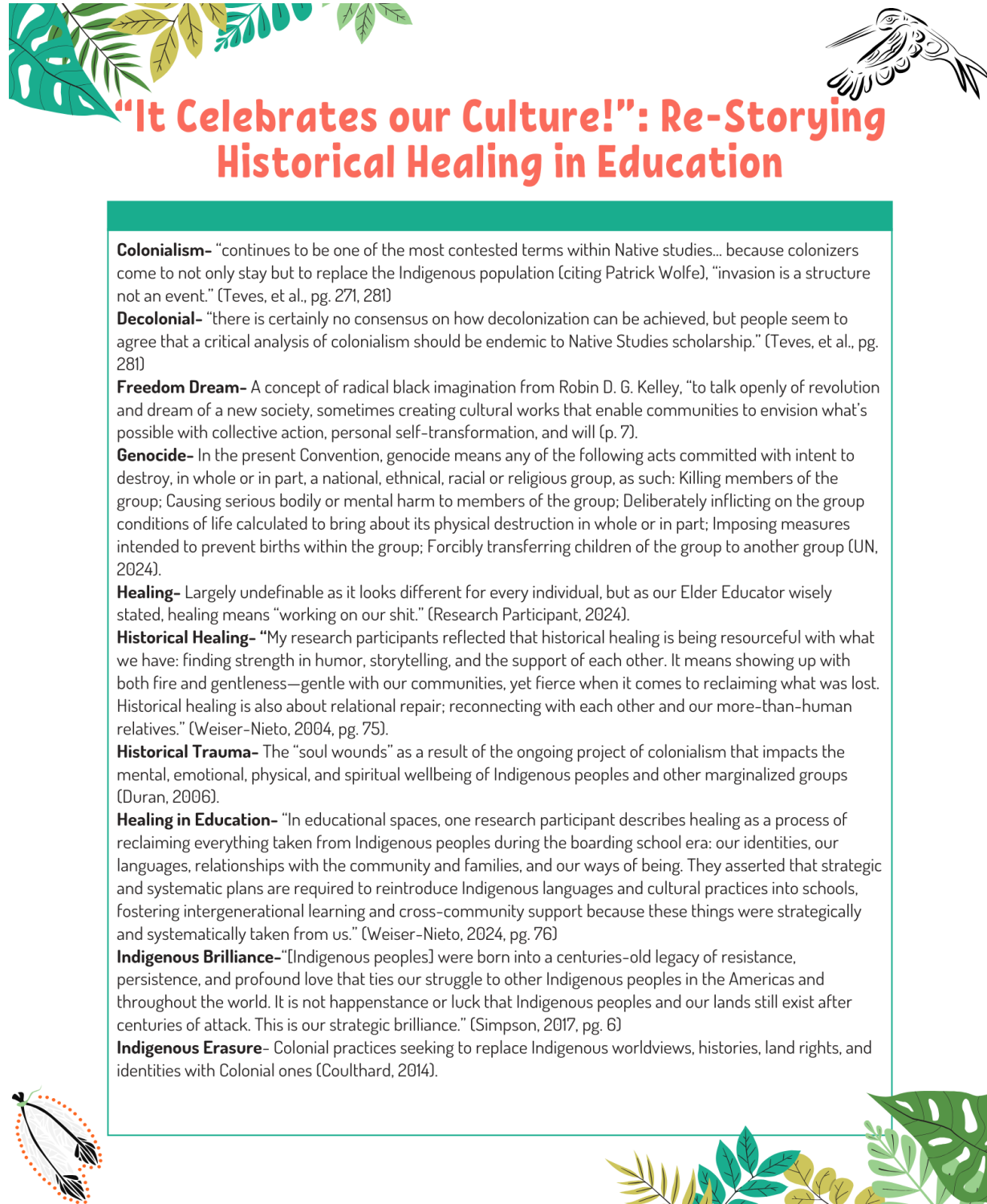


Figure 3

A Dissertation Reader's Guide Page 3



"It Celebrates our Culture!": Re-Storying Historical Healing in Education

Pedagogy- Educational pedagogy is essentially the "how" of teaching. This dissertation uplifts Sandy Grande's concept of "Red Pedagogy," which centers hope, strength, resiliency, sovereignty, resistance, and Indigenization (Grande, 2024, pg. 32).

Resurgence- "[A] call for Indigenous Peoples to delve into their own culture's stories, philosophies, theories and concepts to align themselves with the processes and forces of regeneration, revitalization, remembering and visioning" (Simpson, 2011, p. 148).

Refusal- Deciding when to "stop" accepting colonial narratives and enacting our own "notions of sovereignty and nationhood" in generative ways (Simpson, 2007, pg. 78).

Storying/Storytelling- "[U]sing First Nations stories and storytelling for educational purposes" (Archibald, 2008, pg. viiii).

Sovereignty- "[D]escribes the inherent right of Native American Nations to exercise self-governance" (ODE, Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon, pg. 7).

Self-determination- Enacting our "freedom" as Indigenous peoples (Simpson, 2011, pg. 163).

Stinta as Theory/Practice- "Drawing inspiration from my practice as a beadworker, where each bead, needle, and thread plays an integral role, I used this metaphor to describe how we can show up in our research [and practice] ethically centering relationships with human and more-than-human beings, looking to our axiologies/value systems as our guiding lights, and believing that storytelling is truth-telling" (Weiser-Nieto 2024, pg. 94).

Time Immemorial- "[R]efers to a very long time - indefinite in the record of history (long predating European contact." (ODE, Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon, pg. 4)

(Citations provided at the end of this dissertation)

TH/SH LESSON LINKS



TH/SH RESOURCE PADLET

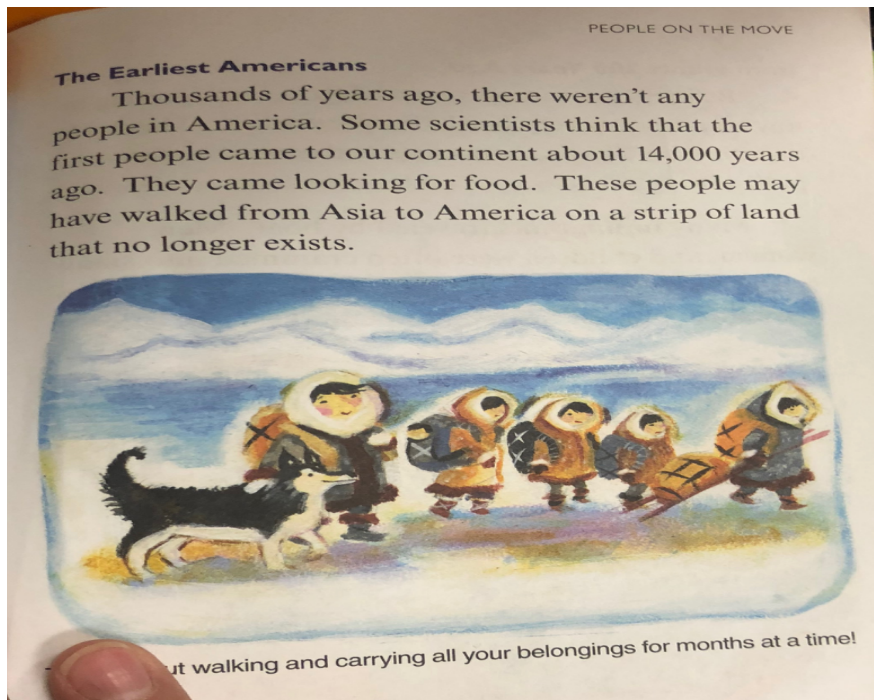


CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Seriously?! Again?! Why here?!" I thought while preparing my second grader's reading lessons from the district-mandated curriculum for the week. Pulling the new unit off the shelf and reviewing the content left me disheartened. I was expected to teach the land-bridge theory to a class of all Indigenous students at a school on an Indian reservation (Figure 4). "I shouldn't be surprised," I thought to myself. The curriculum was riddled with problematic, stereotypical, and sometimes potentially violent portrayals of people of color. Seeing this lesson assigned to second graders left me heartsick that any student is exposed to this false narrative. The early reading text stated, "Thousands of years ago, there weren't any people in America" (Read Well 2, Unit 2, 2009, p. 49). Period. End stop. Ethically, I couldn't ignore this. I didn't want them to internalize these inaccuracies, so had to have an in-depth conversation with my students, explaining that while some people believe the land-bridge theory, we, as Native people, know we've been on our lands since time immemorial.

Figure 4

Read Well 2- Unit 2- Chapter 2



Note. From *Read Well 2*, Unit 2, Chapter 2, “From Here to There” (p. 49) by Sopris West Educational Services. Published by Cambium Learning Group/Voyager Learning, Dallas, TX, 2009.

Furthermore, scientists are disproving the theory and finding artifacts that date far past 14,000 years ago (Echo-Hawk, 2000; Cajete, 2000). I engaged my students in a thoughtful and inspiring conversation about their ancestry to interrupt these inaccuracies. Still, I couldn't help but wonder what the experiences would be like for other students nationwide whose schools still use the Read Well curriculum. They will grow up believing this narrative about Native people that has been scientifically disproven time and again. Now, in 2024, although I am no longer in the classroom and my former school district has since adopted a new curriculum, I worry about other children who are still being indoctrinated into false and colonial versions of Native American history. The frustration fuels my passion for listening and learning from teachers taking a different approach in their own practice.

Testimonies of Indigenous erasure, such as my story above, highlight the crucial need for accurate Native American curriculum. These problematic stories erase the experiences and histories of Indigenous peoples in what is now known in the United States, while also miseducating all students about U.S. history. Indigenous peoples have long been positioned as “other” in histories and history curricula told from dominant, Eurocentric, colonizer perspectives, including in the legacy of genocide and assimilation projects in schools. However, Indigenous communities must be involved in decolonial efforts to “center our concerns and worldviews” and reclaim accurate narratives (Smith, 2001, p. 39). With inaccurate narratives illustrated in my story dominating mainstream curriculum in the United States, educators and academics have been in conversation about how to address this colonial, revisionist version of “history” (Rodríguez & Swalwell, 2021). This dissertation details my research and findings on how accurate and authentic Native American curriculum can serve as a source of healing in public schools.

Chapter One tells the story of the colonial legacy of K–12 schooling for Indigenous peoples and the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges. As the reader, you will find that this chapter does not follow a typical linear pathway. Instead, I approach the chapter as a beadworker and think of the chapter like a medallion. Beadworkers often work in circles to create a medallion. This is intentional, as I draw inspiration from authors such as Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) and Leslie Marmon Silko (1996), who sometimes choose not to tell stories in any sort of point A, to B, to C, western fashion. I start by centering the healing work of Indigenous resurgence by introducing the importance of centering Native educator voices, reflecting on the powerful Indigenous curriculum coming out of the state of Oregon. I then take the reader back into history and discuss why this type of curriculum is essential to draw out the impacts of

boarding schools in K–12 schools and the ways in which Native American curriculum remains problematic to this day. I discuss why this is largely due to the colonial domination of what is considered legitimate knowledge and back to the importance of the exemplary work happening in Oregon. In bookending this dissertation proposal chapter with inspirational stories, I intend to draw the focus away from being “damage-centered” (Tuck, 2009) and move toward a more healing-centered approach to how I think about my work.

Senate Bill 13, Tribal History/Shared History

As a result of the efforts of Indigenous people and legislators throughout the State of Oregon, Senate Bill 13 (SB13) was passed in 2017. The law directs the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to create Native American curriculum for all K–12 students in Oregon public schools and provide professional development to support educators. The legislation guaranteed funding so that ODE could create a set of lessons at the state level and also provided funds to each of the nine federally recognized Tribes of Oregon to develop their own Tribal-specific content (ODE, n.d.).

The Native American curriculum, now referred to as TH/SH, was born from this legislation. It was developed by educators ODE in consultation with Native American educators and scholars. The Tribal-specific curriculum was developed by each of the nine Tribes in Oregon using their own processes/ consultation.

By requiring all public schools to teach TH/SH curriculum, the law is designed to present all students with a historically accurate account of Tribal history and modern-day contributions to both Native and non-Native communities (ODE, n.d.). The dissemination of the Tribal-specific curriculum around the state can also be seen as a resurgent effort to reinvest in

Indigenous ways of knowing and being in K–12 public schools, as Indigenous educators' and Tribal members' voices are so thoughtfully attended to and included throughout the process.

Comparable to curriculum developed in Hawai'i, Montana, and other states, this vital work is urgent since the United States' original goal for Indigenous youth has been that of genocide, forced assimilation, and cultural erasure through boarding schools (Adams, 1995). Although Indigenous youth are no longer habitually removed from their communities and some families choose modern Indian boarding schools, public education remains a site of harm and trauma for Indigenous students and their families (Sabzalian, 2019). As my introduction story illustrates, being required to teach such a problematic lesson is harmful. Despite having thorough discussions around our reading table, there was a risk that my students might have internalized these inaccurate messages. Therefore, the creation of the Native American TH/SH curriculum in Oregon is an important step in providing an equitable education for our¹ youth. Moreover, it has the potential to be a source of healing for Oregon Tribal peoples and beyond, as it is developed and written in partnership with Native peoples.

Statement of the Problem: Why We Need Tribal History/Shared History Curriculum

It is essential to discuss why legislation such as SB13 exists in the first place. Indigenous peoples have always had our own systems of education, however European settlers colonized the Americas and imposed their own forms of schooling rooted in white supremacy (Grande, 2015). These schools have disrupted Indigenous languages, knowledge systems, and ways of life. TH/SH curriculum provides an important intervention into legacy of assimilative schooling. To

¹ I am inspired by Black feminist, Patricia Hill Collins's (2000) assertion to reject pronouns such as "they" and "their" in her own writing which distance herself from her own community. I follow her lead and choose to also think and write in terms of "we," "us," and "our." (p. 19). I do this to acknowledge my positionality as an Indigenous womyn and academic, to un-"other" myself, and to affirm my deep commitment to center relationality and sacred reciprocity in my own life and scholarship.

understand the potential of such curriculum, and how it can contribute to healing, we must take a closer look at the legacies of colonial violence that impact U.S. public schooling and curriculum today.

The colonists had to portray Natives as savage to justify the theft of the lands and considered this their manifest destiny (Deloria Jr., 1988). Settlers engaged in various strategies to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land and create a nation of their own. They rewrote history on their terms, narrating Indigenous peoples as "savages" to justify the theft of their lands. They also framed the conquest of Indigenous peoples and the expansion of America as inevitable and their god-given right, their manifest destiny (Deloria, 1988). And as they worked to eliminate Indigenous peoples, they then claimed that they were the new "natives" (la paperson, 2017).

The U.S. legal system justified the theft of the land with laws such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, making settler colonialism U.S. policy. On top of the massive theft of Indigenous lands, widespread disease and outright genocidal massacres nearly decimated the population of Indigenous peoples in the United States (Deloria, 1988). Many of those who survived were removed from their homelands and sent to reservations. Many children were stolen from their families and sent to boarding schools that “forcibly sought to erase Indigenous identities and replace them with more ‘civilized ones’” (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 11). It was not a choice for many Tribes to send our children to boarding schools, and the impacts have lasting effects to this day.

Today, many of us live in poverty, and the effects of historical trauma from the genocide of our ancestors, the theft/loss of our land, and the boarding school era continue to devastate our communities (Grayshield et al., 2015). Some of our traditional stories and knowledges have been

stolen from us, and some were legally forbidden until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. Despite the efforts of colonists, the legal system, and boarding schools, many Tribes have retained and continue to practice their traditions and pass down their oral histories

The Aims of the Boarding Schools

Like other strategies of colonialism, boarding schools were designed to dispossess Indigenous peoples, which was ultimately about gaining access to Indigenous lands. Boarding schools sought to "civilize" Indigenous children, erasing their Indigenous identities, languages, and knowledge systems, and replacing them with more "civilized" knowledge along with capitalist values and Christian ideals. Boarding school advocates felt their methods were less violent than outright warfare.

Advocates for boarding schools claimed that "education would quicken the process of cultural evolution," and that proper schooling could put Native children on par with their "more civilized white neighbors," thus ensuring they were assimilated into (white) society (Adams, 1995, p. 19). Not only did they view their strategies as more benevolent than policies of warfare and extermination, but they considered them quick and efficient: "By means of the common school, Indians could, in effect, be catapulted directly from savagism to civilization, skipping all the intervening stages of social evolution in between" (Adams, 1995, p. 19).

However, boarding schools were incredibly violent, and students endured immense physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Timothy San Pedro (2021) employed Althusser's (1971) definitions of the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and ideological state apparatus (ISA) to describe how the painful experiences of boarding schools functioned in the United States (p. 10). He summarized how the two apparatuses work simultaneously, whereas the RSA functions violently by colonizing people through acts of genocide and other physical

abuse, and the ISA functions ideologically through social conditioning, such as the work of churches, politics, and other communal spaces. We can see how the two apparatuses are at work in the ways in which boarding schools operated at a physical level through the physical and sexual abuse of children and through the ideology and conditioning of our youth that our traditional ways of living were uncivilized.

Settlers felt that traditional ways of Indigenous peoples had to be eradicated and used education as the vehicle. To prevent children from engaging in traditional ways of learning and knowing, they intentionally removed children from their families and put them into boarding schools, which were often far away from children's families and homelands. William Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, claimed "To educate the Indian in the ways of civilized life... is to preserve him from extinction, not as an Indian, but as a human being" (Adams, 1995, p. 21) and there were four major priorities of the boarding schools to do so. The four aims of the boarding schools included teaching the Indian children how to speak, read, and write in English, become individualized beings, learn Christianity, and undergo citizenship training (Adams, 1995). These educational aims would lead to long-standing impacts on oral tradition, Indigenous languages, and cultural practices and ways of life.

Despite the harm in the boarding schools, Native students found ways to resist the complete loss of their identities and cultures. Resisting the individuation process, students with siblings remained close and formed close bonds with other students in their dorms (Lomawaima, 1994). In developing these relationships, the boarding school's agenda to socially condition the students into individualism backfires because the students not only retained memory and use of their own Native languages, but they also begin to teach their friends, learning each other's languages (Child, 2000). Relationality is "at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous"

(Wilson, 2008, p. 80), and boarding schools did not have the power to take this way from the youth. Students also resisted by running away. Some children were caught before leaving, others caught and returned to the schools from where they ran away multiple times. Nonetheless, their courage in the face of overwhelming odds was undeniable (Johnston, 1989). While many students lost their lives to boarding schools or lost a part of their Indigenous spirit, those of us who are descended from the survivors are forever indebted to their will to live and remember their resiliency. While the traumatic impact of boarding schools is undeniable, they did not have the power to completely eradicate our culture due in large part to these brave survivor youth.

Colonialism's Ongoing Legacy in Education Today

In the aftermath of the boarding school era and the colonialist version of what is considered knowledge, the plight of Native American education has been and continues to be tenuous. From the boarding school era until recently, accurate and appropriate Native American curriculum rarely existed in public schools. Vine Deloria and Wildcat (2001) asserted, “Education in the English-American context resembles indoctrination more than it does other forms of teaching” (p. 42). As illustrated in my opening story, schools in 2024 are still teaching antiquated theories such as the land bridge theory, even though Native people know we have been here since time immemorial. Social Studies curriculum and standards often contribute to Indigenous erasure invisibilizing the modern-day existence of Native peoples and centering the lessons focus on history and narratives from the past (National Congress of American Indians, 2019; Sabzalian et al., 2021; Shear et al., 2015). In other cases, the curriculum has the insidious tendency to minimize our nationhood or relegate Tribes to minimalistic terms such as “groups” (Sabzalian et al., 2021, pp. 337–338).

These examples reflect how colonial domination has shaped and controlled what is considered valid knowledge, often marginalizing or erasing Indigenous ways of knowing (Curtice, 2023; Grande, 2015; la paperson, 2017; Smith, 2021). Patriarchal colonial systems imposed Eurocentric ideologies and dismissed Indigenous knowledge systems as inferior or irrelevant (Grande, 2015). This imposed dominance continues to affect how history, culture, and identity are understood and valued, reinforcing power imbalances and perpetuating the dehumanization and erasure of Indigenous perspectives (Smith, 2021). Indigenous knowledges deserve to be honored and valued. They deserve to be elevated instead of relegated to elective courses, clubs, or after-school programs, as so many K–12 schools do today (Sabzalian, 2019).

Indigenous and Ethnic Studies scholarship and curriculum begins from this premise and specifically seeks to intervene into the types of knowledge and curricula promoted in schools. Following the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Native American and Indigenous Studies began gaining traction as a field (Deloria, 1988). Scholars and educators advocated for the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, which led to the creation of Indigenous scholarly journals that published Indigenous voices, including *American Indian Quarterly* and *Wičazo Ša Journal*. Indigenous peoples were asserting their treaty rights to self-determination and fighting to reclaim control over their narratives in academia and schools. It was in this era that Tribal advocates began to put pressure on the states to support their freedom dreams (Kelley, 2002; Love, 2020) for new possibilities of a better education and Indigenous curriculum for the youth. As educators, we all benefit from Indigenous brilliance and this vital work.

Purpose of the Study: Resurgence of Indigenous Knowledges

Resurgence describes the process of Indigenous peoples investing in our own cultures and communities. For Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011),

a leading advocate for resurgence, it is “a call for Indigenous Peoples to delve into their own culture’s stories, philosophies, theories and concepts to align themselves with the processes and forces of regeneration, revitalization, remembering and visioning” (p. 148). Simpson calls on Indigenous peoples to live our teachings in our modern-day lives; thus, resurgence will mean something different to each Indigenous person and community. I see the development of the Native American curriculum as a resurgence project in that each of the Tribes in Oregon have been able to exercise their sovereignty and self-determination to draft their own curriculum specific to their Tribes and have been in consultation for the content included in the state lesson plans. Furthermore, the content from the state-led curriculum was also developed with Indigenous consultancy and informed by the essential understandings which were developed by members of each of the nine Tribes of Oregon:

- since time immemorial
- history
- identity
- language
- genocide, federal policy, and laws
- treaties with the United States
- lifeways
- Tribal government
- sovereignty

Indigenous educators and Tribal communities in Oregon are committed to ensuring the state values and implements an accurate curriculum centered around the themes from the Essential Understandings. Teaching about our histories, sovereignty, treaty rights, current lifeways, government structures, and contributions accurately and affirmatively through the development of the TH/SH curriculum and honoring the voices of Tribal nations, provides a resurgent and accurate account of Indigenous history and current lifeways. Warm Springs Tribal Elder and education director, Valerie Switzler, testified for SB13 and the involvement of the nine

federally recognized Tribes of Oregon to contribute to the curriculum (Jacob et al., 2018). She reminded people that the communities around Warm Springs used to be “good neighbors” to the Tribe and “advocated for public education that would affirm her peoples’ inherent rights” (Jacob et al., 2018, p. 158). By advocating for legislation that specifically supports and funds Tribal-specific curricula, Tribal nations are enacting their sovereignty and resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and all students in the state have the opportunity to benefit from a more responsible and comprehensive education.

I see the development of legislation and curriculum such as TH/SH in Oregon as a refusal to reduce Native American Studies to elective courses or after-school programs. Simpson (2017) asks, “What happens, then, when we build movements that refuse colonial recognition as a starting point and turn inwards, building a politics of refusal that is generative” (p. 177)? TH/SH and similar curriculum from other states can be seen as a refusal of colonial versions of recognition (or invisibilization) and deserve to be taught in mainstream curriculum versus relegated to elective courses. Just as our cultures survived genocide and the aims of boarding school, so did many of our stories and practices of traditional means of education. Now, we can teach our own curriculum and share it with the State of Oregon backed by legislation. In my research, I partner with Native teachers who also see the importance of teaching Native American curriculum and ask whether this curriculum has the potential to do some healing work in their classrooms, schools, and larger communities.

Research Questions

In partnership with Indigenous teachers across the state of Oregon, my research project focuses on the following anchor research question: Since schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how can implementation of the TH/SH Native American curriculum serve

as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools? I also suggested the following potential supporting research questions to the group:

- How do Indigenous educators understand and define the concept of healing?
- How do they understand healing in educational spaces?
- What role do they see TH/SH contributing to the broader project of healing?
- What specific ways can the implementation of TH/SH promote healing in the classroom? And finally,
- What further interventions, supports, or resources can sustain their efforts and foster healing in this work?

Due to the participatory nature of my research project in alignment with the Indigenous methodologies I chose (which I describe further in Chapter 3), I proposed the above as “potential” supporting questions because I wanted to make space for the teacher participants to bring forth their own questions to the group. As a result of this process and based on participant interest and input, my list of research questions morphed to include two additional questions:

- Has their understanding/definition of healing evolved or become more nuanced over the course of the research project?
- Is there potential for healing for the educators by teaching the curriculum?

My process of collaborating with and sharing power with Indigenous educators was profound and is exemplified in my central research question. I had originally proposed the question with an *if* at the beginning: If schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how can implementation of the TH/SH Native American curriculum serve as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools? One research participant pushed back on my use of the word “if,” arguing that there is no question that schools have been sites of trauma and genocide. We

decided collectively to rephrase the question, changing “if” to “since” to honor my research participant’s voice and uphold my commitment to centering relationships and responsibility. For me, that shift is a testament to the power of collaboration and why Indigenous educators' voices should be central to inquiries around Indigenous curriculum.

Role of the Researcher: “Introducing the Storyteller”

Inspired by Shawn Wilson's approach to his role as researcher as storyteller, I approach this research project in the same way (Wilson, 2008, p. 32). I also see myself as a researcher storyteller. It is my responsibility to “re-story” (retell; San Pedro, 2021), the stories my research participants have shared with me in an honorable way. This is an important responsibility that I take seriously. Additionally, part of an Indigenous way of being for many Tribal communities is introducing yourself right away, sharing your Tribe and who your family is. For this reason, I am putting this section into the introduction chapter instead of including it in the Methodology chapter, where it is traditionally located in most research papers.

Ha?o ii, Roshelle Weiser-Nieto mi?i nī nani?a (I started off with a general greeting that loosely translates to: How are you, my name is Roshelle Weiser-Nieto in our Yahooskin Paiute dialect, nīmī). I am a Modoc and Yahooskin Paiute womyn² from the Klamath Tribes, Pit River, and Chicana. I am a doctoral candidate in the critical and socio-cultural studies in education program in the College of Education at the University of Oregon. I have 21 years of experience in education, currently serving as the Native Youth Wellness Program Coordinator and Specialist for Lane Education Service District (LESD), which serves 16 school districts across Lane County. Often, I refer to my position as my dream job; I get to consult, partner, co-lead

² As an Indigenous feminist and female identifying scholar, I spell "woman" with a "y" to assert my power and reject the patriarchal notion that womyn are derived from men and are therefore subservient.

communities of practice for educators, co-lead middle and high school Native American Student Unions (NASU) and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) affinity groups, lead professional development, and host gatherings for the Lane County Native community. Centering wellness as my “why” is in direct alignment with values I inherited from my family: care, connection, and community.

The content I cover in professional development and consultancy ranges from TH/SH implementation, transformative social emotional learning (TSEL), culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), and trauma informed care (TIC). It is always such an honor to be invited into a classroom with Lane County educators to co-plan, co-teach, or be a guest speaker on any of these topics. I am also currently developing a professional development series titled *Healing Informed Practice* (HIP), which illustrates the importance of how all these practices lead to equitable education for the youth and the potentiality for healing.

I have also taught on the Warm Springs reservation as an elementary teacher, a K-8 instructional coach, and a K-12 first- and second-year teacher-mentor. I am an alumnus of the Sapsik^walá (teacher) Education Program at the University of Oregon where I earned my teaching degree and learned the importance of Indigenous representation and pedagogy in schools and how powerful it can be when Native students have Native teachers as role models. I never had Native teachers until I got to college and having a teacher who looked like me and understood my culture would have made a world of difference in my formative years in education. Additionally, the ability to participate in programs similar to the Native Youth Wellness program would have been transformational for me. It is my hope, as the researcher storyteller, that this research project can make a difference for teachers (and, in turn, their students) who want to

learn more about and teach the TH/SH curriculum, by giving them an opportunity to learn from Native teacher's stories and experiences who are also using the curriculum in their classrooms.

Scope of the Study

This research project centers Indigenous storytelling, inviting six Indigenous teachers and one Elder Educator in Oregon who will teach TH/SH lessons and reflect after they teach each lesson. I brought the teachers together over Zoom for four quarterly sharing circles (Kovach, 2012; Tachine et al., 2016) with the traditional values of each of our Tribal teachings, storytelling, relationship, and reciprocity guiding the conversations. I intentionally invited teachers from different subject areas and grade levels because, in my experience as a practitioner, some of the most powerful learning moments have come from teachers outside our own fields.

The initial sharing circle took place during the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year to build community and relationships, develop our group protocol based on our aforementioned traditional values, and set the context for the study. The first session invited the teachers to share their teachings, build relationships and a sense of community, and I introduced them to the components of the theoretical framework I developed, Stinta as theory, to get their feedback and consent that it was a suitable model for us.³ The next three sharing circles occurred throughout the remainder of the school year, meeting quarterly, and wrapping up in June 2024.

During these meetings, the teachers had the opportunity to share their classroom stories and discuss their experiences with the curriculum based on the research questions as we explored examples of healing in the classrooms. I also met with each participant in an Indigenous

³ I will provide a more detailed description of Stinta as a theory in Chapter 2.

approach to conduct qualitative one-on-one interviews (i.e., “collaborative storytelling”; Bishop, 1999), at the beginning of the research project and again at the end.

The scope of my study is intentionally small, centered on relationality and creating a space that was nourishing and healing for the Indigenous educators I worked with. I wove my experiences and expertise as a practitioner dedicated to HIPs into the space we created, however I learned as much as I contributed, which speaks to the power of Indigenous educators’ knowledge and stories. I hope what I offer affirms the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous educators who are leading the implementation of TH/SH, while helping all educators to implement these initiatives more effectively and responsibly. More broadly, I hope this study contributes to conversations around the healing power of Indigenous studies curriculum.

Summary

My opening story and the ongoing legacy of colonialism outlined in this chapter underscore the necessity for curriculum such as TH/SH in schools. As illustrated in my introductory story, making the pedagogical decision to not conform to the district-mandated curriculum and to refuse to teach false narratives may have been a small step, but it was a step that led my students away from Indigenous erasure in education, and I see that as enacting my own self-determination and healing work. This chapter showed how collective organizing and advocacy efforts by Indigenous educators and nations can reshape the landscape of Native American curriculum in K–12 schools. This shift reflects the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges, as Tribal Nations in Oregon turn to the power of their knowledges and cultures and author curriculum on their own terms. More broadly, I see the possibilities of curriculum such as TH/SH and learning from Native educators’ experience as a narrative shift and a profound change needed in schools, including the potential for curricula to promote healing.

CHAPTER TWO: FINDING MYSELF IN ACADEMIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

I will never forget when my uncle took us out to harvest apos (wild carrots) for the first time. We all loaded up in the cars on a brilliantly sunny day and drove down the reservation dirt roads laughing, singing, and in deep anticipation. I had my sunroof open, letting all the dust fly into my car, with my little cousin riding shotgun. I let him take off his seatbelt, stand on the seat, and put his head and torso out the sunroof because that's what you do on the back roads of the rez. It's normal to pass a truck with its bed loaded with kids and adults in the cabin and give a head nod or a wave when we pass each other.

When we got to the field, my uncle gave us digging sticks and showed us how to carefully pull up the apos. If you go in at the wrong angle, you can damage the plants. It takes intention and concentration, and you don't take too many from a certain spot. It's important to move around. We dug and dug, he showed us how to peel them, and he was right! They tasted exactly like carrots! After we spent the afternoon digging, we hopped back in the cars and continued down the dusty road to a bend in the river, where we jumped in to cool off. I will never forget that day and all the teachings and joy we experienced as a family.

Anyone who works with traditional foods and medicine understands the importance of the process, and the same is true when considering developing a research project. It takes an intentional and methodological approach, just like how my uncle taught us to dig roots. Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2013) organization of her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, is a model of this in action. First, you must understand the cycle of the medicine. Before using the medicine, you must learn how to plant and tend to it or know where to find it if it grows wild. Then, when the medicine is ready to harvest, you have to know how to pick it in the right way (Kimmerer, 2013). The medicine must

be dried, braided, crushed, roasted, bundled (or whatever the medicine asks for) before you can use it. Even then, you need to be taught how to use the medicine properly and give back in return.

The reciprocity of the relationship between humans and medicine should be done with respect, in relationship with good intentions, and with the responsibility to share (Brayboy et al., 2012). I am inspired by Wilson's (2008) assertion that research is ceremony and feel research and storytelling can be good (healing) medicine if done in an intentional way. Ideas can also be medicine. When someone plants an idea, it has the possibility to grow in many directions, harvested by other scholars who take inspiration from the first author's medicine stories. This chapter is an honoring of all the related teachings and writings from those who came before me in this research.

A professor once told me that a good way to think about scholarly research is by thinking of myself joining a conversation, reading what is already being researched and discussed, and deciding where my own voice fits in. For this literature review, I see two foundational bodies of work critical to my research project— literature that discusses healing and literature that documents Native American curricula in other states. Before that, however, I will share how I found myself in academia and the BIPOC scholars who have influenced me and my approach to understanding and finding my place in academia. These scholars help me find a home in a place that is typically rooted in hostility rather than healing. Additionally, their scholarship inspired me to develop my own framework that centers love, healing, and Indigenous ways of knowing. Although a theoretical framework is not typically located in a literature review, including it here also helps me lay the groundwork for how BIPOC scholars are taking up (or troubling) the concept of healing. Moreover, my literature review is organized through the

components of a theory of Stinta that I developed, which include (a) healing with community relationships, (b) healing through our values and spirituality, (c) healing through relationship with place, (d) healing through storytelling, and (e) healing as refusal and resistance to Indigenous erasure and settler colonial agendas. Finally, I share the wisdom and guidance I have found from other states creating accurate and authentic Native American curriculum and standards similar to TH/SH.

Theoretical Framework

I found myself again and again in the academy, a world my people were never meant to belong. Finding myself in academia, sorting through the new seeds of ideas, discarding the ones that didn't fit, continues to be a journey of self-discovery, self-love, and owning my sovereignty. I first found myself within the paradigm of Tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit; Brayboy, 2005), felt my way through the work and development of my research project with Felt Theory (Million, 2009), and leaned into cultural intuition (Calderón et al., 2012), all of which supported my own theory of Stinta (love) to emerge.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

I want to first lift my hands up to Brian Brayboy (2005) and his groundbreaking theoretical piece, "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education," for those of us engaging in Native American scholarship. This article came to me in my first year of the Ph.D. program in our Philosophy of Research class. Our professor explained to us that we would be presented with theoretical frameworks ranging from pragmatism, positivism, the posts, and the critical, and that it was important for us to have a basic understanding of each as Ph.D. holders, even though we might find our home in one. Throughout that course, we were introduced to scholar after scholar, including (but not limited to) Habermas, Foucault, Barad, and finally the world of critical race

theory (CRT) and its different arms of scholarship. It was here where I finally felt like I might belong.

Brayboy developed an Indigenous framework born out of CRT grounded in Native American onto-epistemologies. There is evident overlap between the tenets of TribalCrit and CRT such as a focus on storytelling, counter-storytelling, governmental power and policy, and activism work (Brayboy, 2005). However, there is a major difference in the two theoretical approaches to racism, in that CRT asserts race is endemic to society, and Brayboy (2005) asserted colonialism is endemic to society (p. 430). The nine tenets of TribalCrit are as follows:

- Colonization is endemic to society.
- U.S. policies toward Indigenous people are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
- Indigenous peoples have not only racial but political identities.
- Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge Tribal sovereignty, Tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
- The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on a new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
- Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
- Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
- Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are therefore real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
- Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. (pp. 429–430)

The TribalCrit framework and tenets were transformational for me as a Native scholar. I situate my work within his powerful framework. While I see elements of all nine tenets existing within this research project, his eighth tenet, “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430) is the cornerstone of my work. TribalCrit was born from Brayboy’s mother telling him that our stories *are* our theory (Brayboy, 2005, p. 426). Her words and Brayboy’s development

of TribalCrit ended up being foundational and healing to so many Indigenous scholars, including myself, however, my spirit still needed more. I needed a framework that allowed me to research and think with love.

Felt Theory and Cultural Intuition

To think and research with love, I needed to be able to feel, without fear of being labeled as too “subjective” or “bitter and biased” (Million, 2009, p. 62). The first couple years of my Ph.D. journey led me to believe there was a hierarchy in academia positioning objectivity above subjectivity, at least until I found Indigenous Methodologies, specifically felt theory (Million, 2009). Dian Million explored how emotions and embodied experiences are not solely personal but serve as a powerful form of knowledge, especially in the context of storytelling. Emotions also carry deep significance despite the way academia “produces gatekeepers,” essentially gaslighting people of color to believe our ways of knowing and being are inherently less than Western bodies of thought (Million, 2009, p. 54).

By allowing myself to explore felt theory, I learned to challenge the Western separation of emotion from rationality, rejecting the notion that the pain and anger surrounding our ancestors’ experiences were not rational (Million, 2009, p. 73). Leaning into Million’s assertion that feelings are essential for truly understanding and communicating lived experiences, particularly those shaped by colonialism, trauma, and resistance, offered the possibility to lean into my personal self-determination, which is a decolonial process.

For me, feeling through my research and in conversation with my advisor, I was led to Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) and specifically cultural intuition (Calderón et al., 2012). Thus far, my work and research have been grounded in Indigenous thought from North America, but I am also Chicana, meaning I am of Indigenous Mexican American descent. Leaning into the

work of scholars such as Dolores Calderón, Dolores Delgado Bernal, and Gloria Anzaldúa led me to revisit themes from my Chicano/a studies classes as an Ethnic Studies undergraduate major. CFE is a framework that holds “the potential to disrupt Western colonial assumptions,” which have historically marginalized the experiences and perspectives of Chicana women (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 514). Central to this epistemology is the decolonization of knowledge production using “Anzaldúa as an anchor” in her “spiritual activism” work (Anzaldúa, 1987; Calderón et al., 2012). CFE seeks to create space for the voices and experiences of those who have been historically oppressed while honoring intersectionality, gender, class, and sexuality. Moreover, like felt theory, CFE values embodied knowledge, viewing the body and testimonios of lived experiences as legitimate sources of understanding.

Cultural intuition is an evolving extension of CFE, referring to the embodied, experiential knowledge that Chicana women possess, rooted in cultural practices, family histories, and community experiences (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 516). Here, I found permission to dream big in what could be possible in my own work. Drawing from Anzaldúa’s (1987) assertion that spirituality can and should be central to our scholarship if we are to walk in our ethics, I believe that incorporating spirituality, or “spiritual activism,” into my work can help me challenge systems of oppression).

While taking courses before my comprehensive exams, I wrote a paper about my interest in researching theoretical frameworks from my own Tribe. I wanted to become as fluent as I could in my own Tribe’s language of theory and philosophies because our own knowledges should be the cornerstone of my future work. I wanted to be Klamath Tribes Spirit Literate, which I now see as the same as enacting my self-determination and “spiritual activism” (Anzaldúa, 1987). Stories are a part of oral tradition in many Indigenous communities, passing

history and instructions on how to be in the world from one generation to the next (Archibald, 2008; Simpson, 2011; 2017; Smith, 2021). It would be an honor to someday partner with fellow Tribal members and listen to and learn from more of our stories. To deepen our sense of spirit literacy together, define what it means to be Modoc, Yahooskin Paiute, and Klamath with my sammaq (relatives), and share it with the world. Centering knowledge and stories from my own Tribe is how I see myself developing spirit literacy.

My dream is to join the conversations in decolonizing and Indigenizing our educational system, grounded in and guided by my own Tribal values and spirit literacy. Similar to Anzuldua, Michelle M. Jacob (2013) called for Indigenous activist scholarship, urging us to lean into the responsibility of reclaiming our traditions and stories, which honors our past and nurtures our people and future generations. Joining the community of Indigenous scholars, I take this responsibility seriously. As such, cultural intuition as a framework has allowed me to be more reflective in honoring my intersectional identity and the deep knowing that comes from Creator's teachings as someone with Indigenous ancestors from both North and Central America. It has allowed me to reflect on my journey with developing a sense of spirit literacy, and this reflexivity has been crucial in balancing my self-determination and sovereignty while navigating through a traditionally Western academic institution.

Collectively, these scholars supported me in turning toward the brilliance and teachings of my own community to develop my own theoretical framework (Simpson, 2017), which I describe as a theory of Stinta. Stinta is our Klamath/Modoc word for love and is one of the most positive words in our language. I discuss this in more length in the thread/axiology section below. This presentation of my heart in text form is my own move toward resurgence by turning

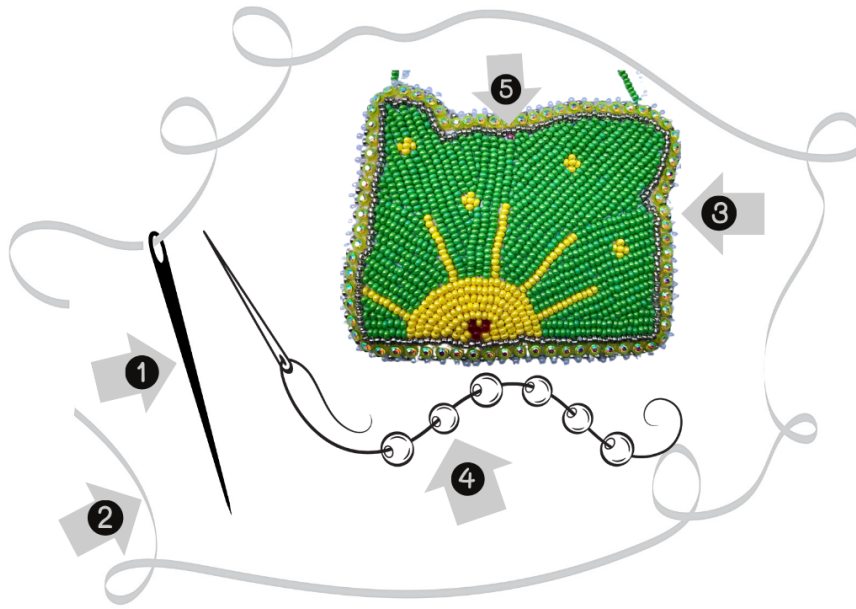
to my own Tribal teachings, practice, and language as the basis for my work rooted in my own Tribal values and Stinta (Simpson, 2017).

Theory of Stinta (Love), from a Beadworker's Soul

A theory of Stinta was born out of my own self-determination to dream of a healthy future for myself and my family. After living a life with tension around my identity as a mixed-race womyn, never feeling fully “Native” or “Chicana” enough, the journey I described in the past few sections into my own reflexivity around my ethical beliefs in my praxis led me to fully embrace my intersectionality. I have been able to see myself as whole, and see my identities as assets rather than deficits, enabling me to stand in my power and claim my own theoretical framework. It has been a journey to find where I fit in the world of academia, but now I feel I have the direction and guidance for engaging in this research journey with a good heart and good intentions. I feel at home with a theory of Stinta—in developing my research questions, methods choices, and data analysis. Now I complete this research project and Ph.D. journey with confidence by honoring my research participants' stories and centering reciprocity—gifting their stories back to them and to the field of education at large.

Figure 5

Theory of Stinta (Love) Components



THEORY OF LOVE COMPONENTS

1. Needles as Key Partners
2. Threads as Key Axiologies
3. Beading Foundation as Relationship with Place
4. Beads as Stories
5. "Spirit Bead" as Refusal

Note. This figure was developed by Roshelle Weiser-Nieto (author) on February 4, 2023, using canva.com. The Oregon medallion was also created by Weiser-Nieto, and the needle and thread clip art are stock images found on pinterest.com and dreamstime.com.

My mother taught me how to do beadwork a few years back. It has been an important part of my life ever since, as I often turn to my beads when I need to think, pray, do some soul work, or just take a break from life. During the summer of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Dakota and Tlingit artist CeeJay Yellow Hawk launched a “Bead Your State/Province” challenge to promote Indigenous artists and strengthen community bonds. Prior to this challenge, I had only beaded smaller projects such as earrings. Despite the colonial invention of state borders, I still feel a lot of love for what is now known as Oregon. Oregon is the original homelands of my people, so I decided to take up the challenge.

As a “triple Duck,” I decided to use green and yellow, the University of Oregon’s school colors. I created the rising sun as a symbol of hope, rising over our Tribal homelands, and put a red heart in the middle of the sunshine, right where our reservation lands are in the Chiloquin/Klamath Falls area. I beaded the four stars to represent the four directions and the relationship between spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health and wellbeing. When finished, I submitted it to CeeJay’s Instagram challenge on her sites @kooteencreations, @sevenallies, and it made the map (Figure 6)!

It was such an honor to participate in this challenge with Indigenous bead artists across The United States and Canada. I had intended to gift the medallion to my cousin for Christmas that year, but she unexpectedly passed away in November of 2020. She was born one year after me and we grew up as sisters. She was my best friend and greatest confidant. She was my person. The medallion was for her always and forever, so when we put her into the earth, I put the medallion in with her. There it will remain until Mother Nature decides otherwise. Sepkeec’a, thank you, for witnessing the story of my sister’s Oregon Medallion.

Figure 6

Bead your Province/State Final Map



Note. Image retrieved October 2020, from the @SevenAllies Instagram page.

Now that I have shared my heart, I return to describe my theory of Stinta, using my beadwork practice as a metaphor. I use the two-needle technique in my beadwork, using one needle to pick up the beads and the other to tack them down to my pesson- the needles are the do-ers. The threads are significant because they hold it all together and in place. The beading foundation is where everything lives and provides structure and stability for everything else. And

how would we, as beaders, create our beautiful Indigenous masterpieces without every single bead and decide where they will go with patience and precision?

In the following sections, I describe the components of a theory of Stinta using a beadworking metaphor shown on Figure 5: the two needles as key partners, the two threads as my key axiologies, the beading foundation as relationship to place, the beads as stories, and the spirit bead as refusal.

Needles as Key Partners

In a love as theory approach to a research project (and life in general), I see the key partners as yourself and who you choose to engage/work with. In a beading project, the needles are the “do-ers,” so I illustrated this in my graphic art design with the needles as the key partners. This could be your research participants, a more than human relative (Jacob, 2020), or lessons from Creator. The possibilities are seemingly endless, depending on the project. I center the participants first because if it were not for them and the relationships we have in our lives (both human and more than human), where would we find love? bell hooks (2001) described living by a “love ethic” as centering “honesty, openness, and personal integrity” to lead free, full, and well lives (p. 87). This involves working with those we admire and respect, fully committing to relationships, and embracing a global vision that connects our lives and fate to everyone else on the planet (hooks, 2001).

Love is hard. Powerful relationships are strong enough to withstand the darkest of days together. Possibly one of the biggest gifts we can give to each other is the ability to reflect each of our own personal “lights” back to the sender. When I was little, I remember asking my auntie why people wore mirrors on their regalia at a powwow. She told me it was to protect the energy of the dancer. If someone was sending them good medicine, the good medicine would be

reflected back to them. However, if someone sent the dancer bad energy, that would also be reflected back to them. Simpson (2017) writes about how important it is to recognize each other's light; to truly see one's essence. It is my goal to live life as a disco ball, reflecting back love to those who send it to me and to protect me from those who don't.

Equally important, however, is the relationship we have with and the love we extend to ourselves. It is important to recognize the gifts we bring to our relationships and projects as the second key partner in a Theory of Love. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) offered loving as a powerful Indigenous project that supports decolonization, asserting that "Indigenous love, loving your own people and loving the broader set of principles about Indigenous peoples are important in loving yourself, your skin, your very being" (p. 189). How do we center Indigenous love, take good care of ourselves and our spirits, and attend to our soul wounds (Duran, 2019; Duran et al., 2008) so that we can, in turn, show up for others? It is vitally important to ground ourselves in our values and teachings, have a clear understanding of our "north stars" (Love, 2019), and ensure we are coming from a loving space in our work.

My whole Ph.D. journey has required me to dive within the depths of my soul and recognize my power. These pages were written in some of the best and worst times of my life. Some of these pages were written in desperation and loneliness, and some were written in paradise on a solo vacation where I desired nothing more than my own company and thoughts. Making space for all of this to be true is how I showed up for myself day after day. I asked for help when I needed it. I slept, I sat ceremony, I went to therapy; I did whatever it took to make sure my heart was well so my mind would be right. My research deserved nothing less.

Thread as Key Axiologies

I see our values as the threads that hold us together, just as the threads hold together and hold down the beadwork. Living my life centering the components of Stinta, is how I hold it together. In a conversation with a Tribal elder and knowledge and language holder, GeorGene Nelson, I learned that stinta is a very strong word, perhaps the most positive word in our language (Nelson, 2024). Georgene shared with me that there are roughly 17 different ways to use stinta, but ultimately, it is a word we use to show the utmost reverence and regard for someone or something. We use stinta to show we cherish and love. It is not a word to throw around. We also use this word to receive guests into our space or onto our lands, it shows that we value and honor them.

In another conversation with another Tribal linguist and knowledge holder, Dr. Joseph Dupris, I learned that the parts of stinta are as follows: *stin-* means to be tied, hung, suspended to, or tied at both ends (Dupris, 2024). The *“-ta”* part of any word can mean at, on, or against. Joe taught me that our language is an agglutinative language- our words stack together to make a whole. Similar to how beads come together to make a whole picture in a piece of beadwork. I love thinking about stinta as a tie to one another. From both ends. It reminds me of the reciprocal nature of being in healthy relationships with each other and our more than human relatives. It's an acknowledgement that the love comes from both sides.

Stinta is my north star as a scholar and human. Simpson (2017) describes the way Nishnaabeg people are connected with the stars and the skyworld looking to the constellations with a sense of “star literacy,” knowing when it is time to tell specific stories or tend to different plants (pp. 212–213). Bettina Love (2019) also uses stars as a metaphor to describe her relationship with theory. She stated that her theory is her own north star guiding her work, giving her the language and knowledge she needs to fight injustice. Love described theory as “a location

for healing ... like the North Star” (p. 132). Just as Simpson described the importance for her nation to be “star literate” and as Love claims theory as her north star, I have found my components within a theory of Stinta to be my north star in my healing journey, my praxis, and in my research.

Beading Foundation as Relationship with Place

When thinking through what Stinta as theory looks like in relationship with place, I draw in words from *Fox Doesn't Wear a Watch*, wherein Jacob (2021) pondered how it would be if we saw the whole world was Mother Nature's classroom. What would Mother Nature's learning outcomes be for us here on her lands? Jacob posed the following as possibilities:

- Be in respectful relationship with place.
- Honor all of my relatives, human and more than human.
- Continually demonstrate caring, connection, and love--toward myself and all beings.
- Conduct myself in ways that affirm I am a good ancestor to future generations. (p. 5)

Seeing this list gave me hope and the guidance I needed to believe that we could one day see ourselves as good stewards of the lands once again. For me, specifically within this research project, honoring the place where I am and my human and more than human relatives means honoring those who walked these lands before me and giving back when and where I can.

Demonstrating caring, connection, and Stina is the way I want to move in the world and show up ethically in my research. When I think about how the foundation of my beadwork is what holds everything up, there could be no creativity or beauty without the very foundation it all sits upon. This list of Mother Nature's learning outcomes also feels foundational to Stinta as theory in how to be in right relationship with place.

Beads as Stories

This whole dissertation is my story, but it is not just one story. Just as a medallion requires hundreds and hundreds of beads, life contains stories upon stories. Storytelling is a powerful way to push back against colonial narratives and reclaim Indigenous knowledge (Simpson, 2011; Smith, 2021). When we bring Indigenous stories into research and into the classroom, we challenge the systems that have tried to erase or silence Native voices (Smith, 2021). Honoring stories as truth is healing in action. When we feel safe to share our stories with each other, it empowers us and helps foster a sense of belonging (Duran, 2019). Stories teach us about personal growth, respect for our ancestors and land, and honoring our cultures. Honoring and centering story in Stinta of theory is about keeping our communities strong and safe. Each bead matters.

I have mentioned that care, culture, and connection to community are important teachings from my family that I bring into this work. These teachings are stories that are important to me. They are my truths. Care is a learned tenet from my mom who made huge sacrifices in her life and worked two jobs to ensure my siblings and I were always taken care of. I do not know anyone who models the tenet of care more than Indigenous mothers. Culture is a learned tenet from my auntie, who always made sure I knew where I come from and who we are as Modoc and Yahooskin Paiute people. And I learned that community is nothing without connection from my grandma. Communities are powerful sources of support if you stay connected, and my grandmother has modeled this beautifully in my life. She has shown me the importance of keeping up with our relatives as well as creating supportive relationships when we move to new communities. What are the stories in your life that are your truths? How do we honor the truths of research participants in academic work? Stories are everything and deserve to be treated with the utmost respect.

“Spirit Bead” as Refusal

The last component of my theory of love is the concept of the spirit bead. If you look very closely at the top of the Oregon medallion I created, just above the center sunbeam, you might be able to see the out-of-place, hot pink bead I placed there. My grandma taught me the practice of creating an intentional flaw in beadwork, a teaching that reminds us that only Creator is capable of creating perfection; we as humans are flawed. This teaching is undervalued in Western educational systems where flaws in theories and knowledge systems can delegitimize claims. The spirit bead is a signifier of refusal.

Though I center my work in love, resurgence, and as heart-centered, I agree with Rachel Flower’s (2015) assertion that “the love we have for our world” does not have to extend into settler colonial agendas; instead, “our love is reserved for one another” (p. 40). My love is a fierce love that sometimes prioritizes refusal. Refusal is taken up by many Indigenous scholars (Curtis, 2023; Flowers, 2015; Jacob et al., 2019; Sabzalian, 2019; Simpson, 2014, 2017; Smith, 2021; Trask, 1996; Tuck 2009), and at the heart of Stinta as my theory it is a refusal to accept the insidious nature of the -isms that plague our lands and people. It is a refusal to give up on people who are sick from their soul wounds, even if we must create boundaries in what we will accept (Duran et al., 2008). Because what do we need when we are sick? We need healing and medicine. We don’t often give up on someone who is sick or be angry with them for their sickness. But we also must recognize and accept that we cannot save anyone and must refuse to take on a savior complex in their healing journeys. We can only offer knowledge, support, and Stinta and pray they choose to heal from their sickness on their own.

In a theory of Stinta, there is a refusal to strive for perfection and an acknowledgment that mistakes are inherent to being human and are powerful learning opportunities. There is

space for growth and even changing our minds. A theory of Stinta asks us to forgive ourselves when we trip up but then do better once we have learned the lesson.

Healing Through the Lens of Stinta as theory

Healing is at the heart of this research project, but it is a hard-to-define, complex, and nuanced concept. Some Indigenous communities, particularly in Canada, have been hesitant to embrace the term “healing” due to its manipulation as a tool to ease white guilt rather than doing work to create genuine relationships and reconciliation (Simpson, personal communication, April 5, 2022). In her discussion on abolitionist teaching, Dena Simmons stresses the importance of "anti-racist" healing, or acknowledging the pain caused by racism, holding space for that pain, and creating educational spaces that empower individuals to thrive rather than merely survive (Haymarket Books, 2020). Anti-racist healing isn't self-care days at the spa; anti-racist healing is essential in addressing harm and systemic oppression in education. Million (2013) contextualizes healing within the framework of Indigenous self-determination, emphasizing the need for healing that addresses the trauma inflicted by colonial violence. In this review of the literature on healing, I discuss healing through the frames of my theory of Stinta: healing in partnership and community, centered on Indigenous values and respect for place, and honoring our stories and moments of refusal and resistance.

Healing in Partnership and Community

Indigenous scholarship consistently emphasizes the centrality of community and relational partnerships in the process of healing. Gregory Cajete's (2015) *Indigenous Community: Rekindling the Teachings of the Seventh Fire* explored the importance of relationships in community-building and healing, focusing on how Indigenous knowledge systems are rooted in collective experiences rather than individual achievements. Cajete

highlighted how Indigenous peoples are inherently connected through relationships with each other, the land, and all living beings, and it is through these relationships that healing occurs. This collective focus on relationality aligns with Wilson's (2008) concept of relational accountability, which insists that healing is not an individual journey but one shared by a community.

For Smith (2021), healing is directly connected to Indigenous peoples' experiences of colonization and struggles for self-determination. While each Indigenous culture has its unique values and teachings, Smith argues that Indigenous peoples share a common language of colonization and decolonization. This shared experience creates a platform for solidarity and collective healing. Smith wrote, "Colonized peoples share a language of colonization, share knowledge about their colonizers, and in terms of a political project, share the same struggle for decolonization" (p. 45). This common language helps build bridges between different Indigenous groups, making collaboration and shared understanding easier in the collective struggle for healing and resurgence.

Understanding healing in relation to decolonization means that healing must go beyond the surface wounds and must be understood holistically to address the depth of wounds Indigenous peoples have sustained over time. For Smith (2021), healing "is a holistic way of connecting and addressing intergenerational trauma, systemic trauma, collective grief and loss for land, place, people, language, knowledge, and material things" (p. 191). Healing centers on the well-being of our people, lands, and lifeways collectively and our ability to determine our lives and futures in the places that have sustained us for generations.

Smith (2021) also discussed how Indigenous movements assert sovereignty and self-determination on a global scale. These movements have developed an international discourse

that allows Indigenous activists and scholars to communicate across cultural differences while still honoring their specific communities. This idea resonates deeply in the context of my research. Although the educators I worked with came from various Tribes, they found common ground in their shared experiences of colonization and their collective commitment to educational healing. Through collaboration, they honored both their Tribal-specific values and the broader Indigenous experience of decolonization, showing that healing in community is possible when we come together with shared intentions.

Importantly, Indigenous scholars like Eve Tuck (2009) have critiqued research that is centered around damage-based narratives, which tend to portray Indigenous communities as broken and in need of saving, proposing instead that research should center desire, including “the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities” (p. 417). This approach aligns with scholars such as Smith (2021) and Simpson (2017) who advocated for research that centers self-determination and resurgence, which allows Indigenous peoples to define themselves by their strengths and potential.

As Love (2019) suggested that healing from oppression is not merely intellectual but personal, emotional, and spiritual. Healing within a community space allows for the kind of support and love that makes this work sustainable. Simpson (2017) beautifully reflected this in her metaphor of constellations—individual stars shining brightly, forming connections with other constellations to create pathways out of settler-colonial realities and into Indigenous resurgence.

Through partnerships and community engagement, Indigenous educators can disrupt the isolation and harm imposed by settler-colonial systems. They demonstrate that healing work, especially in education, is most powerful when done in collaboration and community, rooted in the values of reciprocity and relational accountability. By centering partnerships and community,

Indigenous education becomes not only a pathway for academic success but also for collective healing and transformation.

Healing through Indigenous Value Systems and Spirituality

Spirituality is also centered within Indigenous theories of healing. Indigenous scholars consistently emphasize the inseparability of spirituality from other aspects of life, particularly in healing and educational practices. Simpson (2017) described how Indigenous spirituality and ceremonial practices provide a framework for daily actions, informing how we approach both personal and collective responsibilities, including education. In this way, spirituality is not something that can be compartmentalized, it is central to how we think, teach, and heal.

My own approach to my research and practitioner life reflects these values. Whether smudging before engaging in academic work or offering prayers for guidance, these practices align with the teachings of Margaret Kovach (2009), who asserted that spirituality is essential for grounding research in Indigenous values. This grounding creates spaces where educators can teach with love, clarity, and intentionality. The act of integrating spiritual practices in the academic realm represents a refusal to separate intellectualism from spirituality, which is often demanded by colonial educational systems. As a result, Indigenous educators can create a balance between their spiritual and intellectual selves, resisting the separation imposed by Western education.

Wilson (2009) captures this beautifully, noting that "spirituality is not separate but is an integral, infused part of the whole in the Indigenous world view" (p. 89). For Indigenous peoples, spirituality is as vital as physical, emotional, and mental health. This holistic view of well-being is something that resonates deeply with me as an Indigenous womyn navigating the challenges of a white, western institution. A beloved átway Elder articulated this tension, saying, "We Indian

people are wedged in between two cultures, and there is no way for us to avoid it" (Beavert, 2017, p. 160). The return to academia after teaching on a reservation was a profound culture shock for me, as I struggled to find a place for my spiritual and cultural identity within the rigid frameworks of Western qualitative research that often discourage the inclusion of the personal and the spiritual.

Moreover, many Indigenous scholars explore the psychological impacts of colonial narratives on Indigenous peoples, such as the myth of the "savage Indian" and the damaging effects of Native mascots and Hollywood portrayals (Duran, 2019; Fryberg et al., 2008, 2021; Pewewardy, 1998). These narratives inflict what Duran calls "soul wounds"—deep spiritual injuries that, if not healed, will perpetuate suffering for future generations. However, there is also powerful healing work being done within Indigenous communities, where the resurgence of traditional knowledge systems and the revitalization of languages play a significant role in healing these wounds (Jacob, 2013; Simpson, 2011). The act of (re)learning our cultural practices, languages, and traditions serves as a form of resistance and healing, as noted by Simpson (2017) and Cornthassel (2018), who referred to these as "everyday acts of resurgence."

By centering spirituality and Indigenous value systems in both research and education, we can create healing environments that honor our entire selves: intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual. This approach not only promotes healing for educators but also for the students and communities they serve, ensuring that cultural knowledge is passed on in ways that are spiritually sustaining and culturally grounded.

Healing through Relationships with Place

Land and place hold deep significance in Indigenous knowledge systems, essential in guiding cultural practices, traditions, and healing processes. Cajete (2016) spoke to this

understanding, noting that the land itself acts as a teacher. For Indigenous peoples, land is not simply a resource or property, but a source of wisdom, shaping both our identity and our connection to the natural world. Archibald (2008) similarly argues that place-based education can also serve in reconnecting Indigenous people to their land, history, and communities, which in turn promotes profound healing.

However, the impact of genocide and colonization has significantly disrupted the relationship Indigenous peoples have with our lands and bodies. As Megan Bang (2020) and Deloria Jr. and Wildcat (2001) described the forced removal and termination eras have severely impacted Indigenous peoples' ability to act as traditional stewards of our lands. The ongoing effects of climate change and capital inequality continue to limit physical connection to homelands, particularly for those who live far away from their ancestral lands (Bang, 2014). These factors also intersect with broader issues of healthcare access, poverty, and adequate housing, all of which affect the physical health of Indigenous peoples (Bang, 2020; Lewis, 2014). The connection between land and body is evident; when Indigenous people are separated from our lands, our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is also compromised.

The physical toll of colonization on Indigenous peoples is far-reaching and manifests in many forms. From the massacres of Indigenous communities, the abuse suffered in boarding schools, forced sterilizations, and ongoing domestic violence to the loss of our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womyn/Peoples, Indigenous bodies have been subjected to centuries of violence and trauma (Adams, 1995; Beisaw & Olin, 2020; Grayshield et al., 2015; McDiarmid, 2019). These traumas are carried not only in our memories but in our bodies, and the need for physical healing in Indigenous communities is immense. Healing is not just emotional and

spiritual; it must also address the physical harm done to our communities through colonization and its lasting impacts.

My own Tribe, the Klamath Tribes, has taken steps to address this history of trauma and promote healing through the TH/SH curriculum. A series of videos created by the Klamath Tribes' SB13 Ad Hoc Committee and Education Department focus on topics such as boarding schools, restoration, termination, and our relationship with the land. These videos offer a form of truth and reconciliation as they center the stories of elders who survived the boarding school era. In the video *Boarding Schools, Truth, Reckoning, & Healing*, Klamath elders speak openly about the physical violence they endured in the schools and how it affected their ability to trust adults or show affection to loved ones. This reclamation of stories, centered in the TH/SH curriculum, allows for a powerful form of healing, not only for the elders but for future generations who learn from these experiences (The Klamath Tribes, 2022).

In this way, the land itself becomes part of the healing process. By fostering a reconnection to place through education and storytelling, Indigenous communities can heal from the physical and emotional trauma of colonization. As Perry Chocktoot, the narrator of the Klamath Tribes' video series, stated:

Our strength and resilience has sustained our communities through this turbulent time ...

We weep for who and what we've lost, but we celebrate those who came home and found the will and determination to give back to their families, communities, and Tribe. (The Klamath Tribes, 2022)

This celebration of resilience and the strength of our ancestors is a model for how healing can happen through a reconnection to both land and community.

By (re)learning our cultural practices, honoring our ancestors, and reclaiming our relationship with the land, we can heal not only our spirits but also our physical bodies. These acts of reconnection are a form of resistance against settler-colonial forces that have sought to sever our ties to the land, highlighting how the resurgence of Indigenous languages, traditions, and lifeways is not only a cultural revival but also an essential aspect of healing from the trauma inflicted on both our bodies and our lands (Jacob, 2013; Simpson, 2017).

Healing Through Stories

Storytelling is at the heart of Indigenous knowledge transmission and healing, serving as a powerful method for passing on cultural values, histories, and teachings. Scholars such as Russell Bishop (1999) emphasized that storytelling in Indigenous communities is not only a way to represent truth but also a means of creating personal and communal healing. Storytelling allows Indigenous people to reclaim our narratives, often in response to the historical erasure and trauma caused by colonization. Stories embed Indigenous knowledges that are vital to healing, but telling, sharing, and listening to stories in community is also a healing process.

As Archibald (2008) and Simpson (2011) suggested that storytelling in Indigenous education goes beyond content delivery and memorizing the stories; truly it becomes a space for reflecting on cultural survival, resilience, and identity. Indigenous storytelling serves as an act of resistance, allowing for the continuity of Indigenous knowledge systems and the survival of cultures. Simpson (2017) described storytelling as an essential part of Indigenous intelligence, a theory and process rooted in affirmative refusal. By telling our own stories, we create “constellations of disruption” that challenge colonial structures, promote decolonial love, and embody Indigenous sovereignty (p. 198).

For Indigenous peoples, storytelling is not just a reflection of the past but a pathway toward healing and restoration. Smith (2021) spoke to the healing potential of storytelling as part of an Indigenous Research Agenda. In reclaiming Indigenous knowledge systems, Indigenous peoples engage in cultural work that nurtures both past and future generations. This concept of restoration emphasizes the need to revive traditional ways of knowing despite centuries of erasure and indoctrination under colonial rule (Smith, 2021). The resurgence of Indigenous brilliance, as Simpson (2017) noted, empowers us to continue passing down our knowledge systems to future generations, honoring the responsibility of being cultural keepers.

Jacob (2013) echoed this sentiment in her book *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing*, where she described the role of Indigenous scholars in reclaiming the stories and traditions of their people. She wrote, “As Indigenous scholars, it is our task to reclaim the stories and traditions of our people... We have a responsibility to go about, to the best of our abilities, doing this nurturing work” (p. 121). In this way, storytelling becomes a form of cultural survival and a profound act of care for both past and future generations. For Indigenous peoples, the act of storytelling is a deliberate and active process of ensuring that our histories and teachings endure, resisting the colonial forces that have sought to erase them.

Million (2011) reminded us that Indigenous survival is a powerful testament to resilience in the face of overwhelming colonial violence. Quoting Joy Harjo and Audre Lorde, Million asserts, “We were never meant to survive” (p. 316), yet we have, and storytelling plays a key role in our survival. By telling our stories, we resist settler-colonial narratives that have tried to erase our existence and instead assert our continued presence and vitality (Bang, 2014). Through storytelling, we create spaces for healing, not only for ourselves but for our communities and

future generations, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge systems remain a living, breathing part of our cultures.

By integrating storytelling into education and research, Indigenous scholars and educators are actively engaging in the process of restoration. This involves reclaiming Indigenous knowledge systems, resisting colonial narratives, and passing down cultural teachings to future generations. The act of storytelling, whether through the classroom, research, or community spaces, has the potential for healing by allowing Indigenous people to reconnect with their histories and maintain their cultural sovereignty.

Healing through Refusal and Resistance

Refusal is a powerful and essential component of Indigenous healing, deeply intertwined with the resistance to settler-colonial ideologies and structures. Audra Simpson (2014), a leading scholar of the theory of refusal, discusses refusal as a form of political resistance and an assertion of sovereignty. Instead of seeking validation or recognition from colonial governments, refusal is about asserting Indigenous autonomy and identity on their own terms, outside the structures and expectations imposed by colonial power (Simpson, 2014). This act of refusal is inherently healing, as it allows Indigenous peoples to uphold our sovereignty and cultural values without being confined by settler-state frameworks. Scholars such as Tuck and Yang (2014) argue that refusal is an act of resilience, a deliberate challenge to the normative systems that continue to erase and marginalize Indigenous voices.

In this dissertation, this concept of refusal is reflected through the metaphor of the spirit bead, or the intentional flaw in beadwork that symbolizes a rejection of colonial ideals of perfectionism. By intentionally placing a flaw in beadwork, Indigenous artists refuse to conform to settler-colonial standards of perfection and instead embrace the beauty and power of

imperfection. After all, as my grandmother taught me through the teaching of the spirit bead, many of us believe that we are all flawed beings and only Creator is “perfect.”

Flowers (2015), in her critical work on refusal, asserted that Indigenous refusal is not simply about saying “no” to colonial structures, but about reclaiming Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. She contended that refusal is a form of “fierce love,” wherein Indigenous peoples resist settler-colonial oppression while affirming their own systems of knowledge, culture, and governance. By refusing to adhere to the colonial expectations placed upon them, Indigenous educators can center our own cultural values, thereby creating healing spaces in the classroom that honor Indigenous ways of knowing. Flowers’ work demonstrates that this refusal is not an act of separation but one of restoration, allowing Indigenous peoples to reclaim their rightful place in the world on their own terms.

Simpson (2017) built on the concept of refusal by describing it as an affirmative act of creation. For Simpson, refusal is not just about rejecting colonial ideologies but also about creating alternatives rooted in Indigenous intelligence. She argued that refusal involves asserting Indigenous worldviews and values as valid, powerful, and self-sustaining. Simpson wrote about the importance of creating “constellations of coresistance and freedom,” where Indigenous peoples come together to reject settler-colonial norms while simultaneously creating our own paths toward resurgence and decolonial love (Simpson, 2017, p. 231). This form of refusal is both resistance and healing, as it allows Indigenous communities to strengthen our ties to one another, to the land, and to the cultural practices.

Love’s concept of abolitionist teaching aligns with this idea of refusal. In *We Want to Do More Than Survive* (2019), Love advocated for educators, particularly those from marginalized communities, to engage in resistance through refusal and abolition, rejecting the oppressive

systems of schooling that dehumanize students of color. Love argued that healing can only occur when we refuse to operate within systems that are built on the oppression of marginalized communities and instead work toward the creation of new educational models that affirm the humanity and brilliance of all students. Love's abolitionist approach encourages educators to center love, liberation, and refusal to conform to the standardized, colonial models of education, which parallels the resistance Indigenous educators engage in as they navigate and challenge Western educational systems.

Kaitlin B. Curtice (2020) also explored the healing power of refusal and resistance in her work, particularly in relation to the reclamation of Indigenous spirituality and identity. She wrote about the necessity of refusing assimilation into dominant Christian and colonial frameworks, emphasizing that this refusal is an act of spiritual healing. For Indigenous peoples, reclaiming our spiritual practices and refusing to conform to colonial religious expectations is a profound act of self-determination and cultural preservation. Curtice (2020) advocated for the importance of returning to Indigenous roots, drawing on the wisdom of ancestors and resisting the erasure of Indigenous identities in both religious and educational spaces. By doing so, Indigenous people can heal from the trauma of colonization while reestablishing their connection to our spiritual and cultural selves.

In these ways, refusal and resistance become vital tools for healing. For Indigenous educators, refusing to conform to settler-colonial standards in education is an act of cultural survival and resurgence. By reclaiming our narratives, knowledge systems, and spiritual practices, Indigenous people can create spaces of healing that honor our ancestors and nurture future generations. Refusal is not simply about rejecting oppression. It is about creating a future

where Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and teaching can thrive and be passed on to our future generations.

Summary of Literature on Healing

Healing is the heart of this research, embodied by the framework of Stinta as theory. From this literature, we see that healing in Indigenous contexts is collective, grounded in relationships with community and land. Spirituality is also deeply integrated into healing practices. Healing also bridges the intellectual and spiritual, with educators using methods such as smudging and storytelling to resist colonial compartmentalization and honor holistic well-being. Furthermore, refusal and resistance are crucial acts of healing. By refusing colonial standards, Indigenous peoples assert sovereignty and reclaim their cultural integrity, which affirms our knowledge systems and self-determination. Ultimately, Stinta as theory and the literature I reviewed provides a framework that centers healing through love, spirituality, and community.

Following in the Steps of Our Relations: Native American Curriculum Development

I wouldn't be a good relative if I didn't uplift other states doing this important work. Oregon was not the first state to create its own policy and curriculum for Indigenous education. States such as Hawai'i, Montana, Washington, New Mexico, Wisconsin, and more have laid the groundwork, modeling what is possible in creating policies and developing curricula to uplift the Indigenous peoples of their lands.

Montana passed legislation in 1999 to develop a curriculum for "all students, both Native and non-Native," to have the opportunity to learn about "the cultures and histories of Montana's Tribal nations in the common school curriculum" (Hopkins, 2020, p. 7). However, Montana truly led the way for this important work beginning in 1972, when the curriculum was originally

mandated and passed (Hopkins, 2020). After the 1999 development of Montana's Indian Education for All legislation, they did not secure funding for the curriculum until 2005, however, that did not stop the work from happening and the development of the "Seven Essential Understandings," (Figure 7) which provide a pathway between understanding the curriculum and what it was intended to accomplish in centering Indigenous history and current lifeways (Hopkins, 2020).

Figure 7

Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

Essential Understandings:

1. There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.
2. Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.
3. The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America.
4. Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions: I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers; II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land; III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.
5. There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:
 - Colonization/Colonial Period, 1492-1800s
 - Treaty-Making and Removal Period, 1778-1871
 - Reservation Period – Allotment and Assimilation, 1887-1934
 - Tribal Reorganization Period, 1934-1953
 - Termination and Relocation Period, 1953-1968
 - Self-Determination Period, 1975-Present
6. History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.
7. American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.

Note. These Essential Understandings were originally developed in 2001 and revised from 2010-2024. Retrieved from Montana Office of Public Instruction at:

<https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Indian%20Education%20101/essentialunderstandings.pdf>

Another early leader in this area was Hawai'i, with the creation of their Hawaiian Studies Program (HSP) in 1980. This initiative stemmed from the 1978 State Constitutional Amendment, which mandated the state to promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history, and language. The program's philosophy, as stated on the Hawaiian Department of Education webpage, emphasizes developing a cultural lens that preserves core Hawaiian perspectives, drawing on elders'

teachings (kūpuna). Hawaii's dual language immersion schools are a testament to the continued success of this initiative, serving as an inspiration for other states.

These states are remarkable examples of how policy and curriculum can be crafted through Indigenous partnerships. Hawai'i's program draws on the wisdom of its kūpuna, while Montana emphasizes collaboration with its Tribal communities, ensuring the curricula are meant for all students. When Indigenous curriculum is implemented in respectful relationship with Native peoples, the potential for healing and empowerment is immense.

However, research shows that simply providing a curriculum and standards is not enough to make meaningful change. Julie Kaomea (2005) highlighted the issues with Hawai'i's HSP implementation, where outdated and problematic texts, purchased in bulk from the 1980s, are still being used. This mirrors what we see in Oregon today, where outdated and inaccurate curricula perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Similarly, in Montana, studies by Ngai and Koehn (2010) revealed that teachers who incorporated Indigenous content throughout the school year, rather than limiting it to isolated lessons, saw greater student engagement. Further, Kaomea (2003) described how curriculum implementation often earns accreditation to the classroom teachers, while the kūpuna are doing the true behind-the-scenes and often unpaid work. These examples illustrate that while well-intentioned, it is not enough to simply provide a curriculum with no training or understanding of Indigenous values.

Other states, including Washington, New Mexico, and Wisconsin, are also trying to implement Native American curricula. Washington state made significant strides with the passage of Senate Bill 5433 in 2015, which mandates the inclusion of Tribal sovereignty and history in all school districts. Built on the 2005 "Since Time Immemorial" curriculum, this initiative emphasizes collaboration with Washington's 29 federally recognized Tribes. However,

challenges remain in terms of teacher training and ensuring consistent implementation across districts (“John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State,” 2024). New Mexico’s Indian Education Act (2003) established a framework to address the unique educational needs of Native American students, focusing on language preservation and cultural sustainability. However, while the state’s programs have been seen as models for integrating Native American languages into school curriculums, particularly in districts serving Tribal communities (“NM Indian Education Act Implementation Report,” 2021), the state also faced and lost a historic lawsuit filed by families (Greyeyes, 2023), again illustrating that “good intentions” are not sufficient to make meaningful change.

Wisconsin, through the passage of Act 31 in 1989, requires public schools to teach the history, culture, and sovereignty of the state’s 11 federally recognized Tribes (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2024). Like other states, Wisconsin faces challenges in the consistent implementation of this mandate, but efforts to partner with local Tribes ensure that the curriculum remains accurate and relevant (Leary, 2018).

These examples illustrate the importance of collaboration between schools, Tribal communities, and state education departments. However, as research has shown, providing curriculum and resources is just the beginning. True change requires strategic and systematic initiatives, comprehensive teacher training, and culturally responsive implementation to ensure these initiatives fulfill their potential to promote healing and empowerment.

Healing in Education

This literature review is important in truly understanding the significance and healing potential in education from the passing of SB13 in Oregon and the development of TH/SH in Oregon for Indigenous communities and the larger collective who have the beautiful opportunity

to learn directly from the Tribes of Oregon. The Tribes in Oregon are finally able to follow in the path of the other states doing the work, “writ[ing] back” our own history (Smith, 2001, p. 37). Like Montana, upon the passing of SB13, the ODE partnered with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon to create our own “Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon” (ODE, n.d.). Each of the nine Tribes were invited to select a representative “to share their heart, expertise, and knowledge to create concepts with will support educators as they teach information the Tribes wanted all students to learn and understand” in the development of the Essential Understandings (ODE, n.d.). I see this as a resurgence of Indigenous knowledges, as Indigenous self-determination, and as a potential site of healing in education. Each of the Tribes were able to bring their voice to the ODE, and much of what is being developed and disseminated throughout the state is coming directly from Indigenous knowledge systems (Jacob et al., 2018, Sabzalian et al., 2019). While there is still much work to be done and districts are still using problematic curricula, as I described in the introduction story of chapter one, the development of lessons within TH/SH provides opportunities and possibilities for healing and the resurgence of Indigenous brilliance in the State of Oregon.

Summary

This research has taught me that sharing stories from other states engaging in implementing Native American curricula and research on healing is a modality for fighting oppression and comes from a place that is both intellectual and from the heart (Jacob, 2013; Love, 2019). Healing is a potentiality in “culturally sustaining” educational spaces and regenerative efforts to create accurate curricula for all students, whereas the business of schooling is centered in settler colonial logics and hegemonic norms and dominant understandings of what it means to be excellent in schools (Eagle Shield et al., 2021; Paris &

Alim, 2017). While there is still a journey ahead in the continued improvement, creation, and prioritization of Native American curriculums in public schools, the possibilities for culturally responsive schooling and uplifting Indigenous knowledges creates beautiful healing possibilities for all students (Battiste, 2002; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

CHAPTER THREE: HEALING IS MY METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One of my favorite teachings from my family comes from a story another uncle told me one day when I was younger and distressed about something that had happened at the time. He told me that sometimes there are things in life that we can't control. When it's heavy, we don't always want to share those stories with our loved ones, but it's also not healthy to bottle up the feelings. Instead, we could get ourselves to a river and tell it to the rock people. I remember him telling me how you find rocks that catch your eye in the unique way rocks do and pick one up for each of your concerns or sorrows. You must find the most special ones who are calling you. You tell your story to the rock, and because the stones have their own unique spirit and medicine, you throw the rock into the river as hard as you need to. They can handle it. The rock people then carry your troubles downstream, all the way to the ocean, and the pain will not have the ability to hurt you in the same way anymore. It is a release. It is the letting go and letting the water take it away. The river (or any body of water I could get myself to) had always been my favorite place to go when I needed a spirit lift, and after my uncle told me the story of the rock people, I understood why.

The power of Native educators' experiences, their stories, and possibilities for healing are at the heart of my research project and methodology. Words can be used as a tool to harm or control, or words can be used to teach or heal, like medicine (Delgado, 1989; Kimmerer, 2013). My work, striving for change, anti-racist, deep listening, and allowing room for growth (Germán, 2021), is heart-work, social justice work, and seeks to uplift the power of teacher story and the healing that exists in the process of receiving, honoring, and retelling or "re-storying" (San Pedro, 2021) their stories. In the last chapter, I described how I came to develop a Stinta as theory, and if Stinta is my why, I believe that healing is the how, and so healing is my

methodology. I heal by telling my story and honoring and re-telling the research participants' stories.

In this chapter, I tell the story of how I developed this research project, describe how I leaned into the power of story as methodology and method, and the understanding that storytelling comes with many lessons (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008), however, in reality, I *felt* my way through the process leaning into my cultural intuition (Million, 2009). When told well, stories can “make the listeners/readers visualize events and feel like they are part of the story” (Archibald, 2008, p. 21). Stories show up for us when we need them the most. My uncle’s story of the rock people has continued to be medicine for me over the years, and the rock people have always been there for me when I felt lost. My uncle guided me to understand that the pain from our stories can be transformed into good and healing medicine. I learned this from him and now share this story with others experiencing difficult times. This is the way of stories. We share them as good medicine when they are most needed, and why this research project is centered around the healing power of teacher stories.

A Textured Approach to Holding the Stories

When designing my research project, I grounded myself in the overlaps of Stinta as theory and the Indigenous methodologies that I felt best supported this specific project. I also drew on my wealth of experience and expertise as a practitioner, as I do not silo my work as a researcher and practitioner. Before I introduce my specific methodologies for this research project, let me first introduce how I move in the world both in my practice as a researcher and a practitioner.

As the Native Youth Wellness Specialist for Lane Education Service District, I have been developing a new professional development series titled, “Healing Informed Practice,”

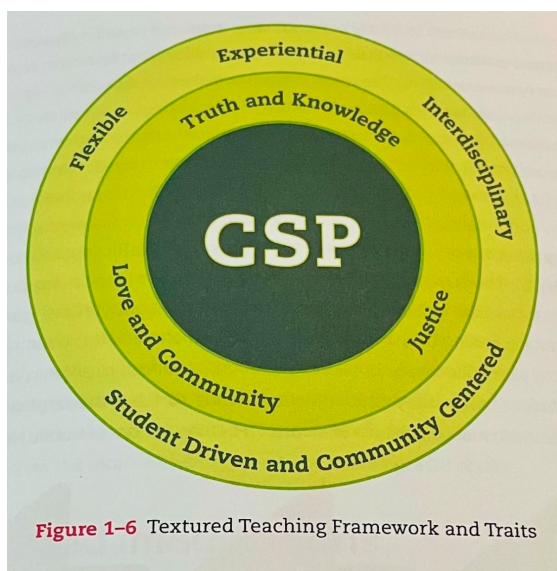
which centers Stinta as Praxis.⁴ An HIP acknowledges the interconnectedness between Stinta as Praxis, educational initiatives such as TIC, TSEL, and CSP, anti-racist pedagogies, and how the practices complement one another by speaking the same language of equity and social justice work in education.

My approach to HIP also draws from Lorena Escoto Germán's (2021) *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*, including the core values of "love and community," "justice," and "truth and knowledge," which she advocated as core to social justice work (p. 6). While designing this research project, I recognized how the themes and values in textured teaching applied to my work as a researcher. Her teaching as social justice work framework (Figure 8) danced beautifully with centering relationality, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity (Brayboy et al., 2012), all in the name of Stinta in my research project. She described the importance of believing that students and their communities are "worthy of love and respect," that teaching should be "liberating," and that we should dedicate our practice to empowering students and telling the truth (Germán, 2021, p. 6). While referring to her teaching practice, I felt strongly that this is how I wanted to show up for my teacher participants as a researcher who believes in the power of centering Indigenous Methodologies. In my professional development, I was braiding the textured teaching framework and traits into my HIP, and I came to see the value in applying this approach to my role as a researcher.

Figure 8

Framework and Traits of Textured Teaching

⁴ In the training, I use the phrase "Stinta as practice" as this tends to draw in and create more trust from classroom teachers than using such an academically loaded term such as praxis.



Note. From *Textured teaching: A framework for culturally sustaining practices* (p. 9), by Lorena Escoto Germán, 2021. Heinemann USA Imprint. Copyright 2021 by Lorena Escoto Germán.

Textured teaching draws on the metaphor of a woven tapestry: the underside may appear "chaotic and messy," but the top reflects "a colorful, purposeful, and beautiful pattern" (Germán, 2021, p. xv). For Germán, this applied to culturally sustaining teaching, which has multiple parts and may appear "messy," but also has another side that reflects "learning, growth, consciousness, and liberation" (p. xv). This description resonated with me deeply, as I had already used beadwork as a metaphor for Stinta as theory, where the underside of a beading project can also appear chaotic, but whose top is purposeful, patterned, and beautiful. I came to see how the traits of textured teaching applied to my practice as a researcher: I wanted to employ an experimental and flexible approach to my project, which required me to be open to trying out new ideas and adjust when things didn't go as planned and/or felt "messy." My approach had to be interdisciplinary due to my multifaceted identity as an Indigenous person from the Paiute and Modoc Nations and Chicana and my diverse educational background in ethnic studies and education studies. Finally, due to my deep belief in Stinta as theory, my work had to be teacher-

driven and sharing circle centered, similar to the student driven and community centered approach from textured teaching (Germán, 2021).

Indigenous Methodologies

Just as a textured approach to holding stories and Stinta as theory powerfully shaped who I am as a practitioner and scholar, engaging in Indigenous Methodological research has also been integral to my healing and academic journey. I draw on authors such as Russell Bishop, Margaret Kovach, and Timothy San Pedro, who use story as both process and representation in Indigenous methodologies. Simpson (2017) described the power of Indigenous peoples turning to their own Indigenous systems of intelligence, a theory and process that she offers creates "constellations of disruption, interrogation, decolonial love, and nation-based Indigeneity" (p. 198). When researchers engage with Indigenous theories—whether their own or those from other Tribes—we disrupt colonial “traditions” and, in so doing, open up possibilities for our own healing and deep self-in-relation research. I feel honored to join the conversation with scholars such as Amanda Tachine, Eliza Yellow Bird, Nolan Cabrera, Bishop, Kovach, and San Pedro. They have shown up for me when I was ready and needed to hear the messages they bring forward, contributing to the constellations of my own world. In the next sections, I describe three Indigenous methodologies—collaborative storying, sharing circles, and self-in-relation research—that ground this study, including my process of finding these methodologies and the ways they shaped my practice as a researcher. Although I describe the methodologies separately, their influence on my research is interconnected.

Collaborative Storying- Russell Bishop

After reading a beautiful article about an Indigenous approach to research focus or inquiry groups by Tachine et al. (2016) called sharing circles, I was called to see what I could

find as an Indigenous approach to qualitative interviewing. I found Bishop's (1999) article, "Collaborative Storying: Meeting Indigenous People's Desires for Self-Determination in Research." This research approach is different than the traditional approach to qualitative interviewing in that the participants themselves have an active role in the sense-making of research, versus an approach where the researcher collects the data and synthesizes it later and on their own. Bishop (1999) noted, "[t]he traditional position of the researcher has been that of the storyteller, the narrator, the person who decides what constitutes the narrative" (p. 3), however, I wanted my research participants to feel safe to provide feedback and trusted their contributions to the conversation when they didn't necessarily align with what I had originally thought through. It can become problematic when researchers come into Indigenous communities, extract stories, and exert their power as scholars (Bishop, 1999), and this is not how I wished to operate in my own research process.

In a collaborative storying approach, an important value is paying respect to the connectedness between the participants and their knowledges and committing to this deep level of engagement throughout the entire research process until the final product is created by all (Bishop, 1999). For this reason, I intentionally offer chapters to my research participants for review and approval as I complete them. The strength of collaborative storying is that, as a method, it takes up story as both process and representation. Bishop argued that when Indigenous ways of knowing shape research, it goes beyond "enabling others to find their own voices" (p. 4) to empowering participants to "engage in an interactive, complex, holistic approach to research" (p. 4). This approach centers my relationship with my research participants and fosters mutual respect, conversation, and collaboration. This approach to interviewing allows for relationality

and deeper connections when the researcher follows the spirit and intent of collaborative storying methodology.

Bishop (1999) also asserted, “Stories are a way of representing truth and meaning” (p. 5). Story as representation takes many forms because Indigenous communities tell stories for many reasons (Archibald, 2008; Bishop, 1999). Using collaborative storying as an approach ensures the participant or storyteller is able “to retain the power to define what constitutes the story and the truth and the meaning it has” (Bishop, 1999, p. 6). This shift of power from researcher to participant pays respect to the story's original source and supports a more authentic representation of the culture, community, and individual telling the story. In practice, this looked like me checking in with my research participants to make sure my writing reflected the essence of their story accurately versus making my own assumptions and moving on.

For me, using collaborative storying as a method involved carefully creating an environment where participants felt safe and engaged as equal contributors rather than passive respondents. I opened every conversation with sage and sweet grass. I encouraged my research participants to have their favorite beverages, welcomed food, and asked them to make sure they felt comfortable. Our conversations did not need to be so formal that we all felt we needed to sit at a desk or table. Often my research participants Zoomed from their couches, while taking a walk outside, or sitting cuddled on the floor with a blanket, pillow, and often a pet. I never got on the Zoom calls and pushed record right away; instead, we always made time to catch up on life before we got started on discussing the research questions for the day. While we discussed the research questions, if a participant wanted to tell a semirelated story and go on a complete tangent, I didn't interrupt. Every story they shared had purpose and powerful significance. Collaborative storying enabled natural, flowing conversations instead of a rigid, back-and-forth

interview format. It was not unnatural to have long periods of laughter or side conversations about what our dogs were barking at or what was for dinner. These tangents only added to the significance of centering relationship and added dynamics of both safety and fun to the research process.

Sharing Circles: Margaret Kovach and Amanda Tachine

Just as Tachine et al.'s (2016) article brought me to Bishop's work, it also brought me back to the work Kovach (2009). In their article, "Sharing Circles: An Indigenous Methodological Approach for Researching with Groups of Indigenous Peoples" (2016), Tachine et al. succinctly define sharing circles as "an open-structured, conversational style methodology that respects story sharing within a Tribal cultural protocol context (Kovach, 2009, p. 278). She also draws from Cree scholar Laara Fitznor's research to frame sharing circles as "an open-ended method that invites story," offering that "[t]his form of knowledge-gathering is based upon cultural tradition and has been adapted to contemporary settings as research" (as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 124). Protocol is one of the key tenets and strengths of sharing circles, which can involve providing food, calling in the ancestors, and providing as much time as needed for participants to share their stories fluidly and organically (Kovach, 2009). Since I held my sharing circles on Zoom, I couldn't provide food, but again, as with collaborative storying, I encouraged favorite snacks, drinks, and comfortability. In the spirit of reciprocity, I mailed participants gifts after each session (a journal, stickers designed by Native artists, hand-made earrings, and a book). We co-constructed our group protocols which included participants asking for a grounding opening and a closing activity during each session so that we started and ended in a good way.

This research method is just as much about the representation of Indigenous ideas and knowledges as it is about the actual process itself. The process is “less about research participants responding to research questions, and more about the participants sharing their stories in relation to the question,” which means that “interrupting a story to ‘get back to the question’ is not recommended” (p. 125), very similarly to collaborative storying which made them both complementary methods. Sometimes, the stories my participants told took on a life of their own and created meaning that might have been otherwise missed if I had insisted on sticking to a script (Kovach, 2009).

Sharing circles hold their own tensions, such as any other research method. Sometimes, one or two voices dominated the whole circle while in a group sharing space, despite the agreed-upon protocol of “Equity of voice.” I had to be prepared to guide the conversation skillfully and gently because while interrupting the story may not be recommended, ensuring all participants feel safe and heard was crucial. This was especially true after the first sharing circle and in reviewing the transcripts noting how much speaking time each participant got.

Sharing stories also triggers memories, and I had to be prepared for conversations to spark “a range of human emotions” (Kovach, 2009, p. 125). We had many discussions about the connections between harm, healing, transformation, and decolonization. There were tears. There was laughter. There was note-taking and artistic representation. There was anger. There was joy. And it all belonged.

Just as collaborative storying must be approached in a respectful way, sharing circles must also be approached with respect and thoughtful consideration of the responsibility of holding such space and stories for participants (Brayboy et al., 2012; Kovach, 2009). This doesn’t mean shying away from difficult conversations. Plenty of times, we didn’t agree on a

definition of healing or the best way to approach the curriculum. Still, there was also power in holding space for the healing that could occur in those moments by moving through the conversations with Stinta and mutual respect. In those moments, we were able to center relationality and respect one another through our willingness to “learn from each other, share our success, analyze our common problems, and nurture and support the optimism and courage that serve as the foundation of our movements” (Jacob, 2013, p. 13). Collaborative storying and sharing circles provide an opportunity for healing if approached with great care, responsibility, and preparation.

Co-developed Self-In-Relation Research: Timothy San Pedro

Here I must tell a story within a story. At an annual meeting for AERA in San Diego, I ran into an incredible Anishinaabe scholar named Jan Hare, from the University of British Columbia. I noticed her fabulous jacket and shoes when she sat in a symposium that I had the honor of speaking in. Later that same day, we ran into each other again. She saw me from across the patio and complimented my neon yellow ribbon skirt. As she was sitting alone, I invited her to join my friend and I. It was fate. She asked us about our research and told us a little bit about hers. She told us about a new idea she was working on titled “Story bundling,” where each story can be thought of as its own medicine bundle (Jan Hare, personal communication, April 2022).

As I describe self-in-relation research, you will see how this interaction with Dr. Hare and her idea of story bundling shapes my approach to stories.

When I arrived at San Pedro’s (2021) book, *Protecting the Promise: Indigenous Education Between Mothers and Their Children*, it felt like the string that ties all my method stories together, such as how Dr. Hare described story bundling as medicine. It made me think about the story I shared in the introduction of Chapter 2 about the care you must take in working

with Indigenous medicine and foods. I truly felt that meeting Jan and finding *Protecting the Promise* around the same time was fate. I have been taught we can blend several medicines in a bundle for safekeeping or to give as gifts, and this process of blending feels like a metaphor for how I came to Bishop's work through experiencing Tachine et al. (2016). Their work led me back to Kovach. And finally, San Pedro's work feels like the bundle that ties it together. He cites Bishop's collaborative storying and Kovach's idea of research as self-in-relation. All the work coming together this way was so powerful; it was such a gift.

San Pedro is a Filipino American scholar who grew up on a reservation in Montana. His approach to research places the utmost value on deep relationships and collaboration, as he had preexisting relationships with his participants who agreed to participate in his *Protecting the Promise* research. This was powerful to me and a guiding light, as I also had prior relationships with most of the educators I invited to participate in my research project. San Pedro shares a decolonial method of listening and learning from the stories of his participants, and especially the teachings we can take away from the way they listen and learn from each other by “(c)entering established relationships” (p. 3), which aligns with collaborative storying. The ways in which he described how they listened to and cared for each other came alive in my research project as well. Many of my participants also knew each other and looked forward to the circles as a point of connection. The participants who weren't as familiar with the other educators felt the Stinta, had many commonalities with the other Indigenous educators, and quickly felt “part of” the group.

Researchers are typically encouraged to be “objective” or “neutral” and to engage in research with participants they do not have close relationships with; however, San Pedro explores the possibilities and tensions of engaging in research with Indigenous mothers and their

children, who are also his friends. He asks, “[w]hat would research look like if it were done with longstanding and established relationships? In other words, when it’s your family, when it’s your friends, what are the possibilities of such work?” (San Pedro, 2021, p. 3). I, too, had this concern, but with the encouragement of my dissertation committee, I learned to see my prior relationships with my participants as a strength rather than being worried about colonial views on research. Because we had prior relationships, we were able to dig into the context of the research project much more quickly. If I had invited people I didn’t already know, I would have had to hold more sharing circles if I were to truly follow the theory of Stinta components to build trusting relationships.

Aside from objectivity, another tension involves the deep sense of responsibility to represent their stories authentically and accurately. As researchers, we are always responsible to our participants and co-researchers, however, the stakes felt higher because we have existing relationships. If I didn’t interpret a story in the same way a friend meant it to come across or there was a misunderstanding, this could potentially lead to strife in the relationship. There were times in my own research project when I needed to ask for additional clarity or check in with a participant in a later conversation to make sure I portrayed their stories in a way that felt safe to them.

Despite tensions around objectivity and clarity, San Pedro (2021) resisted “these Western research norms” and refuses to be “indoctrinated” into approaches to research that do not align with his or his participant's values and ways of knowing and being (p. 4). The ways in which he draws together these robust intersections and resists Western research “norms” require extra labor, attention to detail, and care, but the stories that can come from this approach to research are powerful medicine bundles.

These Indigenous methodologies, which all honor the power of story, inform the importance I place on connectedness and my own self-determination in approaching research as an Indigenous scholar and womyn. The relationships between the authors of my chosen methods all center around relationality, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity (Brayboy et al., 2012). While Western scholarship tends to extract and claim knowledges, Indigenous methodologies are about centering on our ways of knowing and being, joining a conversation, and being a good relative and ancestor. I am drawn back to Wilson's (2008) theory of research as ceremony:

The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world. (p. 11)

I see San Pedro's work and the ways in which he ties together the work Bishop's, Kovach's, and so many more brilliant scholars as ceremony and helping us to build stronger relationships in the world. My research project is a contribution to the ceremony.

Research Design: Braiding it Todo Junto

All these frameworks supported me in planning my 2-year qualitative research project centering on Indigenous storytelling, collaborative storying, and sharing circles. My research project asked six Indigenous teachers to commit to teaching the TH/SH curriculum, journal their experiences and student reactions, and come together as a whole group in sharing circle four times over the course of the school year to talk about the potentiality for healing by teaching the curriculum.

The teachers were also asked to meet with me individually for our collaborative storying interviews at the beginning and end of the school year. I had originally planned to meet with each teacher individually over Zoom for collaborative storying interviews before gathering as a

whole in sharing circle to orient teachers to the research project's overarching question: If schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how and in what ways can implementation of the TH/SH Native American curriculum serve as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools? However, I decided to reverse the order by leaning into cultural intuition and felt theory (Calderón et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012; Million, 2009).

This decision aligned with the process of Stinta as theory and deep respect for my research participants which a research participant reaffirmed during one of our sharing circles: “Love and power come from community” (Sharing Circle 3, April 2024). I wanted our first research touchpoint to be collective rather than individualized. Thus, the research design ended up flowing in the following order over the course of the 2023–24 school year:

- Sharing Circle 1 (whole group)- November 2023
- Collaborative Storying 1 Interviews (one-on-one)- Nov- Dec 2023, Jan-Mar 2024
- Sharing Circle 2 (whole group)- December 2023
- Sharing Circle 3 (whole group)- April 2024
- Sharing Circle 4 (whole group)- June 2024
- Collaborative Storying 2 Interviews (one-on-one)- June-July 2024
- Journal collection and analysis- June-Aug 2024
- Transcript analysis (throughout the school year)

Creating space for Native teachers to tell their stories is important because they are the ones with their feet on the ground and in front of the students daily. Listening to the teachers and reading their journal entries with a storytelling lens will help me visualize the events and draw out major themes (Archibald, 2008). The development of the TH/SH curriculum was a group effort, with people coming from around the state telling their stories, and so to improve and promote the work, we must hear the stories of teachers. Furthermore, as a researcher-storyteller, I

am responsible for carefully listening and synthesizing the heart of the stories my research participants share and bringing them to life in the findings chapter (Archibald, 2008). My hope for this dissertation is that this project honors Indigenous educators' experiences and knowledges, provides them a sense of community to counter the isolation they may feel in their work, provides them a space of healing, and that the relationships they develop during the duration of the school year will be lasting. I also hope my participants' stories encourage more teachers throughout the state to commit to teaching and seeing the potential for healing in the TH/SH and other curricula created with Indigenous voice. This is important because the teachers are at the heart of the collective effort for change and healing, the ones in front of the students, and we must listen and learn from them.

Teacher Participants

I invited six educators throughout the state to join the project via a brief email and/or social media message describing the overall study and explaining that participation involves a commitment to teaching the SB13 TH/SH curriculum, journaling their experiences, meeting with me twice for one-on-one collaborative storying interviews, and participating in four Zoom meetings for the sharing circles. The teachers invited to participate in this dissertation project were all Indigenous (American Indian, Alaska Native, and/or Native Hawaiian). This was crucial to my research because listening to and learning from Indigenous educators honors their self-determination and their perspective on the healing power of the curriculum while centering Stinta, respectful relationships, and the responsibility of reciprocity (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Additionally, I invited one Indigenous Elder Educator to join as a participant. Because I approached the research with an Indigenous methodological lens, observing respect and responsibility and from my own Modoc/Yahooskin cultural teachings centering Stinta, I believe

Indigenous Elders deserve respect and recognition for their deep cultural knowledge and the wisdom they brought to the circle (Archibald, 2008; Simpson, 2017). We looked to our Elder Educator for their wisdom and experience in social justice work in Native American education and with the development of the TH/SH curriculum. Furthermore, the Elder Educator's voice was powerful during the discussions around the potentiality of healing in education.

I invited the six teachers and the Elder Educator to keep the sharing circles intentionally small. This smaller group size was intended to foster a sense of trust, community, comfort in being vulnerable and to ensure equitable participation, allowing us to hear from all participants as frequently as possible. As one participant stated, it was important to honor each of their "Indigi-nuity"—their Indigenous creative genius (Sharing Circle 3, April 2024; Muhammad, 2020) as frequently as possible. By intentionally inviting Indigenous teachers to share their experiences with the TH/SH curriculum, I hope this project eventually serves as a model for teachers in Oregon and beyond, encouraging them to teach Indigenous curriculum. Finally, given the low number of Indigenous teachers in what is now Oregon, they often feel isolated and unsupported. As stated above, I hoped that creating a space for them to come together in community, build new relationships, develop support systems, and share their stories would help them feel less alone.

I sought out the teachers and Elder Educator based on my connections with Indigenous educational affiliations such as the Oregon Indian Education Association and Sapsik'wala Education Program, the University of Oregon's Native teacher education program, through their alumni network. Five of the six teachers were Sapsik'wala alum, all of whom I had already met, and one I met at an Oregon Indian Education Association conference. Researching with community and friends meant we could dig deeper into the context, leading to one participant

reflecting on the power of how “healing and relationship go hand in hand” (Sharing Circle 1, November 2023). I discuss more about the importance of these connections and relationships in the Findings chapter.

The six teachers were selected from specific geographic regions around Oregon, honoring the contributions and knowledges of the various Indigenous communities around the state. I chose to find teachers who work in and can share stories of the educational experience in Central Oregon, Eastern Oregon, Coastal Oregon, Southern Oregon, Valley of Oregon (Eugene, Corvallis, or Salem), and Portland Metro. The teachers from Central Oregon, Eastern Oregon, Coastal Oregon, and Southern Oregon were from areas close to Tribal offices and/or schools with higher Native populations. The teachers from Portland Metro and the Valley of Oregon had smaller Native populations in their schools and classrooms; however, it is important to teach this curriculum to all students, regardless of the high or low populations of Indigenous students.

The decision to choose Indigenous teachers from different regions around the state of Oregon also recognizes that Indigenous experiences are diverse, and each region has unique land and traditional practices that we can all learn from. For this reason, I encouraged the teachers to look closely at the Tribally created curriculum instead of only teaching the curriculum from ODE. While the teachers were all Indigenous, they were not all native to the land they lived and taught on. By teaching the curriculum created by the Tribe in their area, they can help uplift the hard work of those Tribes and honor their self-determination and knowledge they have chosen to share with the state.

Researching in Community

Operating within the theory of Stinta means that I must honor my research participants, including myself. I am one of the needles. I had to learn how to ask for help throughout my

Ph.D. journey, especially after my cousin and closest friend in the world passed away in 2020. I turned to my family when I needed a reminder of my “why.” I turned to my cohort members (who became family), and past alumni of our Ph.D. program when I needed to be held, academic help, and general encouragement to keep going. I even found my medicine dog, Tua, during this time.

I also leaned into my community when I needed support after encouragement from two Indigenous scholars, Valerie Shirley (Diné) and Jeremy Garcia (Hopi), whom I had met in person and “fangirled” over at an AERA conference. I had previously met them over Zoom during my time as a graduate employee for Sapsik’walaá, and they had asked me about my research project and Ph.D. journey. Lamenting that I was torn about how to compensate Indigenous teachers for their time without overstepping IRB protocol, they suggested a good old-fashioned Native go-to: 50/50 or a raffle. “Us Natives love a good raffle,” they laughed (Shirley & Garcia, personal communication, April 2022). Motivated by this idea, I decided to go for it. I turned to my community with a 50/50 raffle, wherein people could purchase a numbered square from 1–100. Once all numbered squares were purchased, the winners would receive 50% of the proceeds, and the other 50% would go toward my research participants’ gifts and supporting me in my research project with things such as postage, mailing supplies, and writing retreats.

The writing retreats were another way I was held in community and a gift I gave to myself when I took solo retreats. This was the advice given to us during our first year of the Critical and Socio-Cultural Studies in Education program by the then director, Audrey Lucero. She had told my cohort and I that she did her best writing by going on retreats with her scholar friends, and quickly a few cohort members and I followed suit. We wrote in the most beautiful places, including the Oregon coast, McKenzie River, San Diego, and New Mexico. Without

those writing retreats, I wouldn't have reached this point in the research project. Additionally, many of the pages within this dissertation were written in Los Cabos, México, on a solo retreat where I balanced rest, writing, and beach time. It was such a gift to give myself that, and I honor my community in all the ways they held me through my writing and healing journey and made this dissertation possible.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, I followed all the processes and protocols within the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is designed to protect our research participants' safety and well-being as well as protecting us as the researchers. This process asks us to be considerate in our ethics and care while designing the research project, which is in direct alignment with Stinta as theory and centers on integrity and honesty (hooks, 2001). As an Indigenous scholar, I felt compelled to go above and beyond these institutional requirements, given the violent history of extractive research in Indigenous communities. There has been an understandable distrust from members of Indigenous communities toward academic researchers, including a story from one of my research participants sharing about an anthropologist coming into the Tribe without reciprocity (Collaborative Storying, March 2024). This is why it was important for me to center the ethics of San Pedro's (2021) paradigm of "self-in-relation" research.

Self-in-relation research aligns with the IRB process, as it ensures that the research is conducted ethically, with respect for cultural values and a focus on the well-being of the participants and their communities. My responsibility is to continually center ethics, cultural sensitivity, consent, participant involvement, and protection of my participants' stories as central to the research process (San Pedro, 2021). I view my work as a "story stitcher and supporter" who feels a deep sense of responsibility to "be careful with the stories given/gifted to us, to be

dialogic, answerable, reciprocal, and co-constructive with those who shared stories...” (San Pedro, 2021, p. 17). This requires an ongoing commitment to ethical relations, which involves being flexible and responsible as a researcher (Germán, 2021).

Methods, Data Collection, and Management

The following describes the details of each of the methods I engaged with to care for my participants’ stories as data in my research project as well as describing the management of the stories as data and analysis of the data for each method:

Collaborative Storying Interviews

I conducted two collaborative storying interviews with each research participant, one at the beginning of the research process and one at the end. Each interview was scheduled for 1 hour; however, a few interviews went longer with consent or by request from the research participants. All of our collaborative storying interviews were recorded on Zoom, as indicated in the informed consent form, and both the audio files and Zoom-produced transcripts were saved on a dually authenticated, secure drive during the duration of my research project.

Sharing Circles

All teachers who agreed to participate joined me for four sharing circles, spaced evenly throughout the school year, as outlined in the research design section. These sharing circles were also recorded and held on Zoom. Each sharing circle was scheduled for 2 hours, allowing teachers to co-create the protocols for the circle, have time to build relationships, and discuss their experiences using the TH/SH curriculum in their schools and classrooms in relation to healing. We always scheduled the next meeting at the end of each session before everyone logged off. There was more than one occasion where I had to be flexible as a researcher when things came up, and our circles had to be rescheduled. Finally, both the audio files and Zoom-

produced transcripts were saved on dually authenticated, secure drive during the duration of my research project.

Journaling

To enrich the research project and give the participants a personal way to share their experiences, I provided each with a journal from an Indigenous company, Eighth Generation. My research participants also had the option to journal digitally in a Google or Microsoft Word document if preferred. I asked the Native educators to journal each time they taught a lesson from the TH/SH curriculum, reflecting on how it went while the experience was still fresh in their minds. I requested images of handwritten journals and digital journal entries be emailed to me as they were completed for analysis. As the researcher, I also committed to writing a reflective memo after each sharing circle and collaborative storying session to reflect on the conversations, the learning and stories shared, and the overall tone while it was still fresh.

Analysis

Analyzing the stories was my second favorite part of the dissertation process, just after the Zoom meetings with my participants. Repeatedly re-listening to the audio recording of them telling their stories reminded me of the power of research in community and doing the work centered around Stinta. For this reason, I decided to employ Stinta not only as my theoretical framework but also as my unit of analysis. I “listened for stories” (Sabzalian, 2019, p. 13) through the lens of my Theory of Love components centering partners/relationships, key axiologies, stories for relationships with place, and moments of refusal and resistance. By listening to the audio files of their stories while highlighting the transcripts to draw out major themes, I could feel the passion, dismay, heart, and healing in a way that solely analyzing printed transcripts or on the computer screen would not have allowed me to do.

Summary

My research, partnership with Indigenous educators, and analysis of the findings have the potential to promote the continued implementation of the TH/SH in sites across Oregon and contribute to the work various stakeholders such as Tribal Elders, Tribal community members, and Tribal Education Departments have developed to ensure the respect of Indigenous knowledge, centering Stinta, and as a site of healing. It is my hope that this project serves as a model and learning opportunity for other states currently interested in doing similar work around historical healing and Indigenous resurgence. I see this work as telling Indigenous survivance stories in schools (Sabzalian, 2019), and in the end, everyone benefits from this type of historically accurate, powerful, and potentially healing education.

CHAPTER FOUR: “IT CELEBRATES OUR CULTURE!”: FINDINGS

I open this chapter with yet another story, this time from one of my powerful research participants. This story is an excerpt from their lesson share, describing their experience teaching a Tribal History lesson from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. In the lesson, “A Day at the Powwow,” students are introduced to Native American powwows and Oregon Social Science Standard, *Geography.K.11- Examine culturally significant traditions, celebrations, days, and places including those from cultures that are currently and historically marginalized*. What follows is a beautiful example of how this curriculum can be empowering for Indigenous students, deeply interesting and engaging for non-Native students, and ultimately healing for all. The Native educator describes:

*“One thing that was really touching was there were some students who were kind of quiet, but one (who is also usually quiet) was really raising her hand and saying (describing) what is a powwow. At the end (of the lesson), you're kind of questioning (with the students), “What is it like? Why do Native Americans have powwows?” And she just said, **“It celebrates our culture, and I have a dance in my category!” And she was really proud. And just seeing her glowing.** She was excited to tell the class about what she did, like what kind of dance she was dancing. **And it just seemed to bring out more confidence in her.** And so just giving opportunities for students to share, when it's something that they're a part of, and it's not something that maybe is like in the regular ELA or math, or just the curriculum, they're given the opportunity to like, talk about it or share. And it was really awesome to see (the other) kids chiming in about what they liked about a powwow.*

***The other (non-Native) kids were also just saying, I want to go to a powwow! I really like the songs!** Just asking questions, like, “What's the girl's shawl?” Why do they wear a*

*shawl? Or, “What are they doing?” Just simply questions like that just showed that they were really interested. So I thought it went very well. **And there was just an excitement and interest in learning about a powwow, and going back to the student who was just very proud to say, “Powwows celebrate our culture.” And lots of kids that were in the class wanted to go to a powwow this summer, which I thought was really awesome.**”*

This story illustrates the restorative and healing power of curriculum. This particular educator reflected on historical healing as bringing back traditions, representation, and language into the schools. These cultural practices and lifeways were taken away from their father, who is a boarding school survivor. That a person who comes from a generational line of survivors is now in a position to teach curriculum (required by law) celebrating Indigenous cultural traditions and empower a young Native student, illustrates healing in action. Moreover, the lesson also illuminates the power and excitement of letting students share and ask genuine questions about cultural celebrations to encourage students to learn and celebrate each other’s identities, which stands in contrast to Western educational models, which center individuation, personal mastery, and silencing students’ lived experiences in educational spaces. My research participant also described healing, witnessing the whole class experiencing excitement and feeling proud of their friend who danced in powwows. Furthermore, I would have loved to hear about what that student went home and told her loved ones that night, and I wonder if they experienced any sense of healing from her experience with the lesson.

In this chapter, I present my findings from this inquiry on healing in education and Native American curriculum through the lens of my theory of Stinta. The theory of Stinta is grounded in love, relationships with my research partners, centering our value systems, listening for stories telling about relationships with place, and spaces of refusal. I repeatedly and deeply listened to

the audio recordings while reviewing, highlighting, note-taking in the margins, and dog-earing the printed-out transcripts, leaning into my cultural intuition and the components of a theory of Stinta as my units of analysis. Each story shared by the participants is like a bead, carefully added to the larger process of creating a medallion—a representation of our collective understanding of healing in educational spaces.

In this chapter, I explore key themes related to my dissertation questions through the components of my theory of Stinta framework. I begin with a discussion of how Indigenous educators define healing, including historical healing and healing in educational spaces. I then move into the experiences of educators teaching the TH/SH curriculum and examine the impact of this curriculum on students and educators. Throughout this process, I draw on my beadwork metaphor, to analyze and amplify key findings. I see our process of defining healing as needles as key partners, working in tandem with the metaphors of thread as key axiologies and values. Together, the needle, thread, and the beads as stories, highlight how my participants' relationships with themselves, their families, students, and communities shape their perceptions of healing. The beading foundation as relationship with place, shows how the Tribal place-based curriculum and some lessons from the ODE curriculum foster meaningful relationships with place. Further, I explore barriers to healing with the TH/SH curriculum through the concept of the spirit bead, emphasizing participants' moments of refusal and frustration with a lack of accountability with the curriculum. Finally, I discuss potential interventions and supports by offering Native educators' insights into how these efforts can sustain healing in educational settings. Throughout this chapter, direct quotes and stories center love and reciprocity, woven together with analysis that honors my participants' voices through my deep listening. This

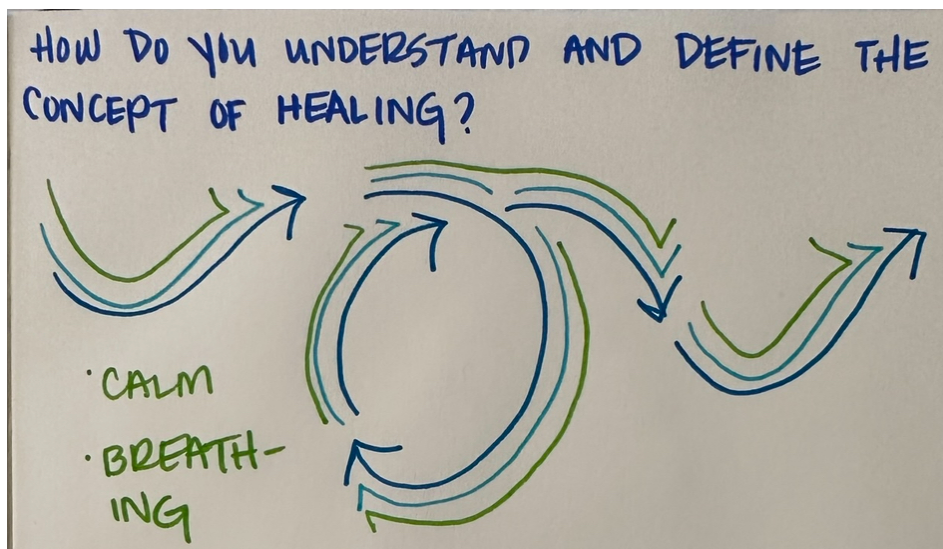
approach creates a richly textured medallion that symbolizes the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, forming the foundation of a healing-centered approach to education.

Defining Healing

In my research, I sought to learn from Indigenous educators' definitions of healing. What I learned from this process of Indigenous educators' diverse experiences and reflections into the space was that healing is not easily defined as their perspectives offered unique, multifaceted, and continuous journeys of working through various historical and contemporary experiences. One educator reflected that they see healing as not one singular event but a series of experiences along the way, acknowledging that there are wounds we may heal from completely and others that remain open, challenging us to work through them continuously. Another participant provided a visual representation of this idea in their journal submission, depicting healing as a nonlinear, ongoing process.

Figure 9

A Research Participant's Journal Reflection



Note. The journal entry was shared with permission by the research participant and as outlined in the research design submission to the University of Oregon in fulfillment of the Institutional Review Board requirements.

This research participant's illustration shows us that healing is a journey that never truly ends and that our ability to stay grounded and centered in our breathing is important. We can heal through our bodies by breathing and looking to our bodies to understand healing. Several educators reflected that healing is not about being fully "heal-ed," an endpoint we may never reach, but rather about acknowledging what needs our attention and committing to "working on our shit" as our brilliant Elder Educator shared with our group.

One Native educator shared a more biological understanding of healing, comparing it to the body's natural process of mitosis, where regenerating cells are sent to the injured parts of our bodies, promoting healing. Another participant reflected that the extent and speed of healing would depend on the size and nature of the wound. A small cut may heal quickly, but something as deep as cancer requires a different level of care and time. This analogy emphasizes that healing requires us to honestly confront the depth and severity of our wounds. Some of the events in our lives are less severe traumas to move through, while some, such as the genocide of our ancestors and the too-early departures of loved ones, may never fully be healed in our lifetimes.

Historical Healing

In the context of historical healing, the participants emphasized that it happens within community and through relationships with both human and more-than-human relatives. One Native educator humorously, yet seriously, used the term "Indigi-nuity," to describe the creativity and resilience inherent in Indigenous peoples. My research participants reflected that historical healing is being resourceful with what we have: finding strength in humor, storytelling, and the support of each other. It means showing up with both fire and gentleness—gentle with

our communities, yet fierce when it comes to reclaiming what was lost. Historical healing is also about relational repair; reconnecting with each other and our more-than-human relatives. As one participant eloquently said, “Relationships and healing go hand in hand,” noting that healing is “taking back those relationships and learning how to be in a relationship with the person or with the land, the finned ones, or the winged ones. You know, the plant world.”

One research participant further emphasized that healing involves supporting each other on our individual and collective “red roads,” or as the Anishinaabe say, “Mino-Bimaadiziwin,” which means to walk and live life in a good and respectful way (Debassige, 2010; Rheault, 1999). This means recognizing our place among all our kin and being in right relationship with our Mother Earth. One participant shared a teaching from their auntie about “walking in a beautiful way,” which includes supporting our communities, being protectors, staying flexible and adaptive, and remaining grounded in our Tribal beliefs.

Healing in Education

In educational spaces, one research participant describes healing as a process of reclaiming everything taken from Indigenous peoples during the boarding school era: our identities, our languages, relationships with the community and families, and our ways of being. They asserted that strategic and systematic plans are required to reintroduce Indigenous languages and cultural practices into schools, fostering intergenerational learning and cross-community support because these things were strategically and systematically taken from us. For this teacher, it looks like incorporating the Tribe’s language around the room, providing a bowl of sage and a family portrait area in the room for students to go to when needed. It looks like a room that flows like water, instead of tables and chairs all in a row facing the front of the room,

centering the teacher as the authority figure. It means bringing Tribal and family members into the class to co-teach placed-based lessons.

Ultimately, healing in education means creating spaces where Indigenous students and teachers feel empowered, connected, and supported as they reclaim their histories, identities, and languages. As I explored the data, it became clear that healing is deeply rooted in relationships, community, and the process of reclaiming what was taken from our Indigenous peoples. This understanding of healing naturally extends into the educational spaces where Native American students and teachers interact daily. For many participants, the TH/SH curriculum plays a crucial role in this broader concept of healing. One participant reflected in their journal, "I see TH/SH contributing connection, love, community, story-telling, and healing." This contrasts the typical Western educational model, which the participant describes as often emphasizing "standardized tests, anxiety, rigidity, percentages, scores, and data." The TH/SH curriculum fosters a different educational environment centered on students' well-being and cultural identity.

Through these reflections, it becomes clear that personal, historical, or educational healing is an ongoing process rooted in relationships and love, an understanding that I came to through our collaborative approach (needles as partners) to discussing what it means to heal. In the words of one participant, "Healing is restoring what was taken from us." It is the ongoing process of returning to ourselves, our communities, and our lands, while as another participant beautifully summarized, supporting each other with a combination of gentle care and fierce resilience and the inner-knowing of when to lean into each. This participant imagined more broadly, "What world we would live in if we/children were in a healthy, safe community in school?" It is this vision of education, where learning becomes a source of healing and cultural

resurgence that I now explore the role of Native American curriculum in fostering historical and communal healing.

Role of Native American Curriculum and Healing

Overall, my research participants felt that implementing TH/SH curriculum would serve as a potential site of historical healing in Oregon schools *if* school districts implemented it as required by law. Each educator's experience with the curriculum added texture and powerful testimony of the healing made possible by this curriculum. The Native educators shared that the TH/SH curriculum empowers students and their fellow educators, creating opportunities for place-based learning and encouraging all to reflect on their relationship with place, which is the foundation we all stand upon.

In response to the anchor question of my research project, "Since schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how can the implementation of the TH/SH Native American curriculum serve as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools?" One participant reflected, "For students who are Native, it's definitely healing because representation equals power." They described how Indigenous representation in schools empowers not only Native students but also Native educators. Seeing our culture represented and valued within the educational systems that have been a place of genocide for our ancestors is empowering. Our Elder Educator added, "I think that it has enormous potential for healing. Imagine generations of school children who are not being taught lies about the Indigenous people of Oregon and elsewhere, who have understandings of since time immemorial, who understand sovereignty ... it's different!" This potential to shift the narrative in educational spaces and promote an inclusive understanding of history marks a profound step towards healing.

The Native educators also reflected that the curriculum allows Native students to experience a sense of belonging in school, which is a rarity for many. One participant shared a personal story about their child's experience in a school that requires the curriculum. Their child was invited to bring in their traditional regalia, and the empowerment they felt from being seen and recognized by their teacher was healing for both the student and their parent. As the participant described, "The students can feel that sense of love. And they know when they're being seen; they feel cared for. They feel connected, and feeling connection in school for a brown person is very rare." This simple act of inclusion is healing in action, providing students with a sense of visibility and respect that they often do not encounter in traditional educational settings, which contribute largely to Indigenous erasure.

Furthermore, the curriculum's positive impact extends beyond Native students and educators. Two teachers shared how empowering it was for their non-Native colleagues to teach the curriculum, one in a Tribal community and another in a metro area. The experience was confidence-boosting, as these teachers felt they were making a genuine difference. Particularly moving, both of my research participants shared that their colleagues had students approach them to talk about their Native heritage and made personal connections to the place-based lessons. My participant from the metro area shared that their colleague didn't even realize their student was Native, and the awareness encouraged them to be more reflective in their practice. The curriculum bridges gaps in understanding and opens space for building relationships.

When considering the specific ways in which the TH/SH curriculum can promote healing in the classroom, the participants highlighted several examples during the lesson share portions of our sharing circles. One Indigenous educator shared about a lesson they taught titled "Grand Ronde Trail of Tears" on the Rogue Wars, describing how it was empowering for all students

and ignited excitement about learning Native languages. One especially powerful moment came after a Native student in their class went home and shared their experience with the lesson with their parent. The parent was so touched that they called the school to express how much it meant to know that their child was learning about their culture, particularly in a metro school setting. This level of cultural validation creates a ripple effect, fostering healing for both the students and their families.

Many participants reflected that the lessons they felt contributed the most to healing were place-based. One educator shared about a complex science lesson from their own Tribe, initially intended as a three-day learning experience. However, the students were so engaged that it "spiraled into a month-long exploration" as they "wanted more!" This teacher went above and beyond the lesson plan, enlisting the support of coworkers to extend the learning experience. High school students joined to help the early elementary students explore, learn about, and read traditional stories. Likewise, the teacher invited sixth graders to come into the class and help the students write stories of their own. This approach to learning provided opportunities for healing across grade levels by dismantling the siloed, grade-level approach to teaching, and instead, allowing students to learn alongside their older family members and neighbors, emphasizing the potential for the curriculum to promote community learning.

Another Native educator reflected on teaching the TH/SH lesson “Food, Energy, and Seasonal Rounds” lesson from the ODE. They described how the students made connections between the seasonal foods they eat and the traditional practices of Native communities. This lesson not only deepened their understanding of cultural food practices, but also provided students with the independence to learn experientially. The educator noted the empowerment in the classroom, highlighting “how much growth, responsibility, and trust exists in the space where

they could learn together.” My participant reflected that this kind of experiential learning aligns with "Indigenous ways of educating our youth" and can be healing in schools by honoring traditional knowledge and practices.

Despite these positive experiences, participants reflected on our research question, asking about the need for further interventions and supports to sustain and foster healing through the curriculum. Leaning into the concept of the spirit bead as refusal, most described they would be teaching the curriculum even though their school administrators didn't require it. They resisted the unspoken truth that the curriculum wasn't a priority for their school sites and taught it anyway. On the other hand, one Native educator faced such a degree of discrimination in their school site, that they didn't feel safe to teach the curriculum in the current political climate.

One participant emphasized the importance of centering Indigenous values (axiologies) in this work, stating it requires a "sort of ethic of care and doing what you can for others and being really generous with your care.” The curriculum is required by law, yet one teacher expressed concern that it lacks the "teeth" needed for meaningful change, which everyone else quickly agreed with. Many schools are not implementing the curriculum in any sort of systematic way, leaving the decision up to individual teachers. As another participant noted, "Every school environment is different, and every school needs support from admin so that it's implemented." With the help of my research participants, I have found that without checks and balances, the curriculum's impact remains inconsistent. However, one district requiring a set number of lessons per year has seen positive outcomes by providing TH/SH newsletters, training, YouTube tutorials, and paid time for teachers to do scope and sequence work. Another one of my research participant's districts also requires TH/SH to be taught but only in 4th grade. However, despite it only being required at one grade level, other grade levels are implementing the curriculum as

well, and the Native educator reflected that they see the impacts of healing in their students who show excitement and joy knowing their culture is being represented and uplifted in their Tribal school.

Overall, my research participants shared that they feel the TH/SH curriculum has the potential to contribute to healing in educational spaces. Through empowering representation, fostering relationships, and encouraging experiential learning, the curriculum creates space for students and educators alike to see accurate representation of Tribal Nations and their historical and contemporary experiences in the lands we now call Oregon today. In the introduction story to this chapter, my teacher participant and I agreed— if students experience this curriculum and each other’s cultures from a young age, there can be a wealth of potential for healing. It would save educators and grown adults so much time in the unlearning process that must take place after a lifetime of learning lies and partial truths. However true this feels to my research participant and me, to fully realize the curriculum’s potential, there is a need for more support, training, and accountability to ensure its implementation is consistent and effective across all schools.

Gifts From Collaboration: Healing Centered Spaces for Educators

This final section reflects the gifts shared through this research project's collaborative and reciprocal nature. Throughout the study, I asked participants to reflect on various aspects of healing, their experiences with the curriculum, and our collaboration process. Their wisdom and insights truly made the theory of Stinta come alive, grounding our work in shared values, protocols, and a focus on place-based education. Their stories of refusal, resilience, and community offered profound insights into the journey of healing in educational spaces, for which I am deeply grateful.

Evolving Understanding of Healing

One of the questions that organically emerged out of the research was, Has your understanding or definition of healing evolved or become more nuanced over the course of this research project? The responses underscored the multifaceted nature of healing. Participants acknowledged that healing looks different for everyone, and the experience of engaging with the curriculum and this research project deepened their understanding of its complexities. For one participant, seeing “all students showing genuine interest” in the curriculum was healing, which underscored that the curriculum’s impact extends beyond Native students to include their non-Native students, fostering a broader community of care. Another educator expressed that the project provided a better understanding of the “different timelines of healing” depending on the size of the trauma.

One of the educators found significant empowerment in learning alongside their students. They shared that it was “okay to learn with their students,” especially when they were not experts in other Tribal Nations' curriculum. This experience provided an empowering experience to go on that learning journey alongside their students. Another participant found it healing simply knowing that the curriculum was available and that they could experience this journey “in community” both with their students and the other research participants.

However, our Elder Educator reminded us that healing is not always an easy path, sharing that it can also be painful: “When the recognition doesn’t come.” This reflection illustrates that healing is not just a process of growth but also one of grappling with the ongoing challenges of visibility and acknowledgment within educational spaces.

The Wisdom from our Elder Educator

Having an Elder Educator in our circles was inherently healing, as they shared powerful insight about the research project's theme of healing as a whole: "Just because we talk about healing doesn't mean we are broken." This perspective shifted our focus toward embracing Indigenous joy and survivance, emphasizing that healing involves both acknowledging pain and celebrating resilience. They also reminded us to be precise with our words and take great care in how we share with each other. Their presence was a constant reminder of our collective responsibility to our students and larger communities.

Our Elder Educator expressed their joy in hearing the teachers' experiences with the curriculum and suggested creating a process "where teachers could meet and share feedback" regularly. This idea illustrates the need for ongoing collaboration and reflection, reinforcing the curriculum's role in fostering healing and community among educators. Our Elder Educator also reflected, "We need to be more loving to each other in research," advocating for a more compassionate and supportive approach. They shared that "it is not fair that we have to heal for our whole families," highlighting the immense burden often placed on Indigenous individuals and communities. Yet, they also noted that indigenizing our classrooms is "inherently healing," emphasizing the significance of integrating Indigenous knowledge and practices as acts of reclamation and community well-being. Their encouragement to lean into Indigenous joy and survivance served as a reminder of the strength and beauty inherent in these educational practices.

I would be remiss to imply maintaining a healthy relationship with the Elder Educator was always easy. Day one of my Ph.D. orientation, they cautioned me about entering into the program if I did not know what I wanted to do with my degree when I graduated. This was difficult, because I felt as though as a fellow Indigenous Educator and scholar, they should be

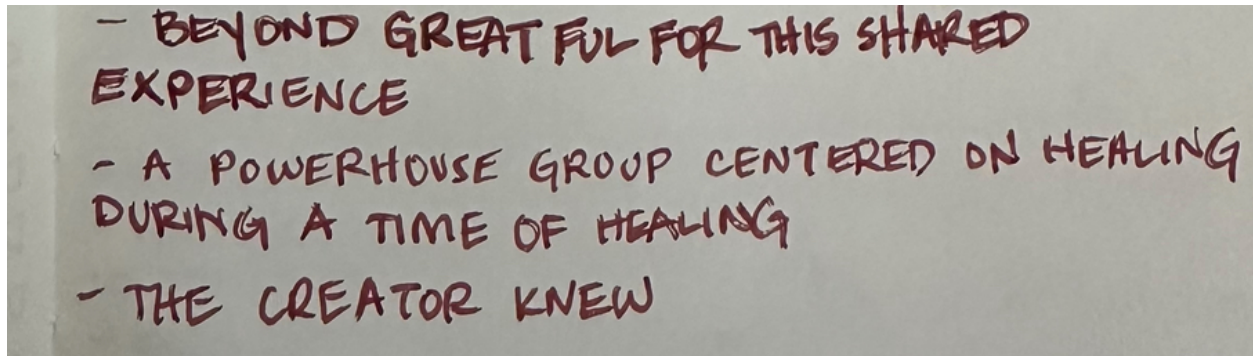
celebrating my admittance rather than dissuading me from reaching for my goals. There were also moments where they made my other research participants uncomfortable in our sharing circles. Further, they interrupted my committee several times at the defense and shadowed the final days of my Ph.D. journey. And while all this is true, I reflect upon their words: “we need to be more loving to each other in research” and that healing is “working on our shit.” I learned a lot from this Elder Educator. I learned to be more loving even through hardship. I learned to continue to center working on my own “ish,” rather than let myself be consumed by another’s. And for that, I am grateful. I grew immensely as a person throughout the past 5 years. I truly leaned into forgiveness and acceptance throughout the Ph.D. journey, and I was able to remain grounded in respect and relationship central to my concept of Stinta as theory throughout this research project.

Reflecting on the Sharing Circles

To improve my practice as a researcher and the collaborative nature of our work, I asked participants to reflect on the sharing circles: “What were the notable moments for you? Where do you think the process could have been improved?” Their feedback was incredibly valuable. One participant shared that they loved the sharing circles so much that “there weren’t enough of them!” Their journal entry (Figure 10) reflected the sentiment:

Figure 10

A Research Participant’s Journal Reflection



Note. Journal entry shared with permission by the research participant and as outlined in the research design submission to the University of Oregon in fulfillment of the Institutional Review Board requirements.

This feedback was medicine for my soul, as I desired so deeply to not only talk about Stinta as theory, but also walk the walk. This educator also reflected appreciation for the grounding, relationship-building openings, the "clarity of the intentions" of the research project, and the flexibility to adapt. These elements made them feel comfortable immediately.

Finally, one of my participants described the sharing circles as a refreshing contrast to their daily routines. They reflected the circles were "opposite of my day-to-day," providing a reenergizing space to be in community with fellow Native educators. However, some felt that meeting in person would have further deepened the experience. Another participant shared their excitement about the curriculum with parents and community members, emphasizing that "the curriculum can be healing for adults too."

Interest in Continued Collaboration

Finally, I asked the participants, "Would you be interested in collaborating again beyond this year?" I was overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement when 100% of my participants expressed willingness for further collaboration. This unanimous interest is especially meaningful, given that a couple of participants have had and shared about past experiences with research that was extractive and damaging to their relatives. Their willingness to continue this work reflects

our collaboration's positive, healing nature and the potential for building lasting partnerships rooted in respect, reciprocity, and shared goals.

Through their reflections and responses, the participants reaffirmed the power of collaboration, the importance of centering love, and the role of storytelling in promoting healing through education. This shared journey enriched our understanding of healing and demonstrated how the theory of Stinta can guide us toward more inclusive and caring educational spaces. Their gifts of wisdom, care, and community support will continue to shape this work as we move forward together.

Summary

In summary, this chapter weaves together stories, reflections, and insights to form a richly textured representation of healing in education. My findings underscore the significance of the TH/SH curriculum in fostering cultural resurgence and community well-being, while highlighting the importance of ongoing collaboration and systemic support. Through the participants' experiences and each story as a bead contributing to the whole, this chapter reveals that healing in education should be an ongoing, collective process rooted in relationships, grounded in place, and guided by Stinta.

CHAPTER FIVE: “THAT’S WHAT THIS WORK IS ABOUT!”:

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

I hope you have experienced this dissertation as a story from my soul thus far. For one final time, I begin with an excerpt from another of my research participants' lesson shares. During their presentation in our sharing circle, they described their experience teaching a Tribal History lesson from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. In the lesson, “Grand Ronde Trail of Tears - Exploring the 1856 Diary of Agent George Ambrose,” the students learned that citizens from several Tribal Nations in what is now known as Oregon and Northern California also experienced a Trail of Tears. The high school Social Science Content Standards they explored were from *Civics and Government* and *Historical Knowledge*. This story illustrates how healing can extend beyond an individual teacher implementing the curriculum, to also impact students, their households, and even extended family. The Native educator shared:

*“Students really enjoyed the lesson! Like I said, some of them are still coming back and asking me about it. I really enjoyed hearing that they liked it so much, **and I also had a couple of Native parents call in and express how excited they were about the lessons.** One of the parents, her son is in my class, was like, “He’s never learned about the Grand Ronde Trail of Tears. And I’ve tried to explain to him about the harsh conditions. And, though he’s heard stories from elders, to see how long it was (visually on the map) over three hundred miles. To hear, you know, the lack of care from George Ambrose who was the general at the time, **and to be able to dive into that himself I think gave him a lot more empathy for the elders who are sharing those stories.**” And so for him it was really, as an Ethnic Studies student in my class, **that was really impactful for him.** He dove into it head first. He was so super excited.”*

The Indigenous educator then shared more about a phone call they received from a parent after the lesson had taken place. They were initially worried about backlash from the community, but the worry was for naught. The parent call further indicated the reach of the Tribal curriculum from the classroom to the home. My research participant shared the following about the “impactful and important” experience:

*“It’s always scary to have parents call your direct extension, and I don’t know why, but I make my extension very known. And so getting that parent phone call and seeing that it wasn’t another extension in the school, I was like (worried tone of voice) “Ohhhhh.” And then it was (actually) really awesome to hear from the parent. **It was great to hear that the lesson plan had gone beyond the scope of just my classroom or even just the halls of the school itself.**”*

To further illustrate the healing impact of the curriculum on the family, my research participant shared:

“Right after we did the Grand Ronde Trail of Tears lesson, our kind of wrap-up for the Native American perspective unit is for students to research a modern-day fight that Native Americans are fighting. So, for example (they could research) DAPL (the Dakota Access Oil Pipeline), the Keystone Pipeline... things like that. I asked students to keep it more local, like they could research the Chinook Nation fighting for recognition right now.

*One of the students decided to research the undamming of the Klamath. He did a whole presentation on the undamming of the Klamath, and how great it is, and how it’s changing the makeup of the land. (He shared) **how awesome it is to see his grandparents so excited.** To be like, we’re going to go there this summer and I’m going to show you all the old spots and we’re going to have so much fun. **That for him was like, “Oh, cool! Now I can like bring my outside life and I can connect it to school.”** And I think that’s super powerful.*

“To see that connection for my student, I feel like it was healing for him and his family. From the feedback I heard from his dad at home, it was also kind of healing for me. I don't know if that is selfish, but to see that connection piece... I hope my kids have that one day. I think that was a healing piece for me. It was like...Yes! The next generation has something that we didn't. That's what this work is about!”

In my role as a Native Youth Wellness Program Coordinator and educational specialist, I often have teachers express sympathy for their ancestor's role in the genocide of Indigenous peoples. They always ask: “What can I do? How can I show up for the Native community?” I used to point them in the direction of the curriculum, “Attend TH/SH professional development and teach the lessons. In my role at the ESD, I can help you!” Sometimes, if I was talking to administrators, I would add, “After all, it's a directive from the state!” However, after this study, I now want to point them in the direction of the stories from my research participants. The stories I have witnessed demonstrate the power of TH/SH to promote healing for Native and non-Native students. From what teachers have shared with me, students from across all grade levels have also been curious and eager to learn to be good relatives. The teachers shared that implementation of these lessons, from kindergarten to high school, have healing impact that extends beyond themselves and their students, reaching into the wider community. Their stories and this research project make it clear: this curriculum has the potential to be healing for everybody... *if* school districts are committed to fully implementing it.

Coming Full Circle

I began this research project journey centered on my anchor research question: *Since schools have been historical sites of trauma and genocide, how can implementation of the*

TH/SH *Native American curriculum* serve as a site of historical healing in Oregon schools? To help answer this question, I asked the following questions of my research participants:

- 1) How do you understand and define the concept of healing?
- 2) How do you understand healing in educational spaces?
- 3) What role do you see TH/SH contributing to the broader project of healing?
- 4) What specific ways can the implementation of TH/SH promote healing in the classroom?

And finally,

- 5) What further interventions, supports, or resources can sustain your efforts and foster healing in this work?

Again, due to the participatory nature of my research project in alignment with self-in-relation commitments I learned from San Pedro as explained in my Methodology chapter, my research questions grew to include the following:

- 6) Has your understanding/definition of healing and historical healing evolved or become more nuanced over the course of the research project?
- 7) Is there potential for healing for the educators by teaching the curriculum? Or more generally, who is it healing for?

A Discussion of Significant Findings

As I reflect on the journey and the powerful stories shared by Indigenous educators who gifted me with their time and wisdom, it is clear that the potential for healing by teaching Culturally Sustaining curriculum such as TH/SH is vast. These narratives have not only highlighted the impact on my research participants and their students but have also revealed how deeply the curriculum can extend into their families, making possible deeper connections and intergenerational understanding. With this in mind, I now turn to a deeper exploration and

discussion summarizing the significant findings from my study, beginning with how my participants defined healing and its role in education.

Defining Healing

My research participants described healing as deeply relational, one that we can choose to navigate together through personal and community experiences. However, there are times in our lives when certain healing work needs to be done on our own. As our Elder Educator shared, sometimes we just need to “work on our shit.” The Elder went onto describe, “We all do better when we're able to be sober. Be educated. Be clear about who we are so that we can frankly deal with our shit. And that means taking care of yourself and going to therapy and taking care of children, taking care of your relationships.” Ultimately, our “shit” looks different to our individual experiences and impacts of the trauma from our histories and lived experiences.

Together, my research participants and I came to understand healing as an ongoing process of acknowledging our collective and individual traumas, as survivors of ancestors who experienced genocide. The educators largely agreed that healing occurs through relationships with both human and more-than-human relatives and involves being resourceful, drawing strength from humor, storytelling, and mutual support. While we may never be fully “heal-ed” we can tend to our healing by being good relatives and walking in a “beautiful way.” We inevitably agreed it is hard to land on a universal definition of healing because it looks different for everyone.

Healing in Education

Healing in education, as described by the Native educators, is about reclaiming what was taken from our family members during the boarding school era. This includes our identities, our languages, and our relationships with families and communities. A healing educational model

would require a thoughtful approach to bringing Indigenous languages and cultural practices back into schools, creating spaces where students feel connected and supported. Families and community members would be welcome and invited to share their cultural knowledge as honored guests. Our elder educator dreams of a future where schools could be seen as community centers, where students would come to learn, and where their families could come for connection and conversation.

The educators also reflected that while the lessons provided by ODE were wonderful, such as the lesson on Food Energy and Seasonal Rounds, most of the research participants expressed a deep appreciation for the lessons that were developed by the Tribes. They found these place-based lessons to be particularly healing and impactful for the students and their families. The excitement in the discussions was significantly palpable, as they expressed a desire for more TH/SH professional development from the Tribes on their own curriculum. Furthermore, the educators in areas where the Tribal curriculum hasn't been released to the public still told stories of healing from teaching the lessons from other Tribes.

Space for Indigenous Educators

Another significant finding that emerged from this research project was how healing it was for all of us, as Indigenous educators, to come together and be in community reflecting on life in general and the importance of Indigenous representation in the face of erasure. Many of the teachers were the only Native teacher in their school, which I deeply resonated with, as I was the only Native on my School Improvement team at LESD for most of the school year. One participant's experience attests to the value of having such a dedicated space. Our sharing circles were held on Sundays at 3pm, and one teacher told their loved ones that they had to go soon to get to their Zoom meeting. They shared that their family members were horrified, exclaiming:

“You have a work Zoom on a Sunday?!” My research participant laughed and told them that our sharing circles were something that they looked forward to every time we met, and that they were as excited to gather with us. This was a sentiment that was quickly agreed upon by the rest of the teachers.

This was particularly significant to me because this educator was the one participant who hadn’t gone through the Sapsik’wala Education Program. Many of us had preexisting relationships with at least one other person in the Circle, and all of them had relationships with me. I feel this illustrates the healing power of the sharing circle space that we had co-created. That the one teacher who didn’t know anyone but me, felt so comfortable, safe, and in relation with the other participants that they looked forward to the circle each time we met, was beyond moving to me.

In a prior publication, I reflected on the power of participating in Indigenous spaces within the Sapsik’wala Program: “Existing in an Indigenous body on campus can be a culture shock and feel isolating; however, our program was where I could fully and authentically be myself. I could talk about my struggles, spirituality, and feelings of imposter syndrome, and I knew my professors and fellow cohort members would be able to resonate with and support me” (Sabzalian et al., 2023, p. 203). I knew that those of us who had been through the program would experience healing in the sharing circles because we were already used to being in community with other Native educators through the program. Healing in community was further illustrated by the teacher’s story above, and their desire to be in community with other Native educators. We were all sad when our time together concluded at the end of the school year.

To me, the space we created together attests to the collective power of healing reflected in Simpson’s (2017) metaphor of constellations, which highlights relationality and

connectedness as vital pathways out of colonialism and into healing and resurgence. The educators in my study embodied this vision, coming together as a community of stars to share their individual gifts and collectively contribute to healing their communities. Each educator brought their own wisdom and experience to the group, and together, they created a space for deep healing and growth.

The Value of Elder Educators

Indigenous scholars often highlight how important Elders are as our most respected culture keepers and teachers, carrying the wisdom, traditions, and knowledge passed down through generations (Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 2016; Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2017). However, in Western education systems, Elders are frequently left out of the classroom, which not only limits the learning experiences of students, but also dismisses the essential knowledge that Elders provide (Sabzalian et al., 2023). It was important to me to respect these teachings and invite an Elder Educator into the research project, especially one with such deep ties to both the Sapsik'walaá program and the foundations of the TH/SH curriculum. Our Elder Educator brought many strengths to the Circles, but perhaps the most poignant for me, was the reminder that we must choose our words carefully and be precise in how we make suggestions about curriculum. The presence of the Elder Educator in the space reminded us of our responsibility to carefully and intentionally consider how we incorporate the TH/SH lessons with respect to the intentions and aspirations of the Tribal Nations who created them.

The Roles of Non-Native Teachers

Another unanticipated theme that surfaced in my research was the role of non-Native teachers in TH/SH. My participants routinely shared stories that illustrated how non-Native teachers can play a critical role in the healing process if they commit to teaching the TH/SH

curriculum with curiosity, inquiry, and thoughtfully. More than one educator reflected that in the early implementation of the curriculum, they would get bombarded with questions from dedicated non-Native teachers who wanted to teach the lessons but felt like they were doing it wrong. However, when they brought in an inquiry lens to the curriculum and embraced the role of co-learner alongside their students, my research participants shared the power of their experiences over time and boosted their own confidence, as they realized they were engaging in Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies. For too long, as one participant shared, our histories and lifeways have been systematically and strategically excluded from mainstream education, contributing to Indigenous erasure. It will be vital that non-Native teachers begin to see their role in contributing to healing by teaching this empowering curriculum.

Summary of Discussion

As I reflect on the rich stories and insights shared by the Indigenous educators in my study, it is clear that the potential for healing extends beyond individual teachers and students, to their families, communities, and even to non-Native teachers. The impact of the TH/SH curriculum has the potential to reach far beyond lesson plans, offering opportunities for cultural restoration, relationship-building, and healing. With the wisdom of my research participant's stories in mind, I now turn to the broader implications of this project, exploring how these findings inform theory and methodology, practice, and policy in education.

“That's What This Work Is About!”: Implications of This Research

In the following sections, I share the implications of my research findings by summarizing Stinta as theory and examining its influence on both theory and methodology. I also explore how this research impacts educational practice and policy by highlighting the rich stories from my research participants. By weaving together my own experiences with those of

my participants, I demonstrate how Stinta guided my heart-centered, healing-informed approach to methodology. Furthermore, I discuss the broader implications of this work for educational practice and policy, emphasizing the need for systems that strategically center love, healing, and Indigenous resurgence to make possible meaningful and lasting change.

Implications for Theory and Methodology

My journey of birthing and embracing a Stinta (love) as theory has called me to lean into all facets of my identity as a Modoc, Yahooskin, and Chicana womyn. I experienced this process during times of grief, joy, exhaustion, and elation through self-discovery and leaning into self-determination, love, and lessons from my family. Drawing inspiration from my practice as a beadworker, where each bead, needle, and thread plays an integral role, I used this metaphor to describe how we can show up in our research ethically centering relationships with human and more-than-human beings, looking to our axiologies/value systems as our guiding lights, and believing that storytelling is truth-telling.

As a reader, you may or may not have noticed that I actively resisted describing my research participants' stories as “data.” The time and stories they shared with me deserve more respect and honor than to be reduced to being seen as data sets, especially because I chose to center Stinta as theory which places emphasis on relationality. My participants' stories are more than data; they are sacred teachings. This writing decision is informed by my concept of the “spirit bead” as refusal. The teaching of the “spirit bead” is an intentional imperfection that acknowledges the inherent flaws of humanity and rejects settler-colonial ideologies. Theory of Stinta weaves together love, relationship, and refusal as essential elements in creating research grounded in reciprocity and healing. I invite other scholars to sit with my Stinta as theory components and examine what is currently showing up in your own process. Further, I invite

researchers to set an intention with components that might not be a prominent feature of their most recent research projects.

My belief and trust in Stinta as theory also guided my approach to ethics within my research project. Grounding my work in love and relational accountability meant that I actively resisted the extractive nature of Western research with no reciprocity. Instead, I asked each participant to join me as co-creators in the research journey, respecting the importance of giving my energy and time back to them and the responsibility of holding the stories they shared with me as sacred. Stinta as theory led me to develop Zoom sessions that were nurturing and safe spaces for the Native teachers through the creation of our group protocols. It was my responsibility to create a container where the educators felt held and empowered to share openly, trusting that their stories would be confidential, honored, and returned to them. We prioritized relationships, mutual respect, and collective meaning-making.

In practice, this ethical stance manifested in multiple ways throughout the research. From the intentional design of our sharing circles, again where protocols were co-created and grounded in our value systems, to the collaborative storying sessions where participants felt empowered to shape how their stories were represented, every aspect of my research was informed by the components of Stinta as theory. This relational, heart-centered (Germán, 2021) approach ensured that my methodological choices not only respected Indigenous ways of knowing but also contributed to the healing potential of the research, for both the participants and myself as the researcher. By centering Stinta as theory, I have been able to navigate the research process with integrity, reciprocity, and love at its core. In this way, my research project truly became a ceremony for me (Wilson, 2008).

Now that I am very near the conclusion of this dissertation journey, I have been more aware how Stinta as theory has also influenced my day-to-day work and morphing into Stinta as Praxis (practice). Stinta and my spirituality define how I move in the world and in my work, showing up as my full self, not siloing my intellectualism from my spirituality. I usually smudge my laptop and workspace before opening emails or joining a Zoom meeting if I am working from home. I also light a candle and ask Creator for direction and to guide me in producing the work and words that the world deserves. If it is an office day, I start my day in prayer and grounding myself in nature while I take my dog, Tua, for his morning walk— rain or shine. I keep smudge in my cubical at work, a light therapy lamp, plants, photos of loved ones, and affirmation statements that align with my values as an Indigenous womyn. Practicing Stinta and centering my spirituality in my professional life provides me with clarity and a healing heart as I strive to fulfill my calling in life. I wonder how other educators would see the components of Stinta at work in their teaching practice. Who would they consider their key partners? How do they honor the stories and value systems of their students? How do they pay respects to the land they are on and enact refusal when necessary? These reflections lead me to my next section, where I explore the implications for Stinta, the healing potential in TH/SH curriculum, and how these ideas can guide and transform the ways in which healing can more broadly inform transformation in educational spaces.

Implications for Practice

One of the clearest takeaways from this research is the urgent need for more Native teachers in our schools. Indigenous educators bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences that prepare them to implement TH/SH curriculum in ways that not only align with the educational goals, but also magnifies its potential for healing. Through our conversations, I learned that

Indigenous teachers also lean into their cultural intuition and feel their way through pedagogical decisions. Programs such as the Sapsik'wala Education Program and similar Indigenous teacher preparation programs are critical in this effort. These programs do more than just prepare Native teachers academically; many cohort members develop lasting and supportive relationships that we carry into our careers. We also develop close relationships with other Sapsik'wala graduates from other graduating classes. In an article I co-authored with the current co-directors of Sapsik'wala, I shared my experience of moving through the program as the largest cohort to date, sharing how powerful it was to stand together in solidarity on predominantly white campuses and take up space intellectually and physically (Sabzalian et al., 2023). It was profoundly empowering. The sense of community and collective strength helps Native teachers counter the erasure and isolation they often face in academic and professional spaces. As we accept more Native teachers in these programs, we must create systems that mirror this collective experience, ensuring ongoing support and community as they navigate their academic and professional journeys.

Another significant implication of this research project is the power of inviting families and community members back into the schools (Sabzalian et al., 2023). To invite older students to come into classes and help teach younger students. One of my research participant's stories illustrates how empowering this can be. In their lesson, they collaborated with other grade-level teachers and invited sixth graders and high school-aged students into their early elementary class to help with the TH/SH lesson activities, many of whom were related. This teacher also regularly invites the students' guardians and community members to join the class and share their cultural knowledge. This kind of family and community engagement is not only beneficial but it's also

required by the ODE for recipients of various grants in the state’s *Integrated Guidance* plan (“ODE,” n.d.).

The *Integrated Guidance* plan requires that school districts who receive grant funds from any of the nine educational intervention program grant funds in the State of Oregon, be accountable for setting equity-based goals, one of which calls for school districts to plan meaningful family and community engagement. Further, integrating family members and community into the classroom reflects traditional Indigenous pedagogies and strengthens the connection between school and community. This engagement not only meets legal requirements but also enriches the educational experience, providing students with a fuller, more culturally connected education that prioritizes their needs.

Indigenous representation in schools also plays a crucial role in healing and strategic, systematic efforts to repair colonial harm. Teachers who incorporate Native languages and cultural practices into their classrooms actively contribute to the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge systems. This work must also extend beyond the classroom. Schools need to strategically place more Native representation throughout their spaces. One school district in Oregon does this beautifully by posting the following imagery centering the local Indigenous languages (and Spanish) at the entrance of their schools (Figure 11):

Figure 11

Tribal Languages Welcome Students to School



Note: The exact location of the school in this image cannot be shared due to confidentiality.

Such efforts make Indigenous students feel seen and valued while educating the broader student body about Indigenous cultures meaningfully.

For these initiatives to thrive, however, administrators must create the conditions that allow teachers to teach this curriculum as mandated by the state. In some schools, teachers fear backlash from administrators or community members, which limits their ability to fully engage with the TH/SH curriculum. This fear of retaliation is retraumatizing for Indigenous educators who are already navigating systemic bias and stereotypes. It's crucial that school leaders not only enforce the state directive but actively support teachers, so they can implement the curriculum without fear.

It is imperative that we build strong, supportive communities both within and outside of the classroom. By increasing the number of Native teachers, prioritizing family and community engagement, ensuring Indigenous representation, and providing administrative support, we can create an educational environment that has a greater capacity to empower Indigenous students, teachers, and communities, increasing the potential for healing.

Implications for Policy

The implementation of TH/SH must move beyond inclusion to actively support Indigenous resurgence and reparative efforts. For the non-Native community, it's essential to understand that addressing historical trauma is not the responsibility of Indigenous peoples; instead, as one research participant shared, we should be allowed to focus on our own healing. Allies, particularly descendants of colonizers, can contribute by making space for Indigenous voices to not only be included but also centered in policy decisions. I see this act of centering Indigenous leadership and voice as a form of repair. As one research participant put it, the current systems are systematically and strategically contributing to Indigenous erasure and trivializing Indigenous knowledge.

For true and effective implementation of the TH/SH curriculum, it needs stronger enforcement. One of the Native educators shared with me that it needs "teeth." One way to achieve this is by requiring TH/SH goals to be integrated into standard professional development and accountability structures, such as SMART goals in teacher evaluations. Teachers could also be required to submit work samples from the TH/SH curriculum alongside their reading, writing, and math assessments for the students' permanent records. This integration would ensure that Indigenous history and knowledge are treated with the same importance as other "core" subjects.

Another policy idea that emerged from a roundtable discussion at the Oregon Indian Education Association conference is the adoption of professional development requirements for all educators in Oregon. The State of Washington requires all teachers take coursework to support them to teach Since Time Immemorial in their teacher education programs and to earn professional development units in specific categories, and a similar policy could be implemented in Oregon. ODE could mandate that a portion of teachers' continued education hours be spent

studying TH/SH and other culturally relevant topics, ensuring consistent and meaningful engagement with Indigenous content.

Finally, Indigenous teacher preparation programs, such as Sapsik'wala, must receive permanent, sustained funding. Currently, many of these programs rely on grant funding, which are often temporary and uncertain. These programs are critical for the success and empowerment of Indigenous students and deserve to be included in university budgets as part of long-term institutional commitments. The Sapsik'wala Education Program, for example, has demonstrated the transformative power of culturally responsive teacher preparation, contributing to the development of Indigenous teachers who are equipped to support their communities and lead educational reform. As noted by Lipe (2018), “Our institutions will never change if we do not dream big and take critical steps toward those dreams” (p. 165). Permanently funding Indigenous teacher preparation programs is one of those critical steps toward supporting Indigenous futurity and ensuring a strong pipeline of Native educators (Sabzalian et al., 2023).

Through these suggested policy changes, we can ensure that Indigenous education is not a temporary initiative but a sustained, integral part of the educational system that promotes healing, repair, and Indigenous resurgence.

Future Research

A critical area for future research involves amplifying student voice, particularly the voices of Indigenous youth. As one of our beloved átway Elders has noted, “Maybe if we call attention to the young generation they might also help make things better” (Beavert, 2017, p. 160). Listening to the insights and perspectives of students not only recognizes their agency but aligns with Indigenous understandings of kinship, which cherish children as capable contributors to the community (Simpson, 2017). Future studies could explore how Indigenous students

experience the TH/SH curriculum and ask them to share stories of their thoughts on its potential to contribute to historical healing in education. By focusing on student voices, we gain critical insight into how future generations perceive their role in healing and revitalizing their communities.

Another vital direction for research is engaging with community voice to assess whether they feel the TH/SH curriculum has the potential for healing. As adrienne maree brown (2023) says, “We need each other” (p. 1). It is not enough to limit these research projects within the walls of the schools. We must listen to those directly impacted by Indigenous erasure and honor their stories. In the context of education, this means forming authentic, meaningful relationships with families and community members, whose perspectives are key to evaluating the effectiveness and transformative potential of the curriculum. Indigenous education does not happen in isolation; it occurs within the context of family and community, where knowledge is shared across generations (Bang et al. 2019; San Pedro 2020). Future research could explore how family and community members perceive the impact of the curriculum, particularly by listening for stories elevating intergenerational learning, strengthening cultural ties, and supporting healing.

Lastly, I am in the process of building a Community of Practice in Lane County to help me refine my approach to HIP, guided by Stinta as practice as our guiding light and textured teaching (Germán, 2021) to orient us to practical application in the classroom. This involves understanding how educators can create spaces that prioritize love, reciprocity, and relationality while centering healing instead of centering solely on trauma for both students and teachers. By examining how Stinta as practice can shape pedagogy, curriculum decision-making, and teacher preparation, we can move closer to an education system that centers healing and Indigenous

resurgence. I propose that this framework offers a powerful lens for future studies to investigate how teachers, students, and communities can work together to create educational experiences grounded in care, connection, and healing for all.

Limitations of the Study

This study, while valuable in exploring the healing potential of the TH/SH curriculum in Oregon, is not without its limitations. The small number of Indigenous educators could be considered a limitation and limit my ability as a researcher to make broad generalizations about healing or Native studies curriculum. However, creating an intimate setting for our sharing circles with a small number of Indigenous is also what allowed us to dive more deeply into the intimate and emotional process of healing. Although the stories, experiences, and insights about healing may be specific to this small group of Indigenous educators, the process of creating such a space was important, especially in a context such as Oregon where Indigenous peoples and educators make up a small percentage of the state and public teachers in its schools.

Safety concerns also played a significant role in shaping this research. Again, due to the dismally small population of Native educators in Oregon, it was impossible to use pseudonyms for the participants or their locations without risking their identification. This lack of anonymity, coupled with the current political climate where culturally responsive education and CRT are under fire, heightened concerns for the teachers involved. Some participants faced significant backlash from their communities and administrators, making it unsafe to fully engage with the TH/SH curriculum in their schools.

These limitations make evident the need for broader, more inclusive research in the future. Despite these challenges, I truly believe my research provides important insights into the

healing potential of culturally responsive curriculum and the ongoing struggles faced by Indigenous teachers.

Conclusion and Saadinay Pok?anaya⁵

This journey has been personally healing and heart-centered yet also long and arduous. While the enormity of the need for healing feels urgent and daunting, I feel encouraged by words from Tuck (2013), who writes, “Dear readers, we don’t need to let the enormity of change needed (and the enormity of the need for change) paralyze us... It is not so much the size of the steps, but the possibilities they bring into view” (p. 14). Leaning into intuition and feeling through our lives is a way to lean into the possibility of healing one step at a time. This lesson reminds me of a poem that I read recently from a beautiful fellow Tribal member, Shuína Skó. They are also a Klamath Tribal citizen, Indigenous Rights Activist, and Two-Spirit spoken word poet. Shuína gave me permission to share the following piece they are working on:

value your intuition

don't ignore your insight

trust your perceptions

take deep breaths

when you wanna fight

root your feet

when you wanna flight

affirm your truth

to gain peace of mind

⁵ This means “Until we meet again” in the Yahooskin dialect of Paiute. My auntie told me our grandpa said we should never say goodbye to each other until the final goodbye. Instead, we say saadinay pok?anaya upon parting with the consciousness that we will see each other again later.

*question what doesn't feel right
honor your third eye
focus on growing your own light
like Maya Angelou said
believe them when they show you
who they are the first time
avoid reacting emotionally
because doing so is like
being in full sprint and running blind
lean in toward healing
chase serenity not wallet size
release pains you've been bottling
hike up a mountain
if you trying to get high
talk to Creator
if feeling like you wanna die
call 988 instead of pulling the trigger
trust everything with be alright
believe this even if it seems like lies
say it, "i will be alright"
then repeat it however many times
make affirmations be the hug
you never got growing up*

let self-love be depression's kryptonite

when you fall, again

don't blame or put yourself down

choose to be kind

stop the cycle of self harm

avoidance and emotional detachment

and allow yourself to cry

embrace vulnerability

challenge insecurities

don't ever give up

and remember...

darkness is nothing

compared to your glow

like a firework, your presence alone

brightens up the night

so, rest in this knowing

and beautiful Spirit being

just shine ✨

Shuína's work is rooted in deep appreciation for their culture, ancestors, and future generations. They are committed to this work to honor both our ancestors and future generations. Their words are deep medicine to me, and it is so beautiful to see my fellow Klamath Tribal members talking about the importance of our wellness, following our intuition, and leaning into spirit. It leads me to wonder how these words can also be medicine for others. How can the

stories of my Native educator participants serve as guiding stars for fellow educators and scholars? I hope that this dissertation and future publications will serve as a resource of support for educators who want to implement TH/SH or other Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies. I believe in the power of this research project and our deep commitment to building a better future for the next generations. They deserve our best. They deserve our dedication to generating opportunities for healing along our journeys.

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