A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO CULTURE-BASED,

COMMUNITY DRIVEN, ADAPTABLE INTERVENTIONS

FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

By

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Culture-Based, Community Driven, Adaptable
Interventions for Native American Youth


    Native American communities work to preserve and enhance traditional culture in
urban and rural environments through an emphasis on strengthening sovereignty and self-
determination in order to protect and promote culture and arts programming, giving
opportunities for community members and students. Interventions for youth often utilize
evidence-based knowledge systems that aim at knowledge and skill building to empower
pathways to adulthood. Indigenous community participatory strategies bring stakeholders
together in synergy, creating empowerment interventions for youth using culture framed
by disparate knowledge systems engaging youth. Canoe Culture utilizes story, song,
dance, food sharing, carving canoe paddles and dugout canoes, establishing strength from
the ancestors. Exemplified by the canoe culture, each unique Tribal culture is a *suitable
foundation* for adaptable intervention curriculum, providing an intersection of culture and
youth wellbeing. This dissertation explores Tribal adaptations of curriculum such as those
derived from the program: *Healing of the Canoe* (HOC). Qualitative data from structured
interviews illuminates experiences from Tribal adoption and implementation adapting the
curriculum to individual unique cultures and communities. I investigate the ontological
divide of disparate knowledge systems utilizing an evidence-based Implementation
Science and Indigenous Science in order to create effective synergies with adaptable

culture-infused interventions for Native youth empowerment (Cajete, 2000). Specifically I seek to extract meaning from how Native American culture, curriculum and community play a role in the adoption of adaptable interventions for youth empowerment. I investigate how curriculum's adaptable uniqueness and community cooperation drives wellness through culture, while producing resilience, identity and protective factors for developing youth. This study will take meaning from phenomenological interviews to gain perspective of Tribal leadership's experiences while adapting unique interventions.

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# INTRODUCTION

*It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience nor even of activity of experience. Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had.*
*John Dewey – Experience & Education*

This inquiry focuses on experiences of Tribal leadership and developers creating adaptable youth intervention programs for Native American communities. I focus on one Native American youth empowerment program entitled the *Healing of the Canoe* (HOC), specifically what makes it adaptable and the Tribal communities or organizations who have chosen to adapt this type of curriculum to their own unique culture. Because the curriculum is a complete, adaptable and potentially synergetic knowledge system for youth programming, I want to consider three primary points in establishing my research questions and three key elements that I refer to as the 3 C's.

*Figure 1.1* The 3 C's



The three C's, culture, curriculum and community, play an integral part of this inquiry, which together integrate as the 'footing' for my own framework in work with

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indigenous communities. It is my belief that this important triad, when working together can enlist the greatest amount of rigorous synergy and secure the best outcomes for almost any production or program, especially when working with youth.

How does the experience of each unique culture tie people to a particular place or time with their traditions important in the decision-making process for the adoption of interventions? Everyone has at least one culture. Native American people represent over 500 cultures. Today, many Native people are multi-ethnic. Each Tribe has a unique and individual history, tradition, and language. The significance of the unique histories and cultures of Native peoples has both fascinated and troubled non-native settlers on this land for several centuries. It becomes more challenging when imagining that many Native youth today are multi-cultural and have multiple complex considerations to make in order to have balance in their lives.

How do experiences with synergy of disparate knowledge systems, namely how the western and evidence-based intervention programs integrate within foundations of traditional Native curriculum? I seek to investigate this by collecting Tribal program's leaders and implementation teams' experiences via audio or written interviews that reference experiences gained from participatory action in the adoption and implementation of sustainable and robust youth culture-based interventions, while also focusing on ways to keep the traditions of their unique Tribal communities alive.

Does the role of community influence positive engagement with programs for youth in each situation? Is this process collaborative? Who are the stakeholders and how is the participation in action? I attempt to address these questions.

I want to make clear how I situate certain terms within this dissertation. I use the words native, indigenous, and First Nations almost identically, to mean those Native Americans living, residing, working and thriving in Indian Country, or Native American communities, both rural and urban, reservation or not. It is my belief that although many may claim the term Native American simply on the fact of their birth being in America, I reserve this terminology for those familial in lineage to Native First Nation's people, those that are indigenous to this continent. I have to side with Luther Standing Bear, the great Sioux leader, who over a century ago described his feelings debated then almost identical with today. Standing Bear suggested, a Native Indigenous person lives with the land, and is from the land, the colonist and their descendants may be born here and have adapted here but in most cases, live on the land. The relationship is simply not the same. This inquiry does not represent a pan-Native American viewpoint, as I realize that it would be impossible to include the many points needed to do this justice. What I attempt is a viewpoint of a small sample of various and different Native cultures as experiential voices describing personal, instead, to seek anonymous narratives inspected for meaning. I do this with respect of their knowledge, culture and history. Meaning from narrative inquiry is an old practice that feels new in some venues of research (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Clandinin & Rosiek have reasoned, "Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. Then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways…we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. With this emergence has come

intensified talk about our stories, their function in our lives, and their place in composing

our collective affairs" (p. 35-36).

## Narrative Inquiry

**Phenomenology**. I consider phenomenology both a philosophy and a research

method. As a philosophy, phenomenology is a particular way of apprehending lived

experiences. In 1962, Merleau-Ponty suggested, "taken straight out, by day and night, to

be experiencing the world is not to be inert, a thing among things, or a bump on a log. It

is surprising in the nature of place and the mechanics of physics merely confirms the

multiple processing options that are possible for the human experience. Our own body is

in the world as the heart is in an organism, keeping the spectacle in front of us alive,

breathing life into the experience, sustaining it inward so that we can form a system of

thought" (p. 246).  A human science, phenomenological methods of inquiry such as this

one, is an exploration of the meaning and significance of lived experiences for Tribal

people tasked with the implementation of youth interventions. The strategic use of

community stakeholders combining the strength and effectiveness of multiple interested

collaborators can ensure the creation and sustainable culture-based infusion for programs

and curriculum (Donovan, 2016). Volunteers participating in this research will have

adapted or attempted adapting a version of an original intervention curriculum called

Healing of the Canoe or, HOC. HOC is an adaptable curriculum based on the Pacific

Northwest Native American canoe culture (Donovan, et al. 2015). This curriculum

includes adapted components of evidence-based youth empowerment that have the

characteristics for integration into the cultural foundation of another Tribal community

(Fisher and Ball, 2005). In the case of HOC, as an adaptable curriculum driving a

prevention and empowerment youth intervention, the canoe culture is a 'metaphor' for the program. HOC curriculum operates strategically to simplify the adjustment to another culture and easily pair with any other evidence-based skill empowerment program for youth (Donovan, et al. 2015). It is my hope that a study of this kind can help shed more light on the value of considering lived experiences as data to help inform where additional research using culture-based interventions in combinations fit into unique populations such as Tribal communities. Phenomenology allows for the inspection and analysis of experiences asking participant Tribal adopters and implementers to dig deep into their personal experience to give breath to them in the form of semi-structured interviews. Themes that arise out of the answers to questions will provide narrative information describing each separate experience of adoption and implementation efforts of youth empowerment curriculum (interventions) using culture and community connections as supportive systems.

**Personal experience**. I situate myself from a stance as far from the participants as possible in order to minimize bias. Thus, although I understand that I will have some effect on those interview narratives that I receive, I am also aware that data arrives to me partly or wholly relating to the trust and confidence in who I am and how I present myself. I cannot be completely outside this inquiry. Since I will not have a physical presence to any of the participants, there exists the concern in how I will establish enough meaning from thematic structures using my own cognition while limiting any bias or influence. In my opinion, there is never a complete elimination of influence in the collection of data such as interview narratives. I try to be as clear from the potential to influence answers, but since I am the individual asking each question, and analyzing

results, I also recognize that it is impossible to eliminate oneself completely from this type of inquiry process.

My own lived experiences are as multi-dimensional and as multi-ethnic as many of this study's participants. The lived experiences of my parents and ancestors play a significant role in how I experience this world. My father was Choctaw. Both of my biological parents passed to the spirit world early in my life. Although my father did not practice traditional ceremonies as an urban Native person, his Indigenous philosophy grounded his values and wisdom. My great-grandparents and their families lived through the Trail of Tears, the forced removal from their Southeast homelands to the destination in the Oklahoma Territory. Nearly half of the Choctaw perished during the traumatic events of the early 1830's. Subsequent years nearly wiped out several Tribes including the Choctaw and Cherokee who had homelands in the Southeast. These experiences affect the way I view the world.

My mother was a native European of French descent, born in Belgium. As a child prior to WWII, she endured many challenges that made it challenging to become a healthy adult. She told me stories about friends and family during German-occupied Europe, in which Nazi troops confiscated everything, leaving the country's residents without basic necessary resources to survive. Many families and young people died during the German occupation of Europe prior to 1941. Many more perished in camps until liberation in 1945. In talking about her youth, she never suggested feeling weak or hopeless, even though violence and upheaval were all around and never ending. I remember her saying in that hybrid French/English 'Pidgin' language she always used, that no matter where I might find myself in life, I should always seek to understand and

find how to establish a 'place' and 'mind' to be strong. I always thought she was talking about my physical presence in the world. I now believe that she meant having confidence in yourself resides between the ears. I can never understand what it was like in her life as a child, but even today, I do have an intense empathy for those that have had their liberties taken away by oppressive forces and evildoers. Feeling empowered seems to have huge implications for positivity, even when difficult, challenging and negative external forces and situations exist. My mother never talked about being powerless or oppressed. Even as an immigrant in the early 1950's, she knew that having light skin color and green eyes opened doors that people of color simply did not have. Her dreams of an inclusive world was partially due to being brought up in a bi-racial home and she never wavered in how she tried to illustrate conditions of equity, equality and temperance and to share an inner strength with those less fortunate. I am certain that her personality and deep wisdom is what drew my father to her. My father trained several breeds of racing horses and both my parents were experts in handling horses. I had just turned 10 years old when my mother passed, my father's stories of her life echo in my memories even though my time with him was not much longer than I had with my mother. As a child, my father battled his own demons stemming from the violence and oppressive attitudes and remnant ideologies of boarding schools including oppressive attitudes and prejudice of mainstream society. He retained a resolve to carving a 'space' for himself that did not seem too limiting for following most of his dreams. Despite the oppressive nature of schools for a significant number of people of color in the first half of the 20th century, he was able to learn how to play several musical instruments while in high school. In the military, he managed regular clandestine games like poker and Native

American hand games because he liked to make extra money. A 'bank' was a necessary and economically fruitful skill to have in the military, when as he told it, "many wanted to play, but didn't have any money until payday". He lived as a frugal person who seemingly saved everything 'for a rainy day' and I am sure this was an attribute he learned based on how he endured life as a boy. He grew up during the Great Depression. The discrimination he faced being an urban Native American made him feel strongly about wanting his own children to experience less racism and oppression than he had to deal with. I would often feel that my father did not want us to 'be seen as Indian', for fear, we would face negative influences and discrimination at school or in the community. I found later that during this time, and with this generation, many parents shielded their families by trying to hide their identities as much as they could. Despite the racial issues of the 1960's, my father advocated for the type of cultural balance in self-identification rarely seen at this time. He learned to be a chameleon, as many of his friends had to do, simply to survive. His philosophy was to have a strong stance in all parts of life, with a firm grasp of understanding personal history and culture. I learned early in life that resilience and protective personalities for kids like me are associated with the extreme challenges and weathering processes learned from family and self.  In the mid-twentieth century, in my parent's opinion, tough and challenging situations are a powerful teacher. That meant that as a developing human being, one learned from all manner of experience, no matter how difficult the situation. For example, my mother would say about her parents and many from that generation simply did not prepare young girls for the challenges that lay beyond childhood and the domestic life that was laid out for them. Understanding experience as tempering life's challenges and successes

illustrated empowered self-discovery and were simple instructions from my parents. As a young person growing up, I remember an environment created for us that allowed us to feel empowered, despite the many challenges and disruptions that I endured during much of my youth. My brother and I learned not to be afraid of trying new things because we might fail. It was only through this tenet that the road to success really makes sense. Failure is often the many 'other' paving stones on the pathway of our life's journey. After many years of working with at-risk youth, I feel that there is at least some truth to this thinking. Having the luxury of life without disruptions and negative environs is not very common for kids like me, yet we still can find continuity in the need to perceive the possibility of being empowered. Resilience is born from this recipe.

## Why Culture

Simply put, culture and traditions teach us about our history and past in ways that can secure a balance of identification and self-understanding in ways that allow us to be part of a greater social fabric (Berry, 1999). Native American storytelling is consistent throughout time and history as a way of disseminating knowledge and science from generation to generation (Battiste, 2008, Deloria, 1999). In short, culture holds knowledge (Gone & Alcantara, 2007). To Native people, Indigenous science and understanding of our cosmos stems from both place and experience (Tedlock, 1975; Cajete, 2000; Deloria, 2006; Garrett el. al 2014). Discussing traditional culture in Native communities is challenging. Culture is a significant distinguishing factor for nearly every Tribal person (Deloria, 1994). Traditions and ceremonies are often sacred and kept out of view of people who are not citizens of an individual Tribe. Tribes protect their most sensitive traditions and culture from unceded appropriation and mis-representation as a

significant component in how wellness is rooted within the communities (Red Horse, 1997). Outside of Indian Country, organizations and stakeholders that have Native people's best interest in mind sometimes have to make important decisions without all the key facts (Allen, et al, 2006). For example, government sponsored health programs for Native Americans have been fraught with problems in practical applications because of the cultural disconnection and mistrust stemming from the resulting lack of understanding of the effects of mainstream systems of care on marginalized cultures (Portman & Garrett, 2006; Kenyon & Hanson, 2012; Baum, MacDougall & Smith 2006). Moreover, because living cultures are a prominent part of a successful and healthy community for Indian people, it is important to understand how culture becomes an important multi-faceted mechanism of action for successful culture-based interventions (Stone, et al, 2006).

This dissertation addresses the relationship between culture, Tribal communities and the creation of interventions (Allen, Mohatt, Beehler and Rowe, 2014; Allen, et al. 2006). There are myriad categories of youth interventions, those programs wrapped in the culture of the Tribal community with some form of pan-Native culture (Deloria, 2006), or interventions created from non-Native sources that in the best cases are from evidence-based sources see (Kenyon & Hanson, 2012). I consider obtaining information about adaptations of interventions that are inclusive and energized with both evidence-based programming and tribal culture (Peat, 1997). Tribes often use community-supported interventions to improve behavioral skills and knowledge for youth because there is a belief  that Native programming will have well-fitting results for their community (Lowe, 2012; Lowe, Riggs & Henson, 2012; Donovan, 2016, Hawkins, 2004; Lonczak, et al,

2013; Thomas, Donovan & Sigo, 2010). The aim is for the enhancement of life skills and

knowledge acquisition to empower mental health while producing additional positive

forms of personal and social engagement (Gone, 2004). For this to be effective, Tribal

communities sometimes consider collaborative efforts that combine disparate knowledge

systems (Peat, 1997; Fisher & Ball, 2005; Hartman et al. 2014; Jumper-Reeves et al.

2014). For example, many equine therapeutic programs for youth entail science and

evidence-based husbandry methodologies coupled with Indigenous science to create a

holistic, culturally grounded youth empowerment program that addresses and bridges two

disparate knowledge systems (Ewers, 1980; Baker, 2004). Cultural programming

provides the grounding and understanding of tradition and history for the individual,

while creating and enhancing opportunities for self-identification (Barrera & Castro,

2006). I posit that empowerment arrives from the synergy in combining knowledge

systems and makes an intervention relevant, practical and effective. Disciplined behavior

and skill development were challenges for many children when I was growing up,

especially those kids who did not have access to positive supportive environments.

Spending some of my early life around Los Angeles during the 1960's and 1970's, there

are examples that existed with Hispanic and urban Native youth. Many of my peers who

did not have a positive family structure or consistency in their lives, especially the boys

without attendant fathers, sometimes ended up gravitating to the gangs, essentially

providing them with a 'culture'. In these cases, culture helped shape a new identity.

Poverty has always been an easy explanation for the many challenges and

problems in Indian Country (Gesino, 2001; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Taylor, 2014). I

believe that there is a great need to study the complex parameters of Tribal poverty, by

looking more deeply in the socio-economic situation of many urban Native communities

(Wexler, 2011; BraveHeart & DeBruyn, 1998). Prior to the 1970's almost every Tribe

experienced some form of extreme poverty (Indian Health Service, 2015). It is only in

recent years that Tribal governments have regained federal recognition as Sovereign

Nations after several decades of termination policies (Deloria & Lytle, 1989). Tribes

successfully survived economic poverty for the last several centuries because of the

nature of their cultural sharing and social cohesion even acquiring or adapting beneficial

business acumen. Because of damaging disruptions to life from colonial policies, Tribal

governments had to relinquish many, if not most of their traditions, lifestyles and

languages (James, 1992; Gone, 2011; King, Brough & Knox, 2014). However, Tribal

communities have also always retained wellbeing in the face of the detrimental effects of

poverty through rich traditions, family-empowered lifestyles, language and community

from culture (Fuller & Minkler, 2005; Tsosie, et al, 2011).

Culture is the knowledge, belief and history that is common to a people in

practice and life (Berry, 1999; Struthers & Lowe, 2003; Bassie, Tsosie & Nannauck,

2012). Culture is a constantly changing component of Tribal life. Native American is a

sharing tradition obtaining knowledge from experience usually linked to a place of

spiritual significance. Indigenous knowledge passes to the next generation from the

original time and place through its traditions and culture, like story, song, dance and

ceremony. Indigenous researchers often speak of lost or missing culture as one of many

significant reasons for the conditions Native communities endure today (Belcourt-

Dittloff, 2006). Too often for Native people, there is a challenge to remove barriers for

support of services in mainstream society due to their long family history of

discrimination and marginalization (Belcourt-Dittloff, 2006). It is very important to note that I seek to discover meanings of culture's form, as it exists prior to the colonized interference from the outside world (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Often the culture and traditions of Native Americans exist in mainstream society as an exotic and extinct way of living rather than grounded practices of wellbeing from a society enlisting ancient and natural ideologies (Garrett, 1999). Mis-identification often leads the un-initiated to believe that Native Tribes no longer exist or no longer survive as they 'once' did. There are significant miscast stereotypes existing today in movies and literature about the unusable lifestyles that Natives lived as being their true nature. Today, the culture and traditions of modern Sovereign Nations are both ceremonial and sacred, but also mobile and flexible, changing with the times (Deloria, 1994). Tribal Nations have evolved and even morphed or hybridized with religious, political and corporate methods intertwined with their own original traditions (Deloria, 1994). Tribal cultural values are as varied as the number of tribes, and the resulting lifestyles are as creatively different as the clouds in the sky (Cross, 1997). Many accounts about the culture of Native people, written by non-Native people, result in missing many customs and traditions because they are declared as significantly private and sacred (Hodge & Limb, 2009; Limb & Hodge, 2008). Knowledge and culture meant for sharing with the broader world is often misconstrued and thrown out as the Native American community's entire narrative. This creates a backdrop of mistrust and reticence for sharing and collaborating. There is a need to further advance and broadly educate on topics related to Tribal protocols before attempting to work collaboratively with non-Native intervention programming, especially where youth are concerned. Today, in states such as Oregon, there are legislative

mandates to create authentic and ethical education about Tribes for use within mainstream school curriculum. Even today, in some states, almost defiant and medieval ideas about attacking critical race discussions whitewashing our history for mainstream society. Church and state are forming more strengthened relationships. Tribes in many states are now preparing for challenging and difficult action to aid in the creation of both the framework and content for much of the effort to ensure accuracy of our written and oral histories (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, 2010).

Many Native children in boarding schools experienced similar activities that resulted in both resistance and survival (BraveHeart, 1999; Myhra, 2011). Settler accounts of Native children attending boarding schools relate to the benefits of the schools toward young students as something they would need to assimilate into the dominate culture, but rarely do these accounts provide the entire story. Boarding schools were sites of intense secrecy and protection of knowledge and Native language. Often these church-backed schools were places of resistance and contempt in an environment of extreme cruelty and violence. Many children could not avoid violent and genocidal efforts of assimilation ultimately leading to loss of their language and culture. The story of the boarding school is complex. Boarding schools were complicated for almost everyone. There are many stories of heinous acts of violence, but there are also instances of immense benevolence and kindness, especially from the older kids who protected, fostered and mentored the younger children (Adams, 1995). Today, elders tell many complex stories about boarding schools and there are several excellent books written by Native American survivors of the boarding school programs that tell the tale more

completely. One of my favorites about life in the boarding school is a book called Indian School Days (Johnston, 1998).

To many Native people, challenges of life are not elements outside the scope of their culture, but are an integral part of the elements of life. A canoe culture, for example, teaches about the toughness and danger of ocean crossings using transportation and hunting or fishing as integral components for positive skill development for youth (Hawkins & LaMarr, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Lonczak, et al. 2013). Is it possible to have a resilient and resourceful life borne from many trials and tribulations? I know that in my family purview, life's challenges are a common, if not unavoidable element each of us need to navigate. To embrace the cold, dark hardships of life as a normal and expected version of daily living, one should 'walk' with as much joy as the days in which the sun is shining down on us eating watermelon on a warm summer day. Balanced expectations are most important in having a positive attitude and opening our relationship with each day. Interventions based on cultural foundations should allow for strength and empowerment to come from every conceivable condition presented within their respective unexpected beginning (Buchwald, Beals & Manson, 2000). A culture-infused intervention program can lead to some short or long-term improvements for Native youth, often diagnosed with intellectual difficulties at some of the highest rates of any ethnic group who is also at-risk for lagging in many important developmental stages of their lives on the way to adulthood (Jones, 2006).

**Concepts of a Canoe Culture.** A day for the 'pullers' often entails at least 12 hours on the water (Thomas, et al, 2009; Hawkins & LaMarr, 2012). Each stroke is "one pull closer to their destination" (Hawkins & LaMarr, 2012). Working with a paddle can truly

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be a marathon experience for those newly initiated to the canoe. Each pull both takes and gives strength. Through the generations, tribes passed down stories, songs and history during long and arduous events on the water. Journeys include seasonal hunting, fishing, and gathering, travel for business, pleasure and tradition (Thomas, et al. 2009). Tribes pass down ceremonies and life lessons regarding traditional activities through storytelling. Much of the life surrounding canoe culture entails strengthening the bonds to the history and tradition of the ancestors (Thomas, et al, 2010). Stories are a way of passing on language and knowledge that surrounds each unique Tribal tradition. Tribes of the Pacific Northwest used canoes as a vehicle of transportation long before any of the heavily forested areas of land had trails or effective roads (Washington Indian Gaming Assoc., 2014). Indigenous people lived with respect of their forested environments and did very little to disrupt or blemish the balance of the pristine nature around them. These traditions have been balancing on vanishing ground for several centuries of colonization and societal oppression. Beginning in 1894, attempts at annihilation and assimilation of Native youth by forced removal from families was the government's attempt to break the back of Native people's culture (Deloria, 2006; Gone, 2013). Richard Pratt's ideology in 1892 of "Kill the Indian, save the man" became the mantra of our nation's government (Adams, 1995). Native children going into boarding schools had their language and tradition beaten out of their lives. Resistance survived in many youth by actively speaking their own first languages to each other in secret. A generation of children who were not going to give up their identity and culture to an oppressive force dominated the efforts to keep their culture alive.

Today, language revitalization is a predominant and effective way that tribes that have to both protect and advance their political sovereignty and culture. Using collaborative participation like CBPR that engages non-Tribal stakeholders, technology and linguistic experts have increased success within the scope of each Tribal tradition to capture and preserve the language for many communities (Allen, et al. 2006; Blue Bird Jernigan, et al. 2015; Thomas, et al, 2011). As an example, the Tribal culture of the Tulalip people know that even the smallest seed of cedar has the ability to grow into a powerful agency, resistant to almost any force (Marchand, 2014). The Tulalip people have a unique and long-standing reciprocal relationship with the cedar tree. Cedar has an important and powerful role for the people, as the bison or horse has for the plains tribes. Today, many of the cedar traditions learned in Tribal programs pass down from elders and protectors of tradition to prepare youth for their future of leadership. Youth learn skills and spiritual wisdom that keeps them healthy and powerful through the teaching of cedar. It is interesting to note that the King James Bible has over 100 references about the cedar tree. The land and the surrounding bodies of water are healing and strengthening places for many Native families that survive through the damage and loss of this environment by deforestation, mining, overfishing and climate change. For me, as a Native person, cedar symbolizes protection, resilience, immortality, strength and elevation of spirit (hope). Today's citizens from the original stewards of this land are fighting as courageously as ever to regain an ethical approach to living and working within this territory. Today, many young Native people increasingly seek the lifestyle of their Indigenous culture. By not taking into consideration the philosophy of seven generations can we truly know which decisions are prudent and wise? A canoe journey is

both a spiritual and practical event. Like the foundations of relationships with Cedar, the canoe is a complex, yet simple teacher. Stories and song are shared with guests often well into the night. Canoe journeys begin at early light. They begin with prayer for the wellness and health of all who witness and participate. Modern canoe journeys do more than simply re-enact the historical routes of their ancestors. Families hope their youth learn to keep themselves wrapped in the positive understanding and spirituality of relationships with the canoe, the water, the agency of all within their world to keep their souls, physicality and mental awareness well (LaMarr & Marlatt, 2005; Lonczak, et al. 2013)). Tribal communities hold the knowledge of traditional fisheries and waterways alive with the passing of each journey. The environmental knowledge and ethics of sustainable practices are never lost, maybe misplaced, but continue showing up in dreams and stories that maintain this knowledge. Youth learn from games, ceremonies and traditions that imitate life's joy and challenges (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, 2010).

A modern version of the canoe journey re-started in the Pacific Northwest as an event in 1989 with a 'paddle' to Seattle (LaMarr & Marlatt, 2005). Today, the Suquamish people keep this event alive with much support and many canoes in attendance annually. Over time, the journey has grown to include stops along many Tribal communities sharing the song, drum, stories and dances that coincide with celebrations and potlatch. Potlatch is a traditional communal time of sharing. The potlatch might have changed over time, but the idea is the same, to share in good food and community while honoring the culture and traditions. Each journey embraces knowledge and understanding that values and traditions teach each of us how to walk our paths ethically. In the way of benefitting

their people in strengthening ways, Native American culture in all its unique situations, entails all forms of life experience, good, bad, beautiful and ugly.

**Community and Lived Experience.** Stakeholders creating enhanced health and wellness interventions for Native youth, use cultural programming for adolescent development to offset disparities in creating positive experiences that shape youth identity, sense of self, and beliefs about their future (Bentler, 1992; Barrera, et al. 2013; Dumont, 2014). Using semi-structured interviews, this inquiry considers a framework examining how the synergy and collaboration of various forms of knowledge inform adaptation of interventions with unique Tribal culture and traditions as youth gain experience using culture and evidence-based skill development (Moustakas, 1994; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). My interest is in action partnerships using the analysis of knowledge and evidence-based non-native information systems communities synergize to create interventions for youth empowerment adapted for each unique Tribal community (Fisher & Ball, 2005; Duffy et al, 2011). This inquiry will acquire interviews that discover and illuminate sources of engagement as well as barriers to engagement for adaptations in each adoption/implementation of the original HOC curriculum.

The experimental use of substances and has been a common theme with at-risk Native youth for many decades. (Beauvais, Oetting, Wolf, & Edwards, 1989). As a young person, I can remember needing to clean the bottles and cans of alcohol from the dugouts in the baseball diamond before we could have games. The kids in my neighborhood constantly looked for places to hide their experimentation with all sorts of substances, including beer, wine, pot, even glue and spray paint. Native youth have substance abuse rates much higher than the general population in the United States and for Native youth,

they tend to start earlier and abuse substances in higher quantities than their non-Native peers. Native youth are also more likely to experiment with smoking tobacco, using inhalants, and trying marijuana at earlier ages in higher numbers than all of their peers. Beauvais (1992) illustrated results of these behavioral trends that often disrupt learning age-appropriate behavior and skills. Not all research reach the same conclusions from these same trends. For example, Dickerson (2019) inquired how health outcomes in urban Native youth exposed to negative behaviors like substance abuse, found no impactful correlation between the wellness of youth and the exposure to a variety of substances including marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes. It would seem that just as many at-risk youth find their way to positive adulthood as those who do not discover well pathways to adulthood.

Native adolescents who lack substantial social, emotional, and spiritual connections, who also have delays in learning or intellectual difficulties, make it to adulthood with much higher rates of morbidity and mortality (IHS, 2015; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2009). Native American youth with disabilities suffer from all causes of mortality at almost three times the rates for children from ages 12 to 24 (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, IHS, 2009). The Indian Health Service (IHS) tells a historically bleak story related to substance abuse; four out of ten leading causes of death for Native youth relate to depression, accidents, suicide, homicide, and chronic liver disease (IHS, 2009). Alcohol-related deaths alone account for deaths in Native youth populations at over four times the national average for same-age peers. Hawkins et al. (2004) compiled a literature review on prevention programs for Native youth and found that the most effective programs share certain characteristics. Their analysis suggest the

best approaches to developing and sustaining prevention/intervention programs include care delivery concepts along a continuum using a stepped-care system that has individualized components (Hawkins et al, 2004). Culturally relevant life skills and traditional knowledge acquisition are foundational for maintaining Tribal individual and community wellness (Cross et al, 2007). Community connections and involvement with consistent and caring stakeholders is a prime goal, especially on reservations and Rancherias (Schweigman et al. 2011). Because of tight budgets, Tribal governments have had to find the most effective yet least effective intensive intervention, providing the best outcome for the cost of resources. Focal points of the Indian Health Service options include provisions to provide timely access to mental health care while enlisting the community with culturally relevant health education (HIS, 2015). Any care plan that meets unique needs of a community's culture adds to the strength approach aiding in self-empowerment and personal wellness experiences (Sobell & Sobell, 1999). Engagement with supports and services that are both short and long term in provisions for programming is necessary in community empowered supportive care. Stakeholders and community health providers assist with the planning for sustainable wellness program development. Traditional and cultural programs work well to engage youth in their quest for total holistic wellness while engaging in the learning of their own identities. Examination and analysis of the unique cultural 'voices' and knowledge of individual tribes and tribal organizations become more diverse when using evidence-based wellness interventions in empowering Native American youth.

## Adaptable Interventions

This inquiry focuses on investigating experiences relating to both facilitators and barriers in adapting Tribal programs implementing Native youth culture-based interventions. Native youth are at greater risk and often fail to launch on time in less than robust socio-economic conditions, even before attending school (Sarche & Whitesell, 2012; U.S. Census, 2010). Youth from Native American communities in North America have survived centuries of dispossession, subjugation, endemic poverty, and coercive assimilation, so I will examine culture-based and tradition-infused intervention curriculum adaptations (Jumper-Reaves, et al. 2014). One of the more successful interventions incorporating community connections, culture and adaptable curriculum is HOC (Donovan, et al., 2015). The HOC intervention concept is an adaptable intervention based on the Pacific Northwest Native American canoe culture. A canoe culture is a metaphor for the intervention itself, and can be accommodating to any Tribal culture such as a horse culture, plains culture, buffalo culture, weaving culture or and other Indigenous culture (Donovan, et al. 2015). The originators of HOC relied on Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) techniques in order to gather all the stakeholders necessary for the planning, development, sustainment and any adjustments that would be necessary for the original version (Allen, et al. 2006, 2014). A conceptual model of this collaborative model for partnerships is one that benefits the Tribal communities that would like to engage with robust research methods.

CBPR is cooperative and collaborative, and like many Tribal Action Partnerships (TAP), is effective for use in many adaptations that Tribal organizations and communities could use for their own versions of interventions promoting wellbeing (figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

## CBPR Conceptual Model

Adapted from Wallerstein et al, 2008 & Wallerstein and Duran, 2010, https://cpr.unm.edu/research-projects/cbpr-project/cbpr-model.html

**Contexts**
- Social & Structural
- Political & Policy
- Health Issue Importance
- Capacity & Readiness
- Collaboration Trust & Mistrust

**Partnership Processes**
- Individual Characteristics
- Relationships
- Partnership Structures
- CBOs
- Funders
- Agency
- Community
- Academic
- Government
- Health Care

**Intervention & Research**

*Processes*
- Integrate Community Knowledge
- Empowering Processes
- Community Involved in Research

*Outputs*
- Culture-Centered Interventions
- Partnership Synergy
- Appropriate Research Design

**Outcomes**

Intermediate
- Policy Environment
- Sustained Partnership
- Empowerment
- Shared Power Relations in Research
- Cultural Reinforcement
- Individual / Agency Capacity
- Research Productivity

Long-term
- Community Transformation
- Social Justice
- Health / Health Equity

Visual from amoshealth.org 2017

| Contexts | Partnership Processes | Intervention & Research | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Social-Structural: Social-Economic Status, Place, History, Environment, Community Safety, Institutional Racism, Culture, Role of Education and Research Institutions<br>• Political & Policy: National / Local Governance/ Stewardship Approvals of Research; Policy & Funding Trends<br>• Health Issue: Perceived Severity by Partners<br>• Collaboration: Historic Trust/Mistrust between Partners<br>• Capacity: Community History of Organizing / Academic Capacity/ Partnership Capacity | **Partnership Structures:**<br>• Diversity: Who is involved<br>• Complexity<br>• Formal Agreements<br>• Control of Resources<br>• % Dollars to Community<br>• CBPR Principles<br>• Partnership Values<br>• Bridging Social Capital<br>• Time in Partnership<br>**Individual Characteristics:**<br>• Motivation to Participate<br>• Cultural Identities/Humility<br>• Personal Beliefs/Values<br>• Spirituality<br>• Reputation of P.I. | **Relationships:**<br>• Safety / Respect / Trust<br>• Influence / Voice<br>• Flexibility<br>• Dialogue and Listening / Mutual Learning<br>• Conflict Management<br>• Leadership<br>• Self & Collective Reflection/ Reflexivity<br>• Resource Management<br>• Participatory Decision-Making<br>• Task Roles Recognized<br>**Commitment to Collective Empowerment** | • Processes that honor community and cultural knowledge & voice, fit local settings, and use both academic & community language lead to Culture-Centered Interventions<br>• Empowering Co-Learning Processes lead to Partnership Synergy<br>• Community Members Involved in Research Activities leads to Research/Evaluation Design that Reflects Community Priorities<br>• Bidirectional Translation, Implementation, Dissemination | **Intermediate System & Capacity Outcomes**<br>• Policy Environment: University & Community Changes<br>• Sustainable Partnerships and Projects<br>• Empowerment – Multi-Level<br>• Shared Power Relations in Research /. Knowledge Democracy<br>• Cultural Reinforcement / Revitalization<br>• Growth in Individual Partner & Agency Capacities<br>• Research Productivity: Research Outcomes, Papers, Grant Applications & Awards<br>**Long-Term Outcomes: Social Justice**<br>• Community / Social Transformation: Policies & Conditions<br>• Improved Health / Health Equity |

CBPR is useful and proven to be efficacious for Tribal use in a variety of settings and needs because as a tool, it creates a space in the middle of the bridge allowing varying viewpoints from both directions, inward and outward (Christopher et al, 2008; Crooks, et al. 2013; Lonczak, et al. 2013)).

**Culturally Competent Interventions.** Native American collaborative research designs that include cultural activities necessary for overcoming barriers that promote positive programming within Native communities tend to have robust positive outcomes (Fuentes & Lent, 2019). Research by Native people suggest that cultural competence in youth development is improved significantly by the adoption of traditional programming into after-school and community-wide programs (Lauricella, et al. 2016). Bi-cultural competence is a significant protective factor (Belcourt-Ditloff, 2006). One's balance relates to understanding the social navigation between one's ethnic culture and any social dominant culture. The response to the social cues in cultural programs suggests Native

youth negotiate harmful situations by increasing positive coping skills, self-efficacy, and social strength (LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). Balance relates to a strengthened emotional intelligence derived from being adept at 'standing' strong in two or more worlds. The challenge for Western research is to engage as linkages and relationships where conceptual, cultural and historical spaces can synergize or be active alongside each other based on the newly formed relationships and language using everyone's knowledge. Cultural humility has inherent skills needed to reflect self and the other, learning and accepting of each other's knowledge and culture. This is something my father instilled in me early in life. Building a strong sense of culture and tradition during a young person's developmental years can help increase overall wellbeing and the reduction of harm and risk behaviors for Native youth, improving their resiliency through the knowledge, history and identity of culture that become incorporated into their lives (Kenyon & Hanson, 2012). A primary principle in cultural humility is lifelong learning, self-reflection and honest assessments without bias or negative influence toward others. Acknowledging ethics and privileges of others, sharing histories and understanding goal similarities often add to the unbiased partnerships. Medical interventions improve feasibility and efficacy by using positive cultural links with Native patients while providing outcomes by using traditional medicine and healing methods like the sweat lodge ceremony (Colmant & Merta, 1999). When these tools are incorporated within the range of care, there appears to be a reduction in symptoms of depression and stress (Tsosie et al., 2011). Using evidence-based prevention models may be more effective when combining culture and traditions that positively reflect the community and its youth (Wilson, 2003; Walker, et al., 2013). In my work with young people, cultural

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disconnectedness and apathy occur when youth describe a lack of knowledge about their roots and history, and for reasons not fully apparent, reject any authentic approach by parents and caregivers to embrace traditional life choices (Berry, 1999; Jones & Galliher, 2007). Mixed-identity, rural v. urban environments, and pan-tribal identity cultures all have similar amounts of Native youth who want to understand and be closer to their respective traditional history (Brown & D'Amico, 2016).

Research studies focused on environmental factors with Cherokee youth suggest both proximal and distal outcomes for negative health and wellness outcomes benefit from methods that used culture as a form of 'competency' within the Cherokee traditional environment in its advocacy for positive family and community interactions and roles for youth (Komro et al., 2014). Hawkins, Cummins, and Marlatt (2004) completed an extensive review of the literature on the efforts of Native American prevention and intervention programs characteristics. Hawkins (2004) also found that culture-infused programs shared similar levels of positive outcomes in the implementation of programs with fidelity. First, prevention/intervention programs for youth were effective on a stepped care model, which in effect was to match the need of youth to the amount and intensity of intervention. Second, some programs also included a continuum of care (Institute of Medicine, 1994) that offers a wide ranging and flexible option strategy to match the level and needs of at-risk youth. Stepped-care approaches have some success in Native youth prevention programs, especially in acute care alcohol prevention and intervention (Sobell & Sobell, 1999). Regardless of technique or methodology, youth interventions seemingly have better overall outcomes using relevant, culture-based infusions and program partnerships.

**Curriculum to empower.** The Healing of the Canoe (HOC) project is the creation

and collaboration between the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Suquamish Tribe and the

University of Washington Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute (ADAI) and other important

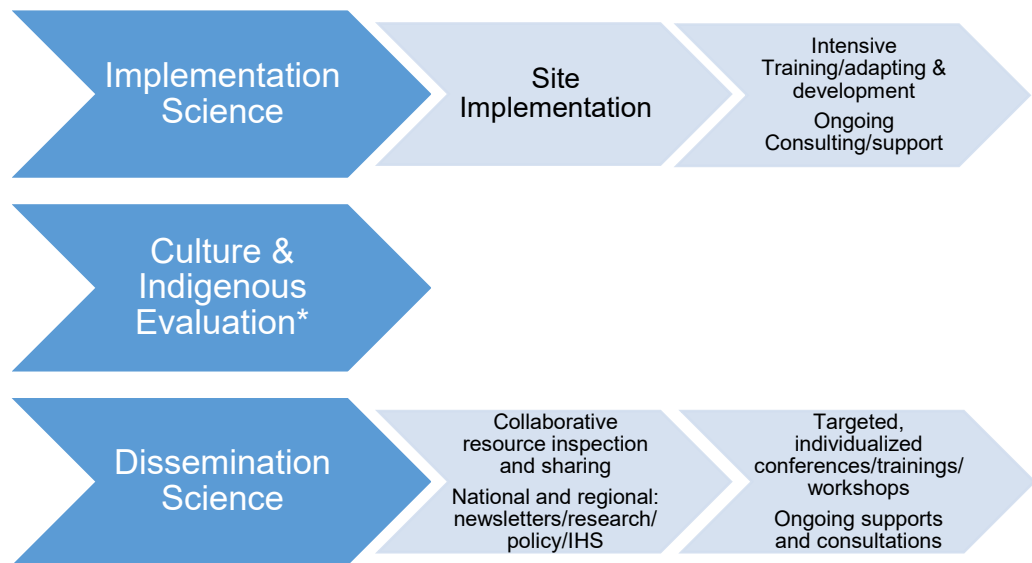stakeholders (Donovan et al., 2016).

Planned as a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project from the

beginning, Tribal governments obtained important access to the academic world because

of the significant work and relationship that Dr. Dennis Donovan from the University of

Washington had forged with the northwest Tribal communities (Donovan, et al. 2016).

After initiating a Tribal needs assessment, the partnership moved forward concerned with

how to address the community's ongoing substance use and abuse of each community's

youth (Thomas, et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2010). With a little over one thousand

citizens within each tribe of the original partnership, they are not too different from many

modern tribes in that they have over one-half of their members living off the reservation.

The CBPR originally formed a trustworthy and credible planning environment using a

Native Framework consisting of several unique and mandatory steps (LaVeaux &

Christopher, 2009). The planning group needed to gain access to a holistic and ethical

thought process in order to create a unique shared novel terminology and culture of

collaboration. The Suquamish staff entrusted by their Tribal Council began to gather and

instruct all of the stakeholder programs and services consistent with their mission to

collaborate effective health programming using their own culture, traditions and values.

The HOC created a community-empowered Indigenous framed curriculum

composed of community leaders, elders, CBPR partners and interested stakeholders from

the community, facilitated by the framework created by the Suquamish, University of

Washington Alcohol, Drug Abuse Institute (ADAI) and the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe (Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004). CBPR is a circular, re-iterative process (Chu, Huynh, & Area'n, 2012), which allows for adaptation from the original curriculum into any Tribal need or situation specific to that Tribe. After adoption by Tribes for use with a diversity of cultural integrations, a collaborative process follows the curriculum through adaptation, which identifies the markers and components necessary to have combinations of evidence-based intervention methods engaged within and surrounded by Indigenous science and philosophy.

*Figure 1.3*
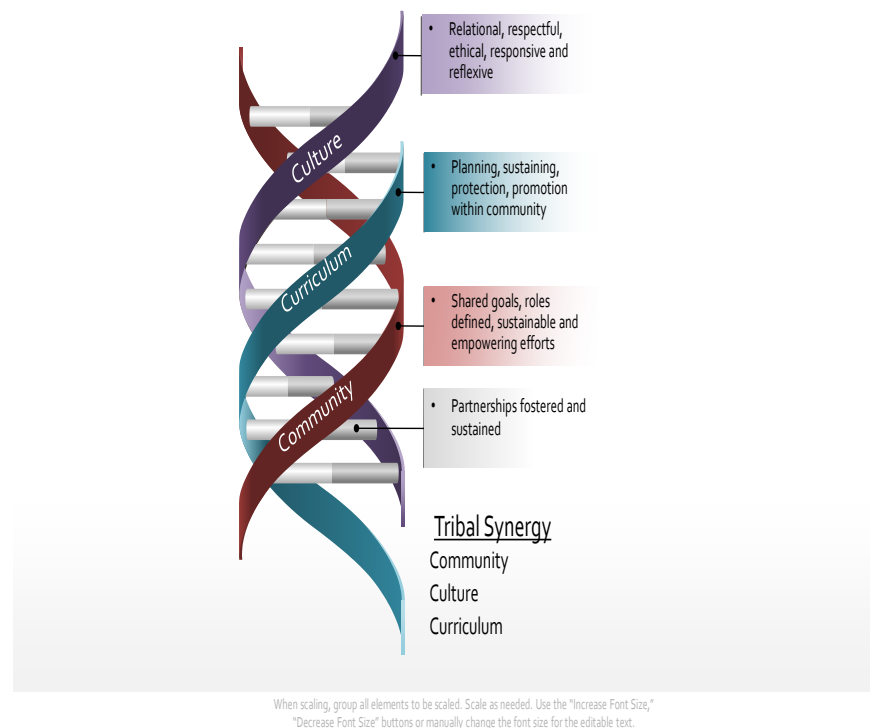
*Healing of the Canoe Implementation Framework*



Each community that 'adapts' the HOC curriculum to their culture or way of life ensures that the foundations of tradition can be the metaphor for what works within their own Tribal traditions. An adaptable curriculum engages some universality allowing for adaptability to interventions in many forms of cultures. I believe collaborative and

balanced methods of intersecting knowledge is both powerful and effective in the creation of sustainable interventions for youth empowerment. The use of evidence-based knowledge synthesized and paired within cultural foundations can be strategic as a strengthening mechanism that opens up possibilities leading to protection factors in building resilience.

Tribes that utilize some form of partnership approach need to establish a level trust and synergy required in the establishment and sustainment of empowering interventions especially using sensitive tools such as culture as the foundation. In a conversation with Vine Deloria, Jr. in 2000, he encouraged me to use my own thinking about how culture and building challenging relationships need to be essential parts to the Tribal action planning process. I believe methods begin and end with significant time initially spent on revealing a background among stakeholders providing a safe place for mutual language and trust creation. CBPR and Tribal Action Partnerships (TAP) that delay the desire to simply put the problems immediately on the table, have a better chance to create a more sustainable and effective path moving forward especially in situations with participation by individuals or groups with entirely different backgrounds. The respective synergy of the CBPR or TAP is reflective of the goals of each community to engage robust relationships with all stakeholders as in figure 1.4.

*Figure 1.4.*

Synergy of Culture, Curriculum and Community in a Tribal System



Culture

Curriculum

Community

- Relational, respectful, ethical, responsive and reflexive
- Planning, sustaining, protection, promotion within community
- Shared goals, roles defined, sustainable and empowering efforts
- Partnerships fostered and sustained

Tribal Synergy
Community
Culture
Curriculum

When scaling, group all elements to be scaled. Scale as needed. Use the "Increase Font Size," "Decrease Font Size" buttons or manually change the font size for the editable text.

Responsibility for the collaborative efforts in programming is one thing, but all sustainable synergies that have lasting volition should first have open and transparent understanding between different cultural and knowledge systems, necessary for beginning, and remaining on sustainable ground. In two projects that I created with Tribal elders spawned from conversations I had with Vine Deloria Jr., I discovered more times than not, everyone around the project table passionately shared goals to become involved with the project's concept and goals. Simply attending a meeting is not the primary objective to effective and sustainable action planning. It is however, most important to delay the customary reactionary attitudes to issues and problems until the group can get 'underneath' the scope of the problem and work out a deep understanding of each other's

culture, values, traditions, and ways of seeing things from behind the others respective

policies and practices. Everyone at the negotiating table needs to have a chance to tell

who they are, voice their stance, policy, procedures and values in order to create a feeling

of ownership for current conditions. Although this is a first step, it is the most important

step. I have found that without this step of the process playing out sufficiently,

sustainability cannot easily occur because actions and activities will not remain after the

funding stream, staffing and attention to them have gone away. After the stakeholders

share their own values, practices and goals, the imminent possibility of a new and unique

shared language emerges that the group will use to talk about directions and actions

moving forward. In my past work using this framework, a space is created for

stakeholders' empowerment by authentically sharing enough of their story to be

understood in a way that illuminates and educates everyone before any investment of

time and resources is made. The efficacy of this method was borne in one example by a

project's negotiations with the U.S. Forest Service on behalf of a community of Tribal

elders who were concerned with retention of traditional gathering places on federally

managed land from many unceded Tribal homelands. These original lands had been

under the management of the Federal government during the last century. At the time of

one such project, the U.S. Forest Service was also actively seeking qualified groups for

stewardship programs that could become a sustainable reality for the future. Neither

Tribal governments nor the U.S. government had seen the possibilities until everyone sat

at the negotiating table. With changing and restrained budgets of the 21$^{st}$ Century, more

and more government-funded programs are being outsourced or eliminated, and it is

natural to look at ways to get Tribes back to their homelands, even if only as stewards. Stewardship is a good place for Tribal communities to begin.

The use of CBPR practices that use cultural programming such as HOC are an example of promising practices we have for strengthening the use of adaptable, adoption and implementation of culturally relevant Native American interventions. Traditional knowledge in my own Tribe utilizes horse culture and stickball (an early relative of lacrosse that uses two short sticks), possible and effective as a canoe journey or virtually any culture, in promoting collaborations for adaptive, sustainable interventions for youth. Stickball teaches young people of all ages about their own culture while the game itself teaches teamwork, humility, discipline, perseverance, attention to detail, physical fitness and many other skills needed for healthy living (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, 2000). It is possible for all Tribal cultures to situate sustainable partnerships and unique models of interventions. CBPR and Tribal partnerships between academic and public health systems with Tribal wellness programs are prime examples of opportunities to engage in circular systems of care (Chu, Huynh & Area'n, 2012; Crooks, Snowshoe, Chiodo & Brunette-Debassige, 2013).  There is a need to become aware and be forthright in collaboration efforts with outside partners that can be easily forged together to do more effective work. The possibilities of synergetic relationships in culture-infused programs and activities coupled with evidence-based interventions can be important for successful individual, family, and community development. Voices from Tribal communities include experience that can grow from intra-actions between traditional culture and other identified external mechanisms of partners in youth interventions, such as universities, public health and private or corporate sponsors (Allen, et al., 2006).

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Native American communities want to ensure that culture and tradition can be positive and useful models of instruction for their vulnerable populations of youth along their pathway to adulthood. A modern necessity is that Tribes need to advance culture while balanced within a greater circle of dominant society. Intersectionality is an integral component in the approach to any community's needs to work out the road to wellbeing with enough agency to engage in sustainable growth (Dyck & Kearns, 1995).

Historically, Native peoples experienced genocidal oppression, social racism and discrimination that often has led to the mistrust and reticent social interaction with public health options today (BraveHeart, 1999). Attacks to self-determination and Tribal Sovereignty are not simply historical battles, instead is ongoing (Deloria & Lytle, 1989). Since the colonization of North America, land loss and genocide of Indigenous lifestyles, culture and language, there has been a great struggle for wellness especially by the youth who quest for a positive identity and a safe place to grow up. There are areas of concern and caution. Public health efforts aimed at the prevention of chronic illness do not address the needs of the entire U.S. population equally (Gone, 2011; Gone & Alcantra, 2013)). The U.S. government's 'one-size-fits-all' approach to health and wellness interventions has been problematic in effectiveness for marginalized and 'othered' populations, especially on rural, isolated reservations and Tribal communities (Gone, 2013; Goodkind, et al., 2015). Our modern healthcare system works fine for people who enjoy privilege and social comfort. Overall, the Native American population has shown great strides in health improvement in the last century; however, youth and young adults continue to lag behind their non-native peers on almost all health metrics including the incidence, prevalence, morbidity, and mortality rates (Indian Health Service, 2011). In

short, quality of life, and life expectancy itself begins from a place of extreme deficit in many Tribal communities, especially for many young people and families living in impoverished conditions. Negative outcomes are not etched in stone, as the U.S. government often suggests without offering any real help; social determinants often are among the strongest root foundations for many health disparities that are preventable in the most vulnerable communities (SAMHSA, 2011). Intergenerational trauma due to many relational elements of society has also contributed to the large numbers of negative health outcomes for Native peoples across the nation (BraveHeart, 1999; Myhra, 2011; Gone, 2013).

Do micro-aggression and forms of racism experienced by Native youth contribute to the health and wellness disparities? First, I have an issue with the word 'micro-aggression', as I see it as language generated from the oppressor, not the oppressed. There is nothing 'micro' about aggression and violence when it is happening to you. I believe the appropriate wording is 'overt' aggression and 'covert' aggression. Some of the violence perpetrated occurs in the open while some does not. Just because it is unseen does not mean the developing child does not experience trauma. It is sometimes challenging to assess negative impacts endured by the Native youth population, as the data is often gathered by non-Native individuals and analyzed in the Euro-American methodologies (Dickerson, Brown, and Klein, et al., 2019). When used alone, many western intervention methodologies do not easily or accurately establish connections between the health systems, and wellness outcomes for traditional Tribal communities (Dumont, 2014). Collaborative participation would appear to be essential to creating robust efficacious systems of care (Allen, Mohatt, Beehler & Rowe, 2014).

Today, much of the research done for benefit of Native Americans includes Tribal teams and staff who help consider how to integrate the deep and foundational elements significant for Tribes' use toward intervention programming (Allen, et al., 2006). Programs that include collaborative, culture-based efforts include such programs like the Healthy Hearts Across Generations funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, Yappalli Choctaw Road to Health, funded by the National Institute for Drug Abuse, Growing Our Students and Faculty, funded by the Native American Research Centers for Health, Indian Health Service, to name several. Other programs accomplished by Native research teams include those programs that serve as a training ground for staff and community while also being adept at giving a relevant cultural backdrop for the evidence-based intervention (Dixon, et al., 2007; Donovan, et al., 2015; Dumont, 2014). Such programs include, Healthy Survey for Two-Spirit Native Americans that was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, Indigenous Substance Abuse Medicines and Addictions Research Training (ISMART), funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse provide great opportunities for collaborative community research practice while achieving success with their wellness intervention efforts. Many programs have been modeled similarly to those found in the NIMH health disparities framework, as in figure 1.5.

*Figure 1.5*

## National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Framework

| | | Levels of Influence* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Individual** | **Interpersonal** | **Community** | **Societal** |
| **Domains of Influence** *(Over the Lifecourse)* | **Biological** | Biological Vulnerability and Mechanisms | Caregiver–Child Interaction Family Microbiome | Community Illness Exposure Herd Immunity | Sanitation Immunization Pathogen Exposure |
| | **Behavioral** | Health Behaviors Coping Strategies | Family Functioning School/Work Functioning | Community Functioning | Policies and Laws |
| | **Physical/Built Environment** | Personal Environment | Household Environment School/Work Environment | Community Environment Community Resources | Societal Structure |
| | **Sociocultural Environment** | Sociodemographics Limited English Cultural Identity Response to Discrimination | Social Networks Family/Peer Norms Interpersonal Discrimination | Community Norms Local Structural Discrimination | Social Norms Societal Structural Discrimination |
| | **Health Care System** | Insurance Coverage Health Literacy Treatment Preferences | Patient–Clinician Relationship Medical Decision-Making | Availability of Services Safety Net Services | Quality of Care Health Care Policies |
| **Health Outcomes** | | Individual Health | Family/ Organizational Health | Community Health | Population Health |

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2018
*Health Disparity Populations: Race/Ethnicity, Low SES, Rural, Sexual and Gender Minority
Other Fundamental Characteristics: Sex and Gender, Disability, Geographic Region

Sacred Journey Young Women's Wellness is the University Of Washington Aids Research Center's shining example of locally funded, robust research to community programming. The Native Youth Education Program provides Science, Technical, Engineering, and Math (STEM) curriculum resources while providing the program using culture of the particular local community, funded by the Gates Foundation.

The significance of creating interventions designed to improve the lives of Native youth using relationships with culture are not necessarily new for Tribal communities (Michell, 2009). These communities work well to have control of creative and legal aspects for most, if not all of their involvement in healthcare development. Adaptations

from Euro-American evidence-based curriculum that are not easily adapted for use within traditional frameworks has consequences for sustainment and efficacy (LaVeaux & Christopher, 2009). Programming framed with Indigenous ideologies; indeed pass through culture with each adapted context of curriculum, which provides learning about respect, relationship, responsibility, reasoning and reciprocity (Walker, et al., 2013). Indigenous or Native American interventions use cultural values and expressions of ethics that introduce reasons for positive life choices and decision-making youth desperately need, especially in troubled environments (Wagenaar & Perry, 1994; Whitbeck, 2006). Each intervention grounds itself in local knowledge of traditional philosophy that can be quite different in intensity and emphasis from one community to another. HOC uses Indigenous science and practice developed through thousands of years of Pacific Northwest canoe culture in how it meets the needs of instruction for youth (LaMarr & Marlatt, 2005). Adaptable interventions promise hope on proximal and distal protective or promotive factors to individuals, families and communities shared through mutual experience and peer influence (Trimble, 2001).

There are significant advantages in learning from the experiential views of Tribes that combine components of Euro-American science with Indigenous knowledge, culture, and tradition. This examination looks at HOC curriculum concepts of implementation science, community-based action collaborations situated within existing Tribal programs that engage youth and families with culture and traditional activities (LaMarr & Marlatt, 2005). I consider program administrators' curriculum adoption, adaptation and implementation parameters with each 'new' possible adaptation. Chapter III explains

how the interviews and qualitative narrative speaks to how each Tribal community resolved its unique challenges to adopting their desired choices and intervention strategy.

How do we capture experiences and perceptions about interventions created for adoption and implementation in Native communities using cultural integration to help do the work of youth empowerment? In reviewing the literature, I consider several categories linked to my research questions relating to the use of culture. I consider literature that falls into one of three categories of interest: 1). Culture-infused interventions created for at-risk youth by non-native researchers, 2). Culture-infused interventions created by non-Native researchers for Native youth, and 3). Native American researchers on interventions developed for Native youth and 4). Sovereignty and self-determination's importance on the cycle of life for youth, family, and communities. For the bulk this literature, I focus on the work specifically aimed at Native youth empowerment from a variety of sources that program within Tribal communities and utilize a culturally informed approach. Considering how differences in adaptations of activities and events are handled, certain ongoing programs may need further adaptation or even consider abandonment.

Sustainment of intervention programming partially hinges on the challenges for necessary adjustments needed for each adaptation. Reframing needs and training those adopters and implementers operate to ensure projects effectiveness and efficiency. This method of research can hopefully add to and inform other approaches that easily accommodate multiple knowledge systems derived from lived experiences. With ethics and respect prioritized, it is possible to ensure that the voices and experiences of Native peoples are intelligible and relevant. Accurate depictions and mechanisms of Native

science should be efficacious for all communities and youth, not just driven by the dominant culture's science and story, but the story of those who historically have been speaking from the margins (Cajete, 2000). Cajete (2000) suggests, "There is a precept of Native science for truth is not a fixed point, but rather an ever-ending point of balance, perpetually created and perpetually new" (p. 19). Further, "Native Science is based on the perception gained from using the entire body of our senses in direct participation with the natural world" (p. 2-3). There is a great need for additional research designed to evaluate novel ideas, especially those focusing on relationships with our natural world that looks to be responsive to the current and future needs of all people.

**Unique Community Partnerships.** In planning the CBPR, the partnership working through the efforts of the University of Washington's ADAI, developed by a National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) grant that would fit well with established goals of the group to address the health and wellness disparities that have grown within the Tribal youth populations (Donovan et al., 2016). The sharing of purposeful tasks are a cornerstone of CBPR and Tribal Academic Partnerships (TAP). Grant management, project leadership and team leadership remained synergized by the partnership and skillsets in a manner that was sustainable and effective. Developing a balanced and collaborative approach using multiple knowledge systems in the creation of youth interventions is a novel idea for many tribes (Lonczak et al., 2013). The HOC partnership entails the use of evidence-based Western science of cognitive and behavioral models of intervention coupled with the framework of Tribal programs involving culture, in this case, the canoe culture and all its historical and modern elements (Trimble, 1992). Interview questions probe for experiences of each participant, leading to the development

of grounded meaning from adults creating community-informed, culturally grounded youth empowerment interventions infusing Tribal culture as both prevention and intervention tools for Tribal youth development (Birks & Mills, 2015). What possible avenues of experiences occur in the success or failure using a community's individual culture as a grounding foundation? I hope to discover ways in which future research could engage a synergy of action using an Indigenous framework, disparate knowledge systems and CBPR.

## Study Contributions

The contribution of this study is the aim toward the Native American communities that continue to evolve, grow and promote their cultural integration, protection and sustainment of programs for youth. The intended audience and information is for people and support systems within Native American communities. I am a strong believer that if a strategy supports wellness for Native youth, it would also have enormous benefit for all youth, especially in mixed race communities. Indigenous knowledge may be just what is missing for all of us to incorporate to improve our most pressing issues. Specific to this inquiry, I draw upon the experiential information and memory of Tribal participants in ways that I hope challenge our normative ways of thinking about the potential conational dance of knowledge systems. This dissertation adds to promotion of the understanding of implementation science strategies in community participatory actions. I realize that I may have many dissenters to my opinions. While I have intended all along to create this work to add some sample of information and knowledge that can hopefully move Native American communities forward, I understand there may also be some trepidation or misunderstanding of my

thinking in application as assistance efforts. To paraphrase an idea that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013) wrote, "as a researcher, we train to conform to certain established models of Academia recognized primarily for their benefit. I have to meet this criteria as well as including some intelligibility with Indigenous thinking. My efforts may not be Indigenous, not friendly, or simply not just. I do believe that reconciling these views has been, and remains to be the most arduous task I have experienced doing this work" (p 8). Decolonizing methodologies is not concerned so much with techniques but much more about context in which research questions (problems) are conceptualized and designed, with its implications of research for participants and their communities (Smith, 2013). I submit similarly that decolonizing methods include that which is not afraid to be abstract or that which seeks to find partners with wildly disparate systems of knowing. Research and community work should be willing to synergize the seemingly incompatible ways of knowing and bridge together a new linguistic method, one that the entire community can learn to navigate, sustain and benefit from.

# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Life is determined by exploring and capturing lived experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Quality of life arises out of the sustainment of positive indeterminate experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Like the indeterminate tomatoes I grew this year, one could not predict where any of the vines would grow, but in nurturing their spirit of chaos, the yield was not less than robust. Much like looking at the horizon of possible experience lying in wait for every person, our experiences are surely indeterminate. The natural world is the horizon of all horizons. The style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, unity underlying disruptions of my personal and historical life (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Merleau-Ponty (1962) continues to tell us that experience is general and the pre-personal experience in my sensory functions are the definition of my body. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is the inspection of essences of perception, consciousness, memory and enlivened experience. Phenomenology is a methodology of rigorous science that accounts for experience as claims in time and space in the world as we live in it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Moustakas, 1994). The essence of any of the points I 'could' have in my experiences, are always changing, as the wave does for the surfer. The board and the surfer come to a new point in time and place on the wave, at any given moment of time, with indeterminate action and results every time a wave is ridden (which in many cases, is not ridden).

Experience has meaning and contains knowledge for many Indigenous people and cultures. Native people have long viewed experience as arriving in the form of knowledge about objects, events and places with all of the natural elements around us in

our environment at any given time. For Indigenous people, the foundation of many forms of knowledge connects with a particular place. Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggested that we are a significant part of nature and that nature appears not only as outside us, but also as objects throughout history as having to be central to the experience.

History plays a significant role in knowledge sharing. Before we can discuss places of experience, we should acknowledge an experience with place. For a Native person like myself, there is a somewhat hermeneutic circular existence between place and the reciprocal experience. I have often viewed science as I was taught in school as wrapped up in the work of defining interactions between concepts and methods, showing itself in experimentation only when enough assertion was produced. Ideology of western society prevails on the angular and linear road, often failing to see the reciprocity and relational circular dance that engages experience and historical knowledge. In a recent campus visit, Cornell West suggested, "it is most important to begin with the existential, the lived experience, before any measurement of quantification can make sense". Aspects of our world and the greater cosmos always lie just outside what we can quantify. Indigenous people often pursue forms of their own science, part of the complete metaphysical system that is not separated from their consciousness. This Native person may contemplate complimentary actions with the cosmic principles, not easily quantifiable by western science. Disparate knowledges can work together and their balance and interaction should be accepted as authentic, relevant and necessary. Experience teaches the lesson. If we pretend to know more, it is easy to lose touch with the valuable and simple rubric of the universe. No matter how much we attempt, we can find much difficulty in trying to control the wind or waves, produce rain or tame the natural world's forces.

**Advancing Community Enculturation**

Enculturation or acculturation commonly used terms in examining the amount and type of culture exposure that an individual, family, or community has adopted (Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995; Garrett and Pichette, 2000; Zimmerman, et al. 1996). Garrett and Pichette (2000) defined acculturation in the Native American community as the process of change that happens at some level as the result of the dominant and mainstream culture's effects on the community's behavior patterns, attitudes, and normative climate. Garrett (2000) and other scholars suggests five levels of acculturation in Native people:

1. Traditional—May or may not use English, but mostly think and act in the native ways, beliefs, while practicing only traditional spiritual customs and methods of worship.

2. Marginal—May speak English and a Native language, may or may not fully accept the traditional customs of the tribe, and feel free to identify with some mainstream culture.

3. Bi-cultural—A mostly very balanced and open thinking about two cultures and blending acceptance and practices of both cultures and behaviors.

4. Pan-native traditional—Assimilated Native Americans who have made a conscious choice to return to the culture and traditions of Native people, not necessarily of a particular tribe. Generally accepted by the mainstream society, they seek to fit in to the both worlds but enlist Native beliefs and practices of either their own tribal heritage or of any Native heritage and culture. Some may be multi-lingual; however many may only speak English.

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5. Assimilated—Accepted by dominate society and embraces only mainstream cultural values and behaviors.

A simple description of acculturation represents a general continuum in which a Native person may fall regarding how they feel about their Native identity (Garrett and Pichette, 2000). This is only a guide, and certainly not comprehensive of all situations that Native people find themselves in. Culture is ambiguous, but always present…before me lies a community with objects and spirit dwelling in the scenery and the mind (Damji, Clement, & Noels, 1996). Culture allows for the closeness of experience to arrive from anonymity of perception about culture (Coates, Gray & Hetherington, 2006). For many Native people, having positive community connections provides beneficial value in culture and the overall health promotion for youth not only as the ones who will carry on traditional skills and knowledge, but also as respected individuals who are closer to the spirit world and need guidance with much to learn about living in this world. Unfortunately, with colonialization's omnipotence in the societies of Tribal lifestyles during the tumultuous history of the United States, many elders left us without being able to share their wisdom and experience in cultural traditions to the next generations. A great amount of traditional knowledge has been lost within the past two centuries. With the loss of individuals who hold valuable knowledge, coupled with forces of genocide on Tribal communities, a double dose of reality has created a barrier in the environment where youth could benefit from positive relational experiences and knowledge. In addition, the more each Tribe engages in the non-native world, without a balance of internal cultural experience to hold as strength against these outside destructive forces, a community's overall wellness can take a negative turn, suffering additional negative

impact (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Elders have told me that disorders like diabetes, obesity and alcoholism originated from outsiders influencing their community, and has decimated health and wellness because linkages to traditional science and knowledge about how to live may have been lost, hopefully not forgotten. Some elders have told me that even seemingly, forgotten language or tradition for a time will survive in stories, memories and dreams. Language simply requires use to awaken. The old stories and songs are tales of language and traditions misplaced because of oppressive outside forces, eventually can be found in the desert wind or retrieved from the trees high in the mountains. In the same manner, knowledge remains accessible somewhere in the ceremonies, dreams and memories. Ethical relationships we form within the natural world can enlist any knowledge and information that is available for connection.

Tribes today work diligently to engage their own culture while learning skills and acquiring knowledge about the world in order to open up economic and social avenues without losing their sovereignty, balance and strength.  All of us live in this modern world together. Elders speak of disease as an inevitable consequence stemming from indulgence in outside culture coupled with their community's inability to create protective resistance to outcomes from negative influences. From the beginning, effects from colonization have led to large inequities with Tribal economy and individual wealth. Colonization has had a significant negative impact on Native American wellness. Early in organized economic development practices, Tribes staved off inequities using government and philanthropic grants wherever possible. In modern Tribal governments, the use of asset-based models of wealth acquisition have become increasingly more common. Unfortunately, with the addition of new methods to create growth, Tribes have

largely adopted these conventional approaches in their societies with the added disadvantage in the risk of losing balance or their hold on traditional practices. Even today, with casinos and other forms of gaming, all Tribes see challenges to becoming effectively balanced socially and economically. Many Tribes suffer from isolation and lack capacity in their own self-determination, with youth suffering the most due to prejudice and bigotry when engaging in the outside world. The wealthy Native American who gained their wealth from casinos is largely a myth. While there are several successful examples, most tribes do not have casinos, and those that do, often suffer from similar patterns and outcomes as prior to their newly found cash flow. Money sometimes only exacerbates problems. Tribes struggling to establish businesses and business plans need support and assistance. Challenges might include the need to use their cash flow and credit to operate their Tribal services and programs, with little left over. Simply stated, by itself, new wealth needs new visions and action to lessen problems, and rarely by itself completely fixes them. In addition, many communities, reservations and Rancherias are located away from large population areas, and have had difficulty in using their land for robust economic development. Those youth who grew up failing to engage in their own culture did so to remain shielded from outside violence, when they saw no other way to survive the aggression. The case for some youth is to try being anything but Native, or risk abuse and prejudice when engaging in the outside world. This was a common defense mechanism during my father's youth. Even when I was young, many of my peers socialized with other ethnic groups because those kids seem to suffer less prejudice and aggression than being in groups with Native friends. In addition, other experience during childhood, included parents steering them away from many things perceived about Native

culture thought perpetuating the violence and prejudice, especially the trauma many of our parents experienced in their generation. Over time, in many ways, our world improved from the work that our parents did to help pave the way for a less destructive environment. Today, we want a more equitable and inclusive environment for our own families, continuing the hope and dreams of our parents' generation. There are multiple implications in the creation of positive intervening efforts in how culture and tradition can improve lives of youth. What works in one case may not be possible in another. Every culture has unique features of complex extenuating social cues surrounding each person's relationship to their community and how experiences of traditional culture is perceived, either embraced as a benefit or as a distraction.

**Opportunities for Native Youth**

Some research suggests there are common elements that create complex combinations of negative outcomes in Native American populations in both rural and urban environments that ultimately place youth at-risk (Beauvais, 1992; Cummins, Ireland, & Blum, 1999; Barlow, et al. 2012). Despite complexities of Native society, several reviews consider multiple intervention strategies to increase hope for health and wellness empowerment in Native youth (Middlebrook, et al. 2001; Clifford et al. 2013). Research on substance abuse within Native communities on youth by Hawkins (2004) and Whitbeck (2012) explored rates of suicidal behavior and substance abuse as complex behaviors in youth. Whitbeck and Hawkins illustrate positive results using more culture-based, strength-based interventions. Allen (2011) suggests that dynamic design strategies improve the implementation and evaluation of prevention projects and the use of culture-informed program elements created in part by the community, offer the best chance for

positive innovation. Whitbeck (2012) notes two different intervention choices for prevention strategies within Tribal communities. The first happens with respect to use of local knowledge and practices, and the second, occurs with respect to the use of evidence-based clinical practices. The either/or relationship of our prevention coordination often works to demean, ignore, or diminish any success of implementation for youth programming (Clifford, Duran & Tsey, 2013). The HOC team found early in the foundation of planning curriculum that it would be possible to weave together quite different strategies and knowledge foundations engaging community support (Donovan, et al., 2015). Cultural interventions based in local knowledge of culture and tradition empowers balance primarily because of collaborations with outside stakeholders including university research teams willing to work alongside Tribal communities (Allen, et al. 2014). This is the same conclusion that I have from working with youth in all age groups within Native communities. Jernigan (2015) and her colleagues concluded that community-based collaborative interventions conducted with Native American populations working on major health disparities enjoyed success with adaptable curriculum guided by frameworks based on both community needs assessments and evidence based knowledge that addressing health outcome gaps for Tribal communities (Garrett & Garrett, 1998). Challenges and opportunities are present equally in the partnership setting. Benefits often include increased engagement and sustainment of effective programming beyond the scope of outside stakeholder funding and assistance (Jernigan et al., 2015).

There are challenges in cultural linkage promotion providing positive wellness outcomes in modern tribal communities. Programming with culture is not always seen the

same within each Tribe. It is sometimes difficult to obtain improvement in wellness based solely on Western socio-economic measures that respond with indifference to culture and ethics. Sometimes Tribes simply misplace important elements in their own form of wellbeing science. As an example, my own Tribe has forsaken many of its own traditional spiritual beliefs and ceremonies giving away power dynamics that include a community's acceptance and social domination of the religious practices of an oppressor. I am often befuddled by this trade-off of principles that is rooted with active pressure in efforts to colonize and assimilate. For myself, a Native American, trading our traditionally defined spaces that include an inseparable deep indigenous culture and spiritual knowledge that creates my sustainably healthy self-esteem is not a sovereign way of living. We are just now realizing what we have given up and are trying hard to regain our own deeper sense of knowledge about spiritual wellbeing than is offered by this outside influence. Native people comprehend their land and specific places as an integral part of the wisdom on wellness. Western experience regards land and the 'ownership' of land diametrically different from the Native viewpoint, often having little consideration for relationships with land and the environment as important placeholders of knowledge. Place and land are part of the basis for Indigenous knowledge and for passing science by lived experiences from family to family and generation to generation. Wellbeing for Native people claims a lineage to the ancestors' experiences linked to the place where their stories began.

**Native 'enough'**. Identity arises from culture. Culture arises from history. History teaches us about the spirituality of wellbeing, especially in reciprocal relationships with all parts of nature. Since the beginning of settler colonization, Tribes have been

challenged by Federal policy influencing all forms of Native 'identity'. In 2003, The

Salish and Kootenai experienced increased concern about policies pertaining to lineal

descent as criteria for citizenship (Puisto, 2009). If the Tribe "dilutes" Indian identity by

accepting new members with low Indian blood quanta, government policy may attempt to

come up with ways to intervene. Tribal members did not talk about termination as it

directly threatened them in the mid-twentieth century, but the fear of losing their

remaining lands and their sovereignty were very real (Morales et al., 2016). Federal

policy has always favored making the decision for Tribes on who is 'Indian' enough to

called Native American. My own Tribe has a strong Sovereign policy on the issue. By

eliminating the blood quantum mandate of Federal Government policy, the Choctaw

Nation has always used lineal descent without requirements for blood quanta as the

measurement of what it means to be Choctaw. By using lineal descent as the tool to

decide 'citizenship' in the Tribe, there is very little chance that as a Nation, through inter-

marriage, or otherwise the Nation will be extinguished from existence. For my Tribe and

others like it, one has to prove to be a descendent through birth and death certificates that

document ancestry to known Choctaws from the Dawes Roll or other Tribal

documentation. There are citizens of my Tribe, as I am sure in other Tribes that truly

believe they can never be Indian enough. People who consider themselves full bloods (or

close to it), challenge the continuation of sovereign sustainment for Tribal communities

by insisting on blood quanta as the real measure of being 'Indian'. For other Native

people, blood quantum policy is just another Federal device to promote genocide of

Native Americans. Erasure and assimilation efforts of our government and other

governments in foreign countries have a long and powerful colonizing history. Even

today, individuals who continue to enthusiastically identify with culture and participate in traditions have higher rates of discrimination from non-natives, especially in urban areas. Tribes themselves are not immune to discrimination against their own people. Harman (2017) offers data from selected Native American communities that suggest discrimination contributes to higher rates of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Ethnic pride stemming from cultural identification leads to higher rates of self-esteem when depression and forms of discrimination are not present (Harman, 2017).

**Western Research on Native Youth**

Much of the research literature involving cultural interventions focus on youth, however not specifically Native American youth. Smith (2012) raises the issue of 'insider-outsider' viewpoints in research about Indigenous people. Often, according to Native American communities, research is perceived as being done by the outsider for the 'benefit' of a community and is based on values in a western method of inquiry (Brayboy, Bryan & Deyhle, 2000). Recent advances in research have provided the insider more acceptable terms of research ownership and participation. Critiques of participatory research models lead to questions about the existence of validity and reliability in findings from those who utilize culture-based interventions (Pace, et al., 2006; Whitbeck, 2006). The Native American research insider often voices concerns about reflexivity in response to research questions that may evade constituent outsiders. For example, insiders have to live with their consequences and involvement with the how the data informs our actions. Relationships and collaborative efforts in gathering data should include equitable use of knowledge systems from all stakeholders in order to remain in what has been termed 'lines of relating' (Smith, 2012). This is not an easy, black and

white formula. For example, being considered an insider in one particular context does not make someone an insider in all contexts. Thus, data gathered by insiders are outsiders in cases where there is no understanding or contact with relational knowledge. Even as a Native person, where I have no relation, connection or understanding, I am an outsider. We should be aware of where the observation takes place, with whom, and with the value of their 'voice' on the matter. For collaborative efforts such as community-based participation research (CBPR) and tribal action partnerships (TAP), understanding what is said is as important as why and where these voices arise, with each particular question asked (Edwards, et al., 2000). Smith (2012) suggests that researchers attempt to find answers to problems in front of them and eliminate irrelevant criteria as 'not useful', 'not Indian enough', 'not friendly' or simply, not useful. An Indigenous research project, especially a collaborative one, challenges the researcher on many levels who need to consider work across many boundaries. The challenge is to remain authentic and ethical while providing a focus and practical direction within the collaborative community responsible for the sharing of the final design.

Research acknowledges positive results stemming from inclusion of culture and traditional activities as protective factors in Native youth for promoting wellbeing (Henson, et al., 2017). Despite findings such as this, these researchers also found that over 90% of research was by non-Native writers and did not focus on the significance of self-identity or culture as a protective factor. Henson et al. (2017) additionally found efficacy when research focused on inclusion of culture as a promoting factor in Native American youth wellbeing. There is a point where contemporary non-Native prescriptions for Native culture-based interventions sometimes go wrong. A concern for

quick integration of programs often lacks establishing necessary balance within Tribal communities. This suggests that there may be difficulty in finding the place where culture can also meet with prescription to meet the needs of community. The history of Tribes battling colonization in health and education revolves around the resistance of the destructive forces in dominating and oppressive forces, rather than focusing on the self-determined growth without the disease of societal indulgent behavior. Native culture and traditional lifestyles are powerful mitigating forces against the diseases of an indulgent society. Although difficult to mitigate, acknowledging the existence and reality of our inside and outside world allows youth to be realistic about their personal decisions. The idea is to retain an ethical balance while retaining a community wellness for young people who require a safe and sane way to travel the road to personal, family and community success. Sometimes holistic Native American scientific methods follow closely the work of Western science in techniques and programs in the promotion of wellness for youth. There are similarities in metaphysics with interactions across the two or more disparate knowledge systems that might not be similar in language use, but are in depth of content. Physical (Do), mental (think), emotional (feel) and spiritual (believe) conditions correspond to balance for wellness and the journey to wellness in both western and Indigenous philosophies (Brown et al., 2016). Brown (2016) suggests that personal attributes require responsibility and commitment for fulfillment and efficacy, especially in youth programming using adapted component parts from disparate knowledge systems.  Resilience and protective factors are both resultant strengths that come out of the challenging work done to secure health and wellness (Belcourt-Ditloff, 2006).

Using culture within prevention strategies both promote and protect the culture and its youth. Native American interventions are usually problem focused and practical, aimed at including multiple levels of individual, family and community, and are inherently strength-based having relevance for each unique tradition and culture. The Indigenous science and philosophy of prevention and intervention practices are gaining attention in mainstream society, not just in the Tribal communities where they have significant importance to wellbeing (Cajete, 2000; Barrera, Castro, Strycker & Toober, 2013; Dumont, 2014). Localized knowledge carries better results for all age groups and genders (Brown, et al., 2016). Novins (2004) suggested that Native healing practices delivered in combination with Western medicine were equally effective for Natives seeking assistance. Despite the Novins (2004) findings, which used a large research sample, few studies exist where Native researchers or healers are willing to talk about their work. Because of sensitive Tribal belief systems and traditions, one does not speak or write of such traditional ceremonies and certain systems of care. The situation is very real, due to the historical misappropriation, corruption and commercialization of Indigenous ideas, practices and products that accumulated without permission. Because of these concerns, with or without merit, much of the knowledge that could provide mutual benefits are not easily shared outside of the Native community.

For researchers and academics like myself, it would be appropriate to find a holistic and ethical way of doing research and science that has meaning, without the disruption or violence to the traditions of any particular people or community. Ethical research models and intentions could strategically assist Tribes turn to action with care for consequences in having situational goal-directed targets within represented

populations. In synthesizing the literature, I surmise that, at least two processes appear to be partially responsible for the increased success for intended implementations, (a) heightened accessibility of the intervention, and (b) a strengthened association between the intervention and the community support of such work.

**Native American Researchers**

I begin by acknowledging all the significant Indigenous academics, scholars and writers, including individuals from around the world that elude being mentioned or cited in this paper. By no means is this inquiry exhaustive of the work being done for the benefit of Native youth. What I do include are works that I feel consider interesting strategies that Tribes could adopt for adaptive models of interventions. Topics of healing and ethical intervention methods are deeply important and ingrained in many Native American populations (Cajicuwa, Good, & Ritchie, 1997; Kiyanni & Csordas, 1997; Lowery, 1990; Marjorne, 1994; Graham, 2002 and Johnson, 2002). Native healing studies are rare because Native people are reticent in discussing them due to their inherent ceremonial ties to knowledge (Gone, 2011). Blane (2000) investigated Pawnee structure and substance for interventions that follow eons of time proven spiritual healing especially for youth. Gurley (2001), and Novins (2004) sought to understand how the Euro-American field of medicine compared with Native American healing methods, which they suggested were seen by Natives as parallel to any concept that the modern world would see as 'medicinal'. Gurley's (2001) investigations using at a large Native American study sample covered an area from the Plains to the Southwest. Gurley (2001) found that in each location where availability to traditional medicine and Western medicine both existed, choices of traditional medicine prevailed. From a Native

American point of view, which emphasizes the value of communicating respect through silence and the importance of nonverbal communication, this sometimes counters American cultural norms (Scholl, 2006).. This study suggests that schools that promote an awareness of multiculturalism can be positive for youth in their adoption of identity and culture (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). Attempts to determine the relationship between ethno-cultural identity and substance use among middle school students in rural Hawaii by understanding the ways in which Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian youth may differ with respect to ethno-cultural identity as a risk or protective factor in substance use (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). Indigenous community participation in holistic youth interventions can have important relationships to culture within each community (Allen, et al., 2006). For example, in Juneau Alaska, the Goldbelt Heritage Foundation established a partnership of community stakeholders that include the public health system, local schools, community leaders and the tribe to offer many supportive activities for youth (Mohatt, et al., 2011). The Tlingit people and culture have been foundational to this project and have included support and assistance to the schools for core subjects, a Tlingit language program (including an app used on cellphones), oral tradition narratives and a 'Healing with the Totem" program. This program uses totem building to build cultural awareness while skills are learned, ensuring the passing down of traditional knowledge to the youth. Youth empowerment, identity enhancement, resilience, protective factors and skills are all assets of this type of program. Although it is challenging, it is becoming more hopeful to find culturally relevant options among programs adequate for use in interventions for minority youth, especially for isolated populations such as some Native Hawaiian and

Pacific Islander adolescents (Durand, Cook, Konishi, & Nigg, 2016; Edwards, Giroux, & Okamoto, 2010; Lauricella, Valdez, Okamoto, Helm, & Zaremba, 2016).

During the last century, Native American communities have increasingly been working toward the concept and practice of reclaiming lost ethnic identity, from elders, and language revitalization (Red Horse, 1990; Nagel, 1996). Principal among the reasons for this is the belief that for Indian people of all ages, a positive view of their ethnicity and a strong identification with one or more cultural groups serve as protective factors for a host of undesirable outcomes such as substance abuse and addiction (LaFromboise & Rowe, 1983; Phinney, 1990). Community-based models of interaction and programming for Native youth, perceptions of cultural connectedness awareness by youth engaged in cultural activities are effective in the creation of protective elements including reasons for living and community involvement (Mohatt, Ching Ting Fok, Burket, Henry and Allen, 2011; Henson, Sabo, Trujillo, and Teufel-Shone, 2016; Schweinitz, Nation DeCou, and Stewart, 2017). Lauricella (2016) and colleagues found in looking closely at the efficacy of culturally grounded prevention programming, almost one-half were using some form of community-based participation strategy. These researchers also suggest that community collaboration among stakeholders was more effective and prolific than focus groups (used about 1/3 of the time), and some form of collaboration with local organizations and stakeholders (together, about 1/3 of the time Lauricella, 2016).

**Diversity.** There is a great deal of ethnic diversity in a single tribal community. The merging of ethnicities intensified during the past several centuries due to pressures of political and social colonization by the dominant society. High rates of intertribal and interracial marriages have resulted in many Native American people affiliating (but not

enrolling) with more than one tribe and/or being of mixed blood lineage. Finally, most Native Americans live in two worlds, their own ethnic community and the dominant culture or community. A large percentage of Tribal members today live in urban centers away from reservations and rural communities. Valentine (1971) looked at ethnic minority groups' exposure to dominant cultural influences by mainstream institutions, including the mass media, advertising, public schooling, national holidays, and national heroes. The process of developing more than one identity refers to dual socialization and is a concept of enculturation experience within an individual's own cultural group (Garrett, & Pichette, 2000; Zimmerman, et al., 1996). Because the majority of Native Americans live in non-reservation settings and interact day-to-day with the non-Native or dominant society, it is likely that many Native American people identify to some extent with both worlds (Moran et al, 1999). Even though their study includes a small sample, Moran (1999) suggested that via this exploratory study of seven urban American Indians, they were able to achieve a strong Native identity and may be an important process beyond childhood for individuals during young adulthood (their 20s and 30s). Moran's research suggests strong cultural identification in rural Native youth is seen as significantly higher but may not be protective for depression and anxiety. However, in urban youth who actively pursue their culture, it can be significantly more protective against the non-native peer negative influences that lead to negative behavior outcomes. Other research findings suggest there is a significant relation between cultural activities and the enhancement of self-esteem and identity for urban youth that is not seen to be significant in rural more isolated youth on reservations (Schweigman, Soto, Wright, & Unger, 2011).

**Sovereignty of Research**

I define Native American sovereignty as the complete legal self-reliance and legal and political jurisdiction to perform any beneficial actions within the legal boundaries of a Tribe for the health, economic, and cultural aspects of the community. Sovereignty includes sustainment, protection, promotion and reliance on all culture and traditions deemed necessary for the preservation, promotion and protection of the citizenry's self-determination in perpetuity. It is a challenge to drive forward the Indigenous knowledge methodologies that are historically rooted in the histories and survival of Native people and their cultural way of life from the eyes of a Native person working within the research community. Doing pragmatic science that makes sense is a self-determined way to control one's destiny, especially in work that would be productive to address wellness goals in any community. Promising practices in Native research should accommodate Indigenous science in synergy with all science in the analysis of what works retaining an intelligible product that adds knowledge to the mainstream scientific community. Parallel and collaborative efforts to engage in production of knowledge can be effective with proper understanding and ethical relationships being beneficiaries of the work. L.T. Smith (2012) suggests in "Decolonizing Methodologies" there are several effective methods for Native research that provide for research platforms of success, including the use of disparate collaborative partnerships. Smith's examples of Indigenous science methodologies are not set in stone and to the Native mind have a natural feel. Indigenous research methods are ethical and relational, flexible and accommodating, while retaining the ability to provide empirical results without losing their spiritual nature.  My strategy entails obtaining experiential narratives that provide insight into the root of a question,

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have relation to the inquiry, and allow me to drive out any meaning about intentions and memories that offer solutions or benefit for each community, family and individual. I attempt to extract a mixture of rich knowledge and memories of experience without disparaging any one thought or decision as long as it contains the essence of meaning and fits the goals of the project. I use methods that are intelligible to both community advocates and researchers which would allow access to information that has ethical balance and intention. It is my hope that more research and inquiry promotes adaptable interventions which can become promising Tribal and evidence-based practices.

Tribal interventions do not always work in their original iteration, thus would require additional treatment or adjustment. Sovereignty and self-determination create the atmosphere for unique packages for Tribes to secure the best fit for any intervention, whether it is traditional or of Western origin. Many intervention programs require multiple adaptations in order to implement in ways that have fidelity and are culturally relevant for each Tribal community. Participation in the sweat lodge can provide a deeply moving and truly spiritual experience that reports enhancing wellness with physical, mental, and spiritual benefits. As Colmant and Merta (1999) described, "the sweat ceremony requires mental and physical fortitude, bringing with it a strong sense of physical, emotional and spiritual accomplishment, thus providing an ideal vehicle for those who want to commit to change". The intent of sweats is to restore the common bond between the spiritual and practical nature for wholeness and harmony beyond the ceremony (Schiff & Pelech, 2007). It is cathartic and cleansing. Though specific to certain tribal traditions in terms of origin, the ceremony and variations thereof have found their way into many forms of wellness practice, both in tribal ceremony and

contemporary therapeutic practice. Native and non-Native traditionalists approach the ceremony as a means for cleansing of body, mind, and spirit through a natural method intended to ensure wellness through harmony and balance with the relational and natural/environmental circles that surround us. An integral purpose of traditional ceremony is to provide a way for people to get back to the power of things, to receive and create an openness of spirit that makes life the growing, interconnected experience (Garrett et al., 2011).

The most intriguing finding was antithetical to the traditional understanding of the relationship between attitudes and behavioral outcomes (Lucero, 2010). Residing most of my life in urban settings, being Native does not necessarily predict identification with traditional cultural behaviors. Lucero (2010) suggests that one can hold very negative attitudes about oneself as an Indian and toward Indians as a group, yet when called upon, in some parts of their lives, maintain customs and norms that reflect identification with their own culture. Lucero (2010) also discusses this conceptual paradox to help explain the inconsistent findings in the studies in which only self-identification or acculturation measures utilized independent of attitudinal measures of identity. This may also offer some clues as to how Indians have survived the colonizing experience in urban environments. As for my father and his peers, there is sometimes what I call the chameleon effect. Having a dual ethnicity myself, I can relate to always having some connection to my cultural background and history, while also weighing the decisions to wear them either on my sleeves or under my jacket. Further limitations from a tribal standpoint suggest there are variations between the urban and rural Native youth as it pertains to how identity through the activity in cultural events protects from negative

health and behavior outcomes. This is a concern for adaptations of interventions based on a particular cultural method if it has no bearing or relevance within the traditions of a Tribe, partially explaining why some traditional instruction may not resonate with youth. Tribes should be cognizant that they are not doing anything wrong. Instead, Tribal programs working with youth who realize there is a more complex array of social and environmental structures underneath. An example might include urban youth who have different cultural activations than their rural peers living on the reservation and who have a different set of peer expectations from non-native friends that also plays a role in how each Native adolescent feels pressure to fit in (Lucero, 2010). Conflicted youth seem to have much higher rates of depression and low self-esteem (Brown, Dickerson, & D'Amico, 2016b).

Culturally infused interventions that integrate unique and holistic disparate knowledge systems have the ability to enhance programs and research on a number of points. First, the community and stakeholders hold knowledge and can back the project engaging in trusting and collaborative goals. Second, giving voice and recognition that is ethical and collaborative provide diverse, unique knowledge systems with goals from deeper thoughts, allowing new discoveries and eventual sustainment. Third, participation with stakeholders that are adept at securing each intervention's grounding in evidence-based information is able to advance with directions from community cultures and traditions for connection and practicality with youth who want to understand their culture. Youth who may need supports for their own positive development are also able to engage in development of their own identity thorough cultural education from their own communities. Altogether, there is need for further quantitative and qualitative

inquiry to decipher the significance in the use of culture as protective and preventative

barriers to the waves and destructive elements in the development of healthy young

people

**Understanding Indigenous Knowledge**

Native American science and philosophy are the foundation of knowledge and

wisdom for tribes. Support, protection, mentoring and instruction from cultural

experience is often the connection for young people who do not have many other

protective factors within their environment. For many Native Americans, Indigenous

Knowledge (IK) ontologically presents keys to the world foundationally in a pool as wide

and deep as the cosmos itself. Indigenous ontologies entail all that we know and do not

know, all that we are, and all that we can or cannot be (Deloria, 1994). Epistemologies

include all within our belief systems and our axiological knowledge are those that we

value (Deloria, 1999). As a Native person, I use my mind, body and spirit to access

information sent through dreams, memories, relationships and stories of experiences from

the ancestors. IK involves all interactions and intra-actions of humans with each other

and with all other life and non-life forms. The ethics of responding to any action and

reaction may follow a reciprocal path or it may find hardship to follow a cursory

pathway. Ethics, especially for Native cultures, is about mattering, according to Barad,

(2007) "about taking account of the entangled materialization of which we are a part,

including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities; even the smallest

'cuts' matter" (p. 384). Barad continues, "We (not only us humans) are always already

responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled, not through conscious

intent but through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails. What is

on the other side of the agential cut is not separate from us; agential separability is not individuation. Ethics is therefore not about the right response to the other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively rationalities of becoming of which are all a part" (p. 393).

Culture used as a tool for wellbeing embeds in the fabric of ethical movement in healthy community transactions. For many Native people, culture moves through time and space and has linkages to places and people (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, & Coulthard, 2014). I do not consider culture as static as this is not reality. Our diversity is the strength through change mechanisms that remain today in the struggle against the wave of overwhelming oppressive forces against many of our cultures. As the Sami people reveal, the relationships and experience between human and non-humans circumvent Euro-western scientific practice (Haetta & Gurholt, 1996; Lanto, 2010). According to Neils Bohr, the physicist, the world's effervescence, its creativeness can never be contained or suspended. Agency, as the experience from agential relations never ends…it can never run out (Barad, 2007). Intra-action and interaction leads to every possibility and to no possibility, what is possible and what is impossible; experience is constraining but not determining (Barad, 2007). Experience and the potential for what entails our possibilities do not sit still. These components seen as spiritual for Native people are also mechanisms of action as a researcher searching for tools in the evaluation of intervention efficacy. Interventions that are adapted from curriculum such as Healing of the Canoe contain an Indigenous framework for youth that guides the process (Donovan, 2016):

1. Medicine Wheel – Canoe journey or any cultural component used as a 'metaphor' for the interventions contains teachings around the circle of life in the arduous journey we undertake. Life's journey requires courage, stamina, strength, determination, spirit, and character while using the balance of mind, emotion, body and belief.

2. Begin at the center – Integrity, awareness of self and balance, are the goals of harnessing the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional processes of our beings.

3. Community teachers – Elders, leaders, even youth of positive instruction and knowledge are able to generate opportunities for learning for youth using culture and traditional knowledge.

4. Quest – Goal setting knowledge. Learning skills and the importance of how to use coping strategies in order to avoid barriers and obstacles in the pathway to growth. An example of this is the Vision Quest, a ceremony of youth guided by elders that allows for the formation of life choices based on skills and ambitions.

5. Overcoming barriers – Leaning to solve problems, think and extrapolate that includes decision-making skills and techniques.

6. Communication – Listening skills, expressing thoughts and feelings in accurate, non-confrontational ways, including assertiveness and refusal techniques that aid in peer interactions.

7. Moods, coping, emotions and mindfulness – How to deal effectively with depression, suicidal ideation, and other emotions. Learning to self-regulate by attending to tasks without distraction of negative elements.

8. Strengthen body and spirit – Learning about the effects and patterns of negative influences such as substance abuse, addiction and consequences. Perception and expectancies of personal, professional development in positive ways to develop growth and long-term success.

Spiritual beliefs an individual young Native American may have depend on many factors, including how much exposure and adaptation to their culture are experienced. These families and youth have various capacities and levels of acculturation including, very traditional, marginal traditional, bi-cultural, assimilated, pan-Indian, or simply non-traditional. Factors for someone's identity might include familial location, their family structure, any religious influence or tribal knowledge. Garrett (2014) outline some basic beliefs that characterize traditional Native experience and crosses tribal boundaries or is pan-tribal, include:

1. There is a single plane of higher energy known as the Creator or Great Spirit. This is a non-human, genderless explanation of the cosmos power for all living and non-living things. Native peoples understand many levels of spiritual energies that fit within this framework of their cosmos.

2. Flora, Fauna and all non-living things have a part in the spirit world. The spirit world exists and functions in synergy with the physical world. The energy or spirit exists before and beyond the simple lifespan of any person or thing.

3. Humans exist as having a body, mind, soul and spirit. All parts of any lifeform have interconnected experiences, therefore any part that is suffering illness affects other parts of the spirit, including affecting the body, mind, soul or spirit of the inflicted.

4. Wellness is an experience of balance and harmony due to transactions of ethical reciprocity with all other physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional elements around them regardless of the characteristics of that thing or being. Illness is the lack of access to that positive energy or imbalance with that.

5. Illness is unbalance with wellness by violations of sacred social or natural law of the cosmos, and by consistent imbalance with the cultural ceremony and social or physical behavior that leads to further imbalance. An example is substance abuse leading to addiction.

6. Unnatural imbalance with wellness by actions and volition in conjuring with negative or destructive intentions. An example is criminal behavior.

7. Each person is responsible for their own wellness by maintaining attention to self, relations, environment and the universe around each of us.

Native American wellness springs out of the spirituality that surrounds our entire lives. Each day, many Native Americans make our own personal acknowledgement to the *seven directions*:

1. East-represents the mind and the thought processes that inform our journey each day. Eastern directions are indications of new beginnings, the new day and is accessed as knowledge only when it is in balance with harmony of all the directions in our lives. Many Native people build homes that position doors to open to the east to greet the new day. I start my day by taking a run heading east to clear my thoughts as the day begins.

2. South-Represents the soul and the emotions of how we operate. The southern direction gives us awareness of the energy to inform our day-to-day decisions when we have balance and harmony to help regulate our intentions.

3. West-Represents the spirit and spiritual connections in our lives. The western direction represents wisdom and connection to our life experiences including how well we pass that on to our relations.

4. North-Represents the body and our plane with the Earth, consisting of elements in our world including the plants, animals, winged, finned, ones that crawl are examples. This direction shows us that all things around us are equally valuable and important for balance.

5. Sky-Represents the Native American traditional spirituality of knowledge and understanding and provides us with awareness of the cosmos, the ethereal, referring to that which we cannot see. This is the direction of that which is not fully understood but we know to be true through experience and stories of our past and utilize this knowledge to live with balance and harmony in a 'good way'.

6. Below-Represents our relationship with the planet, our home. This includes our connection with the elements: earth, wind, fire and water.

7. All around us-Represents our awareness of ourselves within all the scope of the larger environment around everyone. It represents our sense of personal space and grounding from experiences of our past, present and future possibilities. It represents our self-determination and self-actualization (adapted from Garrett, 2002).

By implementing, restoring and protecting culture, Native tribes benefit holistic wellness outcomes, especially for youth, such as:

"Recognizing the need to protect their language. Teaching techniques that stress traditional cultural characteristics and interactions, and are in line with traditional culture and ways of knowing and learning. Programming and curriculum that grounds itself in culture and recognizes the spirituality as well as the skill acquisition involved. Strong community participation requires ethical relevance in daily living founded by principles of social values within the community" (Hawkins, 2012).

Protection and restoration of cultural community practices leads to collective synergy within the scope of all tribal activities and work to alleviate the underlying perceptions that lead to erasure and marginalization of Native social, economic and political infrastructure. In a sense, it works to create a strong cultural community and creates a revolutionary environment that supports sovereign, self-determined actions to remain able to break down abstract and overt discrimination. A revolutionary critical stance is a creative process involving the building of coalitions of culture and tradition in order to politicize and protect resources or the identity of a Tribal community. Individuals in the mainstream society who have not had to live in the margins do not easily understand protection of political sovereignty. Euro-western ways are not always cognizant of other forms of knowing that include other metaphysical foundations that provide for healthy individuals and communities. For example, in the dominant society, to be an elder, simply means that you are over a certain age, and this gives you the ability to get certain discounts and services or programs available to this population. To be a Native elder is

not the same as in western communities. You are more than a senior citizen when you become an elder. For Native communities that exist on a culture of integrity, advancing age comes with an increase in sacred obligations to family, clan and the larger community. Elders have, and pass on the wisdom, experience and knowledge of their own lives to youth through the forces of their ancestors. Native connection and traditions cherish the lives of youth not only as the ones who will carry passed on knowledge, but also as respected individuals who still are closer to the spirit world and are guided with much to learn about living in this world.

There are many reasons to understand how to use Indigenous knowledge with Native American youth interventions. Examples include how Native peoples acknowledge their sacred relationship to land, beyond the physical places that Reservations end up as 'home' for Tribes. The relationship to land on which all relations, ancestors and culture have experienced is the foundation of Indigenous philosophy and science (Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox & Coulthard, 2014). Instead of denying any dimension of our spiritual lives, we should understand how additional component parts have transcendent meaning. Sacred sites are those that have connections and higher spiritual power experienced by people over time and include manifestations that enable us to focus these stories on the specific forms of information relational in our lives. Sacred places are structural foundations for beliefs, relationships and positions that represent the presence of other life and non-life for us as Native people. Sacred teaching informs us that we are not the center of anything or omnipotent to nature and that we have the responsibility to understand how to respond to the natural world in order to transcend our own personal desires and needs. This is the lesson that instructs each generation's integration into all

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healing and interventions. This knowledge is foundational to what I (and many others) call Indigenous science and supports certain parameters for wellbeing, including:

- Primarily a tool for learning and skill building, experience with spiritual knowledge expands awareness of political, cultural and intellectual wellbeing.

- Knowledge about spiritual culture expands understanding and analysis of colonization and oppressive forces.

- Informed by critical theories of learning, the installation of culture can deepen understanding culture by engagement with revolutionary praxis.

- Education about colonization and its roots articulated as some portion of society's efforts to destroy sovereignty and ethics. In this sense, education about colonization makes no claim to being neutral but rather engages methods of analysis and social inquiry that opposes capitalist-imperialist aims of un-checked competition, accumulation, and exploitation, and genocide.

- Spirituality that invests in both democracy and Indigenous sovereignty which are defined as the right of a people to exist politically with the ability to make chosen gifts of its culture to the world, adamant on not giving up its traditions, identity and power with the land.

- Cultural programming that cultivates collective agency, aiming to build traditional solidarity among the community committed to imagining a sovereign place free from imperialist exploitation and oppressive forces.

- Having goals of holistic wellness, not just for the future, but one that is linked to the past, trusting the beliefs and traditions of the ancestors, the power of knowledge, giving possibilities to new avenues to understandings. Chief Seattle

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said, "We have not woven the web of life, we are one thread within it. All that we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things are connected".

**Self-Determination**

Self-determination works best when the tools of sovereignty run bright in Native American communities. It is important to understand that the foundation of any self-determined efforts to protect cultural and traditional elements of Native society contain a very traumatic past that each tribe has had in their relationship with the United States Government. I also contend that Sovereignty is paramount to the self-determined success of sustainable economic and social welfare for future Native American communities. Understanding the historical and current significance of Tribal sovereignty is a first step in considering any effort towards positive intervention on behalf of Tribal communities. Development and strengthening First Nations Sovereignty and self-determination has been one of the main strategies in Tribal decolonization efforts. What I have seen in my life is that colonizing effects have led to un-necessary and un-wanted cultural disintegration and unapologetic appropriation of Indigenous knowledge. Without self-determination, there can be no true sovereign stance under the umbrella of another dominant government. What some call a sovereign stance sometimes is only a little more than a local or regional independence or inherent ability to act. There are many current examples of erosions to wellbeing, including the examples like the protest over the Dakota Access Pipeline. The pipeline's history and directorate, like so many projects ignored the sovereignty of the Tribal citizens request to mitigate potential damage to the

entire region's water quality for Tribal and non-Tribal citizens. What is remarkable is that the pipeline's planners did not consider potential harm to the environment and water quality for even its own wealthy non-Native citizens. Native citizens from all over North America converged on the area to voice concerns to tone deaf government agents. Sovereignty is always at great risk of erosion or elimination by power and privilege of the ruling class and our Federal government. Sovereignty is not a given and is not something that can be taken for granted. Control of natural resources like water and minerals and social resources such as healthcare and medical services are integrated into the political and social fabric tied to the ruling class of our dominant culture. Self-reliance is inextricably tied to the concept of political sovereign cultures that First Nation peoples expect from their own governing bodies.

Sovereignty guides the workings and Tribal decisions on a daily basis for all parts of a Native community's needs, including the healthcare and wellness of the people. Well-known Native American scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. suggested that sovereignty was not an easy or simple definition as it applied to Native Peoples residing within the confines of the United States. An original religious idea in its foundations, sovereignty is an ancient concept (Deloria Jr., 1984).

**Recent history.** Historically speaking, sovereignty originated as a political appropriation birthed from the combination of politics and religion during the period where the divinity of kings embraced it in conquering civilizations. During the early years of our nation, the notion of sovereignty leaned toward the definition of the 'power to control one's destiny and course of action for a particular governing body'. The United States Constitution created the United States as a sovereign power that could enter into

relations with other sovereigns, including those of Indian Nations. Deloria (1984) maintained that there was no real equality between the Indian Nations and the United States. Both parties are indeed sovereign, but engagement in government-to-government actions and reactions, the U. S. government retains 'plenary' power within its overall boundaries. Indian Nations retained 'inherent' sovereignty because their ability to govern itself preceded the nationhood of the United States, and that their day-to-day existence entailed historical sovereign actions. This led to the several Supreme Court decisions that created the pathway to 'legal' sovereignty for Tribal Nations, which together creates the package of 'political' sovereignty that exists to this day. It is important to understand that Indian Nations have a special treaty-based and trust relationship with the U. S. government, not with individual states. Individual states may create compacts and certain negotiations with Tribes, but states are not on par with the sovereign power that Tribes have on their trust and reservation lands because of their Federal trust relationship. Prior to Oklahoma statehood in 1907, the Creek Nation, nearly completely entailed the eastern portion of the area named as the Indian Nations Territory. A recent decision in summer of 2020 by the U. S. Supreme Court found in a vote of 5-4 that the U. S. neglected to remove, rescind or revise the original Tribal reservation territories that existed long before statehood in Oklahoma. Muscogee reservation 'land' exists today, despite over 100 years of buying and selling this land on the open market by non-Native citizens. Federal and Tribal legal jurisdiction of Native citizenry on Tribal land takes precedence over state jurisdiction. Legal implications for the Five Civilized Tribes require the same treatment in courts that Tribes in Oklahoma Territory had prior to statehood. This is very significant to the overall ability of Tribal communities to govern and maintain its culture,

language, traditions to control overall wellness.  The precedence of the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision in 2020 will resonate in all parts of Indian Country as long as it is not overturned or challenged by future High Court cases. This rests on the natural right of each individual Indian Nation in Oklahoma that lies within this boundary as a distinct political entity. The fact remains that this ruling will remain a point of potential future legal action for all Sovereign Tribal jurisdictions.

For those who promoted decisions like *McGirt*, the advocacy of protecting sovereignty for Tribes is more about continuity of culture and community. Sustaining sovereignty has become a difficult political issue for Tribes recently as a legal concern. The High Court has not had consistency when either giving or taking away treatments pertaining to self-governance as it relates to applications by Tribal governments. In the McClanahan Case (*McClanahan v. State Tax Commissioner, Arizona Appellate Reports, 1971*), several states attempted to erode their previous non-existent relationship with Tribes, "the trend has been away from the idea of inherent Indian sovereignty as a bar to state jurisdiction and toward reliance on federal pre-emption…" The conflict today begins with the various misconceptions by non-native people over the concept of social institutions and nationality with respect to political decisions by Tribal leaders (Deloria & Lytle, 1989). An example would be similar to states like California in their understanding of Tribal gaming practices. Native people are different from other ethnicities within the borders of the United States based on these facts. Often misunderstood, political positioning of Tribes places it outside the scope of simple ethnic decisions by government policies and practices. Native citizens belong to political nations and are not simply ethnicities and people residing within the United States.

Along with Deloria & Lytle (1989), Robert Coulter (1978), was one of the first Native scholars to explore and write about the last 100 years of Tribal legal battles with the U.S. government over the concept of plenary power's effects on the trust relationship with Indian Nations. Certain U.S. administrations use of plenary power has tremendously eroded legal stances of Tribes, which also chisels the long-standing inherent and legal sovereignty that is foundational to Tribes self-determination efforts. In essence, this erosion has the effect of loosening the binds of political balance within Tribes. Tribal governments that do not understand or keep abreast of the strong undercurrents have found many new battlegrounds necessary in order to retain their Sovereignty. I remember a lively conversation I had with Vine Deloria, Jr. in 2002, telling me; "sovereignty is both a shield and a sword, the shield can protect when necessary, but the sword may be wielded with precision when you really need it". I have found these words to be helpful in work I have done with Tribal governments in the past several years. Tribes that want only the use of a shield run the risk of erosion at the heart of their self-determined efforts. There are times and need to bring out the sword to fight for legal and political resources and way of life. There is a time to fight and a time to hold off and wait, and not knowing the difference creates risk of it all slipping away. Guarantees of permanent retention of sovereignty is not a given anymore. Tribal sovereignty needs to be active and engage both the shield and the sword.

**Older history.** One needs to consider the very traumatic past that each tribe has had in their relationship with the United States Government in the grounding of any self-determined efforts to protect cultural and traditional elements within Native communities. Sovereignty guides the mechanics of Tribal decisions on a daily basis for all parts of a

Native community's needs, including the healthcare, education and wellbeing of the people. Sovereignty originated as a political tool birthed from the combination of politics and religion during the period where the divinity of kings secured control over conquered civilizations. During the early years of our nation, the notion of sovereignty leaned toward the definition of the 'power to control one's destiny and course of action for a particular governing body'. The United States Constitution created the United States as a sovereign power that could enter into relations with other sovereigns, including those of Indian Nations within national boundaries. Since it is possible for the U. S. government to refuse or negate all Tribal treaties and sovereignty of Tribes, plenary power is very real. Doing so would incur great national cost and societal damage, so I do not think it will happen. There are many other more subtle and easily accomplished ways to erode the power and position of Tribal governments. The U.S. Supreme Court has made rulings that tear away at the fabric of both plenary and inherent powers back across many topics in the past two centuries. Today, many Tribal governments politically resided in the liminal spaces created from the many decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. Political sovereignty is a significant and powerful tool for all Native Nations. 'Inherent' sovereignty remains significant to Tribal Nations as the behavior and actions in self-governing precedes the nationhood of the United States; with the day-to-day decisions made that are necessary self-determined, sovereign actions. Court decisions in the past have led to creation of the pathway to sustainment of legal sovereignty for the Tribal Nations, combined today with inherent sovereignty, created the 'political' sovereignty. Indian Nations maintain a tenuous treaty-based and trust relationship with the U. S. government. The sustainment of the trust relationship remains today as repayment

suffered from the removal from homelands creating trust relationships that have been established for the health and education of Native Americans in perpetuity. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education and Indian Health Service are some examples of this 'payment' (Trujillo, 1996; Indian Health Service, 2009).

Considered one of the landmark cases regarding sovereignty for Native Nations, *Worcester v. Georgia,* Chief Justice Marshall held that "it is difficult to comprehend the proposition that the inhabitants of any quarter of the globe could have rightful *original* claims of dominion over the inhabitants of the other, or the lands they occupied, or that discovery of either by discovered, which annulled the pre-exiting rights of its ancient possessors". Marshall continues, " …Tribal sovereignty is a function of collective *political* rights, for distinct peoples that are divided into separate nations, independent of each other and the rest of the world, having their own specific institutions and governing themselves by their own laws". In *Johnson v. McIntosh (21 U.S. 543),* Chief Justice Marshall continues, "The Indians were admitted to be the rightful occupants of the soil, with a *legal* as well as a just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretions…".  Even as lands were taken and appropriated by land sales and land 'rush' efforts to white settlers, High Court opinions continued to expand some ideas of inherent rights by Native nations. Since the beginning of settler colonization on this continent, land-based culture and traditions regarding self-determined daily life for Tribes have continued to be negatively impacted by the notion of the Doctrine of Discovery and the ideology of Terra Nullius (Deloria, 1994; Grande, 2004; Porter, 2012). Having trust land and trust relationships was better than not having any land left especially at a time when the entire country was appropriating as much land as it could for the benefit of

white industrialist growth. Some 'ownership' seemed to me a better solution than having everything taken away, as it was for many of my Choctaw relatives. If it were not for much of the remaining Tribal Trust land, our Tribe would have very little left today. The next step in the evolution of sustainment and future protection of the Native American is through the reconfiguring of the Trust relationships and treaties that exist with the Federal government. There is no need to have trust land, and titles should be in the hands of each individual Tribal Nation that can claim these lands and titles. Although this is controversial to many Tribal people, I believe that the next step is more progressive in nature, to protect Tribes legal and political sovereignty. Component parts of the Doctrine of Discovery remain in many legal decisions to this day. Decisions made in courts reference treatment of Native people, with relationship to land and ownership of land. Terra Nullius is the foundation of an ugly and dominant religious philosophy that dates back many centuries (Deloria, 1994). This ideology still survives today. To the settler, land was not seen to be a part of the spiritual or physical life world. Indigenous people are part of their environment, and the environment is part of the people, except when colonizers take lands without legal right or negotiated claim.

In my opinion the best course of action for all Tribal wellness and justice now and into the future would be to re-negotiate the trust and title relationship with the United States and purchase or obtain new deeds to the lands that are now in trust. The antiquated portions of our trust relationships remain today simply as a form of power and advantage over Native people. True and sustainable community wellness will be difficult to achieve without removing the vestiges of colonial power and oppression. Justice Mclean's final summation in *Cherokee v. Georgia*, "The Indian's condition is something like that of the

Israelites, when inhabiting the deserts. Without land to call home, in the sense of place

and property, their right to self-government failed to exist though the land that is

occupied by another…".  McLean and others in the Court insisted that inherent

sovereignty is a condition of the Native Nations, regardless of mitigating factors such as

the trust relationship with the U.S. government's plenary powers over everyone within its

natural borders. Native American governments have ridden a seesaw created by the High

Court's decisions on plenary power. During the 19th century, Courts favored the opinion

that Tribes at a minimum held a legal and political sovereignty with and within the

United States (Deloria & Lytle, 1989). With the arrival of the 20th century, much social

and political pressure began to tear away at the legal ground gained. In a 1903 decision,

the High Court went as far to say that Congress always had plenary power over Tribes, so

why the inconsistency from the U.S. government on plenary policy interpretations? It is

complicated, but in my opinion, the government would like to rid itself of their fiscal

responsibility over Tribes, including their obligations of health, education and economic

treaties. During the last half of the 20th century, the U.S. stance on Tribal rights went

back and forth like a ping-pong match in the wind as far as the efforts to nail down what

it meant for Tribes to have self-authority. The protection and sustainment of sovereignty

has always been a challenging strategic issue for Tribes with reference to legal options in

U.S. District Courts. The High Court has not had a consistent stance on either giving or

taking away self-governance decisions as it pertains to applications by Tribes. In the

Mclanahan brief (*McClanahan v. State Tax Commissioner, Arizona Appellate Reports,*

*1971*), several states attempted to erode their previous non-existent on-par relationship

with Tribes, "the trend has been away from the idea of inherent Indian sovereignty as a

bar to state jurisdiction and toward reliance on federal pre-emption…" The conflict today

begins with the various misconceptions by non-native people over the concept of social

institutions and nationality with respect to political decisions by Tribal leaders.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, several terms are operational definitions necessary

for understanding the goals and methods of this inquiry. Specifically, the following

definitions apply:

1. At-risk Tribal youth

2. Culture as metaphor

3. Comprehensive curriculum adaptations (pertaining to culture-based

interventions)

4. Adopters (Tribal leadership)

5. Implementers (Program staff and administration)

In addition to using the term Native American in this research, I use the terms,

Indigenous, First Nation, American Indian, Alaska Native, as synonyms for the numerous

Native people mentioned without names or places. In my opinion, the term American

Indian is a preferred option, as a person born in New Jersey might claim that they are a

native American, just not Native American. There is a difference. The use of any title is

limiting and never adequate, often inaccurate and difficult for descriptions, but I use them

for convenience and confidentiality.

The literature provides several examples by which Native youth are described as *at-risk*. Some of these include students with high absenteeism, youth with special needs or first generation students or those from a community with less than robust resources for youth. For the purpose of this study, however, Native youth are considered at-risk if they have any number of issues that have them falling below their same age/gender peers in social, behavioral or physical development, ultimately identified by each Tribal community as significantly in need of attending to. Youth in many communities include those who are sometimes cognitively, emotionally, or physically challenged and need to have an inclusive and skilled mentoring environment. In addition, Youth programs often engage activities offering education or skills to secure a positive identity, which makes the enculturation of youth programs acquire new and robust possibilities.

**Culture as 'metaphor'**. The use of '*culture as metaphor'* suggests a strong connection of culture as the vessel holding the contents of any promising or evidence-base empowerment strategy a community engages in for youth who may be at-risk for negative wellness and life outcomes including the loss of identity or place within their family, community, school or even the world at large. Culture in Tribal communities is an integral component for the wellbeing of a community or family centered Tribal system of care. While many Tribal citizens do not always know protocols in their own culture, including variance of levels with how communities practice traditional cultural activities, often see certain traditions importance as being necessary for the wellness of its youth. Because of outside pressures at school or in the community, many times youth meet with systemic racism simply by being engaged in their own culture, traditions, language, or activities. Nonetheless, in collaborative, adaptable interventions like HOC, especially in

combining Native and non-Native curriculum, culture is a metaphor for the intervention itself. As the equine therapeutic example, it is a vehicle or vessel for any such programming of evidence-based skill acquisition, such as a social emotional learning strategy or regulation of emotional output behavior (Collin, 2012). Every program that adapts HOC as its youth empowerment programming will advance some form of promising practice or evidence-based skill curriculum into the framework. I believe that the collaboration and synergy using two disparate knowledge systems is key to the efficacy of an intervention being thought of as 'culture as metaphor'.

**Relational curriculum**. HOC imparts strategies for learning and skill development with defined curriculum as a program of study. Since this inquiry examines the youth who will be impacted and empowered via the acquisition of both culture and selected life skills, this curriculum focuses on comprehensive and collaborative strategies aligned within a Tribe's social and educational goals for youth. Within a youth-centered, strength-based accountability system, the Tribal leaders need to be committed to implementing a *comprehensive curriculum*, particularly in the basic skills knowledge of core components for active engaged youth. It is necessary to adapt the original curriculum in order to engage fully into the unique qualities and component parts of each individual Tribal culture. These adaptations create a novel approach for the intervention relevant to every traditional element that is integrated. Each intervention becomes a unique and powerful tool that is deliverable to any number of youth in any number of possible environments.

Every Tribe that desires to adopt programs for its youth will do so using at least one necessary adaptation, but in reality, many iterations over time may be necessary. The

group of participants called implementers ascertain whether the youth are able to learn the adapted curriculum programming using rubrics contained within each curriculum. Staff training workshops and meetings are provided for those working with the adaptation of HOC, for the provision and support to implementers as needed to accomplish this goal (Donovan, et al., 2015). Adopters are individuals within each Tribe, Tribal organization or school that have the decision-making authority to make decisions on creation of any Tribal programs including those of external agencies on behalf of youth education, juvenile justice or even behavioral health systems of care. Tribal Council or designated staff are tasked with understanding and empowering the needs of their people in order to engage in instruction programs using culture and traditions of the Tribe that promote its own self-determined way of life. In its goals of protecting and promoting culture and traditions, it is necessary to engage youth in the passing of knowledge, language and skills unique to this culture. Adopters are able to put together enough capacity to make adaptation of any outside intervention curriculum efficacious within the confines of each prescribed community. Adopters ultimately secure the defined 'metaphor of action' for a desired project, program or department that engages collaborative efforts required to infuse culture with any desired additional intervention methods.

**Implementing adaptations**. Implementers are those individuals tasked with taking the decision of an adopter, Tribal government, leadership, school or official program and create programming under the umbrella of their own organization. As an example, a Tribal health clinic can become the implementer of a Tribal culture-based program that is going to utilize its own program as a base for helping to create the newly created coordinated efforts to have both culture and the intervention work together to create a

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more effective way to engage youth. This collaborative strategy can effectively add the use of culture into an existing skill-based program as a way to improve each youth's understanding of its own culture, identity and use of traditions in their Tribal community.

**Importance of Story and Knowledge Sharing**

I respectfully borrow from several Indigenous research methods utilized in this inquiry to help understand the meaning behind each Native voice. My methods are adaptations from Indigenous methods of research suggested by Smith (2012). One example is the notion of claiming which is a simple but important step in taking back assertions that are important self-determined Tribal actions. While not as difficult as claiming judicial rights in Tribal courts, a self-determined stance to engage in formal research grounded in the unique history and tradition of each Tribe is very significant. Written and oral claims about language, culture, traditions, and territories are all possible selections constructed by participants in this research. I seek to capture claims of participant's experiences and memories obtained in reflection in relation to how each participant perceives wellness in their community, and how they see that evolving into the future (Smith, 2012).

Storytelling is a form of claiming knowledge through survival and resistance as a necessary engagement of community for relevant historical perspectives of wellbeing (Brayboy, et al., 2012). Old stories join new stories mixing history with modern life that passes down wisdom of their ages into hope and values that the next generation can engage. Second, survival or better yet, survivance, a term first coined by Native American researcher, Gerald Vizenor, speaks to efforts of both resistance to colonizing

forces and survival and protection of one's culture. Survivance does not enlist violent

reactions to colonization, but speaks more about positive reflection on what one has, what

one is missing, and what is needed to retain or regain vigor (Vizenor, 1993). Survival is

about acting to retain those elements of culture that speak to wellbeing in spirit and form.

To Vizenor (1993) survivance is about celebration and affirmation. Youth interventions

need to have a positive influence that both protects and resists. Survivance does just that.

Third, intervening is action taken in the process of becoming involved for change or

improvement. The use of intervening techniques with respect to Indigenous knowledge

has been necessary for centuries due to the trauma and crisis of forces that Tribal

communities continually face. Today, intervention politics takes on roles of change from

activism's roots on many fronts and projects. Interventions are often necessary for

directed change within the population in ways that a community invites as an adaptation

to programs that have evidence in other forms or from other communities. Adaptations of

interventions are both continual and consistent within Tribal communities who seek to

ensure fit for its own cultural norms. Finally, revitalizing, reframing, restoring and

returning are all closely related acts of claiming (Smith, 2005). Rediscovery of wellbeing

via traditional routes includes efforts to restore those elements that are culturally eroded

or missing.

Tribal communities that have lost almost all of their fluent language speakers and

have not been successful in preservation and promotion of the language use run the risk

of losing the functional use of language forever. Interventions include language

revitalization through storytelling, which may begin as early as pre-school. Culture and

language that is on the brink of extinction needs to be protected in ways that allow new

ways to stop the erosion. Adaptations of HOC curriculum include activities for youth to discover their own desire to engage in foundations of culture while cultivating strategies for their own empowerment. Indigenous cultures are now fully integrating original languages in the work of adapted interventions and prevention activities.

As Smith (2012) and other Native researchers suggest, there is a need to discover the 'efficacy of Indigenous Knowledge' as necessary to unveil and maintain as effective synergy with all other knowledge systems. Smith (2012) informs us that Euro-western science and education has a hostile history of relations with Indigenous science and research methods, especially true with the British on her Maori heritage. Science instruction from my elementary schools were neglectful or simply ignored aspects of Native American wisdom, philosophy, science and traditional knowledge. I believe that resolving issues of knowledge disparity lies partially in the promotion of collaborative bodies of work for all types of research literature. Balancing disparate knowledge in navigation of challenges having similar unseen characteristics can be quite powerful. Similar differences exist in the conflict between Indigenous science and Western science, as exist with spiritual knowledge and scientific knowledge. Often, we do not realize how similar we are in our disparate knowledges when considering other cultural standpoints. Western science does not easily accept knowledge that Native peoples understand as spiritual knowledge. The underlying philosophical premise in Western science is being in control of nature (Cajete, 2000). Cajete (2000) suggests, "We need to give way to the reality of moving creatively with the flow of events, which is the true reality of the universe" (p. 16). The west refers to spirituality as pseudo-science. What remains relevant for Indigenous people today is the integration of natural knowledge for our

understanding of the cosmos. As with differences between Christianity and Native spirituality, the former grounded by faith, the latter emphasizes experience and practical systems that often entail ceremony tied to foundations of natural science of their world. A Coquille elder told me a story about the demonic nature of trickster in ways of evil-doing or damaging behavior or actions not being part of the trickster. Instead, it was only after Christianity that trickster changed into something that could engage in demonic or evil behavior. Prior to settler and colonial influences on religion and traditional spirituality, trickster original stories from many Tribal communities viewed trickster actions as something to learn from and strictly part of the natural world, and did not have anthropomorphic attributes of human inventions such as churches and religion. The natural world drives Trickster spirituality and is not only about good or bad actions. Trickster is about change, queering, natural and unnatural adjustments surrounding everything in our universe. The west might consider Trickster agencies equal to what physicists might consider the activities of the sub-atomic world.

In Western research, there is often a failure to recognize the esoteric and seemingly invisible nature of the knowledge that does not easily meet the quantification standards of normative science. For the Native researcher, experience tied to land or place sometimes makes the difference in considering how and why claims occur, which also is difficult to quantify or translate to the non-Native scientist. Access to Indigenous science is possible, as the requirement provided by the significance and importance of resources each agential relationship entails. One only needs an ethical relationship with the natural order during research, a sort of ethical reciprocity to engage the science of everyone's universe.

With so many possible combinations of knowledge systems, it is necessary to have a framework of ethical reciprocity inclusive for all stakeholders who need to access information required for enlightenment and community betterment. After all, stakeholders should have similar goals they would like to see achieved by such work. If it is prudent to have effective collaborations that are culturally sensitive to each other's needs, it is imperative the researcher follows the needs and goals that remain true for those who are being researched. No longer can projects just conceive that validity only be derived from the researcher. Participants and those being involved with research contribute to the overall answer to their respective research questions. Sometimes the simple productions are the most fruitful. For Native researchers, taking the science apart and making it sensible and accessible to its own community is at least of some importance.

**Summary**

Adoption and implementation experiences such as this study considers, relate to how Tribes make decisions about how implementation of culture-based curriculum can be used in synergy with evidence-based skill and behavioral interventions and have effective use for young people's risky behaviors. Tribal communities give support and enlist many of their own sovereignty and traditional resources in efforts to combine protective and promotive gifts for their youth. Having a synergetic environment for learning culture while gaining valuable skills on how to navigate a difficult life is challenging when implementing such interventions at the Tribal level. Funding concerns, attacks on Sovereignty, lacking capacity, and social barriers from within and outside of Tribal communities continue to be troublesome agendas. The simple fact that simple

partnership possibilities can include access and a willingness to proceed into difficult

roles and projects with success is enlightening and suggests progress and growth in this

style of collaborative work. It is enlightening to see how a self-determined people having

complete discretion and control over its social and economic development becomes more

adept through cooperation and communication with disparate groups. Work inside of

Tribal communities that involves stakeholders from outside the community gives promise

that increased collaborative research involving positive intervention techniques for youth

empowerment is still on the horizon.

     Native American culture used as a tool to build identity and resilience with youth

has a long history using activities to expand knowledge about one's history while also

grounding families with protective factors against negative behavior and health

outcomes. Beyond identity politics, Indigenous Knowledge and science resists

materialism and speaks to the oldest philosophies of time. Experiential in nature,

stemming from a non-judgmental history, our fit and experiences in the natural world

provide multiple levels of learning through the cycles of life. This study examines Tribal

leadership's roles, perceptions, and experience in adapting the Healing of the Canoe

intervention for youth empowerment in ways that use their own culture and traditions as a

vehicle to move the intervention.  Because each individual is either an adopter or

implementer, qualitative narrative data connects an individual's experiences and

understanding of adaptive curriculum, knowledge of culture and traditions in their own

community, and any form of participatory action they may have developed in

collaboration with outside stakeholders. Tribal leaders are competent and knowledgeable

decision-makers and can aid in the implementation from ideas into viable Tribal

programs that offer a unique form of culturally based programming for youth and families.

A phenomenological approach involves stepping into the personal, intimate perceptions of experience in order to obtain a comprehensive description that provides for the basis of a structural analysis of the experience itself (Moustakas, 1994). I seek to ask about experience itself, in order to see if there is meaning in relevant memories and perceptions that are close to expectations of the topics of adoption and implementation efforts. Phenomenology does not lend itself as reduced to a method or an interpretive set of procedures (Van Manen, 2014). Van Manen suggests that relying on pre-determined frameworks and simplified inquiry models, or a series of descriptive steps will unwittingly undermine the inclination for the inquiry to deepen itself in the relevant narrative that this type of research scholarship requires. This ensures that I can acquire a more authentic grasp of this project in both thinking and meaning. Phenomenology is less a determinate code of inquiry than the beginning of search for meaning of pre-reflective experience (Van Manen, 2014). In essence, Van Manen (2014) points out methods for questioning:

- Phenomenological research begins with wonder at what is possible with experience and how it presents to the individual. Questions pursue curiosity and wonder.
  - Questions explore any moments of pre-reflective, pre-predictive experience, as we live them.
  - It grasps any exclusively singular aspects (identity, essence, otherness, culture, and traditions) of a phenomenon or event.

o The epoché and bracketing are the reduction of various relevant points of information—though the reduction itself may be understood differently at times even incommensurably, sometimes contested by other researchers.

o Phenomenological reflection and analysis occur primarily in the attitude of the reduction, and the vocative, variously understood.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

This chapter will introduce the methods of this phenomenological inquiry regarding the experiences and motivation Tribal leaders have in the adoption, implementation and hopeful sustainment of adapted interventions. Tribes attempt unique cultural programming as the foundation for youth at-risk for a host of personal wellness concerns, including those young people navigating development with learning challenges while in search of cultural identities. This inquiry allows for a questioning of Tribal ambitions toward creation of programming interventions with the use of disparate knowledges, while also shining light on the experiences of collaborative, community support and assistance. The next chapter involves an exploration in my application of phenomenology. The research plan that includes explanations about participants, procedures, analysis and ethical concerns are also primary elements of this chapter.
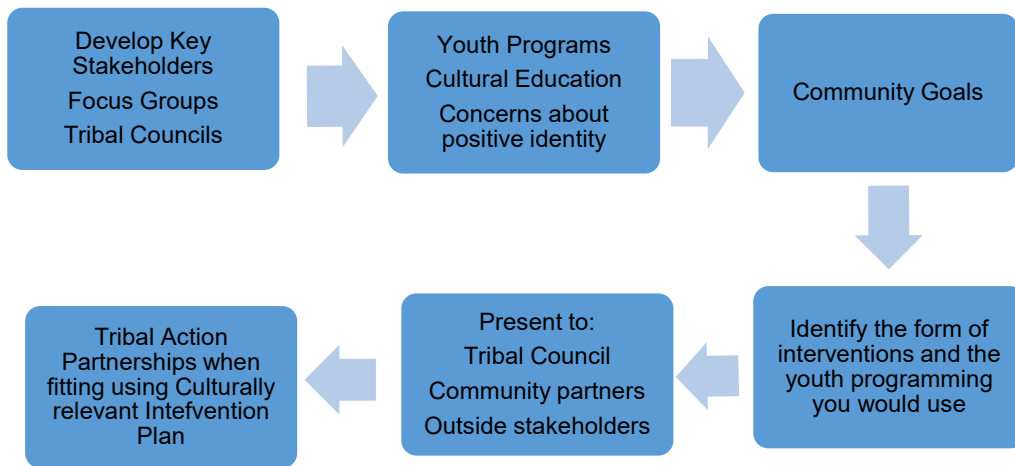
## HOC and the Adaptable Model

Healing of the Canoe (HOC) is a curriculum that focuses on a canoe culture, designed for adaptation to any Tribal culture. Any form of culture can be a metaphor for the intervention itself, as the adaptation becomes the foundation or vehicle to deliver the evidence-based skill curriculum. The analysis of culture-based interventions using phenomenological methods helps gain insight by obtaining lived experiences from in-depth interviews of study participants (Creswell, 1989).  Interviews give the researcher a way to gain a depth of structure to details of experiences that leadership and

administrative actions have during activities of collaborative community programs and projects. Ongoing conditions may point to the need to adjust curriculum from previous adaptations, into new iterations or alternative adaptations. Tribal decision-making follows similar patterns within most of the communities for adaptation (See Figure 3.1).

*Figure 3.1.*

**Adaptation Process**

| Develop Key Stakeholders<br>Focus Groups<br>Tribal Councils | → | Youth Programs<br>Cultural Education<br>Concerns about positive identity | → | Community Goals |

| Tribal Action Partnerships when fitting using Culturally relevant Intefvention Plan | ← | Present to:<br>Tribal Council<br>Community partners<br>Outside stakeholders | ← | Identify the form of interventions and the youth programming you would use |

Participants in this study were allowed to share textural and structural experiences that are examined for both the *what* and *why* in relation to those events' personal significance. Textural conditions connect the narrative of each person's experience relating to their viewpoints, feelings, and emotions about imagined possibilities in programming (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Structure of conditions allow for how adoption and implementation is experienced in ongoing or former projects where the Tribal community has adapted a version of HOC. Structural conditions speak more about

the experiences of participants' how and why adoptions worked or didn't, given the

capacity, conditions, stakeholders, Tribal decisions, cultural fit, and many other elements

of logistics (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Responses are clustered together to create themes that

arise from within the data. From these clusters, I attempt to draw from and consider two

distinct categories of data. The first one is textural and considers what, and the second

structural, deals with how experience occurs. In textural patterns, I consider all the

emotions, attitudes and feelings about events as they unfold for each participant during

planning, implementation and sustainment (or abandonment) of any individual adapted

program. It is important to allow each person to reflect fully on the meaning of his/her

involvement in his or her experience outside of any interference or judgement of any

other person or group. For structural patterns, I am not speaking of the phenomenological

method of semi-structural interviewing, per se; instead, I am seeking to find the structure

of each participant's interview narrative, beyond the narrative (Bevan, 2014).

Structurally, each experience is reduced to the parts of narrative that captures the

meaning of how, why, and what is important for each participant (Hoffding & Martiny,

2015). As an example of one possible scenario, an individual adopter who volunteers an

interview for this dissertation could include a structural element about important

meetings they had in decisions to move forward with the HOC program. An adopter

could illustrate a decision to create a collaborative using a cultural program involving

buy-in from their Head Start director in order to engage curriculum with culture for

families and their children. Phenomenological methods include elements that are helpful

in the analysis of narratives of lived experience from each participant in this data pool.

Relevant and clear data allows the best chance to become useful in the analysis of all

unique experiences shared. Sharing of each experience is anonymous, beginning and ending without bias or preconceptions. The goal of this inquiry is to enhance future opportunities that would assist Tribes with culture-based programming, and in order to generate ideas about research strategies that could assist communities.

**Research Questions**

By extracting all relevant narratives as data, I will let the phenomena of each experience illustrate direction in analysis of each individual interview. If a directionality and significance offer pertinent directive information, I will gather all viewpoints and establish my inquiry via the phenomenological methods for information gathered from interviews. My research questions aim at an in-depth look at perspectives made available for analysis. Each question offers to open up widely the possibility of discovery, both past and present, while looking at how a future narrative beyond memory forges active social structures that benefit each self-determined community. Each of these questions are semi-structured as well as presented with respect and consideration of individual expression and individual interpretation. My research questions are the 3 C's of my study, culture, curriculum and community. Research questions guiding this inquiry include:

1. What does the meaning of culture have for each unique tribal adaptation to influence and produce self-empowered, sovereign youth intervention programs? (Culture)

2. What are the unique Tribal experiences that exist for each adoption and implementation from original HOC curriculum? (Curriculum)

3. What are the possibilities that exist for Tribal intervention projects by participation and balancing stakeholder's knowledge systems using CBPR? (Community)

**Study Participants**. To this date, over fifty Tribal communities have individuals who have been exposed or trained by those exposed to the HOC curriculum who were potential volunteer participants in this inquiry. I obtained and included as many narratives possible from this participant pool. Volunteers offered semi-structured interviews from two distinct groups of adults:

1. The *adopters*, or Tribal and organizational leadership responsible for the decision-making on attempting to engage in a new program or intervention.

2. The *implementers*, from each Tribe or Tribal organization, a department, school or program that has the necessary capacity to implement each iteration that is adapted from the original HOC curriculum, molding it to fit into the unique cultural needs and desires for each Tribal program.

Transcription reduced challenges in retaining the accurate body of narratives for examination of experiences from participants. Each volunteer offered reflections on experiences that influenced individual memory of related eventful moments. Elements such as funding issues, family dynamics, a change in a social environment, mental and physical health issues, are some of the factors that were influential narratives from participant interviews. I considered both barriers and facilitators behind experiential claims that either promote or deteriorate the effectiveness of adapting and sustaining curriculum from the Healing of the Canoe format to each unique adaptation in every

Tribal intervention program. This form of qualitative research is a fitting methodology when variables are difficult to define or identity (Creswell, 1998).

An e-mail sent to the pool of possible volunteer participants will contain the necessary information about my study, proper permissions and a request for their phone contact information in order to secure the time to produce my interview. Included in the e-mail is a statement of confidentiality and security according to the rules of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). Each person who participates will complete the consent form in agreement to the interview process.

Interview narratives from these two groups will comprise the foundation of my data. After contacting all participants via e-mail, I will then contact the participants who agree to include their experiences for this inquiry by telephone interview. Circumstances when individual adopters or implementers work in both categories I consider each interview as only one role, as often in Tribal communities professional staff wear many 'hats'. In such cases, each individual participant will give an accounting from one situation or the other. Data will be audio recorded generating a transcript using the Word 365 transcript program. Transcripts are placed in the Atlas ti (9) qualitative software program for analysis. All audio recordings are deleted promptly after transcription. All confidential written sources of information are deleted after analysis is completed.  I use a phenomenological analysis from the in-depth interviews for all relevant components obtained within each interview in work done around unique adaptation's characteristics. Key themes in each context include identity development, cultural belief systems, navigation of programming processes, relationships among stakeholders, and all themes regarding barriers to adoption or implementation of each adaptation. In addition,

questions surrounding abandonment, adjustments, or subsequent documented changes and editing.

**Experiences**. Each of the interview questions extract the experiences and phenomena related to the origin and evolution of culture as programming from participant's perspectives. The interview provides insight from the concepts of experience as described, derived from a natural attitude, from an individual's lifeworld as modes of appearance, which are then reduced for relevant content and prepared for reflective analysis. Husserl (1970) believes that our lifeworld is culturally relevant, diverse and different for every person based on experiences of those who evolved in places and spaces of knowing.

The interview is an efficient and convenient method to gather information using the phone and transcription method (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). Each volunteer has the opportunity to compete the interview via phone or by written answers sent via e-mail. A self-addressed and stamped envelope is provided for participants requesting a method of postal mail for written answers. Prior to beginning, the participant will consent by returning the e-mail with permission granted and information on how to move forward with an interview. All participants will have the opportunity, if desired, to review the written record of their interview after the study to ensure accuracy and to permit any follow-up questions or comments.

Data collection and analysis comes from volunteers in the original pool of participants identified from their attendance in the original or subsequent trainings/workshops administered by the HOC staff. All participants are either Tribal citizens or working staff of a Tribal community who may or may not be Tribal citizens.

In addition, every effort for activities to correspond with this group of participants digitally via e-mail in order to obtain the contact phone information needed to obtain times aural recordings of their answers. I strictly adhere and carefully attend to confidentiality in handling and analysis of all data.

**The Phenomenological Interview**

The phenomenological interview is the method I use to unpack experiences of the what, why and how of each participant in this inquiry discovered from their work using Healing of the Canoe curriculum, specifically with adapting to their unique Tribal culture. The nature of the interview is semi-structured around the goal of getting to the knowledge under each experience surrounding each individual adoption or implementation of the adaptable curriculum. The framing of each interview question is structured so that it can elicit responses that speak to the what, why and how the individual feels about the memory of such experiences (see Table 7). The content of each interview seeks to extract the mental and emotional aspects of their experience as the reciprocal nature it has with the work, people, and community. Because I am obtaining this information as an outsider, with the help of the interview, I strived to remain bias free in order to recover each experience with neutrality (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). As an outsider, I need to be aware of my behavior or voice influencing my data gathering and analysis.

The interview protocol and questions are included in Appendix B, and each interview takes a participant between 30 and 45 minutes to complete.

The interview questions reflect these ideas within this inquiry: *What is your experience in <u>adapting</u> the Healing of the Canoe curriculum to your specific Tribal Culture and needs? Some main topics in the interview could include:*

- What is your experience with Healing of the Canoe?

- Did you adopt the Healing of the Canoe program immediately after training?

- Did you feel this work was worthwhile to your goals?

- How did you move forward with your 'adoption' of the Healing of the Canoe Curriculum?

- To what extent did you adapt or change the original curriculum from Healing of the Canoe?

- How did you implement the program and with which program did you decide would work best?

- Did you encounter any barriers to adopting Healing of the Canoe program?

- Did you encounter any promotion assistance in adopting the program?

- How did you engage your target populations? (age, school level, locations)

- Did you have difficulty in finding a location or department to implement the program? (desired location and department) Was the program location linked to a cultural program? (chosen program, if any)

- Did you have enough support from trainers, facilitators, and program staff to begin?

- Did your community leaders and citizens back your decisions to start a program?

- What do you believe to be the best Healing of the Canoe impact?

- What do you believe to be the biggest barrier to success?

- Did you fail to launch? Did you start and abandon the program? If you stopped, are you considering ways to begin again?

- Does the community support your decision and efforts with this programming?

- What would make this program work best for your Tribal community?

**Pathway to meaning.** Answers from interview questions seek to uncover elements of experiences in each community's working environment, a description of activities and the natural setting where activities are experienced (Creswell, 1998; Warren, 2002). As a researcher, I seek to understand the subtle but distinctive instances of experience through phrasing, expression, emotion, bodily interaction and reaction within the constraints of the work done surrounding the adaptation of prevention curriculum using community and cultural connections. Every memorable activity or event captured via the interview provokes the memory of each experience. Structures of each experience are contained within each 'answer'. These experiential narratives are merely discussions about where and when information is gathered and later exchanged via the questionnaire. Phenomenology is a tool used in obtaining a description of the characters and ghosts of experience, the here is not now, rather what was in a way to capture knowledge and behavior in the best way possible (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Gathering narratives on experience seeks the possibility and structure of an individual's perception of phenomena. I consider the experiences of *what* is remembered by the study's participants along with reasons in *how* and *why* each person explains their individual adoption or implementation activities. The direct involvement of the researcher in the data collection and analysis is one of the key challenges of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003), so steps

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are taken to limit influencing any participant's answers. This is accomplished through a process whereby participants are allowed to review and clarify transcripts, if desired, from the interview and statements made during data collection. In an attempt to limit any bias in this study, each participant is given the opportunity to review the record from his or her interview and make any statements or clarifications deemed appropriate.

## 'Indigenous' Phenomenology

We learn to see things fresh and clear while valuing and respecting the nature of a person's experience and perception for nothing other than what it is by itself. A portion of the respondent pool of participants engage in a short duration talking circle in order to engage the mind and clear thoughts about the general nature of youth programming. These participants will be engaging in discussion surrounding youth programs without divulging any personal experience. Sharing of personal experiences are only discussed during interviews. Opportunities to follow up with participants after the end of the study allows longitudinal consideration and factors going into capacity to connect these elements, which program components were effective, and which ones were not. I consider and value both recent experience and the impression made in lasting memory of these experiences in similar ways. Temporal and spatial interest of experience are equally contained in the vast knowledge gained from experience. I theorize an indigenous phenomenology as being similar in certain interesting ways to Transcendental Phenomenology (Husserl, 1965). To many Native Americans, knowledge is experience from a time and place, passed down through telling of experiences and perceptions. Before I can consider a place for which experience connects us to events, I consider the experience that includes place. Indigenous people believe there is a circular and

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reciprocal nature between place and experience. Western science has suggested the need to define such intra-actions as between elements, separate and dissimilar, only to engage when enough outside assertion is applied. Western research does not easily see the significance in the reciprocity or the circular dance between experience and place. Perceptions of lived experience and lived spaces are passed on within systems of knowing as the state of consciousness from experience as an expression of a totality of energy in the past, memories and bodies of the cosmos' knowledge which we have access to. The relationship of time and place to our own experience teaches us about the knowledge linked to place that transcends culture. Knowledge grows from experience, gathered from within or outside of a place where someone seeks it. Native philosophies contemplate balance of synergy in complimentary actions around physical and natural events. Knowledge derived from experience does not always provide quantification equity in many realms of non-Indigenous science. As a Native person, I also strive to see our world with a lens that does not lose touch with these valued and simple rubrics of the universe. Aspects of our world and the greater cosmos always seem to lie just outside what we can quantify. Concealed often, simply not illuminated, useable and practical knowledge is always available for our ethically conscious mind. No matter how much we try, we cannot direct the wind, produce rain or tame even a few of nature's forces. I attended a presentation by Cornel West recently who said, "It is most important to begin by considering the existential, the lived experience, before any quantification or measurement can make sense".

The emphasis with phenomenology provides a subjective and discoverable way to find experience as a form of knowledge (Husserl, 1965). Husserl's approach and

philosophy points to knowledge transitioning and spilling from the individual's experience. Because experience and knowing about perceptible events have connections to phenomena, parts of conscious windows appear in the surrounding world as objects that we have come to know and understand (Husserl, 1965). I feel that Husserl's views are close to the deep connection that Indigenous science has with the cosmos which relates to the validation of experience as a form of knowing because it utilizes experiential reality that is available to the conscious mind as appearances to our realities itself (Husserl, 1965). Husserl considers this transcendental in nature because perception or experience sticks to the consciousness through a reflection on subjective moments and their respective objective representatives (Husserl, 1965). Although phenomenology is concerned with ideas and conceptual perceptions, there is no denial of the deeper unknown parts of nature. Any phenomena that is experienced represents a beginning point of reflection. My challenge here is to extract the meaning of a participant's experience in terms phenomena they remembered. This is reflective of a withdrawal of conscious thought and its corresponding essence of the experience (Husserl, 1965). The concept of realism is a major focus of transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1965). In my opinion, these concepts relate to what Husserl asserts, as something parallel to the workings of Indigenous Science.

Dilthey (1976) suggests images about activities that surround us that moves us in the accounting with the senses and is experienced inwardly first. Focusing on our inner thoughts and experience by giving light to them with participation and observation is a central thesis of hermeneutics. The hermeneutic approach to the empirical analysis of experience relates to and provides validity by our consciousness (Dilthey, 1976). From

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these connections within our reality, our viewpoint and perception stands as the 'shadow cast' by the reality of our activities and we live with the understanding of our perception as fact from the consciousness (Dilthey, 1976). I develop themes that relate to the participant's perceptions, processing each reading and re-reading the participant's transcripts. A final approach to data analysis is to obtain an understanding of the experience. The purpose of acquiring thematic structure is to gain an understanding of the essence of the experience of the study participants (Creswell, 1998). I am obtaining meaning from the perceptible connections derived from each participant that has relational significance to the work surrounding effective interventions, regardless of the challenges faced. The data analysis informs meaning using thematic clusters relating to each research question.

**Strategies of inquiry.** Phenomenology, identified and practiced, as a way to capture certain styles of thinking, in my mind, in some ways resembles the science of Native American thought processes in storytelling. Trickster agency may consider forms of experiential chaos that produces additional connections between the phenomena and the recollection or experiencing of events or actions of our lives (Haraway, 1991; Deloria, 1994). Similar to chaos theory in roots of physical dynamics, trickster hermeneutics explains how barriers, bumps or bifurcations in the roadway to choice arrive as both horizonal propositions and experiences (Cajicuwa, Good & Ritchie, 1997). Without reciprocal and ethical relations, one cannot easily predict how trickster or chaos of events can trigger our responsiveness to experience in the same way as when reciprocal agencies are engaged (Squint, 2012). My use of phenomenology here does not consider methodologies with focus on trickster 'phenomena', rather I consider all

possible forms that might come out of narratives and issue a consideration only in coding

and analysis (Squint, 2012). It is my hope to include these considerations, if they are

relevant, as meaning behind descriptions. Phenomenological methods exist today with its

background in philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, 2007). Founded as a unique movement prior

to the beginning of WWI in Germany, phenomenology occupied a place in philosophy by

researchers such as Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1931, 1965). His work is seen as a way to

'return to the things themselves and a way of elevating the role of experience in the

analysis of qualitative human science. Further development and evolution by Heidegger,

Sartre and others took phenomenology and the measurement of experience further by

expanding the role of inquiry about the quality of lived experiences. Heidegger (1962)

and others strived to claim experiential narratives from the essence of our lived world.

Heidegger responded to the role of phenomenology as a way to access the human

condition as a theme of ontological elements in the lived experience, as a way to explain

how knowledge about the essence of experience assists in establishing explanations about

human activity (Heidegger, 1962).

One way to honor the experience of Native people is to engage in phenomenology

as a way of 'seeing' while thinking being and responding to the data (Bartlett, Marshall &

Marshall, 2012). My aim is to transform thoughts about lived experiences into textual

expressions of essences in ways that illustrate the narrative as reflexive memory of

something meaningful. Van Manen, (1990) suggests that an inspection of worldly things

from a phenomenological perspective is a way we can question the world we have

experienced and to know about it as humans. In this sense, Van Manen (1990) thinks

about the process as ontological rather than epistemological, as the evolution of

experience is who we are as much as it is always moving, alive and unending. According to Heidegger (2008), a survey of lived experiences are hermeneutical as well as descriptive and interpretive as they uncover the hidden meaning. This study is a form of interpretive inquiry, hermeneutic in the sense that what erupts out of the narrative interview are not simply insightful, but draw out and uncover those experiential feelings, attitudes and thinking about the events themselves. I believe that Heidegger (1990) was looking at ways we can deeply and broadly know and perceive what we know as possibly complex and often unknown to our conscious thoughts.

Thus, I want understand the essence of Native thought and experience as a reveal to the intended aspirations of those who make adaptations of curriculum with the assistance of community support programmed with the use of unique qualified culture and traditions. I take a participant's experiential narratives about their roles in working an adaptation's outcomes for culture-based interventions for youth. Just as storytelling can add to the body of a community's knowledge, narrative interviews used phemonenologically can also offer deeper insights into what experience can explain as meaning of humans in such complex set of events and activities.

**Data Collection**

Collection of data entails the selection of interview narratives provided by volunteer participants who were exposed or trained at Healing of the Canoe meetings and workshops. In addition, prior to interviews, I attended several communities to engage in preliminary talking circles that engaged prospective participants in thoughts and ideas about programs and local conditions that play possible roles in youth interventions, prior

to getting interviews. Study participants were instructed to not share or discuss in any individual experiences during talking circles, so that these could be offered during the interview process. Talking circles also provided a blind backdrop for me to take confidential notes which serves as the backdrop for decisions I make about community meaning behind the work providing for youth empowerment. Interviews were granted confidentially the day following talking circles.

The original goal was to have as many volunteer participants from the 52 total trainee organizations or Tribes that trained or had exposure with the original HOC curriculum from 2011 to 2017. Many original contacts could not be contacted directly due to changes made to staffing or from the Covid-19 pandemic's influences on communities, stakeholders and individuals. A promising practice, HOC program developments have exposed nearly 2500 youth in all types of communities. Many of these programs are in communities where youth attend urban schools off the reservation. The majority of the Native students and families come from multi-ethnic or multi-cultural combinations, which include those on a continuum from the most traditional to those living an entirely Westernized lifestyle. Many Native students have non-native instructors who have very little understanding about the indigenous communities their students come from. Additionally, since I was in high school, national data from free and reduced lunch programs suggest over 90% of all Native youth are still included or considered at-risk for lower education and economic achievement because of their socio-economic status. Although this is improving at a slow pace, it is an alarming statistic. The urban environment where these youth attend school is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural

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environment where support services are available to students in regular education, special education, and for Native youth in Title VI Indian Education programs.

**Analysis**

Beginning with a clear mind, open to the interview answers with an unbiased, receptive attitude. Husserl (1931) described the freedom from preconceptions as the *Epoché.* The word has Greek roots and meaning, to stay away from or abstain. With Epoche, a researcher should avoid holding any prejudgments, bias, or preconceived ideas about events, experiences or actions. The epoché is not foolproof or a pure filter; it only has the effect of eliminating the 'everyday' unconscious bias and knowledge creating a barrier to finding a participant's honest recollection. One can only prepare a mindset for obtaining knowledge and experience, as it sets aside any prejudice or predictions which hinder a narrative before it gets a chance to 'speak' for itself. Without free allowance, experience and understanding of the experience is not fresh and allowed a new beginning. It allows for a new way of looking at a thing, and also makes it possible for the experience to be open from consciousness as it arrives and not be filtered by judgement from others or even community standards or norms. A person experiencing or reflecting on experiences turns inward, following the most original information obtained from within, because it is here that the experience arrives for us (Husserl, 1931). We not only perceive when we think about them as they are happening, but are also including our memory and outside recollections that were imprinted on us during former experiences of such similar familiar happenings. By undertaking the reduction of a narrative from each participant's interview, the existence of memorable experiences maintain a certain level of validity. The epoché is a critical placement of attitude requiring a researcher's

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acceptance to take in everything and not be judgmental. This takes personal attitudes out of the equation and provides a natural attitude toward a more critical stance. A shift of attitude allows for a different way of theorizing and conducting analysis of a participant's situation, which includes looking for original patterns of thinking about a person's experience.

Qualitative research methods become operational with any of several traditions, including, biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, or case study (Creswell, 1998). I am using a combination of methods beginning with several talking circles, individual interviews, note taking and a compilation of both manual and electronic review and coding of themes and meanings. It is important to acknowledge the unique goals of Tribal community practices in adapting other analytic tools that would be relevant and effective for making inquiries and discoveries about such programs providing Native youth empowerment.

The methodology used here is similar to classic phenomenology but also considers an adapted Indigenous inquiry using talking circles and note taking along with semi-structured interviewing processes to inform my analysis of experiences from Tribal settings (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Bevan, 2014). Indigenous inquiry can involve considering and accepting knowledge about experiences lived and transported by storytelling across time, usually associated with place. It is with much respect that I engage with communities and allow their authentic voice to arrive to me for my own individual analysis. Also, it is my hope that I can discover a nuance that may provide for future avenues to gather experiences for value in promoting decisions or promising practices that are effective for Native people. Participants are self-identified as leaders in

adoption or implementation within the Tribal communities on behalf of each unique

sovereign entity. A challenge of this inquiry is the understanding of influential

experiences in developing successful youth empowerment interventions, especially those

that are protective and promote traditions and culture in local community settings.

Coding strategies include considering analysis of the variables or facilitators and barriers

that promote program development, hinder progress or even may have led to the

abandonment or reassignment of any project. I gather information about all decisions

made in the course of programming from planning to development successes and failures,

without judgement on that issue. Phenomenological methods extract meaning of actions

or interactions that happen to people in unique situations and provide processing for

which we can assign meaning to their experience (Moustakas, 1994). Tribal communities

hope to develop successful programs with community-committed goals especially for

youth empowerment while also maintaining and promoting sovereign and self-

determined actions strengthening access and use of each unique culture.

   **Reduction**. An important element for the 'reduction' of each interview is the

movement from content of past actions to the action itself, from conscious and

unconscious claiming of memorable experiences. The use of semi-structured questions

rather than closed questions are intended to elicit the formulation of wide arrays of

resulting recollection that is more directed to the experiential state of memories from

interviews. Wide-open, non-judgmental questions are directive but not aiming

participants in any direction. Participants construct the elements of their experiences from

both pre-conscious and conscious efforts that form the basis of narratives used in

reducing content into the final analysis.

Construction of structural qualities of experience are developed from *structural themes*, those clusters of structural qualities driven from roles and conditions that employ universal structures as themes, time, space, relationships to self and others, intentions and concerns for what is the experience perceived (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Individual structural descriptions are the integration of structural memory and remembered themes cleaved into an individual description of each experience, while composite structural descriptions show integration of all individual descriptions into a universal description of experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The bracketing and reduction become the analytic tools I will use to gather experiences and unique memories from my participants (Moustakas, 1994). Structured but plain language questions is an important strategy required to get to the point of highlights of the participants' natural experiential claims. This will allow for responses that avoid the shortsighted memory claims that may not easily be brought forward as extracted perception. Phenomenology is adequate in that it allows for a methodological reduction of individual lived experiences to take place in the data-analysis portion of the research (Creswell, 1998). Bracketing information is simply the means for which information relevant to the inquiry is captured from the immense amount of information that is derived from each interview (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing for my purposes is the simple retention of the dominant elements of relational bits of information.

Invariant themes appearing as not repeating, overlapping components of thoughts are clustered in themes. Repetitive themes may arise from similar situations and conditions from different tribal organizations due to the nature of political, social or cultural values present. Individual textural descriptions could include descriptions about thematic

elements experienced separate and as distinctly different. Composite textural description are those that occur from integrating all the individual textural descriptions into the universal thematic description. Thoughts and perceptions of significant experiences could be thematic or composite in nature. Imaginative variation includes the gathering of varied possibilities in meaning while considering varied perspectives of the experience, or, coming from different points of view, opposing meanings from various roles. Free thought variations are free perceptions of experience given the possibilities and structural dynamics that evoke texture or the how and why to each experience. The preceding paragraph contains adapted thoughts and phenomenological elements from Moustakas (1994) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) that seem to work well for my bracketing the main points of interview narrative data.

Synthesis of composite textural and structural experiences reflect the composite descriptions as the venue to develop a synthesized version of the meanings behind the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) suggests, "The understanding of meanings beginning with Epoche, going into reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis is necessary to conduct phenomenological research inquiries. This process is used in the investigation of human experience in the derivation of knowledge or understandings from a state of un-biased consciousness" (p. 180).

**Qualitative validity**. Attempts to achieve validity is through analysis of each experience by gaining the understanding of each individual experience being close to the meaning of the descriptions given in the interview (Hodge & Limb, 2009a, 2009b). Examples of interviews as methods in research signifies the effects of the actual event or action, yet remains quantified as data when either triangulated or checked by participant

agreement of some sort within the data (Creswell, 2014). Even in the hard sciences, instrumentation gathers the data with meaning even though the scientist does not have access to the actual event or action. Without the microscope, we, as humans cannot see the bacteria. The validation occurs between the link of the theory and the action of using the instrument. The interview itself constitutes a second person examination that contains a certain amount of subjectivity. This subjectivity is not reducible to objectivity but remains a commitment worthy of address (Creswell, 2014). I am not interested in any singular objects, but rather any descriptions of items that surround the sphere of experience gathered from each interview. It is difficult to return to the experience in straight lines of retrospective gathering, rather like a dream, when dug up by conscious and unconscious embodiments of the original experience or memory of the original experience (Moustakas, 1994). Interviewing involves some form of eidetic variation that is commonly a traditional tool for phenomenological inquiry (Hoffding & Martiny, 2015). Using the imagination and emotional thought to conjure up the meaning of things, putting aside the non-essential parts of experience is the goal for each interviewer in accessing as much related information as possible. For most inquisition, memory does not stand as only one finite version, instead has multiple descriptions obtained during the interview process. Each indirect variation is not necessarily expressed by the participant in concrete concepts but can be given in conceptual interpretations unique to that particular individual in their unique situation or environment (Hoffding & Martiny, 2015). What I seek is the mental and emotional recollections to underlying meaning. As a Native person conducting research, I suggest that the interview should reveal a form of knowledge, revealed as it has significance to the participant. A participant's knowledge is

unique because it is embodied and embedded within the confines of each experience and is driven from their own particular environment and roles (Leston, Crisp, Lee & Rink, 2019).

**Interrater consensus agreement**. Inductive, interpretive phenomenological case inquiry has rigor in the capacity to amass many textual sources of diverse and unique thematic and structural qualities from the narrative data. The deductive, post-positivist rationale is more of a hypothesis where the data support a claim made from questions driving the inquiry. The interrater reliability consensus agreement will provide a measure of consensus agreement in the coding process preparing data for analysis (Harris, 2006). This process ensures quantitative comfort for reliability in analyzing data. The use and assistance of a volunteer doctoral student's manually coding a small sample of the written interview answers provides this consensus. Interview data is entered into the coding software and then integrated with the other data, such as confidential notes taken during collection phases.

Within the framework of this research method, I believe that the lived personal experience in their respective social world may only have minimal intrinsic meaning, based on the individual's roles and social flux of community. Meanings negotiated within the social fabric in which they reside arrive for me as narratives from varied parts of community. Participants share them to illustrate these experiences with the goal toward understanding while gaining a positive outlook in the work they perform.

**Ethical Considerations**

I have applied the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oregon. With this in mind, there will be several steps taken to make certain that the privacy and protection of study participants. A protocol and letter of informed consent provides and ensures that participants are protected. This includes getting permission from the University IRB prior to beginning any process of collecting data. Participants who volunteered to participate were notified via e-mail about the goals of the study as well as how data collection, analysis, and storage methods are used in the inquiry. Prior to conducting an interview, every participant consents to volunteering, signifying his or her desire to participate in the study (see Appendix C). Additionally, each participant had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants may review the written transcript from their interview at any point until the end of the study in order to amend or add additional statements they feel might be reasonable to the value of the inquiry.

Consideration to inform participants about the process of data collection, security, and storage is explained upon request. Recordings from the interviews and transcriptions will be stored in a password protected laptop in the office of the researcher. All information is held in a laptop for travel to and from the University, deleted from all sources including memory devices and computers at the conclusion of the study. Written transcripts were shredded after analysis. All personal interviews (data) are confidential, only used by the corresponding assigned number, without using names, addresses or

other identifiable items. I will not use names of Tribes, Tribal communities or names of

organizations without the expressed knowledge and interest in doing so by participants.

# CHAPTER IV
## RESULTS

Obtaining data and narrative interviews during the height of an international pandemic was a major challenge. Another challenge in this inquiry process entailed carefully understanding participant's words and cultural nuances, and then qualitatively interpreting even the most subtle meanings through consideration of each 'authentic' voice that arrived alongside the many other significant distractions. Working on this collection of narratives, I thought it necessary to be patient in acquiring stories while navigating methods I learned for doing this research. Despite success or failure of my own findings and depending on the many choices of research samples, culture-infused Tribal empowerment programming continues to grow, expand and gain efficacy towards community goals. There are so many more examples today in both promising practices and practical applications. This all leads to the possibility of sharing these examples with future scientists and other Native American research teams so that vital and robust techniques and methods of action will pervade. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the division of Administration for Native Americans (ANA) continue to grow examples of positive community interventions of all types, scope and landscapes including those in economic, social and sovereign government actions. Political gains in recent years are small but steady in producing navigable landscapes for Tribes securing their own databases and destinies.

I did not decide on only one of the many Indigenous research methods, instead I chose to see spaces where similar and consistent techniques could be places of finding

my pathway to meaning. In doing so, I chose phenomenology as a method that closely resembles Native American storytelling. Although dissimilar in design and structure, they both speak to the extraction of meaning from narratives of story and memory. As a Native person, I seek ways to engage research that has meaning, but also to reclaim ways that will ethically extract available knowledge, often ways for which either have not been used or at least not for a long time. Obtaining holistic and complete conversation during each interview is a tricky process. A neutral but interested stance is a necessary starting point while becoming sensitive to changes in direction that are not useful, or defined or too limiting in scope.

*Table 4.1 Structure of Interview Questions*

| Phenomenological Attitude | Approach | Structure | Method | Example |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Epoche' | Accept | Contextualize | Descriptive Question | "Tell me about how…" |
| Reduction | Reflexive Critical | Apprehend Phenomena (natural) | Structural | "Tell me about this particular…" |
| Analysis | Active Listening | Clarify each thought and phenomena for variation | Imaginative Results crafted for bias-free meaning | "Tell me or describe how your experience led to…" |

A strategy that I used included my thinking about the content for interview questions begins from phrases such as:

Think to the time when…
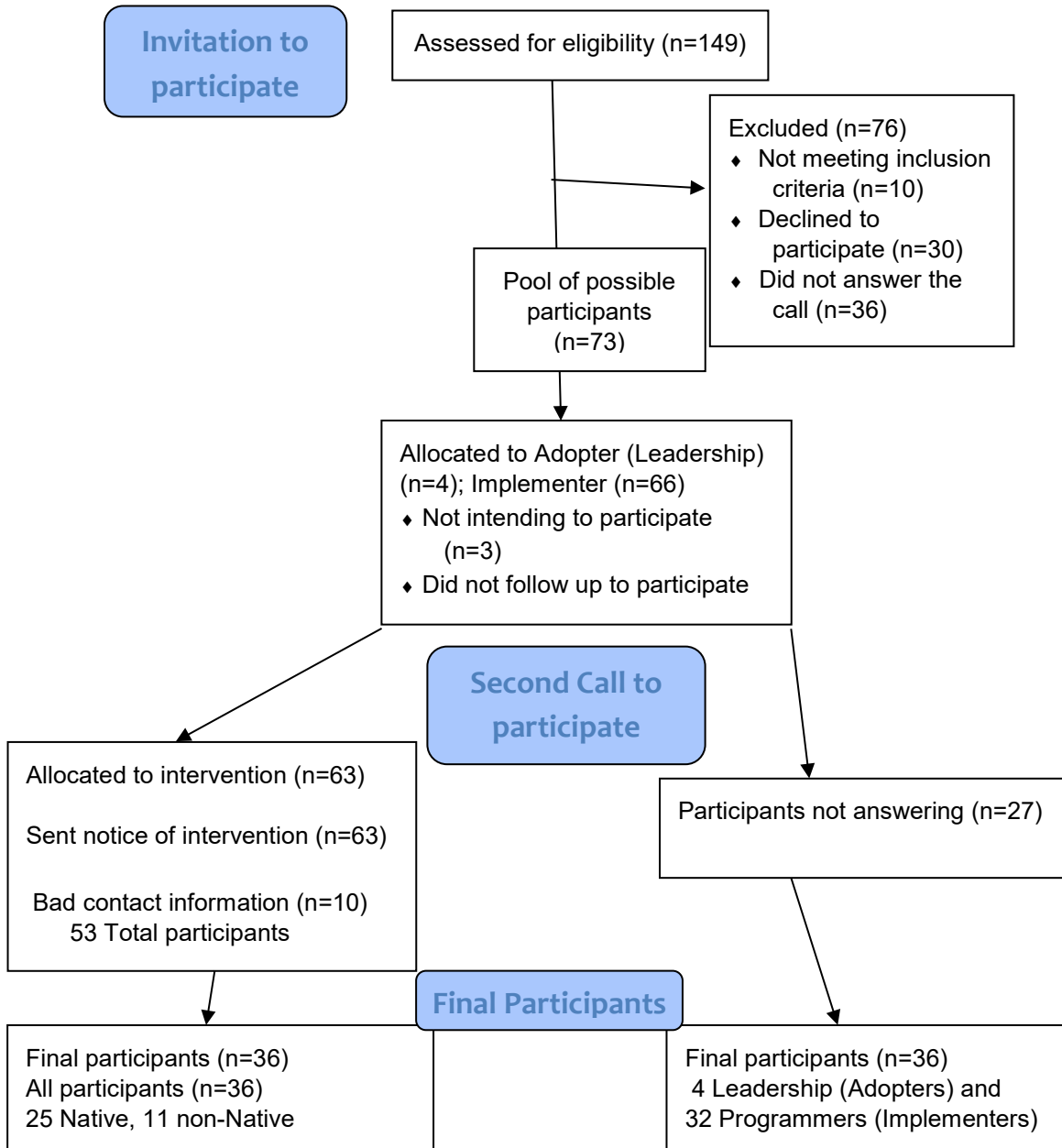
Tell me about what…was like for you…

Describe in detail about your experience of…

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I engage in the Chahta Yakni Way, which is a voice that resonates with those who comprehend the Chahta method of non-biased conversation in the Choctaw culture. I utilize direct personal, spiritual experience in juxtaposition to that of any number of other methods. I also seek to provide data from experience that includes the spirit of meaning behind conversations. The nature of capturing spirit and energy in this way is the capture of authentic essence of experience. This is the empirical attitude I attempt in the way of engaging others in their own search for completeness of experience. Deloria (1999) did not believe that interactions of the story should be time-bound, instead should have parabolic characteristics in meanings discovered by reflection without historic sharpness. This entails a recipe that includes spirit. The Zuni utilize stories are not simply heard, but also 'seen' (LaFromboise, Howard-Pitney, 1995; LaFromboise & Lewis, 2008). With this in mind, I can engage with and around non-native research and researchers without risk of mis-appropriation and commodification of both process and product. I can focus on the intelligibility and legitimacy of technique even as novel or different yet it gives voice and meaning often ignored or misunderstood. My responsibility is for the acknowledging and uplifting of all scholars who reflect the native or Indigenous values with their academic work. I am inspired to write and use narratives that reflect ethics and Indigenous protocols of knowledge in ways that are resistant to formation by colonial or western academic production. My program advisors have allowed me immense latitude and understanding serving the needs and goals of the Indigenous student and models of thinking which centers decolonization and gives voice to those ancestral epistemologies and knowledge protocols of our ancestors.

**Participants**.  Of the original pool of 149 potential volunteer participants, 76

potential volunteers chose not to participate or could not be contacted or denied

becoming a participant for other various reasons. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the

participant acquisition for this inquiry.

*Figure 4.2*   Participant Flow Diagram



**Invitation to participate**

Assessed for eligibility (n=149)

Excluded (n=76)
- Not meeting inclusion criteria (n=10)
- Declined to participate (n=30)
- Did not answer the call (n=36)

Pool of possible participants (n=73)

Allocated to Adopter (Leadership) (n=4); Implementer (n=66)
- Not intending to participate (n=3)
- Did not follow up to participate

**Second Call to participate**

Allocated to intervention (n=63)

Sent notice of intervention (n=63)

Bad contact information (n=10)
   53 Total participants

Participants not answering (n=27)

**Final Participants**

Final participants (n=36)
All participants (n=36)
25 Native, 11 non-Native

Final participants (n=36)
 4 Leadership (Adopters) and
 32 Programmers (Implementers)

Many original training attendees could not be contacted due to changing or leaving employment or contact information that was not correct. Some participants were secondary or replacement employees trained in their current job by an original workshop attendee. Several participant's decided not to participate due to the fact they thought their experience was minimal and not valuable for this inquiry. Some potential volunteers could not participate due to the complications from the pandemic. The final data pool consisted of thirty-six participants who agreed to participate and have further contact in sharing their experiences via phone interview or written letter answering the interview questions. Twenty-nine participants agreed that it would be easier and more effective to have oral interviews. Seven volunteers agreed to some form of written answer to questions about their experiences.

**Semi-structured interviews**. Interviewing is the single way I used to gather data organized to obtain thematic descriptions of participant's experience. The narrative acquired provides me a conduit to understand and compile differences and complexities of each story and storyteller's experience. Using analysis of narrative, I wish to explore the nuances of everyone's unique and complex experiences. It is also my hope that the narrative inquiry fits well into the overall phenomenological methodology and tradition that focuses in on and gives voice to Native culturally identified lived experiences of those who are often marginalized or reside in the outskirts of mainstream society.

The lived experiences derived from each narrative interview plays an important role in the understanding of how each community approached needs and desires to complete the task of culture infused intervention programming. The interviews bring out the knowledge and memories of each lived experiential claim and get to the core of what

opportunities arise out their quest to achieve desired goals. Lived experience is the 'breath of meaning' when achieved by the interview process as it assigns meaning to the phenomena of individual lived life brought about by meditation, conversation, daydreams, inspirations and any other act of recall (VanManen, 1990). My aim is to discover some of the thought processes that aim my understanding toward what it takes to become a program of unique culturally adapted prevention and intervention curriculum that is both sustainable and relevant to a positive community environment for youth and their families.

**Adopters**. The description of the participants fall into two distinct and unique categories with application to the programming of youth interventions using a culture-based approach such as the curriculum in Healing of the Canoe. The first group, adopters, are individuals who are in leadership positions in Tribal government, such as Tribal Council or other leadership prescribed to do the work of the Tribal government, who are responsible for advising and promoting programs or ensuring that the path taken in such endeavors are ones that meet the needs and goals of the community. Tribal leaders, or adopters ensure that any collaborations with stakeholders, community or support programs are relevant and worthy of such work. If adopters are not on Tribal Councils, they report to a Council for any such work. The Tribal leaders also ensure that knowledge systems, culture and curriculum is protected, promoted and becomes the project or program that is empowering for the youth, families and entire community. Sovereignty and self-determination speak to how each Tribe is responds to meeting most of the needs of their citizenry, including education, health and welfare, culture and traditional protection. All of the Tribal leaders who participated in this inquiry were adamant in their

comments in the fact that Sovereignty and self-determination both guides and drives the movement forward for almost all processing of youth interventions integrating culture, community connections and engagement, and how curriculum is synergized using both Euro-western knowledge and Indigenous local knowledge.

**Implementers**. Implementers are any individual or group of individuals who are tasked as stakeholders with the programming of youth interventions. Adaptable curriculum or interventions such as Healing of the Canoe (HOC) are well placed and ready for implementation within any cultural environment or program. Adaptable curriculum carries within it two parts, first, the evidence-based life-skill curriculum and second, the cultural element that is completely unique to the programming environment, region, and circumstance. Schools, health and welfare agencies, boys and girls clubs, recreational facilities, scouting, or other agencies have become venues and partners for implementing adaptable curriculum for Native youth. There is no one way to perform adaptation of curriculum. Every adaptation is designed on the community desires and needs adopting it. Adaptation of the HOC program in each individual Tribal culture may be integrated with, around or separate from the original curriculum. Results indicate that about one-third of communities adapted the curriculum in a way that separated the life-skills from the culture, integrating their own traditions into the youth program. One out of five communities offered experiences about their youth programming having some utilization of culture inclusive of form and factors from the original HOC curriculum. Nearly one-half of the participants only partially engaged programming from the adaptation or curriculum into existing youth programs. Schools were stakeholders in almost one-half of early efforts to create programs. Almost one-half of the communities

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delivered either after-school programs, or in-class instruction of modules, with schools

being active participants in some form of life-skill training/education. Over one-quarter

of the participants related experience about the early stages of adaptation where offerings

were partnered through the Tribal health and wellness organizations on the reservation or

off-site in either a trusted partner organization or Indian Health Service clinic/hospital. A

small number, about one in ten of the respondents, reflected that their direction entailed

workshop formats, including several two and three day workshops for youth that were

immersive in nature. Workshops were single day events or offered at regular intervals.

Workshops included resident and non-resident styles, where youth could reside on the

site of their cultural longhouse, or other structures like off-season camps, for the duration

of each project. For workshops held during the day, after-school or on weekends, a

variety of methods and choices for venues were possible, each unique to the Tribal

situations and environments or time of year.

**Narrative Analysis**

The use of the interview is the most common type of data acquisition used in

phenomenological research. Husserl's (1970) descriptive perspective suggests

fundamental concepts of phenomenology are contained within an interview process. This

study considers tools combining Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and a portion

of Moustakas (1994) ideas about the structure of inquisitive methods aimed at

investigating lived experiences. Husserl (1970) explains the 'natural attitude' as the way

in which we as humans are involved in our reality, or lifeworld. Lifeworld, to Husserl,

describes the consciousness of our reality, including the objects or experiences

surrounding it, set against any possible eventual scenes (Husserl, 1970). I use something

close to a natural attitude that considers the ease of remembering while searching

participant reflections about their own experiences. Giorgi (1997) suggests something

similar in that each experience of a natural world is reflective of the natural attitude from

participants that will benefit phenomenological research. The structure of interview

questions are open ended to the point of getting an answer of sufficient breadth to provide

opportunities for full expression and robust accounting of participant experiences (Giorgi,

1997). I discover as much meaning from each individual's expression, based on context

of content of that person's experience, by providing an approximate semi-structured

interview. While I attempt to follow a pathway of expected phenomenological techniques

and procedures, researchers such as Ricoeur (1971), suggest that although

phenomenological interviews should ensure a form of structure, there are no universal

approaches, and the researcher should be nimble and creative to remain on the pathway to

accepting meaningful data. Moustakas, (1994) suggests themes taken from each transcript

to identify and secure similarities among the meaning units.  For example, the units of

measure are whole or partial bits of information and consist of individual words or small

phrases that have significant meaning to Native American people doing this type or style

of work that lead to the thematic meaning sought for analysis. The phenomenological

attitude in figure 4.3 illustrates how this inquiry adapted tools for the Tribal narratives.

**Figure 4.3.** Phenomenological attitude for interviewing

| Attitude | Approach | Structure | Method | Example |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Epoche' Reduction Themes & Subtheme Meaning | Acceptance Of a natural Attitude | Context to the Lifeworld of Participant | Descriptive Context in questions | "Tell me about how you became involved…" |
| | Reflexive critical dialogue | Capture of Phenomena | Structure in Questions of Experiences | "Tell me about a typical day in your work…" |
| | | Clarifying of Phenomena | Imaginative Variation in Structure and Description | "Tell me how your experience might have changed with respect to…" |

In combining ideas from various sources, my task is to capture descriptive natural attitudes of each participant's lifeworld in their modes of appearance. The analysis of narratives involves collections of stories for thematic analysis using a process of categorization. Ultimately, I extract the essences of meaning from narratives obtained about each lived experience that arise from an interview. The process of analysis reconstructs a story in itself extracting meaning from experiences in each participant's memory. In analysis, I employ the reduction and imaginative variation, giving full attention to the bracketing of meaningful information for resultant thematic options.
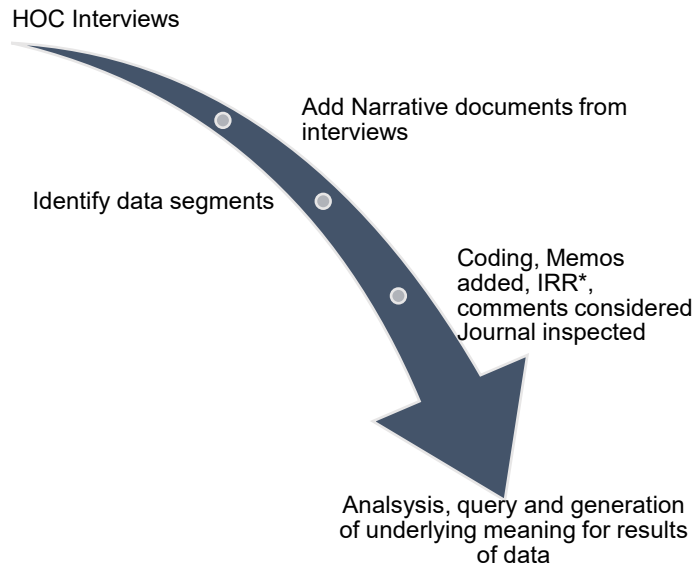
Specifically, this phenomenological study examines Tribal leadership goals and perspectives in their adoption experiences in relationship with those who have had

exposure and/or training with the HOC curriculum or have been hired as a replacement or in post-training work within a current program. It is important to emphasize that this phenomenological work does not seek to discover successes or failures; rather I seek the compilation of relevant experience and memory, whatever prevails. I am not providing judgement to any program or process success or failure. I attempt to understand the lived experiences of any complexities that surrounds Tribal communities that are involved with the empowerment of youth, the protection and dissemination of culture and tradition that each Tribe wishes for its citizens, and for the benefit of Native community collaborations that would support an ambition to perform such endeavors in the future. Utilizing a form of phenomenology provides a systematic approach to analyzing data about lived experiences and offers an understanding of the underlying structure of human thought that might provide an historical mapping to provide knowledge about important events and activities (Moustakas, 1994).

**Meaning from data**. Thematic meaning comes from the thinking and making sense of each experience, how it factors and influences present conditions and perceptions by focusing on the individual's experiential pathway. The end game for all narrative analysis in this research inquiry is to find the clear thinking.  I interpret meaning by acknowledging myself as part of the inquiry. I cannot completely extract myself in this work. The first step to achieving clarity was to gather narrative data from the interview transcriptions and place them into the qualitative software program, Atlas ti 9 (see Figure 4.4), for analysis in conjunction with phenomenological methods as described in chapter three: 1) the epoché, 2) phenomenological reduction, 3) imaginative variation, and 4) synthesis (Moustakas, 1994).

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*Figure 4.4*

Qualitative Software Flowchart



HOC Interviews

Add Narrative documents from interviews

Identify data segments

Coding, Memos added, IRR*, comments considered Journal inspected

Analsysis, query and generation of underlying meaning for results of data

My Interrater Consensus included a rating from the software program. A Krippendorf's Alpha/binary and multi-value, alpha = (0-1.0) was obtained for up to 100 codes, and yielded a value of 0.68@0.05. (Obtained from Atlas ti 9 software program computations).

**Notes**. The first step, the epoché, involved writing down any predispositions or potential bias from the researcher. Initially, all preconceived notions are set aside. I engage the epoché process by setting aside any ideas about my previous roles including my background or relationship to the process and work done on behalf of Native American youth empowerment and the creation of interventions. I set aside my personal views of any phenomenon and only focus on each interview narrative provided by the participants. In addition, I took daily journal

notes during the gathering of data in a reflective journal in order to release any

tension about my role and further cleanse any biases or preconceptions about the

various experiences of adopters and implementers or program development using

adaptations from the HOC curriculum. This journal's entries do not contain any

names, places, or identifying information that would breach any confidentiality or

anonymity of any participants of this study, but is about further conversations or

work that I may have during the compilation of data for this study. In fact, my

notes contain many elements that allow my analysis to get to the meaning behind

much of the narrative data. These notes are instrumental in the underlying feeling

of each narrative. The journal of notes also contain many topics of relevance to

Tribal communities, but very little to the significance of this inquiry. Some of the

off-topic conversations that are in the notes may not have relevance for this

inquiry, but include conversations on various topics including:

- Concerns about understanding and dissemination of Tribal use of Stimulus

  funds, American Recovery Act funds, Covid-19 mitigation strategies.

- Conversations with Tribal Government in strengthening of sovereignty

  and self-determination across their community.

- Community concerns in obtaining information to develop new

  collaborations, including Indian Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs,

  Bureau of Indian Education, Economic Development, Cultural

  Preservation and Language Revitalization, Food Sovereignty and

  Water/Treaty Rights, TERO and TANF Law.

- Concerns and issues surrounding budget Analysis, audits, HUD and other

infrastructure elements.

- How to enlist poverty reduction and financial literacy for youth.

- Conversations about business and cash flow beyond the casino.

- Concerns in balancing Tribal economic development and grants, 638
  Programs (Public Law 93-638; Indian Self-determination and Education
  Assistance Act of 1975).

- Conversations on Federal Legal Relationships, including sovereignty in
  the McGirt action and other decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court.

- How to further plan for contingencies in community action especially
  during shutdown of Federal, State and local agencies.

**Textural and Structural Description**

The textural and structural description involves an account of 'what' the
participants experienced and 'how' each individual perceives events (Creswell, 2007).
Both are necessary for the complete and robust construction of each narrative. A textural
and structural description develops though highlighting the lived experiences in the
period in time that an individual participant exposure works toward the adaptation of the
HOC curriculum. Phenomenological method suggests that the identification of any
specific thing or event at the time of a lived experience has ways to appear that are
possible in many ways. Sokolowski (2000) suggested that modes of appearance tend to
have structural and textural conditions that make for each viewpoint of even similar
experiences sometimes as vastly different. For example, a horse race can be exhilarating
for any owner or trainer who has worked hard to see this day, as each experience of a

single race will have vastly different experiential recordings according to the participant. For the winner of the race, the horse and trainer head to the winner's circle to get their photos taken and given any awards or trophy, and then taken to the receiving barn for testing (sometimes called the spit box), finally given a luxurious warm bath and a big meal with a soft clean bed. The person in second place is happy too, but for different reasons. They collect about half of the winner's share in earnings, but none of the other experiences except when they get back to their own stable. Third through fifth place also partake in the purse money to a lesser percentage. The also rans have a completely different viewpoint from the top five. The 'also-ran' horses simply go back to their stalls to try again another day. Claiming races are venues for potential 'sale of horse, whereby each horse is entered for a specific price. If any person would like to buy this horse, they are able to place a purchase ticket with certified funds placed in escrow prior the start of the race. The horse has a new owner immediately after the race, win, lose or draw. Horses have their own value by the price for which their owner is willing to 'sell' the horse the day of their race. Only similar levels of horses race each other. The results of claiming races is traumatic for some owners who have become close to these animals and know that after the race, they may not see this horse again, as ownership changes the minute the race is over. Racing claiming horses is a unique and strategically important quadrant of the horseracing industry. Not every owner and trainer can operate effectively without understanding the role of claiming horses. It takes a certain objective calm and collected demeanor to train a horse of any kind, claiming horses is even trickier. Even to the casual observer, a horseracing experience, even in one single race may seem like a universal experience, but is far from it. Just as in this study, there are no universal experiences by

the participants, even seemingly going through the very same process, project or action within their respective communities.

In this study, each participant relates their own memorable experiences driven from decisions made in the adoption of youth empowerment programming as an intervention using each unique Tribal situation and culture as a foundation. When creating any themes, the data revealed the individual descriptions of what it was like to make these decisions throughout the process, wherever they were at any particular time. Participants in this study interview to share experiences, regardless of the temporal or spatial significance to the time in which they began their experiential journey.

All of the participants revealed their own journey and experiences beginning with learning about the HOC curriculum, techniques for adaptation to their own situations, how to engage the community for support and sustainability, and how to synthesize cultural products within their Tribal community to successfully empower youth. The interview process reveals information about the research questions in this study.

**The essence.** The final analysis looks for meaning behind the themes. The final step of phenomenology is to seek the 'essence', which is a composite look at the textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007). This universal essence is "a grasp of the very nature of the thing" that we seek to discover (van Manen, 1990, p. 175). The essence of this study is a shared understanding about Tribal communities experiences in adopting and implementing adaptable Native American (or other) curriculum using their own culture as a foundation, engaging community connections that provide for sustainment, promotion and protection of both the culture and the youth in the process. The lived

experiences of adults providing these intervention programs extended beyond the Native

community and filter out into the outside world of their everyday life. The community's

concern for how to carefully engage with each other in finding valued, relational goals in

program engagements to ensure that youth grow up with knowledge of who they are, but

also where they came from. Transcripts created from recordings elucidating significant

experiences related directly to the lived phenomena of each participant during their work

around adapting youth interventions. To do this, I immersed myself in the data through

reading the transcripts several times. Identifying code words that occur many times in

narratives allow for thematic separation of information as a way to get to the meaning of

each narrative. After compiling transcripts, the software created codes. In conjunction

with this, I also obtained codes from corresponding notes in order to generate a network

of themes. The final group of codes are sub-themes. Following the coding process for all

narratives, the identification of themes and potential relevant bits of information are

considered for inspection and analysis. All recordings and transcripts are erased, deleted

and destroyed after analysis.

**Thematic categories.** The phenomenological analysis of this inquiry led to three

major themes based on 36 significant narrative statements from interviews of varied

lengths. A sample of participant quotations is provided here (see Table 4.5).

*Table 4.5*

Description (sample) of Themes and Sub-themes (n=36 respondents)

| Themes | Descriptions | Sample Quotes | Frequency, n (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Culture | local, unique | "adapted to our language…" | 16 (44%) |
| (sub) Identity | self, personal | "youth became aware…" | 32 (89%) |
| Community | overall | "needed to engage…" | 18 (50%) |
| (Sub) a. Connections | Local | "…our local health clinic" | 10 (27%) |
| (Sub) b. Connections | Regional, other | "…considering colleges" | 11 (30%) |
| Curriculum | adapted, general | "…skill based lesson plans" | 6 (17%) |
| (Sub) knowledge# | cultural | "…paddle making workshops" | 8 (22%) |
| (Sub) Knowledge* skills, | western, other | "more goal setting skills…" | 5 (14%) |

Their resulting thematic meaning for this study is included here and reflect the order of the research questions. Thematic Clusters include Culture, Curriculum and Community. Not in any specific order, sub-themes include Adoption of curriculum, adaptation of culture implementation of curriculum, barriers, facilitators, youth identity, protecting and promoting culture, community connectedness, inside and outside potential for partnerships, sovereignty and self-determination, skill based curriculum, synergy of process, stakeholder support and capacity within each community. Each of the sub-themes provide descriptions related to experiences, followed by how individuals' narrative data illuminate each theme. The purpose here is to gather enough thematic structure to obtain some 'essence of meaning' for this sample of communities. This chapter includes the compilation of meaning derived from interviews. This includes obtaining the essence of experiences focusing on adoption of 'adaptations' derived from the original HOC curriculum, how the community engaged connections, and how cultural

programming was integrated with youth empowerment interventions. I want to ensure that my thought process is as thorough as possible before finalizing any process using a qualitative analysis software program. Finally, repeating a pattern of inspection and description, I chose a thematic code. The third step, imaginative variation, sought the fundamental meaning of the phenomenon by constructing structural themes. The final step synthesized all of the textural and structural descriptions together into a combined statement of the essences. I do all of these steps within the qualitative analysis software program, in the processing my analysis.

I present the categories identified using selections from the participants' interviews and thematic narratives of understanding about their own unique curriculum adaptations:

- What are the identified themes about the integration of culture?
- Does the intersection of varied curriculum options play a significant role in project design?
- Does community involvement play a significant role in any part of project design or build?
  - How does a collaborative attitude provide a potential for the advancement of community engagements and partnerships including Tribal action partnerships and community based research partnerships?

Thematic clusters relate to and help explain meaning about the research questions in this study.

**Community Connection**

The first cluster involves the meaning and conditions that community and community connections create for atmosphere of robust support within and surrounding each unique Tribal community. I define the word community as a complex entity within and around Native communities. For the purposes of this inquiry, community entails, rural, urban, reservation, non-reservation Tribal communities, but also any loosely or tightly formed groups of stakeholders presenting, producing or projecting a youth empowerment or culturally-integrated intervention or program with Native or indigenous youth. In this case, a school that engages Native youth in an after-school program is considered a community, as is the Choctaw Nation's life-skill program in urban Durant, Oklahoma. Sub-themes dissected from narratives include suggestions about connections made outside the community such as participatory partnerships, CBPR and other forms of community support. Connections made inside each community was a predominate theme in almost all narratives. In general, there is a great concern of Tribal communities about the loss of family and community connectedness due to colonization and social and economic challenges and struggle. Community wellness drives thoughts for so many narratives as reasons for the many negative wellness outcomes in today's youth. Positive elements in narratives suggested that there are many opportunities to engage across platforms, departments, programs, organizations and with other communities. These collaborations are happening with increased efforts and improved outcomes in most cases. Many funding agencies, grant programs and even tribes themselves look to improved funding outcomes by integrating partnerships and stakeholder collaborations as changes to newer funding opportunities. With all the efforts to recognize and improve

Tribal departmental collaborations and connections, even more focus is being placed on where outside stakeholder involvement can be integral to improved youth academic, social and economic outcomes. For most Tribal communities, stakeholder engagement is now without borders and relies on the significance of the work and outcomes sought to improve and empower each community.

Sub-theme: Connectedness. Connected families and citizens in Tribal communities have long been socially and economically well. Narratives tell of shared experiences for wellness and connections for families, youth and community when there is a feeling of support for interdependent behavior involving traditional and cultural activities following the local values. Connections are often challenging to start with newcomers. Language and social differences across cultures creates some challenges, even when blood related communities are just down the road. Further challenges occur when existing forms of relationships are difficult to sustain. In my tribal work, stakeholders have greater chances for sustainment success when there are real working relations built on relevance and relational integrity. The achievement of programs is bound by capacity that goes on after the life of the funding cycles. This is the basis for sustainment. Capacity need not be bogged down by who is doing the work, but rather who will have 'ownership' of the work after all of the non-community stakeholders have gone home and the funding stream has ended or needs to be replaced. A good example might consist of the opportunity to have a youth outdoor recreation project started in partnership with an elder's program. The youth require a real reason to be in the project, while the elders require the affirmation that the youth are there for the right reasons, namely learning significant cultural heritage and life wisdom that comes from the

relationships made. Without adding a significant form of sustainable funding and resources for the elders to continue this work, this program is not easily sustainable. Maybe a third significant partner would help. What is missing in the planning stages was not immediately apparent, but soon came out of discussion and trust among stakeholders in later stages of the project. Almost immediately, this group benefits from a small program developed for youth through the Indian Health Service local clinic. The group of counselors and medical staff started to work with elders in recreating the project using more of the 'outside' resources. Within 6 months, it was beginning to be clear that this project had wings and could be sustainable. After 5 years, the program has grown to include other cultural programming and some seasonal stakeholders and school curriculum additions have made this a very robust programming for youth. Almost every narrative spoke to the need to think about ways to engage a wider network of groups, programs and individuals for a wide variety of roles. Of particular significance is how narratives related the successful empowerment coming from connections made in canoe cultures have with each other and with other necessary aids in work and play. Canoe cultures are exemplar examples that use foundational, sustained relationships made during every aspect of a canoe journey including with each canoe's construction and their care. I found that programs establishing traditional knowledge foundations similar to that of the canoe culture or any relevant traditional culture tend to accomplish at least minimal goals. Each of these situations offers ways to get though challenges and decrease barriers toward sustainment of positive outcomes.

**Sub-theme: Partnerships.** Established or newer programs have suggested viewpoints from both adopters and implementers for the necessity to have ethical and

sustained partnerships. Trust relationships are often difficult and long-term propositions to establish and maintain. Engagement takes a lengthy amount of time and effort, with staff that is often already stretched to the limits of possible tasks that can be performed. Nonetheless, each narrative suggested many different possible ways to engage in local and community partnerships. These narratives also spoke to the power and unlimited range of work that is done with stakeholders that truly are concerned together in efforts to empower youth. Challenges of sharing resources and the development of new opportunities continue to plague most Tribal communities. Cost sharing, as well as staff training and education continue to grow as communities engage with robust partnerships with colleges, universities and professional agencies. Partnerships that speak to having an increased social and cultural sensitivity toward sharing cultural knowledge seem to have an increased cultural competence in the community. Cultural sensitivity comes from cultural awareness and empathy, which comes by way of cultural knowledge and education. For me, there are few shortcuts to achieving cultural competence.  Each unique Tribal partnership has just as many different sets of challenges and opportunities to grow and prosper with advanced and modern community-based partnerships, especially those that include research collaborations with universities. The original HOC program successfully sustained a CBPR serving as a model for other communities that want to engage in collaborative opportunities with all forms of research agencies and schools. Data sovereignty is a Tribal community concern for both urban and rural Tribes. Who will retain ownership of research data and subsequent properties, such as publications? The answers to these are quickly changing course to include those Tribal communities and individuals on research publication and property. These opportunities

gather strength as time and experience move these positive collaborations forward.

**Sub-theme: Community reach.** Interview narratives suggested that obtaining and retaining relationships and partner stakeholders offer challenges and opportunities that matter. In many situations, finding new ways to perform outreach are getting results where there were significant barriers even in established but challenged relationships. Accepting change that is beneficial is difficult in certain situations. Finding and assessing the necessary elements to change is often a challenge even when looking to outreach program leadership and those who will benefit from successful programs. Youth outreach continues to plague many Tribal communities, especially in urban settings. Even with some rural, isolated communities, there are significant challenges to engage youth today, with the many forms of digital distractions and social media. Some families, especially traditional families and youth engage repeatedly and consistently with many of the cultural programs, but securing youth previously not engaged is challenging. In many of my own Tribal programming sessions, there was always a need to 'recruit' youth previously not engaged by the use of new incentives or marketing techniques and activities that appeal to youth. Tobacco abuse prevention or teen pregnancy prevention is a challenging curriculum to deliver, but when it can be delivered with a field trip to Cirque du Soleil, you may have more outreach. Changing the program, activities, venue and curriculum often leads to more outreach success. Better yet, a social and cultural exchange with two distant and different youth cultural programs can be quite robust. Alaska Native youth traveling and exchanging their culture with California Tribal communities (or vice versa), for example, can offer a significant and long relationship that may endure the lifetime of these youth. Narratives that suggest an ability to accept

change rapidly, adapt to adversity, or simply enlist an attitude and ability to accept change for quality improvement have good outreach outcomes. Accepting change as well as accepting assistance is a challenge that needs to be overcome in meeting outreach goals. Community reach covers as much distance as any program can envision.

**Sub-theme: Sovereignty.** Sovereignty is the beginning and foundation for all programming and community interaction. Tribal political sovereignty is at the root of all work done by a Tribe's government on behalf of all Native people. Finding novel ways to integrate Tribal government's policies for strengthening youth, families and communities are always at the top of the list of needs. The need to effectively produce programmatic activities cannot be taken for granted, as erosion of sovereignty and self-determination is always in the environment. Colonization still affects Tribal communities in a variety of powerful and damaging ways, but everyone does not always understand the workings of sovereignty in the same way. Sovereignty remains a consistently legal, political and socio-economic grounding for all of the work being done for the benefit of every Tribal citizen. The challenge is in when bolstering sovereignty, education and advocacy in Tribal programs including teaching how to sustain Tribal cultural conditions despite the many oppressive outside influences. Barriers sometimes challenge efforts to remain engaged with stakeholders who are empowered to protect Tribal sovereignty. Education to strengthen and empower political or legal sovereignty is an important and essential element for all adoptions, especially in successfully adapting outside interventions for use within the community. Youth councils understand the need to be fully educated on political sovereignty today more than ever given the increasing amount of negative forces on its citizens and environments. Today, more than ever, Tribal communities understand

that protecting and keeping sovereignty strong needs to be an integral part of every community's efforts in order to retain the tools necessary to provide for the future.

**Sub-theme: Self-determination.** Self-determination is the action and civic activation of community derived from sovereign Tribal governments. Self-determination facilitates growth within each community driven by local decisions about policy and practices that are most necessary and empowering. Self-determination ensures control and decisions about current and future stakeholder involvement are set in place with the betterment of the entire community in mind. It relies on engagement with ethical and respectful neighbors and partners working toward similar goals. It is an empowered way to ensure that local decisions made by Tribal councils have the best interest of an entire community. Respected leadership develops policy and practice that sustains revolving legal and political power through the levels of departmental activities that include the empowered development of youth projects and programs.

**Sub-theme: Capacity.** The need to accomplish and sustain each community's production and engagement of effective youth intervention programs are a considerable concern provided in many narratives. Capacity is often more than funding, and in many cases, is discussed as those elements of programming other than costs or the ability to pay for them. The acquisition and retention of tools necessary for successful implementation of cultural programs are important. Canoe building tools are both expensive and proprietary. Many cultural adaptations see challenges from a reduced availability or access to regions or areas that have necessary materials. Labor is constrained by the loss of our knowledge keepers. These tools and resources have an important traditional significance to each Tribal community. Basketry, weaving and beading equipment are

similarly traditional in nature, training and skills in these 'arts' are difficult and time consuming to acquire. Today, many Tribal communities utilize and support novel ways to protect what is left of traditional ways marginalized by oppressive political and social forces. Many Tribal programs created operate as generational; in other words, have programming that entails multi-generations attending, ensuring that every family can have a passing of these traditions from elders to youth. In addition, multi-generational programs are family oriented, which gives an empowering activity to the community, which also has preventive and protective characteristics. Tribes that adapt to creative and effective methods find effective ways to empower capacity beyond funding and are able to have sustainment for programming. Community projects that go beyond the initial funding stream are thought of as more successful because these projects can become adaptable with other available resources and funds beyond grants and local economic sources like casino revenue. Youth capacity is growing with the increase in youth leadership councils. The integration of multiple programs and departments adds to the depth of resources and capacity in some cases. Many new programs need initial support due to the fact that there are no available funding streams beyond the ability for each separate program or project to secure their own grants. Some Tribal communities go the extra step and initialize funding and resources after the initial grant period, which gives each project the chance to prove itself worthwhile. Effective projects come before the Council who then may offer to provide at least partial budgets to operate in subsequent years.

**Curriculum**

The second thematic cluster involves curriculum and programming for youth

empowerment. Within each Tribal community, there is an indeterminate amount of unique conditions to develop curriculum. Some citizens speak to how integration of outside sourced curriculum are used with existing local (Indigenous) knowledge to promote the conditions for programming that seeks to develop youth empowerment. Community partnerships exist in some cases or are created using middle through high schools. The participation from local universities or colleges using CBPR or other frameworks is intended on improving the intervention outcomes while providing necessary supportive conditions to improve Tribal efforts. Each community has unique capacity and conditions requiring unique action. Nearly two-thirds of participants (63%) suggested that community engagement was an important early goal for their adoption of any program's curriculum. Sub-themes include the use of 'other' forms of information and knowledge for youth, culture-based delivery models in workshops, schools and other venues. In addition, traditional events that occur regularly in the community, lack of capacity to engage with other curriculum providers, such as transportation and logistics, funding or other staffing shortages may be challenges to launching and sustaining activities and projects.

**Sub-theme: Adoption.** Adoption of any program, intervention or activity is usually challenging for a community and needs to go through leadership, such as the Tribal Council before any action or planning can begin with internal departments or programs. After initial training, planning the adoption of intervention programs from a curriculum like HOC can be a considerable challenge in certain cases. Adoption requires input from community members, elders and other significant citizenry before planning or implementation. Sponsorships should consider the ethical local knowledge before

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appropriate collaborating can work on project development. Working relationships with a local Indian Health Service or Tribal clinics can be robust partners that have the opportunity to engage in prevention and empowering skill-based activities for youth of all ages. Culture from traditional programs are foundational for youth in gaining knowledge and acquiring passed on skills. These traditional skills worked into youth programs have increased demonstrably in recent years, as they seem to have an increased outreach and attendance including academic outcomes for many age groups. Some urban youth in middle and high schools are not as consistent in attendance for cultural events, even though there are those who attend regularly. Peer pressure beyond the boundaries of the Tribal community exert forces to conform to non-Tribal and sometimes deleterious social norms. Despite less than positive environments, youth carve their own pathway to wellness, often without the need to know more about their own history or culture; many seek to blend in to the world outside their own Tribal culture. Those youth who fall prey to negative choices may or may not follow their culture and identify traditionally. Not all youth identify with their own culture or traditions in the same way and are able to obtain their wellbeing in a myriad of other ways. Sports, music, academics and leisure pursuits are also programs that offer support for youth empowerment and development. Cultural programs that allow for differences and see diversity of wellbeing as positive, eliminate judgement and are more flexible in how resources in the community can be used for the benefit of youth and families. From my inquiries with urban Native leaders and programmers, unwanted influence and judgmental attitudes from adults turns off youth even before a program can begin. In many communities, youth understand and have belief systems in place that either support or reject adult intervention into their lives.

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Many youth simply want to be left alone to make their 'own' decisions about what their life choices are. In some communities where oversight is limited or not existent, youth can often not have the support to navigate the many challenges presented during their development. Cultural activities can be a great beginning for the integration of skill or behavior acquisition for youth in all age groups. Leadership decisions about adopting school-based curriculum that seeks to improve academic outcome are a primary strategic request for many participants. Decisions about which style of program curriculum to adopt is another important step. Successful partnerships exist or are procured in many cases using the existing capacity of local schools. Venues such as workshop or after-school formats are used in about one-half of my samples where these programs used local cultural programming with a great latitude of flexibility and resources to engage successful and sustainable outcomes.

**Sub-theme: Skill knowledge.** Identification of appropriate curriculum and skill pedagogy is a significant part of the planning and development in adaptable strategies. Cultural programs and current or existing traditional programs utilize elders and other knowledge keepers thought to be of great social importance to youth and family identities in healthy communities. Planning, collaboration and implementation of youth programs that contain local traditional knowledge is very important. Identifying appropriate skills is one of the most primary components in planning interventions. Which program is best suited to implement the skill-based intervention in synergy with Tribal culture-based programs or departments? Can schools or other agencies that work explicitly with youth offer the relevant environment for such programming? Most Tribal communities consider working within the scope of each agency that can implement both cultural and academic

curriculum. The goal is to empower youth for academic achievement, while instilling a sense of cultural identity, in order to add growth opportunities for every young person. In many cases, wellness and development are important links to culture and traditional identities. Thought to be a significant and traditional way to protect loss of knowledge held by elders, important collaborations made within the community support the facilitation of passing forward knowledge and skills to the next generation. Generational prevention and intervention programs such as beading, weaving, basketry and others are now at great risk of being lost to time, and as such are good component parts to newly created adaptations to interventions.

**Sub-theme: Collaborations.** An important finding from the narratives suggested combinations of culture and traditional activities are necessary to create a robust youth empowering program. Combinations using Tribal and non-Tribal programs that can occur within or outside of the community and have elements that make intervention programming both complex and relevant. In addition, a significant function in Tribal communities is the collaboration of departments and structures necessary for the successful development of youth programs. For example, inter-Tribal department collaborations with education, prevention (health), culture, environmental, housing and education in almost any combination aid in sharing programming tasks that makes sense and may have long-term benefits. There are successful programs that occur in both urban and rural communities suggesting that diversity and differences matter and their inclusion into programs create strong and sustainable activities and projects for youth. Adaptations in communities are similar to early HOC research findings in many of the narratives I received regarding the positivity and efficacy of combining cultural activities with

prevention or behavior management curriculum (Donovan, et.al, 2016). Collaboration has an influential impact on how relationships empower the development of programs. CBPR and other complex relationships illustrate the enhancement of integrity and efficacy for community-connected youth programs. Canoe culture, as with many Native American cultures, entail a complex array of traditional skill development, protection of resources while promoting knowledge for youth development. Relational elements of culture and traditions can be effectively combined to create empowering skills for youth to learn and use throughout their lives. Combining the efforts of departments like education, prevention, natural resources with culture illustrate Tribal community involvement and environments with an ability to work together creating sustainable spaces for integrating adaptable interventions.

**Sub-theme: Partners.** A significant finding from the narratives suggest the need for discovering and retaining suitable stakeholders and partner agencies that can help do the work of providing youth interventions. Stakeholders are very important resources chosen with careful consideration from the confines of local communities. Stakeholders share similar goals for the work being done, but often are not coming to the table with similar values, policies or practices. Involvement of many differing partner resources requires the skill to sew together the many parts to create a holistic working unit. Project or program partners come from a variety of places within each community, and in a few cases outside the community. More often, new partnerships grown beyond the scope of the local community and have extended 'reach' to program component parts that are both viable and relevant. In certain cases, resource development and funding sources come from inter-Tribal departments such as economic development or casino revenue sharing.

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In other cases, participation from outside organizations support programs with necessary resources are important partners. Tribal business and enterprise have become effective partners for youth programs. There is potential for curriculum components that entail business, leadership or other forms of fiscal education that fills gaps where schools have no offerings. Financial literacy or business planning needs are important issues that Tribal governments can no longer ignore because these skills are no longer included in core school curriculum. Because of budget cuts in similar programs where I worked, I needed to create my own financial literacy and entrepreneur-training curriculum for use with youth in all age groups. Community-based partnerships offer effective tools for challenges seen by Tribal communities in creating collaborative working partners. Table 4.6 illustrates the narrative suggestions for meeting challenges with CBPR approaches.
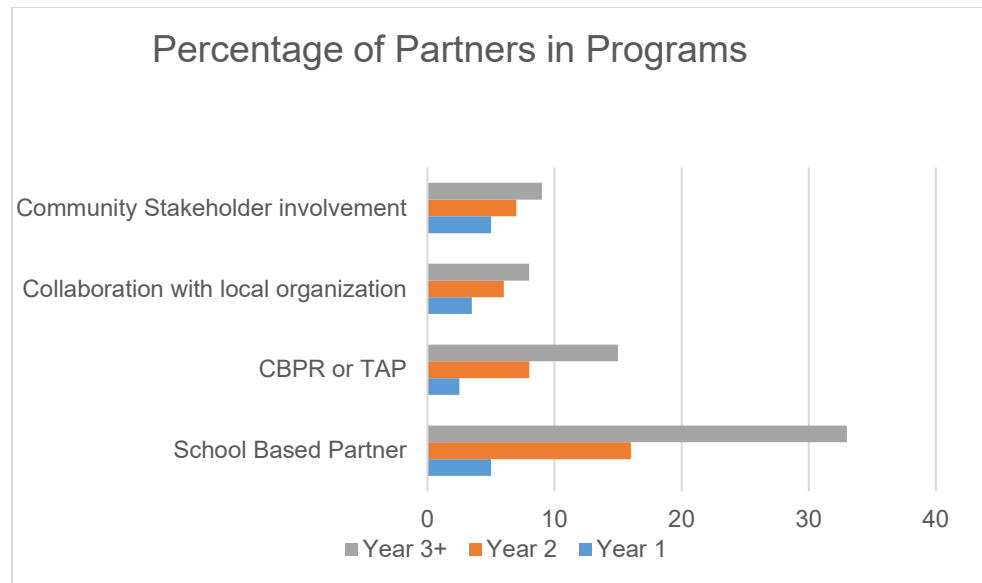
Table 4.6.

| Challenge | CBPR Effectiveness |
|---|---|
| Evidence of only one dominant knowledge in the project. | Create space for hybrid or synergy of all knowledge including cultural humility and advocacy. |
| Language is incompatible or not understood among the stakeholders. | Broadens discourse; allows 'new' language use created by advice and input from all stakeholders. |
| Business as usual for dominant power agency in the collaborative. | Shifts power through omni-directional learning and sharing of knowledge, resources and respect. |
| Sustainment challenges with ongoing project. | Sustainment grows through real need and the agency with sharing of existing resources for localized ownership with increased capacity development. |
| Trust | Using combinations of shared knowledge and respectful engagement creation of long-term partnerships providing for outcomes met and mutual benefits. |

**Culture**

Tribal communities need to engage efforts of all stakeholders to plan and program effective ways to identify youth intervention programs at schools and after-school workshops using traditions and culture unique to their respective Tribes (Chu, Huynh & Area'n, 2012). As an example, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma utilize behavioral health services and outside stakeholders to augment culture (equine therapy) with adapted (adaptable) curriculum to empower youth to stave off negative behavior and empower youth confidence and self-esteem in order to provide for better academic outcomes (Choctaw Nation, 2010). In addition to the social/emotional support, equine assisted therapies also provide a significant amount of physical and physiological influence that support and improve motor skills in many types of challenged abilities for youth and adults (Collin, 2012).

Sub-themes from the aspect of culture include culture-based programs for youth, engaging elders' support and programs for early education, preservation, promotion and protection. More and more Tribal communities are now combining youth programming with culture and tradition that both links the youth to their heritage, but also provides a unique option for protection and engagement with the culture. Over at least a 3-year period, my sample of narratives provided a look at growth of cultural integration in programming youth empowerment. The percentage and significant use of partners over a period of years is shown in Figure 4.7.

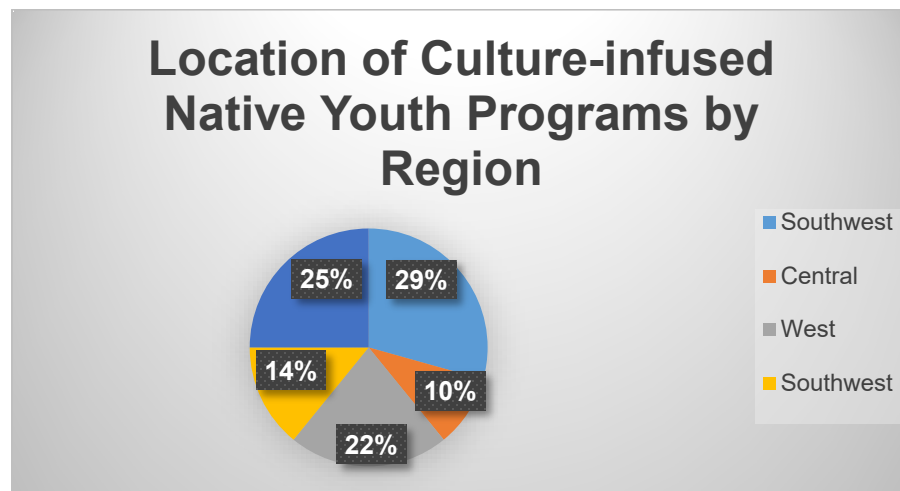*Figure 4.7*. Partners used in youth programs, percentage by years



**Sub-theme: Adaptation.** The discussion, planning and need for adoption is one of the first decisions made by many of the research participants queried for this project. Quite importantly to this inquiry, adaptation considering culture was the most defined topic in the narratives. Adaptation of any curriculum, program, project or activity for the role as a Native American culturally-based program is not easily planned or administered with everyone on board from the beginning. Many programs have start and stop initial steps, with several needing to rethink the parameters that are necessary to engage local knowledge into a robust youth intervention. In addition, the coupling, combining of disparate knowledge systems, different community values, and the myriad of ethical considerations any community and their stakeholders have are considerable challenges. Nonetheless, each narrative suggested a positive approach, mostly positive results and in the end an even greater understanding to the wide range of possible venues, culture choices, and settings that make this a remarkable opportunity to adapt other forms of

evidence-based information into synergetic relationships with local knowledge and tradition. Many, if not most narratives suggested that either by beginning or getting back to the needs assessment is most necessary for planning an effective project. Looking at values, ethical relations, and appropriate stakeholders to help with adaptation is part of this process. Whether discussions are about canoe culture, weaving, basketry, beading, horse or any other culture, all suggested that whatever choice was made, it would entail programming that could be implemented provided most factors could be accounted for. Adapted models of intervention's start-up occur in a variety of settings, including schools, health clinics, and churches, community centers or homes, wherever capacity exists to do the work of connecting Tribal traditions, youth and skill-based intervention knowledge. Many narratives suggest a case where youth wish to be in convenient and comfortable environs where they feel safe and respected. Often, these are in places that adults do not realize during planning. For example, a respected elder with a small number of horses often works with the community on holiday season activities. These horses and their elder owner became an initial contract and trial period working with youth on equine activities for a wellness and prevention program. These activities led to the eventual consideration of having an Indian Relay team that could compete locally, and eventually even regionally or nationally against other Tribes (Ewers, 1980). The coupling of skill-based substance abuse prevention and teen pregnancy prevention with the equine activities worked well together, with some initial youth prevention contracts funded in part by Tribal TANF funds. Youth positive identity and self-awareness is a concern for this community that struggles with high rates of teen pregnancy and substance abuse. Can programs and projects aimed to offset colonization's effects on wellbeing improve

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outcomes? Some of these outcomes include the highest rates of suicide in these age

groups. The states where our narratives had culture-based programs for youth provided

some significance in robust efforts toward positive youth programs. Figure 4.8 below

illustrates the finding I found in my data regarding culture-infused youth programs by

region.

*Figure 4.8.* Percentage of Culture-Based Interventions by Region



**Sub-theme: Promoting culture.** A sensitive and delicate conversation in many

Tribal communities i.e. the passing of culture from elders to youth has long been valued

and effective in transforming knowledge, skills and traditions. The question of balancing

promotion while protecting presents in ways that disseminate the appropriate traditional

knowledges at the proper place and time. Promoting culture for the next generation is a

goal and value that came out of many of the narratives. Promotion of culture and tradition

includes classes for families, youth (as prevention programs), community events with

elders, stakeholders like schools Title VI and Title VII programs, and many other

community driven connections that support and drive positive empowerment for youth

and their families. Efforts to integrate youth development with culture such as language revitalization begins early in most cases in Even Start and Head Start adding immersive strength and sustainable growth of original languages. These projects are necessary for communities that are considering the high risk of losing culture, language and traditions. Choctaw health services and other Tribes like it effectively have great success with youth programs as partners in culture-based activities (Baker, 2004). Identifying the positive ways to promote culture while instilling positive learning opportunities during youth development remains a strong component in all planning. Some narratives suggest that they would use their stories, songs, dance and certain ceremonies and festive traditions as a framework for helping to deliver prevention curriculum and skill training for youth. Since we have started reclaiming our aboriginal territories and traditions, we have also instructed our youth in historical community wellness practices, so that they can understand and carry on traditions into adulthood, understand their kinship clan and language or simply be proud of their own heritage. Tribes that protect valued knowledge from elders and other knowledge-keepers become more easily adapted to our new programs, which can also promote a positive wellbeing for everyone in the community. As a protective factor, this is a trusted way to promote youth identity and resilience using culture.

**Sub-theme: Protecting culture.** Protecting knowledge, tradition and culture from the myriad ways of mis-appropriation and commodification of a community's knowledge is a significant finding from conversations about culture and youth. In most of the narratives obtained, protection of culture and tradition is different from promoting culture. Navigation of social protocols that are unique to each Tribal Nation is a sensitive

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conversation. Spirituality, traditional knowledge, techniques and language are often not easily found, disseminated or shared without the expressed permission of each Tribe (Limb & Hodge, 2008; Cross, 2001). Protecting knowledge and tradition is the responsibility of community citizens in my Tribe, as it is in many others. In addition, elders feel certain responsibilities in communicating the expected protocols for many traditions and ceremonies, which are often very different from the shared knowledges that get used on a daily basis. Community stakeholders need to be on the same page for all forms of planning and dissemination of products used for the empowerment of youth that engage culture and curriculum synergies (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Community can be a very powerful agent for effective change in how these productions occur. Many of the narratives discussed ways that changes are being made in post-pandemic Indian Country that are essential and effective ways to both promote and protect culture while ensuring that these knowledges are kept safe while being transferred to the next generations. By protecting culture and heritage, we are protecting our youth through wellness programs. One participant suggests a decision to protect knowledge begins with our youth council, as a way to add (adapt) teachings about science and leadership with the cultural-based curriculum we are now creating. These teachings also serve to promote self-determination that illustrates knowledge for youth in the protection of their culture while strengthening sovereignty.

**Sub-theme: Youth identity.** Adults working with youth in urban and rural Tribal communities illustrate concerns about what it means to have a healthy and productive childhood, while still keeping traditions and history alive (Kulis, Wagaman, Tso & Brown, 2013; Jones & Galliher, 2007). Today, youth have many challenges and outside

distractions from their academic and family lives, including overt and covert prejudice and peer pressure (LaFromboise & Lewis, 2007). I find it interesting that most of my findings were very different from my earliest personal views on identity and wellness. Understanding the effects an urban or rural setting has on the behavior and values of youth are often challenging to nail down. For example, there were narratives that suggested in their urban Native community settings, youth were often picked on or estranged from their peer groups if they were 'too Native' or what we think of as coming from 'more traditional' families (Beauvais, 1992; Benton, 1992; Dixon, et al., 2007). My father's urban setting was like this many years ago, before I was born. He and his peers would hang out with other 'ethnic' groups that appeared to have more prestige with other youth. There is a significant amount of peer pressure to conform to the standards set for what is cool and acceptable to other youth at any particular time. Furthermore, there are now differences in pressures that did not exist in my father's young adulthood. Social media and the internet changed everything. Today, anonymous and instant pressure, prejudice and expectations happen with widespread and wide scaled ferocity through social media. Bullying is not only an in-person problem, today, it is often much more insidious because it can seemingly come out of nowhere, without any accountability for actions and effects that happen because of it. Learning about life's journey for a young person makes curriculum such as HOC presentable as a real value understood by Native communities (Johansen, 2012). A paraphrased comment from one participant suggested, "Enlisting our own culture with trust and respect from our elders is important. Reducing harm and trauma for youth is a primary goal for our communities, using adaptable curriculum based on Native wisdom and knowledge is what makes our projects

successful and sustainable, although we have changed venues and departments several times, we currently seek to add stakeholders to the model". Our programming starts with Head Start, where we can offer cultural instruction, and language immersion to help build stronger positive youth identity at an early age, especially for those families at-risk for negative health and wellness outcomes due to socio-economic disparities and isolation. Youth council is a way to adapt leadership training and mentoring in promoting self-determination.

**Sub-theme: Capacity.** There is a widespread misconception today that all Tribal communities are wealthy because of casinos. The truth of it is that there are relatively few high income producing casinos, and most of the money taken in by even the successful operations funds most, if not all Tribal functions, such as education, welfare, health, utilities, and housing, just to name a few items. Since Tribes are sovereign and have the responsibility to care for their own jurisdiction like any municipality, there is a requirement to establish functions that any city or county would have, such as courts, law enforcement, fire and other services in addition to any other elements that are necessary for functioning. My own Tribe has many forms of income, mostly from economic developments and investments, but it seems that the more that comes in, the cost of operations and growth coincide with the financial curve. Funding sources are challenges to help develop and sustain cultural programs. It takes many years to develop economically beyond the simplified equations that grants provide. Elders and other knowledge keepers are being lost in greater numbers than ever due to the destructive effects of Covid-19 and its variants within Indian Country. Family-focused events and activities help offset some of the capacity challenges within many smaller community

settings. Canoe journeys often use entire community resources as partners during events for support at sites of landing and with caravans following in support. There are successful examples of community sponsored and supported events that have their roots as humble beginnings, such as Indian Relay or other equine activities that utilize many outside stakeholder support systems adding to the support of the community.

**Conclusion**

In the next chapter, I discuss my interpretation of these findings. Furthermore, I include potential implications of this study to the research and practice of how adaptable interventions can be understood and available for integration by any community.

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION

I discovered significant elements of meaning in gathering narrative interviews that further solidify my thoughts and feelings about the efficacy of culture, adaptable curriculum and community connections for our youth empowerment programming within our urban and rural Native American communities. While this intersectionality has a significant impetus for change agency, I am surprised at some of the findings. I present these results from the standpoint and foundation of the three cornerstones from my research questions, what I refer to as the 3 C's, culture, curriculum and community. What rises from the results, namely the meaning behind each participant 'voice', was each person's personal introspection and response to their experience behind work attempted or accomplished in implementing the adaptable versions of youth programs. A significance to the research questions surrounding culture, curriculum and community beyond this inquiry, intersects in some way for almost every narrative about today's current Tribal youth projects. As far as youth programming, some Tribal communities investigated utilize only one of the C's, while others operate successfully with two, and a few operate with all three 'C's'. The past teaches us important lessons needed for planning the future. Beyond the many social and economic challenges faced today, for many Tribal communities collaborative efforts aid in obtaining positive experiences because of the willingness of each community to use an adaptable and relational curriculum providing unique, local cultural knowledge as a composite for youth, family

and community empowerment. Talking circles provided additional grease for the flow of remembering the experiential parts of work done by participants. Only about one-half of the participants attended talking circles, and in those cases, did not alter the significance and accuracy of producible interview data. I did not see any difference for depth of meaning derived from groups of in-person interviews (those that attended talking circles) to the groups interviewed on the phone. I firmly believe that at a minimum, talking circles provide for an extra holistic element to interview data gathering accuracy when used as a precursor to the questioning of participants. Talking circles adds an indigenous methodology to the research. It may be a benefit for future research to design studies to measure the efficacy of using pre-curser techniques such as talking circles.

**Culture**

Retention, protection and promotion of the community's culture is one of the most important aspects for community continuity that surfaced in my inquiry. One of the interesting points that came out in many discussions reminded me of what Galloway (2009) referred to as the effects of a Shatter Zone. The Shatter Zone according to Galloway referred to the early 16th century Choctaw and Chickasaw peoples, along with many other smaller Tribes living in what is today the U.S southeast, namely the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. The political intra-action of the Spanish, English, and French intertwined with complex socio-economic entanglements in Tribal communities changed and stressed many Native communities, usually in the liminal spaces where these cultures collided. Many of the day-to-day activities created many crushing or stressed areas where cultures collided, often resulting in many oppressive and damaging forces to Tribal socio-cultural environments and communities. Settler

colonizing effects on Native culture began without even a program or policy. In a sense, many of the narratives related similar stories about community pressures that are still happening nearly 500 years later. Many, if not most, Native people suggest that traditions and local culture play an integral part of who they are and what their community understands to be the foundation of wellbeing and social existence. Relationships affect the politics of social exchanges. Relationships matter.

According to many of these narratives, cultural activities are not always integrated and practiced together in synergy with other projects or programs in Tribal communities. Several confounding points arise out of participant narratives in the data pool. First, I have always taken it for granted that most Tribal communities include or at least consider local cultural programs in implementing all youth interventions. Many Tribes are working on but have not yet integrated culture into their most significant youth programs, however all support optimism that that this would be a benefit and positive goal to accomplish. In some cases, culture and traditional elements reside in the community as separate, protected and sacred knowledge that rarely functions with other open social, economic or academic activities. Integration of traditional knowledge should pass the community's special consideration for collaborations within programs in order to be used respectfully. Despite careful consideration, many Tribal leaders insist on youth programs containing cultural knowledge sharing communal traditions in order to promote, but also protect important legacies of local knowledge. There are sensitive, protected parts of culture that are important elements of a sovereign, self-determined people.

For too long, there has been a pillaging and unceded appropriation of many parts of Native American life. Much of the world still holds that Native people once lived but are

no longer here. Surprising to me is that Native lifestyles, regalia and iconologies exist as exotified or dehumanized, including how Hollywood movies represent Natives. Early television did not have Native people portray themselves, write the storylines or produce their own product. The one Native person from television I remember while growing up was Jay Silverheels who played Tonto on the popular show, The Lone Ranger. My family knew Jay as a friend of my father's partner, Joe Wishard, also known as the 'Golden Hawk' who did stunt work with horses on many western television shows. Joe was also a professional Standardbred (harness racing horses) trainer and driver, when I first met him. I still have a photo of him driving my first racehorse to victory at a southern California track. Television depicted Jay's persona and way of speech as not human, in the ridiculous and humiliating stereotypical way that dominated views of how Native people 'once were'. Native people were simply removed from the land in almost the same way as the buffalo. In elementary school, my history books did not include an accurate portrayal of the rapid and almost complete genocide of Native people. I did not learn about Tribal Nations, sovereignty or the Trail of Tears during school. When my doctoral program began, students in my current co-hort who went to public school in Oregon did not know that there were nine federally-recognized Tribes that exist today in the state. Even in my life, most knowledge about my own Native history has been self-taught, as an adult. Most of the narratives in this inquiry relate similar stories about their own local culture and situation. Talking circles almost always discussed this point.

Of the estimated 60 million Native people living on North America prior to the year 1500, the population dropped to less than one-half that amount without direct contact with outsiders. Disease spread and killed many Native people faster than and prior to full

contact from the spread of colonization. By the 19ᵗʰ century, Native people in the U.S. numbered less than the amount in the Choctaw Nation today. The truth in our history represents the lack of accuracy or understanding in how Native people continue to thrive today. Much of continued oppressive force is recent, within my lifetime and remains damaging and marginalizing in instances and evidence that genocide is not complete. Degradation of Native culture occurs today to varied degrees. Pervasive appropriation of culture and tradition used and commodified continues today if it were not only permitted by Natives, but also performed by Natives. Tribal government's decisions aimed at community benefits is a challenge not easily navigated in that sometimes the lines of proper and respectful use of traditions are sometimes blurred. By itself, this does not seem to have relevance in this inquiry, but it really does play a role in how each community decides to take on partners, stakeholders, programs and curriculum as a component of adapting youth empowerment and prevention. Communities do not always view even similar circumstances, needs, goals or actions with the same lens. There are almost as many viewpoints and ideologies as there are Tribal communities and citizens within them. This provides for a sensitive consideration when adoption includes adapting, and then implementing a particular culture into curriculum, and then garner community partnerships to help produce these with sustainability. Agreement on what parts of culture and tradition that would support programs, while also not deteriorating or damaging knowledge or traditions is not always in place. I find the balancing of protection and promotion of culture is one that challenges many situations more than I previously considered.

**Curriculum**

Tribal communities are attempting to protect and preserve what original language, tradition and culture that remain today. Many indigenous languages are continually at-risk to be fully lost, because capacity for oral traditions and first language speakers are not with us anymore. The effects of assimilation, Jim Crow and other forces such as boarding schools have been effective in limiting the protection and promotion of many Native American languages and traditions. Empirical research shows that perceived caring from Tribal leaders is protective against suicidal thoughts for Native youth (Middlebrook, et al., 2001; Rowan, el al, 2014). Stories from our youth coupled with research show the impact tribal leaders have in promoting wellbeing among Native youth (Mohatt, Ching Ting Fok, Burket, Henry & Allen, 2011). Many interview narratives suggested we have the power to help youth who are struggling. We can and should make decisions for programming that positively make a difference in the lives of those yet to come.

Self-determination strengthens opportunities conducted with Native American communities and has shown that cultural connectedness and empowerment of self-governance lead to decreased negative health and wellness outcomes (Berry, 1999; Burnette & Figley, 2016). Middlebrook (2001) looks at programs recognizing different community etiologies of varying rates of suicide. What are the conditions available for use to keep and prevent higher rates of suicide and behavior that leads to these risks? Using data that were available to them, researchers looked at a variety of factors that could contribute to cultural continuity—tangible things that would project to youth that their culture and identity continues through time (Middlebrook, 2001). Many of these

factors related to self-governance, including First Nations communities' involvement in land claims negotiations, control over health, safety, education and development of community cultural facilities (Wilson, 2003). We are nations within a nation—sovereign tribal nations with formal relationships with the U.S. government (Deloria & Lytle, 1989). Since Tribal sovereignty means possession of the ability and authority to self-govern, entities like The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) advocates for this right as a crucial means used to address youth suicide. In 2013, NCAI passed a resolution called "Building Tribal Capacity to End High Rates of Suicide" that encouraged stakeholders to engage in partnerships that drive culture to continue to restore culture and community balance and secure the future for Native youth (NCAI, 2013). Tribal leaders have a responsibility to consider strategies and action to prevent youth suicide in our communities. One of the ways tribal leaders can demonstrate self-determination and sovereignty when it comes to suicide prevention is by leading the development of suicide prevention efforts. One of the most successful community-based youth Native suicide prevention programs, the Zuni Life Skills Curriculum was borne out of Tribal leaders' concern over rising rates of youth suicide and young people's disconnection from Zuni culture and traditions (LaFromboise & Howard-Pitney, 1995). Discussions during interviews support most significantly that tribal leaders want to continue the exploration of opportunities to listen, support and show up for youth programs, including allowing them to lead community wellness, culture and suicide prevention efforts.

**Community**

Third, Tribal communities have as many varied philosophies as there are Tribes

themselves. Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a relatively novel approach achieving huge success in the work done to create Healing of the Canoe curriculum (Allen, et al., 2006; Horowitz, Robinson, & Seifer, 2009; Allen, Mohatt, Beehler & Rowe, 2014; Blue Bird Jernigan, 2015). Many Tribes are now beginning to consider and utilize such community empowering strategies with partnerships such as the Tribal Action Partnership or TAP, research action partnerships, and other collaborative action partnerships (Fisher, 2005). One of the highest functioning forms of partnership, the CBPR approach, as in other forms of participatory action, involves multiple levels of stakeholders and community, combines the strengths and efforts of all those involved to ensure the creation and sustainable culturally relevant models of intervention products and programs for youth. While this may not seem to be an issue, it carries with it many challenges in promoting best practices for Tribal community services. Based on history, even today, some Tribes are reluctant to network on culture or traditions, while others simply have no problems sharing. Some citizens believe that their traditional knowledge should remain within the community and not be included or diluted with other ways of being or knowledge systems. Other Tribes have no issues with sharing with outside stakeholders such as university research teams or other Tribal Nations that may have systems that would work in their own communities. Research methods that I  and many other Native people use account for roads in and out of community projects which aim the focus toward audiences producing intelligible, ethical and relevant self-determined projects centering on the protocols and knowledge where it is both practical and can be shared. Throughout history, using oral delivery systems sharing adaptable knowledge has an important role for research and the work at the junction of Tribal community and the

education institution (Cross, 2001). Native people assert claims of many forms of knowledge but are only recently experienced in the academic arena where the written word passes for authentic knowledge. My Tribal history includes complex epistemologies, which pre-dates the recent and incredible learning journey where the written academic environment has become our connection with Indigenous thoughts and understanding, bridging acceptance of our cultural ideologies for the rest of the world. Recent changes for Tribal communities include ethical protocols and communication processes to share information with appropriate parties. Not all knowledge circulates in all circles or for all people equally. As a Native person doing research, I believe that my knowledge and beliefs can benefit all of humanity. This is not a universal belief among my Native peers. There has to be platforms and spaces where real listening and acknowledgement can occur, which is both relevant and intelligible, used for the improvement of all those residing on this planet. As a Choctaw scholar, I join a growing movement of inquiry by Indigenous people, challenged by what Eve Tuck calls the 'Damage-Centered ' dominant narrative and culture which portrays Indigenous knowledge as either fading away or non-existent historical rhetoric (Tuck, 2009). Tuck (2009) suggests that narratives cloaked as benevolent still operate without opportunity for real change and establishes harm to achieve legitimacy. There are foundational and significant ideas developed during my interviews with Tribal leaders and programmers of youth interventions, especially as these topics surrounded my three research questions. This inquiry is an example and one puzzle piece of research using claims of experience as knowledge and sustenance for the benefit of first Nation cultures. I believe Native people can benefit from the adaptation of evidence-based and other indigenous knowledge

systems bridged from the forming of collaborative community engagement through the use and protection of culture, especially in programming for youth empowerment. I look at how lived experiences within Native American communities enlist powerful ways of gathering and re-gathering knowledge using adaptations from individual unique cultural-based curriculum transforming it into a tool that works with each Tribal community's cultural and traditional ways.

In this chapter, the meaning and findings presented in Chapter IV illustrate a deeper look at the themes emerging from narrative data derived from adopters and implementers of such culture and youth intervention programming. As a human science, phenomenology explores the meaning and significance of the lived experiences for each of the Tribal citizens that contributed their 'stories' to my project. Max Weber's idea of 'verstehen' involves the prescription to interpret and understand experience. To reveal meaning underlying experience. You cannot separate experience from values of a culture driving it. Experiences do not imply value, experience is value. Efforts are made to think about value of culture on a local level beyond the individual's experience as part of the meaning behind each narrative. Phenomenology allows for the inspection of experiences that important Tribal leaders and programmers provided some answers in my search to document some meaning. As an adaptable curriculum, HOC has shown us we have the ability to transform a canoe culture to any form of Native American culture (Donovan, et al., 2016). In the case of adaptable interventions or as a curriculum driving prevention and empowerment programming for youth, the canoe culture is reproducibly a metaphor for the intervention, as adapted with other cultures, is easily paired creating combinations of empowerment, cultural knowledge and skill-based systems.

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While I respect the attention and advice of my advisors suggesting I also consider the voices and experiences of the youth themselves, there are reasons for not doing so in this instance. First, I want to say that in my many years of experience and education working with youth, I have always found their 'voices' and experiences to be mostly truthful and insightful, albeit naïve. While it would be valuable to include that here, I wanted to focus on the more challenging parts of particular experiences, those tough and challenging decisions made by adult leaders and programmers, seen for inherent value in the creation and sustainment of intervention programs that serve youth, culture and hopefully community connections. I consider the experiences of the adults who make the bulk of decisions surrounding the three elements behind the research questions presented here, culture, curriculum and community as synergetic experiences during establishment of these innovative programs that promote sustainable growth and education for young people. I have found that most of my challenges, questions, barriers and problems arose out of the decisions made (or not made) by the adults entrusted to do so. This inquiry is for the advancement and hopeful sharing of knowledge for all decision-makers going forward who want to consider the best practices, promising practices and benefits that others have experienced in this process of adoption of complex curriculum, cultural integration and hopefully advancing the notion that a greater community can help support and sustain these important efforts.

Having sourced my information from thirty-six Native volunteer adult stakeholders doing this work included these community positions:

• Tribal leaders (including Chiefs/Chairpersons/Council Members/

Tribal Health Board Directors).

• Grassroots leaders and community members working with Native youth on empowerment and prevention in their respective communities.

• Native youth leaders of all areas surrounding each community.

• Two-spirit leaders who work with two-spirit (and one-spirit) youth.

• Elders and traditional healers, knowledge keepers and health programmers.

• Veterans/military service members from past and present.

**Intersection of Cultures**

Early in this process of gathering narratives, the concept of culture intersecting wellness emerged as a concept worthy of considering. Natural relationships and reciprocal intersections are important laws of indigenous science, fundamental as well as needing is for well-being or listening is for storytelling in the proliferation of our epistemologies and ontologies as Native people. I envision that the strands of strength-based knowledge, stories and insights gathered in work surrounding adaptable curriculum are giving way to a larger tapestry illuminating how Tribal life is empowered. Many interviews suggested the turn in time now that is most imperative, that of passing the baton of knowledge to our next generation. Our precious last generation of weavers told, "We were gifted the art of weaving to keep our families from starving, to be kept in good comfort, and to keep our families together while teaching the next generation about their history. Choctaw woven baskets utilize function for numerous purposes from storage of household goods to carrying food from hunting, fishing and gathering retreats to

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contemporary pieces of art. Coast Salish Tribes in the Pacific Northwest weave robes, hats and baskets that serve multiple purposes for carrying out important traditions and functions. These are examples of tribal communities who continue to use and value weaving in cultural practices. The purpose of weaving for physical survival, for health and wellness and for everyday practical uses helps teach the community and youth by passing along skills and traditional thoughts that keep history and culture alive. Each Tribe's programmatic decision begins by considering adaptations from the original HOC curriculum to help tell their story that may include efforts to improve daily life in many areas such as:

• Tribal leaders and policymakers needing to leverage funding and resources for their communities to build wellness and prevention programming and to know what is working in other communities.

• Health, behavioral health and educational leaders working to ensure Native youth and entire communities are able to live, balanced lives and have positive futures.

• Grassroots leaders and Tribal departments become involved working with Native youth to create functional tools and helpful information regarding strength-based approaches to empowerment and prevention of negative behavior and health outcomes.

• Native youth leaders to continue with traditional cultural exchanges that provide information about prevention best practices from their peers and gather knowledge from their larger tribal community.

• Elders, traditional healers and two-spirit leaders who provide guidance about when it is appropriate to share traditional knowledge and how we move forward to protect our youth in a rapidly changing world while holding on to cultural values and worldviews

• Community stakeholders working on behalf of Native youth wellness and prevention programs who desire additional information and resources that are both sensitive to needs and protecting of traditional rights. In order to better understand why all this is necessary for each Tribal community, it is useful to consider risk and protective factors. Risk factors are associated with a higher chance of negative behavior and thoughts, actions that lead to risk outcomes. Protective factors provide protection against outcomes such as youth suicide.

**Community protection.** Acknowledging a community's risk and protective factors can help everyone involved identify program targets or help a provider consider how to plan for mitigating outcomes for those who may be at higher risk. However, in both rural and urban Tribal communities, risk and protective factors often are dissimilar and do not have the same effect for each situation and are understood in the micro-contexts and circumstances of individual lives. Stress, anxiety and risk actions, thoughts and behaviors are complex factors that do not occur in isolation, nor are they perceived by each person the same way (Cummins, et al., 1999; Sheets & Craighead, 2014). Resilient youth often use negative influences and environments as fuel for their personal fire to energize their path toward personal goals (Heavy Runner & Morris, 1997; LaFromboise, 2006). The least resilient often have significant challenges in life under the pressures of stress and anxiety. There are all sorts of personality and behavioral reactions

to stress (Robin, et al., 1997; Sheets & Craighead, 2014). Within Native communities, there are historical, social, cultural and political contexts to consider; self and wellbeing or harm for the individual, family and community may factor through comprehensive youth prevention programming (Kenyon & Hanson, 2012). Connectedness and belonging is one of the greatest themes to come out of data to suggest protection against risk of youth suicide and substance use within the communities (Jones & Galliher, 2007; Whitbeck, Walls & Welch, 2012; Tyser, Readdy & McCrea, 2014). Youth experience connectedness on many important levels, including to their self, peers, family, community and the natural environment (Snowshoe, et al., 2015).

**Epistemologies of experience**. Recalling experience and cultural meaning refers to the grounding of culture as education, generating and protecting knowledge shaping traditional values, identity, and ontologies in ways of sustaining production of agencies in our lived world. Experience is everything. There are those in non-Native communities that do not fully understand the meaning of experiential knowledge of stories and storytelling. Kovach (2010) suggests that stories are essential to the community's strength and continuity for wellbeing. Outsiders and settler societies have seen cultures of knowing from oral traditions as mostly entertainment, and simply not essential or significant to the bearing or propagation of knowledge (Kovach, 2012). In addition to finding knowledge shared in the gathered narratives, I recognize each story contains experience in almost every instance of essential data sharing. I also understand that the volunteer participant's sharing is confidential and sensitive, so that I only gather each 'story' as a precursor to the underlying meaning without needing to know or reveal the source. The findings discussed in this chapter, help to explain actions aimed toward

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Native American youth intervention strategies and the use of community-based participation strategies driving unique knowledge behind each culture and tradition.  In essence, this study looks at experience in order to share knowledge Native communities have about other 'voices' and experiences in both using and protecting culture, while also integrating youth into cultural programming with empowering skill and knowledge systems that are aimed at positive growth and development. Utilizing social ecological theory and Indigenous ways of thinking gives this information an intersectionality when applicable, so that this study develops to discuss each theme that emerged from the findings. The participants in this study have provided viewpoints to the ways in which their experiences have altered approaches to desired cultural programming as foundations to youth growth and development. An example that identifies many narratives, including adaptations for curriculum development, following a course of inquiry including:

- Why or why not? Would each component in the adaptation of any curriculum be scrutinized for efficacy and relational relevance for the Tribal community at this time?

- Circumstances. Would this adaptation provide differences and positive outcomes for those stakeholders, families and youth because of configuring all the necessary elements of an effective intervention?

- Experience. Would the youth experiences involve the many outcomes that were initial goals by the Tribal community, including in part, a robust method to empower youth, protect and promote culture and traditions including language, along with the creating effective connections to more community participation.

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- Do the interventions work? Are there needs to adjust initial intervention trials? Are there efficient and effective connections to cultural programming? Are outcomes similar to the ones from planning stages sought in the beginning?

- Do we make adjustments and continue to work creatively toward successful programming? Do we simply abandon efforts to continue at this time for reasons such as low capacity to engage or sustain? Lack of interest from community or elders? Do we lack appropriate structural capacity within Tribal programs that can operate with youth programs entailing adaptable interventions such as from the HOC curriculum? Can we provide a pathway that makes our schools the best primary partner to source our pathway forward for youth empowerment and skill acquisition while infusing culture from the Tribe?

While these questions do not explain all possible challenges, they are some of the predominant questions that came from a compilation of the participant's narrative interviews and from notes taken by myself during conversations with participants. Participants respond by logical constraints due to their roles within their respective communities and described challenges relating to societal factors, family, school, and navigating their own Tribal needs. Participants also expressed connection with others through their community participation in planning and development that spoke to each individual open-mindedness towards differences.

Given the dynamic nature of culture on the health and wellness benefits for Native American youth and families, the absence and removal of traditional activities through

colonizing and oppressive forces of the dominant society have had significant detrimental effects in the last several generations for families. Urban and rural Native families have faced any number of challenges creating barriers to how culture and traditions integrate into programs that empower citizens. The loss and potential for loss of many Tribal languages is for many, one of the most significant potentially damaging elements for survival of traditional and cultural revitalization efforts in Tribal communities.
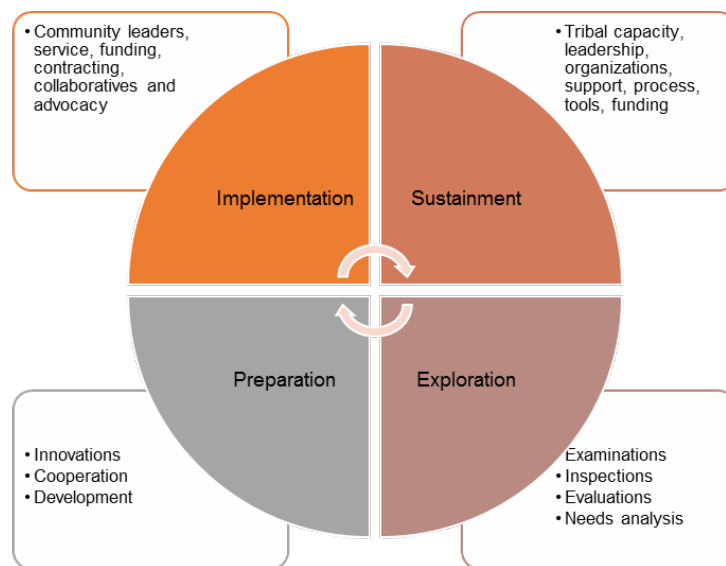
**Two-eyed seeing**. Two-eyed seeing is a term used by First Nation peoples, the Mi'kmaq, who coined the phrase to illustrate the relationship of two different points of view, two different converging knowledges or two different directives and approaches. Working together, Indigenous and western systems of science are similar to engagement practices such as two-eyed seeing. I like to envision this process as the opening of two eyes when seeing something, consciously looking at something from two angles, or from two different directions. I have also seen the term 'four-eyed seeing'; much like the saying "two heads are better than one". When enlisted, four eyes can give a broader view of objects and events in our purview. Two-eyed seeing requires being attentive to alternative cultures and ways of being and knowing. It involves the adoption and incorporation of the strengths from two worlds of knowledge, in this case, Western and Indigenous. Synergy establishes a form of hybridization with disparate methods that can reveal particular challenges leading to development of collaborative holistic work. The process of using two different ways of seeing resolutions provides perspectives without domination over each, retaining equity of substance for both is for the benefit of all (Kitchikeesic, 2005). Bringing together two or more perspectives in sharing the same goals for outcomes is both relevant and essential for the promotion of Sovereign self-

determined interests in community wellness of any kind (Figure 2, Appendix). Two-eyed seeing or an approach similar to it is important for Native people as it can create avenues for new approaches and understandings that were not previously present. Using a framework that fosters growth and integration of different and varying knowledge systems promotes wellbeing from a variety of directions and resources. As a way to decolonize, it is a way that positively adds without the loss of integrity in any single value system. Growth without while limiting barriers is a win-win for communities, individuals, and those stakeholders who are engaged to do work with similar goals.

Balancing two or more knowledge systems can be both tricky and ineffective if the planning, communication and execution does not meet with related goals for the community. The EPIS framework (Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, and Sustainment) closely resembles the Indigenous methods of circular and holistic approaches to planning and implementing cultural programs (Moulin, et al. 2019).

*Figure 5.1.*

EPIS Framework (adjusted for Tribal community development) (Moulin, et al., 2019).

I feel that two or more disparate forms of knowledge cultures can become effective partners and come to understand each other on the 'bridge' that is a custom build by the stakeholders themselves. Utilizing the synergy with tools resembling those like social-ecological theory coupled with an Indigenous model of understanding can be both incredibly similar and yet incredibly different. Similarity begins and ends with the holistic and cosmic viewpoint that both entail. Differences begins but does not end with the fact that they arrive on your meeting table from varied cultures. Solid ground can be cultivated if those early challenges in understanding cultural differences can be seen as a strength. The framework for moving ahead with any Tribal action partnership entails initial steps taken to introduce all values, policies and working characteristics of every stakeholder prior to engaging in work. Reciprocity and relational goals may be apparent; however, knowledge of each culture needs consideration to be understood and respected. Reciprocal and relational experiences exist between the individual, family, local and greater community, and the world outside (cosmos).

**Focusing adaptations**. Knowledge acquisition from experience is how we gain an understanding of our world and is reflective of memories within our histories. Native people gain knowledge centered in the experience and in the epistemologies of both personal experience and the historical stories that enliven it. Ethical relationships between elements of our world mark the basis for how we begin to engage the natural parts of projects and programs, especially in more traditional and ceremonial environments. Experience and performance of our activities throughout time has been the building blocks of knowledge and wisdom. For the Native person, well-being is a by-product of such active engagement of our positive constructions made using culture and tradition.

Scientific methods sometimes acts to disrupt and deconstruct colonized performance in the hope of creating a more equitable and ethical environment in which we can act. Challenges that I have seen from Tribes include discovering ways to be pragmatic in the adaptation of any intervention, especially those of Euro-western evidence-based sources, or with local indigenous backgrounds that are brought forward from the experiences of culture through time. I consider entities of long past experiences that are linked to transactional memories tied to the land, place, stories and traditions of the ancestors despite the local and recent influence and damaging actions elicited by the outside world. If possible, I seek to find and understand a holistic and traditional experience that exists through time and place. The voices of depth beyond current conditions, natural connections beyond normative social relationships are the unique conditions where adaptations are successful.

Seeking the possible pathways of synergy between knowledge and systems of care has put me at odds with some Tribal elders over time. I will always believe that since we reside on one planet, it is becoming more complex to extract ourselves to our own corner of the world. It is becoming more difficult to hope that others will play by ethical rules of reciprocity. I do not think we can survive without acknowledging and respecting each other and the ethical stance necessary to sustain healthful life on this planet. Indigenous science and philosophy, giving of our gifts and knowledge is benevolent and should not be considered appropriation or theft of our way of life. I realize there is a balance in how we as Native people assist our sovereign citizens can help everyone in learning efficient and effectively ethical actions, and the clock is ticking on when this needs to happen on many social and environmental fronts. Tribes may look for ways to affect their modeling,

but remain consistent that each system works well within the sovereign and self-determined culture that exists in their aim for well communities. Indigenous metaphysics or ontologies are not easily accepted as measurable data in the Euro-western sense of science. Control and domination of our environment is not the goal of indigenous philosophies, instead, holistic and ethical determination of actions and activities arise out of experience in the responsible truth that orients the community and individuals toward the deep understanding of relational elements in the cosmos. Our best hope is not to extract the abstract pieces of reality, but rather to find the proper road along each person's lifespan (Deloria, 1999). I have always agreed with Deloria in the aspects that our lives behave in balanced, practical, and ethical responsiveness to our natural and un-natural world. Anyone can live a life without care for living things in the sense of inter-relatedness to everything else as if they were machines created in conditions under which they are required to 'perform' only certain timely functions (Deloria, 1999). All that is required is brute force. Traditional Native communities accept the experience and lesser-observed strata from the entirety of creation. Lacking the ethical dimensions, Euro-western epistemologies often produce something that is knowledge only in the attenuated sense that we have solicited knowing about a thing, but only answering the specific question we ask of this (Deloria, 1999). This information may not tell us the whole story, and our Native thinking is left wondering where the other parts have been left, the ones that were left out, anomalies or otherwise. Data from experiences and observations often do not seem to fit into the pattern that emerges from the related indigenous worldview of nature. Some answers prematurely arrive from the science and laws or theorems that are the products of the universe, while Native people who are confused continue to allow

processing questions as they continue recognizing a premature analysis producing anomalies and giving incomplete understanding (Deloria, 1999). Understanding the significance in how indigenous people see and retain experience is important in the analysis and answering of questions about culture and the synergies from multiple forms of knowing. The whole experience is not simply where we draw the line of our understanding. Instead, knowing entails that which our experience has sometimes not identified, and Native people attempt to preserve the entirety of their vision without reduction to parts and principles. Deloria (1999) also suggests something that I remember from my youth about our 7 generations. In order to be considerate of our role in decision-making there is continuity in life that responds with our maturation in Native thinking and understanding. Deloria (1999) also contrasts Thomas Kuhn's understanding of how paradigms in science change or come into focus. Kuhn's description includes paradigms as where the hills and mountains of our normative scientific world gets broken down, slips or erodes to reveal pathways toward a novel and improved method or advancing a particular aspect we perceive in our world. As a Native person, I do not need to see things as isolated or linear in sharp focus in order to see the holistic pathways and possibilities, as long as my ethical relationships remain using partnerships with prevailing shared knowledge and is maintained through my chosen analysis. Finding and sustaining ethical agential relationships is the goal in finding the road upon which we walk.

**Community connectedness.** Yuimaru is an Okinawan dialect term used within traditional Japanese culture to explain the nature of heartfelt cooperation among community members. Yuimaru is a process of impeccable cooperative spirit, restoration and sustenance for fruitful community effort. This ideology is grounded in the words and

actions that create community collaborations resulting in 'many hands that make the work light'. The word 'yui' is the root word in Japanese meaning 'mutual aid'. A cultural willingness to act in this way enlivens warm-hearted cooperation and effort to engage many levels of experience and skills toward the goal of gaining access to all of them for many large and complex tasks. This philosophy also ensures that quick and efficient processing of labor to allow for synergy and efficiency to work together for the benefit of all who will be part of the outcome. Social and relational outcomes also blossom from the spirt driven by cooperative project efforts. Programs that are adapted with cooperative structures strengthen youth connectedness and feeling of identity and belonging to a family, school, community and tribe. Community networks are conduits that allow intentional communication with each other about trusted and meaningful issues openly about their challenges, to express their feelings, pass on values and provide affection and praise. I have only seen a few of these cooperative cultural community 'agreements' outside of Tribal communities, in examples like the Mormon or Amish communities.

Community-empowered events promote open dialogue and communal problem solving form negative outcomes through prevention. Stakeholders and leaders with enough practical experience help build community-level support and provide opportunities as role models. Trainings help make connections and build networks of stakeholders, which also put together examples of dynamic components in programs using formal and informal community resources.

Healing in the Tribal community exists on a continuum and intertwines with the programs that people use and attend (Trujillo, 1996). Connection to land and the spiritual wisdom allows survival in the most challenging circumstances (Tsosie, et al., 2011;

Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox & Coulthard, 2014). Living ethically with the land and living with the lessons passed down to us through generations in our daily lives keeps us strong, healthy and resilient. Each culture and traditional history is dynamic and constantly evolving, just like connections to the places the ancestors and knowledge comes to us from. Sustaining these connections conveys resilience and means we can engage our history with positive goals moving forward.

A significant portion of interviews suggested communities that share a deep relationship with environment, land and place. Native people have always seen themselves as stewards of the lands that are supportive and nourishing for each community. The environments we are a part of not only provides resources, they offer spiritual connection and meaning. Land holds knowledge from the experience gained over centuries of reciprocal relations. In both rural and urban communities, we feel a constant connection to original homelands. In my own Choctaw heritage, aside from our mound builder heritage, we have learned to thrive in urban communities, adapting and creating a connected community that is consistent with our worldview and social values. No matter where each homeland is, it is rooted in place, as participants in this study revealed about their communities as a fundamental source of purpose, wisdom and identity.

**Traditional knowledge**. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) signifies that Native experiences of the world are spiritually oriented based on a strong connection to place and mindfulness of all individuals, plants and animals that share the spaces we inhabit. Everyone benefits from TEK. TEK validates consideration for all forms of agency within the natural world. Central to this wisdom are concepts of relatedness and

connectedness, which are also fundamental pillars of many Native American family and clan systems. These concepts convey the acknowledgment, respect and ethical (reciprocal) relationship with all beings, people, plants, animals, land, sky, and water as relatives to be honored and respected. Native people have a different relationship to the land than the settler populations that came forth. Native people live with the land, not simply on the land. Youth learn early in life that wellness for one's self connects to the wellness of all other things. What is the difference in traditional knowledge and traditional science? In my opinion, traditional science entails that which we should be using to share with others in helping to establish improvements in how certain deleterious events are now occurring. Knowledge given or shared changes after the gift into something that cannot be predicted or predicated from any particular aspect. How is traditional knowledge assessed and used? What is a Native American researcher's role when there is traditional knowledge or science involved? The trickster, in this sense, can change forms of knowing through changes altering the information, even confounding the data. Trickster is effectual down to the sub-atomic level of being. My belief is that trickster has something to do with how change and queering of atomic components 'behave'. Knowing and experiences are not universal; instead, they are experienced in various ways, which is challenging for Western science to measure. Ceremony, songs and stories as an example, are tools that have firm meanings in time and place where they exist. It is difficult to establish units of measure for each point of time and place. In Native epistemologies, humans are the newest and youngest to exist, so we should adhere to the knowledge and science that entails provisions for us before we came to be here on this planet. Native research suggests that learning through interaction with the land is an important pathway to connect Native peoples with spiritual and

traditional knowledge and lessons that promote rhythms of living in healthy balance with respect for nature. Cultural teachings, strengths and resilience survive from our rich historical experiences and interactions with our lands. This robust connection to our lands, ancestors and Elders can be a profoundly powerful source of healing.

Indigenous knowledge is a robust resource for social change, beyond the perceived borderland or exotic methodologies. It is emancipatory of ills and empowering in possibilities for all of us.

**Exemplar Native youth programs**. Choctaw people have long been had many wellness programs for both youth and adults, derived from a rich culture that includes surviving to this day from two original homelands. In 1830, several tribes, including the Choctaw endured forcible removal from their homelands and were forced to move to the 'Territory' in what is now the state of Oklahoma. The Trail of Tears changed the nature and lives of many Native families for many years. Some of these effects are even felt today.

The word 'Yappalli' means, to walk slowly and softly, in the Choctaw language. Yapalli is also a culturally grounded program conceived from ideas about acknowledging the experiences with Choctaw lands and traditional knowledge. Yappalli works to confront historical trauma and current stress and anxiety by allowing participants connections to family histories of the Choctaw Trail of Tears. By revisiting the place and experience where relocation once took place, participants remember and retrace traumatic events in a profound, experiential learning process. Remembering these events by engaging with the land where traumatic events happened allows participants to grapple

with personal challenges and embody a positive future. More than just linking to land, this project is about connecting to specific places tied with significant historical events. Knowledge gleaned through interactions with such spaces is rich in cultural and spiritual teachings available to protect and promote wellness. The Yappalli project guides participants across the nearly 300 miles their ancestors had originally walked. This experience stimulates pride and identifies history. This experience allows for ideas and insights into the participants' understanding of health and their wellness behaviors, which assists in traditional education methods in promoting health within their communities. Another example of cultural integration in wellness programming exists in Northwest Alaska, where tribal programmers have been running culture camps for youth as a keystone of their wellness and prevention efforts (Allen, 2006). Native youth attend five-day camps across rural, remote regional sites often a great distance away from villages. Elders and other stakeholders instruct and mentor youth in their original languages and guide them through cultural practices and wellness activities, some of which are skill-based and involves behavioral modeling. Programs allow the sharing of traditional stories and curriculum is strength-based and offer topics such as team building.

Another example is known as Native H.O.P.E., (Helping Our People Endure) a strengths-based Native youth leadership program that creates networks of youth peers providing the empowerment of those that may go out to help those others who may be challenged in life (Small, 2012). While it is much more than a suicide prevention program, it brings together culture, elders and youth in ways that help bring to the surface those topics that are difficult to discuss openly. I have seen the program work as an incredible community-strengthening resource to reduce stigma, which may be a barrier to

getting help and resources to those that require it. Adult leaders (teachers, counselors, spiritual and traditional healers) facilitate curriculum delivery to youth and support them as they embark on a community and strength-based approach to suicide prevention. Training involves developing prevention strategies at multiple levels (e.g., individual, family, school, community), breaking "codes of silence" about suicide among youth and providing them with skills to identify risk, provide support and referrals and other strategies that allow youth leaders to build local capacity for suicide prevention. Native H.O.P.E. provides programming and supportive ideas for youth in both reservation and urban settings. There are several promising evaluations that suggest this is at least a promising practice and that it could evolve into an evidence-based practice with more research. Native H.O.P.E. has discovered that youth become more engaged and empowered with increased connectedness to culture and community attachment after participation.

The White Mountain Apache Tribal Council developed a Tribally- operated community-based suicide surveillance system (Mullany, et al., 2009). The Council passed a tribal resolution for anyone living or working on the reservation to report all self-harm and suicidal behavior (suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, binge substance use, non-suicidal self-injury, suicide ideation and deaths) to a central Tribal data registry (Mullany, et al., 2009). Mullany (2009) and other stakeholders around the White Mountain Apache community worked with mental health specialists, the Celebrating Life team, provided close contact and follow-up with each report made in the program. Programs such as these fill important gaps for care within the community for citizens who need support, to help educate schools and advocate community agencies with outreach activities forming

key partnerships to develop and sustain Apache community-based prevention and intervention solutions (Mullany, et al., 2009). A community-based public health approach, made possible by Tribal governments, are exercising self-determination and sovereignty and show significant reductions in suicide attempts and deaths across age groups within their communities.

In response to growing concerns about suicide and substance use among youth, one large reservation in the Midwest worked to adapt an evidence-based intervention called, Thiwáhe Gluwáš'akapi Middle School Children and Parents Program in order to strengthen families within the community (Whitesell, et al., 2019). At the heart of the intervention program, the pathway to reducing suicide and substance use was through family empowerment. Thus, Thiwáhe Gluwáš'akapi, translated as "sacred home where families are made strong," was initiated (Whitesell, et al., 2019). The program engages youth ages 10 to 14 along with their parents and other family members for seven weekly meetings. Each group includes eight to ten youth and their families. Families begin each weekly meeting by sharing a meal together before participating in separate youth and parent sessions, and later come together again for a family session. Whitesell, (2019) illustrates program design around five goals:

1. Build on family strengths

2. Encourage appreciation for one another

3. Improve family relationships

4. Decrease family conflict

5. Decrease risky behavior in developing youth.

Projects like this enact family-based intervention and adapt them to align with their specific cultural values, traditions and practices (Middlebrook, 2001). Program development that increases engagement for youth interest are examples such as involving them in movie and documentary production that reflect positive community settings or stories. These activities provide multi-dimensional integrative models of interventions where Native youth thrive and achieve skills and behaviors that help forge pathways for their future inside and outside tribal communities. Efforts within many Native American communities utilize cultural programs for youth and families that are similar to the efforts made in Japanese Yuimaru community goals.
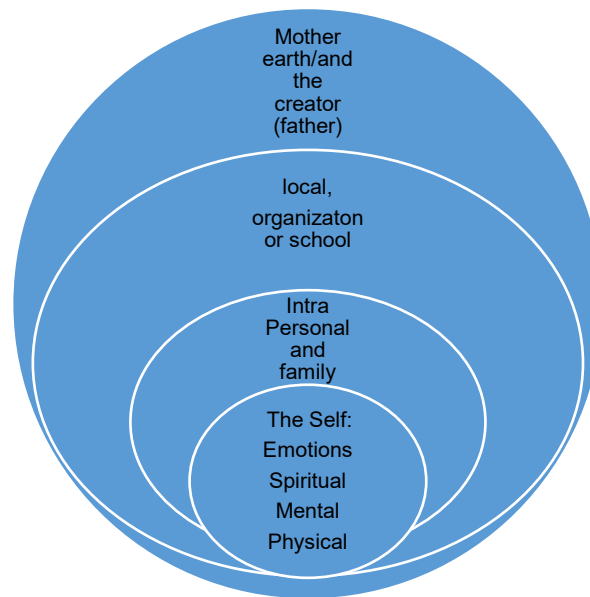
**Social Model for Native Communities**

Community and social structures relating to our personal selves exist for us at all levels and relationships to the other elements in our universe. Native populations and communities have always considered ways in which we as individuals fit into, around and within our Cosmos. We humans are not the center of our universe. Rather, are only a part of the web of life. This is a foundational basis for most of Indigenous Science. It is this understanding that creates the aspect of ethical responsibilities that are profoundly a part of daily living. Traditional and cultural activities that revolve within Native communities place this sort of social and ecological understanding to valuable use.

Western concepts are similar in the conceptualization of socio-ecological models, especially as they prevail in the model of health services and wellness programming. For the western and dominant society, the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979)

offers a way of conceptualizing the pathways of influence between individuals and their respective environments. An adapted Indigenous version of this framework illustrates this in Figure 5.2.

Holistic Indigenous Wellness (adapted from Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model, 1977).



Rooted in human development research, Bronfenbrenner suggested the human development process is influenced by nested systems of our universe's agency, namely in micro-systems, meso-systems, exo-systems and macro-systems. Micro-systems are those that surround the immediate environment of the person and is nested within the meso-system, the environment that connects to other locations the individual inhabits. Exo-systems are the larger productions in our world that influence our local systems such as media and local government. Macro-systems are those of the greater world, such as politics, economic and educational environments. The foundational elements of Indigenous thought and practice often creates our varied places to reside by taking into

consideration the ethical relationships of all the nested components. These nested components are the same ones that occur in the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Longstanding socio-ecological theory contains similar elements occurring with indigenous knowledge, and are foundational to the Native American social ecology model. Euro-western techniques of practical applications are gravitating more and more to using robust and often misunderstood indigenous methods. An example of this is the contribution of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as tools in the offices and meeting rooms of the U. S. Forest Service or other environmental agencies who are discovering that 'new' ways to practice fuel thinning and forest management or other environmental decisions. Not forgotten, but often mis-understood, the practice of indigenous knowledge has many tried and true practical applications that are backed by thousands of years of scientific data. The strengths of indigenous knowledge coupled with other forms of evidence-based knowledge systems can be a powerful and efficient model that supports culture and progress, while ensuring the sustainment and protection of resources, people and community.

Indigenous philosophy is similar in the nesting of ecological systems from the individual outward in greater and greater circles. The individual, family, community, country, international, and world or cosmos creates the circles of influence for Native people, ever widening the scope of influence on our personal lives. The combination of elements of both Western and Indigenous ways of seeing the socio-ecological model enhances any singular approach by taking into consideration personal development, age of a person, and the total amount of influence that occurs with any particular individual. It also entails ethical conditions that are necessary for relationships and agency that

involving that which is other than human, the non-human influence, the environmental and non-human influence. Combining and considering models like socio-ecological frameworks arriving from the two cultures, is much like 'two-eyed' seeing approaches that enhance rather than detract the knowledge used to make and analyze inquiry. Two-eyed seeing offers a way to consider new ways to protect culture, sovereignty and self-determination as driving forces for the need to do what is relevant and important for all Native nations.

**Implications for Future Research**

As a preparation to my study, for proper preparation in Tribal youth intervention curriculum, I made several trips to engage with the HOC developers and training staff who worked on the curriculum early in the program's inception. In addition, my former work in a Tribal education department allowed me to engage with the HOC curriculum as a partner collaborator in activities for youth in preparation for canoe journeys. Relationships created an atmosphere of trust so that I could understand how to be inclusive of the knowledge and experiences without contamination and threats of bias. For participants, it is important to be aware of the overall conditions and circumstances of a particular Tribal community's conditions, as it exists or as it existed during the intervention's adapted programming. If possible, I sought to find out how and why challenges or patterns change or and if there are any plans to develop new adaptations of programming. For example, to find out if a Tribe or Tribal organization sought to develop novel or unique adaptations, to collect narratives about how adjustments affect overcoming challenges.

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Inclusion is important for those elements that reveal why each iteration of an intervention's adaptations are necessary in regaining a balance or sustainment for programming. There may be a need after the study to assist with Tribal efforts to create a better adaptation or iteration of the HOC curriculum in order to make it relevant and effective for a unique situation enlightening stakeholders or participants during interviews. The use of any information gathered from this study to assist with the improvement for any Tribal programming can be an important feature of this style of inquiry.

Based on the findings of this study, there are multiple possibilities for future research that could help researchers gain an understanding about the needs of Tribal leadership, communities and youth interventions engaging empowering knowledge systems. These suggestions for future research include: (a) studies focusing on Tribal Community Partnerships (b) studies exploring perspectives of both youth and adults regarding the use of culture within intervention programs, (c) studies exploring family and community concerns and issues, (d) studies focusing on Native American disabilities, (e) studies exploring Sovereign and self-determined efforts to prescribe wellness programs and (e) studies utilizing non-traditional western-based frameworks and promising practices that could encourage more research that adds to the existing body of knowledge.

**Limitations**

While I considered any reasonable conditions and potential pragmatic programming issues surrounding youth empowerment, there are limitations present in

this project. There are additional necessary steps needed by Native research teams to further elucidate strategies that would augment promising practices. My research only enlisted a qualitative methodology with a limited number of study participants. In addition, the data acquired were confidential narratives and answers to a structured interview. As a result, the responses of the participant (adult) pool and cannot be applicable to other Tribal individuals nor to a larger population of First Nations people and providers of youth interventions. Findings in this inquiry can only be helpful to better understand and explain the experience of this sample of individuals involved in the adaptations of adaptable curriculum for their own particular Native American culture-infused programming.

There are certainly limitations in this study that are important to explain. First, all of the interviews were conducted over a two-month period, which is a short period and can only provide a glimpse into each of the participants' experiences. Many interviews involved more distant recall than memories of more recent experiences which might give pause to some researchers about the accuracy and poignancy of the experience itself. In the review of my research notes, it was apparent that most of the interview narratives were poignant and memorable experiences, regardless of the distance in the past. It was important that during each interview, pre-conceived, secondary probing allowed for a deeper dive into each experiential claim. This step seeks avenues of structure in the essences of experience, sometimes called in as imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). As many instances of experiential memory were a bit further back in time, there are limits to how accurate or detailed the experience remained. Some of the narrative arrives out of intuition, where the nature of feeling about the experience prevails. Husserl, (1931) refers

to this type of significant introspection as the pure essence or 'Eidos' coming through as a sharper form or purity of secured meaning from each experience. Second, many of the participants were non-Native. As a result, their experiences may be different compared to Natives or other ethnicities and cannot be generalized. Third, geographically, data were collected in both urban and reservation areas that have been more intensely ravaged socially and economically by the effects of Covid-19 pandemic management compared to other areas of the United States. Therefore, these findings may not be comparable to youth living in other areas. Fourth, participants volunteered to participate in this study. The perspective of those willing to share their perspective, excludes accounts from those who may be reluctant to talk about their experiences because of safety, insecurity or other reasons. It is also important to mention that while conducting the interviews, some of the locations were expectantly noisy, although this did not appear to interfere with any of the participant's responses; it is still possible that the environment and noise could interfere with content or length of responses. Furthermore, the validity of phenomenological research methods depends on the unbiased analysis and participation from the researcher. Although the researcher engages attempts toward control of the Epoché and journaled thoughts and assumptions/biases, I acknowledge that it is impossible to eliminate all of these influences.

**Summary**

This chapter offered a discussion of this study's key findings, limitation, significance and implications for research and practice. Findings in this dissertation illuminate the lived experiences of each Native American community's discovery of advantages of culture combinations with youth empowerment. This dissertation sought to bring

attention to the intersection of culture and intervention through the lived experiences of adult Tribal leadership.

This study offers an account of how intersecting Native American identities influences youth cultural experiences with empowerment. The practical implications are innumerable for how any cultural environment can become more adept at adapting technologies, education and skills for the use and benefit of its unique population. The use and emergence of synergies for disparate knowledges requires us to break down barriers of differences, gather momentum to walk on the bridges we make together, and use the terms of our separate knowledge systems together. Collaborations and community connections have an important role in establishing programs beyond where we can do them alone. Funding challenges and capacity concerns affecting where we have the ability to work together, sustaining the future for work that needs challenged by the community requiring such action. The lessons and activities of today can be a stepping-stone to further sustainment of prosperous and benevolent community work. Furthermore, inquiries such as this one offer a possibility for utilizing more visionary approaches to research and practical applications such as 'two-eyed seeing' theory, community connections such as Yuimaru ideologies and the willingness to truly engage in our differences as strengths using disparate knowledges for understanding about youth experiences and community empowerment and wellbeing. This approach helps to challenge an ideological view of how culture either works or does not work as a protective factor in building youth resilience and opens up an understanding of youth who may do well to keep up on their own cultural identity. Moreover, it points towards how programming can change and challenge their practices in ways that will help support

Tribal youth. The findings in this study support important implications for changes to support our Tribal communities, schools, professional organizations, cultural programming, and all forms of youth empowerment programs. This study provides an example of how important it is to gather experiences to find the deeper roots in the intersections of culture, community and curriculum for Native American youth.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

*Introductory e-mail*

June 1, 2021

Hello.

**My name is Tracy Blue, an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**. I am sending this letter to you to ask you to share some important information you may have in your experiences with the Healing of the Canoe youth intervention program for Tribal communities. I seek volunteers with whom I will be having conversations about experiences gained with Healing of the Canoe and any adaptations as part of the data for my PhD Dissertation from the University of Oregon.

I will not need any identifying names or Tribal data, unless you find it important for me to know. I only want to use how your personal experiences were developed during your work with and around any programs that were used from adaptations of the Healing of the Canoe youth curriculum. I will be using a questionnaire/interview method.

I have been developing and working with Tribal youth using culturally based interventions such as Healing of the Canoe for many years. I would like to get your confidential and anonymous views and experiences about how you are involved with the programming in your unique communities and settings.

# Participant Release Agreement

I agree to participate in the dissertation research study providing an interview about my in-depth experiences with Healing of the Canoe training and adaptation. I understand the purpose of this research is to gather only experiences gained personally in either adopting the program or in the development and use of cultural-based programming for youth that obtained by adapting the Healing of the Canoe curriculum.

My participation is voluntary, and I will be in a draw for a $100.00 incentive for answering several interview questions, anonymously and confidentially. **I will not need the names of people, names of tribes or organizations for this research**. Your interview will only contain a code number, never your name. We are only interested in the experiences that had great meaning, in order to help other Tribes gain knowledge in understanding how to use adaptations for interventions that use a unique community's culture.

I grant permission for the researcher to use only my interview comments. I also agree to have either a telephone interview, respond by e-mail to the questions, or by written answers sent in the U.S. mail. If you would like a short telephone interview, you could send your telephone number and a best time to reach you, and we will call you at that time to interview you. If you would like to respond by e-mail, then simply write out your answers and send back on this e-mail address: tblue@uoregon.edu

If you would prefer to send your answers in the U.S. mail, I will send out a stamped envelope for you to use in sending your answers back.

Each interview should only take from 30 to 45 minutes. I grant you the use of audio recording for the interviews. I also understand that all material obtained will be destroyed after the researcher has made an analysis of the information.

_____          _____

Name of Participant                              Date

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS


**Interview Questions for volunteers who want to participate in my dissertation research**

*These topics are designed to help Native Communities with adaptation, protection and survivance of culture in the empowerment of Native youth and Native communities.* This research is *about* and *for* Native people. As a Native person doing research, I want to add to the body of Native knowledge in a confidential way that can be shared to benefit our Sovereign communities. There are many ways we can have this 'conversation' about your own personal experiences with HOC and any adaptations you have worked with.

If you would like to respond by conversation, please send me your phone number and a time to call you.

If you would like to send your answers in writing, let me know and I will send you a self-addressed, stamped envelope to send your answers back to me.

In addition, you can simply answer me in an e-mail, if you like.

*In your own words, take as long as you need to talk about the challenges, barriers, and successes in your personal experiences working with the HOC program in your own Tribal situations*.

1. Please tell me about *yourself* and what you do in the adoption of the Healing of the Canoe curriculum?
2. How did you become involved with the Healing of the Canoe project?
3. Can you tell me about your experiences in early stages of work surrounding the HOC curriculum? Were there challenges? Did you experience any success?
4. Tell me about your current experiences around anything surrounding the HOC curriculum?

*IN ADDITION, PLEASE ANSWER THESE 3 QUESTIONS in any way that you feel:*

**Community Connections**

Tell me if your project created community partners.  What does that connection look like?


**Culture-based Interventions for youth**

Tell me how you experienced work in the creation of programming with culture for youth interventions?


**Adaptation of HOC curriculum for your own Tribal culture**

Tell me about your experiences that surround the adaptation of HOC curriculum to meet the needs of your own culture and traditions?

## Interview Questions (my copy)

Can you tell me your name and your title or relationship to the Healing of the Canoe (HOC) project?

- What is your relationship with your community that involves the HOC project?
- What decisions did you make as a Tribal leader or developer of the program?

How did you become involved with the HOC project?

- Tell me about any challenges you experienced? What were they?
- Tell me about any success you experienced? What were they?

Can you tell me about the beginning stages and training for the HOC project?

- Tell me about the development of your program?
- Tell me about how you feel now about this type of programming?

Tell me about the goals using the HOC curriculum?

- Can you tell about who were your partners?
- Can you tell me what the agreed upon goals were, and were they met?
- Can you tell me if this was valuable for your community's needs/goals?

*Next, I want to ask about three topic goals of my research.*

## Community Connections (possible prompts)

Tell me about how you feel about the community connection with this project.

Did the project meet with original goals for the *community*?
Tell me why was this important for the community?
What did people do to make all this happen?
How did you feel about the process?

## Culture-based Interventions for youth (possible prompts)

Did the project meet with original goals for how *culture* is used with youth interventions?

Did the project meet with original goals for culture and youth?
Tell me about the community's feelings about using culture to help youth?
Who has something to say about integrating culture and youth in your community?

### Adaptation of HOC curriculum for your own Tribal culture (possible prompts)

Were you able to *adapt* the HOC curriculum to your own Tribal culture and needs?

Did the project meet with goals for curriculum that addresses culture adequately?
Tell me how this makes you feel?
Tell me about how the community helped with creating the youth intervention program?
Tell me what individuals do to help?
Who has something important to offer the program?
Tell me more about your part in the process?
Overall, tell me how you feel about the process?

### *Probing*

Elaboration vs. Clarification

Encouragement vs. Stagnation

Reflection v. Interpretation

### *If needed:*

Tell me more about how you feel?

Tell me more about what you think might be missing?

Tell me more to clarify the picture of your unique adaptation?

       Who?

       Where?

       What do you see?

       Why was this important?

       Why was this significant?

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

**EXEMPT DETERMINATION**

April 6, 2021

Tracy Blue

tblue@uoregon.edu

Dear Tracy Blue:

On 4/5/2021, the following research was reviewed and determined to qualify for exemption.

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | Initial Study |
| Study Title: | Adaptation of Culture-Based Community Participatory Interventions for Native American Youth. A Phenomenological Case Study, Healing of the Canoe |
| Principal Investigator: | Tracy Blue |
| Study ID: | STUDY00000066 |
| Funding Source: | None |
| IND, IDE, or HDE: | None |
| Documents Reviewed: | • Application - Exempt Determination, Category: IRB Protocol; • Worksheet Exempt Cat 2, Category: IRB Protocol; |
| Approval Date: | 4/5/2021 |
| Expiration Date: | 4/4/2022 |

**For this research, the following determinations have been made:**

- This study has been reviewed under the 2018 Common Rule and determined to qualify for exemption under Title 45 CFR 46.104(d)( (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk)

**For this research the following contingency applies:**

- Face-to-face interactions conducted for human subjects research (HSR) are limited to those permitted under the current OVPRI COVID-19 Research Recovery Stage. Those

interactions that can be facilitated remotely may continue without restriction. The investigator is responsible for monitoring for any changes to the current Recovery Stage information and requirements. The investigator is responsible for securing any other institutional approvals required before conducting this research including an approved Recovery Plan through Research IMT.

The research is approved to be conducted as described in the approved protocol using the approved materials. Approved materials can be accessed in the protocol workspace in the IRB module of the research administration portal (RAP).

All changes to this research must be assessed to ensure the study continues to qualify for exemption. Research Compliance Services has developed specific guidance to help you understand when a modification is required before a change can be implemented. It is your responsibility to ensure modifications are submitted when required and approval secured before implementing changes to the protocol.

Continuing Review is not required for this study. **An institutional approval period has been established based on your application materials**. If you anticipate the research will continue beyond the approval period, you must submit a **Continuing Review Application** at least 45-days days prior to the expiration date. A closure report must be submitted once human subject research activities are complete. Failure to maintain current approval or properly close the protocol constitutes non-compliance.

With the submission of your request, you agreed to uphold the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator and have agreed to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB module of the RAP.

If you have any questions regarding your protocol or the review process, please contact Research Compliance Services at ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu or (541)346-2510. The University of Oregon and Research Compliance Services appreciate your commitment to the ethical and responsible conduct of research with human subjects.

Sincerely,

Research Compliance Services
*on behalf of the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects*

cc:       John Seeley

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