WALKING ON SACRED GROUND: CENTERING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE TO DEFINE INDIGENOUS STUDENT AFFAIRS

by

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(Under the Direction of Merrily Dunn)

ABSTRACT

Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) is a relatively new functional area in higher education. Many North American institutions have created ISA programs, but there is no unifying sets of literature, standards, or professional associations in which to situate this work. Therefore, ISA educators are subject to the individual whims and desires of non-Indigenous institution administrators to guide their work. A lack of Indigenous voice in the development of this field thus far has caused a major strain on Indigenous ISA educators who often struggle to utilize cultural knowledge and values in their work within colonized institutional spaces. This study utilized an Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and Tribal Critical Race (Brayboy, 2005) theoretical framework to simultaneously create a community of ISA educators (the Indigenous Student Affairs Network, ISAN) from across North America and center their Indigenous knowledge to develop a shared definition of ISA. The co-researcher participants from nine institutions across the U.S. and Canada developed a collective definition, mission statement, guiding principles, contextual considerations, and essential institutional support and resources for ISA programs and educators. In this way, they established their own definition for themselves that is Indigenous-led and culturally relevant. The results of this effort may now be used (a) by

ISA educators to situate their work and leverage resources, (b) as a resource for institution leaders who wish to create ISA or support an existing ISA, and (c) by researchers who wish to further the exploration into the ISA functional area.

INDEX WORDS: Indigenous Student Affairs, Native American student support services, Native American college students, Indigenous college students, American Indian college students, First Nations college students, student affairs, institutions of higher education, college, university, predominantly white institutions, PWI, land acknowledgement, identity-based centers, cultural centers, TribalCrit, Tribal Critical Race Theory, Indigenous paradigm, Indigenous research methods

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous culture and research revolve around the oral tradition of storytelling. I am a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, and our traditional ways of educating and passing down history is performed this way. So that is how I will begin, with my story.

Significance of the Study

At the end of summer in 2006, before my junior year at the University of South Dakota, I wrapped up my summer job with the TRIO Math and Science Initiative summer program for Native American high school students. I was shocked to find the laundromat I worked at during the year had abruptly closed. I desperately searched for a new job with the new school year lurking around the corner. I was willing to do anything to keep my off-campus apartment, including working the graveyard shift at a bakery an hour away. Luckily though, my school was in search of an undergraduate student to work under a new grant to help open an office to support first year Native students. The job entailed working with the local Lakota community's spiritual leader, my mentor, and dad-joke extraordinaire, Gene Thin Elk (Sicangu Lakota), at the campus Native American Cultural Center. I jumped at the opportunity. Gene and I, under the direction of a supportive Dean of Students, embarked on the journey of creating Native Student Services (NSS), the first official office on campus dedicated solely to supporting Native student retention at USD.

We did not know exactly where to start since there was no literature or professional organizations to inform us how to do this work. Most of the literature we could find on Native

college students was outdated and deficit-focused. Our first year included a lot of brainstorming and trial and error. Luckily, we had some experience to fall back on, as Gene had been supporting Native students, staff, and faculty in an academic department for the past 20 years and I had the experience of being a Native student and past-president of the Tiospaye Student Council (the campus Native American student organization). We also worked closely with other folx who had been supporting Native students on campus. They included the Director of TRIO programs, the Director of the Indians into Medicine (INMED) program, and a psychology professor and coordinator of the annual Building Bridges Conference for Native high school students (oh, and she's my mom, too). We also got some great advice from the Director of the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Program at Stanford on how to implement a Native freshmen orientation program. Then we created some basic assessment tools and spoke to the students to find out what their needs were.

Like so many others who work in Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) offices like ours, we relied on our lived experience, the stories from others in our Native community, and the needs of our students. We were never sure if we were "doing it right," and unfortunately our institution did not allow us to find out by collaborating with other ISA programs in the area, as there was fierce competition over the small number Native students who came to our schools. We must have done something right though, because in that first year we raised freshmen-to-sophomore retention from the usual 24% to a record 74%. The next year we did even better as we refined our programing from the year before.

Although we were tasked with focusing solely on first-time freshmen students, we found that the more senior students as well as transfer and graduate students needed us too, so of course we found ways to include everyone in our community. For instance, we implemented a Native

student graduation ceremony in which the students and their families could incorporate their cultural traditions into the celebration. By creating the office, we supported the existing Native student community by showing that we cared about them, listening to their needs, and by bringing them into community together and with the Native faculty and staff often. The students began to feel more included in the institution and became more engaged in other areas across campus than Native students ever had before.

A Hunkpati Dakota student and a Cherokee student started a Native Studies conference and an annual USD Native American Alumni Dinner. A Sisitonwan Dakota and a Sicangu Lakota student joined the women's rugby team. Another Sisitonwan Dakota student became the president of his fraternity *and* the president of the Student Government Association. An Oglala Lakota student went on a study abroad trip to Australia and an Ihanktonwan Dakota student won the Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship to study with Māori people in New Zealand. Prior to the existence of our Indigenous Student Affairs office, Native students typically only got involved with Native student organizations on campus, so this was a *major* shift. A while later after I graduated, I was hired to create the Multicultural Recruitment Coordinator position in Admissions. By connecting our Native student community with local tribal high schools, we continuously increased recruitment, retention, and graduation every year.

While my work at USD was more than fulfilling for me, I was frustrated by the limit of support I felt we were receiving at the upper administration level. Even though we had a few very supportive administrators working with us, there was always a glass ceiling that none of the Native staff or faculty could get past. All the major decisions were being made by non-Native people without our input, and this affected how effective we were able to be with the students. It

was then that I became determined to get a PhD so that I could have the credentials to join the upper administration and break that glass ceiling and do right by Native students and staff.

So here I am, 12 years since we first began NSS, working on my dissertation. In my research over the past couple of years, I have found that there is still sparse literature and no professional organizations for Indigenous Student Affairs, and folx who work in ISA offices across North America are still struggling with the same issues that Gene and I had in 2006. Because of this, I am performing this research of working with ISA folx to establish a meaningful definition of what Indigenous Student Affairs is, how it is performed, and how Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) should support it. In doing so, I am creating literature for the field and simultaneously creating the first professional association for ISA, the Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN), within the student affairs professional association ACPA—College Student Educators International. My hope is that this research will help current and new ISA folx situate their work within the lived experiences and stories of others in the Indigenous Student Affairs community and continue to further enhance the field. I also hope that this research will help institution leaders understand the importance and meaning of Indigenous Student Affairs, and then utilize this work to provide the necessary resources to create and/or support ISA on their campuses. For whoever chooses to take part in or read this work, I thank you for joining me in this research ceremony.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to work with Indigenous Student Affairs educators to create our own definition of Indigenous Student Affairs for ourselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Fisher & Ball, 2003), as opposed to it being defined for us by our institutions and/or the fields of higher education or student affairs. Creating an Indigenous Student Affairs definition includes utilizing

an Indigenous Paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and a Tribal Critical Race (Brayboy, 2005) theoretical framework to establish a collective mission statement, guiding principles, contextual considerations, and institutional resources. ISA is not a typical field in student affairs, in which we are simply looking to engage and support students and their development; we must also consider the historical and cultural considerations that impact Native students in their college-going experiences. This should also be considered in programs for other minoritized groups, but it is particularly poignant for Native people. This is because 1) Native people have a complex status as dual-citizens of their country and their tribal nations with treaty rights to education (Brayboy, 2005; Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001), 2) Native people have a particularly traumatic history with North American higher education being used as a tool of colonization (Brayboy et al., 2012; Carney, 1999), 3) all IHEs occupy Indigenous land (Marker, 2011), and 4) Native students' attendance and graduation are forms of radical resistance to colonization and a means of fostering the growth and survival of Native communities (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, Castagno, & Solyom, 2014; Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). Therefore, it is essential that the definition of Indigenous Student Affairs come from the community of ISA folx themselves, using Indigenous methodologies so that the Indigenous voice and lived experience is at the center of its creation.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are the following:

1. What is the collective mission of Indigenous Student Affairs?
2. What are the guiding principles of Indigenous Student Affairs?
3. What contextual considerations need to be considered in creating Indigenous Student Affairs programs and services?

4. What support and resources must institutions provide for Indigenous Student Affairs programs and educators to be successful?

Subjectivity Statement

There are aspects of my personal background which could have potentially shaped my interpretations in this study. First of which, I may be considered an *insider* with my participants because of my ethnicity as an enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians. This could have biased my views of the necessity and effectiveness of Indigenous Student Affairs and the experiences of other Native people. Second, I am an insider because I co-created an office of Indigenous Student Affairs. This could have caused me to have preconceived notions of what the data should include, which themes may arise, or the resultant findings of the study. Finally, I am an insider as a community member of the Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN) of ACPA in which my search for participants took place. Therefore, I had prior relationships with some of my participants, another way in which it may have been difficult to view this research objectively.

However, I have no intentions of approaching this research objectively. According to Indigenous values, one cannot remove themselves from their world to study it, and therefore objectivity in research does not exist (Fisher & Ball, 2003; Weber-Wilson, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Attempting to be objective is attempting to be feeling-less and emotionless, or to remove one's humanness. This is considered dangerous to the researcher and those around them (Wilson, 2008). According to Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999),

> Indigenous research approaches problematize the insider model in different ways because there are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider in Indigenous contexts.… the major difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of

> their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities (p. 137).

It is actually an *advantage* that I am a Native insider and that my participants may have prior relationships with me. By being a Native researcher with Native participants, "the element of the non-Native researcher as outsider is removed, allowing inherent Native knowledge, values, and lived experiences to strengthen the research and to be seen through Indigenous eyes" (Minthorn, 2014, p. 76).

Outsiders may miss important nuances from the participants' perspectives because of their distance from the participants (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000; Kanuha, 2000). Such distance is especially problematic when working with Native American participants because of the political history of researcher exploitation of Native populations (College Board, 1989) and the typical lack of Indigenous researchers included in the research process (Wilson, 2008). Research performed by objective outsiders tends to focus "on problems, and often imposes outside solutions, rather than appreciating and expanding upon the resources available within Indigenous communities" (Wilson, 2008, p. 16). Outsider researchers also have a history of perpetuating demonizing or romanticizing stereotypes by comparing the Indigenous culture of study with their own (Wilson, 2008). Therefore, outsiders are often blocked by Native participants, who they may deem as unworthy of being trusted with Indigenous knowledge (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Instead, being a Native researcher studying Native populations actually "enhances the validity of the research process, data collection, and analysis" (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000, p.166). Native researchers are needed to perform this work because they a bring culturally authentic worldview, insight, and methodologies to the process (Wilson, 2008). As a familiar Native insider, I likely

had greater trust from my participants and I may have been better suited to "ask the appropriate questions and find appropriate answers" (Swisher, 1998, p. 194).

Definitions of Terms

Throughout this study, there are a few terms for which the following definitions may be useful to the reader.

- *Native/Native American/Indian/American Indian/Indigenous/First Nations/Aboriginal*: All of these terms may be used interchangeably in reference to the original inhabitants of a continent prior to acts of colonization. This study specifically focuses on the original people of North America, whose spiritual creation stories indicate this place as their traditional homelands. There is no one right or wrong term to use, as the preferred term changes based on the personal preference, age, and region of the speaker or population being referenced.
- *Students/People of Color*: This phrase refers to students or people who belong to a race or ethnicity other that Caucasian/White, or who are mixed-race with at least one race or ethnicity other that Caucasian/White.
- *Folx*: I intentionally use this term in the place of "folks" to signal the inclusion of all genders in my writing. This is in opposition to gender-binary norms often found in academic writing.
- *Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)*: I use this term to refer to North American colleges and universities in a general, broad sense.
- *Predominantly/Historically White Institutions (PWIs)*: This term is used to reference any college or university that is not designated as a Minority Serving Institution, and which typically and historically enrolls more Caucasian/White students than students of color.

- *Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)*: This term refers to Minority Serving Institutions that were chartered by tribal governments in service to Native American students and communities, and who share the mission of tribal self-determination.
- *Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA)*: I created this term to reference any job, program, institute, or department on a college or university campus whose main purpose is the support of Indigenous student retention and/or graduation. Such entities may focus on undergraduate and/or graduate Indigenous students and are typically located in PWIs (as opposed to TCUs, whose overarching purpose of all programs is the support of Indigenous students).
- *Co-Researchers/Co-Researcher Participants*: As directed by the Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and Indigenous methodologies (Fisher & Ball, 2003; Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004) utilized in this study, it is necessary to view research participants as co-researchers, collaborators, and partners in the research process. I utilize these terms in reference to the study participants in an effort to equalize the balance of researcher-participant power, disrupt the notion that a researcher *owns* data, respect the relationships participants have with knowledge shared and created in the research process, and normalize and keep salient this collaborative lens for myself and readers.

Organization of the Paper

This study is organized in five chapters. In Chapter 1, I have described the background of the study by sharing the story of how I came to this topic. I have also provided the purpose of the study and the research questions that guide this work. Finally, I included the definition of terms that will be used throughout the study. Chapter 2 is a synthesis of related literature to the

area of study. This includes the theoretical framework used, as well as literature on the history of Native students in North American higher education, Native student identity, barriers and persistence factors to Native students' success in PWIs, and identity-based centers in PWIs. In Chapter 3, I review the methodology used in this study, as well as the limitations to the methods used. Chapter 4 includes an introduction to the co-researcher participants and a review of the study findings. The findings are organized into six themes on Indigenous Student Affairs: the definition; the mission; guiding principles; contextual considerations; support and resources needed; and the co-researchers' response to the Indigenous Student Affairs Network. Finally, Chapter 5 incorporates a summary and discussion of the findings. There, I provide implications of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

> As Indigenous scholars, researchers, thinkers, and writers, we have an obligation to challenge the ideologies that shackle us. The purpose, then, is to push the edge of the ideological certitude of what counts as knowledge and research in the academy (Kovach, 2009, p. 93).

Theoretical Framework

Historically, Eurocentric, colonial research was used to guide the colonization and oppression of Indigenous people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Morgan, 2003; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Still today, "research provides the foundation for reports about and representations of the other [and] becomes an objective way of representing the dark-skinned other to the White world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). Performing research on the Indigenous other undervalues the use of culturally appropriate protocol and any consideration of the utility of research studies to Indigenous communities (Fisher & Ball, 2003; Smith, 2012; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004; Wilson, 2008). Although it is often viewed as innocuous, "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (Smith, 2012, p. 5). The research process is dominated and regulated (through institutional review board committees and publishers) by Western, positivist worldviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Fisher & Ball, 2003; Morgan, 2003). Academic institutions have a monopoly on what counts as legitimate knowledge to the point where "Western epistemological privilege evades the academy" (Kovach, 2009, p. 28). Thus,

Indigenous worldviews and research methodologies are dismissed as primitive, inefficient, naïve, illogical, and/or contradictory (Smith, 2012; Weber-Pillwax, 2004). However,

> when a researcher assumes that the ethics guidelines of a hypothetical 'research community' can take precedence over those of a real community of people (real faces and real bodies) situated in space and time, this surely constitutes a breach of ethics and ought to raise serious questions about the research project itself… Logically, the existence of such a knowledge gap would call into question the findings, results, products, and outcomes from such research (Weber-Pillwax, 2004, p. 80).

Even in the field of higher education, research and theories fail to take Indigenous epistemologies into account (Morgan, 2003; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Smith, 2012; Smith, Trinidad, & Larkin, 2017; Sonn, Bishop, Humphries, 2007). While there have been some improvements towards appreciating Indigenous culture, there is still a gate through which Indigenous epistemologies are disallowed to enter academia (Morgan, 2003). Native educators and researchers are often required to perform the work of Native student recruitment and retention, yet they are forced to repeatedly justify and fight for their right to use their own worldviews in their work and research (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous people are not seeking special treatment in the academy, they just want to be included in a way "that respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 108). As researchers, we have the obligation to utilize "Indigenous methodologies [to] disrupt methodological homogeneity in research" (Kovach, 2009, p. 12).

Research needs to be conducted *with* Indigenous people, not *on* them. Indigenous research needs "to break free from the hegemony of the dominant system [and] into a place where we are deciding our own research agendas" (Wilson, 2008, p. 17). We are tired of continuously justifying ourselves and our ways of knowing, researching, and writing to the dominant society gate-keepers. A new surge of Indigenous researchers is demanding our right to use culturally appropriate "methods and forms of expression that we judge to be valid for ourselves" (Wilson, 2008, p. 14). For these reasons, I very intentionally use an Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005) as my theoretical framework to guide this study.

Indigenous Paradigm

A *research paradigm* is a worldview based on shared concepts, beliefs, practices, and values (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). According to Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson's (2008) Indigenous paradigm, "Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony" (p. 61) with a purpose of building stronger relationships between ourselves and aspects of the cosmos (the unknown). It allows us, as Native people/researchers, to gain "a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world" (Wilson, 2008, p. 11). A paradigm is made up of four parts, including the epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). While these are viewed as separate entities in the dominant scientific arena, in the Indigenous worldview they blend together to create a circle of *relationality* (Wilson, 2008). This comes from the idea that a "relational way of being [is] at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). The epistemology and ontology "are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships" (Wilson, 2008, p. 70-71).

An *epistemology* is how a researcher views knowledge and how it is gained, while *ontology* is a researcher's perception of reality and truth, as well as whether research should be objective or subjective (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Indigenous ontology is the *relationship* one has with a truth, and epistemology is the *systems of relationships* we have in their context (Wilson, 2008). Knowledge comes from the universe around us in various ways. It can come from above (in a dream or vision), a flash of inspiration, conversations with others, ceremonies, or memories of lived experience (Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2004; Wilson, 2008). There are multiple truths because multiple people will have different relationships or understandings with any one truth. Also, the relationship that one has with a truth is more important than the object of truth itself (Wilson, 2008). For example, I may see a wooden chair in my professor's office as a place to sit and talk with them. They may see it as a place to stack their teaching materials between classes. The chair itself is not the important concept, but our varying relationships to it are important. If knowledge is taken out of its context, it loses its meaning (Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Say that facilities management removes the chair and breaks it down into door stoppers for the building. Now my professor and I no longer have the same relationships with the individual parts as we did in the chair's full form in the office, in its original context. This is why Indigenous people often speak in stories, to give the listener the full context of a piece of knowledge to fully understand its meaning.

Knowledge comes about from the formation of the relationships we create with people, the environment, the cosmos, and ideas (Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004; Wilson, 2008). These relationships do not just shape reality, but they *are* reality. We are not *in* relationships, rather, we *are* the relationships that we build. The knowledge that comes about from relationships is also relational and cannot be owned by any one receiver of it. Indigenous knowledge belongs to

Indigenous communities, the cosmos, and to all of the relationships that have been formed with it, so it cannot be owned by any one person (Fisher & Ball, 2003; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004; Wilson, 2008). Finally, research must be subjective, as "we cannot remove ourselves from our world to examine it" (Wilson, 2008, p. 14). It is important to recognize that "positivistic assumptions regarding objectivity… should be viewed within the cultural context of Western empiricism rather than be viewed as the only valid approach and [researchers] should embrace more pluralistic social constructions of knowledge" (Fisher & Ball, 2003, p. 209). According to the Indigenous paradigm, objectivity does not exist and claiming to be objective is the same as claiming to be feeling-less or emotionless, and one cannot exist in relationships in this way (Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004; Wilson, 2008).

Axiology is how a researcher views values and ethics in the research process, while *methodology* is the approach, or methods used, to obtain knowledge (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Axiology and methodology in the Indigenous paradigm both focus on *relational accountability*, or a researcher's accountability to the relationships formed in the research process (Wilson, 2008). Methodology is the responsibility of building relationships respectfully so that they adhere to relational accountability, as well as to "the usefulness of the results if they are to be of any use to the Indigenous community (reciprocity)" (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). This is followed by an axiology that calls for a responsibility to keep, respect, and reciprocate those relationships, or "being accountable to your relations" (Wilson, 2008, p. 77). Participants are also aware of their own responsibility and accountability to the community they represent when they choose to participate in research (Weber-Pillwax, 2004). Participants are viewed as co-researchers, and researchers are viewed as co-learners in the research process. This is because

both share power in the relationship and participate equally in knowledge construction (Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004).

Value judgements of research, such as validity, reliability, worthy or unworthy, lose their meaning. Instead, one should focus on *authenticity* and *credibility* in how relationally accountable one is to relationships built in the research process (Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2008). This will ensure that the cultural protocol of the research ceremony is completed appropriately, and thus the results are trustworthy. According to Wilson (2008),

> A ceremony… is the required process and preparation that happens long before the event… It is the knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony (p. 60-61).

The role of the researcher in the Indigenous paradigm is that of a storyteller (Wilson, 2008). The researcher also facilitates the research relationship, and the relationship between the community (i.e., readers) and the subject of research (Weber-Pillwax, 2004; Wilson, 2008). The researcher is "responsible for our choice of where we build these powerful connections as we choose the topics of our research" (Wilson, 2008, p. 79). We should choose topics that give strength to connections that build harmony and positivity which allows for growth and positive change to take place (i.e., use an anti-deficit model; Harper, 2010; Weber-Pillwax, 2004; Wilson, 2008). We must also ensure that our work is guided by the 3 R's: respect, reciprocity, and relationality (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Métis scholar Cora Weber-Pillwax (2004) suggests that the following two principles of Indigenous research are necessary to uphold when performing research with Native people: "1) the researcher is accountable for the effects of the research project on the lives of the participants, and 2) the purpose of research is to benefit the community

and the people of the community" (p. 80). Jiman and Bundjalung scholar Judy Atkinson (2001) also provides the following ethical principles for Indigenous research to honor Indigenous worldviews:

- Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community;
- Ways of relating and acting within community with an understanding of the principles or reciprocity and responsibility;
- Research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality;
- A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching;
- A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears;
- A reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard;
- Having [learned] from the listening a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge;
- Responsibility to act with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed, and [learned];
- An awareness and connection between logic of mind and the feeling of the heart;
- Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others;
- Acknowledgement that the researcher brings to the research [their] subjective self (p. 10).

Tribal Critical Race Theory

I use Lumbee scholar Bryan Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) as the theoretical lens through which to examine Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and their

impact on Indigenous people. TribalCrit is an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The central tenets of CRT focus on the ordinariness of racism, the social construction of race, and the need to elevate the unique voices of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, CRT focuses on anti-blackness above other types of racism (e.g., Brayboy, 2005; Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Valdez, 1998). TribalCrit, meanwhile, "is rooted in the multiple, nuanced, and historically- and geographically-located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 427). TribalCrit incorporates the following nine tenets:

1. "*Colonization is endemic to society*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). This tenet recognizes the role of racism in centering the pervasiveness of colonization as pervasive to society and higher education (Brayboy, 2005). Colonization, in this case, refers to the historical and modern ways that Euro-American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate societal norms while subjugating Indigenous ways of being and knowing.
2. "*U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). Here, White supremacy refers to the moral and intellectual superiority that is unfairly awarded to Euro-Americans over Indigenous people in ways that benefits Euro-Americans with legitimized power and financial benefits (Brayboy, 2005). This is evident in historical examples, such as the dispossession of Native people from their lands, and modern examples, such as the admission of White "legacy" students into college and simultaneous attacks on affirmative action policies that may benefit Native students.

3. "*Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). This tenet raises the concern of Indigenous people who are often minimized to being only a racial group of people, as opposed to being recognized in both their racial and legal/political identities (Brayboy, 2005). This highlights the invisibilized nature of Native peoples' history and full, modern existence.
4. "*Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). This tenet reinforces the importance of tribal nations' ability to control their own identities, legitimacy, goals, resources, and political relationships, as opposed to being determined by those in dominant institutions or society (Brayboy, 2005).
5. "*The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). The fifth tenet is a reminder that Indigenous nations have their own longstanding forms of knowledge and power that inform cultural ways of being in the world (Brayboy, 2005). The combination of Indigenous experiential, cultural knowledge with modern academic knowledge can be used to create new meaning and power.
6. "*Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). North American federal governments and higher education has a history of anti-Indigenous, pro-assimilation tactics in attempting to control Indigenous people (Brayboy, 2005). Therefore, there are legitimate reasons for Indigenous people to

experience intergenerational trauma and distrust towards IHEs. It is also evidence of the need for Indigenous leadership in Indigenous educational efforts.

7. "*Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, italics added). This tenet again emphasizes the importance and value of traditional knowledge and reinforces that it should be recognized as a tool of resiliency and community survivance (Brayboy, 2005).
8. "*Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430, italics added). The eighth tenet breaks down the barriers of what constitutes scientific rigor in academic research (Brayboy, 2005). It introduces Indigenous cultural ways of knowing in the research process by recognizing stories and personal narratives as real and legitimate sources of data and theory.
9. "*Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change*" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430, italics added). The last tenet calls for using a transformational approach to research (Brayboy, 2005). Research must amount to exposing structural inequities and creating meaningful change for the well-being Indigenous communities.

Used together, the tenets of TribalCrit encourage researchers to see both historical and modern inequities in how Native people experience IHEs in an effort to improve them. It encourages the researcher to center Indigenous ways of knowing and to challenge dominant paradigms in the research process. By addressing Indigenous "issues and experiences through a

TribalCrit lens, research will lead both to a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities and to changes in the educational system and society at large that benefit Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 441).

Review of the Research

History of Indigenous Students in North American Higher Education

Prior to attending predominantly white IHEs, traditional Native communities saw the role of education as teaching people how to live in the natural world and in community with one another. Education occurred in the course of daily life as "a natural outcome of living in close communion with each other and the natural environment" (Cajete, 2005, p. 71). Learning was not meant as a source of personal gain or recognition (Brant, 1990). Learning is, and was, viewed as a lifelong journey of personal development and technical skills so that one may better contribute to their community and future generations (Bryant, 1996). Thus, education entailed personal relationships and tribal participation "in a holistic social context that developed a sense of the importance of each individual as a contributing member of the social group" (Cajete, 2005, p. 69). Learning also occurred in informal apprenticeship-like relationships, as everyone had specific roles in the tribe. Young people would learn from mentors and Elders via experiential learning, storytelling, ceremonies, role-modeling, and artistic creation (Cajete, 2005). Unfortunately, these traditional teaching and learning styles were not included in the establishment of North American higher education.

The Colonial Era, 1568-1870. The Colonial Era of Indigenous higher education corresponds with Native peoples' first contact with Europeans and extended to the Revolutionary War (AIHEC, 2000; Carney, 1999; McClellan et al., 2005; Thelin, 2011). During this time, the first IHEs, modeled after British universities, were small, residential, rural, and administered by a

president and faculty members (Caple, 1998; Brubacher, & Rudy, 1976; Thelin, 2011). IHEs operated under the philosophy of *in loco parentis,* meaning to act in place of parents (Caple, 1998; Schuh et al., 2011). IHE administrators took full responsibility and control over students (Lake, 2013). With this power structure in place, "the college's interest [was] not parental in the sense of a relationship in which the parent constantly encourages the child toward self-regulatory autonomy. The college [was] interested in hierarchical and unilateral control" (Tieman, 1996, p. 29). Discipline tended to be the focus of those enforcing *in loco parentis* (Caple, 1998). While some administrators enforced discipline with grace, others "employed a 'fear-of-God' approach, however, and Gestapo-like methods were not uncommon" (Caple, 1998, p. 111).

The original goal of the colonial IHEs was to train wealthy young men for roles in the clergy (Brubacher, & Rudy, 1976; Caple, 1998; Thelin, 2011). Harvard University (1636), the College of William and Mary (1693), and Dartmouth College (1769) were also founded with missions to educate and Christianize Native Americans (McClellan et al., 2005; Pavel et al., 1998). Such assimilation efforts were directly tied to the goals of Western expansion and profit from increased contributions from British donors for educating and converting Native people (Carney, 1999). The goal of these colonial institutions was "to transform Indian people and societies and eradicate Indian self-government, self-determination, and self-education" (Lomawaima, 1999, p. 5). They attempted this by educating a select few Native people in hopes that they would return to their communities as cultural conduits, encouraging their people to join a more *enlightened* lifestyle (Wright, 1988; Wright & Tierney, 1991). However, of the 47 Native students who enrolled, many returned home or died from exposure to diseases (Brayboy et al., 2012; Oppelt, 1990), and only four graduated (Carney, 1999), thus establishing this mission as a failure (AIHEC, 2000; Belgarde, 1996; Thelin, 2011).

In the 1820s and 1830s, the Choctaw Nation and the Five Civilized Tribes established their own highly successful school systems on their lands utilizing tribal, federal, and missionary funds (McClellan et al., 2005; Pavel et al., 1998). The students were able to remain within their cultural communities and thus had no need to assimilate to Euro-American ways. Meanwhile, the U.S. government signed 97 treaties with tribes between 1778 and 1871 establishing a trustee responsibility for educating Native Americans (Belgarde, 1996).

The Federal Era, 1870-1964. The Federal Era of Indigenous higher education began with the development of treaty relationships between the U.S. government and Indigenous nations after the American Revolution and continued through the beginning of a movement towards Indigenous self-determination (Carney, 1999). In this era, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), within the Department of the Interior, took on the role of Indian education within its *Civilization Division* (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). They opened federally operated boarding schools in the U.S. and Canada to enact forced assimilation as a solution to the *Indian problem* (Carney, 1999; McDonald, 1990; Noriega, 1992; Wilkinson & Briggs, 1977). Native children's attendance at BIA boarding schools began as voluntary and became coerced by 1890 with threats to halt rations and supplies to tribes and incarceration of the children's parents (EOP, 2014; McDonald, 1990; Noriega, 1992; Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Indian boarding schools incorporated federal Indian policy that called for the forced removal of children from their homes and enrollment in government-run boarding schools often administrated by retired prison wardens and located a great distance from their communities (Douglas, 2009). Already suffering from being separated from their collectivistic home cultures, Native students were now forcibly subjected to *in loco parentis* in which they were under the complete control of white institution administrators. The purpose of the schools was to

assimilate and *civilize* Native children by destroying their traditions under the infamous motto "kill the Indian, save the man" (Douglas, 2009; FEMA, 2008). The school administrators abused the children in the name of *in loco parentis* by focusing on harsh discipline.

> Cut off from their families and culture, the children were punished for speaking their Native languages, banned from conducting traditional or cultural practices, shorn of traditional clothing and identity of their Native cultures, taught that their cultures and traditions were evil and sinful, and that they should be ashamed of being Native American (NARF, 2014, p. 1).

The children lost touch with their culture, traditions, and families (EOP, 2014). Many suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and entire generations went missing from their tribes (McDonald, 1990; NARF, 2014; Noriega, 1992). However, at that time, the U.S. government believed they were doing Native Americans a favor by assimilating them to white culture. T.J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1889-1893, stated:

> I do not believe that Indians… people who for the most part speak no English, live in squalor and degradation, make little progress from year to year, who are a perpetual source of expense to the government and a constant menace to thousands of their white neighbors, a hindrance to civilization and a clog on our progress have any right to forcibly keep their children out of school to grow up like themselves, a race of barbarians and semi-savages (Douglas, 2009).

The Meriam Report of 1928 condemned the boarding schools over deplorable health conditions and a prevalence of tuberculosis and trachoma, as well as accusing the schools of violating child labor laws (Meriam, 1928). Ironically, the report also highlighted a lack of higher education opportunities for Native American college students (McClellan et al., 2005; Pavel et al., 1998) as

the boarding schools were not fulfilling their intended purpose. Instead, students returned to their communities "as deeply scarred humans lacking the skills, community, parenting, extended family, language, and cultural practices of those raised in their cultural context" (NARF, 2014, p. 1). However, federally-operated Indian boarding schools continued until the final one in Canada closed in 1996 (Habkirk, 2017)).

Still, the Meriam Report and the fact that only 52 Native students had graduated with college degrees in the past 300 years (Brayboy et al., 2012) prompted many things to occur. In the 1930s, the BIA had closed some of the boarding schools (16) and replaced them with 84 day schools on reservations (SCLPW, 1969). The Progressive movement in education saw a newfound appreciation for Native culture and its use in curriculum (AIHEC, 2000). The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 restored sovereignty to tribes and established the first federally designated scholarship funds for Native college students (Pavel et al., 1998). The 1936 amendments to the Johnson-O'Malley Act authorized contracts between the government and states for the establishment of Native higher education (Pavel et al., 1998). Utilizing BIA and tribal scholarship funds, as well as the GI bill for those returning from World War II (McClellan et al., 2005; Pavel et al., 1998), Native people began gaining real entry into mainstream IHEs, resulting in the enrollment of 2,000 students in the late 1950s, and 7,000 by 1965 (Brayboy et al., 2012).

The Self-Determination Era, 1964-present. At the start of the Self-Determination Era (Carney, 1999), tribal leaders worked to keep educated young people in their communities and established the first tribally controlled community college in 1968 (Navajo Community College, now Diné College; McClellan et al., 2005). Many Native students began attending Tribal

Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as 36 more were established across the country (AIHEC, 2000). This coincided with the demise of *in loco parentis* in higher education broadly.

The end of *in loco parentis* occurred as predominantly white students, engaged in a variety of social movements, protested and demanded their constitutional rights. These actions were in response to, among other things, IHEs suspending or expelling students without due process (Brubacher, & Rudy, 1976; Caple, 1998). The courts ruled in the students' favor, recognizing them as adults with constitutional rights (Caple, 1998; Kaplin & Lee, 2014; Wolf-Wendell, Twombly, Tuttle, Ward, & Gaston-Gayles, 2004). Student affairs administrators shifted the focus from student welfare to student development (Boyle, Lowery, & Mueller, 2012). This philosophy moved towards "proactive programming and service delivery that promoted student growth and recognized the need to support students on their journeys toward recognition and ownership of identity, cognitive and intellectual complexity, and individual learning style" (Boyle et al., 2012, p. 47). However, this new philosophy was concentrated on majority students' developmental needs, typically overlooking the needs of minoritized students (Wolf-Wendell et al., 2004). One could say that the pendulum shifted from a philosophy of absolute control over students (with *in loco parentis*) to one of total student independence, both of which reflect Eurocentric expectations of young adulthood that do not align well with a traditional Native worldview.

Indigenous students today. Having endured a long and tumultuous history with the United States educational system, Native American students continue to experience the lowest matriculation and graduations rates of all ethnic groups (Brayboy, Fann et al., 2012). Native students are often missing from published and institutional data altogether (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013; Tierney, 1992b) because they make up only 0.9 percent of American college

students (Snyder, 2018). They earn 0.8% of all associate's, bachelor's, and advanced degrees conferred (Freeman & Fox, 2005) with a graduation rate of 40%, compared to 57% for their peers of all other races (Snyder, 2013). More Native college students are women (61%) than men (39%; Snyder, 2018). I have not found data on gender non-conforming Native students. About one-third of Native college students are over the age of 30, and they are also more likely than students of other ethnicities to have children or be single parents (Hunt & Harrington, 2010). They often come from low-income families, as poverty rates for Native people are the highest of all ethnic groups in the United States at 26%, compared to an average 17.6% for all other ethnic groups (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). Native people who live on the reservation experience an even higher poverty rate, at 39% (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Clearly, there are many challenges that Native college students face that impact their interactions with and ability to attend college. Native people are still facing challenges in higher education that other minoritized groups have already surpassed (Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2009). However, attending college is an empowering experience for Native students and a means of resistance, decolonization, nation-building, and self-determination (Brayboy, 2005; 2011; Brayboy, Castagno et al., 2014; Brayboy, Fann et al., 2012; Salis Reyes, 2014). Native college students "bring a wealth of cultural experiences, values, and strengths to the learning environment, and [Native] college graduates provide needed diversity in a variety of employment capacities" (Keith, Stastny, & Brunt, 2016, p. 698). Graduates are also greatly needed in Indian Country to work towards community healing from intergenerational trauma, strengthening of tribal governance and economic structures, and cultural and language revitalization (Horse, 2001; 2012). Therefore, there is a great need to identify strategies that

support Native educational achievement and for IHEs to implement culturally appropriate support strategies (Keith et al., 2016; Brayboy & Castagno, 2011).

Indigenous Student Identity

Native American identity is very complex. Native identity can be broken down in three ways: biological, political, and cultural (Brayboy, 2005; Horse, 2005; 2012; Geddes, 2014). Biologically identifying as Native American is perhaps the most straightforward, referring to the identity of one's biological parents. Political Native identity is more complicated.

Political Native identity. Native Americans in the U.S. comprise 567 federally recognized tribes and over 200 state-recognized and non-recognized tribes (Indian Entities., 2015). Native people who are enrolled in federally recognized tribes have a unique political status in the U.S. as dual-citizens of their tribes and the country (Brayboy, 2005; Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001). Such tribes are legally sovereign nations as a result of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (Horse, 2012). Citizenship in federally recognized tribes is often determined by "Euro-American definitions of race imposed on native peoples by the U.S. government" (Tallbear, 2003, p. 89) with the use of blood quantum. Blood quantum is the fractional measurement of the degree of one's Indigenous ancestry (Doerfler, 2017; Waterman, 2011). This was introduced by U.S. government agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), in the late-1800s (Tallbear, 2003). While each tribal government technically has the authority to determine their own enrollment requirements, the BIA has a heavy hand in enacting blood quantum as a requirement (Doerfler, 2017).

However, in this non-Indigenous way of identifying as a tribal citizen, tribal bloodlines thin out and eventually disappear as individuals have children with non-citizens of their tribes (i.e. citizens of other tribes or non-Natives; Beard-Jacob, Oxendine, Bazemore-James. & Kind-

Keppel, 2017; Doerfler, 2017; Horse, 2005). Therefore, biologically identifying as Native is not enough to claim a political Native identity, and many families and communities become divided by those who can and cannot be enrolled (Doerfler, 2017; Horse, 2001). Tribes that are not federally recognized or that have been stripped of their recognition (i.e., state recognized and non-recognized tribes) have been deemed nonexistent by the federal government and create more individuals who cannot legally claim Native identity (Deloria & Lytle, 1984).

Another issue with using blood quantum is that "racializing the tribe (naming that entity as only a biological entity) undermines both tribal cultural and political authorities" (Tallbear, 2003, p. 84). Native nations traditionally used more inclusive lineal and cultural requirements for tribal citizenship (Doerfler, 2017). This might include "being born within the tribal community, marrying or being adopted into the community, long-term residence within the tribal community, and the assumption of cultural norms such as language, religion, and other practices" (Tallbear, 2003, p. 93).

Cultural Indigenous identity. Culturally, individuals identify as being Native American and with Native culture in varying ways (Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001). This may be influenced by enrollment status, distance from a tribal community, level of familiarity with tribal culture and language, phenotypical appearances, level of assimilation or resistance to assimilation, internalized racism, or non-Native caregivers (i.e. multi-racial adoption, etc.; Weaver, 2001). One could view Native students as being located on a continuum of cultural identity—in which "some [are] very assimilated or less culturally connected, and others who [are] very much connected to their tribal nations and cultures" (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011, p. 148). This includes many Native people who struggle with feelings of *Native inauthenticity*, in which individuals feel like Indigenous imposters. So those who do not look phenotypically Native and

who did not grow up on the reservation and/or around the culture may choose not to outwardly identify culturally as Native American (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). However, the experience of being or feeling removed from Native culture and cultural knowledge is perhaps part of the modern experience of being Native today. That is, adoptions out, relocation programs, boarding schools, the ability to *pass* as another race, not being enrolled – these are all part of the modern experience of being Native. Therefore, a lack of familiarity with Native culture does not make someone *inauthentically Native* – it is instead an *intended* result of colonization.

There is also great cultural diversity among tribal nations, including language, traditions, traditional dress, customs, ceremonies, and histories (Horse, 2001). The social construction of race is complicated by Native people's tendency to identify first with their tribal nation(s), and second with the larger Native American community (Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001). For many Native people, "identity development begins with the family, extended family, kinship, or clan affiliations. Then it extends to the tribal group, and then to identification with the general Indian populace" (Horse, 2001, p. 94). Focusing on these differences lessens the danger of creating a stereotype of a singular Native identity (Horse, 2001; Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012; Weaver, 2001). However, there is a shared historical experience of colonialism (Brayboy, 2005; Weaver, 2001) and common cultural values (Cajete, 2005; Horse, 2001; 2005; 2012) that is useful in better understanding Native identities.

One important common cultural value is the importance of community and situating oneself in the context of a community (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). While Euro-American students are often culturally individualistic with a drive for individual competition, community-centered Native students tend to prefer small group work in which they do not draw attention to

themselves individually (Hain-Jamall, 2013). This comes from a common cultural value of humility, in which one does not seek to stand out in an egalitarian society (Brant, 1990). Historically, Native young people were taught "in a holistic social context that developed a sense of the importance of each individual as a contributing member of the social group" (Cajete, 2005, p. 69). Collaboration is important for an individual to put the community before the self.

Self-identification to institutions. College student race and ethnicity is typically tracked in higher education by offices of enrollment management and institutional research (Mrozek, 2011). It typically starts and ends with a single form, the institution's application. Most students fill out college application forms as high school seniors looking to make their applications stand out in the best ways possible, and to the best of their understanding of what stands out as *good*. While IHEs claim to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by not discriminating against applicants based on demographic questions, higher education has a long history of discriminating against applicants of color (Saulny & Steinberg, 2011). Thus, students of color often fear that disclosing their race or ethnicity may act as a barrier to their admission. The Department of Education mandates race and ethnicity questions be optional, and IHEs must allow students to mark more than one box to indicate all their races (Mrozek, 2011). However, once the application information goes into the online system they are still typically categorized into one of the race categories chosen or as some version of *mixed race* in which all other racial identification information is lost (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). This is a means of simplification for categorizing students in quantitative reports, but it ignores the complicated, socially constructed nature of race (Saulny & Steinberg, 2011).

Native students may choose not to identify themselves as Native on college application forms, as Native "people struggle to maintain their own identity amid the pressures of adapting to and living in a white-dominated society" (Horse, 2005, p. 66). This may include an assumption that this identification makes them less desirable to an institution based on stereotypes of Native Americans, they may feel as though they are not *Native enough* to make this designation, they may prefer to blend in with non-Native students on a campus, or they may simply choose to opt out of answering optional questions as many students do (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017; Horse, 2012; Huffman, 2008; Mosley-Howard, Baldwin, Ironstrack, Rousmaniere, & Burke, 2016). Multiracial Native students who choose to identify as Native and other races they hold may lose their designation as Native by the person or technology that enters their information into the tracking system (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). There are also non-Native students who inappropriately identify themselves as Native American on college application forms. This occurs due to individuals committing ethnic fraud in attempts to claim Native American scholarship funding (Pewewardy & Frey, 2004) or because they simply see the word *American* and assume that they are answering a question on nationality (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). Therefore, it is difficult to have an accurate picture of Native student presence on any campus.

Indigenous College Student Barriers and Persistence Factors in PWIs

Native student experiences in PWIs vary depending on their level of assimilation to mainstream white culture (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011; Huffman, 2008). Research on Native students has not yet caught up with the reality that approximately 65-75% of Native people live off reservation lands (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Therefore, the vast majority of literature on Native students focuses on individuals from reservations and more traditional communities.

Much of the research on Native students also uses a deficit model (Keith, Stastny, & Brunt, 2016). It focuses on the negative aspects and challenges of Native college-going experiences while neglecting what makes Native students successful and ignoring the positive qualities they bring to a campus (Yosso, 2005). Consequently, in this section, I intentionally discuss some of the positive attributes along with the challenges Native students' experiences in PWIs.

Institutional environment. Guillory & Wolverton (2008) performed a comparative analysis between predominantly white institution (PWI) members' and Native students' perceptions of Native student barriers and persistence factors. Institution members included college faculty, staff, presidents, and state representatives. They found that institution members believed that financial factors and attractive academic programs, in that order, were the greatest motivators for Native students to attend an institution. They were also believed to be the greatest barriers for Native students when lacking. In contrast, Native students reported that 1) family; 2) ability to give back to tribal community after receiving a degree; and 3) on-campus, community-building support were the most important motivation factors. They named lack of family support; single parenthood; lack of academic preparation; and inadequate financial support as their greatest barriers (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Such a contradiction in beliefs indicates a lack of institutional understanding of Native student needs and priorities. This is mirrored by Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) interpretation of whether one is coming or going to college. They assert that IHEs view college attendance as *coming* to established institutions to adapt to their cultural ways and obtain personal benefits. As opposed to Native students, who see it as *going* to college, thus leaving their communities in hopes of maintaining their cultural integrity while seeking community survival.

There is a gap in the literature on the ways in which institutional environments impact Native student retention (Keith et al., 2016). However, PWIs commonly lack appreciation of Native American culture, which frequently contributes to Native student attrition (Guillory, Wolverton, & Appleton, 2008; Tierney, 1992a). On predominantly white campuses, Native students report day-to-day experiences of institutional racism (Perry, 2002; Tachine, Cabrera, & Yellow Bird, 2016), verbal racism and harassment (Huffman, 1991; Perry, 2002), negative perceptions of how IHEs respond to their unique needs (Campbell, 2007), and a lack of understanding or communication with Native students (Guillory, Wolverton, & Appleton, 2008). Challenges like these make Native student retention and graduation less likely to occur (Keith et al., 2016; Hunt & Harrington, 2010; Thompson, Johnson-Jennings, & Nitzarim, 2013).

Tachine et al. (2016) used the Peoplehood theoretical framework (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003) to explore first-year Native students' sense of belonging on campus. The model describes language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and land as four interwoven foundations of a Native sense of belonging. They found that "the university environment created a separation from these core cultural anchors for many Native students while also being a site of microaggressions and microinvalidations. Thus, the university functioned as a site of both interpersonal and structural peoplehood invalidations" (p. 802). Gusa (2010) suggested that such chilly campus climates are a product of white institutional presence (WIP), or "the White normative messages and practices that are exchanged within the academic milieu" (p. 471). As the practices and messages of WIP tend to "remain subtle, nebulous, and unnamed, they potentially harm the wellbeing, self-esteem, and academic success of those who do not share the norms of White culture." (p. 471). This concept is also what Brayboy (2005) refers to as *white*

supremacy. White supremacy in higher educational contexts attributes to Native students feeling alienated and a lack of belonging (Brayboy, 2015; Tachine et al., 2016).

Researchers have made a number of recommendations for IHEs to support Native student belonging and retention. First, evidence of institutional commitment to Native student success (i.e. funding Native student initiatives, providing course release time for faculty to support Native student programs, etc.) is recommended to show Native students that they belong and are important to the university (Brown, 2005; Guillory, Wolverton, & Appleton, 2008; Lowe, 2005). Second, faculty and staff can make themselves aware of issues Native students face, Native American culture, and culturally relevant pedagogy (Flynn, Olson, & Yellig, 2014; Lowe, 2005; Waterman & Lindley, 2013). Supportive and aware faculty mentors are necessary for Native student persistence (Brown, 2005; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Martin, 2005) and can be utilized to implement culturally appropriate collaborative retention programs. Third, cultural programming and a fostered connection to tribal communities (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Martin, 2005; Waterman & Lindley, 2013) help draw strength from Native students' cultural identity to persist in higher education (Huffman, 2001). Fourth, collaborative efforts across campus constituents (Campbell, 2007; Flynn et al., 2014) and with tribes (Brown, 2005; Larimore & McClellan, 2005) not only provide multidisciplinary and cultural support for students, but also demonstrate that the success of Native students is the responsibility of the whole institution rather than a single office (Guillory, Wolverton, & Appleton, 2008). Finally, researchers recommend the use of academic enhancement and socialization programs for Native students (Brown, 2005; Larimore & McClellan, 2005).

McAfee (2000) created a conceptual framework for understanding a common pattern of Native student college persistence of *stepping out*. As opposed to viewing them as *dropping out*,

she recommends that we recognize the common Native student practice of stepping in and out of college, often across multiple IHEs and over more than the typical four years, before completing their degrees. Returning to college and graduating often incorporates finding the appropriate stepping stones they need to navigate the institution. Stepping stones may also include negative factors that induce their disengagement and exit from an institution. They include cultural identity, financial resources, family support, motivation, academic preparation, academic performance, drug and alcohol use, and institutional interface (i.e., supportive faculty, staff, and programs). While none of the stepping stones are singularly sufficient for retention, the first four are fundamental, with cultural identity being the most important (McAfee, 2000).

Academic preparation. While the national average of high school completion in the U.S. is 86%, approximately 74% of Native students graduate high school (Snyder, 2018). Of those Native students who graduate, only about 21% come out with college-ready transcripts (i.e., have completed the minimum required math, science, social science, and English courses for college admission; Greene & Forster, 2003). This is mainly because schools that serve high numbers of Native students, in either rural or crowded, underfunded urban schools, tend to have insufficient resources for providing these courses (Brayboy et al., 2012; McDonough, McClafferty, & Fann, 2002). This includes insufficient resources for providing accelerated AP, honors, and college entrance exam preparatory courses. Native students tend to have lower than average ACT (ACT, 2013), SAT (Benally, 2004; DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008), and AP test scores (College Board, 2014). However, following national trends, there is a trend in more Native students participating in and achieving higher ACT/SAT and AP test scores (College Board, 2014). This may be due, at least in part, to the accomplishments of college preparatory

programs that many Native students participate in, such as College Horizons and TRIO Upward Bound (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011; Jackson et al., 2003).

The move to online access for education resources and information about IHEs creates increasing access issues for some Native students. Rural Native communities have fewer internet resources (GAO, 2006) and only 68% of Native people own a computer at home, with 61% accessing the internet at home (Parkhurst, Morris, Tahy, & Mossberger, 2015). High school students need to access the internet to participate in online AP courses, search for IHEs, learn about admissions requirements, download application materials, complete the FAFSA, and apply for scholarships. Native students also report a lack of college and career guidance to help them navigate these resources (Fann, 2005; Keith et al., 2016; Waterman, 2007). They attribute difficulties adjusting to the academic rigor of higher education well into their third year of college due to a lack of academic preparation prior to their arrival (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). This feeling of being unprepared affects their self-esteem in the college classroom. It also means many Native students enroll in remedial classes, necessitating extra time and money spent on non-required courses (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Some researchers debate the degree to which poor academic preparation impacts higher education persistence among Native students (Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Huffman, 2008; Huffman, Sill, & Brokenleg, 1986; McInerney, Roche, McInerney, & Marsh, 1997). Instead, they have found the relationship between high school achievement and academic success in college to be weak for Native students. Benjamin, et al (1993) found no difference in the college dropout rate between Native students who had performed well or poorly in high school. Personal persistence displayed by the individual played a bigger part in their retention than previous academic preparation. Huffman, et al (1986) found that cultural identity was the

best predictor of Native college student success, regardless of academic preparation. They reported that the students' ability to retain their traditional cultural identity and heritage was a crucial contributing factor towards college achievement. In more recent studies, Waterman (2007) and Waterman & Lindley (2013) similarly found that Haudenosaunee and Northern Arapaho students persisted in college by maintaining connections to their families, communities, and cultures. Therefore, it may be possible to overcome the obstacle of academic unpreparedness by supporting Native students' cultural identity development in college.

Financial support. As mentioned previously, Native people experience the highest poverty rates of all ethnic groups in the U.S., especially those living on reservations (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). The long-standing myth that Native Americans attend college for free is simply untrue. Native students often rely heavily on financial aid, including federal financial aid, scholarships, loans, and work-study, to attend college (Brayboy et al., 2012; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Native students have the second-largest percentage of students receiving financial aid among all ethnic groups at 87%, and they receive the lowest total amount of aid of all ethnic groups, receiving an average of $4,334 in need-based aid per student (Nelson, 2015).

While some tribes offer scholarships to their enrolled members, the amount they can provide varies widely, depending on the economic standing of the tribe (Nelson & Tachine, 2018; Tierney, Sallee, & Venegas, 2007). There are also some non-profit scholarship programs that specifically aim to support Native college students, such as the American Indian College Fund and the American Indian Graduate Center. However, some researchers (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008) have found that many Native students struggle with inadequate overall financial aid packages, especially those who are parents. Researchers have also found that Native students often struggle with the complexity of the bureaucratic financial aid process

(Brayboy et al., 2012) and often feel under- or misinformed about their financial aid options (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

Nelson and Tachine (2018), however, asserted that providing financial aid to Native college students honors U.S. government treaties to provide education to tribal communities. They emphasized the history of how colonial colleges provided tuition and housing to Native students in exchange for increased funding from English donors to "convert Natives to Eurocentric White society" (Nelson & Tachine, 2018, p. 69). Though the act of providing financial support to Native students today, they argue, supports Native nation building (Brayboy et al., 2012) when Native students use higher education as a means to return to and support tribal communities.

Cultural conflict. Cultural conflict is the most commonly identified barrier that Native students face in higher education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011; Huffman, 2008; McAfee, 2000). Those who come from more traditional Native communities are more likely to experience some level of culture shock or cultural discontinuity when matriculating into PWIs than those who come from predominantly non-Native communities (Brayboy, 2004; Huffman, 2003; Waterman, 2011). IHEs expect Native students to conform to Western worldviews, failing to recognize that Native students have their own (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). For instance, IHEs view students as *individuals*, while Native students view themselves as *community members*. Native people and IHEs often clash over "incompatible notions about the very nature and purpose of higher education" (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011, p. 147). For example, IHEs embrace the Eurocentric value of college students separating from their parents to form an independent identity (Tinto, 1993), and thus create orientation programs aimed at fostering this separation (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Tachine et al., 2016). However, Native people place high value on staying

connected to their families (Holm et al., 2003). And while achieving a well-paying career is the assumed motivation for most students to attend college, Native students are often motivated to get an education so that they can give back to their tribal communities (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Horse, 2001; Waterman, 2007; 2011).

IHEs have a tendency to ignore Native culture in the curriculum, which is embedded in "homogeneous perspectives… which may deny [Native] students' cultural relevance or opportunities for academic success" (Burk, 2007, p. 2). Indigenous people value community, cooperation, and respectful silence, as opposed to competition and academic aggression that is valued by IHEs (Brayboy, 2005; Waterman, 2007). Consequently, Native students often face the difficult choice between taking on more aggressive and orally assertive qualities or resorting to silence in academic settings (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Some researchers say that this makes PWIs' teaching methods inherently ineffective for teaching Native students (Stokes, 1997). So far, there is mixed evidence as to which of these choices they make, choosing to either rely on their traditional ways (Brayboy, 2005; Waterman, 2007) or assimilating to a western approach (Carroll, 1978), leads to higher academic performance.

Huffman (2008) found that Native students can often be classified into four categories on a continuum of traditional and assimilated qualities in their approach to navigating an institution. They may be assimilated, marginal, estranged, or transcultured. *Assimilated* students completely assume the qualities valued by the institution and mainstream society, perceive the least cultural barriers, and associate the least with Native others. *Marginal* students are torn between identifying more with mainstream or Native qualities. They experience many cultural conflicts while having difficulty attempting to assume a bi-cultural identity. *Estranged* students strongly hold onto a traditional identity while rejecting all forms of assimilation, and often, non-Native

others. They experience the greatest amount of cultural conflict, as they view assimilation as the goal of IHEs. Finally, *transcultured* students are culturally traditional students who reject assimilation and can be their true selves with all others. While they, too, experience cultural barriers, they adopt an increased level of security in their ethnic identity that helps them to resolve the issues they encounter. In his study, transcultured students performed the best academically and estranged students performed the worst (Huffman, 2008). However, if retained long enough, estranged students can grow into being transcultured.

Indigenous communities are concerned with incorporating their cultural traditions into their student's broader education (Demmert, Grissmer, & Towner, 2006). They want to preserve their young people's Native identities while they are developing the skills they need to be prosperous. Native students who focus on graduating with the purpose of returning to and supporting their home communities tend to be more successful than those who focus on their own individual goals and achievements (Brayboy, 2005; Waterman, 2007). It is necessary for educators to recognize their tendency to develop programs that cater to predominantly white students and address the educational concerns of Native people in order to be supported by tribes (Demmert et al., 2006). To foster the success of Native students, there is a need to celebrate Native ethnicity (Keith et al., 2016) and find creative ways to incorporate Native "cultures, languages, histories, and values as strengths in teaching and learning at all levels of education" (Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012, p. 841).

Educator support and role models. Indigenous student involvement with Indigenous faculty and staff, or educators, can play a significant role in supporting their learning and development (Belgarde, 1992; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Tippeconnic Fox, 2005). Native educators are necessary for Native student persistence and integration, they promote a

welcoming atmosphere, and act as role models (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Native educators can more easily support Native students because of their familiarity with what students face (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017; Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003), as "some of the same feelings and issues that confront Native Americans as students will continue to confront them in their professional life" (Tippeconnic Fox, 2005, p. 53).

Unfortunately, Native Americans only make up approximately .5 – 1% of educators in IHEs (Snyder, 2013) as they often experience racism, discrimination, and harassment in their institutions (Mihesuah, 2003). Therefore, it is essential for non-Native educators to orient themselves to the needs of Indigenous students (Tierney, 1991; Tippeconnic Fox, 2005) to support the efforts of Native faculty and staff. While research, thus far, indicates that new non-Native student affairs professionals are poorly prepared to understand Native students or how to support them (McClellan, 2003), they can play a key role in cultivating a welcoming and supportive environment for Native students (Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997). Non-Native educators must take it upon themselves to become informed on the issues Indigenous educators face, Indigenous cultures, and culturally relevant pedagogy (Flynn, et al, 2014; Lowe, 2005; Waterman & Lindley, 2013).

Wilson (1997) found that faculty who take the time to get to know Native students individually and show a genuine interest in them makes students feel cared about and more open to learning from them. The relationship formed is so important that "course content is learned almost as an aside. What matters most to these students is the personal and human contact they have with the bearer of the message" (Wilson, 1997, p. 536). Professors who had not made any attempt at forming a relationship with the Native students were perceived as not caring about them and the students had more difficulty in their courses. The perception of being cared about

by educators provides Native students with "confidence that they [have] (a) a place to go to ask questions about the college or university, and (b) an important personal connection to the college or university" (Jackson et al., 2003, p. 554). Both Guillory and Wolverton (2008) and Jackson et al. (2003) specifically found educator *warmth* towards Indigenous students to be especially important. This experience signaled "the social upbringing of these students who place emphasis on community and a sense of belonging" (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008, p. 76). Incorporating Native values in our approach to working with Native students can support their cultural identity and their connection to the institution (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017).

Identity-Based Centers in PWIs

Identity-based centers originated with Black Cultural Centers (BCCs; Patton, 2006; Princes, 1994). They were introduced in the 1960s due to increased Black student matriculation after Brown v. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black student activism. BCCs supported Black student matriculation and retention in PWIs by helping them "cope with the alienation, loneliness, and isolation, which so many often felt... The Centers' role and function were also to assist with the development and enhancement of the students' racial, ethnic, and cultural pride, preservation and identification" (Princes, 1994, p. 21-22). BCCs served as Black social hubs where students could feel safe and at home on sometimes unfriendly campuses (Patton, 2006; Young,1989), and provided academic benefits for the entire campus community (Astin, 1993; Princes, 1994; Villalpando, 2002).

In light of the success of BCCs, non-Black students of color began calling for their own cultural centers the late 1970s and 1980s (Princes, 1994). Instead of adding more identity-specific centers, BCCs were transformed into Multicultural Centers that served all minoritized student populations (Stennis-Williams, Terrell, & Haynes, 1988). This occurred despite great

concern voiced by Black students and faculty (Princes, 1994). However, institution leaders believed that this was a more politically correct choice during the dominant culture's movement towards colorblind ideologies (Princes, 1994). Consequently, this diluted approach to multiculturalism led to an overall 19% dip in Black student enrollment (Ford & Lang, 1990).

Today, campus identity-based centers may include all-encompassing multicultural centers and/or individual identity-specific centers. These centers "serve as physical homes and central gathering places for students, thus providing social anchors for those students most at risk of dropping out" (Chang, Milem, & antonio, 2011, p. 54). IHEs need to maintain diverse student populations and create "welcoming and hospitable campus environments [to] create opportunities for students to be their authentic selves, develop a sense of belonging in the campus community, and gain access to social support" (Griffin, 2017, p. 73). Doing so supports underrepresented student learning, development, and persistence (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008; Lundberg, 2014; Museus & Maramba, 2011). IHEs that create and support safe spaces for minoritized students to be in community with one another helps them to promote a sense of inclusion (Griffin, 2017). Providing opportunities for students of color to spend time with others of shared identities is important for identity development and well-being (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Also, incorporating centers that celebrate diversity and provide exposure to diverse populations supports all students' increased racial understanding and awareness, critical thinking skills (Milem, 2003), positive learning outcomes (Chang, Denson, Saenz, & Misa, 2006; Griffin, Nichols, Perez, & Tuttle, 2008), having more diverse friends, living in more diverse neighborhoods post-college, and developing competencies for working in a diverse work force (Jayakumar, 2008). Students of all identities who attend IHEs

with a strong diversity emphasis report increased satisfaction with the college experience (Villalpando, 2002).

Indigenous Student Affairs. Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) are Indigenous-led offices or programs that are dedicated to supporting Indigenous students in PWIs. There is no definitive literature that states when exactly they started coming about in the form they take now. They often began informally in one of two ways in the 1980s and 1990s. Some began with a Native American student club, an advisor, and a dedicated meeting space (Wright, 1985) which grew with Native student activism (Minthorn & Marsh, 2016). Others started with the hiring of a single Indigenous person into some academic department or student affairs office, such as TRIO, academic advising, or admissions, who was continuously assigned greater amounts of responsibility for supporting Native students broadly (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017).

Today, ISAs appear as either a single Native student support person within a multicultural office or as a stand-alone ISA office or program with one or more educators. 141 Indigenous Student Affairs programs were located in a 2017 in-depth web search within the U.S. and Canada. They go by a variety of names, including Aboriginal Student Services, American Indian Resource Center, First Nations House, Indigenous Student Affairs, and Native American Program. They offer a variety of services, including:

- tutoring and other academic support,
- scholarships and financial aid assistance,
- cultural programming,
- mentoring/peer mentoring programs,
- a campus cultural center,
- support for Native student organizations,

- Native culture/language classes,
- freshmen/transfer orientation programs, and
- interactions with tribal liaisons or tribal communities.

There is a key difference in providing these types of services in Indigenous Student Affairs as opposed to elsewhere on campus. When such services are provided in non-Native student affairs departments, it is in response to a deficit-based view of Native students' inability to persist, thus encouraging assimilation to the culture of the institution "to the extent that students are willing and able to check their own cultural predispositions at the university's gate" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 98). Instead, Indigenous Student Affairs creates an Indigenous space within the institution that "connect[s] with the students' own aspirations and cultural predispositions sufficiently to achieve a comfort level that will make the [college-going] experience worth enduring" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p. 99). In ISA, Indigenous students are supported by Indigenous and ally educators who understand the unique complexities of Indigenous identity as well as modern and historical Indigenous experiences in higher education (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). Participation in Indigenous Student Affairs contributes to Native student persistence (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017) by helping students navigate the transition from high school, create safe counterspaces to be themselves, (Brown, 2005; Jackson et al., 2003; Tachine et al., 2016), contend with campus hostility, offset feelings of loneliness and isolation, and by supporting academic and social engagement (Belgarde, 1992; Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997; Carney, 1999; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016).

There are at least four reasons why it is essential for PWIs to make intentional efforts to support Native American students. They are that 1) Indigenous people have complex status as dual-citizens of their country and their tribal nations with treaty rights to education (Brayboy,

2005; Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001), 2) North American IHEs have played a large part in the historical, intergenerational trauma of Indigenous colonization (Brayboy et al., 2012; Carney, 1999), 3) all IHEs occupy Indigenous land (Marker, 2011), and 4) because Indigenous students' attendance and graduation are forms of radical resistance to colonization and a means of fostering the growth and survival of Native communities (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, Castagno et al., 2014; Brayboy, Fann et al., 2012). It is incumbent upon PWIs to recognize and embrace these realities by creating opportunities for Native students to succeed. This entails

> foster[ing] a campus culture conducive to understanding and respecting Native cultures… [by alleviating] the pressure to assimilate into the college environment [which] often conflicts with tribal culture and results in internalized conflict that hinders students from persisting and completing degrees." (Harrington & Harrington, 2011, p. 2-3).

This study will help institution leaders understand the importance and meaning of Indigenous Student Affairs and utilize this work to provide the necessary resources to create and/or support ISA on their campuses.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In my prior research (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017), I found that Indigenous Student Affairs directors focus on creating community amongst their Indigenous students to support their connections to each other and their cultural identity, and thus to their IHEs. Bringing the community together frequently supported both the directors' and the students' shared goal of Native student and staff persistence. The directors, however, did not feel as though they were able to connect to the larger Indigenous Student Affairs community. They felt isolated on their individual campuses and unsure if they were performing their jobs to their community's standards – both the ISA community and local tribal communities. Therefore, for this study, I chose to work towards creating a community of ISA educators from across North America and to bring them together to work towards the shared goal of defining and enhancing the field of Indigenous Student Affairs.

As there were no established definitions or professional guidelines of practice for the field, I worked with the Indigenous Student Affairs community to co-create them. In this way, we created our own definition and guidelines for ourselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Fisher & Ball, 2003), as opposed to them being created for us by our institutions or the larger fields of student affairs or higher education. This study established a collective Indigenous Student Affairs definition, mission statement, guiding principles, contextual considerations, and necessary institutional support and resources while simultaneously building a much-needed ISA community. The results of this effort may now be used (a) by ISA educators to situate their

work and leverage resources, (b) as a resource for institution leaders who wish to create ISA or support an existing ISA, and (c) by researchers who wish to further the exploration into the ISA functional area. It was essential that this process use Indigenous methodologies so that the Indigenous voice and lived experience were respected and centered throughout the study.

Research Design

The research design for this study utilized concepts from Tribal Participatory Research (TPR; Fisher & Ball, 2003) and Indigenous research methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004). TPR incorporates "(a) community-specific cultural factors; (b) the acknowledgment of historical trauma and other contextual variables; and (c) community involvement and the protection of tribal interests throughout the research process" (Fisher & Ball, 2003, p. 207). Therefore, research with Indigenous populations must utilize culturally appropriate methods that involve participants as co-researchers throughout the research process.

Weber-Pillwax (2001) described Indigenous research methodologies as "those that enable and permit Indigenous researchers to be who they are while engaged actively as participants in research processes that create new knowledge and transform who they are and where they are" (p. 174). Thus, by engaging in the Indigenous research process I had to humble myself as a researcher and find my place as a co-learner who sought to gain knowledge from, and with, the wisdom keepers of my topic of study (Wilson, 2008). As research with Indigenous people "must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 2), I was required to utilize "culturally responsive research practices [that] locate power within the Indigenous community" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 6). I needed to utilize methods that made sense culturally and relationally, as opposed to those that may be intended to impress the scientific research community.

The Indigenous paradigm similarly posits that research "methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)" (Wilson, 2008, p. 99). Research is both experiential and spiritual, as knowledge comes from the universe around us in various informal ways (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Research is an informal "ceremony for improving your relationship with an idea. It takes place every day" (Wilson, 2008, p. 110). When you choose to perform Indigenous research, you must hold yourself accountable to retaining your integrity as a researcher, a member of a community, and as a person in relationships. Therefore, Wilson (2008) offered the following questions that a researcher must ask themselves in developing their research methods:

1. How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between the topic that I am studying and myself as a researcher (on multiple levels)?
2. How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?
3. How can I relate respectfully to the other participants involved in this research so that together we can form a stronger relationship with the idea that we share?
4. What is my role as researcher in this relationship, and what are my responsibilities?
5. Am I being responsible in fulfilling my role and obligations to the other participants, to the topic and to all of my relations?
6. What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal? (p. 77)

I considered these questions as I determined how I would enact relational accountability in my interpretation of TPR and Indigenous methodologies. Thus, I chose to utilize experience-

centered narrative interviewing (Squire, 2008) for data collection. The primary strategy of qualitative research "is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants' own words" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 93). Experience-centered narrative interviews "bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience" (Patterson, 2008, p.37). Storytelling is an important source of knowledge transfer in Native communities. According to Indigenous methodologies, "story is methodologically congruent with tribal knowledges. A product resulting from research using a tribal-centered Indigenous methodology ought to have a strong narrative component as part of its method and presentation of findings" (Kovach, 2009, p. 35). TribalCrit also views stories and oral knowledge as legitimate sources of data and theory (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). In this way, I sought and respected the knowledge gained from the lived experience of the co-researcher participants as wisdom keepers. I used a semi-structured interview strategy with a TribalCrit lens to elicit experiential data from the co-researchers.

I later utilized an asynchronous online focus group (Gaiser, 2008; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015) during data analysis as a means of member-checking (Creswell, 2014) and keeping a cumulative and collaborative data analysis process (Wilson, 2008). Since knowledge cannot be individually owned, collaboration in the interpretation of knowledge is necessary. Focus groups allow for new insights based on group interaction (Morgan, 1988) and they help to establish consensus among the co-researchers on the topic of study (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015). Focus groups and sharing circles are also appropriate Indigenous methodology tools for story sharing (Kovach, 2009; Tashine et al., 2016). Utilizing an asynchronous online format is easy to establish, inexpensive, and efficient for including co-researchers in various time zones with busy schedules (Gaiser, 2008). It also supports the Indigenous value of respectful silence in

conversation, as individuals are allowed extra time and space to think about what they would like to say before responding in an online discussion.

Tension Between Qualitative Research and the Indigenous Paradigm

I came across many discrepancies as I attempted to unite an Indigenous paradigm with the conventional standards of qualitative research. I had been trained in the conventional standards of research which often promote striving for objectivity, accuracy, and simplification of findings (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). However, the Indigenous paradigm encourages subjectivity, authenticity, and nuanced abstract meanings in findings (Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; 2004; Wilson, 2008). I examined this tension in many places throughout this study and illustrate with an example here.

An example of this tension carried over from my prior research (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017) in which I utilized a transformative paradigm. In my previous data analysis, I hand-coded my data to *winnow* it down and focus on the most relevant information (Creswell, 2014). This entailed cutting out bits and pieces of my participants' words, physically relocating them to another document, then listing them under themes that had emerged in the process. In doing so, I felt a twinge of discomfort because I knew that I was removing them from their contexts, the full paragraphs of stories to which they belonged. I knew that every time I would review this new document that the meanings would change ever so slightly as I would forget where exactly the words had come from. The words would become just that, words.

However, for the current study, Wilson's (2008) Indigenous paradigm strongly states that "an idea cannot be taken out of this relational context and still maintain its shape" (p. 8). The analysis process may not be a linear one, as Native people use more of an intuitive logic. One looks at the big picture "until eventually the new idea comes out. You build relationships with

the idea in various and multiple ways, until you reach a new understanding or higher state of awareness regarding [the topic of study]" (Wilson, 2008, p. 117). Otherwise, breaking the data up into smaller pieces and removing it from its context breaks relationships and renders it meaningless. The Indigenous paradigm changes the data analysis process entirely. Having been trained both in the Western academy and in my cultural ways, I had difficulty picturing myself *solely* utilizing the methods on *either* end of the spectrum. While Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach (2009) agreed with Wilson's (2008) ideology on this matter, and she suggested that some concessions must be made for Indigenous research to be deemed credible by the larger research community.

> Researchers wishing to use Indigenous inquiry may use it alongside a Western approach… thereby using a mixed-method approach. The data can be coded, emergent themes grouped and bracketed, and so forth, while transparently indicating that it is not an Indigenous epistemological approach to data analysis… The point is that if Indigenous methods (e.g., sharing circles, story, [cultural] protocol) are being utilized, an Indigenous research framework with a tribal epistemology ought to be recognized, as opposed to assuming that Indigenous methods can be subsumed under a Western way of knowing (Kovach, 2009, p. 35).

Therefore, I followed Kovach's (2009) lead by including a mix of both thematic coding, which conflicts with the Indigenous value of making meaning holistically, and condensed conversations between myself and the co-researchers which includes the original context and allows for interpretive meaning-making. The latter included "presenting the data in [a way that] allows readers to interpret the conversations from their own particular vantage points and take from the teaching what they need (Kovach, 2009, p. 53).

Learning about the Indigenous paradigm and Indigenous methodologies made me feel as though I was given new life, like the feeling of a fresh, cool breeze after completing an *inipi* (sweat lodge) ceremony. They validated me in a way that I never knew academia could do. They helped me to realize that what makes me uncomfortable in conventional research methods makes sense, because they do not align with my cultural upbringing and worldview. That these concepts are socially constructed by *people*; they are not the natural order of the universe. Therefore, as an Indigenous researcher, especially as I perform research with an Indigenous population, I now utilize methods that are aligned with our cultural ways of knowing and being. Now my spirit can remain intact during this ceremony.

Trustworthiness and Reciprocity

Establishing trust is an essential component of both qualitative research (Creswell, 2014) and the Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008). In Western qualitative research, trustworthiness requires the researcher to employ one or more certain procedures to regularly check for *accuracy* of their findings (Creswell, 2014). Doing so helps the research to be credible and defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In this study I utilized a form of member-checking in which I asked my co-researcher participants to review my themes, analyses, and writing (Creswell, 2014). This also satisfied the value of utilizing continuous co-researcher feedback and collaborative analysis for the Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008). I utilized low-inference descriptors in which I used the co-researchers' own words and descriptions phrased very similarly to their words to remain as accurate to the co-researchers' experiences as possible (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). Finally, except for those who preferred to remain anonymous, I identified my co-researchers and introduce my relationship with them (p. 68) rather than give a brief discussion about their demographics. According to the Indigenous

paradigm, “we need to honor the relationships *they* share with the knowledge *we* are writing down for our research” (Wilson, 2008, p. 115, emphasis in original). This helps readers to form their own relationships with the co-researchers and holds me, the researcher, accountable to my relationships with the co-researchers.

Meanwhile, as opposed to the standards of achieving accuracy and validity in qualitative research, the Indigenous paradigm argues that trustworthiness is about encircling your study in *authenticity* and *credibility* (Wilson, 2008). This means focusing on how relationally accountable the research process is and an effort to make it reciprocal for the co-researchers and their community. For this study, I intentionally chose to focus on creating resources for, and with, the Indigenous Student Affairs community. In this way, my research was transformational (Brayboy, 2005) and went beyond serving my own purposes of completing my dissertation to receive my degree (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). I also began the process by attempting to establish trust with my co-researchers and the ISA community with an act of reciprocity. I did this by creating the Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN) within ACPA—College Student Educators International. I chose to do this because I learned from my prior research (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017) that there was a need for an ISA professional association and that ISA educators did not have the time or resources to work on creating it. This effort simultaneously helped me to create community among Indigenous Student Affairs educators and to generate a co-researcher participant pool.

I began the ISAN project by crafting a proposal to the ACPA President and Governing Board to create a new network. I framed it as a means of enacting the new ACPA Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD) by increasing Native American membership in the association. The SIRJD imperative described ACPA’s renewed focus on

"reducing the oppression of communities of color and Native Americans [and to…] provide leading research and scholarship; tools for personal, professional, and career development; and innovative praxis opportunities for members that will actively inform and reshape higher education" (Squire & Quaye, 2017). I proposed that ISAN would be a sister-network to the ACPA Native, Aboriginal, and Indigenous Network (NAIN), which supports Indigenous-identified folx who work in all areas of student affairs. I also requested they waive the registration fee for the 2018 ACPA Convention for new ISAN members. I made this request because ISA educators may have few professional development funds and I believed that it would be an appropriate gesture for ACPA to show as an act of genuine interest in welcoming them to the association.

The proposal was accepted, and the governing board also included one year of free ACPA membership to all new ISAN members. My next step involved locating and inviting ISA educators from across North America to sign up for the network, ACPA membership, and the ACPA18 Convention. This was a large task as there was no established comprehensive resource of ISA programs. I simultaneously worked with ACPA administrators to create an ISAN webpage and list serve, made an ISAN Facebook group, and established ISAN meeting times and space during the convention. The convention took place in Houston, TX in March 2018. Through the process of inviting ISA educators to join ISAN, communicating with them on the ISAN list serve and Facebook page, and leading the ISAN meetings at the convention, I created relationships and established trust with potential co-researchers. By the time I sent requests for participating in my study, they were very familiar with me and my intentions. This made them more comfortable volunteering to participate in my study.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were the following:

1. What is the collective mission of Indigenous Student Affairs?
2. What are the guiding principles of Indigenous Student Affairs?
3. What contextual considerations need to be considered in creating Indigenous Student Affairs programs and services?
4. What support and resources must institutions provide for Indigenous Student Affairs programs and educators to be successful?

Co-Researcher Participants

I created a potential co-researcher participant population pool by compiling a list of Indigenous Student Affairs programs across the United States and Canada with the help of volunteers. We started with a list supplied by Dr. Stephanie Waterman (Onondaga), University of Toronto, who had also been performing research with ISA educators. Her list included the names of Indigenous Student Affairs educators and their programs that her research team could find. My volunteers and I searched the internet to add more ISA programs to the list and for contact information. In total, we located 139 ISA programs and 311 individuals who worked in them. All these individuals were emailed multiple times about joining the new ISAN network. Of the 311, 79 individuals registered for ACPA and ISAN membership, and were thus added to the ISAN list serve.

Co-researchers were later recruited via email invitation on the ISAN list serve and postings on the ISAN Facebook page (Appendix A). The invitation asked potential co-researchers if they were interested in participating in a telephone or video conference interview during data collection and/or the asynchronous focus group during data analysis. The goal was

Table 1

Co-Researcher Participants and Institution Demographics

	Tribe	Job Title	Institution	Institution Size	Indigenous Students	ISAN Attendance
Melissa Beard-Jacob	Anishinaabe	Intercultural Specialist, American Indian/ Indigenous Student Initiatives	Ohio State University	68,100	0.1%	Yes
Saundra Mitrovich	Tyme Maidu	Outreach & Retention Coordinator	University of Nevada, Reno	21,400	0.7%	Yes
"Damon Snow"	-	-	[Eastern Canada]	-	-	Yes
Phenocia Baurele	Apsaalooke	Director of Native American Student Development	University of California, Berkeley	42,000	0.4%	No
"Maya Sand"	-	-	[Midwestern U.S.]	-	-	Yes
Rob Hancock	Cree-Métis	LE,NONET Academic Coordinator	University of Victoria	21,700	5.8%	No
Brittany Anderson	Fond Du Lac Ojibwe	Curriculum Coordinator	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	52,000	1.4%	No
Breanna Faris	Cheyenne, Arapaho	Assistant Director of Student Life for American Indian Programs & Services	University of Oklahoma	31,600	4.1%	Yes
Jamilee Gerzon	N/A	English Instructor	Central New Mexico Community College	28,200	6.9%	No

to identify 6-8 interview participants and 3-8 focus group participants. In total, 8 co-researchers participated in interviews and 3 participated in the focus group (only one of which, Jamilee, did not also participant in an interview).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began as soon as I had 8 volunteers to participate in interviews. As they volunteered, I reviewed their contextual demographic data from their ISAN applications. The application included information such as: name; job position; institution name; institution location; ISA program name; years worked in ISA; and if they are Indigenous, and if so, which tribe(s) do they belonged to. Three of the co-researchers who volunteered (Melissa, Rob, and Brittany) had not filled out the ISAN application. Melissa was already an ACPA member, and Rob and Brittany both received a forward of the email invitation from another person. I gathered their demographic information from their staff pages of their respective IHEs' websites and from initial conversations. I then collected signatures on institutional review board consent forms and set up times to conduct open-ended, semi-structured telephone or video conference interviews (Appendix B).

Prior to the interviews, I sent copies of the interview questions to each co-researcher to give them an opportunity to see and think about the questions ahead of time, and to allow them the opportunity to have the questions in front of them during the interview. This was a necessary step in building trust and respect with the co-researchers before the interview and was a means of shifting some of the power and autonomy that I held as the researcher to them as the co-researcher participants (Squire, 2008). The interviews began with an introduction, or reintroduction, of who I am and my purpose in performing this research, to allow the co-researchers to situate and assess my motivations (Kovach, 2009). This helped the co-researchers

to situate their relationship with me as a fellow Native person (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000) and a fellow student affairs professional who has also worked in ISA and has a passion for working with Native students. I also reiterated the terms of the consent form, reminding the co-researchers that they may choose not to answer a question or to terminate their participation at any time. I then lit some *ṕejíl̓hóta* (sage) and explained to the co-researchers that I would have it burning throughout the interview to clear our minds so we could create some good knowledge together. This practice seemed to be appreciated by the co-researchers and clearly helped to put some at ease.

Utilizing narratives and stories is a culturally appropriate means of Indigenous knowledge acquisition and creation (Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2004). The centering of Native voices in Euro-centric environments that normally silence them is crucial to this research. I did this by actively listening, rather than passively hearing, the words of the co-researchers (Brayboy, 2005; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The use of stories enhanced understanding of the data because "issues related to school culture, personal relations, values and beliefs, and rituals and myths, take on more meaning as they are presented in stories of practice" (Danzig, 1997, p. 129). I attempted to elicit the co-researchers' experiential knowledge from which I found the answers to my questions better than any quantitative survey could do, as "many Indigenous people have strong oral traditions, which are used as vehicles for the transmission of culture and knowledge" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). Indigenous "stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective… [and] are grounded within a relationship-based approach to research" (Kovach, 2009, p. 95).

I started the interviews by asking the co-researchers about their background and why they were interested in working in Indigenous Student Affairs. From there I asked about their

thoughts on what Indigenous Student Affairs is, what it should be, and how it needs to be supported, based on their experience. Except for the two interviews in which the co-researchers requested not to be recorded (Damon and Maya), I refrained from taking written notes during the interview as this could have been culturally symbolic of untrustworthy, distant, outsider researchers (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). Instead, I journaled about further thoughts, questions, or themes after each interview (Kovach, 2009).

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data and presented the findings in two ways, including a mix of thematic coding and condensed conversations (Kovach, 2009). I began the data analysis process by journaling after each interview. I journaled to process the thoughts, revelations, and ideas that came to me (Kovach, 2009). This included a short summary of the most salient points that stood out to me in what the co-researcher spoke about. As I completed more interviews, I started making connections between them in these summaries. I then had the interviews transcribed and sent each co-researcher a copy of their transcription for their review to ensure accurate representation of their story (Kovach, 2009). I sent the two participants who asked not to be recorded a copy of the notes I took during their interviews. A few of the participants made some minor changes for clarification or to ensure their anonymity. I read the transcriptions and journaled about each of them again. This time I wrote more extensive summaries of the most salient points they made. Both sets of journal entries about the interviews helped me to have a summarized understanding of the co-researchers' thoughts and to recognize what was most important to each of them.

I then transferred the transcripts into ATLAS.ti 8 (Saldaña, 2013). I applied the program to create a list of codes while I reread the interviews a few more times, and then applied the

codes to the transcripts. I utilized the coded data to create a bullet-point list to organize data into themes and subthemes that emerged (Creswell, 2014) while using a TribalCrit lens (Brayboy, 2005). As I did so, it became clear that the themes were directly linked to the research questions. While organizing the data into themes, I simultaneously utilized an intuitive logic and my own lived experiences to "build relationships with the idea[s] in various and multiple ways" (Wilson, 2008, p. 117). Kovach (2009) described this as accessing Indigenous inward knowledge.

> Attention to inward knowledge is not optional… Teachings come from many places. We need to open ourselves to those teachings and then give ourselves time to integrate them so that we can be of use to our community. This requires preparation by the researcher, something that is unique to each individual. It is a process that can never lend itself to a check-box, universal approach, rather it is personal work that must be done by the researcher in conjunction with [their] world (both inner and outer) (Kovach, 2009, p. 49-50).

Such Indigenous inward knowledges come to a person from many sources, such as "traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations, [and revelations may come from] dreams, visions, cellular memory, and intuition" (Marlene Brandt-Castellano quoted in Steinhauer, 2002, p. 74). This level of trusting intuition in research may be difficult for many in the Western academic research community to understand. However, "recognition of inward knowing flows naturally if one is coming from a tribal epistemic positioning… The methods of engaging with this knowledge can emerge through fasts, ceremonies, and dreams, as well as through walks in nature, or silence." (Kovach, 2009, p. 127).

I was not located near my familiar tribal lands in South Dakota (where I grew up and participated in ceremonies) and thus did not have access to some of the ceremonies I might

otherwise engage in for seeking inward knowledge. However, I prayed with my *canupa* (sacred pipe) and utilized *ṕejíȟóta* (sage) and *wacaŋġa* (sweetgrass) in culturally appropriate ways and times to help clear my mind of judgement, allow my intuition to be guided by the Creator (Kovach, 2009), and commit myself to the research ceremony (Wilson, 2008). I also found that listening to Native American music, from ceremony songs to 49ers, and sometimes wearing ceremony skirts and moccasins while reading and writing helped to remind me that I was in a ceremony and to put me in a good state of mind to engage in this work.

Next, I shared the bullet-point list with the co-researchers who volunteered to participate in the second part of the study, in which they reviewed my initial findings in an asynchronous focus group analysis (Appendix C; Gaiser, 2008; Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015). Focus groups incorporate a small group of individuals who can discuss their experiences of and ideas about a certain topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Asynchronous focus groups "are text based and allows greater time flexibility and typically use online discussion boards or forums allowing participants and researchers to read the prompts and have more time for reflection before responding to the discussion" (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015, p. 2). The focus group discussion took place in a Google doc on Google Drive for one week.

The use of a focus group in data analysis was encouraged by the Indigenous paradigm, TPR, and Indigenous methodologies because it involves the ISA community in all aspects of the knowledge production process (Fisher & Ball, 2003; Kovach, 2009; Weber-Pillwax, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Data analysis should be cumulative, collaborative, and potentially nonlinear. The co-researcher participants informed the analysis and "directly shape[d] the process and outcome of the research" (Wilson, 2008; p. 10). Relationships could also be built between co-researchers and the ideas that were discussed among them. Since knowledge cannot be

individually owned, collaboration in the interpretation of knowledge was necessary. This use of collaborative analysis allowed co-researchers to review the analysis, elaborate on ideas, and to learn from each other (Wilson, 2008). It also integrated a TribalCrit transformative approach that calls for "a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities and to changes in the educational system and society at large that benefit Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 441-442).

The asynchronous focus group worked, but not quite as well as I had hoped. While I had eight co-researchers sign up to take part in the focus group, only three actually participated (Phenocia, Rob, and Jamilee). They also did not engage in an ongoing conversation over the week. Instead, each appeared to drop into the document only once to review the data and any comments written by other co-researchers and add their own commentary. While there was some mention of agreement or disagreement with previous postings, there was not an ongoing dialogue. A few of those who did not participate later apologized for not having the time to get to it. I think that time was a major factor here. I had only allotted one week for this process because I was concerned that giving *too much* time would cause the co-researchers to put off their participation until late in the process, forget to return to the document often enough to keep the conversation going, or get annoyed with my ongoing reminders. However, as I found in my previous research (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017), Indigenous Student Affairs educators are *very* limited in time. The co-researchers had volunteered enthusiastically to participate and those who did clearly spent a good amount of time with the data and provided commentary that was well thought out and very beneficial to the process. Nevertheless, I think that if I were able to give them two or more weeks of time in the document that more co-researchers may have engaged in the process and that they might have engaged in it more than once.

In the end, I feel like the asynchronous focus group technique was an appropriate method that aligned well with the Indigenous paradigm and methods. However, I will attempt to improve upon the implementation of this method in future research. In any case, I inserted the data from the focus group throughout the bullet-point analysis list. The co-researchers' comments mainly touched on things that I needed to dig deeper into or to consider a shift in the words I used. They also pointed out topics to emphasize and subthemes that could be rearranged.

Next, I re-read my researcher journal entries and connected participant quotes together to create cohesive, condensed conversations (Kovach, 2009). To present this part of the findings in story form, I included member-checked condensed conversations from my interviews couched between an introduction and my interpretations of the teachings within. In this way, the readers may make their own interpretations of the teachings from the stories and read mine as well. This is important to include because "tribal knowledge systems value the interpretive and the subjective" (Kovach, 2009, p. 131). As Kovach (2009) explained, "skilled orators, then and now, were able to imbue energy through word choice, and allow listeners to walk inside the story to find their own teachings. The interpretation and the teachings taken become the listener's task" (Kovach, 2009, p. 60).

Limitations

As with all studies, this research has its limitations. However, it depends on whose expectations you are catering to, to know what is a limitation or a strength. As described above, I did not enter into this work objectively. In some research circles this is a limitation leading to researcher bias. In others, it is culturally appropriate and within human nature to be subjective. The same issue is afoot regarding transferability. Is it important for this study to be transferable

to other fields, such as Latinx or LGBTQ Student Affairs? Or is it more appropriate to recognize the diversity in needs amongst social identity groups? It may be viewed as a limitation that I chose not to focus on validity and accuracy in my methods. Although, is this *really* achievable in *any* qualitative study? Meanwhile, if I had, the study may not have felt culturally relevant or of any use to Indigenous and ISA readers. Instead, they may believe that is more culturally relevant to focus on relational accountability and credibility.

Still, there are some more clearer limitations. Regarding the potential co-researcher participant pool, it is a limitation that my co-researchers were restricted to those who my volunteers and I could find in our online search, and further to those who chose to participate in ISAN. This means there may have been more Indigenous Student Affairs educators who were excluded from the pool, and that those who volunteered may have had similar thinking about the need for this work. This may have led to a lack of generalizability across the larger ISA population. The methods I utilized also had their limits. While interviews are a culturally appropriate means of gaining co-researchers' stories, it would have been more ideal and more culturally appropriate if they would have taken place in person. Interviewing over the phone or online creates distance that may have diminished my relationships with the co-researchers. Thus, the co-researchers may have been less trusting in me and less forthcoming in their responses.

Finally, the asynchronous focus group may have ended too quickly and may have excluded the participation of those who were less familiar or comfortable utilizing technology, especially with sensitive information. The process may have also been confusing as co-researchers were not online at the same time, and the layout of the conversation may have been difficult to navigate. So, while the process may have emboldened some who felt more confident

communicating from behind the relative anonymity of the computer screen, it may also have felt too distant or cumbersome for others.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introductions to Co-Researcher Participants

I begin this chapter by introducing my co-researchers and my relationships with them. As previously stated, the Indigenous paradigm requires that I "honor the relationships *they* share with the knowledge" (Wilson, 2008, p. 115, emphasis in original). This is a way for me to humble myself as I, a researcher, cannot *own* their data, experiences, and knowledge. It also holds me accountable to the relationships I formed with the co-researchers and allows the readers to form their own relationships with the co-researchers.

My first interview participant was Melissa Beard-Jacob. She is from the Eagle Clan of the Anishinaabe. Melissa has worked as the Intercultural Specialist, American Indian/Indigenous Student Initiatives at The Ohio State University for four years. She is also working on her PhD in Cultural Studies. Melissa is the participant that I've had the longest relationship with. We met at the 2015 ACPA Convention in Montreal. It was both of our first time at ACPA and we joined the Native, Aboriginal, and Indigenous Network (NAIN) together. She then served as the inaugural Indigenous Advisor for the ACPA Convention Steering Team for the next two years before passing the torch to me. Melissa first got involved in Indigenous Student Affairs as a sophomore after her grandmother had passed away, which caused her to feel a loss of connection to her culture. She continued working with Indigenous student organizations even through graduate school. After she had completed her doctoral coursework and moved home to complete her dissertation, her mom encouraged her to apply for her current

ISA position. She is driven to provide the support she received from her own ISA mentor when she was a student and by the impact she is able to have on her students.

My next interview was with Saundra Mitrovich, who I met through her joining ISAN. She is a member of the Tyme Maidu tribe. Saundra has been the Outreach and Retention Coordinator in The Center, Every Student. Every Story. at the University of Nevada-Reno for the last five years. Concurrently, she is working on her master's degree in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma. Saundra also learned about Indigenous Student Affairs when she was a student. She had participated in student support programs since she was young and was supported by TRIO in college. She had an Indigenous mentor who was very supportive of her and who role modeled what ISA could be. Her first job out of college was with TRIO as an academic advisor which eventually led to her role in ISA. She is motivated by connecting with tribal communities and partnering with them to support Indigenous students' connection to home and to their IHEs.

"Damon Snow" chose to remain anonymous. He is an Indigenous person with a master's degree who has worked in Indigenous Student Affairs for less than five years in eastern Canada. I met him for the first time at ACPA when he joined ISAN. Damon had not known about the field of student affairs or realized that there were services for Indigenous students when he was a student. He stumbled upon his current ISA job opening while he was working in another field and was excited by the idea of supporting Indigenous students, so he went for it. Now, he enjoys helping Indigenous students get into academia and works hard to promote the services to students so that they do not miss out on them like he had.

I met Phenocia Bauerle a couple years ago through a mutual Indigenous friend at her institution. She participated in an interview as well as the asynchronous focus group. Phenocia

is Apsaalooke (Crow) and has worked towards a PhD. She has been the Director of Native American Student Development at the University of California Berkeley for about four years. Phenocia's first introduction to Indigenous Student Affairs was in elementary school while her mom attended college. She fondly remembers her mom receiving support from an Indigenous student advisor and how impactful that person was for the Native student community. She later attended the same institution and received support from another person in that position, even into her first role in student affairs. Phenocia works in ISA in hopes of shifting structures in higher education that were not built with Indigenous inclusion in mind to become places where Indigenous voices and needs are included.

"Maya Sand" chose to keep her identity confidential. She is an Indigenous person with a master's degree who has worked in Indigenous Student Affairs for less than five years in the midwestern United States. I also met her for the first time at ACPA when she joined ISAN. Maya learned about ISA as an undergraduate. She struggled to connect with the ISA person on her campus because they focused on supporting traditional Native students from the reservation while Maya grew up in an urban setting, somewhat disconnected from her culture. In her role, Maya strives to connect with Indigenous students of various identities and to help them find their calling in life.

Dr. Rob Hancock is Cree-Métis from Canada. He has been the LE,NONET Academic Coordinator in the University of Victoria's Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement since 2011. He is also an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the School of Environmental Studies. We met because he was sent the email invitation to participate in this study by a colleague and reached out to me. Rob participated in an interview and also the asynchronous focus group. He and his colleagues have been working

on and presenting some great projects similar to this one, so we were both excited to have our conversation. They had hoped to present their work at NASPA in 2017 but were unable to attend. However, they have presented it in other settings in Canada and he plans to come to the next ACPA convention in Boston in 2019. As an academic, he had not realized that student affairs was a field until he was in his current position, which had been housed in the Division of Student Affairs until May 2017. His work in Indigenous Student Affairs is inspired by his own experiences as a graduate student at UVic, where he knew there was eight other Indigenous graduate students at the university, but there was no program to help him connect to them. So, today, he aims to provide a better experience for his students and support their growth in community.

Next, I interviewed Brittany Anderson. She is Fond Du Lac Ojibwe and is completing her master's degree this year. She has worked for the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities for about 5 years in community engagement and curriculum. We also met because someone had forwarded her the email invitation to this study. Brittany first experienced Indigenous Student Affairs at the two IHEs she attended as an undergrad. In the first institution she struggled to connect with the institution and ISA, and therefore transferred out to the second institution. There, she connected more with ISA, but the staff were focused on both Indigenous and general multicultural students, so it still was not the level of support she had hoped for. Today, Brittany enjoys working with Indigenous students from various backgrounds and helping them connect with their cultural identity. She is motivated to learn the rules of the institutional system so that she can become an agent of change within it.

My last interview was with Breanna Faris. She is from the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes and has worked as the Assistant Director of Student Life for American Indian Programs & Services at the University of Oklahoma for three years. She is also currently working on her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies. I first met her at the 2017 National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Convention. I attended a presentation by Breanna and her colleagues on their work in Indigenous Student Affairs and was very impressed. I introduced myself to her after the presentation and told her that I was working on the ACPA ISAN proposal at the time. We exchanged cards so that I could make sure to keep her in the loop as things progressed and she did, in fact, join ACPA and ISAN for the Houston convention. Breanna first learned about ISA when her older sister was in college. Her sister had come home after a crisis and the ISA educator would call to check on her. Indigenous students like her sister are what motivates Breanna to work in ISA. She utilizes her social work skills to be there for students who feel like no one else is there for them. She also enjoys engaging in humor and teasing with the students, a very important aspect of Indigenous relationship-building.

Finally, while she did not participate in an interview, Jamilee Gerzon participated in the asynchronous focus group. Jamilee is the only white, non-Native co-researcher in the study. She has been an English instructor at Central New Mexico Community College for 4 years. She has also been a member of the Native American Task Team at CNM for one year. As an instructor at a community college with a large Indigenous student population, Jamilee began seeking opportunities to learn more about Indigenous student needs. This is when she first became interested in Indigenous Student Affairs. She is motivated to work beside Indigenous students, educators, and administrators to help increase the rate of success for Indigenous students in IHEs.

Definition of Indigenous Student Affairs

To understand the mission of Indigenous Student Affairs it is important to create a definition and review the key points that make up ISA. As a result of this study, the co-researchers and I developed a definition, however the complexity of this topic makes it difficult to condense into a single sentence. Instead, I describe all the nuance the co-researchers discussed. Damon made an excellent point when he plainly stated that Indigenous Student Affairs is "new. We still don't know what it is yet." In performing this research, I found the process of asking each of the co-researchers to articulate their thoughts about what the definition of ISA is, *for ourselves*, was an important exercise. There were also some difficult discussions about *who* ISA serves, which led us into some deep dialogues about Indigenous identity. Maya and Brittany both questioned whether ISA serves *everyone* on campus, and if so, what does that mean? They determined that Indigenous Student Affairs needs to be intentional about serving Indigenous students first while also supporting all campus constituents in learning about and supporting Indigenous people and communities. Ultimately, as Rob stated,

> I think it's sort of a tiered model. I think at the core of our mission, at least as we do it here, is we serve Indigenous students and the Elders. And from there we serve community, like we serve the university community and we serve Indigenous communities whose lands we're on.

Damon also simply put it this way: "It serves the students and the public who know nothing about us."

Overall, the co-researchers concluded that Indigenous Student Affairs is about supporting Indigenous students and Indigenous community in a relationally accountable way, with the guidance of Indigenous Elders, while secondarily being a resource to others on campus. They

believed the definition of ISA should incorporate the eight concepts of: community, home, culture, support, advocacy, collaboration, retention, and education. Rob paraphrased it in this way:

> There's something about land and where we are, there's something about putting the students first, and there's something about working with Elders in community. And so what I think Indigenous Student Affairs is, as I've come to know it, is about creating a home away from home or a safe space of Indigenous students, and it's about working with our colleagues across student affairs to serve those students and not just shuttle them over to the Indigenous Student Affairs office. And it's about working with faculty and staff and executives to think really intentionally about how we relate to community.

All of the co-researchers made clear that *community*, amongst Indigenous students and educators, as well as the inclusion of local Indigenous communities, was the most essential component of this work.

In addition, they discussed *how* Indigenous Student Affairs supports Indigenous students. Brittany described it as "integrated services or integrated pieces that all talk to each other and that are all holistically supporting our students in a good culturally relevant way, that also exercise sovereignty." The co-researchers referred to utilizing holistic, culturally-appropriate methods for supporting Indigenous students that recognize them for who they are and where they come from. Phenocia stated, "I think the purpose is to really support Indigenous students in their higher education course of whatever that looks like. To affirm their identities as Indigenous students and scholars." Here, she points out that Indigenous students' paths may vary from what is considered the norm in IHEs, and that there are many ways to view success and scholar identities. The co-researchers also emphasized the need to be advocates for Native students and

community on campus. Saundra explained that "we have Indigenous Student Affairs so that we can make sure the voice from our Indigenous communities are present on campus."

In this section, I will review the following four overarching themes in the definition of Indigenous Student Affairs which incorporate the eight concepts of ISA listed above:

1. Family and Relationality.
2. Indigenous Land, Communities, and Elders.
3. Indigenous Students.
4. Indigenous Student Affairs Educators.

Family and Relationality

Family. The co-researchers stated that Indigenous Student Affairs should create and sustain a community of Indigenous students and educators. Within this community, educators must be intentional about creating authentic, familial relationships. As a collectivistic group, Indigenous people often (consciously or subconsciously) connect to the people in their networks in familial ways. Brittany explained that ISA educators and community members need to "understand the intricacies of our familial-based, community-based relationships." Native students enter IHEs looking for supportive relatives, so ISA educators must be prepared to think and operate in this cultural way. Once such a connection is established, the students may view Indigenous Student Affairs educators as aunties and uncles who have the wisdom and experience to guide them through any aspect of the institution until they are comfortable navigating it themselves. Therefore, ISA educators must be prepared for Native students to come to them for support related to any functional area in the institution, not just ISA-related services. Otherwise, telling a Native student to find resources on their own can, in the student's mind, may equate to telling them, "I don't care about you, our relationship is not important to me." This would

quickly break the student's trust in the educator in a way that can be very difficult to repair. Breanna explained that

> sometimes those in student affairs, we kind of get caught up in, "oh, well who works in residence life, or who works in fraternity and sorority student life," things like that. But with Indigenous Student Affairs, we really have to know it *all*. We have to do *all* of that. We have to know the financial aid, we have to know res life policies, we have to know academic advising to some extent. And so it's just a very comprehensive position and profession.

Many of the co-researchers described their ISAs as one-stop-shop resources.

Relationality. While operating in familial relationships with their Indigenous students and peers, ISA educators also need to be cognizant of exercising respectful, reciprocal relationality. This notion falls directly in line with Wilson's theory that a "relational way of being [is] at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). Maintaining accountability to those relationships is also important to attend to. Rob and Breanna spoke about community, familial relationships, and relationality in the following condensed conversation.

> Rob: Indigenous staff parallels that of Indigenous faculty, right? In my office we are *all* frontline people if it comes down to it. And we are all out in community if it comes to it, right? That recognition that my job is not a straightforward 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with an hour for lunch {Cori laughs} and a couple weeks of vacation, but that it's about changing the university's perception of what it actually means to care about students. And some of my Indigenous faculty colleagues have definitely got the, "well if you can't get anything done, why don't you just close your door?" And it's like, "well no, because we are advisors, and we are aunties and uncles, and we are all of these things to all of these students." And it's important to have strong boundaries, but those boundaries are very different than what most faculty and other staff see or expect as part of their role.
>
> Breanna: Yeah, I mean even though we have academic resources, we have academic advisors, we have financial aid counselors, but they're going to come to us first, they're not going to go seek them out on their own, they're going to come to us first and so you

really do have to be – I always describe it like the utility player in baseball. You have to know how to play every position because you're going to be called to play all positions, multiple times a day even.

Cori: Why do you think that is, that Indigenous students tend to go to Indigenous Student Affairs folks first? Is it a trust thing?

Breanna: I would say it's a relationship thing. We don't exist without the relationships to each other, right? Our very existence is tied to our relationships with people who you consider our relatives, our friends, our community. And so that's kind of how they navigate in their home communities, they go to their mother, to their grandparents, to their aunties for things first. I always get mad if they call me a *mother*, I'm like, "I'm not that old yet, hey! {Cori laughs} Y'all can call me like big sister or auntie." But yeah, I mean it's the same thing, they go to their mother if they need something or they go to an instructor. So thinking about like our ceremonies, usually when you go through our ceremonies you have an instructor and you go through that person for everything to learn about our ceremonial ways and things like that. So I see that mirrored here a lot. They come to *me*. They come an Indigenous faculty member or staff member first before they seek help anywhere else.

Cori: So Indigenous educators maybe understand and participate in the cultural values of creating familial ties in the institution?

Breanna: Absolutely. There's very much like an academic genealogy that occurs once Native students come to college.

Rob: And I think there's something else really important about balance, in that – like one of the late Elders here used to always remind us when she saw us that when we work together we can accomplish so much more than when we work on our own. And that when we come together we make a whole. So, none of us can be everything to Indigenous students, but if we bring our strengths together we can create a community – we can help create the conditions for a community to emerge.

Cori: You have both talked about the importance of relationships and accountability in Indigenous Student Affairs. Can you explain that a bit more?

Rob: For me it's *all* about – how we are going to take care of those relationships with the people whose lands we're on and how are we going to exercise our accountability and our responsibility both to the lands and to the people whose lands they are. It's about

building strong relationships. And starting with the idea of taking care of one's self, so that one can be healthy in their relationships with other people and other beings.

Breanna: I don't think people really understand relationality. I think sometimes we throw it around because it sounds pretty, right? Kind of even sounds majestic in some ways, sort of that exoticization of Native people. But really understanding what relationality means and what it means to be a good relative is something my mentor is always honest about. She says, "don't be calling people your brother and sister if you're not going to be there for them when they need you." So things like that, understanding what that really means. Relationships are not the, "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." It's very much an agreement to treat somebody like your own family. Make sure you understand that when you're saying, "we're going to honor our relationships with you," that you know what that means for Native communities. It's not about giving money here and there, it is more about that reciprocity and responsibility. And so, you know, if one of our students is treated poorly, like "what are you going to do to reconcile that relationship?" And we have those ways in our communities, right, in our culture. We have those ways that if you wrong somebody this is how you make it right. And so understanding that, what you think is adequate to repair relationships may not be adequate in the eyes of the community. So again, just making sure you understand the responsibility of saying, "we're going to take care of your students when you send them to us." Because it's not the same for everybody. And understanding that it's just not the Indigenous Student Affairs or whoever their Indigenous advisor is, it's not their sole responsibility, it's really the institution's responsibility to support Indigenous students.

Cori: So if an institution is going to say, "we're going to commit to supporting Indigenous students and putting in some efforts towards hiring Indigenous Student Affairs educators," they need to be prepared to be flexible and adaptable to learning how to work with the local tribal communities, working with the Indigenous students' and educators' cultural ways of being and knowing in the institution? What is an example of that?

Rob: One of the messages that we're getting ready to share with our president is, "clear your schedule when you go and meet with a chief, because it could be a 15-minute meeting, or it could be a 3-hour meeting." But I think there's that sort of a shared value that I've heard many people from many Indigenous communities share of "things take as long as they take." And we hear from the Elders from this territory, we get some pretty firm teachings about like, "you don't walk away, you don't say that you have to leave because you've got something else to do because what you're saying is that the person you're talking to isn't as important as the next person you're talking to."

> Breanna: I know we joke about Indian time all the time, "oh, well we're just running on Indian time." Well no, that's a real thing! My relationships with students always come before a deadline, always. Like I've been told about Indian time in my community from one of our tribal leaders is that, Indian time is not just about being late. It's about doing things when you're ready, so you never do things when you're not ready. You never hold a ceremony when you're not ready. You never take on something that you're not ready to take on. Those relationships are always going to come before, like, putting on a program. I think that's more of the institutional priority of developing these large-scale programs that bring recognition more so than the actual, you know, being a good relative and caring for people.

In the focus group, Phenocia and Jamilee spoke to the importance of having a clear understanding of what is meant by "relationality" and "family" in this Indigenous context. From my experience and understanding of the co-researchers, I relate these concepts to one of the most important lessons we learn in the *wi'wang wacipi* ceremony. During the annual 4-day ceremony, we know that we are in a sacred time and place, so we are taught to treat ourselves and each other with the utmost respect and care. When we walk on the sacred ceremonial grounds, we must be humble, respectful, and mindful of our thoughts and actions. All who attend the ceremony must find their place in the community and offer their support in whichever ways they can. Everyone is viewed as a close relative and we grow a deep bond with one another during this time of close, collectivistic togetherness and prayers. We are taught that we each carry the same spark of *Tunkasila*, the Creator, and thus we are all sacred beings and must love one another as such. At the end of the ceremony, the spiritual leader reminds us that we are to walk in this sacred, prayerful, and relational way every day, not just these four days of the year. Of course this lesson is powerful and deeply meaningful, but it always seems to slowly fade to a distant part of our memories as we enter back into the everyday realities and frustrations of life and work. I think that this lesson is what is meant by operating in relationality and familial

relationships. We are all sacred, we are all related, and we all have a part to play in sustaining our community.

Indigenous Land, Communities, and Elders

Indigenous land. The co-researchers made clear that both IHEs and ISAs must also exercise accountability and responsibility to the lands the institution occupies and to the people whose homelands they are. As Melissa explained,

> we should be thinking about "whose land are you on?" I think that's a really great space to start with because knowing who was and continues to be here kind of guides you in the direction of "so what local tribes should you get in contact with? What communities are your students coming from?"

ISAs must be cognizant of the land and the history of how their institution came to be there to establish relationships with local Indigenous communities and students. Rob clarified that "nothing else can happen without that because if we don't know whose land we're on or we don't know how to do things here, that's going to keep us from doing our work in a good way." Knowing this history helps ISAs to work with tribal communities. If there are no longer any local tribal communities in the area, then they have to look at whose land it was historically and connect with those tribes who were removed.

Indigenous communities. The co-researchers all emphasized a strong need for Indigenous Student Affairs to work in collaboration with and on the behalf of Indigenous communities. Saundra explained,

> ISAs need to think about reaching out to Native communities to start asking questions first, making those connections to get the voice of the community involved in the process. So I don't think that you should create a program without that first being a part of that

> process, because then it's almost like doing it backwards. You create a program, you say, "well I think this is what this tribal community needs," and I think that's the wrong way of doing things. I think it should be more about listening to what tribal communities would like, and then trying to implement those things within your student services model. Every tribal community we know looks very different and has very different needs.

Saundra spoke to the importance of listening and responding to the needs of the community as opposed to making assumptions about what a community may need. Maya more pointedly stated that for Indigenous Student Affairs "to serve the students, we need to serve the community." Phenocia made clear that ISAs must work in connection with local tribes "so that you're not creating these programs or these efforts in an ivory tower. I think any Indigenous movement has to be connected to communities." As a collectivistic group, it would be culturally inappropriate for an ISA to operate completely independently of the local tribal communities. ISA needs to understand and respect the local communities and their cultural protocols and support the needs that come from them and their students.

Indigenous educators often feel a loyalty and accountability to their communities, and thus their students, above and beyond any loyalty to an institution. It is important to have that understanding about Indigenous staff, not as a means of losing trust in them, but in understanding their drive and their motives. If an Indigenous educator is advocating for a student, a program, or some major campus decision, they are doing it on behalf of their Indigenous communities, so they will not go down without a fight. In fact, they may feel as though the institution has *hired* them to fight the institution on behalf of the students and communities, as someone to hold the institution accountable. Breanna explained,

> What I see time and time again with Indigenous Student Affairs folx is that we don't give a damn about loyalty to the institution, because our loyalty, and even more than loyalty, our accountability lies with our community, right? So I often have to be a bulldog to advocate and constantly go against the institution because that's the nature of my work, right? We strive to make a better place for Native students to ensure that we are making room for placemaking here, that's really important for Indigenous peoples. However, you know, with Indigenous Student Affairs folx, I think people don't understand that, what that's like to constantly be at odds with the institution that you're employed from.

This is very hard and exhausting work. It is necessary for IHE leaders to understand this strain on ISA educators and consider ways to minimize it without minimizing the cultural importance of serving their communities.

Brittany emphasized the impact of *not* creating authentic connections with a tribal community.

> I think you need to have community consultation and it has to be meaningful and it has to be held in the highest regard, because otherwise it's a joke. Your communities aren't going to send their students there or feel trusted or comfortable with the work that you're doing on campus.

Damon also suggested that "if you don't have community support you're not going to do good, because the community talks to the students all the time. They're very influenced by where they're from, urban or rez." Native communities already have little trust in IHEs due to the history of Indian boarding schools, so it is vital to continuously work on creating a trusting relationship with communities. Even Native educators must work on this trust because they are viewed as representatives of their institutions. For Rob, working with tribal communities "takes

a lot of time. And it looks different each time and with each community." Therefore, there is no pan-Indian approach to this work. ISA's need to spend time gaining trust and rapport with tribal communities, especially if the ISA educators are not from those tribes or communities themselves. When possible, ISAs should employ Indigenous educators from the local tribes who are familiar with the needs and traditions of the local communities.

ISAs also need to hold themselves accountable to Indigenous communities and attempt to get their institutions to do the same. As stated by Breanna,

> when we're asking our Native communities to send their students to us, we are then accountable to those communities. We're saying, "we're going to treat your students good, we're going to treat your children good, we're going to treat your future good when they get here."

Given the historical context of North American higher education and Indigenous people, tribal communities are often weary of sending their students to college. Maya explained,

> There is a lot of distrust there with local communities, and I get why that's there. The communities want their students to go to TCUs because they can educate them in a culturally relevant way in which PWIs can't. Some tribal politics plays a role in that, it depends on who's in the tribal council and their feelings on the PWI. I think as more Native students come to our institution, I think TCUs and communities are realizing that we're not here to assimilate but to support and encourage the students and hopefully send them back to their communities.

Indigenous Student Affairs is the arm of the institution that is tasked with overseeing the care and responsibility for Indigenous students. ISAs and IHEs should be prepared to report to the communities how they are supporting their students and how well they are being retained.

However, caution must also be taken in how often ISA educators, whose main role is being present with students, are traveling off-campus. As opposed to creating a single position in which an educator is constantly pulled in two directions, some institutions have developed Tribal Liaison positions. These positions are developed to focus on traveling to tribal communities for bridging relationships and developing collaborations and pipelines between tribes and the institution. This is an excellent way for institutions to serve both purposes of having a consistent presence of ISA educators on campus while also cultivating and being accountable to relationships with tribes.

Indigenous Elders. As part of working with Indigenous communities, ISAs should seek the council and wisdom of local tribal Elders. Damon advises ISAs to

> go to the Elders first and foremost for counsel, but make sure it's a joint effort. We go to see them and give them tobacco, they have the best intentions, but we need to do our part too. We have to invest in that relationship.

Damon indicated the necessity of the reciprocal relationship and cultural protocol in working with Elders. Where I am from, we offer tobacco to someone when we ask for a favor, help, or advice. When the tobacco is accepted by the other person, a relationship is formed that creates a bond and responsibility for both parties to uphold. This is the way many Elders operate when we ask for their wisdom. Similarly, this is the same type of reciprocal relationships tribes expect with an IHE when they send their students to college. In Rob's case, he highlighted the level of responsibility his staff feel towards listening to their Elders.

> The office here has a relationship with 11 Elders, we call them Elder's Voices. They make it really clear they're not a program, but they guide our work and our previous

> director would say to the university president, "I know the university thinks you're my boss, but really the Elders are the ones whose direction I take."

Brittany emphasized students' "need to have access to Elders. And whether that's a formal Elders council, or whatever, I think that that's really important, too. I think our students have been missing that on campus. Access to Elders." Many Indigenous students grow up around Elders and grandparents and may feel lost without the ability to gain council or direction from Elders. Damon recommended creating Elders-in-Residence programs to build special part-time positions within Indigenous Student Affairs to provide students and educators access to local Indigenous Elders.

Indigenous Students

There is nothing more important to the co-researchers than Indigenous students. Damon described his role this way, "I'm here with the students helping them with crisis situations or mentoring leaders. Providing their basic needs, like in Maslow's hierarchy, and then they are able to engage with the rest of the institution." He and Breanna both described their willingness to drop whatever else they may be doing, such as participating in important meetings, to serve the students when they are in need. Melissa illustrated being a supportive point person on campus.

> What many of us do in Indigenous Student Affairs is we support our students. You know we're a resource for them and also I think 'second family' or 'second home' kind of feeling. I know my office is kind of like hang out space or I guess I would say, safe space or a comforting space. So students come to me because they know that they can talk about things here that other folx might not understand, you know, cultural issues in the classroom, and so I think that we are kind of that crucial piece for Native students in

> navigating college life. I've just kind of seen how unique my position is in interacting with other Native faculty and staff on campus because I'm kind of that key person for Native students. I know them the best, I know what they're going through and so I think it's really important for students to have that one person they know they can go to for support or advice.

Here again, Melissa connected Indigenous Student Affairs to the notion of family and also for ISA educators to be crucial support persons who understand the students' cultural ways of being and experiences in the institution. Saundra further expressed that Indigenous Student Affairs exists so that "students can identify with and feel that they see themselves in this place and feel supported in this space."

For some, however, describing *who* exactly Indigenous Student Affairs serves can be complicated. In some interviews, co-researchers pondered: Do we just serve students who are connected to their culture and look phenotypically Native? How do we include those who have grown up removed from the culture and/or do not look Native at all? Do we include non-Native allies? How do you define who is or is not Indigenous without getting into a messy debate about blood quantum? It is hard to draw the line between being inclusive or exclusionary when you want to create a safe space for Indigenous students while not leaving out people who want to learn about and be supportive of Native people. And it is dangerous to get into a debate about *who counts as Indigenous*, especially when that is not even an Indigenous way of thinking.

The co-researchers all described the diversity of their Indigenous students and considered how the urbanization of Indigenous youth may change how ISAs operate.

> Phenocia: I think if you looked at schools like Stanford, the students they recruit on the whole don't seem to be from the same backgrounds or state, and I think it's an in-state versus out-of-state student population difference. And being at a California state school we're going to get more California Indians or more Natives who have relocated off

reservations to live in California, whether that was two years ago or two decades ago. So I think that's different than like when I was in Montana, there are very distinct tribes that have very distinct communities and that's who's brought in. Every year, our community changes dramatically just based on the students that come through the door and their experiences, it's not like we get usually like five students from Graton Rancheria every year, it really varies and so those experiences vary and shift the community makeup a lot.

Cori: Yeah, so you feel like there needs to be intentionality around the services provided, but also in thinking about the Native student population that you're recruiting?

Phenocia: Yeah, yeah. And where they're coming from and I think for me that's why it's like if we get a bunch of Native students who have a real strong sense of identity – say we get three from Montana and they have particular ways of doing things and are grounded in certain ways – it can change dramatically the makeup of the community here. Say like we have five students who grew up in Sacramento but didn't grow up powwow dancing or didn't grow up having a community center, that can shift dramatically then what people think of as Indigenous or Native. And you have to be ready to work with that, and for me community is one of our very intentional things, we want to develop inclusive community so that those kinds of shifts don't make it not a community anymore.

Melissa: We have the divide of people who come from reservation communities but then we also have a lot of folx who, because of relocation are more of like an urban Indian. So a mixture of people who may have grown up close to their traditions and then those who didn't and are looking to reclaim those pieces. So I often have one or the other in terms of students. Like I have some who are like, "I'm enrolled, I know my culture," and then others who are kind of like, "I don't really know anything. I know that I might be Shawnee, I might be Cherokee, but our family didn't talk about it a lot."

Brittany: A lot of the students I work are working through some identity stuff, so a lot of them are like upper middle class, suburban students who didn't grow up on the rez or like went back to the rez only once in a while, but have a very different experience than urban Indians or rez Indians, right? A lot of our students that we work with are suburban, because I hate to say that's the population that the U of M targets with their admission standards, but that's who we see getting admitted. And so I think that definitely does change how we do Indigenous Student Affairs. Like I find myself having to have more conversations about like culturally why is it appropriate that we wear long skirts to ceremonies, not you know, "how are we going to get back home for your cousin's funeral and how do we talk through that with your faculty members for why you need to be gone for four days at a time" or whatever. So the conversations have shifted to doing a little

bit more like walking our students through cultural protocol and how to have those conversations with either faculty or staff. So they absolutely have different needs, in my mind. But also there are some key things that like watching them go through these cultural transformations, furthering themselves on their cultural journey or their identity journey is like a phenomenal thing. Because I have a student that was not really connected, kind of interested and was like, "you know, I know I'm a little bit Ojibwe, I don't know what that means," but she's been able to trace back and find her family on the rez and now she goes to sweat and participates in some of those kinds of things. And so being able to like help foster those relationships, because I personally didn't take her to a sweat, but I connected her with someone that knows people that do sweats and do cultural/spiritual stuff. So I think it goes back to a little bit more, we have to do a little bit more handholding to get them to the point where they're asking for these kinds of like more critical, key cultural pieces.

Breanna: When we have students come from urban areas, it very much is, you know, they feel like they're missing something, or they feel like they don't have a place to talk about their experiences as Indigenous people. And so it's always this, "well I just don't feel Native enough or I shouldn't be talking about this because I don't know." And I think that's also indicative of a larger sort of problem in that Native people are expected to know everything there is about being Native, right? And so a lot of our students are feeling that strain. Not only this overall societal standard that we should just know, or that we should all powwow dance, or we should all be phenotypically Native. They feel like they're missing something when they're coming to the institution. And so that can very much affect their role in the Native community when they get here. Some of them feel like they shouldn't put themselves in a box. And so they'll stay away from the Native community and we know that that's detrimental to the Native students. And so there are just lots of different ways that it can play out, but I see that a lot, they just feel like they're not Native enough or that they're missing something.

Maya: There is a lot of mixed people out there, students who say their parents were stolen from the culture, so they were removed. Our ISA community consists of a range of identities, so we all play a role in supporting Native community on campus. A few of our staff are super connected to traditions and have been really amazing at helping the few of us that aren't as connected to our communities or cultural knowledge or protocols. A lot of students connect more with the individuals in our office that match their identities in having grown up removed or more traditional. We need more than one ISA person to represent the various Native identities of our students. The impact we've made on our students is because of our varying degrees of identity in our office.

Cori: Do you think that there are Native students on *every* campus?

Rob: My sense is that there are Indigenous people everywhere and we just need to make it possible for them to feel comfortable stepping forward. If like we have a campus leader who says, "oh, I don't think we have any Indigenous students at our university." Well… {Cori laughs} Then the students will say, "is it safe for me to come forward and correct him or do I just feel okay about passing and getting on with my studies?"

Cori: Yeah. That's something that I've gotten a lot here in the south is like, "well, but there's no Native students at my school so…" And I'll say, "well, they probably *are* there, you just haven't figured out how to find them yet!" {laughs}

Rob: Absolutely.

Damon: The majority of us are lighter skin in Eastern Canada so people don't know we're Indigenous. We teach people on campus that Indigenous students are in their classes, so they need to be aware of what they say. Saying negative things about Native people can be really damaging to them.

Brittany: That's what I'm seeing on our campus is a lot more blond haired, blue eyed – and that's – you know, there's nothing wrong with that.

Rob: There's a lot of education to be done around "what do Indigenous people look like in the 21st century?"

Cori: So how do you support students who are so removed and don't have a connection to Indigenous culture?

Rob: It makes really important the connection to land. The students that we work with are very interested in land and water-based activities. So for example, just in this past month or so we've had workshops bringing in local hunters to talk about teachings around hunting in this territory, sweat lodges, like a brothers' lodge, a sisters' lodge, and a two-spirit lodge on different weekends to try and serve the diverse needs of the students. Students are speaking up more and more for these things, and I think that that reflects the urbanization of Indigenous peoples, that desire to reconnect, even though they're not necessarily from here. Like the Canadian Indigenous population is really mobile and really urbanized and so it's just about that first step of being out on the land with people from this land as part of that reconnection so that students might find a way then to say, "okay, when I'm home or when I'm visiting my aunties and grandparents I can think differently about being out on the land."

> Damon: I've found that urban populations are different from community ones. They crave connections to Elders and the land, but don't have access to it. I can drive five hours to go to my homelands to pray and come back in a better way, they don't have access to that.
>
> Cori: So there's almost a reconnection process as part of their connection to the institution, an ability to reconnect them to their culture through the land?
>
> Rob: Absolutely. And so we do our best to meet students where they're at and to also talk to students about how people are in different points on their own identity journey. And we try and provide community-building opportunities here on campus so that students can also find that connection here.
>
> Breanna: I think that a lot of times our students can be kind of ruthless {laughs} sometimes kind of like investigating each other, well "who knows more" and it's kind of like the Olympics for cultural knowledge. And so it's this actually like weird display of, like in my community when you have a lot of cultural knowledge, when you know about our ceremonies, you don't talk about it. You don't talk about it needlessly, and so it's like this weird – they're trying to prove to each other who is Native, and I think that comes from the societal standard of like "well, you should know everything about being Native," right? So I think just helping students establish that culture where we are allowing for that learning, we're allowing for that understanding that you don't know everything and that this might be the first time you've gone to a stomp dance or to a powwow and that's alright, but we're going to take you in to try to teach you some of that etiquette that goes along with it.

There is a wide variety of Indigenous student identities, so ISAs must shift as the needs of the community changes each year when new students come in. This means that ISAs need to be intentional about creating a more inclusive Indigenous community that can accept students from such a wide spectrum of experiences and connections to Indigenous cultures. ISAs should focus on affirming Indigenous student identity, no matter where they are in their identity when they arrive. As Phenocia stated,

> I think that's where my issues sometimes in student affairs comes, it's very transactional and event-based and I think that Indigenous Student Affairs has to be a little bit more deeply connected to the growth of students in their time at the university. I think there's a

> piece that always has to be about meeting those students where they are and also helping them connect more deeply with where they come from.

ISAs need to consider who their Indigenous student community encompasses and what their specific needs are, while maintaining the ability to be flexible as the student population and needs change. As the Indigenous student population changes and urbanizes, it is even more important to connect students to tribal culture because they are often yearning for that connection.

The co-researchers reported seeing more urbanized Indigenous students and a change in the types of conversations they are having with them. Rather than helping them get through the institution while maintaining their culture or advocating for them practicing their culture in the institution, they are instead helping them to *learn* about their culture and how to connect to it. They also must find a balance with those who are so removed that they only see their Indigeneity as their family's distant heritage, rather than seeing it as who they are and what responsibilities they have in upholding it. This may include supporting students who experience being *otherized* for their Indigeneity for the first time on campus, because they had never experienced this dissonance before having always been able to blend in with non-Native people.

Students who come from more urbanized backgrounds tend to come in feeling *not Native enough*, or Native inauthenticity, because they do not know as much about their culture as they think they should. Society and IHEs put this pressure on them to think that they have to know everything about their culture and be able to speak on behalf of Native people, which is intimidating and feels shameful when they do not have all the answers. This is so pervasive that even the students will put those expectations on each other and shame those who do not know about their culture. All this can leave students feeling like they do not belong in Indigenous

Student Affairs and they may try to blend in to other parts of the campus instead. Therefore, the work of ISA needs to include helping students learn about Indigenous cultures and bringing them in, letting them know that it is ok not to know everything.

As Maya pointed out, it is important for ISAs to employ educators who reflect the mix of Native students who were raised culturally traditional and those who are non-traditional. This way students can feel comfortable going to the staff they feel comfortable with and can relate to. Culturally non-traditional, urban students may feel too intimidated to go to a culturally traditional educator. Traditional students from the reservation may feel like an urban, non-traditional educator does not have the adequate cultural knowledge to understand them. Rob also made clear that making an assumption that there are no Native students at an IHE is not an excuse not to have Indigenous Student Affairs services, and that this is simply not very likely the case. It is more likely that the IHE has not tried or considered how to find and connect with its Native students.

Indigenous Student Affairs Educators

Indigenous Student Affairs educators mostly consist of staff but may also include faculty. ISA educators' personal objectives usually include helping Indigenous students through their personal journeys in higher education; being supportive mentors who understand Indigenous students' experiences; creating welcoming, Indigenous identity affirming spaces on campus; advocating for Indigenous student needs; and shaping institutional policies in attempts to decolonize institutional practices. They will host numerous programs throughout the academic year, including a mix of academic, social, and/or cultural activities. For some, like Saundra, the goals of Indigenous Student Affairs programming efforts are clear: creating connections to

home, spirituality, and culture on campus so students do not feel "disassociated with home, spiritually or personally, while they're here. So that it's not lost and they're getting what they need here, but not ever having to replace or leave anything behind." In other ways, as Damon suggested,

> there is always a moving target. Some administrators will ask "what's the goal?" but every day there is a different goal. It's hard to create a policy when, how communities work, it's a moving target. The same goal might not work from year to year because student needs change.

The co-researchers emphasized being collaborators with peer offices and programs. Damon made clear that ISA educators must be politically savvy to navigate the institution. They need to make strategic relationships with upper administration, deans, and faculty who can help them find resources and to collaborate with. He is even strategic in how he gains collaborative buy-in from his peers:

> Settlers [white people] from other offices, like Career services, come and ask how they can help. I call them "comrades" in my language and tell them they are part of us now, so they need to be there and help, and they do. Now they do a more holistic approach in their own work.

By being claimed as part of the community, his collaborators begin to feel a sense of responsibility to it as well. Breanna found a more direct approach works best for her.

> I feel like I've worked up a good relationship between administrators where I am able to be very direct and very blunt with them and too, like my intentions are never to do it just to do it, right? I'm not trying to just be very direct for no reason, there's always a purpose behind it. But sometimes when I say things, and I'm just like, "god, I sound just like my

> mom!" {both laugh} My mom, she only has a high school diploma, but I just remember when she was part of our Indian Ed program, coming up to the school and fighting with the superintendent about where our JOM monies were going. Things like that. Or my aunties or my grandmas kind of like boss us around during ceremony times. "No, you're doing that wrong, you need to be doing it like this! You're not supposed to make the frybread like that, you're not supposed to make the rice and raisins like that, you need to be doing it like this!" And so sometimes when I'm saying things like that I just hear my grandmas and my mom and my auntie. {laughs} But then I just remember them doing that for us at school for our Indian Ed program. And like I said, my mom, she had a high school diploma, but she didn't let that stop her from being an advocate in our community. So, I think I just like use that to my advantage. I'm not scared of anyone, you're not going to intimidate me and like I said, just that accountability that I feel to the community, not to the institution, always is a huge motivational factor for that advocacy work.

Breanna uses a direct approach she had seen modeled by women in her family during ceremonies and in times when they were advocating for their children. She feels this direct approach suits the situation because she uses it out of love for her students who she views as her nieces and nephews, and her need to keep the institution accountable to them.

Some of the co-researchers found difficulty in navigating relationships with other Indigenous people on campus. Brittany discussed the complexity that can exist in managing generational differences in ISA educators' approaches to the work.

> We have staff people who have been on campus for 30 years and have been shoved in different corners and in different boxes and really are scarred from doing that, so they're

> not able to move forward and do work that some of us maybe younger professionals are thinking that our students need. And no disrespect meant towards those people, but I think people that aren't able to kind of keep up with the times or keep up with what our students need and always kind of doing things just because "this is how we've done them," is really a hindrance for our students. I would say the first three and a half years that I was in my previous position, my everyday struggle was trying to open the door a little bit for some new ideas or some flexibility or like try to help further the understanding of the *needs* of the students that we're serving. And fighting against that is exhausting. How do you argue with tradition but also at the same time, if you're not being effective to your students' needs, like what are you doing there?

This type of generational push and pull is not uncommon on many campuses that serve Indigenous students. It is especially difficult for younger generation educators to navigate when traditionally, we are taught to always respect our Elders views and decisions, even when we believe they are incorrect.

Brittany and Maya also communicated common experiences of negativity from other Indigenous ISA or campus members around issues of Indigenous identity. Brittany described in-fighting amongst ISA educators in which she was devalued for not being federally enrolled in her tribe. She also told a story about others on campus who willfully pass as white every day, but then occasionally come out to weaponize their Indigenous identity against the work of Indigenous Student Affairs.

> We submitted a proposal for a Dakota language bachelor's program and [a person with institutional power] had the gall to come back and say, "as a Native American myself, I'm fully in support of this program but the numbers just don't demonstrate that." And I was

like, “you don’t get to say that. You don’t get to invoke your Native identity when it’s convenient for you!”

Maya expressed pain of feeling self-conscious and Native inauthenticity because she has light skin and grew up removed from her culture and tribe. She had experienced being judged in her job and by people from local tribal communities and TCUs.

> Not feeling Native enough happens every day. Being white-presenting and having to show the way for other white-presenting students how to navigate too. It can be really challenging to have the right answers. It’s hard to have students come to me and tell me about their experiences and it’s hard to help them navigate it when sometimes I don’t know how to myself. My non-Native colleagues wouldn’t see how challenging that is.

Maya expressed a critical need for Indigenous and ISA educators to support and have “compassion, love, and encouragement” for one another in order to be effective at supporting their students.

Most Indigenous Student Affairs offices are staffed by only one or two people with few resources, while a few consist of several individuals and abundant resources. For example, Rob is in an administrative role with some teaching responsibilities, in an office with a large ISA staff. Although his office has adequate financial means, they are very much reliant on outside resources. He worries that this may not be sustainable or show much commitment on the institution’s part. Rob and Damon both work in Canada, where many institutions are taking the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) very seriously. Damon explained that there is currently momentum in the country in which ISA educators are being hired and listened to and getting their needs met: “we’re here and putting in demands, and people are actually opening doors to allow us to do this work. I can’t believe we’re being listened to.” Although,

some campus members only see ISA educators as token hires with little influence, who in turn try not to ruffle any feathers in the institution to ensure job security. However, Damon says his mantra is "I may be a token, but I'm in the game." Therefore he is very active in his position and getting things done on behalf of Indigenous Student Affairs.

The more common experience in the United States is that of being an Indigenous solo on campus, with far less than a critical mass of Indigenous educators. Breanna described her experience as the solo member of her Indigenous Student Affairs in the following exchange.

> Breanna: Just being 'the one', being the one that's responsible for everything. I don't feel like I am able to establish these innovative programs that the students deserve because I may have to deal with a sexual assault victim that day that I was supposed to get this started. Or you know a student may be having suicidal thoughts so I'm working with them in counseling services. Or a student is tearing it up in class and so I have to help them through that and walk them through the financial implications of withdrawing at this time and what that looks like for their tribal scholarships and for their financial aid for next year. And so being the one, it really limits the type of work and I guess development that you can really do as far as like programming and those sorts of initiatives that you want to start because when you're putting out fires all day there's no time to build anything. So that's something I think is the biggest hinderance, I don't feel like people really get it because they're not the only one. Here at OU I'm the only Indigenous person in student affairs, in Oklahoma where you have 39 tribes! And so there's something wrong with that. I think that is the biggest hinderance, just being 'the one,' it's impossible.
>
> Cori: Do you feel like it's related to your familial connection that you create with the students that when you have a student who is having an emergency you feel a personal responsibility to help them through that?
>
> Breanna: Oh absolutely. So not necessarily that I'm not ready to take on the overall vision of where I would like to see us go in regard to programming, it's just I literally don't have the time. If somebody is in here telling me they have suicidal thoughts, I can't be like, "oh, I'm sorry, I have to get on these programming initiatives, I need to start working on these learning outcomes for this program," right?
>
> Cori: Do you ever get a feeling of insecurity about your ability to *do everything*?

Breanna: All the time. I think that I talk to my mentor almost every day. Like "dang, I'm really struggling with this" or "we were supposed to plan something this spring and it never happened." I've texted her, "how do I handle this?" or "am I doing this right?" almost daily. At least three to four times a week at the minimum or talking through different student situations with her or talking through even interactions with my supervisor and our vice president, you know, "am I doing this right, did I say the right thing?" all the time. And so I know that puts an incredible burden on her as well, because she's constantly caring for me while I'm trying to care for the students and sort of like reaffirm me or guide me in the right ways. And so there's always that. I think it's very much imposter syndrome, like "oh, I'm not doing this right or look at my colleagues, they're developing these large-scale initiatives and I'm not." There's always that sense of like somebody could be doing this better. Or I think even our students sometimes, I'm always really worried that students don't understand what I do and that they might think that I'm not doing enough. Things like that, there's always that in the back of my mind. Or you know, if this program doesn't get the attendance that's expected are we going to get our funding cut? So yeah, a constant worry.

Cori: With all this stress, how do you keep going in this job?

Breanna: I will say that a lot of times we talk about like the burden of Indigenous Student Affairs work and it is, it is an incredible burden at times, but again I think I see that mirrored in like my own tribe's ceremonies. You know, we always suffered for the people, you take on that burden for the people, and so I do kind of see it as a role even though I'm not situated in my community currently, like I still see this as an important function of an extension of our ceremonial ways in a lot of ways. And you know it is a burden, but it's also so incredibly rewarding. It's so much fun working with Native students, {laughs} they crack me up. Just being able to tease with them the way I tease with my nieces and nephews, or you know I call different ones my nephews or things like that. So as much of a burden as it is, it's so incredibly rewarding too.

Breanna expressed the difficulty of the push and pull of cultural obligations to support Indigenous students in need versus the institution's need for Indigenous Student Affairs programming, and how impossible it can be to feel confidence in her abilities when she does not have any staff support or reassurance from others on campus that she is *doing it right*. This struggle is one that is virtually invisible to others on campus, so she fights this internal battle alone on top of the duties of her job. She calls her mentor, an Indigenous faculty member on

campus, almost daily to help talk through this pain and insecurity and that she feels, and worries that this may, in turn, be a burden on her mentor. However, as hard as the job is on her as a solo, Breanna connects this experience to a common Indigenous ceremonial task of suffering in the place of others or for the betterment of others. She is also able to find joy and intrinsic rewards in her work that make it worth the pain.

Mission of Indigenous Student Affairs

The review of the Indigenous Student Affairs definition highlights some of the various key points and challenges of the functional area. Thus, the essential elements of the mission statement become clear. The mission of the Indigenous Student Affairs functional area is to:

- Focus on Indigenous college students, local and campus Indigenous communities, and the Indigenous land that institutions of higher education occupy;
- Support, advocate for, and enhance the visibility of Indigenous students and communities in institutions of higher education;
- Affirm the various Indigenous cultural and social identities present in campus communities; and
- Promote the well-being of Indigenous students and educators in higher education.

Guiding Principles of Indigenous Student Affairs

Now that we have an Indigenous Student Affairs mission, we can focus on the principles that guide the work of ISAs. The guiding principles are broad guidelines that ISA educators may use to operate in ISA and IHEs in culturally appropriate and effective ways. They are not directives on exactly how to perform the work of ISA or what programs to provide, because that will differ based on contextual considerations at each institution (p. 118). In total, the co-researchers named the following nine guiding principles, which I grouped into three categories:

A. Leadership:
    1. Lead with cultural values *and* be politically savvy.
    2. Be accountable to your word and your constituents.
    3. Lead or assist campus education on Indigenous student support.

B. Students:
    4. Develop programming based on current Indigenous students' needs.
    5. Work within the diversity of Indigenous student identities and tribes.
    6. Connect Indigenous students to cultural practices.

C. Community:
    7. Create and sustain an Indigenous community on campus.
    8. Build authentic relationships and collaborations with students, institution members, other Indigenous Student Affairs programs, tribal communities, and Elders.
    9. Sustain the larger Indigenous Student Affairs community and support one another.

Leadership

Lead with cultural values *and* be politically savvy. The co-researchers expressed that it is important for ISA educators to show up in IHEs as their authentic cultural selves while also learning to navigate the political nature of an institution to get Indigenous Student Affairs needs met. This points to the delicate balance of navigating the cultural value of humility and the institutional value of assertiveness. ISA educators need to be intentional in advocating for the needs of Indigenous students and ISA in a way that they are heard by institutional leaders and that does not compromise their personal and cultural ethics. Maya described it this way:

> Doing things whole-heartedly and having the courage to be bold. Sometimes that means not fitting in at your institutions. I hate being the stereotypical loud Native person coming in, but sometimes you have to be really loud and break the system and be ok if sometimes that's isolating.

Damon talked about ways that ISA educators can be politically savvy in navigating institutions.

> My mandate was to not hide in my office, because this is a politically safe position and some people do that. But if we're not at the table, we don't get anything. If you are a rebel-rouser you will get stonewalled, so you need to have diplomacy. We work in the background a lot. You need to give a little to get something back too. You will attract more flies with honey. Use a hand-in-glove approach with politics, so they don't see the fist you're going to hit them with, but they see the glove first. You need to make sure you don't burn bridges. It's about relationships and networking. Collaboration is important across the board. It helps if you have a good and accessible president. Good relationships with VPs and deans are also helpful.

Damon and Maya both expressed how important it is for ISA educators to use the cultural values of bravery and fortitude to *show up* and make their presence and needs known, even though this can sometimes feel intimidating and culturally inappropriate. Damon also advised ISA educators to be assertive in respectful ways and to utilize the value of relationality to establish relationships with key political players and collaborators. Educators must pay careful attention to the political nature of their specific institution to learn who the key players are and the unspoken rules of the political landscape. The seemingly simple advice to "attract flies with honey" and "don't burn bridges" is actually very important. It is easy to cut ties with others who we feel have wronged

us or who do not understand how to support Indigenous students. However, the cultural values of compassion, relationality, and relational accountability require us to see the sacred spark of the Creator in everyone, and so we must learn to tactfully navigate difficult situations. Cultivating relationships will help ISA educators to get their needs met in the long run.

Be accountable to your word and your constituents. The co-researchers emphasized the Indigenous value of accountability in order to earn trust and respect. Breanna suggested that ISA educators

> recognize that no matter how much education or experience you have in education, that does not equal knowing how to support Indigenous students. You have to be willing to learn and grow as you go along. You have to be accountable to your word that you give to your students. If you say you're going to do something, then you need to do it. Also, recognize your accountability to the local tribes in supporting their youth.

ISA educators need to be cognizant of their roles as representatives of historically untrustworthy institutions. Trust from Indigenous students and communities is difficult to gain and sometimes impossible to *regain* if it is broken. Students may see Indigenous educators as the *only* institutional staff who may be trusted. So Breanna stressed, "don't tell the students that you are going to make swift policy changes that will help improve their experience and then you don't do it. Do what you say you're going to do."

Brittany also gave the following example of non-Native campus members winding up Indigenous students and communities to become passionate about things that will likely never take place:

> We have a state statute for one of our campuses that our Native students get free tuition [because of its history of operating as an Indian boarding school], but someone in the

> student government, or someone in the Office for Equity and Diversity, once they catch wind of that for the first time, and it's always for the first time, they're like, "we should have that on all campuses!" So then like a little spark gets lit and they try to pull together the right people to have this conversation, and I swear to god since I've been on campus in the past five years I've had this conversation at least once every year. Like "yes, we all should have free tuition on campus. Yes, we agree. Yes, we're on stolen land." And then I think they realize that it's not going to happen, it's not feasible, and then this conversation drops.

In instances such as this, non-Native educators create excitement around a potential new initiative that would have a major impact on Native students and communities. However, when said initiative is suddenly dropped, it has a much harsher impact on the students and communities than for those who can just move on to the next shiny idea that catches their attention. This is another example of institutions proving themselves untrustworthy in the eyes of Indigenous people. All educators need to be cautious about inciting positive or negative excitement around major initiatives and learn about the political history of potential past initiative failings.

Lead or assist campus education on Indigenous student support. ISAs are tasked with supporting the general campus community in addition to the Indigenous student and local communities. They do this by serving as a resource to others on campus who are open to learning about the needs and experiences of Native students and communities. This may include providing workshops, lectures, and consultations. It also includes participation and leadership on campus committees that focus on Indigenous and diversity topics, as well as committees that benefit from the inclusion of diverse voices.

ISA educators attempt to hold IHEs accountable to supporting Indigenous students and in making efforts to decolonize institutional practices. Rob described *decolonization* as

> changing the way the university does its work and changing the way that it perceives Indigenous students and interacts with Indigenous communities. It's about getting the university to think about the way it works *with* and *for* Indigenous students and communities in a different way.

To Rob, decolonizing an institution is about unlearning and recognizing that there is more than one *right* way to operate. Much like Indigenous research, he described it as changing the institutional mindset to thinking of Indigenous students and communities as partners. For instance, "talking to the executive and administration about the idea of a nation-to-nation relationship. That if we're meeting with tribal chiefs, the university president should be there." He mentioned the need to respect tribes as sovereign nations and to respect that distinction by sending institution presidents to meetings with tribal leaders. Brittany and I also discussed our prior experiences of being Indigenous admissions counselors in which our institutions asked us to establish relationships with TCU presidents on behalf of our institutions. We both recalled feeling that this would be disrespectful to TCUs and their leadership to equate their presidents with our entry-level staff. Brittany and Rob both pointed to the importance of honoring the nation-to-nation and institution-to-tribal-institution relationships in authentic and appropriate ways as an example of decolonization.

Maya took it one step further by saying that ISAs should attempt to *Indigenize* institutions. She described incorporating Indigenous scholarship and ways of learning in classrooms; considering Indigenous ceremonies in personal absence guidelines; and integrating Indigenous artwork, flags, and languages in public spaces. Rob described how his institution

created a plan to hold all institution members accountable to decolonizing and Indigenizing the institution.

> Our university just launched an Indigenous plan that sits alongside our strategic plan and our international plan that sets out intentions. It sets out a vision for how we do our work as a *whole* university, so it's not just an Indigenous plan for Indigenous faculty, staff, and students; it's a plan for the entire university.

Another way of Indigenizing institutions that many of the co-researcher's mentioned was the use of institutional land acknowledgement statements. Maya reiterated the importance of

> first and foremost, acknowledging the land and space the institution is on and acknowledging that it doesn't belong to you. Understanding the trauma related to that. Knowing who are the communities connected to the land your institution is on and whether they were the original people or were they removed to or from there.

Breanna clarified that institutions need to recognize

> whose homelands are you in and how does that affect the work that you're doing? And also, what are you going to do to create relationships with those tribes? Not only of whose historical homeland you're on, but also who may have been relocated nearby to your institution?

As Breanna stated, the co-researchers found it important to consider *all* Indigenous communities with connections to the land. There may have been Indigenous nations who were long-removed from the area to another part of North America, or a tribe that had been removed from their original homeland to the area in which the institution resides. Knowing this history can help institutions to work with tribal communities.

Land acknowledgements are written and spoken statements that recognize the tribes who have a spiritual connection to the land on which the institution sits, the history of their displacement, a commitment to serving the Indigenous people, and humility for the institution's ability to exist there. Land acknowledgements may be created and used in a variety of ways. Rob explained that his institution,

> as part of the launch of the Indigenous plan, has a territory acknowledgement video with one of the local elders welcoming people in the local language. He is the last fluent speaker of that language. And then the president doing the territory acknowledgement and talking about the university's commitment to redressing the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people and community.

Saundra emphasized the importance of normalizing the use of land acknowledgement statements throughout all conventional institution materials.

> I'm talking about on every syllabus that goes to a student within every college, do we have a statement? We have a disability statement; do we have a land acknowledgement statement on every single syllabus that goes to students? If we're a land-grant institution, we should be doing that.

ISA educators may be instrumental in creating and/or encouraging the use land acknowledgment statements in any of these ways.

Students

Develop programming based on current Indigenous students' needs. ISA educators put on a wide variety of events and programs throughout the year. Programs are generally centered around supporting students' academically, socially, and/or culturally. It is not the goal of this study to say exactly what programs ISAs need to host because this will vary depending on

the context of each institution. However, this is meant to be a discussion on how to go about developing Indigenous Student Affairs programming.

As discussed above, sometimes there are generational differences in how ISA educators believe they should support Indigenous students. The co-researchers value older generation ISA educators' and Elders' wisdom and they *also* see value in changing their Indigenous Student Affairs programming strategy as the population and needs of the students change. Damon suggested that ISA educators "let the students give you ideas of what they need. Let the students drive the programming." It was important to him to listen to the students to understand their needs, even when students are sometimes misinformed about what is possible. The students need to feel heard and valued in the process. Phenocia made an important point that ISA educators ought to have a future orientation in how they work with students, rather than solely focusing on getting them through *right now*. Hosting programs that remind students of their larger, post-graduation goals of supporting their communities, or whatever their personal goals may be, can be a powerful motivator when they feel stuck in present difficulties.

Saundra recommended utilizing assessment to understand student needs and build programming efforts.

> We're just doing a lot more with assessing that data and looking at the numbers and looking at how we build programs based on the data that we get. And I think there's something about being responsible with data, as Indigenous professionals typically are researchers, I mean, we are researchers because we have to be. We have to know our communities, we have to be involved in the data. If we're not, then we're not being intentional about our program.

Brittany also emphasized the need to be flexible and adaptive in performing Indigenous Student Affairs work and using assessment to make sure ISAs meet current students' needs. She recommended that "we need to focus on the individual student that is before us."

A particular difficulty around assessment that often arises is how IHEs track Indigenous students. As described in the literature review, IHEs often have inaccurate lists of Native students on campus. This can occur because some students choose not to self-identify their race or ethnicity to the institution, some students mistakenly indicate the wrong race or ethnicity, and often students who self-identify as multiracial are placed in a separate race or ethnicity identity category (i.e. an ambiguous *mixed-race* category). ISA educators tend to have different lists from those their IHEs use because they interact with Native students on a more personal basis and thus add students who may be missing from the institutional list. They also cannot force Native students to participate in their programs and are unable to interact will *all* Native students on their campuses.

Saundra described the problems that occur when Native students who self-identify as multiracial get excluded from Native student lists.

> The reason why this was so alarming to me, is that some people only pull and report the 'Native-only' number and that's where I was like, "wait a second, there's something wrong with that!" Because there are other students that are missing on that list, I know them personally. So the personal knowledge of knowing who they are and who their families are that don't end up on that list because most people will just report the 'Native-only' number and that's very problematic. Because then now what you're saying is, "the only real Native on the campus is the ones that only self-select 'Native-only.'" Whereas I have other students that I know are Native and they're from extended families that are

> Native too, they just selected 'Native and Hispanic,' or 'Native and white,' and they show up on a different list. {laughs} So sometimes when people do outreach, they only outreach to those students that are 'Native-only' and that to me is unfair, it's like you're leaving out a whole other dataset of Native students that just because they self-selected an additional ethnicity, now you're leaving them out of the pool. And that's not good for our data and it's not good for our outreach programs or our retention model.

She explained that her institution does a better job with institutional tracking of Indigenous students in that she is able to pull up lists of students who self-identified as Native-only *and* those who also identified as Native-multiracial. However, the difficulty is that she and others must remember to pull up *both* lists in order to catch all Native students on campus.

Work within the diversity of Indigenous student identities and tribes. The co-researchers recommended that ISA educators be cognizant of the nuanced identities of their Native students and to be intentional about creating an Indigenous Student Affairs that is inclusive to all of them. Nuanced student identities may include those from various tribes, traditional or nontraditional cultural backgrounds, urban and rural, as well as those with various intersectionalities, such as those who are multiracial, LGBTQ, have disabilities, are first-generation, are older students, etc. Saundra explained how educators can sometimes get so focused on supporting certain groups of students that we forget about others.

> You're serving the student that wants to pursue higher education and that could be a first-generation student that's coming as a first-time freshman. It could be a student that's returning, or that's a transfer student coming from a TCU or a JC [junior college]. It could be a student that's non-traditional that's returning after years of being away from educational systems. I think it really actually just has to serve Indigenous community as

> a whole because oftentimes you'll see really good models for first-time freshmen coming out of high school and there's this college pathways program that's this pipeline that's leading them in, but then we may fall short when it comes to the transfer student coming from a TCU or a JC. Think about "do we have a really strong connection there?" I think we really have to be intentional at how we're doing that.

Phenocia stated that ISAs should "really affirm the identity of Indigenous students in the spectrum of identities that Indigenous students show up with – I think that is really important because I don't see that being done generally."

The co-researchers were specifically vocal about supporting Native students from various tribes. Maya suggested

> acknowledging the diverse Indigenous communities original to North America, because even though I'm very well aware of the space we're on, we have students from all tribal nations from all over, and when they see us using one tribe's protocols all the time, are we sometimes excluding those others. Recognizing the diversity in our own population.

It is important to know that there is no monolithic Indigenous identity. All tribes have different languages, customs, cultures, and needs. Phenocia recommended that ISA educators be careful not to create monolithic cultural support, but instead to be inclusive of all Indigenous nations that may be present at an institution. There is a wide variety of Indigenous student identities, so ISAs need to be able to shift as the needs of the community changes each year when new students come in. It does not change what it means to be Indigenous; it means that ISAs need to be intentional about creating a more inclusive Indigenous community that can accept students from such a wide spectrum of cultures and experiences.

Per her recommendation, Saundra's institution now includes an option for students to identify their tribal affiliation when they self-identify as Indigenous to the institution. This way she can keep up with which tribes are present on her campus and it helps her to have a better way of connecting with the students and connecting them to tribe-specific resources.

> One of the things I asked for is tribal affiliation because I said, "you know, when I'm working with students I can better guide and direct them if I know their tribal affiliation because then I can pick out some things that I know in my partnerships with their tribal community and in my partnerships with maybe even resource funding regionally that I can point them to." And that I can say to students, "hey, you know this is a partnership I have with so-and-so, are you familiar with this program? Did you know this exists?" And we can have those more meaningful conversations.

Breanna and Melissa both discussed the importance of having data on students' tribal affiliations. Breanna explained it this way:

> OU does not do a good job tracking tribal affiliation for students. We track a few tribes, but we have 39 in Oklahoma alone and then we have lots of students that come from out of state and we're not tracking those students. And so that could even determine what kind of programming I'm doing, like are we having a lot of students come from historically southeast tribes or do we have more plains tribes? How does that affect the programming that we're going to do? So making sure they kind of have the institutional infrastructure to understand the Native students that are enrolling at their institution.

Tracking Indigenous students' tribal affiliation helps inform Indigenous Student Affairs programming. It could also potentially help to track whether they come from a more traditional

community setting or a more urban setting, or something in between. This would also have a big impact on outreach and programming efforts.

The co-researchers also discussed supporting multiracial Indigenous students, those who do not look phenotypically Native, and those who did not grow up around a traditional Indigenous culture. These are the students that ISAs are seeing more and more of. Melissa spoke about the adversities such students face in her state where there are no longer tribes present.

> I definitely think that regionally folx would need to understand kind the history of Ohio and what has happened and the fact that, it's not like you can look at students and know they're Native per se. I think that's a big struggle especially here in Ohio because there's been so much interracial mixing that people often don't know how to handle mixed blood Native people. And I think that's a common experience, but I think especially here in the Midwest because you know Ohio – the Indian Removal Act did a wonderful job of erasing pretty much Native history from all of the stories and histories and landscapes. And so oftentimes I have to tell people, you know, they were literally removed and the folx that stayed here oftentimes don't identify as being Native because that was how they survived.

Melissa referenced how even the regional history where an institution is located can affect the Native students who attend. It is important to know this history to know how to support the students and understand their experiences.

Students like these tend to struggle with feelings of Native inauthenticity. Breanna explained,

> no matter how I perceive their sort of cultural identities and the strength of that cultural identity, Native students always have this sense of not being Native enough, so that's something I hear often from our students, especially when they come from urban areas. You know, our students that come from those smaller, rural areas located in tribal jurisdictions, it's a little bit different.

Phenocia found that she "works with students a lot on, not just identity politics, but imposter syndrome and authenticity issues and really unpacking identity in different ways." ISA educators need to balance supporting students who feel insecure in their Indigenous identities and those who identify so strongly with their Indigeneity that they struggle to make sense of the white institutional context. Oftentimes these differences can cause the students to denigrate each other around identity politics. The goal is to help all Native students draw strength from their Indigeneity and support one another in navigating institutions.

Connect Indigenous students to cultural practices. Connections to Indigenous cultural practices are important for all Native students, but perhaps even more important for those who grew up removed from the culture. Many of the co-researchers found that such students become involved with ISA because they are seeking connections to Indigenous cultures and communities. Melissa described her understanding of this trend.

> I think it almost kind of like becomes more of a reclaiming piece for students. Students are coming with a different purpose, it's more of like trying to reconnect. Maybe they know they're Native and they occasionally go to the rez in the summer for a ceremony or something, but, you know, throughout the year they're basically in a very white, suburban area. So I guess in that sense our roles wouldn't be to like culturally teach them, but kind of give them those cultural pieces.

Melissa made an important distinction that ISA educators know the difference between being teachers of Indigenous culture and being conduits to cultural and spiritual leaders. In many Native cultures, there are certain people who take the role of teaching cultural practices, this is not something that just any person can do. It is common for solo Indigenous people in an institution to be looked to for such cultural guidance, but Indigenous staff need to be cautious about crossing this line. Unless they *are* cultural leaders in whichever way is appropriate to the Indigenous nation they belong to, they instead help students to make connections to the appropriate local cultural and spiritual leaders.

Rob's students are mostly urban, so his Indigenous Student Affairs focuses on reconnecting students back to the land and culture. This includes Indigenous students from other tribal territories as well.

> Cori: What do you think this looks like for institutions that aren't close to Indigenous communities? Because this is what I just imagined immediately, someone saying, "well, we're not near any Indigenous communities, so what does that look like for *us*?"
>
> Rob: That's something that I haven't thought a lot about because in the Canadian context at least, that is not as much of a conversation. And even where there were large treaties signed, there's still an acknowledgement that it's treatied territory and so that there's a relationship even if the community that was nearest to where you are was moved, dozens or hundreds of miles away to a reserve, that it's still Treaty 6 territory or Treaty 7 territory. So that's something that I don't have a lot of experience thinking about.

Rob was almost baffled by the idea that in the United States, people can view any land as lacking a connection to Indigenous nations. Again, the history of Indigenous removal is important because connections can and should be made with the original inhabitants of a territory, even if they have been removed to another place.

Indigenous students have a desire to reconnect to the culture, so part of the process of connecting Indigenous students to the institution is also a process of connecting them to the local

land and culture. Breanna talked about how Indigenous Student Affairs needs to be a place where students can feel comfortable if they have little cultural knowledge. She makes an example of herself, even though she is very familiar with her own tribal culture, she embraces learning about others with her students.

> One of my favorite events we put on is our stomp dance and that belongs to our southeastern tribes, right? And so I'm from a plains tribe but I still really enjoy putting that on and working with the students because it's a big learning opportunity for me, I learn something new every year. And so kind of experiencing that and being open about that really kind of helps establish that open environment.

Community

Create and sustain an Indigenous community on campus. As discussed above, being in community is an important cultural value. It is also an effective Indigenous retention strategy for both Indigenous students and staff. Rob highlighted that a main function of Indigenous Student Affairs is "supporting the growth of the student community." ISA educators host programs to bring people together from across campus and encourage relationship-building. They make sure that the students, as well as faculty and staff, come together on a regular basis to keep from losing contact with one another. Maya emphasized that ISAs should "want to encourage community, love, compassion, and respect" among Indigenous campus members. They must attempt to create a space on campus of mutual respect and safety. Melissa made the point that this community is "where we feel most at home." Native students need a sense of home and community when they are away in college and feeling separated from their own homes, communities, and families.

Another part of the Indigenous campus community is Indigenous alumni. Native alums can serve as mentors and role models to current students. Damon suggested that ISA educators "foster connections with the alumni. We have chiefs who are alum and they're very successful business people. Bring them back to talk to the students about their experiences, how they struggled too in school." Keeping Native alums involved in the campus community by acting as role models and mentors helps them to remain connected and provides motivation to current students that they can make it too. Alums may also provide internship opportunities for students or become donors to support Indigenous Student Affairs programming and scholarships.

Build authentic relationships and collaborations with students, institution members, other Indigenous Student Affairs programs, tribal communities, and Elders. Relationality is another important cultural value for ISA educators to uphold. Relationality and relational accountability are about being in relationship oneself and others with the belief that we are all sacred, we are all related, and we all have a part to play in sustaining our community. It is important for ISA educators to operate in respectful and reciprocal relationships, behaving as *good relatives* to all their constituents. Collaborations with peers and tribal communities provides opportunities for ISAs to share resources, create dynamic programming, and show accountability to tribes.

Indigenous students will come to IHEs looking for people who will act as supportive relatives while they learn to navigate the institution. According to Phenocia, culturally non-traditional students also "need a space that they are supported in exploring ideas that they may not have been raised with." ISA educators must be supportive of all Indigenous students who come from a variety of cultural and social identities. It is also important to work on partnership-building with peer offices and programs as well. ISA educators must establish and be

accountable to the relationships they build with other members of the institution. It is vital to build strong working connections with peer departments, such as admissions, advising, TRIO programs, multicultural offices, and academic departments. ISA educators should personally welcome peers into the Indigenous Student Affairs community and reciprocally support their efforts as well.

ISA educators must advocate for their own needs to the larger institution, which may feel counterintuitive to this point. However, Rob posited that ISA educators "have a role advising executives about the needs of those students and the needs of community." Therefore, part of being relationally accountable to the students and community is holding institution leaders relationally accountable to them as well. ISA educators should also work to develop relationships with other ISAs and ISA educators at other institutions. ISAs are typically understaffed and in need of support and community. Therefore ISA educators must find opportunities to develop relationships and collaborations whenever possible.

ISAs must work in respectful partnership with and on the behalf of Indigenous communities and Elders. Phenocia and Saundra strongly believed that ISA's need to be built upon agreements with local tribes in which the tribes are viewed as partners with the institution, and tribes can hold the institution relationally accountable to supporting and retaining their students. The co-researchers also stressed a need to build trust with tribal communities when working on behalf of historically colonizing institutions. Rob emphasized "the importance of building and maintaining trust and of being cognizant of the historical and current factors that can make it difficult to establish trust with Indigenous people and communities." Rob, Brittany, and Damon all recommended creating an Indigenous advisory council including members and/or Elders of local tribal communities. They also cautioned about the need for educators to be able

to work through divergent opinions about how things should be done when working with community members and Elders. The goal is to make the best recommendations to the institution on their behalf, and sometimes that entails paying more attention to the process than the outcome.

Sustain the larger Indigenous Student Affairs community and support one another. The last guiding principal revolves around Indigenous Student Affairs community support and survival. At the inaugural meeting of the ACPA Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN), we found that this was *essential*. ISA educators should take the opportunities available to get involved in the larger Indigenous Student Affairs community. This is necessary because ISA and Indigenous educators often struggle to find personal community, advocacy, and support from others on campus. As Maya suggested, it is important to bring positivity and vulnerability to the ISA community, "supporting each other instead of criticizing each other. Our field is so small, and we don't have time – we will lose our students and communities if we are criticizing each other and not being supportive." Getting involved creates opportunities to share concerns and ideas. It is not a space for competitiveness or egos.

It is important to reach out to others in the field who may be struggling or feeling alone on their campuses, and for those who need support to reach out to the community. Indigenous Student Affairs community members must be welcoming to each other, including those who do not come from a student affairs background, who are culturally non-traditional, or do no look phenotypically Native. The Indigenous Student Affairs community must be inclusive and supportive if educators want to sustain the ISA field and sustain the Indigenous leadership of how it operates. Being involved also means contributing to the development of best practices for the field. It is good for ISA educators to contribute to literature, conferences, and workshops

about the Indigenous Student Affairs functional area. It is critical that ISA educators lead in the evolving development of ISA.

Contextual Considerations for Indigenous Student Affairs

This section reviews the contextual considerations that IHEs and ISA educators must take in developing or understanding the functions of an Indigenous Student Affairs program. It is broken up into three categories of assessment questions that relate to the:

1. Context of Tribal Communities and Homelands;
2. Context of Indigenous Students at the Institution of Higher Education; and
3. Context of the Institution of Higher Education.

Context of Tribal Communities and Homelands

This section of assessment questions relates to understanding the state or regional context of tribal communities and homelands in which an IHE is situated. The questions help IHE administrators and ISA educators consider who's land the institution inhabits, the history of such communities, and which tribal communities they should connect to.

- Are there any local tribes in the state or region?
    - Are the tribes federally or state recognized?
    - If there are not any local tribes, which tribe(s) originally inhabited the land on which the institution is located?
- Who are the local tribal leaders?
    - Does anyone in the institution have connections to them?
- Is there a local Indigenous community within the institution currently?
    - What is the history of this Indigenous community?

    - Has anyone reached out to them to see what their needs are or what ideas they have?
- Is there a local Indigenous community in the town or city the institution is located in?
    - What is the history of this Indigenous community?
    - Has this community been connected to the institution in any way?
    - How can the institution connect to this community?

Context of Indigenous Students at the Institution of Higher Education

The questions in this section assess the current Indigenous student population at an institution. They help IHE administrators and ISA educators develop an understanding of the current Indigenous students on campus to aid in creating and evaluating Indigenous Student Affairs programming.

- Is the Native student population from mostly one or more local tribes, or are they mostly inter-tribal (from many, various tribes)?
- Are the Native students mostly monoracial or multiracial?
    - Are there many Native students who do not phenotypically look Native American?
        - If so, are they accepted as Indigenous by the Native student community?
- Are the current Native students mostly from reservations and tribal territories or from urban, non-Native communities? Or a mix of both?
- Do the current Native students know their Indigenous culture (did they grow up around it) or are they more removed from it?
    - Do the students want Indigenous cultural programming?
    - Are they looking for connections or reconnections to Indigenous culture?

- Do the current Native students mostly believe in traditional Indigenous spirituality, or do they have other spiritual or religious beliefs? Or a mix of both?
- Do many of the current Native students struggle with feelings of Native inauthenticity?
    - Do they feel apprehensive about claiming their Indigenous identity or participating in Indigenous programming?
- What do the current Native students say they need?
    - What type of support are they looking for from ISA?
    - What purpose do they want ISA to serve?

Context of the Institution of Higher Education

The last set of assessment questions evaluate the institutional context for Indigenous Student Affairs, Indigenous students and community, and tribes. They guide administrators and educators to reflect on the history of how the institution has connected with local and internal Indigenous communities in the past which may affect new or current efforts. They also call into question how the mission and practices of the institution may impact ISA and Indigenous students and communities.

- On which tribes' original homeland is the institution located?
    - How close is the institution physically located to tribal nations?
    - What is the institution's relationship to this tribe(s)? With any local tribes?
    - Does the institution utilize any form of land acknowledgement?
        - Has an institutional land acknowledgement statement ever been created?
- What is the institution's history with tribal nations?
    - What are the perceptions of the institution in local tribal communities?
    - Has the institution made mistakes in the past with any tribes?

        - If so, has a formal apology been made?
    - Has the institution's president/chancellor ever met with a tribe's chairman/chief/president?
- Are there any local any local Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)?
    - If so, what is the institution's history with TCUs?
    - Has the institution made mistakes in the past with any TCUs?
        - If so, has a formal apology been made?
    - Has the institution's president/chancellor ever met with a TCU president?
- What is the institution's history with Native students, staff, and faculty?
    - Has the institution made mistakes in the past with any of these groups?
        - If so, has a formal apology been made?
    - Who are the key stakeholders in these groups?
    - What projects have they worked on in these groups?
    - What are the goals of these groups?
        - What requests have they made of the institution or institutional leadership?
            - What has been the result of these requests?
- What is the mission of the institution?
    - Does the institution's mission refer in any way to how the institution supports Indigenous students or communities?
        - If not, should this be added to the mission?
    - Is the institution a land- or sea-grant institution?
        - If so, how does (or might) the institution operationalize this in how they support Indigenous students or community?

- How large or small is the institution?
    - What is the current population size of Native students?
    - What is the current population size of Native faculty and staff?
        - Where are they located within the institution?
- How well does the institution track Native students?
    - Do the institution's numbers align well with ISA's numbers?
    - Do multiracial Native students lose their "Native American" identification in the student tracking system?
    - Does the institution track Native student tribal affiliations?
        - Does it track if they are enrolled in their tribes?
        - Does it track which specific tribal communities they are from?
- What is the current level of institutional buy-in for (i.e. how much do institution members believe in the concept of) supporting Indigenous students or communities?
    - What is the level of buy-in at the various faculty and staff levels?
    - Is the president/chancellor and upper administration open to incorporating and listening to an Indigenous liaison?
- Does the institution have a Native American-themed mascot or name?
    - If so, what responsibilities does this put on the institution regarding Native students and community support?
    - What has been the response of local and outside tribal nations and Indigenous organizations to the use of this name or mascot?
- What kind and amount of space on campus does the institution provide to ISA and Indigenous students?

    - What kind of improvements can be made in the kind and amount of space the institution provides to them?
- Does the institution currently have ISA?
    - If not, has there been some version of ISA in the past?
    - If there is ISA, where is it located within the institution?
        - Who does it report to?
    - How well is ISA staffed and funded?
        - Are the staff tribally affiliated, and to which tribe(s)?
        - What degrees do they hold?
    - How long has ISA been in existence on this campus?
    - How did ISA come to be in existence on this campus?
    - How well do ISA educators feel heard and supported by the institution?
    - If an ISA no longer exists, why?
- What other current institutional programs and/or support is available specific to Native students or community?
    - What is the history of these programs?
    - How well are they currently meeting the needs of Native students?
    - How well do the leaders of these programs feel heard and supported by the institution?
- What purpose does/would the institution want ISA to serve?
- Is there a staff member(s) in Admissions who specifically focuses on Indigenous student recruitment?
    - If so, how are Native students recruited?

- Where are Native students typically recruited from?
- If not, why not?

Support and Resources Needed for Indigenous Student Affairs

The next section of this chapter focuses on the support and resources needed from IHEs, administrators, and peers for ISA educators and programs to operate successfully.

Resources Needed for Indigenous Student Affairs

The co-researchers described the tangible resources needed by ISAs and ISA educators in great detail. The following three themes came up repeatedly in the interviews:

1. Multiple, sustainable, full-time staff positions;
2. Sustainable funding; and
3. Space on campus.

Multiple, sustainable, full-time staff positions. One of the most common themes brought up in all of the interviews was the need for Indigenous Student Affairs staff. It is necessary to have a full staff of ISA educators to handle all aspects of the office and programming, so it is not all one person's responsibility. Being the sole educator in Indigenous Student Affairs causes a person to feel alone, overworked, and burnt out. When there are only one or two ISA staff, they can struggle to put on dynamic programming, create long-term goals, collaborate with on-campus and off-campus partners, and establish strategic plans because they are so busy dealing with everyday tasks and emergencies. There needs to be a reasonable amount of staff for an Indigenous Student Affairs to operate at its full potential, or it can be detrimental to ISA educators' well-being. The co-researchers discussed the need for staff, and types of staff, in the following condensed conversation.

> Cori: In your experience, what resources must institutions provide for Indigenous Student Affairs programs and staff to be successful?

Breanna: I think that the biggest thing is staff. It's really difficult for one person to do it, so you have to be willing to add more staff if needed. I will say like putting one person and expecting them to do it is impossible. Like I said especially when you're in an area like Oklahoma or California where you have just such a large variety of Native students, it's just impossible to do for one person. So they have to be able to provide the funding necessary to provide adequate staff.

Damon: I'm the first full-time, non-student staff to lead ISA here. They had done good before, but they couldn't put in the necessary amount of time to do the job.

Melissa: I'm the only really full-time person and then I have two student associates that work with me kind of like as office assistants in the office.

Saundra: We know that many ISA programs, when they're first starting, they're staffed by one person. I am one person in my ISA program, I am the only staff. {laughs} So I definitely know what that feels like, but I rely on my partnerships with my tribes, I rely on my partnerships with my education departments within my tribes, with my tribal organizations that are community-based. I do nothing without those partnerships.

Rob: Well it needs staff. {Cori laughs} I mean I say that semi-facetiously, but I think there's now 12 of us here. I started on a half-time, seven-month contract. And it needs those resources to have regularized staff, we need permanent full-time staff to do this work and that goes back to the relationship thing. There are times when I have had to make an ethical decision to back away from connecting because I'm saying, "I don't know if I'm going to be here."

Cori: Ohhhh.

Rob: Right? And some of the communities that we get to work with are as small as 170 people and so they are not going to have the infrastructure to engage with us if we keep changing the point person for it every six months or every year. And so I think that that is a key piece is that once an institution has connected with the local communities and the students, the next piece is to start ensuring a sustainable model.

Cori: What types of staff do you envision in a fully-staffed Indigenous Student Affairs?

Brittany: In my ideal world, we would have an internship coordinator that does liaison work between the community organizations and the institutions we work for. I think there needs to be a financial aid person to help navigate scholarships and grants and those

kinds of things and help explain to families and not just students. I think there needs to be an academic advisor, just kind of like dreaming up my own little world over here. What else would I want? Admissions recruiter. I think there needs to be faculty that teach and reflect Native culture and issues.

Phenocia: It would be most helpful to have someone who had the ability to go between res life and wherever the ISA office was situated so if there was the need for the development of like a theme program or a living-learning community, that could be done in partnership in a way that made sense, rather than a struggle to make the case for it. Where I've seen where folx sometimes are situated is, they don't have the positionality to move between. So I think that would be one that thing that was important.

Damon: In hiring an Indigenous advisor, you can't always worry about how much experience someone has, too. They need to have a growth mindset, a willingness to learn.

Phenocia: The tendency historically, has been to just hire any Native, anybody who identified as Native and that was, at the time, what needed to work. But I think there's getting to be more and more folx and if you can ground it in – like I believe in my job, there should be more California Indians working at Berkeley because there are so many California Indian tribes and I'm from Montana, I'm a Crow. So I think thinking about where you are, so even if you don't have people from those communities initially staffed in your office that you're working with them to recognize the land and the people who are still there and bring those in because those are the communities who are really hosting you.

Cori: Going back to Brittany's earlier comment, do you think ISA's need a separate recruitment person or persons in Admissions?

Melissa: Yeah, I think that's huge. That's something we're actually working on right now at OSU because retention often feeds into recruitment, because we had gone to a meeting with them – I think it was last spring – and they were spewing off all these statistics of how many minority students we were bringing in and they had nothing on Native students and I was like, "well wait a second, what's your stance on bringing Indigenous students in?" And it was like, "well, they're too small, there's not enough of them to collect data on." And I'm like, "but we have Indigenous students here so obviously they're applying, there needs to be something there." And so myself and my supervisor, that's one of our projects this summer is to work on creating a better relationship with admissions. And so that's kind of like one of our building projects because I think historically there was a relationship, like I think they actually had a

person who was solely focused on recruitment because there was a time where Ohio State had over like 200 Native students compared to our like 60 now. But I think that's because that was somebody's full-time job. And so I think it might be a conversation of needing to create that again if they want to see more students coming. And so yeah, I think that's a huge piece.

Cori: Yeah. So do you feel like you need another person to do recruitment so that it's balanced between retention and recruitment? So it's not just bringing Native students in and then falling down on the support when you have to go back out recruiting more students?

Melissa: Absolutely. Yeah, definitely, because I think, in my role it would almost be – it would just be too much to try to do the recruiting and the retention piece. So yeah, I guess in my way I'm kind of the retention person, but there's a little bit missing from that recruitment area. So it would be so great, I would love if they could create a recruitment position. Ugh, it'd be awesome.

Saundra: Yes. That's a quick yes, absolutely. {Cori laughs} We actually talked about that two years ago, but it never really materialized. I don't know why, but I think it has a lot to do with funding, {laughs} but I think you need – within this type of position, within ISA, you need an outreach person that can go and actually spend time in the field, right? So that is so crucial. But if I'm out in the field then I'm not here with my students. So there's a balance that comes with that, a healthy balance. And here's the thing, I've got to be able to go out to my rural communities, too. It is not fair for me to only go within 50 miles of the university, now I'm missing all of my other tribal partners that really deserve to have the same amount of service as my local partners do. And so I think that's also being fair and right in that model. So I would ask that people consider that. When you're looking at starting an ISA, you need someone that can be at the school doing the retention and graduate service program and you need somebody that can be in the field, that can be out there in tribal communities spending time. Maybe you create a satellite program, you know like most universities have a satellite office for recruiters? Why don't we have satellite offices for tribes? I don't understand why we don't do that. Maybe even say to a tribe, "we're willing to hire someone in community, where we train them and everything to do with outreach, retention, and graduate services for Native students for this university. And we're going to hire them on a part-time basis in your community and all we need from you, as a tribe, is can you provide a location for them to be housed? Can you provide a cubicle or an office within your tribal headquarters where we will provide all the materials, we will fund them, we will pay them, but they'll be a recruiter for us in a satellite position there?" Because it just – it doesn't make any sense to me – like tabling is one thing, going out and tabling is great, but you as well as I know when we go to

conferences even, as professionals, you get a bag full of goodies. {Cori laughs} How many people actually look at that bag full of goodies? And do they actually spend time rifling through that?

Cori: Do you feel like there is a need for Indigenous staff in other parts of campus as well?

Phenocia: Staff is one thing, like enough staff, not having one person do everything. I think also being intentional about where those staff are situated and the access to administrators and where they are in the hierarchy of the institution is really important.

Melissa: I think it's important for Native students to see Native people in other roles outside of like diversity work. So like, you know teaching a class, or maybe being a vice president, or president that would be even better! {laughs} And so I think that representation is super important, too.

Breanna: If you're not going to hire vice presidents or presidents or other upper administrators that are Indigenous, or even people of color for that matter, then you need to be hiring an advisor that tells you how to best work with our Native communities and how to honor those relationships. Just skip that part of the budget and just hire Native vice presidents and presidents. Absolutely we need that representation. I mean clearly here at OU we need that representation everywhere, but all our vice presidents are white men, all our presidents have been white men. I think currently most of our board of regents are white men. So we absolutely need that representation, but like I said at the very least, put somebody on your presidential cabinet that is an advisor for Indigenous issues, Indigenous Student Affairs, or Indigenous relations, at the very least.

The co-researchers were very clear in stating that staff positions must be full-time and sustainable. When they are not, there is higher turnover. High turnover makes creating authentic, trusting relationships with students and communities difficult, if not impossible. Rob explained that when he first started in his office, he was hired in a part-time, temporary position. This made him wary of how much he wanted to connect with Indigenous students and communities because he did not know how long he would be present in that position. He was cognizant about the relationship-building process that needed to occur and was concerned about the relationships breaking down when he left. He was afraid that starting relationships and

leaving soon after would cause the students and communities to feel abandoned and left with broken promises. He felt that it would be more culturally appropriate to engage *less* with students and communities because he would not have the ability to continue long-term reciprocal relationships. This is an excellent example of why ISA educator positions must be full-time and sustainable. ISAs that have only part-time, short-term educator positions are not sustainable and will have the highest turnover. It is important to remember that relationships are built between people, not an office itself.

Another concept the co-researchers brought up was the need to be mindful of the *type* of staff that are hired into Indigenous Student Affairs. An IHE cannot just hire a person simply because they are Indigenous, as happened in the early days of ISA. There are more and more Indigenous people with masters and doctorate degrees in relevant fields. IHEs need to also consider whether they are hiring people who are familiar with traditional Indigenous culture. It may be best to hire a mix of those who are and are not, which would likely reflect the Native student population. IHEs must also take into consideration ISA educators who are from or familiar with the local tribes to the institution. Most Native students at an IHE are often from local tribes, so familiarity with them can be an important characteristic.

Finally, the co-researchers explained that there is a need for Indigenous staff who support Indigenous Student Affairs work across the institution. For instance, there needs to be separate staff who focus on Indigenous student recruitment. It simply does not work to have the same staff member do both recruitment and retention. It is too much to ask of one person to continuously build authentic relationships with the students on campus while having to consistently be on the road recruiting new students. This comes across as broken promises of being there to support students after they matriculate to campus. It is better to be clear with

students on who will be there for them as they apply to college, and who will be there for them when they arrive on campus. Some campuses have seen dramatic increases of Native students when there is a separate recruiter in addition to Indigenous Student Affairs, as well as dramatic declines when that position is taken away. The co-researchers also made a point of needing Indigenous upper administration. These roles are necessary to help ensure the Indigenous voice is heard at the top of the institution. They also help to provide upper-level support and advocacy for mid- and lower-level Indigenous educators.

Sustainable funding. The next call from the co-researchers was for substantial and sustainable funding. Damon emphasized that institutional funding should "not just be a pilot budget, it needs to continue." Phenocia pointed out that there needs to be a budget based on the *intention* behind the creation and work of Indigenous Student Affairs rather than the *number* of current Indigenous students.

> Having a budget that looks at what the intention is and is realistic about what is needed to meet that intention, versus what are the numbers of the students that will be coming through. Because that's never going to work for Native or Indigenous, we will very rarely see critical mass at universities in higher education, so that paradigm has to shift, and the commitment really has to be in serving Indigenous students regardless of if there's 50 or 500.

IHEs need to consider how supporting Indigenous students and community relates to the greater mission of the institution rather than focus on the number of Indigenous students present. The commitment must be in serving Indigenous students regardless of the size of the community.

The co-researchers emphasized that Indigenous Student Affairs funding must also not be dependent on external sources. There is too much danger in losing soft money and it shows a

lack of commitment from the IHE. Especially given the history of North American higher education beginning on the backs of Native people, retaining and supporting Indigenous students should be a responsibility carried by the institution, not outside Indigenous tribes or organizations. Rob described that his institution relies on outside funding and how a change in the institutional mission may call this into question.

> I think we're in a really unique situation here because our province has an Aboriginal Service Plan program that guarantees us $200K in external funding for Indigenous student services and programming. However, there's a danger on becoming reliant on external funding and I think that being able to have a conversation that says, "this work is *central* to the mission of the institution, and to the institution's *vision* of itself." That is something that's been really important to the resource and it's to the point now that our new strategic plan has six points and one of them is 'foster respect and reconciliation' and it speaks entirely to serving Indigenous students, recruiting Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, building connections with communities and things like that. The university is saying that this is one of the six things that it wants to be known for as an institution.

Again, IHEs need to evaluate whether supporting Indigenous students is central to their mission, and if so, or if it should be, then they need to live up to that mission and provide the needed financial support. If the institution sees a need for Indigenous-specific fundraising, then there needs to be a position created for Indigenous fundraising in a foundation office. Fundraising should not be an additional burden on ISA educators whose focus and expertise is student retention.

Finally, there needs to be funding available for creating connections with tribal communities in person. Saundra explained how her supervisor tried to support her in these efforts before they had a budget for it.

> When I first came in to this position, I spent a lot of time going to tribal communities and spending time in community with members and with tribal council and education programs and schools and there was not a funding line for me to do that. There wasn't like a budget for me to travel to go do that. I just was supported in doing it through my director at the time and he said, "you know, we can find you some mileage dollars to get you out there and make those connections" because he understood how vital it was for me to go to a community, not just send an email or a phone call. He knew that me being in person was way more important to Indigenous communities and so they support that. So I would say, you need to look at your budget as it relates to – are you provided institutional support for those relationships to occur in person? So getting out to tribal communities, that's huge.

A separate budget may be necessary for travel (for ISA staff to get out to communities and/or inviting community leaders to campus), meals, lodging, and sometimes gifts. These efforts are necessary for following cultural protocol in developing relationships with tribes.

Space on campus. Lastly, all the co-researchers stressed the need for Indigenous space on campus.

> Melissa: Space I think is a really big one, too. I know through our focus groups, students often talk about how cool it would be to have like a Native American house or a residence hall just for Native students. And so I think my office right now in the multicultural center kind of serves as that space, but they're looking for like a strictly specific Native space as well.

> Brittany: I think that our students deserve to have their own space, whether that's a whole building, a house, you know, a floor of a building, whatever. They deserve to have one centralized hangout spot, study spot, like a one-stop-shop for everything. It would be like locationally sovereign, they would have like a beautiful space, {laughs} you know, well-staffed, well financially supported, because I think that's something that's super important.

> Breanna: Here at OU we don't have a Native student center and I feel like that's a constant detriment to the work that I do and it's also a really big, I guess, like agitation to the community, like we don't have our own space, and so I'm constantly having to listen to that, deal with that kind of backlash. Which I mean they're right, we do need our own space.

Many ISAs started in rooms the size of a closet. Some are lucky enough to have entire buildings. Availability of space is different on every campus, but the more that can be provided, the more that Indigenous students will feel welcome and at home in the institution. As Phenocia stated, "all institutions should have recognition of the tribal lands that they occupy, and it should be a part of Indigenous Student Affairs work to build that into the culture of the university that they work with." Rob added,

> I think that it's important that ISA spaces on campus reflect the cultures, traditions, and protocols of the people whose territory the institution is on, while also being welcoming to all Indigenous students. We know that all cultures and traditions have values about being good hosts or taking care of guests, that build on the initial recognition of the original people of the territory.

ISAs need some amount of space for Indigenous students to gather and call their own. They need a place to simply *be* Indigenous, where they do not have to explain who they are or why they operate in the ways that they do. Indigenous students need to have an amount of space that allows them to perform basic spiritual functions, such as burning sage before a meeting or having private consultations with Elders. As Rob stated,

> I think that that's absolutely essential and I think that it can be done in a number of ways. There needs to be dedicated space, it doesn't necessarily need to be a building, but I think that there needs to be a space that the students feel a connection to and they feel like it is *their* space and they have a say in what happens there and how people are there. Because it's sacred space, but also because it's *community* space. I think it's about striking that *balance*, and it's about the life that we breathe into the building. Without the community it wouldn't be sacred, but we could have the most beautiful *building* and if there's no life in it, it doesn't matter.

ISA's need a community space where students can garner strength in their own identity. A space that they do not have to fight for or that is difficult to schedule because it is shared with so many others. A space where they can gather, study, eat, relax, learn, and pray. A space with a kitchen where they can make and learn about cultural foods. And a space where local Indigenous community members feel welcome.

In relation to space, many of the co-researchers had difficulty making a solid stance on whether Indigenous Student Affairs should be located within multicultural centers or in their own separate unit. On one hand, ISA should be separate entities because Indigenous students are not simply of another race, but are a political group with sovereign status, the first people of this land, and ISA needs to be built in partnership with tribal communities. Also important is the fact that the first higher education institutions were created with a specific purpose of *civilizing* and *educating* Indigenous people. Moreover, having an individual identity provides ISAs more visibility and stature in the institution. On the other hand, Indigenous student populations and ISAs are typically small and benefit from the built-in support of other multicultural offices when housed together. It can be helpful to have the support and resources of built-in allies within a

multicultural model. However, when Indigenous Student Affairs is placed in a multicultural center, space and resources are usually reduced.

So perhaps this conundrum is context-specific. Maybe in institutions in which there is a larger Indigenous presence the ISA should be separate, and in institutions with a small Indigenous student presence, ISAs may be better suited in a multicultural office – at least to start with. This is distressing to say because in comparison to other minoritized groups, Indigenous student populations are almost always going to be small. So perhaps it also has to do with there being a strong local Indigenous presence, such as IHEs in states with nearby tribal nations. In any case, IHEs must be intentional not to utilize one-size-fits-all models across multicultural centers and ISAs.

Support Needed for Indigenous Student Affairs

The co-researchers designated several aspects of support needed by ISAs and ISA educators from IHE administrators and colleagues. They are divided into the subsequent four themes:

1. Direct access to, and support, buy-in, and trust from top administration;
2. Support, allyship, and collaboration from campus partners;
3. Continuous land acknowledgement; and
4. Indigenous critical mass on campus.

Direct access to, and support, buy-in, and trust from top administration. Upper IHE administrators and supervisors of ISA educators need to work towards cultural competency to understand how Indigenous and ISA educators may operate. This may include providing the ability to utilize time and funding to travel to tribal communities and make personal connections or understanding that an Indigenous person may prioritize their time differently (i.e. supporting a

student or community member in a crisis over attending a meeting). Administrators also must be cognizant that Indigenous educators may need time off to attend ceremonies. Maya described this as "helping ISA professionals connect culturally, not just professionally. Sometimes it is our cultural ceremonies and protocol that is important and foundational to our work as well." Indigenous educators may need time off to attend ceremonies and connect with tribal communities to reenergize and renew themselves when they work in colonized spaces.

It is also important for administrators to understand the past traumas and painful history of higher education for Native people, and especially any history specific to their institution. Maya described it this way:

> An institution starting a new Indigenous Student Affairs needs to be prepared for it to be more challenging than they think it will be because you are working to help with a healing process of various tribal communities, and need to be sensitive which takes time, empathy, and ownership. A white administrator who may not have directly moved Native people from their lands, you need to be able to speak on behalf of your white community to take ownership for that. They need to be able to do this to gain the trust of the communities. They need to have the cultural value of humility, don't dance around these issues, be willing to acknowledge them. They need to check their own white privilege. You can't do a watered-down version of this, saying "just learn to work in a culturally appropriate way," you need to acknowledge past wrong doings directly.

IHE leaders need to acknowledge and have empathy for institutional history, even if they themselves were not involved in it. They need to recognize and be sensitive to the healing that continues to take place, or needs to take place, for Indigenous communities. Administrators must recognize their and the institution's responsibility for being on and profiting from someone

else's land. In addition, IHE leaders need to view local tribal and TCU leaders as *equal* to institution leaders and honor their nation-to-nation relationships. Meetings with tribal and TCU presidents means the institution president needs to be there too.

ISA educators need direct access to the top of their institutions to have a voice in the upper level decisions that affect Native students. Maya stated that "the administration needs to identify the importance of Indigenous Student Affairs at their institution and incorporate those ISA voices in strategic planning." Institutions looking to create Indigenous Student Affairs need to think about how supporting Indigenous students is or is not relevant to the institutional mission statement. They must stop to consider, 'do we have ethical obligations to support Indigenous students?' It is imperative that ISA educators be at the table to influence institutional policies that affect Native students, such as tobacco and burning policies that affect smudging and prayer, like Breanna described here:

> I think administrators have to understand that that's not just like we want to have special treatment but that's actually a core part of our identities and so there has to be that sort of understanding and trust, more so trust in the Native community, that they know what they're doing. You don't have to have a fire marshal on hand, they know how to burn some damn cedar and not catch the place on fire.

IHE administrators ought to recognize that ISA staff are not seeking special treatment but are seeking support in allowing students to be their full, authentic, cultural selves on campus.

Administrators should also be intentional about their role in creating buy-in for supporting Indigenous students and Indigenous Student Affairs and spreading that message of support across the institution. This way it would not all be on ISA educators to constantly educate their peers and beg for support. As Rob stated, "you *need* the president and the vice

president of academics to stand up and say, 'we're doing this because it's the right thing to do.'" Administrators ought to consider what the institution wants to be *known* for in terms of supporting Indigenous people, and act accordingly. Breanna proclaimed, "I feel like the institution has to do a good job having my back if I'm having theirs." Melissa called for "being able to say that the vice president of student affairs acknowledges Native student needs and works toward educating folx, just to have like a baseline of Native culture and the importance of community, building community, relationships." This is a call for upper administrators to encourage peer functional area buy-in and provide education to others on campus to understand who Native people are and why Indigenous Student Affairs exists.

Support, allyship, and collaboration from campus partners. Colleagues in the institution who show support for Indigenous Student Affairs and ISA educators are very important. They may provide advocacy, collaborative programming, and friendship. Indigenous Student Affairs needs supportive allies and champions across the institution who help advocate for ISA and Native student needs, because sometimes non-Native others are heard more easily. Melissa described how helpful it is to have allies speak up for her needs.

> I have folx who back me up that are not Native and sometimes that has more power in allies saying, "hey, I'm not personally affected by this, but it's important and we need to do something about it." I think my supervisor is really good about trying to push some of these issues through because she's a gay, white woman, but she uses that white privilege and is able to say, "well, you know I'm not Native, but this is important." Sometimes it takes somebody who isn't Native to push the agenda, because I think we're always constantly saying, "well, we need this," and they look at us like, "okay…" Sometimes it needs to come from someone not affiliated with the community.

Allies have power to garner support for Indigenous Student Affairs no matter what level of the institution they occupy. ISA needs them to show up and use their voices when Indigenous voices are being ignored on campus.

There are some specific peer office ally relationships that are important for ISAs. For instance, they need relationships with colleagues in institutional research to help with tracking Native students and in admissions to help with recruiting them. Saundra spoke passionately about the need of ally relationships with those in charge of data.

> I don't think you can do it without it, right? So you have to be involved with your office of prospective students. You have to be involved with your data coordinator, right? So the person that's collecting your data, you have to be able to have a personal relationship to say to them, "hey, I'm noticing a trend here, I'm having a problem with retention, I'm noticing sophomore, junior, you know, there's some issues here. What do my numbers look like? Where am I falling behind? What's happening?" And you can pull that data and you can start really noticing some things and that will definitely inform your practice. We have to have access to that information to be successful in the way that we intentionally do our programs. We have to have a close relationship with being able to have access to that and have someone that's willing to build reports for us when we need them.

Other important partnerships include offices and departments that Native students often frequent, such as faculty from popular majors, TRIO programs, advising, financial aid, residence life, and multicultural centers, among others. Breanna spoke to the necessity of having faculty allies.

> I still understand like I could still get fired {laughs} because I'm a staff member, right? But relying on those relationships I have with faculty members who also serve as those

> sorts of advocates for our community. Relying on them when I know I'm getting close to the edge to say the things that maybe I can't say or initiate the conversations that, you know, I can come in on the back end, but usually it's better for somebody who has tenure to start those conversations or to ask those kinds of questions. So utilizing those relationships in a way that allows for growth for the greater community. In this role I think people recognize that I do always want what's best for the students, we just kind of understand we all have to work together. That it can't just be on me, it can't just be on our Native American studies department, we all do kind of have to work together.

Supporting Indigenous students and ISA should be a campus-wide effort.

Indigenous Student Affairs should not be the only place on campus where Native students find support. Brittany described how Indigenous-affiliated departments can feel frustrated and overburdened at times.

> Whenever anything Native comes up, the Department of American Indian Studies has all eyes on them, whether that be positive or negative, or recruitment, or wild rice, or X, Y, or Z. An academic department was deciding that they were going to host a group of Native 6th graders on campus and then they were like, "American Indian Studies, can you guys fund this?" "What? No!" So that's what we see as like, we are the people that deal with our people and it's no one else's responsibility but ours to deal with.

Supporting Native students should be a priority of everyone's on campus so that institutions, as a whole, can be safe and welcoming places to be. Ideally, there should be a network of support for Indigenous students across campus. This might include a group of specific individuals from the various ally offices that support all Native students. This network, including Indigenous Student Affairs, should meet regularly to track and sustain Native student success.

Continuous land acknowledgement. A reoccurring theme throughout the interviews was the need to acknowledge Indigenous land. When I asked Rob, "why do you think Indigenous Student Affairs needs to exist?" He responded, "{takes a long, deep breath} Because we're on Indigenous land. I think that it starts from something as simple as that, or not – it's not simple, something as straightforward as that." The idea of having a land acknowledgement statement can seem like a simple checkbox item on a diversity and inclusion to-do list, but it has deep and powerful meaning to Indigenous people. Creating and utilizing a land acknowledgement statement is a necessary part of engaging in a healing process with local tribes. Melissa described how important it was to her students to see institution members utilize land acknowledgements.

> You know our Native students seeing land acknowledgements on their syllabi or when people are presenting. I know we did a focus group actually last week with a group of my students and that was one of the things one of my students voiced was, "it'd be nice to see everyone other than Melissa doing land acknowledgments." So, you know, yeah, great, the Native people are doing it, but it also means a lot when like a non-Native faculty member does it in their class.

IHEs should work with ISA staff and Indigenous communities on understanding and developing land acknowledgement statements that can be used throughout their institutions. The statement should be included in all major campus addresses, on the institutions' websites, and on all course syllabi. Upper administrators should encourage all staff and faculty to utilize the land acknowledgement statement regularly.

Indigenous critical mass on campus. Indigenous Student Affairs and Indigenous educators need community just as much as students do. Too often ISA educators feel alone,

isolated, and burnt out at their institutions. Having a critical mass of Indigenous staff and faculty is necessary to develop a supportive community and it helps to elevate Indigenous voice and influence on campus. Melissa described the difficulty of being one of very few Indigenous people on campus.

> Luckily, I have a colleague over in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, a Ute staff member who we try to really keep connected, and so whenever she hears about a Native student she'll connect them with me and vice versa. That's been a really nice relationship to have. But unfortunately, she's going to be retiring in a few years so it's that whole like, "oh my gosh, we need to get another Native person in {both laugh} so I don't lose that connection!"

Institutional leadership should encourage the hiring of Indigenous staff and faculty throughout all levels of the institution, not just in roles that support Indigenous students or diversity efforts. They must be intentional about also hiring Indigenous people at the very top levels, such as in the Board of Regents, Presidents/Chancellors, Vice Presidents, and so on.

Many of the co-researchers suggested developing institutional Indigenous advisory councils, which some of the co-researchers have on their campuses. Such councils might include ISA educators, Indigenous Elders, and members of local tribal communities. In Brittany's experience, such a council should

> report directly to the president of the institution or of the system, again, recognizing that sovereignty and nation-to-nation conversations. That's the model that's used in our system, should be used in our system, right now we're out of compliance with it, but I've seen it work where they do make very meaningful change and they do institute very meaningful community-instigated programming. So one of the direct results of that was,

> they created an American Indian graduation ceremony specifically for Native students because our students tended to get lost in the big hullabaloo of black gowns and caps.

As noted in Brittany's comment, it is not enough just to create an advisory council. It also needs to be continued and maintained, and perhaps celebrated for its contributions to the institution. Brittany further explained the importance of having a direct communication line to the top of the institution.

> I feel like as much as you can do community outreach, there needs to be a time to provide meaningful feedback and like, "hey, quit doing this in our communities, this is wrong and you as the president need to hear it!" You can't just provide that feedback to a staff person and then like, there's eight layers between them and the president or, you know, someone that can actually make a difference about it. So I think that having that direct communication line to people that can actually make a difference is really important.

Creating a space for the Indigenous voice to be heard and valued on campus is a significant way to develop trust with Indigenous communities, students, and educators.

Co-Researchers' Response to the Indigenous Student Affairs Network

In the final section of this chapter, I decided to include the raw data of what the co-researcher's had to say in response to attending, or hopes for attending, the Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN) meetings at ACPA. Five of the co-researcher's attended ACPA18 and the inaugural ISAN meetings, and three (Phenocia, Rob, and Brittany) plan to attend in future. I felt that it was important and more impactful to capture the co-researcher's own words on the need for such a community without interruption of my interpretations as they could seem boastful. Instead, I thank the co-researchers for sharing their experiences, vulnerability, and

talents with the ISAN network. These are the qualities that are needed to develop a positive, healing, welcoming, and productive community. *Nya:wëh s:geno*.

Co-Researchers who Attended the ACPA18 Convention and ISAN Meetings

Melissa:

> ISAN is functioning for Indigenous Student Affairs practitioners in the same way that our roles serve Native college students. So it's kind of like what we do, but for ourselves in a way. So, you know, being in a place of support, being able to kind of talk about best practices, or being able to give each other resources. And also I think that, you know, in thinking back to my first ACPA convention in Montréal and seeing the Elders on stage and coming to NAIN, it's just really affirming to have like a Native-specific space at a large national conference. I think it's just again of support, you know, being able to support each other as professionals and kind of understanding where we're coming from because I think going back again to the uniqueness of supporting Native students, like we can have conversations like that with other diversity and multicultural folx, but if they're not directly working with Native students, they might not get some of the struggles or difficulties in the work that they do. And I think it's just community also, you know creating that space – like it was pretty freaking awesome to have that dinner we went to with like 30 plus Native practitioners – that was pretty awesome. That was so great. I was like, "we're taking over!" {both laugh} It was fantastic. And networking too, I guess that goes in with community, but networking is also really nice.

Saundra:

> I feel like it was building a strong network of student affairs professionals, both those just starting and those continuing, helping each other implement best practices, helping

develop a stronger network of ISA professionals. And then also, a Native professional network that was nationwide. I mean, I was able to meet Native professionals that were doing very different things with research and non-profits, it was nice to have people there that had transitioned out of higher education into non-profits that were able to talk to us about the challenges or the successes and the ways that we should look at things and the ways that we should approach partnerships with non-profits and also look at other resources, maybe guiding systems that we never thought of before. And I think that's really so valuable – I got so much out of the network, it was just amazing. I would really like to see, you know, the follow-up with everybody. I know we created a lot of sub-committees in ISAN and I'm really excited to see where that goes and how that continues. And I it would be great for those of us that attend different conferences to be able to bring back those knowledge systems – because not all of us have the budget to attend a lot of the conferences but so many good workshop sessions and things that are at other conferences, if we can bring back best practice models and maybe even in webinar form or something that we can share. I'm really excited about that opportunity, of sharing those best practice models across our division and across our universities to say, "hey, you know, I tried this in my community and it worked really well, you may have to tweak some stuff for your community because we know all of our communities are different, but this might work if you want to take a look at this as a model." And that's what I'm really looking forward to.

Damon:

ISAN is excellent. We can come together and don't need administration to tell us what the profession is. Talk peer-to-peer to create it. If we don't have a good grasp of what

we do or intend to do... We can come together and say, “ok what do we do, and what do we want to do?” Be a collective force. Decide our boundaries. Shared understanding even with different experiences. Be a collective council. People will have you do all kinds of stuff that doesn’t help the students, like say, “come smudge my office.” We need to decide what we do and what we don’t do. We need a version of ISAN for the Atlantic area. When I arrived at ISAN, seeing other people, I was like, “this is awesome.” We have people do this work, but we don’t get together. Something like ACPA, everyone goes to it. There we’re able to share with each other what we’re doing, how to deal with students talking negatively with each other, etc. One person taught me to say to students, “when you apply to stuff I am your first reference, so you need to get along well here.” It's a community. It’s a small group when you think of all of America, but big enough to talk with other folx of other tribes. We’re all from Turtle Island, it was good to learn we have cultural similarities. I was surprised by the plenary speakers who had went to Harvard. I didn’t know Indians go to Harvard. It was good to meet Indigenous people at ivy leagues, that was really inspiring because we don’t have that in Canada. People were surprised to hear that when I came back and told them that Indians go to Harvard. I learned about services from the non-profit people, here we’re band funded, need to call the band and make sure the students are on the roll. Band politics wouldn’t matter with these non-profit scholarship programs. The group was welcoming and open. Within the Indigenous group, we already understand that many of our people are mixed-race and can move on to other topics.

Maya:

> I hope to get connected with other ISA people, this is my first time I felt like I could say something, when I walked into the room and felt ok being white-presenting in this room. I think other people may feel that way too and I can unpack that with them. Being ok with not being tribally connected as much as others, and yet I walked in and others wanted to know who I am and what I do. I think they will help me to grow in my own identity, and hopefully I can help them too, a reciprocal relationship. We're all in this together, it's not a competition. I got that sense right away, versus in other student affairs or Indigenous student affairs things, I'm asked to speak as a representative of my community, and I don't feel that way at ACPA so far.

Breanna:

> I have been to lots of conferences, just as a part of your residency plan for doctoral programs, it's kind of required that you go to conferences to stay up on your game, getting that practice, sort of that socialization to the field, but I have never had an experience like I had at ACPA. And with the Indigenous Student Affairs Network, that kind of restoration that I experienced at ACPA this year was amazing. And I'm trying to like make sure all my colleagues are going to go next year so that they can be a part of it this year. I talked about being 'the one,' sort of how isolating that can be, and so it's so nice to just be able to talk to people who, one, understand what you're going through, but also like just offer things from a new perspective that maybe you didn't think about. And maybe that they're working with different tribes so they kind of approach things differently, but you could see how maybe that can transfer over to the work you're doing. So it really is about the restoration, that relationship building, and community building

even though we might not be close geographically, it very much is again about those relationships and the community you build through those relationships and just doing similar work and even similar research. It's so helpful to understand my role and things that I can improve on or implement here. So yeah, restoration. I just keep going back to that because it really was so restorative and just coming back with a new perspective and a new sense of motivation, I guess. So I'm looking to continue that and also, you know, you always go to conferences and you say, "oh yeah, let's keep in touch" and then you rarely do a lot of times, but with this I feel like again there is that responsibility to each other and that commitment to each other and I think you modeled – you, Cori, model that so well and so I think it kind of is that responsibility to you to want to maintain that as well with other people. So yeah, I'm really excited to see how this grows.

Co-Researchers who Plan to Attend a Future ACPA Convention and ISAN Meetings

Phenocia:

I am just really excited to connect to other folx who are doing work in these areas and having conversations about – I mean, best practices, yes, but really – what are the philosophies, and what is the approach, and what is the rationale behind that in a way that I think gets washed out when you go to other conferences where it's like they have their little thread of Native presentations and we all kind of know what – at least for me, I'm always hopeful and then I get there and I'm like, "oh yeah, I've seen this like three times, just different presenters." {Cori laughs} So I'm really just excited to make those connections and have a network and hopefully have people who can be thought partners in things and are approaching it from perhaps a little bit more of a merging of the theoretical and the praxis in a particular way. That's what I'm hoping.

Rob:

I think that it's a chance for people who are working in the field to come together and build a community and share experiences. And the context I'll give to that is, for a while now, in this part of Canada, we've been having lots of reconciliation conferences and lots of Indigenizing the academy conferences. And so often, especially when university executives are there, they want to talk about all the things they've done. And it was a really powerful moment for me with the director who hired me sitting in one of these rooms and her saying, "we've all done great things, but I know we're also all struggling to do some things. So it would be really great if we could have a conversation about what needs to be done, and where we're struggling and how we can help each other overcome those struggles." And that's something that I see something like the network becoming is a place where people who are – who sometimes are totally immersed in something being able to step away from it and come together and share their successes, but also have really frank conversations about the challenges they're facing and to get support and hear insight. Because I think there's a common set of challenges probably across North America, and to be able to hear a number of other approaches to those I think would be invaluable. And to share research or to share best practices or to celebrate the work that we do, it's not all about complaining, but it's about that balance of saying, "this is what we're doing well, and this is where we could really benefit from support or from advice."

Brittany:

I would hope to be an active participant in a meaningful community, because I've been a part of like ineffective communities – communities that weren't mutually beneficial and spaces where I could contribute, and I'd gain knowledge or skills that would help me

professionally. I hate to use the word ‘best practices’ but I think some guiding principles is really important for the work that we do. I think obviously, if you're working in Indigenous Student Affairs there's a huge difference between doing that at a four-year, versus a two-year, versus a tribal college, versus a vo-tech, and I don't even know what a junior college really is so I'm sure that's very different too, {laughs} but even thinking about like, regionally the work that I do, well the student population is different, but even between us and the next largest institution in our system, the work that I do is fairly different and the students we work with are fairly different. So best practices I don’t think is really realistic, but I think guiding principles of how we do our work.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

I began thinking about this work in 2006 when Gene Thin Elk and I first created Native Student Services (NSS) at the University of South Dakota. We started with a tiny budget and no real guidance. We struggled to find resources in literature and professional networks, and ultimately relied on our Indigenous knowledge. This included listening to our own lived experiences, receiving guidance from our Indigenous community, and seeking out Indigenous students' stories. While we found success in our efforts, we continuously struggled with a lack of clear direction from upper administrators, upper-level decisions being made without us, and an inability to connect to others doing this work at other institutions. This caused undue stress and concern that we may not be "doing it right." For me, the issue was that even though the intentions were good, the larger intuitional efforts for establishing NSS and its goals were not Indigenous-led, and the Indigenous voice was not centered in the process. According to my prior research (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017), these same issues continue to exist for many institutions who have created Indigenous Student Affairs programs. ISA educators are often siloed in their programs and institutions with unclear directions, far too few staff and resources, are exhausted and overworked, and desperate for an Indigenous Student Affairs community.

The goal of this study was to begin addressing these concerns. The purpose was to collaborate with ISA educators to create our own definition of Indigenous Student Affairs for ourselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Fisher & Ball, 2003), as opposed to it being defined for us by our institutions and/or the fields of higher education or student affairs. This work included

utilizing an Indigenous Paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and a Tribal Critical Race (Brayboy, 2005) theoretical framework to establish a collective mission, guiding principles, contextual considerations, and the support and resources required from institutions, peers, and administrators.

Reflections on Utilizing the Indigenous Paradigm and Methodologies

Performing this research was liberating for me. I had always been intimidated by research before. There are so many rules and proper steps you have to follow and sometimes I had a hard time understanding them. I felt afraid that people reading my work would find my flaws like blaring red flags that I could not see. I suppose that would be my imposter syndrome showing up. I felt like a *fake* researcher trying to pass as legitimate in this Western research world. This also mirrors my life as a light-skinned Native person. Sometimes I am afraid that other Natives cannot tell that I am Indigenous and see me as a Native imposter, and sometimes I do not know when I am unintentionally passing as white or if other white people suspect that there is something *different* about me. This is a difficult tightrope to walk in daily life and is especially scary when trying to prove that I am worthy of a doctorate degree. However, the combination of finding my Indigenous research community at ACPA in 2016 and being given the freedom to learn and perform research that is culturally congruent for me has changed *everything*.

I feel like I have finally found my community and it is amongst Indigenous higher education researchers. Reading their work continues to be a powerful, uplifting, and life-changing experience for me. It gives me permission to be myself in my work and to do so unapologetically. Sometimes in this study I questioned whether I was including my intuitive knowledge and cultural protocol *enough* as I utilized qualitative methods, but my advisor would

remind me of the things that felt culturally normative to me that were in fact radical in the research process. Through this study, I had the opportunity to explore and practice relationality and relational accountability. This has brought me closer to members of my community and enhanced my self-confidence and self-worth in my work and in my world. I have learned that my lived experience and intuitive knowledge is legitimate and meaningful.

I have also learned that performing research in a relationally accountable way takes more time and effort than many other research processes. I was warned that "white students don't have to work this hard, they just get it done and over with" by a professor and mentor that I have great respect for. I understand and appreciate what she meant by that – that I carried an extra weight of responsibility to the Indigenous community to follow cultural protocols. While at times I felt it was unfair that I had to work longer and with greater responsibility than many others, I never felt as though I could do this work any other way and not feel ashamed of it. I also recognized that this work looks different from what is expected from most dissertations. The mere audacity I had to *co-create* knowledge with *co-researchers* may be unnerving to some. It may seem unnecessary and cumbersome that I used so much raw data in my findings. And it may appear ostentatious that I included my own voice and lived experience to inform the findings. Some might argue that my methods are not scientifically rigorous. However, I have my culture and my research community to back me up and I know that my process is authentic and credible. I am no longer afraid; I am uplifted.

Conclusions and Implications

Definition and Mission of Indigenous Student Affairs

The co-researchers felt as though the definition of Indigenous Student Affairs should incorporate the eight concepts of: community, home, culture, support, advocacy, collaboration,

retention, and education. The most essential component of ISA work is *community*. Fittingly, traditional Native communities historically saw the role of education as learning how to live in community with one another (Cajete, 2005), in which learning was regarded as a lifelong journey of personal development and skills so that one may better contribute to their community and future generations (Bryant, 1996). ISAs and ISA educators must support community amongst Indigenous students and educators, as well as local Indigenous communities. The co-researchers explained how they support Indigenous students and community by utilizing holistic, culturally-appropriate methods which recognize Indigenous people for who they are and where they come from. They also emphasized the need to be advocates for Native students and community across campus and to the upper administration.

The co-researchers had to wrestle with the question of "who exactly ISA serves?" This question is complicated by the variability in our own and our institutions' understandings of Indigenous peoples' liminal experience in both racialized and politicized identities (Brayboy, 2005). It is also rooted in the determination of tribal citizenship by "Euro-American definitions of race imposed on [N]ative peoples by the U.S. government" (Tallbear, 2003, p. 89) with the use of blood quantum, as opposed to culturally traditional modes of identifying members of our communities (Doerfler, 2017). This makes delineating *who counts as Indigenous* difficult, especially because the co-researchers reported encountering an increasing number of Indigenous students who look less phenotypically Native and who grew up more removed from their cultures.

Ultimately, the co-researchers decided that Indigenous Student Affairs first serves Indigenous students and Indigenous community in a relationally accountable way, with the guidance of Indigenous Elders, and then secondarily operates as a resource to others on campus.

While it is important for ISAs to support non-Native allies and educate non-Native institution members, it is Indigenous students and communities who must be centered in this work. North American higher education has a history of anti-Indigenous, pro-assimilation tactics in attempting to control Indigenous people and continues to be plagued by pervasive colonization and white supremacy (Brayboy, 2005). Indigenous students' success in IHEs is a form of radical resistance to colonization and a means of fostering the growth and survival of Native communities (Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, Castagno et al., 2014; Brayboy, Fann et al., 2012). Therefore, Indigenous students and community must take precedence in Indigenous Student Affairs efforts.

Creating authentic, familial relationships with Indigenous students and communities requires developing a personal understanding of relationality and relational accountability. The Indigenous paradigm asserts that a "relational way of being [is] at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (Wilson, 2008, p. 80) and that we *are* the relationships that we build, as opposed to simply being *in* relationships. This requires an intentional consciousness about how to hold ourselves accountable to our relationships with others. To me, relationality is equivalent to understanding that all people are sacred, we are all related, and we all have a part to play in sustaining our community. We must conduct ourselves with the understanding that we are always walking on sacred ground and operating in relationships with sacred beings.

The co-researchers also emphasized that IHEs and ISAs must exercise accountability and responsibility to the lands on which an institution occupies and to the people attached to those lands. ISA educators must be cognizant of the land and the history of how their institution came to be there in order to establish relationships with local Indigenous communities. ISA educators ought to work in collaboration with local tribal communities and attempt to create a bridge

between communities and institutions. This is necessary as historical and modern "educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429) in which IHEs expect Native students to discard their own worldviews and conform to Western ideologies (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). Therefore, many tribal communities legitimately have very little trust in IHEs and their ability to support Indigenous students. Some ways to establish relational accountability with local tribes is to create Elders-in-Residence programs, Indigenous Advisory Councils, and Tribal Liaison positions. These are mutually beneficial by providing Indigenous students and institution members access to elders and tribal leaders while creating spaces to center local Indigenous voices in the way Indigenous students are supported in IHEs.

Native student involvement with Indigenous educators can play a significant role in supporting their learning and development (Belgarde, 1992; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Tippeconnic Fox, 2005). However, Indigenous Student Affairs programs are most often staffed by only one or two ISA educators (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). Being a solo or only one of very few Indigenous educators on campus is a very difficult, draining, and lonely task. Some programs have more staff and resources, but they may rely on soft funding from outside sources or be expected to secure outside funding themselves. ISAs are often expected to do *all* the work supporting Indigenous students, as opposed to this work being a priority of everyone's on campus. There can also be struggles amongst Indigenous educators across generations, in which there may be opposing views on how Indigenous Student Affairs work ought to be performed.

In any case, ISA educators often rely on their cultural knowledge and the cultural value of supporting the next generation of Indigenous people and thus persevere in their roles (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). The co-researchers' personal objectives included helping

Indigenous students through their personal journeys in higher education; being supportive mentors who understand Indigenous students' experiences; creating welcoming, Indigenous identity affirming spaces on campus; advocating for Indigenous student needs; and shaping institutional policies in attempts to decolonize institutional practices. In their work, they incorporate a wide variety of academic, social, and/or cultural programs for students and institutions throughout the course of a year.

With all these pieces in mind, the co-researchers concluded that the mission of the Indigenous Student Affairs functional area is to:

- Focus on Indigenous college students, local and campus Indigenous communities, and the Indigenous land that institutions of higher education occupy;
- Support, advocate for, and enhance the visibility of Indigenous students and communities in institutions of higher education;
- Affirm the various Indigenous cultural and social identities present in campus communities; and
- Promote the well-being of Indigenous students and educators in higher education.

Guiding Principles of Indigenous Student Affairs

The guiding principles developed by the co-researchers made up three categories: *Leadership*, *Students*, and *Community*. They discussed the complexity of navigating the cultural value of humility contrasted with the institutional value of assertiveness in how they operationalize leadership in IHEs. This parallels the difficult choice Indigenous students must often make in academic settings between utilizing the more aggressive and verbally assertive qualities that are valued in IHEs or leaning into culturally traditional values such as respectful silence (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011). ISA educators must learn how to show up in IHEs as their

authentic cultural selves while also learning to navigate the political nature of an institution to get Indigenous Student Affairs needs met. Meanwhile, IHEs should recognize that Indigenous people have their own longstanding, legitimate forms of knowledge and power that inform cultural ways of being and navigating leadership roles (Brayboy, 2005). For example, the Indigenous value of relational accountability requires us to incorporates the three R's of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility in non-hierarchical, equal power relationships (Webber-Pillwax, 2001; 2003; Wilson, 2008). ISA educators must hold themselves relationally accountable to Indigenous students and communities to be worthy of their trust and respect.

ISA educators also lead by holding IHEs accountable to learning about and supporting Indigenous students. IHEs must be open to learning how they can make efforts to decolonize and Indigenize institutional practices. Colonization refers to the historical and modern ways that Euro-American thought, knowledge, and power structures dominate societal norms while subjugating Indigenous ways of being and knowing (Brayboy, 2005). The co-researchers described decolonization as a process of unlearning singular, rigid modes of operation and changing the institutional mindset to thinking of Indigenous students and communities as equal partners. They gave a seemingly obvious example of equating an IHE president with a TCU president or tribal chairman. However, this simple gesture is rarely heeded by IHEs. Indigenizing the institution means bringing in Indigenous influences and openly accounting for past harms to Indigenous people. The co-researchers encouraged ISA educators to support the creation and use of institutional land acknowledgement statements as one means of Indigenizing. Land acknowledgements are written and spoken statements that recognize the tribes who have a spiritual connection to the land on which the institution sits, the history of their displacement, a

commitment to serving the Indigenous people, and humilty for the institution's ability to exist there.

The co-researchers emphasized a necessity for ISA educators to develop programming based on *current* Indigenous students' needs. Unlike the trend of past literature to focus almost exclusively on culturally-traditional, reservation-based Native students (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011), the Native student population at any one institution will vary greatly from year to year. Therefore, ISA educators need to utilize assessment strategies to ensure they are fulfilling the current Indigenous student community's changing needs. Providing opportunities to center Indigenous student voices in program creation is an example of acknowledging the importance of tribal nations' ability to control their own identities, legitimacy, and goals, as opposed to them being determined by those in dominant institutions (Brayboy, 2005). ISA educators must be cognizant of Native student diversity so overall programming efforts are aimed at inclusivity of all Indigenous nations and social identities that may be present in the community.

In fact, the co-researchers reported an increasing change in the way ISAs need to support many Indigenous students. They continuously encounter more students further towards the "assimilated or less culturally connected" (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011, p. 148) end of a continuum of cultural identity. Thus, they find themselves spending more time connecting students to Native culture than helping them navigate IHE institutional culture. ISA educators must be mindful of how they support Indigenous students who struggle with feelings of Native inauthenticity while also supporting those who grew up in traditional Native cultures. This change, however, appears to be an indication of the intended result of colonization, in which Native people are becoming more assimilated into the mainstream culture and less connected to their own. This does not mean that we need to provide less Indigenous Student Affairs resources

for Native students, it means that we need to be open to change in *how* we support Native students.

Correspondingly, prior literature has noted that incorporating Indigenous cultural programming and fostering connections to tribal communities (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Martin, 2005; Waterman & Lindley, 2013) is necessary for *all* Native students by helping them to both learn about and draw strength from their cultural identities to persist in higher education (Huffman, 2001). It also tells us that incorporating Native values in our approach to working with Native students can support their cultural identity and their connection to the institution (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). Additionally, this is a way to fulfill a desire of Indigenous nations for their young people to experience Native cultural traditions incorporated into their broader education (Demmert et al., 2006). The literature has also stated that Native students experience greater success when their institutions celebrate Indigeneity (Keith et al., 2016) and incorporate Native "cultures, languages, histories, and values as strengths in teaching and learning" (Tippeconnic & Tippeconnic Fox, 2012, p. 841). The caution ISA educators must take in providing cultural programming is to include a diversity of Indigenous cultures and identities to avoid implementing exclusionary efforts and a homogenous view of Indigenous people and cultures.

ISA educators must also focus their efforts on creating and sustaining an Indigenous community on their campuses. Maintaining an inclusive and welcoming Indigenous community is a culturally appropriate strategy for retaining Native students, staff, and faculty alike. This needs to be a space for all Indigenous people, no matter what they look like or where they grew up, to find safety and solidarity. It needs to be a space where authentic, respectful, and reciprocal relationships and collaborations are built. Prior literature has noted that collaborative

efforts across campus (Campbell, 2007; Flynn et al., 2014) and with tribes (Brown, 2005; Larimore & McClellan, 2005) provides opportunities for multidisciplinary and cultural support for students. Additionally, collaborations built with campus allies also demonstrate that the success of Native students is the responsibility of the whole institution rather than a single office (Guillory, Wolverton, & Appleton, 2008).

Furthermore, the co-researchers found importance in sustaining the larger Indigenous Student Affairs community and supporting one another across institutions. My prior research found that directors of ISA felt isolated on their individual campuses and struggled to find and connect to an Indigenous Student Affairs community (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). They were in need of support, validation, and advocacy. As such, the co-researchers who participated in the inaugural ISAN meetings found affirmation, shared understandings, new perspectives, and restoration. Thus, it is imperative that we maintain and grow the ISAN community. As much as they are able, ISA educators ought to become involved and contribute to the community and to the development of best practices for the field. According to TribalCrit, our ability to come together and combine our shared knowledge can be used to create new meaning and power in our ability to control our own legitimacy and goals (Brayboy, 2005).

Contextual Considerations for Indigenous Student Affairs

A thorough understanding of an IHE's context is key in developing Indigenous Student Affairs and ISA programming. The co-researchers indicated questions that IHE administrators and ISA educators must take the time to ask about their context to operate at the most effective and culturally appropriate level. Utilizing these contextual considerations that were created by a panel of Indigenous experts is a means of incorporating Indigenous leadership in Indigenous

educational efforts (Brayboy, 2005). The questions are situated around the contexts of tribal communities and homelands, Indigenous students attending an IHE, and an IHE itself.

The context questions may be used by administrators and educators to assess how well they know and understand their relationships with local and campus Indigenous communities. They help administrators and educators to be mindful and aware of an IHE's history and where healing may need to take place. The questions also guide administrators and educators to Indigenous resources for finding and understanding their Indigenous student, staff, and faculty populations. Finally, the context questions can help ISA educators develop programming that relates to the makeup of the current Native student population and their needs. It would be to ISA educators' benefit to utilize such an assessment on an annual basis, as was called for by the co-researchers.

Support and Resources Needed for Indigenous Student Affairs

The co-researchers described the support and resources Indigenous Student Affairs and ISA educators need from their institutions, upper administration, and peers in order to function effectively. Perhaps this is the most important section of all because it is so rare that Indigenous educators are given the opportunity to voice their needs and truly be heard (Mihesuah, 2003). TribalCrit explains that Indigenous stories and personal narratives are real and legitimate sources of data and theory (Brayboy, 2005), so it is vital that we provide spaces for Indigenous stories to be heard and valued as legitimate. As for tangible resources, the co-researchers called for: multiple, sustainable, full-time staff positions; sustainable funding; and space on campus.

Requesting to have an adequate number of full-time ISA staff is no small matter. While there is a major dearth in literature on the experiences of Indigenous higher education staff, my prior research made very clear that ISA directors may experience detrimental effects to their

well-being when they have only one or no staff (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). Indigenous educators are often driven by the cultural value of supporting the next generation and may lean on the common ceremonial task of suffering for the betterment of others to accomplish this goal. This is a quality that is likely taken advantage of by many IHE administrators, in which they allow ISA staff to *literally suffer* in their roles to save money by hiring a less than adequate number of staff. Indigenous and ISA educators need a critical mass of Indigenous staff to establish a community for themselves in the same way that Indigenous students need community to withstand the inherent toxic, colonizing nature of North American higher education (Brayboy, 2005). Anything less than that is creating a dangerous glass cliff in which burnout and failure may be inevitable and would likely be blamed on Indigenous staff rather than the pervasive nature of colonization and white supremacy.

Similarly, providing an inadequate amount of sustainable financial resources and space on campus is a surefire way of communicating to Indigenous staff and students how little the institution values them. Education in North America began with the forced removal of Native children from their families and communities into violent, genocidal boarding schools (Carney, 1999; McDonald, 1990; Noriega, 1992; Wilkinson & Briggs, 1977). The earliest colonial colleges were built by receiving extra funding for including Native Americans in their charters, but that funding was used to abuse Native people while uplifting wealthy white colonizers (Carney, 1999; Nelson & Tachine, 2018). Still today, some states receive extra funding when they take Native children from their homes and place them in foster care (Sullivan & Walters, 2011) and others are actively fighting the Indian Child Welfare Act for the ability of white families to adopt Native children out of their communities (Kastelic, 2018). There is a continued effort in North America to remove Native young people from their homes and assimilate them to

Western institutions, an effort that began and remains tied to educational institutions. IHEs made progress when they created Black Cultural Centers in the 1960s but greatly damaged their efforts when they did not heed the call from Black students and educators to provide adequate spaces and resources for Black students (Princes, 1994). It does not matter what the size of the Indigenous population is on campus (Shotton et al., 2013). Indigenous student populations are small *because* of the colonization IHEs were built upon. If an administration decides that it cares about Native students and does not wish to exploit them as IHEs are known to do, they must provide adequate, sustainable resources to meet their needs.

The means of support the co-researchers called for included: direct access to, and support, buy-in, and trust from top administration; support, allyship, and collaboration from campus partners; continuous land acknowledgement; and Indigenous critical mass on campus. Upper administrators, I will speak to you directly. You must take the time to learn about Indigenous student and staff needs. An easy way to go about this is to establish an ongoing relationship with ISA educators. They are the leading experts and they are on your campus. Take the time to get to know them personally and professionally. Find opportunities to center their voices and experiences. Remove barriers for them to access those with decision-making power. Then, turn around and be their champions to the rest of the institution. Encourage their peers to get to know them and collaborate with them. Assign institutional research staff to develop better ways to track Indigenous students in collaboration with Indigenous Student Affairs. Make it known that supporting Indigenous students is *everyone's* responsibility. Use and encourage the use of a land acknowledgement statement campus-wide. Read it at major campus addresses and post it on the institutional website. Encourage the hiring of Indigenous staff and faculty throughout all levels of the institution, especially at the very top. Foster the

establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Council. Express the need for the institution to value Indigenous knowledge and leadership. These are simple gestures that do not take much of your time and do not cost any money, but they make Indigenous educators feel valued and supported. If you give them that, they will reciprocate your efforts and your Native student and educator population will grow and flourish.

Recommendations for Future Research

This is the one of the very first studies on the functional area of Indigenous Student Affairs, so there is much more work to be done. Given the culturally traditional, reservation-based Native student focus of most prior literature (Brayboy & Castagno, 2011), an area of study could be the changing nature of Indigenous student populations and how that changes the work of Indigenous Student Affairs. It may be useful to implement a quantitative study to see just what the numbers of more culturally traditional versus more acculturated Native students appear on campuses today. It would also be beneficial to perform qualitative studies on the experiences and needs of the more assimilated Native students and those who struggle with feelings of Native inauthenticity. Such a study may change the way we understand and support modern Indigenous college students. I feel as though the co-researchers in this study gave a great starting point for understanding these students' needs, but it would also be valuable to hear from the students themselves. Similarly, future research could focus on developing Indigenous student identity models and how they might be created without producing singular identity boxes in which students would be assumed to fit neatly into.

It may also be interesting to perform studies comparing the student support strategies of older and younger generation ISA educators alongside asking what Indigenous students say they need and value from Indigenous Student Affairs. One would need to be very cautious, though, to

keep from creating intragroup conflict and labeling one or the other group as *wrong*. That would be antithetical to the values of the Indigenous paradigm and methodologies. Instead, one could seek the value that both groups bring to Indigenous Student Affairs programs. Perhaps there could also be a study on developing a list of specific best practices for the ISA functional area. Again, some caution would need to be taken to keep from being too prescriptive, as programming efforts must take context into consideration.

Another important point that was brought up in this study is the way institutions track Indigenous students. Clearly there is major discrepancy in how institutions track Native students compared to how ISAs do, and, most likely, neither of them has the *exact* right numbers. While we may never find a way to capture the number of *all* Indigenous students, given their legal autonomy to decide if and when to disclose their ethnic identity, there must be better approaches that have not yet been tried. One thing that was found in this study is that it is certainly easier to understand an institution's Indigenous population if our measures also capture specific tribal identities. Given the common practice of many Native people to identify first with their tribe and then with Indigeneity (Horse, 2001; Weaver, 2001), conceivably, being given the option to disclose their tribe would increase the number of Native students who disclose their ethnic identities. Perhaps a study that included institutional research staff and ISA educators could bring us closer to more effective solutions.

Finally, future research could investigate the pros and cons of ISAs that are standalone programs versus those in multicultural centers. I was surprised to find in this study that a clear stance was hard to come by. I found in my previous research that ISA directors staunchly believed that it was necessary for ISAs to be standalone (Bazemore-James & Dunn, 2017). In this study, I found the co-researchers saw positive and negative attributes to both options,

especially in considering the case of ISAs in institutions with very small Native student populations and no local tribal nations. A study that focused specifically on this question could be very valuable. There is also a danger that it may be detrimental to some to take a hard stance in either direction. My hypothesis would be that the answer would depend on contextual considerations.

Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ (all my relations; the ceremony is now complete).

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

Email Recruitment Message:

Subject: Invitation to participate – Defining Indigenous Student Affairs

Nya:wëh s:geno,

It was wonderful to meet many of you at the ACPA Convention! I hope you all returned to your institutions fulfilled and energized to work with your students and to continue building the ISA community.

As I mentioned at the convention, I'm leading a new research project in which I hope to develop a common mission statement, guiding principles, programmatic considerations, and institutional resources needed for the Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) functional area. The goal is for us, as Indigenous educators, to create a definition of ISA for ourselves, as opposed to it being defined for us by our institutions or the field of higher education. In completing this research, I hope to provide literature in which ISA folks can ground their work, leverage resources in their institutions, and to find support in the ISA community. It is also meant as a resource for new ISA folks and institution leaders who seek to create new ISA programs in more institutions.

I am writing to you to ask for your participation in this project. There are two parts in which I need participants:

1. In the data collection phase, I am seeking folks for individual 1-hour telephone or video-conferencing interviews.
2. In the data analysis phase, I am seeking folks to review and discuss my initial findings in an online, text-based group discussion (taking place in Google Docs).

You may volunteer to participate in *one or both parts* of the study.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please reply to this email (or email me at cori.bazemore@gmail.com) and indicate if you are interested in *one or both parts* of the study. I will respond with more details and an Internal Review Board consent form.

Please also feel free to contact me if you have thoughts or questions about this study.

Thank you for your consideration!

Nya:wëh (Thank You),
Cori Bazemore-James, MS
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
College of Education
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services

Facebook Recruitment Post:

Hello everyone! I am leading a new research project in which I hope to develop a common mission statement, guiding principles, programmatic considerations, and institutional resources needed for the Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) functional area.

The goal is for us, as Indigenous educators, to create a definition of ISA for ourselves, as opposed to it being defined for us by our institutions or the field of higher education. In completing this research, I hope to provide literature in which ISA folks can ground their work, leverage resources in their institutions, and to find support in the ISA community. It is also meant as a resource for new ISA folks and institution leaders who seek to create new ISA programs in more institutions.

I am seeking ISA folks to participate in this project. There are two parts in which I need participants:

1. In the data collection phase, I am seeking folks for individual 1-hour telephone interviews.
2. In the data analysis phase, I am seeking folks to review and discuss my initial findings in an online, text-based group discussion (such as in Facebook messenger or Google docs).

You may volunteer to participate in *one or both parts* of the study.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please comment below, direct message me, or email me at cori.bazemore@gmail.com and indicate if you are interested in *one or both parts* of the study. I will respond with more details and an Internal Review Board consent form.

Please also feel free to contact me if you have thoughts or questions about this study.

Thank you for your consideration!

Nya:wëh s:geno,

Cori Bazemore-James, MS
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
College of Education
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What was your first experience of Indigenous Student Affairs (ISA) – how did you find out about it?
    a. Did you first experience it as a student or as a job opportunity?
2. What is your personal interest in working in ISA?
    a. What drives you to do this work?
3. If you were to generally define what ISA is (not just particular to your institution, but generally as a field), how would you define it?
    a. What is its purpose?
    b. Who does it serve?
    c. Why does it need to exist?
4. Say a university wants to create its first ISA office. What are some things that they need to think about relating to the community, the campus, or Native student population (or anything else) in creating a new ISA program?
    a. What are some things about your university or student population that makes your ISA different from one at another university?
5. In your experience, what support and resources must institutions provide for ISA programs and staff to be successful?
    a. What should a university looking to start a new ISA be prepared to do to support it?

   b. What has been helpful or hindering to you at your institution?

6. If you were to develop it, what do you think should be the collective mission of ISA as a field?
   a. Or what mission should ISA aspire to (as a field)?
7. What would you say should be some guiding principles of the field of ISA?
   a. Or what are some guiding principles that ISA should aspire to (as a field)?
8. What do you hope to gain from the ACPA Indigenous Student Affairs Network (ISAN)?
   a. What do you see as the function of ISAN?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about ISA or is there any question that you would like to go back to?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in this collaborative analysis focus group!

This document will be open for 1 week, 12:00pm EST, Thursday, July 5 - 1:00pm EST/12:00pm CST/11:00am MST/10:00am PST, Wednesday, July 11, and you may return to participate as much and as often as you like.

Please review the initial findings on the **Initial Findings Pages** (p. 3, below). On the **Focus Group Discussion Pages** (p. 12, below), please post your thoughts, questions, concerns, and ideas regarding the initial findings. What might be missing? What is confusing? How might you describe things differently? How might you order things differently? What specific reasons might something be important to include or not include? What surprised you? Anything that you're thinking about, please share it in the discussion.

Return to this document as often as you like during the week to engage in a discussion by responding to other participants' posts. Please *always* write your next post *below the last post made*, to keep the flow of the discussion as clear as possible.

Before each post you make, please write [Your Name, Comment #] in your designated font color (see in Focus Group Discussion Pages). Here is an example:

> [Sarah, 1] My initial thoughts on the findings are …
>
> [Aaron, 1] I think the findings…
>
> [Sarah, 2] Aaron, I agree that __ and also…
>
> [Aaron, 2] Thanks Sarah, that is a good point. Perhaps…
>
> [Max, 1] I think that the finding about __ should include…
>
> [Sarah, 3] I'm not sure that I agree about [Max, 1]. What about…
>
> [Cori, 1] Aaron, [Aaron, 2] is interesting. How do you think we incorporate…

[Max, 2] In response to [Sarah, 3], maybe we should consider...

If you want to reference another post in your post, reference it by the [Name, Comment #], (i.e. "Aaron, [Aaron, 2] is interesting…").

If you have a *specific question* for another participant: highlight your post/question, click on the "Add a Comment" box to the right, type the "@" symbol and attach that person's name. This will let them know that you are seeking a response from them.

When *responding* to a specific question like this: write your response post *below the last post made*, include a reference to the poster's question (i.e. "In response to [Sarah, 3] …"), then click the "Resolve" button on the Comment box by the question.

Finally, please feel free to ask me questions anytime in the document or via email (cori.bazemore@gmail.com).