AN EXPLORATION OF INCLUSION ACTION PLANS TO FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR TCU FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

by

Gena M. Qualls

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Ferris State University

April 2022

AN EXPLORATION OF INCLUSION ACTION PLANS TO FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR TCU FACULTLY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

by

Gena M. Qualls

Has been approved

April 2022

APPROVED:

Adam Haviland, PhD
Committee Chair

Benjamin Ramirez -Shkwegnaabi, PhD
Committee Member

Carla Sineway, MA
Committee Member

Dissertation Committee

ACCEPTED:

Sandra J Balkema, PhD, Dissertation Director
Community College Leadership Program

ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education have been focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion for many years as a way to recruit and retain students of various backgrounds. Studies have shown that Native American students are the least represented on campuses across the nation. A lack of equitable access to higher education is the reason that Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) were created. The introduction of TCUs has had a positive impact on Indian country, but the low number of Native American graduates still causes issues for TCUs. Among these issues are recruitment and retention of Native American faculty has also been a challenge; It is important for Native American students to see themselves represented in the faculty and staff. Providing representation will help students, staff, and faculty gain a greater sense of belonging and inclusion, which in turn increases student success and positive identity formation.

The product created for this dissertation was designed to help TCUs recruit, hire, and retain Native American staff and faculty, as well as deliver professional development opportunities for non-Native staff and faculty. Using the self-assessment, environmental scan, and other best practices described here, this product can help to provide an inclusive environment and build a stronger sense of belonging for students, staff, and faculty.

The self-assessment and data gathered will help institutions better understand the current environment surrounding the tribal college and provide talking and learning points for staff and faculty. Environmental scans can ensure that faculty and staff are comfortable on campus and have a greater understanding of cultural competency and sensitivity with regards to the Native American student body. The data gathered during this process can also deliver evidence concerning how well the college is meeting its strategic objectives. These data can

also afford staff essential information to make adjustments in strategies to ensure quality improvements are made effectively.

KEY WORDS: Sense of belonging, Inclusion, Tribal Colleges

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends who have supported me throughout my educational journey. Your encouragement is what has inspired me to be a better person and a strong role model for my children, Cora, Kathryn, and Tristan, whom I also like to thank. Thank you to my husband, Steve, for pushing me to be stronger than I ever imagined I could be. To my mom Colleen, and in memory of my dad, David, thank you for always believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my chair, Dr. Adam Haviland, and my committee members: Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College President, Carla Sineway, and Dr. Benjamin Ramirez-Shkwegnaabi. I am indebted to each of you. I am extremely grateful for my best friend, Amanda Flaugher. Without her, my success and the completion of my dissertation would not have been possible. I also must thank Tracy Reed, Mary Pelcher, and the rest of my SCTC family for always offering encouragement and advice when I was struggling.

Table of Contents

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) students are one of the least represented populations in the American higher education system. The representation of these students is so low that oftentimes indigenous students are hidden amongst the “other” category in demographics. The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI) fact sheet (2019) notes that AIAN students make up only one percent of the US undergraduate population and less than one percent of the graduate population. Indigenous students also have an unfavorably low persistence rate compared to the general population (Tachine et al., 2017). There are many reasons for the low attainment numbers and not just one solution will rectify the issues.

When thinking about the low enrollment and persistence rates of Indigenous students, it should be noted that there are many factors that lead to the lack of representation and unsuccessful degree attainment for these students. The Partnership with Native Americans article (PNA; n.d.) states that more than 60 percent of U.S. high school students go on to college, while only 17 percent of American Indian students are able to continue their education after high school, facing a number of challenges the average student does not encounter. These challenges include things such as growing up in mostly rural areas (although that is changing), and lack of funding, resources, and widespread support services. All of these are contributing factors that quite often deter Native American students from even enrolling in college. Adding to the list of challenges is the lack of cultural inclusion for Indigenous students attending most universities and colleges. Erroneous accounts of history and the absence of representation can cause a feeling of uncomfortableness and invisibility on campus for Indigenous students. Examples regarding inaccuracies taught in U.S. history include the stories told of Christopher

Columbus, the pilgrims, and the founding fathers. (PNA, n.d.). It is the duty of the college to ensure that all students feel at ease on their campus by providing an inclusive atmosphere. This holds true for all institutions of higher education, including tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Providing faculty who are representative of the students they teach can assist Indigenous students to persist in obtaining the degrees they strive to earn.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given the low enrollment and persistence numbers, as well as the push for inclusivity initiatives by large institutions, it would help if colleges offered services and meeting spaces for Indigenous students to feel welcome and accepted (OECD, 2017, p. 2). Encouraging inclusion for American Indian students on campus can be a start to developing a sense of belonging for the often-discouraged population. Terrell Strayhorn (2012) defines sense of belonging "as a basic human need and motivation, sufficient to influence behavior" (p. 3). For college students, a sense of belonging is their perception of feeling supported by, connected to, and valued by the campus community. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020a) has found that diversity among campus leadership, including faculty, plays a key role in the institution providing an inclusive environment for students. Studies have shown that "faculty members' curricular decisions and pedagogy, including their individual interactions with students, can foster inclusive climates as well" (US Department of Education, 2020, p. 37). Students reiterate the claim that it is important for them to see someone "like them" reflected by faculty and the curriculum. Solidifying the inclusive feeling on campus (US Department of Education, 2020) keeps students feeling reassured and comfortable.

The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College (SCTC) currently does not have a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan or initiative. These are terms that have been difficult to define or introduce into the TCU environment. As noted by the President Lindquist (2018) of Cankdeska Cikana Community College, Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) were established more than

fifty years ago to address the glaring failure of mainstream higher education institutions to serve and graduate Native students. In other words, the lack of access to education, lack of representation, and lack of cultural inclusion was the reason for the creation of the TCU.

Currently, TCUs have an open enrollment policy but must balance that with the requirement of maintaining the Indian student count. According to the 1978 25 USCS § 1801 [Title 25. Indians, chapter 20. Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance]:

> "Indian student count" means "a number equal to the total number of Indian students enrolled in each tribally controlled college or university, determined in a manner consistent with subsection (b) of this section on the basis of the quotient of the sum of the credit hours of all Indian students so enrolled, divided by twelve." Indian student count is therefore not a set number of students but is a number based on a formula that is calculated by the U.S. Federal Government or Bureau of Indian Education more precisely. The Bureau of Indian Education (1978) also specifies that, to maintain status as a tribal college and university, the college must, "Have a student body that is more than 50 percent Indian (unless it has been in operation for less than one year." (§1801. Definitions)

It is important that TCUs accommodate the needs of the American Indian students. While mainstream institutions concentrate on implementing diversity plans to assist in exposing students to those with differing ethnic backgrounds, TCUs focus more on the inclusion aspect of the initiative. A report written by the American Council on Education (ACE; 2020) titled *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2020 Supplement* states that "Among the over 1,800 faculty at TCUs, 43.9 percent were Native, while 56.1 percent were non-Native" (p. 69). While most mainstream institutions push for diversity, a TCU would more likely strive to be more inclusive when hiring faculty and staff and focus on those who are representative of their student body. This is valuable information to consider when discussing the factors that contribute to a student's sense of belonging and recapping the importance of inclusion, cultural inclusion, and representation.

The theories that inform the product creation include Tinto's (1993) model of the persistence/withdrawal process, known as the student integration model and the peoplehood matrix. Tinto's (1993) model of student integration proposes that students come to a college or

university with a variety of traits (e.g., race, school achievement, academic aptitude, family, educational, and financial) with the goal of graduating from the institution. While the peoplehood matrix, developed by Holm et al. (2003), is a comprehensive framework that combines four factors deemed important to indigeneity: language, history, ceremonial cycle, and land (Tachine et al., 2017). The student integration model assists us in understanding the need to create a sense of inclusion and belonging for Native students. The peoplehood matrix helps to identify ways to provide an inclusive environment.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

It is hard for TCUs to define terms such as diversity, equity, and inclusion since the inequity in education is reason that TCUs were originally created. Education has been and continues to be the cause of much trauma for American Indians. Forced into government-run boarding schools at incredibly young ages, education efforts were driven by religious indoctrination and forced assimilation (Stull et al., 2015). This history, combined with many economic and social barriers, were recognized by Native American leaders. These leaders also realized that the education system was built on westernized methods and standards of learning, which did not work for tribal people. Westernized approaches were implemented to assimilate Native people into western culture while erasing Tribal culture, history, and identity. Building on the success of the self-determination movement of the 1960s, Native American leaders and communities began to rethink higher education. (White House Historical Association (en-US), n.d.). Although accrediting agencies base their standards on westernized viewpoints, this too could change in the future if agencies such as the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the American Indian College Fund continue to work together to create an agency of their own.

Diné College was the first tribally controlled higher education institution and opened in 1968. The start of this college marked a new era of self-determination for American Indian

students (AIHEC, 1999). Since then, TCUs have grown to include 37 institutions, serving over 28,000 students, that are actively working to revitalize Native languages and culture, promote tribal sovereignty, and further economic growth aligned with Tribal values in the communities they serve (Stull et al., 2015). TCUs often go unrecognized for their accomplishments, and most remain unreasonably underfunded even though their work redefines the valued influence that higher education institutions can have within their communities (Stull et al., 2015). TCUs are often the center of their tribes and communities and offer support to struggling students and families.

Although tribal colleges hire a higher percentage of Native American faculty and staff compared to Predominately White Institutions, recruiting and retaining them is harder to do. Tribal colleges are often located in remote geographic locations, and combined with the fact that representation of Native Americans among faculty across the United States remains extremely small, the availability of such faculty is limited. It is difficult for the smaller TCU to compete with the more prestigious four-year colleges that can offer greater benefits and higher pay.

Accrediting agencies also make it difficult for tribal colleges and universities to hire Native American faculty. The accrediting agency sets the standard for faculty academic credentials and with the relative under-education of American Indian people nation-wide, tribal colleges have frequently turned to non-Indian instructors who have Ph.D.s (AIHEC, 1999 as cited by Tierney, 1992). Despite all that is working against tribal colleges and Native people, many TCUs share the dream of a “grow your own” program that encourages alumni to return to campus as faculty.

PROJECT FOCUS AND PURPOSE

The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College (SCTC) is a two-year public and tribal college located within the boundaries of the Isabella Indian Reservation in central Michigan’s Isabella County. Surrounded by a diverse community, SCTC serves Saginaw Chippewa tribal members,

descendants, members of other tribes, and the public with degrees granted in liberal arts, business, general science, and Native American studies. The mission of the institution states, “The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College is a tribally controlled land grant institution that reflects and promotes the unique culture of the Anishinaabek community, designed with educational excellence to empower learners to reach their educational goals” (SCTC, n.d., p. 4). The vision of SCTC states that “Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College is committed to expanding educational opportunities in a nurturing environment that embraces and integrates the cultural uniqueness of the Anishinaabek” (SCTC, n.d., p. 4).

SCTC was chartered by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe (SCIT) of Michigan in 1998 by Resolution 00-062; and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Council formally established a tribally controlled college and the formation of a governing Board of Regents. The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan constitutes a sovereign nation within the United States. The sovereignty of SCIT forms the legal basis to charter the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. With its founding in 1998, SCTC joined the larger tribal college movement, which today numbers approximately 37 institutions. Since achieving accreditation status, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College continues to fulfill its General Education Statement and Philosophy:

> Through the Anishinaabe culture and heritage learning environment, Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College is committed to educating the whole person, enriching quality of life, broadening employment possibilities, preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions, and increasing knowledge of the Anishinaabe culture, heritage, and Ojibwa Language. Vital to the preparation for lifelong learning is the development of competencies in: communications, fine arts, natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, technology, literature, historical studies and Anishinaabe culture. (AIHEC, n.d.)

This product dissertation provides a guide for the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College to implement an effective inclusion plan for Native American faculty to assist students to develop a healthy sense of belonging. While the action plan provides direction for SCTC, its content could be utilized in any higher education setting. The purpose is to provide pertinent information for SCTC faculty, staff, and administrators who are tasked with implementing or expanding a formal

inclusion program at the administrative level. The “how to” implementation strategies are gathered from current literature, and insights from existing institutional approaches and best practices are provided to help structure the implementation process. There are also practical tips, strategies, and recommendations for developing and implementing an inclusion program provided within the guide.

Having Native American faculty members who can impart on students the importance of culture and language is critical. As first-generation or nontraditional students, faculty and staff who are representative of the student demographics can also assist in reducing anxiety for many. It can create a much-needed connection to the college that is almost impossible to reproduce. Native American faculty in the classroom provide students a space where their identity is understood and appreciated. Students will be in a place where they feel safe and will continue to grow their sense of belonging.

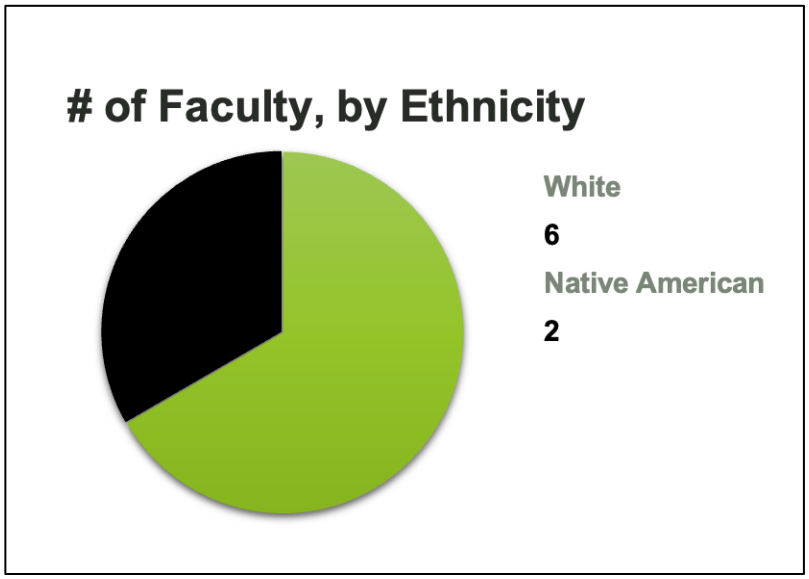
SIGNIFICANCE

While predominately white institutions may concentrate on creating a diverse faculty and student population, it is important to note that to maintain status as a tribal college, TCUs must uphold a student body of 51 percent (serving mostly Native American students) Native American (American Indian College Fund, 2019). The significance in this project is that there is a lack of representation of Native American faculty and staff even at tribal colleges and universities. This project will begin to assist SCTC in recruiting and retaining Native American staff, as well as making suggestions for building a mentorship program to encourage students to become future faculty.

Having faculty who shares the characteristics of the student body will help to create the sense of belonging that students can use to reach their educational goals; but inclusionary gaps that have been found at SCTC revolve around the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Native American faculty. Currently, SCTC employs eight full-time faculty with only two of them

identifying as Native American (see Figure 1). This is not significant to just SCTC, but at all TCUs. The American Council on Education (2020) breakdown of demographics for TCUs shows that, “Over half of TCU faculty were non-Native men (29.0 percent) and non-Native women (27.1 percent), 24.6 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native women, and only 19.3 percent of TCU faculty were American Indian or Alaska Native men” (p. 69). SCTC’s institutional data shows that faculty identifying as white outnumber the Native American faculty. To extend an inclusionary feeling, the college must make a concerted effort in actively seeking out Native American representation.

Figure 1: SCTC Faculty (Fall 2020)



According to SCTC’s internal institutional data, 42 percent of the student body also identify as male, while 58 percent are female. According to PNPI (2019), “Men of color represented 17.5 percent of all postsecondary enrollment and 43.9 percent of all male student enrollment in 2019” (p. 1). Of those numbers, only 0.3 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native men who were enrolled in postsecondary education (PNPI, 2019). To address the low enrollment numbers of male students, SCTC has offered a scholarship to encourage the enrollment and degree attainment for American Indian males. The “Educational Success

Scholarship" is awarded in the fall to American Indian males who are an enrolled tribal member or first descendant and is renewable for three consecutive semesters following the initial award. To remove barriers for the scholarship, students do not have to apply; this is an automatic award issued through the financial aid office. This scholarship, combined with faculty and staff who are Native American and a mentorship, can help with growing our own faculty and creating a welcoming atmosphere so that students can fully integrate into the culture of the institution and build their sense of belonging.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before application of the action plan, it is helpful to define several key terms that are found throughout this dissertation. In previous sections, definitions were used from other sources, but the following will address the definition that SCTC utilizes.

- Diversity has been defined as "the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance" (Cox, 1993, p. 5).
- Inclusion differs from diversity in focusing not only on the configuration of people, but also on the employee incorporation into organizational processes and culture. Bernstein et al. (2019) define inclusion as being "the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, involvement in work groups, and ability to influence the decision-making process" (p. 396).
- Equity is grounded in the principle of fairness. In higher education, equity refers to ensuring that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience (Achieving the Dream, n.d.).
- American Indian (AI)/Alaska Native (AN): As used in the United States census, an American Indian/Alaska Native is a person "having origins in any original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition" (Gibson, 2019, p. 1). This term is often used in reference to collected data about the population (Aspen Institute, 2019).
- Indian Country legally refers to: (a) all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and, including rights-of-way running through the reservation, (b) all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the

limits of a state, and (c) all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same (Aspen Institute, 2019).

- Historical trauma refers to traumatic experiences or events that are shared by a group of people within a society or by an entire community, ethnic, or national group. Historical trauma meets three criteria: widespread effects, collective suffering, and malicious intent. Historical trauma response (HTR) can manifest as substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, violence, and difficulty in emotional regulation.

- Intergenerational trauma (sometimes referred to as trans- or multigenerational trauma) is defined as trauma that is passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations. Intergenerational trauma may begin with a traumatic event affecting an individual, traumatic events affecting multiple family members, or collective trauma affecting larger community, cultural, racial, ethnic, or other groups/populations (historical trauma)

- Pursuant to Title 25, U.S.C. §1801(a) (7) "Indian Student Count" means a number equal to the total number of Indian students enrolled in each tribally controlled college or university, determined in a manner consistent with subsection (b) of this section based on the quotient of the sum of the credit hours of all Indian students so enrolled, divided by twelve. 25 U.S.C. §1801(b) provides the following conditions applicable for purposes of determining the Indian student count pursuant to paragraph (7) of subsection (a) of this section: (1) Such number shall be calculated on the basis of the registrations of Indian students as in effect at the conclusion of the third week of each academic term, (2) Credits earned in classes offered during a summer term shall be counted toward the computation of the Indian student count in the succeeding fall term, (3) Credits earned by any student who has not obtained a high school degree or its equivalent shall be counted toward the computation of the Indian student count if the institution at which the student is in attendance has established criteria for the admission of such student on the basis of the student's ability to benefit from the education or training offered (Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance, 1978).

- Native American refers to "all Native peoples of the United States and its trust territories" (Aspen Institute, 2019, p. 1).

- Sense of belonging refers to "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3).

- Tribe, otherwise called a "federally recognized (Indian) Tribe," refers to any American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity with a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. that is entitled to federal trust obligations (Aspen Institute, 2019).

- Tribal college and university: Tribal colleges and universities provide dynamic higher education opportunities, most on or near reservations, throughout Indian Country. These accredited institutions offer vocational, degree, and cultural learning opportunities and provide remarkable programs, culturally supportive classes, and familial student care (AIHEC, n.d.).

ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the subject of tribal colleges and universities and the needs of Native American students. Chapter One describes the theory of student integration and the peoplehood matrix with discussion about what these two frameworks entail and mean to the concepts of belonging and inclusion and includes a list of definitions of commonly used words. Chapter Two is a literature review of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, involving the history and background of Native American students and the public education system. The literature review includes a review of the importance of creating a sense of belonging and inclusion at institutions of higher education. Chapter Three will discuss the action plan and provide relevant information, such as institutional approaches and best practices that informed the creation of the guide. Chapter Four is the plan that was developed and will hopefully be implemented in the future. The product includes an environmental survey, a benchmark dates, and resources. Chapter Five discusses the delimitations and assumptions, acknowledges challenges, and recommends the expansion of additional resources and tools such as the decolonization of strategic initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Native American people have suffered a longstanding trauma induced by westernized beliefs within the educational system. To assist Native American students in overcoming the intergenerational and historical trauma that has been induced by the public education system, it is essential that colleges focus on ways to create an inclusive, nurturing environment. An inclusive environment will help to create a secure sense of belonging for Native American students who might not otherwise feel compelled to finish even the first semester. Creating a guide for hiring and retaining Native American faculty and staff can assist students with the representation they need to see in higher education. Having support staff at the campus who

understand the unique challenges of Native American students can promote the inclusive environment that the students need to stay engaged.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes an overview of existing literature regarding how to assist with building a sense of inclusiveness and belonging for Native American students on college campuses. In this review, I categorize and synthesize previous research into the following sections: the history of Native Americans and education and the trauma that was caused in direct response to the public education system. This section will also identify institutional barriers, Native American identity, support structures, and Tinto's student integration theory and Holmes' peoplehood matrix. Tinto's framework discusses what is known about student integration and how important it is to have students become connected within the campus environment, including making connections with staff and faculty. The peoplehood matrix discusses the importance of students finding a balance and being able to include four important aspects of place, language, history, and ceremony into their educational experiences to encourage inclusiveness and belonging within the campus community.

NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

In their report, Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) provide a history of Indian education and compare the difference between education and schooling. The authors contend that education has long been a source of trauma for Native American students and Lomawaima (2000) argues that the history of Native American education can be summarized in three words: "battle for power" (p. 2); "Settler societies have used schools to 'civilize' Indigenous peoples and to train Native peoples in subservience while dispossessing them of land" (Brayboy and Lomawaima,

2018, p. 82). Education for Native American students has been more in the realm of preparation for life or assimilation and erasure of culture and less on education.

Bombay et al. (2013) found in their study of Canada's First Nations tribes that the effects of the intergenerational trauma brought on by residential schools plays a big part in the current state of First Nations people and education. The authors note the link between the family histories of residential school attendance with present-day stressor experiences and comparatively greater effects of stressors on well-being. It is also suggested that residential school attendance over many generations within a family has a cumulative effect (Bombay et al., 2013). The Indian Residential School (IRS) system was one of the strategic mechanisms by which the government attempted to achieve their goals of eliminating their "Indian problem" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 322). The same was true of US boarding schools.

Building on the work of Lomawaima (2000), Fox (2002) agrees that although their efforts were put forth to educate and "civilize" the Indigenous population, not much was done to strengthen that commitment to the higher education sector. They point out that attention has been given to certain aspects of Indigenous people's education, but higher education of Native Americans has not been addressed (Fox, 2002). According to Fox (2002), Lomawaima noted that the focus of education for Native American students was to prepare them as homemakers or provide vocational training and less about moving to higher education. This has been proven time and time again and is a point of contention with Native Americans who are now struggling with ways to work through their long-held traumas due to the public education system.

Gaywish and Mordoch (2018) recognize that the impact of intergenerational trauma (IGT) on Native American students' learning has been ignored by institutions of higher education. In their studies, Gaywish and Mordoch (2018) found that when left untreated, the effects of the original trauma, such as the trauma brought on by the residential schools, the unhealthy effects on the first generation can be passed to subsequent generations. The authors

determined that given the history of trauma experienced by Native people, it is reasonable to conclude that Native students' learning is impacted by IGT.

The AIHEC (2000) points out that it was not until the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 that education for Indigenous people became more focused on the appreciation of culture and that curriculum should incorporate culture instead of suppressing it (AIHEC, 2000; Fox, 2002; U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.) The most considerable progress in the era of self-determination for Native Americans in higher education has been the development of the tribal college movement (AIHEC, 2000). While the residential school era created much trauma in the lives of Native American students, there has been an effort put forth by tribal nations to bring back and or maintain their heritage, languages, and culture through Indigenous education while actively seeking to make changes in schools. (PNA, n.d.). Tribes are demanding seats at the tables of educational boards and committees, and to be recognized as decision- makers for their children's education, as well as within the higher education realm.

According to Evans-Campbell (2008), the residential boarding school era negatively impacted American Indian communities, and many of these communities are still trying to rebuild from the effects of the trauma. Evans-Campbell's (2008) study found that almost 18 percent of respondents from their survey thought about the losses incurred during the boarding school age at least one time a week. It was also reported that many of the elders suffered a range of emotions, such as sadness, depression, anger, discomfort, or fear of white people, as well as shame, and feelings that more trauma will happen (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Approximately one-quarter of those who took the survey reported that they often or always feel anger when thinking about the historical loss. While close to one-half of respondents reported to have intrusive thoughts, 21.4 percent always or often felt uncomfortable around white people because of the historical losses and 34.6 percent still feel distrustful of the intentions of white people (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Native American students who attended boarding schools

have never been given the appropriate process to healing from the trauma that was induced and therefore continue to hand down these feelings to children and grandchildren.

A U.S. Senate Report released in 1969, shared their findings of the traumatic effects that forced assimilation through the educational system had on Native American communities. This report entitled, “Indian Education—A National Tragedy, A National Challenge” (1969) noted specific failures of the education system at that time.

1. The classroom and the school becoming a kind of battleground where the Indian child attempts to protect his integrity and identity as an individual by defeating the purposes of the school.
2. Schools [that] fail to understand or adapt to, and in fact often denigrate, cultural differences.
3. Schools [that] blame their own failures on the Indian student and reinforce his defensiveness.
4. Schools which fail to recognize the importance and validity of the Indian community. The community and child retaliate by treating the school as an alien institution.
5. A dismal record of absenteeism, dropouts, negative self-image, low achievement, and academic failure for many Indian children.
6. A perpetuation of the cycle of poverty which undermines the success of all other Federal programs.

The report also noted that these failures are a direct result of the derogatory attitudes held by some Americans toward Native people and communities. Many people in the U.S. still hold negative stereotypes of Native Americans: “These stereotypes have followed children into the classroom causing low self-esteem and disconnect from the curriculum—one that doesn’t recognize the true history of Indigenous Americans but a one-sided colonial account” (U.S. Senate, 1969, pp. 9-10). The U.S. Senate report, combined with the Evans-Campbell’s (2008) study helps raise awareness pertaining to why it is so important for colleges (especially predominately white institutions) to create an inclusive environment for Native American students to feel comfortable enough to build their sense of belonging on campus.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TINTO'S MODEL OF STUDENT INTEGRATION

Tinto's (1993) model of the persistence/withdrawal process, known as the student integration model, is based on the fit between the individual and institutional environment. Tinto's (1993) model suggests that students come to a college or university with a variety of traits (e.g,. race, school achievement, academic aptitude, family, educational, and financial) and with the goal of graduating from the institution. The background traits combined with the commitments to the college are believed to influence how well the student will perform academically and how well they interact with and become integrated into the institution's social and academic systems. The greater the student's level of social and academic integration, the greater their commitment is to the institution and to the goal of graduation. The more a student integrates, the less likely the student is to drop out of an institution (Arnekrans, 2014). Being able to provide resources and services will assist students with integrating and making connections.

Bonds that students create with other students through extracurricular activities or knowing people from whom they could learn about professors, course options, or support services can help students through the integration process. The networks in which students engage can include professors and classmates, but the connections must be strong enough to promote information gathering (Karp et al., 2008). If the integration process is disrupted, it may lead the student to believe they do not belong. Students who do not feel connected or that the college cannot help them meet their goals are unlikely to return.

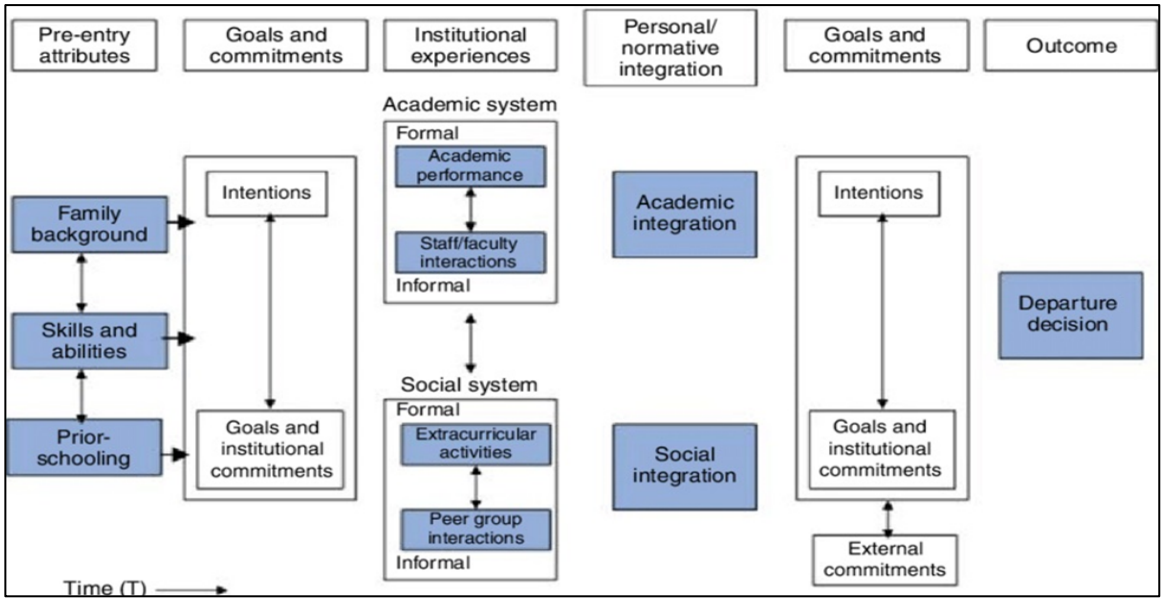
The interactions and integration theory are part of the reason that colleges and universities focus their efforts on diversity and equity initiatives. Clayton (2021) talks about the differences between diversity, equity, and inclusion while noting the fact that diversity offers several educational benefits. Diversity benefits include greater awareness to racial and cultural differences and enhanced critical thinking. Clayton (2021) compares diversity to the Center for

Urban Education's equity definition as, "achieving parity in student educational outcomes, regardless of race and ethnicity. It moves beyond issues of access and places success outcomes for students of color at center focus" (USC Center for Urban Education, n.d, p. 1*)*. Using the AAC&U's (as cited by Clayton, 2021) description of inclusion as the intentional, ongoing, active institutional efforts to reap the educational benefits of diversity. On a campus, inclusion means having a valued voice, seeing others like you represented around you and in the curriculum, and knowing that you belong and matter, based on how you experience the environment and your interactions with others.

Inclusion is particularly important to historically underrepresented and marginalized populations, as the focus is on creating a sense of belonging, and prioritizing having others "like you" represented is essential.

When thinking about Tinto's (1993) theory, it is easy to imagine that students are making connections that we all long for during their first year at school. But it is important to note that it can be a daunting task to a young Native American student who has traveled a long way from home and is far from their family. In most Native communities, family encompasses extended members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and clan relatives (Tachine et al., 2017 as cited by Jackson et al., 2003; Minthorn, 2015). Figure 2 illustrates Tinto's theory of student integration framework.

Figure 2: Tinto's Theory of Student Integration Framework



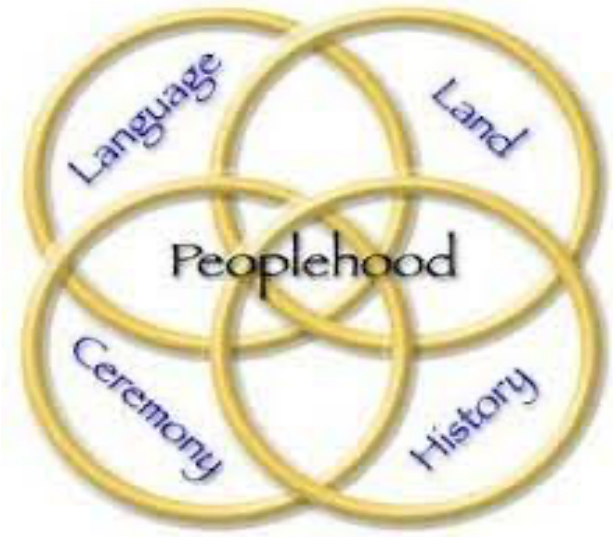
THE PEOPLEHOOD MATRIX

The Peoplehood Matrix is a complete framework that addresses four crucial factors of indigeneity: language, history, ceremonial cycle, and land (Tachine et al., 2017 as cited by Holm, 2003). The peoplehood is derived from the concept of "persistent peoples" recognizing the first people's survival despite past and present colonization (Vizenor, 2008). As noted previously by Tachine et al. (2017, Native families consist of extended family, all of whom support each other holistically. Being able to go home and see their family as often as possible helps maintain important relationships and provides support to the success of the student. For most Native students, the connection with home and family is often tied to the cultural value of reciprocity (Tachine et al., 2017). The peoplehood matrix (Holm et al., 2003) is one of the leading theories/frameworks for Native American studies. The peoplehood matrix states that indigeneity is tied to place, language, history, and ceremony so much so that a loss of even one of the components would mean a loss of identity or peoplehood for Indigenous people (Pima Community College, n.d.), which could have a negative impact of Indigenous people.

Knowing and understanding these two theoretical frameworks helps make a case for the potential implementation of a guide to create an inclusive environment while promoting a sense of belonging for tribal college students. Tinto's (1993) student integration model coupled with the peoplehood matrix (Tachine et al., 2017 as cited by Holm et al., 2003), blends together the idea of a college campus being a welcoming environment for Indigenous students. In their research, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2017) found that colleges could support Indigenous students by developing good relationships with them, helping them feel academically supported, and offering many ways of learning were more apt to develop a sense of belonging on campus.

Sufficient financial support also helped them to complete their programs. Upon discussing student suggestions, hiring a larger number of Indigenous faculty, and allowing more Indigenous culture at the college were the number one and two recommendations. The OECD (2017) suggested that these findings supported the four-component model of the peoplehood matrix (social, cognitive, physical, and cultural) of Native student belonging (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies



Source: Holm et al., 2003

INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Burk (2007), as cited by Emery (2011) contends that institutions of higher education must commit to maintaining or becoming a culturally responsive and inclusive academic environment for Native American students. Colleges must work to incorporate Native American culture, traditions, and language to become a "fundamental part of the classroom, of teaching and learning, procedures, and processes, and of the student experience in general" (Emily, 2011, p. 2). Even the smallest gesture can make a big difference. Incorporating land acknowledgements, posting simple native language around campus, or sharing real Native history in classes can go a long way.

Emery (2011) introduces Jackson's (2002) cultural contract paradigm which postulates that often Native American students will reluctantly enter into a perceived agreement with faculty with regards to socially acceptable classroom norms, attitudes, behaviors, and responsibilities (Burke, 2007; Emery, 2011; Jackson, 2002). Emery (2011) notes that underrepresented students feel that the only choice they have is to accept this unspoken contract and settle for the already accepted social norms and behaviors of their classmates from the dominant culture. The consequence of this unspoken contract is the lack of control that underrepresented students feel. Many of them tend to regulate behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and opinions (Jackson, 2002). The cultural contract paradigm is then solidified in the minds of these students when faced with curriculum and materials that represent every culture but their own.

Emery's (2011) findings show that when Native American students are paired with faculty members of color or faculty "like them," they feel more at ease within the environment. Active and frequent relationships and contact with faculty assisted in building a sense of inclusion and were strong indicators for success. Reports indicate that increased faculty feedback most often translated to increased student effort. Jackson (2002) found it to be true of Native American students, drawing from their inclusionary environment, were some of the highest ranking among students to put in the extra effort.

Pigeon (2016) includes the importance of providing a safe and inclusive space for Indigenous students as well but realizes that it is more difficult for mainstream institutions to provide all the support Indigenous students need. Pigeon (2016) talks about the major challenge within higher education has been being able to create a holistic structure or framework for Native students in a westernized world. Being able to recognize or incorporate policies and practices to create meaningful spaces for students with low enrollment numbers can be a daunting task.

Bridging from Jackson's (2002) cultural contract paradigm, Pigeon (2016) introduces the concept of Indigenization. Instead of pushing Native American students to conform to the norms of westernized learning schools, efforts should be made to incorporate indigenous ways of being. Indigenization is altering initiatives, such as policy, practices, and curricular and co-curricular programs "to support Indigenous success and empowerment" (Pigeon, 2016, p. 77); essentially moving colleges away from just checking the box of diversity and inclusion and fully encapsulating Indigenous knowledge within the institution. A truly meaningful inclusionary environment for Indigenous students assists them in maintaining their Indigenous identity. "Indigeneity must remain at the core of the transformation, centered and grounded in the local territories and nations upon which colleges and universities reside" (Pigeon, 2016, p. 88). It is another reminder of how important something as simple as a land acknowledgement can be.

Tachine et al. (2016) list the importance of helping Native American students develop and maintain a powerful sense of belonging on campus. Noting the works of Brayboy et al. (2012), Tachine et al. (2016) discuss the fact that education is key to Native American self-determination and nation building. This article also discusses the importance of prioritizing Native American student identity and recognizing these students as more than "just a footnote" on the data dashboard (Tachine et al., 2016). Using the definition provided by Strayhorn (2018), sense of belonging is "[the] perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued

by, and important to the group or others on campus" (p. 3). As with most Native American tribes, the Anishinaabek are a collective society, and fitting in or belonging (*dibendaagozi*, meaning s/he belongs) to a group is a reminder that these students are just as important as the rest.

INTERVENTIONS

To create or maintain a sense of belonging and integration for Native American students, it is essential that schools provide a space for them, have faculty who are representative of them, and understand the needs of the student. The four areas of the peoplehood matrix is important to Native American people and is the reason that an inclusion effort must take place on tribal colleges and university campuses. Native American faculty teaching and operating the college offers support and encouragement for students. There are many reasons that Indigenous faculty and staff members on campus are important. It has been found that having a representation of themselves has a tremendous effect on the educational development of Indigenous students. Brayboy, et al. (2012) point out

> Native faculty serve as activists, advocates, and change agents in secondary institutions and in their disciplines by challenging dominant, racist, and discriminatory scholarship, practices, and perceptions; by stimulating research in Indigenous issues; by developing and infusing curricula that is inclusive of Native perspectives and scholarship; by assisting colleges and universities in recruiting and retaining Native students; and through networking with Native organizations. (p. 93)

Shotten (2008) notes that Indigenous faculty members motivate students who lack confidence in themselves. The academic success of Indigenous students can be credited to their support system, and Indigenous faculty often serve as role models and mentors that students relate to and feel supported by.

Campbell et al. (2020) noted that there has been success in a mentee/mentor partnership between faculty/faculty, faculty/student, and student/student. This mentor project was labeled as the reverse mentorship and pairs a junior mentor with a senior mentee. Campbell et al. (2020) talk about reverse mentorship as "a method where junior employees

(mentor) are paired with veteran employees (mentee) to exchange information with the initial lesson coming from the junior employee" (p. 184), or in some cases, a senior faculty is paired with a student.

While it is important to make every effort possible to provide campus with faculty who are representative of the student body, it is not always possible. Because of the lack of representation in some minority groups, Campbell et al (2020) note that not all faculty will be of minority descent. The authors give examples of what reverse mentoring could look like in the context of a faculty member and student: "Office-hour interactions where the faculty member may expound on content taught in class but at the same time benefits from the presence and engagement of the minority student in a one-on-one environment" (p. 184). These one-on-one interactions can also assist students integrate into the environment and build connections on campus.

Campbell et al., (2020) also discuss the many benefits that are found when the reverse mentorship program is enacted on campus. It is not expected that the minority students are to teach the predominately white staff about the student's history or culture. It is more to help to build an empathetic bridge between the faculty members who have not always had the same trials that Native American or other underrepresented students have had. The reverse mentorship is to assist faculty to better understand the student population they are working with.

Minority students can extend the mentoring relationships so that faculty can better succeed in their roles. It was found that reverse mentoring can reduce the isolation that students experience at predominantly white schools. Building mentoring relationships with students can reduce the minority tax by creating a sense of belonging. Many faculty who are paired with minority faculty or students within the mentorship will make the effort to stay within their current institution upon completion of the mentorship. They find it difficult to leave their students behind and want to better their relationship within the college.

Even though the Campbell et al. (2020) study has a major focus on predominately white medical schools, it was found that outside of those parameters, white faculty members will better bond with the minority students and other minority faculty members. This leads to an investment within the college and allows white staff to gain a better understanding of their students and the institution that they work for.

In their study, Broda et al. (2018) talk about the workable solutions to diffuse the inequalities that plague higher education. These authors state that there has not been an emphasis on social-psychological interventions until recently. The methods are labeled as a "light-touch" approach (Broda et al., 2018) and have slowly begun to gain attention when working with underrepresented students. Broda et al. (2018) state that the interventions' objective is to focus on "college's student's uncertainty about belonging (i.e., beliefs about encountering commonplace adversities while trying to 'fit in' in a new community" (p. 318) in hopes of helping students to overcome some of the barriers to success. It is thought that these interventions could reduce reactions to negative events and help to build self-confidence to handle daily stressors (Broda et al., 2018). Such small interactions that are easily implemented can help students to adjust to campus life.

These types of interventions are brief and easily implemented and if they can improve academic outcomes for a disadvantaged student subgroup, they would be extremely helpful to both students and colleges, especially given the excessive cost of recruiting, retaining, and remediating students who fall behind (Broda et al., 2018). One example of a light touch intervention is the "growth mindset" intervention. Broda et al. (2018) describe growth mindset intervention as being a way to "shift the way in which students attribute academic success or failure from stable factors (typically one's fixed intelligence) to more unstable factors (e.g., effort or social conditions)" (p. 319). The goal of the growth mindset intervention is to persuade a student that intelligence is flexible and not fixed. With the appropriate assignments, growth mindset can help students realize that they can continue to grow and become smarter and

become more successful by working hard and investing in their education (Broda et al., 2018). Although this intervention can be useful, it is not a cure-all, as growth mindset does not take into consideration people's history and what they carry in their minds.

Bombay et al. (2014) recognize the importance of incorporating cultural components into the educational setting. These cultural components can have lasting effects on a student's sense of belonging and security within the college. Helping students to engage in or find their ethnic and cultural identity can be a key factor of belonging among minority group members. Bombay et al.'s study (2014) revealed how the Canadian Residential Boarding schools negatively impacted families through the educational system by decreasing educational outcomes for students who had parents or they themselves had attended boarding schools. Incorporating the culture that was lost during boarding school time is a way for students to process the healing that needs to take place and help students to find a safe space to learn and engage in.

Bryan (2019) explains the differences and the advantages that tribal colleges and universities have over predominately white colleges. Stating facts that are well-known indicators to student success, Bryan (2019) cites the AIHEC's (1999) mission of tribal colleges as being to "rebuild, reinforce, and explore traditional tribal cultures, using designed curricula and institutional settings" and "address Western models of learning by providing traditional disciplinary courses that are transferable to four-year institutions" (p. 52). History courses are the easiest in transferability to larger universities and tribal colleges often work closely with larger institutions to ensure that there are articulation agreements in place.

Tribal colleges and universities design their curriculum around the needs of the tribal college student. Even though they are still subject to the westernized standards of their accrediting agency, TCUs do a great job infusing culture, history, and language within the environment. Bryan (2019) reiterates the importance of a mentorship style relationship between students and staff or faculty. These mentorships help the tribal college student to transition into

the four-year college of their choice upon graduating from the tribal college. Therefore, Bryan (2019) recommends that TCUs build a relationship and partnership with the four-year institution that will eventually serve their students in the future as well as with government agencies, and foundations.

AIHEC (1999) backs the claim that although TCUs have the greatest success at recruiting American Indian faculty, there is difficulty associated with the recruitment and retention of said faculty (p. F-1). There are several factors related to this concern such as the geographical location of the college, and representation of American Indians among faculty remains excessively small, thereby limiting the supply of such faculty to the colleges. Accrediting agency rules and regulations also play a part in recruiting faculty, leading TCUs to turn to non-Native faculty, as do the lower pay rates for faculty at TCUs.

AIHEC (1999) concludes with strategies to take seriously when recruiting and retaining Native American faculty. Some of these strategies include creating a mentorship among the Native American faculty with Native American students. A growth in our own program has been worth the investment for some TCUs and other minority serving institutions. Investing in professional development and training programs for faculty who are non-Native so that they may gain a better understanding of the representative student populations is also important.

Offering culturally responsive curriculum to Native American students is a major benefit to creating an inclusive environment. Key et al. (2004) recommend that colleges rethink their approaches to teacher education pedagogy to better align with the diverse student body they serve as well as develop guidelines to implement culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy. Key et al. (2004) state that there are six characteristics to consider when shifting into a culturally responsive environment, which have been proven to help underrepresented students better adjust to attending college. These are the six characteristics that are important to better prepare faculty in working with minority students:

- **Sociocultural consciousness** means understanding that one's way of thinking, behaving, and being is influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language.

- **An affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse background** significantly impacts their learning, belief in self, and overall academic performance. By respecting cultural differences and adding education related to the culture of the students, programs become inclusive.

- **Commitment and skills to act as agents of change** enable the prospective teacher to confront barriers/obstacles to change and develop skills for collaboration and dealing with chaos.

- **Constructivist views of learning** contend that all students are capable of learning, and teachers must provide scaffolds between what students already know through their experiences and what they need to learn.

- **Learning about students' past experiences**, home and community culture, and world both in and outside of school helps build relationships and increase the prospective teachers' use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning.

- **Culturally responsive teaching strategies** support the constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning. (Key et al., 2004, p. 5-6)

With three levels of attainment to culturally responsive teaching, Key et al. (2004) make note that once the highest level of cultural responsiveness is reached, there can be an adjustment to inclusiveness for the diverse populations within the college campus. Going back to Bryan (2019) and AIHEC (1999), this is an area that TCUs already have a grasp on and can continue moving forward with their work in creating an inclusive campus and building a sense of belonging for students.

CONCLUSION

The literature overwhelmingly shows the lengths that have been taken to develop a more positive role of education for Native Americans. Creating an inclusive environment is essential for success of underrepresented students. Changing the culture to be more inclusive can take time and is a challenging task, but worth the challenge for Native American students to feel a secure sense of belonging on campus. Incorporation of culture, language, and history supports the peoplehood matrix and assists in healing the trauma that Native Americans have faced in

the educational systems of the past. Removing barriers, providing meaningful interactions, and assembling a “grow-your-own mentorship” are some considerations for the future of literature.

CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe the background and the process of development of the inclusion action plan. This product is adopted from the University of Michigan Strategic Plan (2020) and modified to fit the needs of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. The action plan reflects the components that are critical to the development and implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion as a strategic initiative. It is important to realize that this product being used for SCTC will only focus on creating a sense of belonging and inclusion for Native American faculty, staff, and students on this campus.

The purpose of this product is to create an environment that moves fairness and inclusiveness across campus in hopes of supporting the college's quest to build a stronger sense of belonging for students, staff, and faculty and helping the college continue pushing the goals and objectives forward within a potential DEI office. There are several important reasons for institutions of higher education to include such things as diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. Diversity brings to the college campus, improved racial and cultural awareness, enhanced critical thinking, higher levels of service to community, and a more educated citizenry (Clayton, 2021). Inclusion helps students to have a "valued voice, seeing others like you represented around you and in the curriculum, and knowing that you belong and matter, based on how you experience the environment and your interactions with others" (Clayton, 2021, p. 1). While equity "calls attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes" (Clayton, 2021, p. 1) and requires improvements at an institutional level for all students to have an equal chance at success. These concepts work in conjunction with each other to push college leadership into developing effective strategies that ensure equitable outcomes for underrepresented

populations. Promoting a diverse campus environment, applying an equity-minded approach to leadership, and working toward greater inclusion can ensure that institutions of higher education provide more access for all.

CREATING THE GUIDE

It has been found that “Nearly 45 percent of tribal college faculty are Native Americans,” (Pennamon, 2018, p. 15). Data from the NCES (2020b) shows that out of the 1.5 million full- and part-time faculty in 2018, less than one percent were American Indian/Alaskan Native or listed as two or more races (NCES, 2020b). The numbers show that there is a lack of representation of Native staff and faculty in higher education. It is important to realize how significant it is for Native American students to see “someone like me” on campus leading discussions in the classroom or making decisions regarding policy changes.

A review of existing DEI action plan models, initiatives, and current literature was performed and used to contribute to this action plan. As a part of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) 2018 cohort, SCTC had taken the institutional capacity assessment tool (ICAT) offered through ATD and found that the college scored a 3 in the Equity category. While the average of other institutions is a 2.7 in the Equity area, SCTC’s ATD data and leadership coaches at that time suggested the college implement an equity initiative and create an equity committee. Leaders within SCTC have not yet decided that it is time to move forward with creating a plan to introduce DEI to the college, but instead, this is an initiative brought on by a single study within the college as part of an outside requirement for educational fulfillment. Since the beginning of the project, it has been hard to define diversity, equity, and inclusion in its entirety, so this action plan focuses more on the inclusion aspect, which is a small piece of a DEI initiative. The creation of an inclusionary action plan will be the beginning of an extensive list of important tasks that will need to be accomplished prior to implementation of any sort of DEI office, plan, or document.

Upon researching examples of DEI plans, the University of Michigan's (U of M) strategic planning model was the most prevalent and has been used by several colleges and universities. The action plan in Chapter Four was a template provided by Rowan University (2019) with parts adopted from the U of M strategic plan. There were also parts of the balanced scorecard assignment from the Doctorate of Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University's IDSL 835 Strategic Planning class. That assignment required students to identify a strategic issue and create a strategic plan resolving that issue. The issue found was to increase (recruit and retain) the number of Native American staff and faculty. The mission of the institution aligns well with the strategic issue and plan.

The original thought was to issue a climate study to ensure that faculty and staff are comfortable on campus and have a greater understanding of cultural competency and sensitivity with regards to our Native American student body. The notes that were included in the plan would explain each of the metrics and in some cases how the metrics would be implemented. The metrics would deliver enough evidence concerning whether the college was meeting their strategic objectives. Data collected from leading measures would afford staff enough information to make adjustments in strategies to ensure quality improvements are made.

More research is needed to find the assessment, action plan, and evaluation that will fit the needs of a small tribal college environment. As noted previously, tribal colleges and universities were developed for the sole purpose of providing access to Native American students and their communities. TCUs already strive to provide an inclusive environment that nurtures the student's sense of belonging (Lindquist, 2018). The future of this plan will depend on the formation of a DEI office. If that is not possible, the Dean of Institutional Advancement would like to create a framework that will make a direct impact on SCTC that is a more relevant model for the Anishinaabe culture.

EXAMPLES OF ACTION PLANS

When researching action plan examples, there were none that focused on Native American students or tribal colleges, and most were general population and diversity action plans. For example, Brown University (n.d.) focused their action plan and DEI efforts on all people with six priorities. Included in their action plan were:

- People — identifying, recruiting, and retaining students, faculty and staff from groups who have been historically underrepresented in higher education.
- Academic Excellence — creating a learning environment for students from all backgrounds.
- Curriculum — reforming, expanding, and developing courses, seminars, and other learning opportunities around diversity, inclusion, and related topics.
- Community — creating a community that works actively to counteract inequity and injustice and that promotes an attitude of mutual respect.
- Knowledge — collecting and sharing data to benchmark and measure progress.
- Accountability — ensuring the steps outlined in the DIAP are carried out.

These six steps are the most common steps included in creating a DEI plan. The action plan template being used for this project also focused on a core group of people, academics/curriculum, community, knowledge, and accountability in differing formats. Concentrating on the Native American student's needs, the action plan being used can help with the recruitment and retention of Native American faculty and staff and offer opportunities for professional development.

One of the main differences between larger institutions' plans and this plan is that the product used at a TCU concentrates on a smaller number of people and not on the recruitment of staff and faculty versus the students that the larger universities will want to recruit. To maintain the status as a tribal college, we need to remember that TCUs will focus their student body recruitment efforts on Native American students.

The U.S. Department of Education has put forth several publications regarding advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives, but none that focus entirely on Native American

students. Listing the importance of maintaining a diverse campus can ensure that all students' needs are being met (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Citing examples of how leadership can increase inclusionary practices by implementing such projects or learning opportunities as "Delaware Goes to College" (2021), this is one example of a state that is committed to advancing campus diversity and inclusion in higher education and contributes to that commitment in many ways. Creating goals and providing support to institutions of higher education (IHEs), state boards of education can work in conjunction with IHEs to create more diverse and inclusive campuses. In the example of "Delaware Goes to College" (2021), Delaware has committed to increasing college access to reach the goal of having zero college-ready students who do not apply to college. The state also insists that high schools create a college acceptance day to allow high school students the opportunity to apply for college admissions and financial aid with the help of the high school.

Program initiatives, such as the one listed above, are beyond some college administrators' control. These colleges view their time well spent on the recruitment efforts of their campuses. The lack of financial support for tribal colleges hinders SCTC from being able to develop a wide scale DEI intervention program. Smaller scale items, such as the action plan that is included, will be just the start for the college.

STUDENT INTEGRATION

Taking into consideration Tinto's (1993) theory of student integration, this action plan will help to create a sense of belonging and inclusiveness for students who may be first-generation or nontraditional students. Karp et al. (2008) found integration to be both academically and socially. Students who become integrated into a college, by developing connections to individuals, joining clubs, or participating in academic activities, are more likely to stay with the college than those who feel isolated or do not engage in social interactions. Karp et al. (2008) also found that at times, preventing the integration process may be a lack of institutional fit:

“Students who do not feel at home in an institution or do not believe that an institution can help them meet their goals are unlikely to persist” (Karp et al., 2008, p. 3). It can be hard for first-time students to find a connection on campus, and intentional outreach to the underrepresented populations on campus should be a priority.

Knowing that integration is an important process for developing an inclusiveness and forging a sense of belonging within the student, it became imperative that the template chosen be more focused on the staff and faculty to provide them with some insight into the importance of faculty and student interaction. Creating a nurturing, trusting, and safe environment begins at the administration and faculty level.

This action plan depends on core groups to move the plan forward within their own department. This is not a one-size-fits-all and may be altered if necessary. The guide calls for departments to come together for a self-assessment, but it will need to be decided later whether that will be a benefit or hindrance to the college. As a small campus, it might be more difficult for some areas to self-assess than others. There will need to be a data collection process in place and the development of a committee comprised of all departments will be considered beneficial to the implementation process.

COMPONENTS OF THE GUIDE

The inclusion action plan (Chapter Four) was created using the same formatting that was used for SCTC’s student success action plan, student services assessment handbook, and other relevant sources to the institution. This action plan will serve as a tool to support tribal college faculty, staff, and administration in building a successful infrastructure for implementing a formal DEI program in the future. It is important to note that this is not an all-inclusive tool but a resource for SCTC employees who are challenged with DEI program implementation. The action plan reiterates the college’s equity statement, diversity statement, and commitment to inclusion.

Section 1: Diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities includes the major priorities that the college will focus on. This section also includes an explanation to the self-assessment and purpose of the self-assessment.

Section 2: Covers the self-assessment steps with an explanation of the guiding questions.

Section 3: In order to avoid confusion, there is a list of definitions of familiar words and or terms that are used throughout the guide. These familiar words were also listed in Chapter One.

Section 4: The equity self-assessment with equity and diversity statement. This self-assessment can be taken individually or as a team and discussed using the guiding questions that follow. Whether this will be an individual or team effort will need to be decided later.

Section 5: This section outlines the next steps to identify action steps within the college or departments to address equity resulting from the discussion of the self-assessment results. There is also discussion about data collection that will be essential to updating the action plan in the future.

Section 6: Discusses the action plan development and reflection questions. This action plan will help the college administration, staff, and faculty identify available and relevant quantitative and qualitative data that will build a foundation for moving the conversation of DEI forward. As a result of the self-assessment and discussion, the team will identify action goals to improve DEI efforts within each department over the next three years.

Section 7: The DEI action plan, equity statement, and strategic issues are covered in this section. The action plan, current data, target data, how often the initiative will be updated, which objective the initiative meets, and notes about why these initiatives are important or how the college plans to meet the goals and objectives. Benchmark dates and resources that were consulted while developing the action plan is included in this section.

CONCLUSION

The structure and design of the action plan provides an organized approach that offers logical steps that a tribal college can take when considering implementing a DEI program. The product includes the elements to consider from the research and planning stage through actively applying the plan to the colleges DEI efforts. Suggestions included in the action plan are not intended to be comprehensive, but to provide guidance and a framework based on research, best practices, and advice learned through experience. The current goals that are

listed in the action plan are only examples of goals that will be set forth after the implementation of the action plan.

SCTC will know that the goals of the action plan were successful after identifying available quantitative and qualitative data and disaggregating the data. The metrics included will deliver enough evidence concerning whether the college is meeting their strategic objectives. Data collected from leading measures will afford staff enough information to adjust strategies to ensure quality improvements are made. The team should start with data sources held by SCTC's administration and faculty.

CHAPTER FOUR: SAGINAW CHIPPEWA TRIBAL COLLEGE INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

2023-2024 ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

The college-wide inclusion action plan is guided by three priorities aligned to our institutional goals:

1. Creating a more inclusive and equitable campus community (Build human capital, infrastructure, and resource capacity)
    - Recruitment and retention of Native American faculty and staff
    - Environmental conditions
    - Systems are developed and maintained to address inclusiveness for faculty and staff
2. Recruiting, retaining, and supporting a workforce that meaningfully reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the community we serve.
    - Recruitment efforts
    - Programming and supports to retain diverse staff and faculty
    - Policies and practices that ensure equity
3. Promoting and supporting inclusive teaching, scholarship, and professional development (Engage in innovative discovery, invention, and application of knowledge)
    - Partnering with human resources on professional development
    - Reviewing data on performance by departments
    - Building a unified team

Self- Assessment: The self-assessment provides guiding questions for departments to help identify areas of strength and areas in need of additional exploration moving forward in the creation of a more inclusive campus.

Purpose: To generate a three-year inclusionary action plan to be used to enhance inclusion practices, programs, policies, and curriculum that support faculty, staff, and students in maintaining or developing a sense of belonging.

SELF-ASSESSMENT STEPS:

1. **Formation of Self-Assessment Team:** Determine if the team will consist of a core group within your department, the entire department, or the entire campus.
2. **Complete the Self-Assessment:** Determine if team will complete the self- assessment individually or as a group.
    - Guiding Questions: The self-assessment is separated by the priorities with guiding questions to assess how well each department is promoting and supporting inclusionary practices.
    - Review and Discuss Self-Assessment Responses: Reflect on the self-assessment results to generate a collective understanding and meaning of the responses. The responses that generate an answer "Yes" should be accompanied with evidence and documentation:
        - Equity goal statements
        - Goals and objectives related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access
        - Training plans and agendas for personnel
        - Personnel policies, procedures and/or handbook with statements against harassment, discrimination, etc.
        - Assessment results such as participation rates, demographics, campus climate, and student needs

Responses generating a "No" or "Don't know," should be used for further exploration and consideration of your department's action plan goals and objectives.

SELF-ASSESSMENT
Department/Unit/College: Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College
Equity Statement: To support a full creative life for all, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	SELF-ASSESSMENT – GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	RESPONSE Yes / No / Do Not Know / NA
	Yes, what evidence do we have to support this statement? *No, what action is needed to support this statement?*	
Creating a more inclusive and equitable campus community 1. Recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff 2. Environmental conditions 3. Systems are developed and maintained to address equity and inclusiveness for faculty and staff	1. Does your department review staff demographics annually (race/ethnicity/gender)?	
	2. Has your department evaluated the employee demographics in comparison to the college's student demographics?	
	3. Does your department address imbalance in staffing patterns among selected populations of program personnel?	
	4. Has your department implemented strategies to ensure a diverse hiring pool?	
	5. Does your department monitor the balance of representation of department leaders?	
	6. Does your department provide opportunities for leadership mentoring/development for diverse employees?	
	7. Are there diversity and inclusion statements in your division, department, and programs/units? o Mission Statement o Goals/objectives o Student learning outcomes	
	8. Are diversity and inclusion statements and images used to promote awareness through? o websites o brochures o posters o email o social media o publications o other	
	9. Are diversity and inclusion policies in place regarding hiring, promotion, tenure, and recruitment?	
	10. Has your department established an inclusive culture where all members of your organization feel safe, respected, and valued?	

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	SELF-ASSESSMENT – GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	RESPONSE Yes / No / Do Not Know / NA
	Yes, what evidence do we have to support this statement? *No, what action is needed to support this statement?*	
	11. Are staff members assessed/acknowledged, rewarded for proposing/implementing strategies for the advancement of diversity and inclusion?	
	12. Does your department ensure constituents experience a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive environment that is equitable?	
	13. Does your department have practices in place to ensure cultural responsiveness of its candidates during hiring practices to ensure values of diversity and inclusion in new hires?	
	14. What are some policies, activities, or practices of your department that support diversity and inclusion?	
Recruitment and retention of diverse students 1. Recruitment efforts 2. Programming and supports to retain diverse staff and faculty 3. Policies and practices that ensure equity	1. What populations does your department consider underrepresented?	
	2. Does your department have any support or retention programs for faculty and staff?	
	3. Are support and retention programs reviewed regularly to ensure they are promoting and retaining a diverse population?	
	4. Are you aware of the demographic breakdown of employees?	
	5. Has your department taken any steps to improve the retention of underrepresented staff or faculty?	
	6. Does the college ensure that its policies and practices are equitable for all staff and faculty?	
	7. Does your department address imbalances in participation among various populations?	
Promoting and supporting inclusive teaching, scholarship, and professional development 1. Partnering with Human Resources on professional development 2. Reviewing data on performance by departments 3. Building a unified team	1. Have steps been taken to make your curriculum appealing, relevant, and equitable for the full diversity of our student body?	
	2. Does the curriculum include topics that address bias and stereotypes?	
	3. Are race and gender gaps reviewed?	
	3a. If gaps exist, are strategies implemented to address gaps?	
	4. Does your department ensure faculty/staff are culturally responsive?	
	5. Does your department provide DEI training for inexperienced staff?	
	6. Does your department offer or require annual DEI professional development?	

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	SELF-ASSESSMENT – GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	RESPONSE Yes / No / Do Not Know / NA
	Yes, what evidence do we have to support this statement? *No, what action is needed to support this statement?*	
	7. (And/Or) Does your department offer/support ongoing professional development in inclusive and culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogy	
	8. Are professional development resources readily available for faculty/staff?	

Next Steps: Establish goals and objectives in action plan: Identify action steps within the college or department to address the outcomes found from the discussion of self-assessment results. Prioritize the areas of focus and develop a three-year plan of action to be documented in the departmental Action Plan.

DATA COLLECTION TO PREPARE FOR STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College is committed to assisting with resources that may be useful after completing the self-assessment to further explore areas that will aid in the development of goals and objectives for the action plan. The dean of research is available to help obtain the data needed which will aid in presenting a well-balanced picture of SCTC.

DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

SCTC employee ethnic/gender demographic information is available through the dean of research.

In addition: To complement quantitative data, you are encouraged to gather qualitative evidence which can assist with telling the unique experiences of Native American students and employees at SCTC. Speaking directly to students and staff about their daily realities and the faculty and student services professionals who work with them on a regular basis can help inform an approach to support, service delivery, and policy. Sources of qualitative data can include surveys, focus groups, interviews, listening sessions, and town hall meetings. The goal

of the self-assessment is to help identify areas of priority, need and opportunity. Accurately and completely demonstrating needs will help to make sound decisions about policy and practice changes, as well as the allocation of resources.

Action Plan Data

The next step in completing the action plan is to identify available and relevant quantitative and qualitative data that will build a foundation for moving the conversation forward. The purpose of the data in this approach is to inform the conversation and to provide an evidence-based foundation for faculty, staff, and administrators to leverage their subject matter expertise and develop insights about how to make improvements in practice and policy. The team should start with data sources held by SCTC s administration and faculty.

As a result of self-assessment information and discussion, the team should identify action goals to improve inclusion efforts within each department over the next three years. For each action plan, indicate the target stakeholder group, intended outcome(s), measure(s), expected challenges, lead person(s) (at least 1-2 people recommended), timeline, and any necessary resources/ supports.

Reflection Questions

To be considered and addressed overall and/or per initiative:

1. What are the goals, target populations and objectives?
2. What are the top 3-4 results you hope this initiative achieves?
3. How will you know you achieved project results?
4. What organizational capacities and data sources are needed / available to implement the initiatives?
5. Is the initiative implemented as per the plan to address goals and objectives?
6. How well is the initiative meeting the goals and objectives?
7. How will continuous quality improvement strategies be included?

8. How will the initiatives be sustained?

SAGINAW CHIPPEWA TRIBAL COLLEGE EQUITY ACTION PLAN, 2023-2024

SCTC Equity Statement

To support a full creative life for all, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation.

Strategic Issue

SCTC's overall goal on recruitment, hiring and retention is to employ a workforce that intentionally reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the community we serve.

Creating a more inclusive and equitable campus community (Build human, infrastructure, and resource capacity)

Objective 1: Increase recruitment of Native American staff and faculty

Objective 2: Increase retention of Native American staff and faculty

Objective 3: Create policies and practices that ensure equity

Equity Action Plan	Current	Target	Updated	O1	O2	O3	Notes
Student and Stakeholder							
Use targeted outreach strategies to recruit qualified Native American applicants							
Increase the percentage of Native American staff and faculty							
Budgetary and Financial Responsibility							
Allocate funds toward professional development opportunities that raise awareness of Native American culture.							

Equity Action Plan	Current	Target	Updated	O1	O2	O3	Notes
Provide unconscious bias training to mitigate bias in people, policies, and processes, to ensure all employees' experiences are maximized.							
Internal Processes							
Provide clear guidance and resources for reporting complaints about discrimination and bias against students, staff, and faculty.							
Make SCTC's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion public.							
Growth and Development							
Incorporate racial and social equity training into unfamiliar staff on-boarding process.							
All faculty and staff shall engage in annual training areas of diversity, micro-aggressions and understanding and interrupting implicit bias.							

Benchmark Dates

Will be determined upon implementation.

Resources:

- Lumina Foundation: Beyond Financial Aid Self-Assessment
- Rowan University, DEI Strategic Plan Template
- SUNY, Diversity, and Inclusion Checklist
- University of Michigan, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan

References

Lumina Foundation. (2021, November 9). *Assessments*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/campaign/beyond-financial-aid/bfa-assessments/

Rowan University. (2019). Division of Diversity Equity and Inclusivity. https://sites.rowan.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion/data-and-reports.html

State University of New York. (n.d.). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion*. https://www.suny.edu/diversity/

University of Michigan. (n.d.). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan*. https://diversity.umich.edu/strategic-plan/

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the key research findings in relation to the research intentions and questions and discusses the value and contribution thereof. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research. The action plan has yet to be implemented, therefore no data has been collected to assess whether the action plan needs revision. A suggested area of future research includes a survey of the staff and faculty at the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College to evaluate the need for an action plan and gather thoughts from stakeholders about the culture and climate of the college.

This dissertation is focused on creating a culture of inclusion at a tribal college to help foster a sense of belonging in students, staff, and faculty. A portion of that will be done through the hiring of more Native American staff and faculty. As the research has shown, Native Americans are some of the least represented in higher education. The low numbers often leave these students (and even faculty) invisible within the institution and data collection efforts. Hiring and retaining Native faculty and staff will help students feel more comfortable and provide a safe space for them to come to and expand their educational goals. After all, that is what TCUs were created for.

It is imperative that the college focus on professional development opportunities for non-Native staff and faculty so that they may garner a better understanding of the population they are working with. Tribal colleges are different from main stream institutions, which makes it so important for non-Native faculty and staff to understand the uniqueness of TCUs and Native American students. The origins, purposes, methods to education, and outcomes of TCUs differ

from mainstream colleges. TCUs are driven and shaped by their tribal communities and strengthen their cultures, shape tribal sovereignty and identity, and grow workforce capacity through accredited degree programs. These colleges provide access for students who might not otherwise partake in higher education; in fact, a majority of the students enrolled are first-generation students. Providing culturally relevant professional development opportunities for non-Native faculty and staff can help them to understand the challenges their students face.

MOVING FORWARD

Supporting Native American students while they are attending college should be a priority. To help students feel welcome and build their confidence, the focus should be on recruitment and retention of Native American faculty and staff. To consistently model and reinforce the organization's commitment to inclusion efforts, colleges must ensure that hiring and interviewing policies and procedures are on a rotating review schedule. This schedule would include implementing a review committee to review policies every one to three years. Policy review does not necessarily mean revision, but reviewing the policies and procedures helps the college stay current with hiring and equal opportunity employment laws. A comprehensive review of policy will also make the college more aware of barriers to success and student integration, which could hinder the sense of belonging staff and faculty as well as students. Issues can be easily resolved when everyone is aware of the barrier. Recruiting and hiring faculty who students can connect with helps build a quality relationship between faculty and students. These secure relations can influence students' engagement in class as well as their socioemotional development.

As Tachine et al. (2017) point out, AIAN faculty represent less than one percent of faculty on college campuses. These faculty are expected to mentor and support AIAN students while not always being rewarded for their service in the process (Tachine et al., 2017). Mentoring and recognizing the Native faculty can be a method of creating the peoplehood sense

of belonging, but it “should not become a form of cultural taxation on Native faculty, staff, and alumni” (Tachine et al., 2017, p. 801). Faculty and staff from underrepresented populations are quite often expected to take on extra duties because of their ethnic representation and to serve as informal diversity consultants without compensation. Some of these responsibilities include serving on more committees than others and advising larger groups of students. These expectations of minority groups are not placed as heavily upon white faculty and can hinder career development and impact job satisfaction.

To provide Native American faculty for the future, creating a mentoring program for students who are identified by the faculty as wanting to work at the college in the future, will help to bridge the gap that currently exists. With only 17 percent of Native American students continuing their education after high school (PNPI, 2019), pairing the student with a faculty member, even if they do not come back to teach, will provide the student the support they may be looking for during their educational journey. Tribal colleges already have a mission to support their alumni, so following through with a mentoring program can benefit both the student and the college. Specific strategies that could be utilized could be to encourage the college to grow their own leaders from within. Dr. Cheryl Crazy Bull talks about existing efforts that institutions have in place to identify people and put them through the higher education system so that they will come back home and teach for TCUs (Pennamon, 2018). Creating and providing educational pathways to higher learning for students and guiding them during their undergraduate and graduate degree can be beneficial for both the college and the student. A faculty member can be appointed as a mentor to the student and guide the student throughout their educational journey.

Another suggestion would be to not only consider a mentorship for students, but also for faculty with faculty. With so few Native Americans in education and enrolled in graduate programs, it becomes vital that colleges create a warm and welcoming community. As a TCU, SCTC understands the cultural responsibility of those who are currently on campus to help

support and provide guidance for those who are invited to visit in the hopes we might attract them to campus and most especially to those who are just entering or joining the community. Whether it is a chat session, weekly coffee update, or being a sympathetic ear in times of stress or distress, colleges should actively engage in the promotion of creating mentorship relationships.

Providing a space for teamwork and the opening or creation of a Native American faculty and staff group will allow for staff and faculty to work together in creating additional resources for Native American employees across campus. This group could provide support and resources for Indigenous faculty, staff, and students as well as provide a place where everyone can feel safe and a sense of community. This group would have no membership requirements, no ID necessary, no birth documents examined; instead, it would be a space for everyone from those invested and connected with their tribes and families, to those who still may be searching to explore their heritage and identity. The only requirement would be to attend a quarterly meeting and to support the semester events and programs through time and energy.

To encourage inclusion and build a sense of belonging in Native American students, colleges can provide staff who are able to understand the unique challenges of Native Americans in higher education. This helps students have more of a connection to campus, which influences their decisions to continue their education. Culturally aware staff and faculty who can teach classes through a Native lens offer a welcoming perspective for students and further enhance their feelings of belonging on the campus. In addition to teaching classes, Native American staff and faculty can also provide emotional and social support to their students (Pennamon, 2018).

Native American faculty can support students by creating teaching environments and culturally relevant curricula while also providing the emotional support that students might be lacking when away from home. Finding a connection on campus is seen as one of the most important factors in increasing student success. Seeing “someone like me” on campus also

establishes the realization that Native American students can be successful in class and after obtaining a degree. It also teaches the student that their identity as Native American does not just go away because they are enrolled in westernized school system.

Guillory (2009) discusses the strengthening of cultural identity as a strong contributor to college persistence for Native American students. To foster and strengthen cultural identity, it is beneficial for TCUs to recruit and retain qualified Native American faculty. When discussing the importance of hiring Native American faculty, Thompson (2011) stated that the impact of hiring and recruiting faculty for the Native American student population was very much a healing process, which also involved the students in the search.

Thompson (2011) also noted that all the Native American candidates who applied for positions at her institution specified their tribal affiliations. These potential faculty members recognized that their affiliations directly informed their teaching and scholarship. This naming helps to connect people to their relations (both living and ancestral) and to those who have supported them (Thompson, 2011). Because of the collectivist nature of Native American tribes, tribal naming highlighted that the candidates in Thompson's (2011) study, "did not come to the hiring process solely as an individual but also as a member of a group" (p. 541), thereby strengthening the cultural identity and assisting students in doing so as well.

The literature shows overwhelmingly how negative the impact of public education has been on Native American students. Several authors discuss the inaccurate history that is still being taught in public institutions, as well as the impact that those inaccuracies play in the lives of these students. Continually perpetuating the negative stereotypes and connotations plays a deciding factor in whether AIAN students even want to enroll in colleges as does the effects of intergenerational trauma that has impacted tribal people across the US. Committing to providing a culturally responsive and inclusive academic environment for Native American students and having Native faculty available to teach the culturally relevant information is key. Colleges must work to incorporate Native American culture, traditions, and language "to become a fundamental

part of the classroom, of teaching and learning, procedures, and processes, and of the student experience in general" (Emery, 2011, p. 2).

This is only one step in realizing the changes that need to be made when thinking about DEI initiatives at TCUs. The tribal college movement has created educational access and cultural representation within higher education settings for Native American students, but still have work to do when recruiting and retaining AIAN faculty and staff. There was little literature about the effects of creating an inclusive environment at larger universities, but the consensus is that TCUs are doing an effective job in creating a healthy sense of belonging for AIAN students.

Despite the many accomplishments of TCUs, there is still a stigma attached to them. These colleges often do not have the advertising money, sports teams, or big draw that other larger community colleges and universities have. TCUs tend to rely on word-of-mouth advertising and targeted recruitment and enrollment. Lack of funding and lower tuition rates are often equated with a lower quality education, which could not be further from the truth. Every TCU is subject to the same accreditation standards that all mainstream institutions are. However, due to lack of funding, TCUs are frequently rendered invisible compared to mainstream institutions. Even with these challenges, tribal colleges are better equipped to offer the community and family feel that draws their students in. At times, students feel so welcome and comfortable at their tribal college that they have a hard time leaving after graduation. Most often these students will come back and register for more classes or to seek assistance in applying for financial aid and or registration to a four-year college.

Thinking beyond the boundaries of the TCU, there are several things that four-year colleges can do to help assist Native American students who enroll or transfer to their institution. One such suggestion for larger universities would include strengthening partnerships. A partnership between the TCU and four-year can offer student pipelines and articulation agreements between the two colleges. It would be important for the partnerships to be built on cultural sensitivity and allow an open dialogue on the part of the nontribal institutions.

Clare and Sampsel (2013) say that listening to and showing respect for tribal sovereignty is vital in building and maintaining relationships with American Indian communities, which is true for any relationship building. Along with the larger four-year university, it would also be helpful for public research institutions to work with TCUs to align transfer agreements. These agreements could create pathways to four-year institutions and are essential to providing a connection to tribal communities to help the larger institution gain a better understanding of the tribal college student's needs.

When searching for potential Native American candidates, it is important to advertise for positions in the appropriate places, such as the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association, Tribal College: Journal of American Indian Higher Education, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. It is important to change the language of the job ad to avoid using stereotypical or colonizing language, attitudes, and approaches and to recognize that colonizing language reflects ideas of Western superiority and Native inferiority, which consequently results in subservience and attempted annihilation of Native American peoples and their cultures.

CHALLENGES

The primary focus of this dissertation was to create a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging by recruiting, hiring, and retaining Native American staff and faculty. Some challenges found during the research include the small amount of literature available regarding Native American students, tribal college and universities, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. The information that did exist focused on ways that four-year colleges and universities could implement practices, policies, and procedures for securing a sense of belonging for Native American students on their campus. Those suggestions included such things as creating a safe space for AIAN students and providing support services and resources for the students. These

are some of the things that tribal colleges already do. It was hard to find information that positively reflects the need for Native American staff and faculty for tribal colleges.

Another challenge when thinking about the implementation of this product is the fact that SCTC is a small college. There would have to be further discussion about how to handle the self-evaluation. It would be almost impossible to break up into groups and create a team the way that other colleges can; that would further drive a divide into the silos of higher education and more particularly to SCTC. Instead, it might be better to come together as a whole and have discussions regarding the format of the self-evaluation process, though it is important to note that there are cons to working on the self-assessment as a group as well. Group think could build a consensus for responses, thereby leading to potentially inaccurate and or incomplete results. It could also be difficult for people to do a self-assessment within their department if they do not understand the importance or meaning of DEI initiatives or do not know about the resources that college has to offer.

Generating buy-in could also prove to be a challenge. Since it was reported that TCUs were created to address the lack of education, representation, and equity for Native American students in higher education, it is hard to define DEI terms for TCUs (Lundquist, 2018). Many staff and faculty might feel as if the college already has an inclusive environment and see no need to change. Administrators are encouraged to identify potential faculty, staff, and early adopters through pre-implementation research to assist with change acceptance.

It was an arduous task finding an action plan that would suit the needs of the college, its students, and the stakeholders. There was nothing available that focused on the needs of the Native American students, staff, or faculty. It is the intention of this product to help the college recruit, hire, and retain AIAN staff and faculty and with the limited literature regarding that topic, one would have to craft an action plan that is tailored to the needs of the college. This will be the goal in the next few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The action plan was intended to provide tribal college leaders with a way to begin discussions about recruiting, hiring, and retaining Native American staff and faculty in order to provide an inclusive environment. Given that the existing model needs to change, the guide in Chapter Four provides ways to further evaluate and implement the redesign. Further research should look for ways to redesign the action plan to help it fit the tribal college setting better than the current model.

It is recommended that further research take place regarding decolonizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Often diversity reinforces the existing unjust system, while decolonization challenges the system. Diversity approves the privileged, while decolonization empowers the underrepresented and undervalued. Diversity seeks to be inclusive while decolonization seeks to rehabilitate people's ways of thinking. This is not to say that diversity is necessarily a bad thing, but rather to recognize that diversity without decolonization is not enough to bring equality and fairness to the forefront of higher education.

CONCLUSION

Being a Saginaw Chippewa Tribal member, an alumna of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College, and what felt like an invisible alum from a larger mainstream university brought an awareness to the need for Native American faculty. Seeing and knowing the challenges of the students helped me to realize that not all faculty understand the struggles of Native American students and the effort it takes for our students just to enroll in higher education. Providing these students with Native American faculty and staff who are willing to mentor the students throughout their higher education experience would make a positive impact on students' lives. Offering culturally relevant professional development to the non-Native staff can help staff to gain a better understanding of the issues that face our students and help non-Native faculty gain a greater sense of belonging and inclusion as well.

The motivation for the action plan was to serve as a resource or guide for tribal college practitioners as they develop and implement a formal DEI initiative. The action plan is designed to provide direction and offer strategies related to various aspects of the development of an inclusive environment. With solid support, human and financial resources, and professional development efforts in place, SCTC will be well-equipped to offer successful DEI programming in the future and ensure that AIAN students are able to build their sense of belonging on our campuses. The future of the action plan is not known, but the intention is to redesign the product in order to make it culturally relevant to the Anishinaabek. Hopefully, implementation of an action plan will help SCTC offer more faculty of Native American descent, so students are able to see “someone like me” in their classes. By doing so, students, staff, and faculty might all gain a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion on campus.

REFERENCES

25 USC Ch. 20: Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance. (2020). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=%2Fprelim%40title25%2Fchapter20&edition=prelim

Achieving the Dream. (n.d.). *Equity.* https://www.achievingthedream.org/focus-areas/equity

American Association of Colleges and Universities. (n.d.). *Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.* https://www.aacu.org/priorities/advancing-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

American Council on Education. (2020.). *Race and ethnicity in higher education: 2020 supplement release*. https://www.acenet.edu/Events/Pages/Race-and-Ethnicity-in-Higher-Education-2020.aspx

American Indian College Fund. (2019, November 26). *About us.* https://collegefund.org/about-us/

American Indian Higher Education Consortium. (n.d.). Who we serve. http://www.aihec.org/who-we-serve/sctc.htm

American Indian Higher Education Consortium. (1999). (rep.). *Tribal colleges: An introduction*. http://www.aihec.org/who-we-serve/docs/TCU_intro.pdf

Arnekrans, K.A. (2014). Tinto's student integration model and diathesis stress model: Adverse childhood events, resilience, and retention in a first-year university population [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of Toledo.

Aspen Institute. (2019, November 23). *Native language: Modern terms for understanding Native America*. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/native-language-modern-terms-for-understanding-native-america/

Bernstein, R., Bulger, M., Salipante, P., & Weisinger, J. Y. (2019). From diversity to inclusion to equity: A theory of generative interactions. *Journal of Business Ethics, 167*(3), 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1

Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2013). The intergenerational effects of Indian residential schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *51*(3), 320–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461513503380

Brayboy, B. M. J., & Lomawaima, K. T. (2018). Why don't more Indians do better in school? The battle between U.S. schooling and American Indian/Alaska Native education. *Daedalus*, *147*(2), 82–94. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00492

Broda, M., Yun, J., Schneider, B., Yeager, D. S., Walton, G. M., & Diemer, M. (2018). Reducing inequality in academic success for incoming college students: A randomized trial of growth mindset and belonging interventions. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, *11*(3), 317–338. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2018.1429037

Brown University. (n.d.). *Diversity and inclusion action plan.* https://diap.brown.edu/

Bryan, R. (2019). The influence of tribal colleges and universities on Native American student persistence. *New Directions for Student Services*, (167), 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20320

Campbell, K. M., Braxton, M. M., Tumin, D., & Rodriguez, J. E. (2020). Reverse mentoring between minority students and faculty. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity*: *Research, Education and Policy*, *13*(2), 184-188.

Clare, M., & Sampsel, R.H. (2013, June 7). Partnership with Native American communities: Can higher education show up? Teachers College Record. http://tcrecord.org

Clayton, T. B. (2021, January 13). Refocusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion during the pandemic and beyond: Lessons from a community of practice. *Higher Education Today*. https://www.higheredtoday.org/2021/01/13/refocusing-diversity-equity-inclusion-pandemic-beyond-lessons-community-practice/.

Cox, T. H. (1993). Cultural diversity in organizations: Theory, research, and practice. Berrett-Koehler.

Delaware Goes to College. (2021). https://delawaregoestocollege.org/

Emery, K. (2011). Breaching the “cultural contract:” Committing to cultural sensitivity and cultural inclusion for Native American college students. *Academic Leadership, 9*(1), Article 13. https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol9/iss1/13

Evans-Campbell, T. (2008). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *23*(3), 316–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260507312290

Fox, S. J. (2002). Creating a sacred place to support young American Indian and other learners in grades K-3. Volume I. 2nd edition [and] Volume II (ED 467992). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED467992.pdf

Gaywish, R., & Mordoch, E. (2018). Situating intergenerational trauma in the educational journey. *In Education*, *24*(2), 3–23. https://doi.org/10.37119/ojs2018.v24i2.386

Gibson, D. K. (2019, November 22). *Native language: Modern terms for understanding Native America*. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/native-language-modern-terms-for-understanding-native-america/

Guillory, R. M. (2009). American Indian/Alaska Native college student retention strategies. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *33*(2), 12–38.

Holm, T., Pearson, J. D., & Chavis, B. (2003). Peoplehood: A model for the extension of sovereignty in American Indian studies. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *18*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2003.0004

Jackson, A. P., Smith, S. A., & Hill, C. L. (2003). Academic persistence among Native American college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(4), 548–565. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2003.0039

Jackson, R. L. (2002). Cultural contracts theory: Toward an understanding of identity negotiation*. Communication Quarterly*, *50*(3/4), 359-67. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370209385672

Karp, M. M., Hughes, K. L., & O'Gara, L. (2008). An exploration of Tinto's integration framework for community college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, 12*(1), 69–86. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.12.1.e

Key, C., Campbell-Whatley, G. D, Richard, H. V. (2004). *Becoming culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy rethinking teacher education pedagogy* (Research to Practice Brief, 2-10). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/

Lindquist, C. (2018). The unique role of tribal colleges and universities. *Diversity and Democracy, 21*(4), 27-28. https://dgmg81phhvh63.cloudfront.net/content/user-photos/Publications/Archives/Diversity-Democracy/DD_21-4_FA18.pdf

Lomawaima, K. T. (2000). Tribal sovereigns: Reframing research in American Indian education. *Harvard Educational Review, 70*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.70.1.b133t0976714n73r

Lumina Foundation. (2021, November 9). *Assessments*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/campaign/beyond-financial-aid/bfa-assessments/

Minthorn, R. (2015). Native American student connections to community and family: Impacts on academic outcomes. In D. Mitchell, Jr., E. Daniele, K. Soria, & J. Gipson, Jr. (Eds.), *Student involvement and academic outcomes: Implications for diverse college student populations* (pp. 203–219). Peter Lang.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020a). Characteristics of postsecondary faculty. *The condition of education 2020* (NCES 2020-144). https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020b). *Fast facts tool provides quick answers to many education questions.* https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2017). *Promising practices in supporting success for Indigenous students.* https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264279421-en

Partnership with Native Americans. (n.d.). *Native American history and culture: Boarding schools.* Northern Plains Reservation Aid. http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_hist_boardingschools

Pennamon, T. (2018, November 19). Tribal colleges and native organizations are “growing their own” faculty. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education.* https://diverseeducation.com/article/131954/

Pidgeon, M. (2016). More than a checklist: Meaningful Indigenous inclusion in higher education. *Social Inclusion*, *4*(1), 77–91. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v4i1.436

Pima Community College. (n.d.). *November is Native American heritage month: Peoplehood matrix*. https://libguides.pima.edu/c.php?g=1088178&p=7934915

PNPI, (2020, January 26). *Factsheets*. https://pnpi.org/men-of-color/

Price, P., Jhangiani, R., & Chiang, I. (2015). *Research methods of psychology* (2nd Canadian ed.). BC campus.

Rowan University. (2019). Division of Diversity Equity and Inclusivity. https://sites.rowan.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion/data-and-reports.html

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). Looking forward, looking back: Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Volume 1). Communication Group.

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College. (n.d.). *Mission, values, vision*. https://www.sagchip.edu/mission-vision-values

State University of New York. (n.d.). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion*. https://www.suny.edu/diversity/

Strayhorn, T. (2012). College students’ sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all. Routledge.

Strayhorn, T. (2018). *College students’ sense of belonging*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315297293

Stull, G. et.al. (2015). Redefining success: How tribal colleges and universities build nations, strengthen sovereignty, and persevere through challenges. *Center for Minority Serving Institutions*. https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/345

Tachine, A. R., Cabrera, N. L., & Yellow Bird, E. (2017) Home away from home: Native American students’ sense of belonging during their first year in college, *Journal of Higher Education, 88*(5), 785–807. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2016.1257322

Thompson, B. (2011). We are all on Native land: Transforming faculty searches with Indigenous methods. *Feminist Studies*, *37*(3), 534–560. https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2011.0062

Tierney, W. G. (1992). Official encouragement, institutional discouragement: Minorities in academe—The Native American experience. Praeger.

Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

United States Center for Urban Education, (n.d.). *Equity and student success.* Retrieved January14, 2022, from https://cue.usc.edu/equity/

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education*. https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/advancing-diversity-inclusion.pdf?source=post_page

U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs. (1978). *Self-determination.* https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/great-plains/self-determination

United States Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. (1969). *Indian education: A national tragedy, a national challenge: 1969 report of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare* (ED034625). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED034625.pdf

University of Michigan. (n.d.). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan*. https://diversity.umich.edu/strategic-plan/

University of Michigan. (2020, September 1). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion: Toolkit introduction.* https://diversity.umich.edu/strategic-plan/dei-strategic-planning-toolkit/

Vizenor, G. (2008). Narrative chance: Postmodern discourse on Native American Indian literatures. University of Oklahoma Press.

White House Historical Association. (n.d.). *Self-determination without termination*. https://www.whitehousehistory.org/self-determination-without-termination