

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA GRADUATE COLLEGE

AMERICAN INDIAN MEN AND THE ROAD TO GAINING COLLEGE ACCESS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By MELVIN PAUL CALLS HIM JR.
Norman, Oklahoma
2025

AMERICAN INDIAN MEN AND THE ROAD TO GAINING COLLEGE ACCESS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Robin Minthorn, Chair

Dr. Natalie Youngbull

Dr. Christy Oxendine

Mr. Jake Skeets

Acknowledgements

To my family:

To my wife Cha (Charlsie), thank you for being my support system and being behind me throughout this entire journey of challenges. Thank you for always being my constant reminder of doing this work and pushing me to the finish line. I will always remember the pandemic and how we enjoyed our time with our new son while the outside world was filled with fear and chaos. We are the strongest team together. I could not have done this doctoral journey without you. I'm grateful that Wah-kon-dah brought you into my life. I love you.

Sterling (Gthey-donh-nah-pah-be), you came into this world at the beginning of my doctoral program, and you did a lot of reading with me. I held you and read you academic articles while you slobbered on me. Now at the end of my doctoral journey you are a reader who makes me proud every day. You are currently in kindergarten reading to your classmates. I want you to remember that you will be able to do anything in life with your strong smart mind. Just never give up on the work that you must do to achieve your goals. I love you son.

Oakley (Gthey-donh-mah-zhinga), you came into this world midway through my doctoral program, and we bonded since the beginning. Now you are currently three years old bossing me around. For example, while trying to write this section you demanded macaroni and cheese two times, so I made it for you. I enjoyed how you would set up your play laptop next to me sometimes as I would do my work. I want you to remember that you are brave, strong, and smart and that you will be able to do anything in life with your strong smart mind. I love you daughter.

To my committee chair and advisor:

Dr. Robin Minthorn, you were my third advisor in the doctoral program, and I could not have done the end of this doctoral journey without you. You came in at a time where I could not see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, you pushed me closer to that light and it became brighter. Thank you so much for the guidance and support that you provided. Thank you for the consistent check ins through zoom that kept me connected to this important work. I've always looked up to you and your brilliant mind. I admired you for all the busy work that you did and do in the academic realm. You are one of my role models. Also, you are an inspiration to Indian country and to all the upcoming American Indian scholars out there.

To my committee:

Dr. Natalie Youngbull, Dr. Christy Oxendine, Jake Skeets, thank you for serving on my committee with your busy schedules in the academic realm. The upcoming generations in Indian country are going to see you all as role models in the higher education setting. Keep up the great work.

To my past committee chair and advisor:

Dr. Heather Shotton, thank you for all the advice and guidance that you provided when you were my advisor and committee chair. I thought it was so cool when you arrived at the ELPS department as the chair. Since the beginning of graduate school, you have always been one of my role models in this space. Throughout my graduate journey, I looked up to all the Indian women that were professors at OU. You are a role model for Indian country, and I am glad that our paths intersected.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	x
Introduction.....	xi
Chapter 1	1
Positionality	1
My Tribal Identity and Connections	1
Connections with Education	2
My Journey to College.....	3
Journey through my Undergraduate Degree	3
Journey through Graduate School.....	4
Problem Statement.....	6
Research Question	7
Sub-Questions	8
Significance of the Study	8
Research Purpose	10
Terminology.....	10
Chapter 2	13
Literature Review.....	13
The History of American Indian Higher Education.....	13
Colonial Era.	14
Federal Era.	15
Self-Determination Era.	16
Enrollment Trends	16
American Indian Men and College Access.....	18

Educational Attainment Among American Indian Men	18
College Readiness	20
Financial Aid Viewpoints	21
Forms of Capital	22
Funds of Knowledge	23
American Indian Students.....	24
Latinx Students.	24
African American Students.....	25
Men of Color.....	25
Barriers to Access	26
Socioeconomic Status	26
Mentoring.....	27
College Access Programs	27
Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)	29
Indigenous Men’s Experiences	30
Chapter 3	33
Methodology	33
Theoretical Frameworks	33
Tribal Critical Race Theory	34
Indigenous Research Paradigm.....	35
Methods.....	37
Indigenous Storywork.....	37
Participants.....	39
Data Collection	40
Data Analysis	41

Trustworthiness	42
Ethics and Responsibilities	42
Summary/Conclusion.....	43
Chapter 4	44
Introducing the Storytellers.....	45
Jared	45
Nolan.....	45
Larry.....	46
Spike	46
Chebon	46
Solomon	47
Harry	47
Chandler.....	48
Joe	48
Brian.....	48
Neal.....	49
Major Themes	49
Influences.....	49
College Exposure in High School.....	57
Scholarships	61
Institutional Type.....	72
Indigenous Resilience and Navigation.....	79
Getting your education and coming back to help your people	83
Summary	86
Chapter 5	88
Implications and Recommendations	89

Recommendations for Research and Practice	92
Recommendations for Practice	93
Recommendations for Research	93
Researchers Positionality	95
Conclusion	96
References	97
Appendix A	105
Interview Protocol	105

Abstract

This study investigates American Indian men's stories of college access and rationales for pursuing college. In addition, this research study will investigate American Indian men and college access roads and the significance behind the access roads. This study is situated in qualitative research and utilizes Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) as the theoretical framework to provide a lens for the American Indian men's stories in this study regarding college access. This research study is theoretically conceptualized in the Indigenous research paradigm and will be utilized as a supporting framework for TribalCrit. The methodological approach of Indigenous storywork will be utilized and intertwined with the eleven American Indian men's conversations about their college access stories.

Introduction

In the beginning, which was an unknown time to the Ponca people, Wah-Kon-Dah gave the Ponca people the gift of song and dance. Wah-kon-dah Omba-thee bayyyoo-heyy-theyy-theyy Wah-kon-dah Omba-thee bayyoo-heyy-theyy-theyy Wah-kon-dah Omba-thee bayyoo heyy-theyy theyy Wah-kon-dah Omba-thee bayyoo heyy-theyy yoi
Dadi-haaathaaa Wah-kon-dah Kaww-dom-bayy-heyy-theyy-theyy Wah-kon-dah Omba thee bayoo heyy-theyy-theyy Wah-kon-dah Omba-thee bayyoo heyy they yoi

This Ponca song translates to “Wah-kon-dah” (Creator) watch over me on this day”. Ponca singers do not know how old this song is, as it can date back to thousands of years ago. Ponca songs tell stories of specific events in the history of the tribe that can date back to unknown times before the existence of the United States. Fortunately, a myriad number of Ponca songs still exist today that tell stories of battles and ancient Ponca people who did great deeds in their past lifetime. More importantly, Ponca songs retain the history of the Ponca people. Today, when Ponca singers gather at the drum to ¹sing, the history of the Ponca people is told through the stories that live within the songs and Ponca language.

Moreover, my traditional knowledge of Ponca songs is another imperative form of education that has been in existence for thousands of years on this continent. More importantly, my Ponca songs are a traditional form of education that teaches me about my own Ponca history and teaches me imperative advice about how to grapple with life. For instance, one specific Ponca song teaches a history lesson about a battle over the Cahokia mounds which conveys the location and historical route traveled by the Ponca tribe. In addition, the Poncas once established

¹ Ponca singers utilize the gift of songs when beginning the various dances that are held throughout the fall, winter, spring, and summer seasons. Furthermore, Ponca songs carry a powerful significance such as a prayer inside some songs but also Ponca history. As a Ponca man and singer, I am sharing my Ponca epistemology and a knowledge system that is unique to my ceremonial way of being.

a village near the Cahokia mounds. Although I have never physically seen or visited the Cahokia mounds, I carry this history lesson through a Ponca song with me. Traditionally, singing is an oral form of teaching and education that was passed down from generation to generation, and throughout time Ponca singers have composed songs and contributed to this knowledge system as history unfolded and moved into modern times.

However, I want to tell you a story about eleven American Indian men and how they gained college access during their educational journeys to a higher education. Jared accessed college through the Gates Millennium Scholarship that paid for his undergraduate and graduate journey until he completed his doctoral degree. Nolan gained access to college through his tribal nation that paid for his entire doctoral education. Larry's tribal nation scholarship helped him gain access to college along with receiving the GI Bill. Spike received several scholarships that helped him gain access to college such as the Coca Cola scholarship, Amigo scholarship, local scholarships, private scholarships, and the Worth and Dot Foundation. Chebon gained access to college through two fellowships, Native American student scholarships, Pell grant, and university monies.

Solomon gained access to college through two tribal scholarships during his educational journey. Harry gained access to college through the McLendon Foundation Scholarship, tribal scholarship, along with other scholarships. Chandler received the Carolyn Watson Opportunity scholarship, Ronald McDonald House scholarship, local scholarships, American Indian scholarship, and other small scholarships that helped him gain access to college. Joe gained access to college through his tribal scholarship along with other scholarships. Brian gained access to college through two scholarships that lasted for five years along with the assistance of a Pell grant and needs grant through his state. Lastly, Neal gained access to college through a

regional scholarship, tribal scholarship, blue chip award, scholarships, grants, and the Daniels Fund.

Chapter 1

This chapter begins with the researcher's positionality centering the researcher's identity and lived stories within this study then subsequently elaborates on the problem statement encompassing American Indian men in higher education along with American Indian men and college access roads. In addition, this chapter includes the introduction of the research questions and the significance of the study of how nation building links to American Indian men and college access. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with the research purpose of how and why American Indian men are gaining access to college and elaborates on some of the key terminology utilized within this study.

Positionality

Before beginning to traverse through the roots of this research regarding American Indian men and college access, I want to highlight that understanding my positionality is imperative as I position myself as a scholarly Ponca man. In addition, my identity and existence are attached to this research study through my lived experiences as a Ponca man and a current doctoral student. Lastly, my lived stories will be shared about my Tribal identity and connections, connections with education, my journey to college, my journey through my undergraduate, and my journey through graduate school.

My Tribal Identity and Connections

My name is Melvin Calls Him Jr. and I carry the Ponca name Eeh-bah-ham-bee meaning "the one who is known". I come from the house of the Nikapashna clan, and I am also Mvskoke Creek. Both of my parents are Ponca, and my mother also carries Mvskoke Creek in her bloodline. I come from my grandpa George Calls Him Jr. and my grandma Imogene Primeaux. My father is Melvin Calls Him Sr. and my mother is Twila Rose Knight. On my mother's side, I

come from my great-great grandpa Running After Arrow and great-great-grandmother Kate Running After Arrow. I come from my great-grandmother Flossie Running After Arrow who married my great-grandfather Anthony Knight. My great-grandpa Anthony and great-grandma Flossie had a son named Henry Arrow Knight. My grandpa Henry Arrow Knight is the one I grew up around as a child along with some other grandparents who affirmed my Ponca identity at the kitchen table. From an early age, I knew I was Indian, with a culture of singing and dancing.

Connections with Education

When I was growing up, I always heard my family say "Get an education" to my sister and me, and that phrase always emerged in my head throughout my life. I grew up with one older sister who is the definition of strength and toughness. I learned that life throws so many unforeseen obstacles at you, and my sister taught me how to be strong in hard times. I watched my sister graduate high school which influenced me to graduate high school. As a teenager, I always heard stories about Sequoyah High School from my mother, as half of my mother's family attended Sequoyah along with some of my father's family. So, I followed in my mother's footsteps as she always encouraged me to attend Sequoyah High School in Tahlequah, so I did.² I remember the halls of Sequoyah had senior class pictures hanging on the walls that dated back to my mother's graduating class and even before then. I remember I would always stop by the giant black and white picture of my mother's graduating class on the hall wall and visit my mother's picture which said "salutatorian" under her picture. Little did I know that my senior graduating class picture would be hanging on the same hall walls, but in color.

² Historically, Sequoyah High School was built as a boarding school for Indian children but today Sequoyah has changed with the times and evolved into a contemporary school that has been renamed to Sequoyah Schools

My Journey to College

Fortunately, during my senior year at Sequoyah, I took a college prep class in the library and the instructor was Ms. Mullican who was extremely helpful to all her students. If it wasn't for the encouragement and help from Ms. Mullican, I may not have been in college or in the realm of higher education today. Ms. Mullican encouraged me to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship, not knowing what college doors would open for me in the future. I remember that I worked on the Gates scholarship for days and hours writing essays and making constant edits and revisions until each essay was polished. Then one day after classes, I walked into my dorm room and a single envelope was lying on my bed from the Gates Millennium Scholarship Foundation. I opened the envelope, and I read that I was selected for the Gates Millennium scholarship, and I couldn't believe it at that moment! It was quiet in my dorm room until that elated moment. I was the only male to receive the Gates Millennium Scholarship my senior year along with three other females at Sequoyah. This scholarship provided access to college for me, and I was told that I could go to any college or university of my choice with this scholarship.

Journey through my Undergraduate Degree

I attended Haskell Indian Nations University as I wanted to be around Indian people who could understand my background, culture, experiences, and way of being. At Haskell, I had minimal engagements with student organizations, but I was involved in one cultural club since several friends were in that club and influenced me to join. One year, I attended the American Indian Higher Education Consortium conference in Missoula Montana, and I won first place in the informative speech contest with no intentions to win as I only went to participate in the cultural aspect of the conference.

While pursuing my undergraduate degree I felt all the emotions a human being could feel from elated to sad and everywhere in between but I also felt a strong sense of belonging on the grounds of Haskell. My support system came from many different individuals while attending Haskell and the first individual was a guidance counselor who passed away in recent years. However, I appreciated his listening ears when I went to converse with him about my life and he provided valuable life knowledge that I have carried with me since those past conversations. When I became lonesome for family and friends my resident assistants were there to support me through a meaningful conversation that uplifted my spirits to continue forward to the next day of classes. Another key individual, an elderly Ponca man, played a vital role in the support system of my spirit as his teachings, words, and songs still live with me to this day. Furthermore, another powerful support system was my two adopted Kiowa brothers and their families which became my second family away from home. My adopted brothers and I shared a love for our tribal songs, and we were connected through our drums of song. Through the drum, I made my connection to my home in Oklahoma. Additionally, the drum and my songs brought me back home to Oklahoma for the weekends to sing at various dances and powwows. I want to point out, that there was a time at Haskell when I didn't think I was going to finish my degree, but somehow, I persevered through that feeling of being burnt out and finished my bachelor's degree. Once again, I amazed myself, but in a different way at this point in my life, as I learned how to push myself through hard academic times with the help of my Ponca culture of singing.

Journey through Graduate School

Interestingly, the next academic stop in my life was at the University of Oklahoma in Norman for a master's degree. Matriculating into a predominantly white institution was an immense change from a Tribal College and University (TCU), but I adjusted and became

acclimated quickly. During this phase in my life, something altered my brain and notions about education, and I began to enjoy learning in the classroom. However, I did not always enjoy the walls of academia before OU with the long hours of studying, typing, and reading. While working on my master's degree, intrinsic learning became the center of my learning along with some extrinsic factors. I never thought in my life that I would make it to the master's degree level, but I did. I remember my last night as a master's student as I stayed up all night critically thinking and working on exam questions in Copeland Hall on the third floor in my graduate assistant office space.

One day I started a second master's degree in the Adult and Higher Education program at OU. Then I had a conversation with a peer who encouraged me to pursue a doctoral degree in the hallway at Collings Hall. After that conversation along with another conversation with my wife who encouraged me, I took a leap of faith and applied to the Adult and Higher Education doctoral program and was accepted. I transitioned immediately to the doctoral degree program and started a new path of coursework. My experience in the Adult and Higher Education program was an emotional roller coaster. In the beginning of the program the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in the spring season of 2020 where the world was in a chaotic panic about the COVID-19 outbreak. As the pandemic began, OU transitioned to online classes through zoom which was a new platform that I had to learn and navigate during that time. I stayed calm and clear as I knew I could not control what was going on in the world with the COVID-19 outbreak, but I had my doctoral coursework to focus on which kept my mind busy as the COVID-19 outbreak was spreading like a wildfire in the outside world.

From my perspective, I saw my doctoral program and coursework as a blessing in disguise while the world experienced an unprecedented time of sickness, fear, and death. I

utilized my resilience and stayed busy with studying and reading and preparing for my online courses. I looked forward to connecting to my online courses as I could see my peers and instructors during that unknown time of the pandemic. I pushed through the first semester of the pandemic and had elated moments when I passed my courses. The pandemic taught me how to thrive in isolation away from my in-person courses, peers, and instructors. My resilience became stronger during the pandemic as I pushed forward through my doctoral program. The COVID-19 pandemic officially ended in 2023 after the spring season. However, the COVID-19 virus still lives beyond 2023, and the COVID-19 virus is still a constant reminder of what I went through during my doctoral journey.

Lastly, my doctoral journey built another layer of resilience on top of the graduate and undergraduate resilience from my past educational journeys. Overall, my entire educational road has been about resilience and being prepared for the next challenge that the academic realm put in front of me. I've learned that challenges will always be there and that those challenges will take diverse forms and shapes as my life goes on. Thus, I must continue to be ready and prepare myself for the next chapter of unknown challenges in the world with the educational knowledge that I accumulated along my road in life through higher education.

Problem Statement

The most recent statistic for American Indian men enrolled in college from 18-24 years of age is 33% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). However, for American Indian men college access roads vary from reservations to tribal communities, rural areas, and suburb contexts across the country. A dearth of knowledge exists on how communities and American Indian students constitute a path to higher education and access college (Shotton et al., 2018). More importantly, we need to know how and why American Indian men gain college

access, and how tribal communities are creating these roads to college in the lives of American Indian men. I chose to utilize the term “roads” in this research study as I thought about the Ponca word “Uhé” which translates to your “road” in life. Furthermore, increasing college access for American Indian men will support a cycle of change to foster nation-building. Drawing upon his work, Brayboy et al. (2012) indicated "thus in order to develop strong nation-building agenda, Indigenous nations should focus on their youth and education" (p. 28). When education is planted at the foundation of American Indian men, only then will some Tribal Nations begin to prosper economically, politically, and spiritually into the future. Today, Tribal Nations need to bolster nation-building and rebuild their Nations in a form that will fit the contemporary times.

Indigenous nation-building is driven by the community's self-government, but the procedure of nation-building encompasses the sovereign status, education, economic health, culture, and political aspects of the tribal nation (Brayboy et al., 2012, p.13). Some American Indian men come from tribal nations and communities that follow a patrilineal line of leadership, and when this line of leadership continues to struggle each generation with education and access, nation-building will continue to struggle or never advance. Drawing upon Brayboy & Bang's work we understand that "by many indicators and social markers, a large majority of Indigenous boys and men are struggling" (Brayboy & Bang, 2017, p. 6). Thus, nation-building is hindered when American Indian men continue to struggle with access to post-secondary education across the country.

Research Question

The Tribal Critical Race Theory and Indigenous Research Paradigm lenses are utilized for the research questions to understand how American Indian men are gaining college access and to understand their rationales for pursuing college.

For this research study, the core research questions are:

What are the stories about American Indian men's college access roads?

How do communities and tribal nations influence American Indian men's college access roads?

Sub-Questions

What supported and shaped American Indian men's college access roads?

What are the reasons for American Indian men to pursue college?

Significance of the Study

In this research study it's imperative to understand how the concept of nation-building connects to American Indian men and college access. Currently, American Indian peoples and tribal nations are in a nation-building phase throughout the country and access to higher education plays a key role in nation-building. To ameliorate tribal nations' futures, it begins with college access and obtaining degrees that equip American Indian men leaders with the tools and skills necessary to cultivate healthy tribal nations.

Brayboy et al. (2012) stated Indigenous communities have two models that exist encompassing nation-building in the literature. These two models are fueled by the sovereign nation and the self-governing community. The initial model utilizes the economic-development perspective when constructing nation-building and incorporates and considers the political facets that display the community's cultural aspects and values with intentions to authorize Indigenous communities to sever economic ties with the U.S. government and other outside entities. In contrast, nation-building within the secondary model intertwines and emphasizes the economic developmental aspects however it's not centered. This second outlook encompassing nation-building emphasizes the culture, educational, and wellness facets (p. 13).

Today, tribal nations are continuing to cultivate this concept of nation-building within their respective communities. Nation building which is presently altering tribes' policies and institutional structures as tribal nations and tribal nations are rewriting constitutions along with creating new curricula in schools and generating more revenue with tribal nation taxes and businesses and establishing tribal law and legal structures (Brayboy et al., 2012). Tribal nations need to recognize that obsolete tribal constitutions are not meeting the needs of the current times and constitutions need to be re-written to fit the current needs and times of tribal nations. Furthermore, tribal nations need to create more of their own schools that center their identities, cultures, and values which moves away from the colonized western curriculum in public schools. Regarding American Indian men's leadership, it's important to evaluate and assess nation-building in the boundaries of communities and tribal nations when re-building tribal nations.

Access to postsecondary education is a vital component to American Indian male leaders who foster nation-building. "Rather, we believe that educational success within Indigenous communities is a necessary (though not sufficient) element of successful nation building" (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 27). Postsecondary education will continue to uplift and transform nation-building into the future.

Educational success is one prerequisite for political and economic success within tribal communities and improving postsecondary access for Indigenous students is a crucial aspect of increased educational success among tribal nations. (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 31) Some tribal nations have failed for decades to constitute strong economies by leaders who lack the educational tools and skills to build robust economies. In addition, some of these American Indian men leaders do not obtain higher education degrees which can hinder nation-building and repeat the same deficit circumstances from previous years.

American Indian men's persistence and college access lived experiences are scarce within research along with their specific needs being addressed (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 54).

Historically, American Indian men's voices and college access stories have been neglected and marginalized so current research must continue to intentionally include American Indian men's voices to be heard throughout the higher education realm. Brayboy and Bang (2017) stated that "the available data tell a grim story about the past and present, but the "real story" of how American Indian boys and men are faring in the world is not fully told" (p. 6). When hearing today's voices of American Indian men about college access we can consider how to construct improved roads of access to higher education institutions and provide implications for higher education institutions to ameliorate this road so tribal nations can prosper through leadership.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how American Indian men are gaining college access and why. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of how these college access roads are created for American Indian men from their respective communities needs to be understood. Moreover, a myriad of American Indian men gain college access and some of their stories are untold and need to be shared, so their stories and voices can be heard and live on through the current literature. American Indian men have a variety of unique rationales for why they seek college, and those rationales need to be uncovered. Today, over 570 federally recognized tribal nations exist across the country. Thus, American Indian men's college access roads will be unique from each community and tribal nation.

Terminology

American Indian, Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, Native, Indian and Alaskan Native are accepted terms that will be utilized interchangeably throughout this research

study. American Indians are the first peoples to exist on the North American continent which has been named the United States of America by western settlers. Today, American Indians have federal recognition as tribal nations and are classified as state-recognized tribes across the U.S.

Nation Building - This is rooted in sovereignty and self-determination but also seeks to ameliorate Tribal Nations politically, economically, and educationally, and seeks to heal the overall health and future of Tribal Nations (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Sovereignty - The right to self-govern which entails constituting and regulating their own tribal government, law enforcement, and economy without the influence and control of the federal government.

American Indian Men - The umbrella term American Indian men are those who identify as American Indian men and have lineage with a tribal nation that could be federally recognized, or state recognized in the U.S. Traditionally, the Ponca Hey-thoska society are the men warriors and the Ponca Pah-thinge society is comprised of women only. In addition, men warrior roles in the Ponca Hey-thoska society do not change gender roles to fit the roles in the Ponca Pah-thinge society of women. However, some American Indian men may identify as gay and trans which is also important to understand.

Since numerous American Indian students derive from backgrounds that lack valuable capital, thus a key complication occurs regarding achievement and access within higher education institutions (Shotton et al., 2018). However, today some American Indian men and students are pursuing the social and cultural capital that is needed to access a higher education to bolster the future roads of college access for their tribal communities and families. Lastly, through this research study, we will understand the lived experiences of American Indian men who gain college access and understand their rationales for seeking college.

The following chapter elaborates on the review of the literature and expands on the historical aspect of access within higher education along with the extant literature that's relevant to American Indian men and college access.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Today, there is a dearth of literature encompassing American Indian men's college access stories and the traveled access roads to college from their communities. Initially, I will discuss the literature on the History of American Indian Higher Education and the subthemes of the colonial era, federal era, and self-determination era as it's vital to understand the history of American Indians, college access, and education throughout each era. Additionally, I will discuss the literature themes of Enrollment Trends and American Indian Men and College Access along with the subthemes of Funds of Knowledge, American Indian students, Latinx students, African American students, and Men of Color. Furthermore, I will discuss current literature on Barriers to Access, Socioeconomic Status, and College Access Programs. Lastly, a discussion of the literature on Tribal Colleges and Universities along with Indigenous Men's Experiences will conclude the literature review.

The History of American Indian Higher Education

Western settlers traveled across the ocean to North America to establish higher education institutions. Early colonists introduced Christianity through education to assimilate and create Indian peoples into a reflection of the western settlers (Wright, 1997, p. 73). We must understand the historical intentions of higher education upon American Indians and how the past has constituted diverse ripple effects across Indian country. Western colonizers aimed to bring education to specific American Indian beviess so they would attract other American Indians to live an enlightening life that would influence tribal communities (Brayboy et al., 2012). In the

U.S., the historical eras of American Indian higher education can be recognized as the colonial era, the federal era, and the self-determination era (Fox et al., 2005).

Colonial Era. Western higher education institutions were recently created in North America whereas American Indian cultural education systems were already existing before the establishment of the United States. In 1656, the College for Indians was created and built (Carney, 1999). From the perspective of tribal chiefs, the utmost value was cultivating long-established tribal customary skill sets in life, and the experience at these early institutions could lessen these imperative tribal skill sets, thus, cordially turning down requests of sending younger American Indian men to these early higher education institutions was reported (Fox et al., 2005). In the colonial era, American Indian men were still living healthily within their cultures, and access to higher education had minimal significance to their powerful cultures, epistemologies, and ways of being.

Initially, higher education institutions were introduced to American Indians then they used the education of American Indians to receive more funding for their institutions. In 1660, the first American Indian student arrived at Harvard Indian College to pursue a baccalaureate, but nothing exceeded two students at the college for Indians (Wright, 1997). From 1656 to 1693 only 4 American Indian students existed at Harvard Indian College but during the stage of the pre-American Revolution war, Harvard recorded 6 American Indian students (Carney, 1999). Drawing from the work of Fox et al. pointed out, "More than simple lack of interest, the failure of colonial colleges and universities to educate Native Americans may reflect many Native Americans resistance to assimilation through Euro-American higher education" (Fox et al., 2005, p. 9). The colonial era represented a time when American Indians were represented in low

numbers within early colonial colleges as Eurocentric values clashed with American Indian values in an unfamiliar western educational institution.

Federal Era. In the beginning of American Indian higher education, to gain momentum towards American Indian self-determination the U.S. federal government constituted treaties with American Indian Tribal Nations after the American Revolutionary War (Fox et al., 2005). In 1830, \$10,000 was allocated to Choctaw adolescents for education under a treaty (Wright, 1991). Drawing upon the work of Wright we understand that "the first official use of the funds provided under this treaty occurred in 1841, when the Tribe authorized the education of Native boys at Ohio University, Jefferson College, and Indiana University" (Wright, 1991, p. 2). Furthermore, 10 adolescent boys who were Choctaw attended Asbury University along with 10 other Choctaw boys at Lafayette College which was reported in 1843 (Wright, 1991). American Indian men's student access and enrollment within higher education institutions was evident during this time but assimilation was the top priority for the U.S. federal government during this era.

Indian boarding schools were also created by the U.S. federal government during this era as forced assimilation to European culture was the purpose of these Indian boarding schools. Complete acculturation of American Indians was the policy decided on by the U.S. federal government (Carney, 1999). Thus, ripple effects of trauma became pervasive from forced assimilation and attempts to eradicate cultures and languages which impacted the relationship of western education among American Indian peoples. American Indian higher education went unnoticed in the U.S. during the rise of colleges in the later 1800s and earlier 1900s (Fox et al., 2005). However, in 1887, an American Indian man by the name of Charles Eastman obtained a degree from Dartmouth (Wright, 1991). Furthermore, college access was not a priority and

American Indian men's enrollment rates were low during this era, and graduating with a degree was seldom for American Indian men.

Self-Determination Era. The U.S. federal government drastically altered the objective of education through new legislation in the self-determination era among American Indians. The Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 was viewed as the beginning of the American Indian self-determination period (Carney, 1999). For American Indian higher education, the initial scholarship monies allocated by the federal government were through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 which declared American Indian self-determination and sovereignty regarding education (Fox et al., 2005). For the costs of college, \$250,000 was granted by the Indian Reorganization Act which was an immense change (Wright, 1991). Thus, 515 American Indians attended college before 1935 as recorded by the Indian affairs commissioner (Wright, 1991). The U.S. federal government supported college access for the first time during this era which was a drastic change as opposed to the past federal and colonial eras.

In the colonial era, American Indian men gained access with the inception of colonial colleges, however, American Indian females seemed to be excluded in this era. In the federal era, American Indian men gained access through treaty monies which constituted a road to higher education for young Choctaw boys. In the self-determination era, American Indians gained access through the IRA of 1934 which allowed many American Indian men to enroll in college and pursue a degree. Access shaped American Indian men's trajectories to college in diverse ways throughout history and college access continues to evolve today for American Indian men.

Enrollment Trends

American Indian enrollment trends began to increase in the late 1970's and into the next millennium. In 1976, the enrollment of American Indians and Alaskan Natives was at 76,100

which increased to 166,000 in 2002 which became twice as many American Indians and Alaskan Natives over 30 years (Brayboy et al., 2012). In 2003, a percentage of 17.7% of American Indian and Alaskan Natives from 18-24-year-olds matriculated into college which increased to 29.8% in 2009 (NCES, 2021). In 2010, the percentage of American Indian and Alaskan Natives from 18-24-year-olds that matriculated into a college increased to 41.4% however in 2014 the percentage decreased to 35.4% (NCES, 2021). From 2000 to 2010, American Indians and Alaskan Natives had an increase in enrollment rates from 139,000 to 179,000 which was a 29% rise but then decreased in 2016 to 129,000 which was a 28% decrease (De Brey et al., 2019). The percentages in enrollment trends have overtly fluctuated for American Indians and Alaskan Natives throughout time in U.S. higher education.

Moving into more recent times with American Indian and Alaskan Native enrollment we must consider how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted matriculation rates within all populations. In 2015, a total percentage of 23% of American Indians and Alaskan Natives from the ages of 18-24 years old matriculated into college and decreased slightly to 22.4% in 2020 but increased to 28.4 % in 2021(NCES, 2021). Furthermore, we must consider how Indigenous students are impacted by the school districts they attend along with the resources and lack of rigorous courses within those school districts. From 2000 to 2016, the overall enrollment rates for American Indians and Alaskan Natives attenuated by 1% and stayed at 1% (De Brey et al., 2019). In addition, we must consider the Indigenous family's perceptions and knowledge about the financial aid process along with the western cultural and social capital which all impact matriculation and college access.

American Indian Men and College Access

Currently, college access for American Indian men has evolved beyond the financial aspect in earlier historical eras. Students need skill sets to communicate with professors and seek campus services along with SAT/ACT preparation, college readiness courses, and traversing through the steps of financial aid and knowledge about financial aid which all need to be accessed (Shotton et al., 2018). Brayboy and Bang (2017) indicated that access and persistence within higher education institutions and American Indian/Alaskan Native males who scored a 3 or above on the 2010 Advanced Placement examination in May were at 48% compared to white males at 67%. Furthermore, American Indian/Alaskan Native men who had taken the ACT in 2011 either met or surpassed the college readiness scores within Reading, English, Math, and Science at 14% compared to 35% of white males (Brayboy & Bang, 2017). American Indian and Alaskan Native men are underrepresented regarding the metrics of higher education access which is alarming.

In the fall of 2016, American Indian males were at 40% compared to 60% of American Indian females enrolled in the fall as undergraduates within an institution (De Brey et al., 2019). Furthermore, in 2016, across the board within minority populations female undergraduates were at higher percentages than males in fall matriculation rates within institutions (De Brey et al., 2019). Overall, American Indian men are struggling with college access and matriculation across the board.

Educational Attainment Among American Indian Men

The recent context of obtained bachelor's degrees among American Indian men also depicts enrollment rates that relate to college access. As shown in Table 1, from 2018 to 2019, American Indian/Alaskan Native males earned 3,418 bachelor's degrees from post-secondary

institutions compared to 516,368 White males, 70,801 Black males, 111,457 Hispanic males, 68,741 Asian males, and 1,937 Pacific islander males (NCES, 2021). Additionally, from 2019 to 2020 across all male racial populations' statistics decreased in receiving bachelor's degrees with 509,031 White males, 70,324 Black males, 117,211 Hispanic males, and 1,911 Pacific Islander males, 3,342 American Indian/Alaska Native males, but Asian males increased to 70,984 respectively (NCES, 2021). Moreover, from 2018 to 2020, the conferred bachelor's degree statistics for American Indian/Alaska Native men decreased from 3,418 to 3,342 which depicts an image of college access (NCES, 2021).

Table 1

2018-2019 bachelor's degrees conferred from post-secondary institution by race/ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	Total degrees conferred
American Indian/Alaskan Native males	3,418
White males	516,368
Black males	70,801
Hispanic males	111,457
Asian males	68,741
Pacific Islander males	1,937

For American Indian men, the campus climate plays a key role in the completion of degrees. In the current context of higher education for American Indian men, we understand that "when it comes to education, Indigenous peoples experience (a) heightened instances of discrimination and racism in school settings, (b) low college enrollment, and (c) suppressed graduation rates at the secondary and postsecondary level when compared to other racial/ethnic

populations" (Brayboy & Bang, 2017, p. 9). Inside and outside of educational contexts researchers have discovered occurrences of more intense racism and discrimination when exploring rationales hindering American Indian achievement levels within education (Brayboy & Bang, 2017). Specifically, with American Indian men and young boys the existing negativity of historical traumatization along with losing identities linked to culture, hopelessness, uncertainty, and isolated feelings (Brayboy & Bang, 2017) all encompass the current context of education. Thus, American Indian college access programs that partner with PWIs with a negative climate towards American Indians could complicate this avenue of access and notions of enrolling.

College Readiness

For Indigenous students, access to advanced placement classes also shapes college access and matriculation across the country. Brayboy & Maaka (2015) mentioned how advanced placement honors and international baccalaureate coursework are scarce if available within schools that serve a myriad of Indigenous students which is revealed by researchers within Indian country encompassing these accelerated courses. However, smaller percentages of Indigenous students engage in the wide array of advanced placement courses offered at schools. Indigenous high school seniors with a score of three and above encompassing the advanced placement examinations have increased two-fold from 2001 to 2010. Although Indigenous student's advanced placement class involvement has increased two-fold from 2001 to 2010, underrepresentation persists in the Indigenous student population (Brayboy & Maaka, 2015).

Albeit a lack of representation exists in advanced placement courses among Indigenous high school students, the parents' role is imperative when assisting a child's aspirations to matriculate into a college. In cultivating the college ambitions of children, the vital indication is the supportive and encouraging parents. Moreover, parents who do not matriculate into a college

oftentimes lack the imperative knowledge for fostering their children's college eligibility and college preparedness (Brayboy & Maaka, 2015). Indigenous families need to find ways to cultivate college access knowledge at home and how that will foster the college-going process.

For Indigenous students outside of their homes, one critical component to fostering college access is within the interactions and relationships with high school staff. Brayboy & Maaka's (2015) discussed how socioeconomic status, racial demographic, and gender status also impact college access services along with the school counselors' and school staff's frame of mind. In addition, we must understand how these school staff attitudes influence students' college access conduits across urban schools, rural schools, and current-day Indian boarding schools among Indigenous populations.

Financial Aid Viewpoints

High school staff and counselors may project biased attitudes towards American Indian students and neglect financial aid conversations. Tachine and Cabrera (2021) emphasized how some Navajo families were oblivious to the immense costs of college and one Navajo father utilized his 401k to pay for his daughter's college education which would impact their family's future living circumstances. Additionally, another single-parent mother who was Navajo began to pawn cultural jewelry to pay for her son's college expenses (Tachine & Cabrera, 2021). Some American Indian parents overtly have a lack of knowledge of the financial aid procedure and how significant the costs are for their children to attend college. American Indian students do not have a free education, as numerous individuals may think but in contrast, it's complex for those students as the key issue is financial aid. Upon arrival, the under-preparedness is there, however, the correct assistance of financial aid falls short (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). American Indian families also need to gain knowledge on how to seek scholarship assistance for their children

from American Indian scholarship providers such as the American Indian Graduate Center. Also, American Indian families need to cultivate their knowledge about the financial aid process at colleges and universities to prepare for the expenses of a higher education degree.

If college access is achieved by American Indian students, then the cost of attending college is another decision to make with the risk of debt by taking out student loans. Poverty is also an issue, "although there have been increases in employment rates for incomes for AI/AN people living on reservations, on average, on reservation Native residents are the economically poorest group in the United States" (Brayboy et al., 2012, p. 40). American Indian students who come from a low-income background and grapple with increased tuition rates may solely depend on financial aid to matriculate into a college or university (Brayboy et al., 2012). American Indian men must formulate a financial plan to pay for college when access to a higher education is granted.

Forms of Capital

Cultural and social capital also play key factors in shaping college access for Indigenous students such as knowing middle-class ways of being in mainstream society. Bourdieu (1986) stated, "The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation..." (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18). However, Indigenous students lack this specific cultural capital which is solely Eurocentric middle-class to middle upper class ways of being. Continuing to draw upon Bourdieu's work, "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network..." (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). Furthermore, Indigenous students also fall short of the white mainstream social capital that fosters benefits and individual advantages due to certain

social networks. Regarding college access, not having these valued forms of capital may complicate the process of college readiness and college going within Indigenous populations.

Some minority first-generation college students fall short of the cultural capital that permeates the college and university context due to the poor K-12 school systems that some minority first-generation college students attend. Furthermore, some minority first-generation college students' access to a college or university poses a challenge due to the educational inequities that encompass minorities. College students who are underprepared for college seek to establish a college-going avenue for the future of others by overcoming the adversities in a higher education context. Higher education role models can be instrumental and cultivate the social capital of first-generation college students who continuously engage and interact with these higher education role models (Luedke, 2020). The gap in the literature encompasses "the ways that promoting college going in communities" specifically the youth uplifting the community (Luedke, 2020, p. 1171). Moreover, a dearth of research exists on how minorities reciprocate capital within fields. Students may struggle within the higher education realm if their parents did not matriculate into a college or university thus built capital is insignificant (Luedke, 2020). However, today funds of knowledge can complicate cultural capital and highlight excluding people of color.

Funds of Knowledge. Funds of knowledge as a concept has been utilized to record the conduit of life knowledge that exists in the lower portion of the stratified society in the U.S. (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama 2012; Przymus & Malin, 2021). Latinx parents who did not matriculate into a college or university still emphasized how imperative it was to seek a higher education (Luedke, 2021). Latinx families also assist with information about college and university choice and the process of applying (Luedke, 2021). Esteban-Guitart et al. (2019) indicated that robust

knowledge and expertise in construction skills and farming skills lived within the households of Mexicans residing in Arizona. Teachers must learn how to implement and mold these funds of knowledge into the curriculum and create engaging activities in the classroom (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019). Moreover, American Indian men's funds of knowledge should also be implemented in the high school classroom as a plethora of cultural knowledge lives in homes along with many other diverse skills sets such as crafting. However, Esteban et al.'s (2019) study pointed out that the funds of knowledge from the family and funds of identity from the learner should be utilized in future studies along with needing to find out if the student's performance at school ameliorates.

American Indian Students. Regarding college access, enrollment rates are imperative to consider among American Indian students. American Indian men are enrolling at a lower rate than American Indian women who are enrolling at an increased rate (Shotton et al., 2018). In addition, a gap exists with not offering entrance exam preparation courses to American Indian students. In 2013, American Indian women were receiving more master's and advanced degrees than American Indian men. However, in 2012, American Indian men surpassed American Indian women in the STEM field earning more bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees (Shotton et al., 2018). Tribal nations must ameliorate college and university access for American Indian students to start the process of succeeding at higher rates within a college or university setting. However, mainstream colleges and universities duty should be meeting the needs and better serving American Indian men students on all levels to foster success.

Latinx Students. Just as American Indian students grapple with the financial aspects of college, Latinx students face the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals obstacle to access a higher education. For undocumented Latinx students, DACA must be obtained to create access

to pursue higher education and participate in social mobility (Price & Mowry-Mora, 2020). Undocumented Latinx students have decreased matriculation rates in colleges and universities across the board (Martinez et al., 2019). In the autumn of 2017, no DACA applications were processed as new, however, 700,000 DACA adolescents continue to renew in two-year intervals. In the U.S., a total of 45% of migrant DACA adolescents reside in Texas at 113,000 along with California at 197,000. In-state tuition was granted to undocumented adolescents who completed high school through a bill that was endorsed by a governor in Virginia. Thus, the probability of accessing colleges and universities will be conducive for undocumented adolescents within Virginia (Price & Mowry-Mora, 2020).

African American Students. Latinx students who are undocumented struggle with the additional obstacles to accessing college in the United States. Historically, access has been challenging for African Americans, but since the Civil Rights era, African American matriculation rates have increased within colleges and universities (Comeaux et al., 2020). From 1976 to the year of 2013, African American matriculation went from 10% to 15% in higher education. College access along with completion rates has been impacted by a system of inequities along with race. Among African American students, evidence has found that family and mothers are instrumental in the choices of enrolling in a college. Furthermore, evidence has suggested that high school counselors have played an instrumental role in African American student's college readiness. Evidence has pointed out that inequities exist within the resources of schools and curriculums which impacts the college access of minorities (Comeaux et al., 2020).

Men of Color

Men of color continue to face educational inequities and lack the advice and guidance on accessing a higher education from public school staff. Huerta et al. (2018) study focused on the

experiences of Asian American Pacific islanders (AAPI's), African Americans, and Latinx secondary school males who intended to pursue college. Additionally, the secondary males in the study emphasized the lack of support from high school counselors which did not foster their future trajectory. High school counselors only spent 10-15 minutes with each student as the truth of this situation could relate to the mistrust. However, in the state of California, the ratio was 760 secondary school students to only 1 secondary school counselor. Latinx students thought the secondary school counselors offered inadequate information on the financial aid process that would not foster the college-going process. Asian American Pacific Islanders, Latinx, and African Americans are victims of racism and discrimination (Huerta et al., 2018). Thus, these adolescent males of color are not adequately equipped with the knowledge for college which hinders access to a higher education.

Barriers to Access

Smith (2018) mentioned how accessible the SAT and ACT standardized tests were to American Indian communities along with exploring what resources were available to those communities for standardized test preparation. In addition, this revealed relevant barriers that hindered the success and persistence of American Indian students. Smith (2018) indicated critical barriers to educational access for those who live on reservations and for those who live outside of reservation boundaries. Furthermore, the theoretical framework utilized is Tribal Critical Race Theory with a mixed methods approach in this study.

Socioeconomic Status

Students with parents who had less education were impacted more significantly financially, academically, and mentally compared to their counterparts with educated parents (Bono et al., 2020). Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses financial stability along with the

parent's educational backgrounds which both play a key role in first-generation college students' retention and completion (McDonald et al., 2021). Low SES parents do not pass down the cultural capital that exists within the higher education realm that fosters success. Low SES students sense that they do not belong in the atmospheres of colleges and universities. Higher education institutions are not tailored for students with low SES backgrounds thus institutions articulate that success is not achievable (Zembrodt, 2021). First-generation low-SES college students may lack some tools and skills in the higher education context, but they can quickly learn how to adjust and adapt within the higher education context. Individuals who assimilate indicate having minimal stresses as they embrace both "home" and "host" identities (Hermann & Varnum, 2018). Some American Indian students have tribal cultural identities and academic identities that can vary by the surrounding context that one is participating in which can impact the SES in various ways.

Mentoring

Imperative mentoring friendships foster supportive social interactions when friends reign in mentorship positions (MacInnis et al., 2019). Mentorship provides advice and guidance regarding obstacles within academia thus individuals can control imposter syndrome notions (MacInnis et al., 2019). Low SES individuals who have friends who are incumbents in mentoring positions can reduce the pressure of imposter syndrome and create college involvement (MacInnis et al., 2019). Lastly, low SES students may emulate mentors and learn professional traits that will benefit them in their college journey and beyond.

College Access Programs

Currently, access to college for American Indians has evolved through college access programs and these programs continue to evolve and grow throughout the country and within

Indigenous communities. Youngbull (2018) indicated, that the Colorado University Upward Bound Program (CUUB) equipped her for applying to college and included challenging coursework such as calculus and physics. In addition, the CUUB program was in the service of American Indian students from specific secondary schools in Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, South Dakota, Oregon, and Washington (Youngbull, 2018). Furthermore, around 140 American Indian students went to Boulder Colorado for 6 weeks of rigor within the summer institute at Colorado University every summer (Youngbull, 2018). Thus, college access programs create avenues for a myriad of American Indians and American Indian males to access college through these programs that provide the tools and skills needed to succeed in the college setting.

For American Indian students, college access programs can bridge a smooth transition to a college or university setting. Keene (2016) pointed out that the College Horizons program encompassed "culturally grounded college access support for Native students" (Keene, 2016, p. 75). Thus, 85% within 5 years complete college, and 99% who are College Horizons alumni matriculate straight into college along with 95% within 4-year institutions revealing the percentages from the College Horizons program conveying a successful model of hopefulness (Keene, 2016). Moreover, a part of the ambitious steps that the students take to become a participant in College Horizons is that students must have recommendation letters and a GPA that surpasses a 3.0 and the students are potentially the most excellent and brilliant in Indian country (Keene, 2016). American Indian students seem to prosper from college access programs that are embedded within Indigenous cultures and values as identity plays a key role for many American Indian men.

College access programs that are deeply interwoven in American Indian cultures seem to exhibit positive outcomes for students, but educators must implement college access programs in early childhood phases to foster success and achieve access. Dr. Jerry Bread was the Outreach Coordinator for the University of Oklahoma's Native American Studies program and a professor who established a partnership with the College Links program and Norman Public Schools Education Student Services (Shotton et al., 2018). Within Norman Public Schools is the College Links program which exists as a program for higher education that is for American Indian students (Shotton et al., 2018). Furthermore, attempting to reduce some of the detachment between the cultural aspects of the student's school and home, the program plans to reveal higher education to students through earlier and constant involvement with colleges (Shotton et al., 2018). Moreover, by using American Indian values of culture to motivate students to attend college the College Links programs strive to combine knowledge about college with the culture of the public school (Shotton et al., 2018). The College Links program is vital regarding college access as young American Indian males will gain early exposure to the college setting which will foster early notions about pursuing college.

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

TCUs provide access to higher education for American Indian students across the country. The purpose of a TCU is to sustain, maintain, and cultivate unique tribal identities while pursuing a higher education (Crazy Bull, 2015). Drawing on the work of Crazy Bull we understand that preserving tribal identities is at the core of TCUs (Crazy Bull, 2015). TCUs can strengthen Tribal students' identities by providing a safe atmosphere to practice cultures throughout TCU environments and campuses. At TCUs, American Indian students can

strengthen their academic skill sets along with strengthening tribal cultures along their TCU journey.

Bryan's (2019) study emphasized the vital partnerships between mainstream universities and TCUs and how these partnerships can have a positive impact on the transfer process for TCU students which provides access to mainstream universities. For example, Haskell Indian Nations University had a bridge program with the University of Kansas in Lawrence KS. Thus, provided access to science degree programs at KU for Haskell students. Lastly, TCUs serve American Indian men in a unique way that contrasts mainstream PWIs and TCUs provide access specifically for American Indian students.

Today, the College of the Muscogee Nation (CMN) in Okmulgee, Oklahoma is chartered by the Muscogee Creek Nation (College of the Muscogee Nation, 2024) which provides access to all American Indian students along with non-Indian students who seek to pursue a degree from an accredited college. In Oklahoma, CMN is the only Tribal college that has accreditation status compared to other Tribal colleges that exist in the state. CMM accreditation confirms the standard of the academic programs offered, faculty credentials, operational facets, and indicates how the academic programs achieve the expected benchmark for education (College of the Muscogee Nation, 2024). Lastly, once American Indian students obtain degrees from CMN the degrees allow them to gain access to four-year undergraduate degree programs at colleges and universities across the country.

Indigenous Men's Experiences

I chose Charles Eastman to reveal his historical lived experience in higher education as often, historically, Indigenous men's experiences are silenced and marginalized. In the late 1800s, Charles Eastman a Sioux Indian matriculated to Dartmouth College and graduated then

went on to pursue a degree in Medicine. Eastman (1916) mentioned, that the college charter provided for him as he lived in poverty, albeit he was in better care than the other students who attended the college. The college president and other faculty respected him and expressed that he should convey his notions and be inquisitive (Eastman, 1916).

I want to connect Charles Eastman's historical lived experiences to the contemporary lived experiences of Indigenous men in higher education today. Poolaw's (2018) study highlighted how financial issues emerged before matriculating into a graduate program. Poolaw discussed how the financial aspect played a major role in pursuing a graduate program. Most Indigenous men within the study pursued funding from their tribe along with seeking scholarship funding, fellowship funding, and loan assistance to pursue a higher education. Moreover, one Indigenous man utilized various sources of funding as mentioned previously along with enlisting in the Army to pay for graduate school (Poolaw, 2018). The entire financial process can be challenging without the assistance of Tribal grants, scholarships, and other sources of funding when striving to pursue a higher education.

Begay (2018) explained his struggles with access to graduate school and the adult and higher education program due to a low GPA that occurred during his undergraduate years. Begay (2018) stated that he was accepted at the University of Arizona on a conditional status that was also transmitted to the adult and higher education program during the initial semester of the EDAH program at the University of Oklahoma. However, Still (2018) elaborated on how the Gates Millennium Scholarship program constituted access to his entire journey from an undergraduate student to a doctoral student without having to worry about debt. The Gates Millennium Scholarship program selects a specific amount of bright-minded high school seniors across all racial populations to pay for their educational journeys into the advanced degree

programs at the college or university of choice. These are recent Indigenous men's voices on college access, and we must consider the intentionality of these voices being included in the extant literature.

Historically, the literature reviewed in the colonial era conveyed how the Western colonizing forces established education by the driving force of piety and assimilation. Thus, complicated college going among Indigenous men during that era and into the federal era. However, in the federal era, access was present through monies from the federal government, but college-going enrollment numbers remained low for Indigenous peoples and men overall. We understand that the context of education has altered along with the context of access and college-going throughout the centuries for Indigenous men. Moving into more recent times we know that college access programs play a key role in fostering the Western cultural capital that is needed for college-going among Indigenous men. Furthermore, we understand that access for Indigenous students specifically Indigenous men will vary depending on various factors such as funding and academic performance in current times.

The following chapter expands on the methodology and theoretical frameworks that will be utilized within this research study. Lastly, I will elaborate on the participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethics, and responsibilities that encompass this research study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Indigenous storywork embraces an Indigenous epistemology and stories which makes storywork the appropriate cultural Indigenous methodological approach for this research. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples across the country have lived and created historical stories during their lifetimes and some of those stories still live today within Indigenous knowledge systems. I believe knowledge resides within knowledge systems that have existed for thousands and thousands of years on this continent among Indigenous peoples. Stories play a vital role within Indigenous communities as stories also intertwine with the previous lands once traveled, but songs and stories can also trace the historical routes of some Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have interacted with the world and nature for thousands of years and tribal cultures have molded definitions and meanings out of the world and land before the arrival of western paradigms.

Lastly, I am seeking to understand the stories and experiences of various American Indian men's college access roads. I am intrigued by American Indian men's backgrounds when it comes to their personal experiences with how their tribal communities created a road to college for them along with hearing why they're seeking or sought college as a pathway post high school graduation.

Theoretical Frameworks

Both Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) and the Indigenous research paradigm frameworks seem to be scarce within the extant literature so utilizing these two frameworks will bolster the Indigenous presence of theoretical frameworks within the extant literature. TribalCrit was chosen to be utilized as it upholds the stories and lived experiences of American Indian men

as true forms of data within this research study. The Indigenous research paradigm was chosen for its unique supporting lens of viewing research as a ceremony with an elevated awareness within the mind (Wilson, 2008). Additionally, the Indigenous research paradigms relationality aspect of the epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology will connect and support the stories of the American Indian men within this research study. Lastly, TribalCrit and the Indigenous research paradigm will contribute a deeper understanding of the American Indian men's stories that will be inserted into the extant literature of American Indian men's voices.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal Critical Race Theory is comprised of these nine tenets:

- 1) Colonization is endemic to society.
- 2) U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.
- 3) Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
- 4) Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge Tribal sovereignty, Tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
- 5) The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
- 6) Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked to the problematic goal of assimilation.
- 7) Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.

- 8) Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real, and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
- 9) Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429, 430).

TribalCrit is embedded within a myriad of subtle Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies that originate within Indigenous groups, however, TribalCrit arises from Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit brings forth a lens that examines the subtle experiences and existence of American Indian people since the arrival of western European settlers which dates to five centuries ago (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit validates orally transmitted knowledge and privileges stories as "legitimate forms of data and ways of being" which contrasts scientific research (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). Indigenous peoples transmit culture and traditions through oral knowledge systems, but these Indigenous oral stories contrast the validated form of Western knowledge that exists within higher education (Brayboy, 2005). Within Tribal Nations we know that "oral stories remind us of our origins and serve as lessons for the younger members of our communities; they have a place in our communities and in our lives" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). TribalCrit will provide a lens to the experiences and stories of college access among American Indian men which will validate these stories as data. Next, I will discuss Shawn Wilson's Indigenous research paradigm which is another supporting framework of Tribal Critical Race Theory.

Indigenous Research Paradigm

Wilson (2008) mentioned that the Indigenous research paradigm is to be viewed in a circular motion that connects the ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Wilson stated that relationality defines the entire Indigenous research paradigm. In addition, research is emphasized

as a ceremony to Indigenous populations (Wilson, 2008). Thus, a deeper meaning will encompass how research is conducted among Indigenous peoples. To deepen the understanding of the Indigenous research paradigms we understand that Indigenous epistemologies embrace and convey ancient cultures, traditions, customs, and Indigenous ways of being along with diverse languages and unique cultural lenses of seeing the world (Wilson, 2018). Thus, TribalCrit is also embedded within the epistemologies of Indigenous peoples which connects to Shawn Wilson's Indigenous research paradigm. TribalCrit emphasizes stories being valid data and the Indigenous research paradigm supports tribal stories within these worldviews that are conveyed by Indigenous peoples.

Tribal Critical Race theory informed my research and was utilized for my theoretical framework that addressed my problem statement through the stories of American Indian men in higher education regarding how they are gaining college access and why. The stories of American Indian men will be in front of the theoretical lens of TribalCrit as the eighth tenet emphasizes "stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). Additionally, this will be situated within the literature that lacks data on American Indian men and adolescent boys as their real stories are not expressed historically or currently (Brayboy & Bang, 2017). Tribal Critical Race theory has been justified by the nine tenets mentioned previously but also by other Indigenous scholars who have utilized TribalCrit. Also, utilizing TribalCrit will add to the literature by implementing a theoretical framework that is scarce throughout the literature which is currently dominated by Western frameworks.

The relevant theoretical frameworks of the Indigenous research paradigm and TribalCrit apply to the stories of college access as we will understand the Indigenous voices from

frameworks that are rooted in the epistemologies of Indigenous peoples. Specifically, we will gain a deeper understanding of college access from the diverse epistemologies and stories of Indigenous men. Furthermore, at the center of TribalCrit is hearing the stories as it differs from listening (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy (2005) emphasized that "hearing stories means that value is attributed to them and both the authority and the nuance of stories are understood" (p. 440). Thus, American Indian men's stories will be heard with a deeper significance and captured beyond just listening. As mentioned previously TribalCrit upholds stories as a valid form of data which is imperative to tribal nations who often tell stories from their respective knowledge systems as a way of life and existence. In addition, the Indigenous research paradigm will be a supporting framework through the relationality of the epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology. Thus, the procedure of relationships can shape a reciprocal reality revolving around the epistemology and ontology. To maintain accountable relationships, this revolves around the methodology and axiology (Wilson, 2008). The Indigenous research paradigm will strengthen the relational aspects along with maintaining accountability around relationships (Wilson, 2008).

Methods

Indigenous Storywork

Jo-ann Archibald comes from the Stó:lō Nation and created Indigenous storywork with the assistance of Stó:lō elders which became a valid methodology for the realm of education. We understand that "Archibald coined the term "Indigenous storywork" so that storytellers, story listeners/learners, researchers, and educators can pay better attention to and engage with Indigenous stories for meaningful education and research" (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 1). Many Indigenous people's stories are deeply embedded within cultures and Indigenous stories can

provide vital advice and guidance in traveling life journeys. Indigenous storywork is driven by the following principles: reciprocity, reverence, responsibility, and respect are the four ethically guiding principles for researchers to utilize when working with Indigenous people's stories and cultures when approaching the setting (Archibald et al., 2019). The researcher becomes "story ready" when emphasizing the four principles. Within the story researching procedure, a researcher is required to listen to individual American Indian stories respectfully, create relationships through the story responsibly, story wisdom must be treated reverently, and then bolster the impactful story by reciprocity (Archibald et al., 2019). Thus, when retrieving Indigenous stories from participants these principles encompassed the behavior of the research process when conducting interviews and approaching the interviewee. The researcher implemented this method by respectfully approaching the American Indian men participants and respecting the storytelling of their personal college access stories. In addition, the latter principles are synergy, interrelatedness, and holism which enhance the significance of the procedure encompassing American Indian lived experiences and customary stories (Archibald et al., 2019). Lastly, the seven principles within Indigenous storywork were utilized to guide the research approach and encompass the storytellers and their stories within this study.

Methodologically, the guiding principles of Indigenous storywork have taken care of the Indigenous stories retrieved. We understand that "oral storytelling is a valuable form of human expression probably as old as humankind itself" (Fernández & Cabeza, 2018, p. 2). Stories date back to the very beginning of time and the creation of Indigenous peoples, which is evident in some Tribal Nations today, as ancient stories still live healthily within some Tribal Nations. Lastly, Indigenous peoples come from cultures of protocols and customs that carry a certain way of being and deep cultural thinking which relates to the guiding concepts of respect,

responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy when conducting research.

Participants

Criterion sampling was utilized for quality assurance (Creswell, 2018). The criterion would be (1) American Indian men currently enrolled in a higher education institution or recently graduated and (2) identify as American Indian men. Snowball sampling and Indigenous storywork have been utilized for this study. Creswell pointed out, “Snowball and chain identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (Creswell, 2018, p. 159). I recruited participants from the native student organization at the University of Oklahoma (OU), then used snowball sampling and created a flyer to post on social media to acquire participants at other colleges and universities. In addition, a flyer was posted at the University of Oklahoma to reach American Indian male students across the campus to participate in this study. Furthermore, there was a public open call for American Indian male students who are currently enrolled in college and have recently graduated from a college or university.

More importantly, I built a relationship with the participants to hear their stories by empathizing and relating to their stories and building rapport. It's imperative to have trust and patience before listening to stories (Archibald, 2008). In the Indigenous context of seeking information, one must be patient with the source of knowledge speaking to hear the story. Establishing trust is another vital aspect of the relationship between the storyteller and listener before moving forward to listen to the stories. The listener must gain the trust of the storytellers to connect beyond the surface level to voice the stories. The old folks convey its vital to utilize three ears when listening such as the ones on your head and the heart (Archibald, 2008).

Indigenous storywork emphasized that "research as conversation is characterized as an open-ended interview with the opportunity of both sides to engage in talk rather than only one party doing most of the talking" (Archibald, 2008, p. 47). Utilizing Indigenous storywork allowed me to converse with the storyteller through a two-way conversation that opened the storyteller up to another level of comfort to share stories.

In addition, I emailed the consent form to the participant to confirm participation or deny participation in the research study. I utilized an iPhone 13 to record the participant's interviews then saved the interviews on a laptop and stored them in a password protected private folder. I shared the transcripts with the participants through email to make sure the transcripts were accurate. The participants were able to make edits and revisions to the transcripts and email them back to me to honor the values of relationality and respect.

Data Collection

The interviewees participated in online zoom interviews throughout the data collection process. Indigenous storywork utilizes the principle of respect which acknowledges the respect between individuals and culturally based knowledge (Archibald, 2008). Thus, the principle of respect has been utilized when listening to the stories of the participants. In addition, I interviewed eleven American Indian men who are current college students or college graduates who have graduated within the last three years. The interviewees were made aware of the interview protocol (Appendix A) and had the option to decline or answer any questions throughout the online and in-person interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer. For example, I asked, "What are the stories and experiences about your college access journey from high school?"

Data Analysis

For this research study, I utilized inductive analysis for the analytic approach as it will tailor this research study the best. This analytic method captured more in-depth imperative portions of the data to convey how the research was bolstered all around. Shanks's (1994) thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data for this study. Thus, enabled me to search for patterns in the data and foster coding, comparing, contrasting, categorizing, and themes. More importantly, TribalCrit along with the Indigenous research paradigm lenses were utilized within the data analysis process as I reviewed the transcripts then coded and arrived at my major themes. Indigenous storywork mentioned “responsible story use is important” which will also be considered in the data analysis (Archibald, 2008, p. 43).

The voices of eleven American Indian men were audio recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed. To analyze the data, I used my way of being as a singer who paid for my seat at the drum within my Ponca culture. As a Ponca singer I sing songs in the language that tells historical stories about certain times in the tribes history that occurred thousands and hundreds of years ago. To learn songs, you must listen to them repeatedly, as I used this technique for my participants interviews. I repeatedly listened to the participants interviews and captured codes and overarching themes throughout each interview. In addition, I transcribed each participant’s story and repeatedly read through each transcript to code sections. Themes also began to emerge throughout the transcripts and notes were taken in the margins of each transcript highlighting themes and codes. As I listen to a song repeatedly you can begin to hear the story and tune of the song such as the participants codes and themes that emerged in the interviews. I highlighted key words and quotes throughout the participants interviews to create codes. When sharing a story

through a song a singer is also highlighting a certain time in history. For each code a different color of highlighter was used for each of these codes.

Trustworthiness

Peer triangulation and data triangulation was conducted to enhance the credibility of this study. Peer triangulation and data triangulation encompasses the participant's accuracy of perceptions and the conceptual interpretation of the participant's raw data. A subjectivity statement was created to encompass and understand the beliefs, values, and biases of the researcher. This corresponds with Creswell (2018) the researcher reveals biases, values, and experiences inside the researcher's mind and notions. The subjectivity statement brackets the researcher's core beliefs, values, and biases so the study will not be heavily impacted by these core beliefs.

Ethics and Responsibilities

I selected the participant's pseudonyms to protect their identities and to avoid identifying any private information about the participants. The purpose of this study was disclosed to participants through in-person meetings and through zoom online. In addition, consent forms were distributed to participants before conducting the interviews and I emphasized that participation is voluntary before any participants signed the document. Moreover, I want to acknowledge that the Tribal Critical Race theory lens was utilized within this research study to validate American Indian men's college access stories as legitimate data. Furthermore, some of the researcher's raw data was placed in secure locations after I analyzed the data. Indigenous storywork practices reciprocity which includes sharing and giving back (Archibald, 2008). Thus, from my position as the researcher, it is my responsibility to give back to the participants by

emailing or sharing copies of this research study to them and inviting the participants to the dissertation defense.

Summary/Conclusion

The study highlights and expands on the minimal research that has been conducted on the stories of how American Indian men are gaining college access and why. In addition, the intentionality is to include the voices of American Indian men in the literature of higher education and to honor those voices. The extant literature will receive more in-depth American Indian men's perspectives on college access stories that continue to impact matriculation rates, completion rates, and conferred degrees within higher education. In the subsequent chapter, I will highlight the codes of “the impact of family”, “scholarships provide access to college”, “FAFSA”, “community”, “predominant white institution” and “tribal scholarships paying for books and fees” that emerged from the data. Lastly, I will discuss the themes of “influences”, “college exposure in high school”, “scholarships”, “institutional type”, “Indigenous resilience and navigation” and “getting your education and coming back to help your people.”

Chapter 4

In this chapter the eleven storytellers are introduced along with their geographical locations of their tribal nations, institutional type, and a brief story. The Tribal Critical Race Theory and the Indigenous research paradigm are unpacked encompassing the data analysis. More importantly, I am honored to share the stories of these eleven storytellers who represent diverse tribal nations throughout the country. Lastly, I elaborate on the major themes of “influences”, “college exposure in high school”, “scholarships”, “institutional type”, “Indigenous resilience and navigation”, “getting your education and coming back to help your people” in this section.

Tribal Critical Race Theory is utilized as a lens for the college access stories of these eleven storytellers in this chapter. Brayboy (2005) emphasized, “stories as “data” are important, and one key to collecting these data is “hearing” the stories (p. 440). When receiving the voiced eleven college access stories, I utilized deep listening and hearing with the ear which supported my technique of deep listening to songs within my Ponca culture. More importantly, the stories retrieved from the eleven storyteller’s voices are valid data for this research study. I want these college access stories to be released into the air like a song so future American Indian men can catch these stories from the air and learn how these American Indian men accessed college. Thus, American Indian men will know how to navigate their own college access road and succeed. Lastly, the Indigenous research paradigm lens is utilized and rooted within an Indigenous epistemology which encompasses the eleven voiced college access stories. Wilson (2008) pointed out, “just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships” (p. 70).

Introducing the Storytellers

Within my Ponca culture, Ponca individuals must introduce themselves to the people when paying their way into the arena to dance or to sing at the drum. I will now introduce the eleven American Indian men who voiced their stories about their unique college access journeys. Good afternoon, friends and relatives this is:

Jared

Jared matriculated into a predominant white institution located in the south-central region of the country. He also comes from a federally recognized tribal nation in the south-central region area of the country. Jared spoke about what college access meant to him, “Because one of the biggest lessons I've had to learn coming into higher education is it's not good enough to attend these institutions if you cannot sustain your place here, so to speak. Because like I said, there are a lot of factors at play. There's a lot of academic jargon and insider knowledge that you're navigating.”

Nolan

Nolan attends a predominant white institution in the Pacific Northwest region of the country. He also comes from a tribal nation in the Pacific Northwest region. Nolan added his perspective about college access, “It opens doors. It opens possibilities. It opens opportunities. You're able to, you know, access your education and access professions otherwise closed off, especially, if you're going into the medical fields or I mean any job that requires like a certification or things like that it just opens doors to really explore what you wanna do with your life.”

Larry

Larry matriculated into a predominant white institution located in the south-central region of the country. In addition, he is a descendant of tribal nations from the south-central area of the country but is enrolled with a northern tribal nation. Larry commented about what college access meant to him, “I think it's a journey and it's one that I think as an American Indian, we need a lot of help exploring and understanding because it's only gonna help more male American Indians get to college. And I think the more we investigate it and show people this is how you do, this mindset you need for, this is how you dress, or it's okay to dress like this some days, or, you know, this is what those degrees are, I think it's gonna help a lot of Indian kids get over the anxiety.”

Spike

Spike attends a predominant white institution in the southwestern region of the country. However, Spike is a descendant from tribal nations in the south-central region of the country. Spike emphasized his definition of college access, “I think college access can change your trajectory of your life. I think having an education is the one thing that people can never take away from you. And you always have something to fall back on. And that's kind of how I preach, you know, to, the students that I work with now is please learn as much as you can because, people can take away your house or your car, but they can never take away your education.”

Chebon

Chebon attended a predominately white institution and comes from a tribal nation that is now located in the south-central region of the continent. Chebon elaborated on college access, “But like she shares with me just horrifying statistics all the time about like, yeah, but one of those is like ones that she shared was that if you're indigenous with a college degree, your life

expectancy quality of living just astronomically shoots up, but it's just making sure to get that degree.”

Solomon

Solomon is a descendant from tribal nations in the south-central region of the continent and attended a TCU for his associates degree. However, he matriculated into a predominant white institution in the southwestern part of the country for his undergraduate degree. Solomon explained his perspective on college access, “So I take online courses and so just physically having access to it and then the cost and the financials of it. And so those are the two big challenges I think that I faced all the time was just getting there and having my home life and then paying for it all while I have my children and stuff. And so those were the two big challenges I had to really get over. But you know that online education has helped me tremendously.”

Harry

Harry comes from a tribal nation in the northwestern region of the country and matriculated into a predominant white university in the midwestern region. He also attended a TCU in the midwestern region for a semester during his undergraduate degree journey. Harry discussed some thoughts on college access, “College access is everything. I believe every student should have the opportunity to learn about college, and this is at a younger age, it could even go from ninth to 10th grade. They deserve the opportunity to go to a college and tour it and check out the dorms and get familiar with the environment and learn about each department and giving them that road at a younger age on what to expect to see if college is the right way to go.”

Chandler

Chandler is a citizen from a tribal nation located in the south-central region of the country. In addition, Chandler attended a predominant white institution in the south-central region of the country. Chandler mentioned his definition of college access, “I think as an Indigenous student's college access is knowing that these systems aren't made for us, but that we have the strength to succeed in them and that we can succeed, we can survive.”

Joe

Joe is enrolled with a tribal nation located in the south-central region of the country and attended a TCU for his undergraduate degree. In addition, he matriculated into a predominant white institution for his master's degree. Joe mentioned his point of view on college access, “But, you know, pushing for, greater things through education and opportunities and using the resources that are given to us, as needed people to help pay towards some of those endeavors because there's a lot of opportunity out there. And, but you have to go and find it. Sometimes it's not always there right in front of your face, but it's out there.”

Brian

Brian came from a tribal nation located in the south-central part of the country, but he attended a predominant white institution in the northwestern region. Brian pointed out his reasons to attend college, “One of my reasons is I love to learn, honestly. You know, we live in a world where it's never ending, and I've always wanted to stay up on the, you know, like, just mind, you know, I always wanted to fuel my mind with, you know, everything that I could. And I enjoy, you know, assignments. I enjoy collaborating with other classmates. I enjoy learning from other classmates.”

Neal

Neal comes from a tribal nation in the southwestern region and matriculated into a predominant white institution in the southwestern region of the country. Neal stated his perspective on college access, “So college access there's a lot of different, it's very important as we're both aware the first-year experiences can, it really informs whether a student's gonna graduate or not, or really informs the level of retention for native students. So, thinking about as early as you can, as we can begin doing outreach, the better. I think that also some of that responsibility also falls on the individual, how they're putting that out into the community.”

Major Themes

The codes of “the impact of family”, “scholarships provide access to college”, “FAFSA”, “community”, “predominant white institution” and “tribal scholarships paying for books and fees” emerged in the coding process. The themes that emerged from the data were, “influences”, “college exposure in high school”, “scholarships”, “institutional type”, “Indigenous resilience and navigation”, and “getting your education and coming back to help your people.”

Influences. Many participants voiced their influences that impacted their lives which ranged from personal goals to family members and school staff. In addition, the theme of influences emerged from the voices of participants which impacted their lives tremendously to pursue a higher education.

Jared added how a Ph.D. heavily influenced his higher education journey and how the Ph.D. could impact his community. Jared also wanted to honor his parents and attend college as his parents did not have the opportunity to attend college. He mentioned wanting to enter these higher education spaces that weren't made for American Indian people. Lastly, a schoolteacher provided encouragement that played a key role in his road to college:

For what does get granted for people who have PhDs or whatever, right? I remember that heavily influencing me because I remember not that I wasn't wanting to be the savior, but I just remember always feeling like, okay, like I want to be somebody so I can get these tools and things that further impact like my community and the people, and I want to bust the doors open and with, for people, with resources, whatever it is that we need. I wanted to kind of step up and play in that part to do it as far as like helping my community and things like that. But really, I think, but even then you know, I do remember my mom and dad kind of always talking about how they had wished they went to college, you know, if they had the money, 'cause it would've made a real difference for them as well. And so I felt like I wanted to, and you know, my mom was always, she was always like quick witted. I just remember always her being like just the sharpest tool in the shed because she'd always be, you know, while I was in the, we were in these schools, like, she would always be telling us the history of like, our people and things. And I remember always kind of like, you know, feeling down like, so we weren't even welcome in these spaces. And, you know, always just having this vibe of like, well, now I'm gonna go mess it up just so I can say <laugh>, just so I can say I was in this space. So I think my parents, you know, my community and then I honestly just didn't see it as a possibility until I got to high school just because, you know, Mrs. Thompson and a lot of my teachers, I think kind of encourages to think like, what comes next, but really, like, what are you wanting to do? And Mrs. Thompson, like, I love her to death. And I remember being annoyed with her the first time because she wants you to think like she's really one of those people that are like, you know, what change do you wanna see in the world? And what are you gonna do to go get it? And at the time I'm just like, oh my God, <laugh>, like, you're just

like, okay, but you know, I'm getting encouraged in that way. The fact that she kind of wants, she always wants you to like step into your greatness because recognizing that, you know, we only play a part in like, the greater scheme of things. And so having, I think someone who thought that or you know, thinks that way, it really encouraged me to be like, oh, like I could be somebody, I could do something while I'm here, while I have my time here.

Nolan emphasized how his father's firm stance towards seeking an education was imperative in life, "My father was very adamant that education was extremely important and encouraged both my sister and I to apply to as many colleges and to choose from what we were able to get into."

Larry commented how his family and father played major influencing roles to travel the road to college. Larry pointed out how the adolescent American Indian boys were amazed that he was a student and employee at the university. More importantly, Larry wanted to be a representation of American Indians in the higher education space to younger generations and to let them know that it's not frightening:

And then my family, you know, I want to make my family proud. My dad had to drop out of college to raise my oldest sister. And so I think there's a level of obligation, I feel, you know, because he gave up that university dream. So I'm doing it to make it up for him. And then finally the third one is I want more Indian kids to see, you know Indian scholars. I want them to know like, you can be here. It's not scary. I remember Twin Butte went to a football game with NASA and you know, through teenage kids, you know, I was talking to the boys and I remember just how shocked they were when they found out I was an employee at the university, I was a student to, it almost blew their

mind to see just, oh my gosh, it's an Indian college student and you know, he can relate to us and he can, you know, talk and he doesn't think we're rugged, you know, it's just was like, I think that moment was just like, that's why I'm here for, I want like them to know like, you can make it, you can be here.

Spike elaborated how he came from a family that was educated and that his family expected him to go to college and receive an education ever since he was a child. Spike believed that obtaining an education would create a career and income and alter his life overall:

I didn't really have a choice. <Laugh>, that's, I mean, it was ingrained in us since we were little. Like, we knew that education was the way to change your life. It was the way that you make money, it was the way that you have a career. So I don't think it was never a second thought for us. It was like, this is what you're gonna do, but you need to figure out like what you wanna be, obviously when you grow up. So yeah, it was always ingrained in us. Like I said, my dad has a master's. My mom has two masters. My grandfather was a principal, you know, like we all, we came from a family of educators, so it was just always like instilled upon us.

Chebon explained how he was expected to go to college since he was a child. Chebon points out that he had to further his education to advance in his career path of archeology. His master's degree catapulted him to pursue a Ph.D. to teach Indigenous archeology to insert American Indian voices into the predominately white field:

One, I think it was just expected. I don't think I had a choice in it. Like growing up I was always told I was going to college, so there wasn't any of that. That was just always an expectation. And, but to go from graduate degree, I think it to a graduate degree was very much the realization that graduate degree was required to really get anywhere in

archeology, like a master's. That also gives you the supervisory roles as well as makes you applicable for national parks and everything like that. Tribal strike preservation officers nag officers. And then at my master's was really being pushed to pursue a PhD because I was kind of tapped early to that I should be teaching indigenous archeology and bringing native voices into this predominantly western field.

Solomon implied how his mother was a key influence in seeking the path to a higher education and asserted how his mother's degree changed their lives. Solomon mentioned how he watched these American Indian guys act and speak which also impacted his notions about becoming educated:

Oh, my mom. My mom got her degree when I was in high school. And it changed our lives really because we, you know, she started doing these other things and so what really helped me out with her was she would take us to these things where we'd get food and stuff because her kids. And so we'd eat there, but I'd watch these guys, these native guys talk and see how they do and see how they acted. And then it seemed like they had pretty decent lives, and so I was like, yeah, I wanna be like that. And then that influenced me, my mother.

Harry did not want to go to the military so it was between staying home or going off to college, but he wanted to pursue a path in life where he could find his purpose. Harry chose to pursue college where he searched for his purpose and passion:

So, right outta high school, it was just going with the flow. You know, I had no other option. I didn't wanna go military 'cause it was too intimidating. So that's all my respect to military people. My grandma always said, don't do military. She said she'd ground me if I did <laugh>. So, like, you know, it was either college or stay home and try to find a

job there, but I just wanted to do something with my life and figure out who I was. So college was the only route. And I only did automotive technology because it was something I wanted to do. It was more of a hobby. And I'm all fortunate for working with my hands. You can make a good career out of trade school and I preach that all the time. But, you know, my passion wasn't there, so I had to go for something else.

Harry indicated how his passion of physical activity was in the driver seat to move out of state to attend college, but he also wanted to get out of his comfort zone. Harry highlights how he told his auto tech school instructor that he did not want to work in a shop for the rest of his life, so he chose to pursue a different career path and went out of state to pursue college:

So my motivation on why I went down to Bressy to finish a bachelor's degree and a master's degree was you know, I wanted something new. I wanted to get outta my comfort zone. It was a personal battle with myself. You know, no one really told me I had to do this. It was just kind of like, let me go to a big college that you see on TV and let me get outta my comfort zone. Let me grow as a person and let me figure out who I am and let me pursue a passion of mine. And my passion was something to do with physical activity. So that's where physical education comes into play. So it was more of a personal passion of what driven me to get to where I am today. And I will tell a story. It might benefit your research and stuff. But my last semester in Orangeville in auto tech school and our teacher was going around the classroom and asking us what we wanted to do after we graduate. And he came up to me, he's like, Harry, what shop you wanna work at once you're done? And, and I couldn't give him an answer 'cause I was kind of shocked. I was like, you know what? I was like, I don't think I see myself working in the shop the rest of my life. Like, it's fun, it's good money, but like to do that day in, day out, I don't

think that's my passion. You know I get bored. I get stressed. I mean, I'd be miserable, you know, on a daily basis. So that's when I pursued a different career. I don't wanna say a career change, but, you know added on to my career duties. So, you know, ultimately it was college was the only choice at the time, unless you wanted to stay back and not do anything. And after that, after evolving, it was more of a personal respect to myself of going out and coming down to Virginia and figuring out what I wanted to do there.

Chandler mentioned how his grandmother's educational journey to her masters trickled down through generations of the family's notions to seek a higher education. Chandler highlighted how his grandfather did not complete college. However, his grandmother supported and ingrained the power of education into his mother and aunt which influenced them to strive for a higher education in life:

Oh, family and community and I guess I would say like opportunity. But I'll position that even as like the financing to do it. So family was, I think education's been playing a role in all of our lives. My grandmother was a teacher who had received her master's back in the sixties, seventies. And so she had done that. And so she really instilled in I think my aunt and my mom the power of education. My grandfather only had, some college, I do not believe that he had actually graduated. He fell prey to the Greek system and just had way too much fun and then left. But he did that. And then my grandmother had done the undergraduate and then the graduate experience and really instilled that in my mom and grandma, excuse me, my aunt and my mom that at higher education was something that they needed to do.

Joe pointed out how his family along with his grandparents were influential role models in his road to college. Joe conveys how his grandfather was a chairman who was a prominent

leader that supported seeking higher expectations and upheld giving back within tribal nations and families. Joe's grandfather wanted him to surpass being ordinary and become something great in life:

Definitely my family. Specifically, both my grandpas, my grandpa Lancelot. He was the chairman of the Kiowas. And a great leader, great orator, great speaker. Just a man of respect. And he always advocated for just like pursuing high things and using those opportunities to then give back to your people you know whether your family or your tribe specifically, or just native people in general. He always used to call me, Joe my name. He always used to call me Joe Alive Siegel, 'cause he wanted to fly high and not just given to mediocrity.

Brian stated how he was an independent child and had a determined mindset of pursuing a higher education which resulted in three degrees. Brian sought knowledge during his educational road rather than seeking money:

Honestly, it was just my mindset of, you know, being able to be working in the work field and just seeing the advancement of how far a degree, you know, could carry you. And it wasn't anything about money, it was just about knowledge. And I always knew I wanted to go to school. I just never, and I've also been a very independent, you know, kid from a very young age. And so if I couldn't do it myself, I didn't, I never really needed to rely on people to, you know, to either push me or, you know, tell me this. I just, if I wanted to do it, I'll do it. And so I just always had that mindset, like, you know, I am gonna do school. What's funny is, you know, I have three degrees now, which is insane to me.

Neal thought following the norms of mainstream society's path to attend college post high school was the road to travel. Neal was ambitious and wanted more in life as he chose to not

stay home and work. Neal was interested in the prestige of a college degree which attracted his interest, but his thoughts changed over time about how he saw the degree:

I think at the time it was still just sort of like what everybody else does. What my friends are doing sort of what we see on tv. I mean, it's very embedded within the culture. Like you finish high school, the right choices to go to college. So I think that was one of the, the biggest influences. But thinking about what kept me was community. So thinking about, I mean, yes, I could have stayed home and maybe worked at the local gas station and raised livestock with the family, but I feel like after the extent, I would've wanted something more. So thinking about, I don't really think of it this way anymore, but I think the prestige of a college degree sort of was a really big amplified my interest in college.

During high school, one college prep teacher was the biggest influence on my road to a higher education. If I did not take her college prep class in high school, I would not be where I am today pursuing a higher education. My college prep teacher discussed how to write and stand out when applying for scholarships and she also pushed us to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship. My college prep teacher provided all the guidance students needed to be catapulted into the next phase of going to college.

College Exposure in High School. The theme of “college exposure in high school” emerged as college was in the conversation among many participants in their sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school. This theme seemed to emerge in many of the participants voices and highlights how the road to college began to be built in the latter phase of high school.

However, one participant started college visits before high school.

Chandler stated how his first college visit was in the sixth grade and how college visits continued into his high school years even though his school was in a rural area. Chandler added how two research institutions were the pinnacle trips for his touring class:

Okay. I think I'll go back to, gosh, my time at Boynton. So, I think even before my undergraduate degree I recall that we had college visits very early on. I wanna say that we had our first college visit beginning in sixth grade. And it was something that our entire class did. So, it was all sixth graders went to one institution. And that kind of continued throughout I think my senior year, junior year just about, so it was just, I think taking a generic class school visit to we had toured a variety of institutions, of course being based out of rural areas. We had Brush University and Buffalo Berry University think kind of the pinnacle trips as like the research institutions. But we also had the opportunity to go to Blanket College, which is where the concurrent program began at the Big Dipper University.

Chandler continued how he began to compile his list of potential colleges early in his junior year of high school with 77 institutions and 32 columns of qualifications, so he could choose his future college post high school:

I started my college search at the beginning of my junior year of high school. And I had created a spreadsheet of about 77 institutions with about 32 columns of qualifications that I wanted to prioritize in looking to an institution of where I wanted to go next.

Jared highlighted how he didn't think about attending college until the concept of college was introduced to him in high school. Jared asserted how he was oblivious to college and had no prior experiences. He spoke about being exposed to college in his junior year of high school and how his college prep teacher fostered the road to college:

I don't think I even considered college until I got to high school. And I was probably in my, like, junior year of high school. We had a college prep teacher, and she was kind of the first person to even introduce college as in my mind as this concept. I didn't know anything about it. And so really, I didn't have any experiences coming into higher education. I didn't know anything about college. You could talk about different components of it, and it would just go over my head. So really, I didn't have anything until high school. In high school. Her name is Mrs. Vicky. She really, she has college prep classes. And so, she really sat us down probably around my junior year senior year and really was like, okay, here's college, here's what majors are, here's kind of the expectations.

Chebon mentioned how the college application process began his senior year in high school and highlighted how guidance counselors played a role, “And especially our senior year, like that fall when you're applying to places and we had guidance counselors’ kind of asking back and forth, keeping track on us and GPAs. You know, so we had a pretty good process.”

Harry related on how the conversation of college emerged in the latter years of high school, “It was more junior, senior year of high school, and that's when the conversation came. You know, are you going to college? Was a basic question.”

Joe highlighted how seniors had notions about their plans post high school such as attending college or joining the workforce. Joe mentioned how the notion of college was inserted into his mind in the latter phase of high school and his school provided recruiters to potentially join the military. Joe conveyed how college trips were provided throughout the city as well:

I think junior, senior year, they definitely had us thinking about college. They had recruiters coming in and out. I think they were pretty active, I wanna say. I mean, it was a

while ago. But yeah, at least junior, senior year. But for sure by senior year most people knew what they were kind of doing. Or at least had an idea of like, I'm going to this school, I'm going to that school, or going into the workforce. Different things like that. So, from what I can remember, yeah, there was a lot of talk, especially senior year of military people coming in. I did JRTC in high school. So, a lot of recruiters talking to us about joining the service. A lot of college trips and all those things around the city.

Brian spoke about how the college conversation unfolded during the latter phase of high school, but the college conversation became more frequent his junior year with weekly meetings with his advisor:

While in high school, freshman and sophomore year, you don't really talk about it because you still have two more years. It's not until typically you're in junior and senior is when you really start talking about it. So, we did have a conversation, you know, with my advisor and, you know, we talked about things and like what my interests were, and what is it that you wanted to do after high school? If that's the case and you wanna go to school, what kind of school do you want to go to? You know, like, so that was, and that started flowing, junior year with my advisor. But that was a once-a-week meeting.

Neal recalled not having many conversations about college in high school in North Dakota, but he remembered how it may have occurred during his junior and senior years, "I think it was maybe just more during my junior and senior year. So being on the North Dakota side of things there wasn't a lot of conversation around it."

This theme highlighted "college exposure in high school" and the participants highlighted how the college conversation emerged in different years throughout high school. In addition, one participant started college visits in middle school. More importantly, the high school years are

highlighted as the vital years that college is implemented into the minds of the participants future roads to college.

In my experience, I was required to take a college prep course that built your knowledge about the college process my junior year in high school which continued to my senior year. In addition, this was the first time that I was exposed to learning about the college process. With support and guidance from the teacher we learned how to fill out the online FAFSA application and apply to scholarships. We also learned how to apply to colleges and universities through this course which was beneficial for the actual college or university of choice for students.

Scholarships. Many of the participants accessed college through scholarships and highlighted which scholarships were received along their educational journey. The theme of “scholarships” became evident in the voices of the participants as each participant voiced their story about their own unique college road:

Jared acknowledged how he gained access to college through the gates millennium scholarship that paid for his entire academic journey. Jared commented how his tribe helped him pay for books, but he didn’t need the tribal monies because he had the gates millennium scholarship:

So ironically, right, sitting here and saying, I knew nothing about college, I didn't know anything about this stuff. I didn't receive just a scholarship. I received the scholarship. So I'm actually a Gates Millennium Scholars cohort 2005. And yeah, so I actually received that one which was the only one that I needed <laugh> really to attend Blowing Wind University. I applied for like, you know, I think it's the Cherokee Nation Promise which helped, like, paid for some of my books, but it really was just extra funds because I didn't need it, because thankfully, yeah, I had help from GMS, I had all the help from GMS, and

it's actually what I've utilized with getting my master's, and it's what I'm still using to finish out now with my PhD. So it's come full gates, million scholarship, <laugh>. So that's the one that helps me gain access into all that.

Nolan emphasized how his tribal nation paid for his higher education pathway at the graduate level. Nolan expressed how he tells kids to take the opportunity to receive an education when it emerges, so Nolan had his educational opportunity arise and pursued it. Nolan pointed out how the tribe would also pay for trade school and anything else students would like to enroll in and attend:

Yeah. The tribe, if you're able to get into a college or a degree program, it's paid for, so all I have to do. Yeah, no, and that was another reason why, a huge reason why I'm like, okay, I mean, it's like I'm working in education. I am telling kids, hey, if you have an opportunity to get an education, you have to go for it. And then I see this opportunity come up, it's like, I just can't, I can't not take it. I mean, they're gonna say, Mr. Nolan, what the heck are you doing? Like, you know, you were set up to do this and you didn't do it. So yeah. They make it so easy, you know, once you're in, all you need to focus on is your schoolwork. You don't have to worry about the financial side at all, which is a blessing. And I'm really excited to, for all the kids that I work with, to watch them grow and potentially get into, and it's not even, you know, like college like traditional universities. It goes for like trade school as well. So, it's like anything you wanna do. I mean, it's pretty amazing.

Larry explained how two scholarships played an important role along with the GI bill on his journey through college:

I got the two, the one from PTO and then one from, I was the president of student council, so I got that kind of, they gave me a thousand dollars to kind of jumpstart me into getting into college. The big one, I don't know if to call it a scholarship was joining the RB and getting the GI bill.

Spike elaborated on imperative scholarships that provided access to college for him and paid for his higher education journey such as the Coca-Cola scholarship, Amigo scholarship, and local scholarships. Spike stated how the majority of his money came from private scholarships and the Worth and Dot Foundation:

Oh, there was so many that I had received. I had received like a Coca-Cola scholarship. I received the scholarship from the University of Broadcloth called the Amigo Scholarship, which gave me in-State tuition. I had a bunch of local scholarships as well soroptimist there was like a teacher's organization that I got scholarship from. A lot of like private scholarships was kind of like where I received most of my money. There was a really big one that's out of Arizona called the Dot and Worth Foundation, and that was a majority of my money. My freshman year of college. I received it and then my middle sister also received the same award six years later.

Solomon stated how these two tribal scholarships fostered his college road and highlighted how tribal scholarships can help purchase books. However, Solomon attended a low-cost college:

I received the Washka Nation Higher Education Scholarship, and I received the Plenty Nation, like it's not the federal one, but it's like the one that helps you pay for your books. So, there was another scholarship that Plenty offered, but it was not federal. And so, I

received those two scholarships basically, and I went to STHU. So, it was very low cost.

And then that was it. I received those two scholarships for the rest of my time.

Harry pointed out how unfamiliar he was with the scholarship process at the beginning of his higher education journey. However, through trial and error he eventually learned how the scholarship process worked and began receiving more scholarships in year three, four, and five. Harry thought that many American Indians may not know about catching the dream that was in Arizona:

Ooh, okay. I got a good story for this one. So right outta high school, in the first couple years of college I applied for scholarships, got denied didn't get 'em, and I know that was due because of my informal way of responding to their questions. You know, what kind of hardships did you go through? What are your challenges? And I wasn't really able to put a story behind it because I was technically still trying to find myself and who I was and what my passion was. So, first couple years, you know, it was hard. I relied mostly on tribal support and the higher education department. But after, you know, failure and trial and error and learning and figuring out how the scholarship system works, then after like year three and four and five and so on, like, I started getting more and more scholarships and, you know those scholarships range between all scholarship for undergrad American Indian Services. There's a good one. I don't think a lot of Natives know about, but catching the dream, they're based outta Arizona. They were a good one. Made a strong connection there. And even with scholarships, when I got to University of Buffalo Horn, you know, I started building my resume.

Harry continues about athletics and how he made connections with the chancellor and head basketball coach for references in the future. Harry received the McLendon Foundation

scholarship which was \$10,000 for graduate school. Harry emphasized how failure had to occur first when applying for funding, but his perseverance prevailed in the end by not giving up on seeking funding for school and his vehicle payments:

I was being part of athletics with being a cheerleader, I was able to visit with the chancellor and, you know, the head basketball coach and all that. So that really helped with, what do they call 'em references and stuff. And once I started sending those in, you know, people really started to understand my purpose and I started to understand my purpose. So, scholarships are coming in left and right. I got the McLendon Foundation Scholarship which was a 10,000 award last year for grad school. And, you know, I was blessed but it didn't come from you know, right out the get go. I had to fail first. I had to go through trials and hardships and learn, you know, you got denied because of this, so let me fix that. Let me send it back over the next year. So just kind of being repetitive and not giving up and then figuring out, you know, you could earn a lot of money. You could pay for your school, you could pay for your car payment, you could get a refund, you know, that's all worth it. So, going out right out the get go scholarships, you know, the tribe helped me out, but eventually I was able to retain more scholarships as my years went on through my college tenure.

Harry continued about how the monthly tribal scholarship helped him immensely by paying his rent and being able to purchase groceries along with keeping him debt free while attending college:

Yeah. So tribal, my tribe did help me financially. I think that's the biggest aspect where they did help me. We were getting scholarships every month. It was like a monthly scholarship. I think it ranges between 500 to 800 per month, just depending on the award

they got every year. It helped out tremendously, like paying rent, paying for food, paying the bills. It just like, without that support, without the tribal scholarship support, I can't live financially, you know, and the best thing about that is it kept me debt free. My first, like, five years in college, I believe I was debt free and I didn't have to take out any loans.

Chandler began stating the scholarships that he applied for and mentioned how he did not become a recipient to all the scholarships he applied for. Chandler continues about how his mother was a Gates Millenium scholar recipient and how she influenced his path towards the Gates Millenium scholarship:

Oh goodness. Okay. I'm gonna try and give it to you in a chronological order, but I remember the first one, or the first like large one that I remember applying for was the well, I'll say this, there were many that I applied for that I did not receive, and that is completely fine and understandable. But that was, I think the awareness of that came from Indigenous students or the Indigenous alumni of like the Gates Millennium, the Coca-Cola scholarship, those big name scholarships that have always been positioned as kind of like our tickets in were things that I applied for. My mother was a Gates Millennium scholar, so it was kind of just aside from going to college, applying for Gates was something that from day one, I think she'd already started my application.

Chandler continued about receiving his first scholarship from the university called the American Indian scholarship which covered the cost of tuition, fees, and provided a stipend for room and board. Chandler highlights how imperative local scholarships were from the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce, Tacoma American Legion, Masonic Temple of Oklahoma, Tacoma alumni association which paid for his fees during the first two years of college:

But it was the first one I received was word on the American Indian scholarship from the Buffalo Horn Cap University. And so that scholarship included membership in our president's leadership class. It included, of course, the two, the cost of tuition portion of fees, and then a stipend for room and board that would all be covered by the university. And so that I think was the first like, huge chunk off of the college bill that I saw. The other ones had to do with locally just smaller local scholarships from the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce. The Tacoma American Legion, the Masonic Temple of Oklahoma had a scholarship that we allowed for. And then just our Tacoma alumni association provides a scholarship. And so it was those small community resources that truly did end up covering, I think the remainder of my fees for my first two years of college. So a notable difference when, when they were all of these, like a thousand or 1500, those small dollar scholarships all get added up. It does make a difference. So that was something those scholarships allowed me to attend.

Chandler highlights how he received a scholarship at the state level from the Ronald McDonald House. Chandler stressed how the financial aspect to college was a big deal. Chandler tells the story about he worked and saved up money along with his mother working a second job to save up money for school expenses. Chandler then received the Carolyn Watson scholarship which fully funded his undergraduate road in higher education:

And then I would say the next one would've been there was a larger scholarship from the Ronald McDonald House. So as well as being Indigenous, I'm also a black or African American. And so there, they offer a scholarship for black students through the Ronald Reagan house? No, Ronald Reagan, the Ronald McDonald House Charities. And so I had applied for that and was an Oklahoma finalist for their national scholarship, which did

include a scholarship at the state level. So I was able to stack that on top of everything else. And then finally would've been word from the foundation about the Carolyn Watson Opportunity Scholarship. And so that one was really, I think the like green light to go to school of saying, look at all of this. That was already knocked off. Finances were a big deal. I'd been saving, I'd been working throughout once I turned 16 and saving up money. And then once I got a job, my mother, I was raised in a single parent household, but my mother was so bored, she got a second job to start saving up money for school expenses and things. So we kind of said the last two years of our time together, kind of building up this nest egg that we knew was gonna be directed to school. But it was still following all of those scholarships, that little bit of a nest egg, there were still some outstanding expenses. They were either gonna become student loans or they were going to need to be supplemented in some other way. And so once I'd received word that I'd received a Carolyn Watson scholarship, that was really kind of like, why would you not go to school? Because now it's completely free for my undergraduate. And so that was really, I think, kind of the, oh my gosh, this is a reality. So that came in the second semester of my senior year. I think I'd already committed to GIDIU already, I was acting like I was gonna go, but it wasn't until I got, I think the finances squared away that I was like, okay, now I know I'm actually going to do it.

Chandler continued about how his tribal scholarship provided funding to purchase books and a laptop for college. Chandler added how he didn't have to go in credit card debt or have any other financial issues at the time which benefitted him:

So, I think that kind of charity of like those smaller nonprofits that gave those local scholarships, the philanthropic side from that granting organization, the institutional side

and then even those national organizations, which are still charities and nonprofits, but I think it came from, and then my tribal nation had support through those scholarships. There was a little bit, I think more freedom in the tribal scholarship that allowed for things that weren't typically going to be covered such as there was a period of time where I had to drive back and forth. And so that was an unexpected expense that my tribal scholarship was able to assist in the cost of books if they were purchased outside of the bookstore that would an asserted cost, which when you've got a lot of classes that is a noticeable expense. And so that was something I was able to use my tribal scholarship for as well as technology. I did not have a laptop going into college, which was not sustainable even in 20, what was that, 2016, even before covid. So it was something that I knew I needed going in. I think I was just kind of pushing off until it became absolutely necessary. And day one, it became absolutely necessary. So that was something that my tribal scholarship assisted in covering. And so it was all, I think always those like smaller, not smaller expenses, but those expenses outside of the bursar services that you wouldn't expect that are necessary for college are where my tribe was able to supplement. And I didn't have to go into credit card debt or I didn't have to do kind of like unnecessary things or take on unnecessary aspects of a financial future at that time, which was very beneficial.

Joe highlighted how his tribal scholarship was the big one. In addition, he elaborated how other forms of financial aid fostered his higher education road. Joe explained how he received a scholarship from the Native American Committee and at the same time they offered a job to him:

Yeah the Kiowa's was the biggest one. The higher ed program, of course, FAFSA at the time. And then I worked for Native American Committee. Again, we service native

communities, anything that someone get a job, keep the job and move up the job. We provide financial services towards training school, whatever. So again, that's people going to just universities, apprenticeships, whatever. So they're here in Charging City and I actually don't remember how I found them, but I reached out to them kind of just wanting to know about their services, won a scholarship from them, and simultaneously got a job offer <laugh>. And they helped me in my master's program kind of shore up the last little bit. So, we're supplemental. We support after other scholarships have been sought after.

Brian commented on two scholarships that were \$1,500 dollars which lasted for five years that could pay for a semester of college. Brian pointed out other sources of funding such as the Pell grant and the Wyoming state needs grant:

So thinking of high school, we had, so part of our senior year, you know, and part of our senior portfolio, we had to apply for two scholarships, you know, so there was obviously basic ones that we applied to, which we pretty much got. So that those two scholarships helped and they didn't expire. They were good for five years. And so when I eventually, which was nice, because that's how long it took me to even go to school, I even after high school. So it was nice to be able to utilize those scholarships. I mean, they weren't much, I think both of them I think were \$1,500 each. But it was still nice because that still paid for like a semester. But that was pretty much the only scholarships, all the times that I have applied, for any scholarships, I never got, like, I never got it, you know, it was only just whatever our government was issuing, either it would be a Pell grant or a Wyoming state needs grant, or the only ones that I was able to gain access to.

Neal stated important scholarships that paved a financial way for his educational journey such as his tribal scholarship, blue chip award, and the Daniels Fund. Neal acknowledged other sources of funding from the Native American Student Affairs Center and other grants and scholarships from the college he was attending at that time. In addition, Neal mentioned how he was back and forth between the STEM and social science fields which altered his eligibility for funding:

Yeah, so there was my tribal scholarship. There was a, I forget what it's called. It's like a blue chip award. That's for like first gen students that are low, that are demonstrating low income. So that came from the university. And then I got lucky with a, this organization called the Daniels Fund. I believe they exist in, for students, high school students from New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, and I forget the fourth and fifth states, but it, it's a few select states that they accept applicants from applied for it and was fortunate enough to get it. So the, that it really helped cut the cost of my cost of attendance particularly during my first year. Yeah. And then during my second year was additional funding from the Native American Student Affairs Center or the Multicultural center on campus. And then some of these other scholarships and grants that were a part of the college that I was in at the time. So bounced around between STEM and social science fields. So that sort of had changed a little bit of the way I received funding or the type of funding I was eligible for.

Neal added how the regional scholarship paid for the remaining expenses for his cost of attendance at college:

So and I also sort of, my name had gotten entered into a pool for a regional scholarship that covered the rest of my expenses that for my cost of attendance that sort of exceeded the amount I received in terms of financial aid and scholarships.

When I was a senior in high school, I applied for the Gates Millenium Scholarship and became a recipient. The Gates Millenium Scholarship provided access to college and a trip to a conference in Los Angeles California which provided some vital student developmental workshops to foster growth in the college realm. Albeit, I received many other scholarships along my educational journey, some of the most imperative scholarships were my tribal scholarships that provided funding for my living expenses and hidden costs that came with being a student.

Institutional Type. Another theme that emerged from the participants voices was the “institutional type” that participants attended. The institutions that the participants attended were in diverse geographical locations throughout the country. Most participants attended predominately white institutions while three participants attended both TCU’S and PWI’s along their educational road.

Jared mentioned how he matriculated into a predominant white institution but also attended SABAZIU which isn’t classified as a TCU but it’s close to home:

Yeah, so BC is historically <laugh> a white institution, right? It, it does not serve historically it has not served any type of person of color a very predominantly white institution. I think it's gotten better over the years. But yeah, the, my short answer is that's the type of institution I enrolled into was a <laugh> PWI. Now, like from my master's, you know, I got to go back home to SABZIU, I completed my master's there. But even

then, they're not a TCU, they're a native serving institution. So yeah, that's my short answer for that.

Nolan indicated enrolling into a scholarship program with the tribe which allowed him to gain access to Meteor Shower University which had a partnership with the tribal college:

I guess both. I got access and enrolled, well, I enrolled in the scholarship program at the tribe. But I applied to the Meteor Shower University. But like I said, it's a partnership with the tribal college, so it's kind of a con I don't know. I'm technically enrolled at the Meteor Shower University, so that's okay. That's where I'm going to school.

Larry highlighted how he attended a predominantly white institution during college, “I attended Meteorite University and it's a predominantly white institution.”

Spike commented on matriculating into a PWI that had a large American Indian population and Hispanic population:

So UZYMOMO is considered a PWI, but it has a large native population, a lot of native and a lot of Hispanic population. It was Nebraska, so you get the different pueblos, you get the Navajos, you get a lot of Hispanic people. So it's considered a PWI, but there was a lot of native students there.

Chebon elaborated on the historical context of his undergraduate school being a women's college in the seventies but is now a predominantly white and public institution:

I think predominantly white. The community college might be different. Mm-Hmm. But no, I didn't go to any Christian universities hbu's or anything like that. They were predominantly and no tribal colleges, no land grant schools to my knowledge. You know, I think, okay, my undergrad used to be in all women's college, but that changed in the

seventies, but you know, that didn't, clearly doesn't apply to me. Yeah. So predominantly white and public.

Solomon explained attending a tribal college where he cultivated his writing and learned math which assisted him to make that transition to Nightfall University. Solomon went on to pursue his bachelor's degree at Nightfall University:

Yeah, FRTPC was a native college, a tribal college, that was very useful for me because, you know, they taught me all the basics, you know what I mean? How to type, how to write paragraphs and, you know, and they really helped me get all up to that math I needed, you know? And so that was very, very helpful. And then then I went to my bachelor's, I went to the Nightfall University, and that was just a general university.

Harry responded about dual enrollment in high school, and highlighted how he went on to pursue an automotive technology degree at a predominant white institution. Harry mentioned how a myriad of tribal individuals attended Otterskin Cap University even though it was a predominantly white university. Harry stated how he didn't find his space at Otterskin Cap University even though his tribal nation and reservations were there. Harry continues how he had to transfer to another predominately white university to complete his automotive technology degree but then transferred to Virginia to experience a TCU for a semester that was described as a universal reservation:

Okay. Yeah. I got a road for you. So <laugh>. Okay. So, I was actually dual enrolled while I was going to high school at the Community College. So I was at TCU. And what I heard, and this could probably go back to your other questions too, is I forget who mentioned it, but they said if you do go to our tribal college here in Kay, you definitely want to do math, English, and public speaking. And that's what I did. I actually did

biology, math and public speaking, and I did that while I was in high school in the summer, right outta high school. And I'm so happy and glad I did public speaking 'cause there's no way getting me in front of 800 people to talk public speaking. I enrolled there during high school. It was great. And then right outta high school, I went to the Otterskin Cap University and pursued that automotive technology degree, which is predominantly white, but there's a lot of tribal people that go there. 'cause The reservation there and Paint reservations there. And then my tribe's there. So there's a good group of all native people that attend that school. But then again, I still didn't find my space there. So then I transferred over to Ice University, which is more predominantly white. And finished my automotive technology degree there. And then once I finished up there in 2018, I transferred down here to Virginia and went to Little Dipper University for a semester. And we all know about Little Dipper, you know, it's a universal rez.

Harry continued about the bridge program between the universities and how the in-state tuition at Cloud Burst University alleviated some of the financial burden. Harry emphasized the main rationale for attending CBU was the physical education degree that didn't exist at Little Dipper. Harry asserted how the guidance of Jane was instrumental in making his transition to CBU and connecting him to other American Indian scholars there. He implied how the two diverse experiences with both colleges and diverse ethnicities played a role in shaping who he is today:

There's people from all over the country with different tribes and cultures and tradition, which was a home away from home for sure. And then <laugh>, I found that exchange program, that bridge program between Cloud Burst University and Little Dipper. And that's, if you go to Little Dipper for one semester, you're considered in-State. So you get

in-State at in-State tuition at CBU if you transfer over to CBU. And that helped me out a lot financially. So I did that. And one of the main reasons why I did go to CBU instead of Little Dipper is because physical education degree wasn't offered at Little Dipper. So that's why I went over to CBU. And then we know CBU is all predominantly white too. I believe the last time I heard there's only like 125 native enrolled students at CBU out of like 22,000 students I think it is. So just to be a part of that group what was, it was a blessing and nightmare to disguise. 'cause You obviously you want more people there. But, but right away, like two weeks in, when I got to CBU, I found Jane who is you know, an advisor and director over there at CBU now and just got her doctorates degree. So shout out Jane. And she really helped me with, with that period of going to CBU and then connecting with other native scholars there too. So, it was definitely a road you know, tribal colleges, predominantly white, but overall, you know, I wouldn't change a thing 'cause that helped me become the person who I am today and experience different college systems at different levels with different ethnicities and stuff. So it was a good goal for sure.

Chandler mentioned experiencing a predominant white institution, but he did not become aware of HBCUs until he attended a conference. Chandler added that a lack of knowledge existed about TCUs within his rural community and that TCUs were not an option. He emphasized the compiled list of 77 schools that he chose were predominately white institutions. Chandler pointed out that after he experienced a PWI that a TCU or HBCU would have been an interesting experience:

Yeah, so I think by and large, I only was aware of PWIs. I didn't become aware of even HBCUs until I was in college, and I was at a conference when I was asked if I was from

an HBCU because I'm visibly a person of color. And I was the only person of color. And that person knew that there were HBCUs, and so I was kind of just assumed to be an HBCU student. But even TCUs wasn't something that I think we had the expertise within our rural community to speak to as even being an option. And it wasn't something that had even been offered up. So I think I had only, I was trying to even think through like that list of 77 schools, and I think it was, they were almost all, they were all PWIs. They were all, I think like setting myself up to be the minority still. But I had gone, I think in rural Nevada, like I was, that was a PWI, I remember there were, I can count on my hand how many black students there were, and I can count on two hands how many people were active in our Native American club. And so it was kind of, I think just something I was already used to that at, like the additional burden we carry at PWIs or that additional pressure was something that I'd already grown accustomed to. And I didn't think twice about trying to reposition myself in relationship to an institution. And I think now after I've gone through it, there's still like a part of me that's like, oh, it would've been so, like, I think like an HBCU may have been a very interesting experience or like A TCU, it, it just would've been completely different than I think what I was able to experience. But it wasn't something that I was aware of and it wasn't something I was able to take advantage of. And that's not a critique or a complaint in any way. It was just I had experienced a PWI because I'd come from a PWI and was only aware of PWIs.

Joe responded about matriculating into a tribal college and a predominantly white institution for his graduate degree, "Yeah. Tribal college for Porcupine and then a white school for my master's."

Brian implied about attending a predominantly white institution for an associate of arts degree and added how a bridge campus existed next to the high school. Brian worked full time to pay for his education and to provide for his family while he attended school full time:

It wasn't until, you know, five years later that I decided, you know, I wanted to at least receive, you know, my general AA degree, you know, so I started some classes, which again, was also through, our local community college, by the college, you know, an hour and a half away was the main campus. And then we had a little bridge campus, you know, in the Plume area that was next to my high school. So we were able to, do classes there if we needed to. Majority of all of this stuff that me attending high school though, was done online just because of how far, you know, we are from, you know, the universities that I decided to choose. I did have some classes, you know, on weekends and stuff like that, but I never once, you know, not worked full-time and not attended school full-time because I needed to be able to, you know, again, provide for my family, but then also pushed through schooling because that is something that I needed to do for myself, and be able to pay for it. So, yeah, my associates in arts degree, you know, was predominantly white as well.

Neal commented on being enrolled at a predominant white institution that was a public four-year institution. However, it seemed that Neal did not want to be far away from family either:

Yeah BDIPC and BIXTU were the only two schools that I applied to. BIXTU has the moniker for its for the university near mom. Cause I think it's really close to a lot of the communities here. So I just wanted to be away from my family for a little bit. Went down south in southern Arizona. It was very close to a southern California experience with the

Arizona prices. So yeah that was the school I decided to go to. So it is a predominantly white institution. It's a public four year college. So that was my first choice to move forward with that option.

At the beginning of my undergraduate degree, I matriculated into a TCU out of state away from my family but made a family away from home by sharing the same experiences with other tribal students. More importantly, I chose to attend a TCU so I could be myself around other tribal students who could relate to my background and way of being. However, for my graduate degree I matriculated into a predominant white institution and discovered my American Indian people within that community which fostered my educational road to completion.

Indigenous Resilience and Navigation. The theme of “Indigenous resilience and navigation” emerged as “figuring out one’s way in college” which seemed to be common among participants. This theme emerged at some point during the participants educational journey as participants had to figure out their own higher education obstacles and roads while utilizing resilience.

Nolen pointed out how he had no direct path but eventually attended college and finished his higher education where he seemed to figure out his own way:

I had no direction. I withdrew. So, I ended up going to this is kind of on the side, but I ended up going to night school at a community college and then realized I needed to go back. Fortunately, I withdrew. So, I had a spot at the college, and then I came back five or six years later to finish up.

Larry stated how the lack of knowledge existed with understanding how college operated and how he had to figure out the whole process of college:

I think the most difficult challenge was just understanding how college operates. And then like, understanding majors, like I was a computer science major my full semester and then understanding like it's okay to change majors or how to do that or like even what these majors are or, and I think the only way I really overcame those challenges was running headfirst into them. And I've just been figuring out as I go and piecing it together and talking.

Chebon stated how a gap year existed from high school to his community college but also had to figure out his life:

So, like, my mom didn't go to college, and I was from predominantly living with her at that time, so she had no idea how to guide it. So, I was really left on my own. And I did take a gap year between high school and community college to kind of figure out my life and then go into the workforce for a little bit.

Solomon spoke about how a higher education was encouraged within his community.

Solomon also mentioned how he gained independence after high school:

So, from my community there is, they do encourage children to go to school and to get higher education. We believe in education, and it is helped our tribe, you know, things have run better, become better managed. And it's also, I don't know, it's to me it seems like they encouraged here, but I actually went to high school in Colorado and so I grew up away from my community. And so, you know, I didn't really know much about it. My mom graduated, but she's the only one in our family to graduate. And so, by the time I got outta high school, I was already living on my own. And so, you know, I just kind of figured it out as I went along.

Harry stated how college was suggested to him by his advisors and mentors. Harry also highlighted how the college realm was foreign to him. Harry spoke about how he didn't utilize the resources available to him in college:

So, when I go back to high school particularly senior year, I don't think I was a hundred percent in on college. I just kind of did it because that was kind of the route that the advisors and our mentors suggested. It was limited. I didn't really know much about college, especially when I graduated high school. I didn't know what financial aid was. I didn't know what a college credit was or a course. I was unfamiliar with the system on how you could have class from eight to nine and have the rest of the day off. It was all foreign to me. I wanna say the resources was there, but I was kind of more in my shell and I didn't really seek those resources and speaking to the right people to help me transition into a college life.

Harry continued to speak about how he followed in the footsteps of other high school students but also lacked knowledge about the college setting when he was accepted to college:

So, I wanna put half of that on me. But the other half, you know, growing up in rural area middle of nowhere, literally middle of nowhere. And the two big colleges there are the Quicksand University and Rainstorm University. I did apply for Rainstorm University just because, you know, it's not 'cause I wanted to, it's just kind of like going with the flow of high school students, you know. And then last second decided to go to Rainstorm University. And again, you know, I just kind of signed up submitted my application, got accepted, and that was it. I didn't know anything else. I didn't know you know; I barely knew when to show up and I didn't know what orientation was. I didn't know what to

expect. So, there was a lot of limitations there. Especially graduating previously from high school and stuff.

Brian stated how college was absent in the conversation with family. Brian also spoke about how his own self-motivation and thinking played a role in his journey:

Experiences I had, wasn't a lot. You know college was something that never was really talked about while I was growing up. You know, it wasn't something that was a conversation starter or just a conversation or communication between either my family or even in school. I can't even sit here and say that I don't even remember having a conversation with even like a guidance counselor or anybody in high school. It was all just self-determination and self, you know, just figuring it out. I didn't go to school right after high school. I didn't attend college, I should say, right after high school. I just entered the workforce, immediately, you know, I think more so or less, you know, the Indian way was always just to help my family the best way that I can, and I felt at that time was to make money.

Neal spoke about how he wanted to figure out his own way in the new environment of college and mentioned how a personal transformation unfolded:

So, for a good while I, especially when I went off to college, it was very much of like, I'm gonna try to figure out my way in this new environment. I'm not really gonna share my tribal identity. It wasn't until my second years where I really started to lean into it, and a lot of that personal transformation started to happen. But just thinking about, like, again, general observations going into the border towns it's really easy to see when you go to like a grocery store. There's people who went into the grocery store and there are people that are hanging around just the corner of the grocery store doing, you know, what

or anything but buying groceries just kind of the social dysfunctions within my family. I felt like college was always that pathway to, I don't wanna say a better life, but just being a more critical thinker about how to solve some of these issues. As we're both aware, they're very dynamic, so there's not a one solution fits all type of approach that doesn't work in our communities. But yeah, I've always had a strong sense of what a college education could provide for me.

The theme of Indigenous resilience and navigation emerged throughout these participants voices, which conveyed how participants had to figure out the higher education realm as they navigated college in a successful way, which seemed to be the story for these participants. The participants utilized resilience to break through hard times without giving up on challenging obstacles in the higher education realm.

In the beginning of my college journey, I didn't understand how the college realm worked, but as I persevered through the higher education environment, I began to understand and learn how the college realm functioned. During my undergraduate years, I also navigated other majors until the right degree program fit my future notions of a career. My experience navigating through the higher education realm was challenging but rewarding as I utilized resilience in the most complex and challenging points in my educational journey.

Getting your education and coming back to help your people. The theme of “getting your education and coming back to help your people” frequently emerged in some participants lives as the road to college was being paved. This theme included helping other tribal nations and this theme seemed to live in some tribal nation's narratives of encouragement to pursue a higher education.

Nolen stated how he received his higher education degrees and wanted to help people and help his community:

At the very beginning it was my dad. He really was adamant, like I said, but then I didn't know what I wanted to do, you know, once I got in there. And then I eventually got my undergrad. And then going back to get my master's, with a sociology degree, I ended up driving a bus a public transit bus. And I'm like, I don't wanna do this anymore. Like, what do I wanna do? And I enjoyed working with people. So, it was a kind of a lot of self, you know, self-reflection, self-discovery, just trying to figure out what I wanted to do. And that the theme, I guess, rolling into the doctorate program as well is just, you know, helping people, helping my community and like the connections you build. So, I guess it's twofold. It was the beginning of my father, but then expanding to just wanting to help others move into whatever educational field or educational path they want to go to, and just overall helping my community.

Larry articulated how his pursuit of college was not for money but rather knowing that he could help his people and help other nations after college:

Well, to start off, it wasn't about like I wanted more money or I wanted more, you know, that wasn't my intent, you know, not judging anyone whose intent is that, like getting a better job and all that. That just really wasn't, that didn't drive me to college and hasn't motivated me to get through college. What motivates me and influenced me is I can help my people, I can help other nations. By understanding how scholars talk, I can decipher research papers now and I can read it academically and I found it extremely satisfying when I can translate it and to just layman terms so other people can understand it. I've had been able to talk to my grandmas about psych, like sociology and even though they

never went to college, but because I can read it and I can now give that information to them, whereas a lot of people may be intimidated by.

Larry continued how his tribal nations supported leaving home and going to college then coming back, “I know they’re just really trying to foster that community, supportive, you know, jump out of the nest, go to university, come back.”

Harry spoke about how the community has a lens about striving to obtain an education and coming back to the community. Harry also mentioned the support system of family and friends:

I would say community support was very limited. I graduated with a class of probably, I think it was around 36 couple of us went to the military and about two or three of us went on to college. And then everyone else kind of just stuck around and hung out and popped or did their own thing. So again, back to that saying, you know, the community wants us to go out, earn our education and come back. I feel like the community has that same perspective, but not as strong as the tribal leaders say. So, I mean, I don’t think there’s really much to say with the community support, just ‘cause it was so limited. Obviously, you got your family and friends there that are gonna back you no matter what you do, whether you go to college or not, they’re always gonna support you.

Neal pointed out how the tribal scholarship organization spoke about going off to receive an education then coming back to use your education for the community:

I think one of the biggest things that the tribal scholarship organization talks about is going away to get your education and coming back to help your community. Sort of, that’s the general sense in the higher education tribal zeitgeist in on Navajo Nation. But I think a lot of it was from personal observations.

This theme of getting your education and coming back to help your people emerged in the voices of these participants but this theme also emerges across Indian country within tribal nations and within tribal students minds who pursue college. These participants understand the value of a higher education and the benefits of an education in society and within tribal communities.

From my experience receiving my higher education has benefitted my tribal community by being a role model that will inspire younger tribal men to pursue their higher education degrees. In addition, some tribal nations are being driven by obsolete constitutions and strategies, but by bringing an education to the table, new innovative notions and strategies can potentially improve tribal nations moving into the future. Lastly, obtaining a higher education has strengthened my tools and skills to solve issues and problems that may arise in the tribal work environment.

Summary

In this chapter, influential individuals were paramount in many of the participants roads to college which propelled participants to pursue and attend college. Many participants conveyed their road to college began occurring during the latter years of high school. The college road started to be constructed through college prep, counselors, questioning about college, college searching, and serious conversations about going to college. However, one participant was exposed to college in the sixth grade where the participants school classroom toured colleges and universities which continued through high school. Furthermore, scholarships provided access to college for participants which created a road to PWI's and some TCU's. Some participants highlighted how they figured out their own higher education roads while encountering difficult situations such as lacking the knowledge of how college works, but participants still seemed to

succeed navigating college. Some participants strived to ameliorate their communities and people by receiving an education. Lastly, one participant was inspired to help Tribal Nations and help Tribal people, which outweighed the potential increase in pay after receiving a college degree.

Chapter 5

This chapter includes how Ponca songs and stories are intertwined with Indigenous storywork. Subsequently, the implications and recommendations and the understanding of the findings through the Tribal Critical Race Theory and Indigenous Research Paradigm is covered. In addition, I elaborate on the recommendations for practice which can provide beneficial insight for higher education institutions, practitioners, tribal nations, and families. Furthermore, the recommendations for research encompassed further research on scholarships, early college exposure, carrying the notion of getting an education and coming back to help your community and or people, and challenging intersections and resilience. Furthermore, future directions of this research study will be highlighted. Lastly, the researcher's positionality and conclusion will conclude the chapter.

Ponca songs articulate stories about individuals and their brave actions that occurred in historical times from thousands of years ago to more recent times such as World War I. Furthermore, Ponca songs tell stories about encounters with the enemy and how horses were perceived at one time in history. Ponca songs are a rich knowledge system that encompasses story telling which is a part of Indigenous storywork. Archibald (2008) indicated, "My dear ones, our work is about to begin. Usually, the cultural work is witnessed by the guests through oral tradition, which includes speech, story, and song" (p. 4). For thousands of years, Ponca songs and stories were learned orally by diverse Ponca singers throughout time that could recall a certain song and translate the story that lived inside the song. The eleven American Indian men's stories are centered throughout this research study which tells their unique stories about gaining access to college during this era of history.

Implications and Recommendations

Tribal Critical Race Theory and the Indigenous Research Paradigm was utilized to mold my understanding of the findings among the eleven American Indian men who accessed college. Brayboy (2005) explained, how theory and stories cannot be separated but stories create theory, which make the legitimacy of stories real avenues of data. Furthermore, through the stories of the eleven participants the findings emerged through influences, scholarships and institutions, college exposure, getting your education and coming back to help, and Indigenous resilience and navigation. American Indian people have utilized stories to save their cultural knowledge systems, songs, and identities since time immemorial and continue to do so in the present time. Wilson (2008) elaborated on relationships and space that individuals share:

Second is the concept of the linking of the space between people with the relationship that they share. This is important for me to bring out here, and I will talk about it more in a couple of pages. The space and therefore the relationship between people or between people and their environment is seen as sacred a key concept within many Indigenous people's spirituality. By reducing the space between things together so that they share the same space is what ceremony is about. This is why research itself is sacred ceremony within an Indigenous research paradigm, as it is all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space (p.87)

From my perspective as the researcher, while conducting interviews on zoom with the eleven American Indian men participants we shared a connection of relationality through the shared online space which played a role in relational accountability. Thus, upholding and creating relationships within the online space of zoom allowed the researcher to move forward in a relational way to retrieve the college access stories.

The participants voiced the influential individuals that encouraged them to pursue a higher education which ultimately impacted their notions to attend college. Jared asserted how a schoolteacher encouraged students to step into their potential and flourish which fostered his college going path. Larry pointed out that his father had to drop out of college to rear his sister, so he wanted to pursue college and make it up for his father. These influences supported and shaped the American Indian men's college access roads and played a motivating factor to pursue a higher education.

The eleven participants voiced their stories about how they gained access to college and scholarships played a vital role while on their road through higher education. These were some of the scholarships that fostered the participants access to college: Gates Millenium scholarship, Tribal scholarships, Coca Cola scholarship, Amigo scholarship, private scholarships, local scholarships, Worth and Dot Foundation, fellowships, Catching the Dream, American Indian scholarship, Carolyn Watson scholarship, McLendon Foundation scholarship, regional scholarship, and the Daniels Fund. Furthermore, tribal scholarships are playing an imperative role in creating that road to college for American Indian men. These scholarships provided access to several predominant white universities and to some tribal colleges and universities for the eleven participants.

Several participants voiced that college exposure began in the last two years of high school during their junior and senior years. Harry and Joe voiced stories and experiences about the beginning of their college access journeys from high school. Harry pointed out that the college conversation of going to college emerged during his junior and senior years of high school. Joe related and implied how college notions were being planted during his junior and senior years of high school and most students knew if they were going to attend college or start a

career in the workforce. In addition, there is a need for college exposure to begin in the earlier phases of life for American Indian men who plan on seeking a degree after secondary school. More importantly, tribal nations need to start earlier college exposure to familiarize our younger generations of American Indian men to the college realm, so American Indian men can succeed in the context of academia at higher rates, and potentially come back home and build stronger tribal nations.

Participants voiced their Indigenous resilience and navigation while finding their own way through the realm of higher education when some participants had no college knowledge. Larry added how he had to go through the unknown experience of changing majors while utilizing resilience to transfer to a new major and move forward with a new degree. In addition, Harry elaborated how the college realm was foreign in all aspects but began to utilize resilience and started cultivating learning within the college realm as time progressed through college. When participants encountered complex intersections in higher education, resilience occurred in the minds and notions of participants which resulted in successfully overcoming those complex situations.

Some of the participants voiced that “getting your education and coming back to help” your community is the purpose of seeking a higher education. Neal’s tribal scholarship organization fostered that narrative of seeking your education and bringing that education back to help your community. Larry elaborated that seeking an education would create a route to help his people and community but by pursuing a higher education he could also understand scholarly conversations so he could communicate in lay terms to family members. In addition, family members can motivate and influence your educational goals of seeking a degree. However, existing research and scholarship has pointed out that getting your education and coming back to

help is evident within Tribal communities. Keene (2014) and Reyes (2019) reaffirm these findings.

Keene (2014) stated that the rationale for accessing an education is to come back to the community. In Reyes (2019) study two participants for instance, “were met with questions as to why, if they were well educated, they would decide to return home to develop their careers” (p. 625). Previous studies have indicated that American Indian’s pursue a higher education to contribute to their communities with the knowledge, tools, and skills gained at college to improve tribal communities and tribal nations.

My intentions were to include these voices to the extant literature that conveys minimal voices of American Indian men and college access stories. American Indian men are a unique population who are underrepresented and understudied within higher education scholarship. These voices and stories will provide a deeper understanding of American Indian men’s college access roads and will provide a deeper insight into the experiences of American Indian men in higher education. In addition, deficit models are pervasive in the literature encompassing American Indian men in higher education highlighting the negative outcomes. However, I strived to assert a strength-based approach to my study to acknowledge the positive strides American Indian men are creating when gaining access to college. Poolaw (2018) emphasized, its paramount that scholars scrutinize the experiences of this population to develop more tools to navigate and discover success in the higher education context. Lastly, these unique stories are steppingstones to build that success for American Indian men in the higher education realm.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

This section highlights the recommendations for research and practice that can provide invaluable insight for higher education institutions, practitioners, families, and tribal nations.

Jared was a recipient of the Gates Millenium scholarship and Spike was a recipient of the Coca Cola scholarship, Amigo Scholarship, and the Worth and Dot Foundation. Harry was a recipient of the McLendon Foundation scholarship and Neal was a recipient of the Daniels Fund. These scholarships paved a road for these American Indian men to access college and travel through the higher education realm.

Recommendations for Practice

I would recommend families, tribal nations, and higher education institutions and practitioners to encourage future American Indian men to apply for these specific scholarships to access college and obtain degrees. In addition, tribal nations and families can assist alongside higher education institutions by seeking and retrieving the information to specific scholarships for American Indian men to gain access to college. Recommending higher education student support programs to consider what phase American Indian men were exposed to college during secondary school and provide college knowledge information where it is needed. However, tribal nations higher education departments could also provide the college knowledge needed for American Indian men to move forward on their college journey. Higher education institutions and student support programs need to better support American Indian men who encounter these challenging crossroads in higher education by meeting them at the exact moment of the challenge to foster that path of retention and success. However, tribal nations could assist in retention efforts by providing services and resources alongside higher education institutions to support challenging crossroads in the lives of American Indian men.

Recommendations for Research

I would recommend further research on the success rates on specific scholarships for American Indian men in specific geographic locations and states. Such as some participants were

in the southwestern part of the country and some scholarships were exclusively offered in that area. In addition, some scholarships were exclusively offered at specific colleges and universities for these American Indian men. Further research needs to be conducted on college exposure at earlier phases in the lives of American Indian men and specific tribal communities. We need a deeper understanding of college exposure from pre-k through 12th grade on American Indian boys and men. In addition, research should strive to understand the success rates of young American Indian boys and men who were exposed to college earlier in life.

Further research needs to be conducted on American Indian men who carry the notion of getting an education and coming back to help your community and or people. Higher education institutions and practitioners need to foster and cultivate that notion and belief of getting your education and coming back to help your community to obtain more degrees and increase success rates among American Indian men.

Finally, additional research on American Indian men's challenging intersections in the higher education realm while utilizing resilience needs to be investigated further. This study highlighted how American Indian men encountered figuring out a path along their educational journey and we need a deeper understanding of those unique challenges to ameliorate American Indian men success rates in higher education.

Future directions could expand the findings by focusing on specific majors and college access roads which led American Indian men to law school or to schools of medicine. Future research could also utilize quantitative or mixed methods to enhance a deeper understanding of college access roads for American Indian men. I would recommend collaborating with diverse disciplines to broaden the perspective on American Indian men and college access. Future

research could apply future findings to higher education institutions, policies, practices, and tribal nations to improve American Indian men's lives across all contexts.

Researchers Positionality

In the beginning of conducting research, I grappled with frameworks and methodologies but as the research process unfolded, I gained growth utilizing Indigenous frameworks and methodologies. Revisiting existing Indigenous scholarship constantly reminded my notions of how imperative Indigenous research is within western academia to push back against dominant western frameworks and methods (Archibald, 2008; Wilson, 2008; Shotton et al., 2018; Archibald et al., 2019). Thus, corroborates Indigenous ways of conducting research within the extant literature. In addition, immense growth came from the IRB approval process as stipulations had to be approved by the IRB which took patience on my end as the researcher. However, navigating the IRB approval process has now bolstered my skills when seeking IRB approval to conduct research in the future. Conducting interviews with the storytellers was another cultivating experience as a researcher which shed more light on the process. The storytellers also provided imperative insight to my own process of approaching future storytellers.

As a researcher I am also grounded in my tribal identity, as I implemented my own tribal knowledge that traveled through a knowledge system from thousands of years ago to the present time into my research process, which created a closer relationship to the research process. Furthermore, I visited and reflected on the stories from the participants college access roads from their communities and began to see the ingredients of diverse hardships, resilience, and success all mixed in the asphalt being laid on their unique roads. Lastly, I hope to honor the voices and

stories of the American Indian men in this research with authenticity and provide valuable insight to tribal communities, families, and higher education institutions and practitioners.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of American Indian men's college access stories and their Uhé (road) in life to pursuing a higher education. The participants shared their unique stories about gaining access to college and how the road to college was created and paved by influential individuals, scholarships, and resilience which propelled them forward. These college access stories need to be heard by future generations of American Indian men who strive to find their paths to college who have yet experienced the college life. Brayboy and Bang (2017) mentioned, "Positive education outcomes are important as they have the potential for enhanced social, political, and economic success—not only for the American Indian individuals but also for their tribal nations and communities" (p. 7). By sharing this same perspective, when our American Indian men access college and obtain degrees these individuals ameliorate their western cultural and social capital for their families and tribal communities to create stronger paths to succeed in higher education and in mainstream society.

When my Ponca people complete a day of singing and dancing, the singers render a closing song:

Hey-thoska Naw-zhe-bayoooheyy, Hey-thoska Naw-zhe-bayoooheyy, He-thoska Naw-zhe-bayoohey, Hey-thoska Naw-zhe-bay Gah-cah-bayoohey Hey-thoska Naw-zhe-bay Gah-cah-bayooheythey

Shay-no Zhinga Ew-Hay-Tay Way-gah-cah-bayo-he-they Wakondah gah-cah-bay Naw-zhe-bayoohey Hey-thoska- Naw-Zhe-Bay Gah-cah-bayoohey-they

References

- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.
- Archibald, J., Lee-Morgan, J. B. J., De Santolo, J. (2019). *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Begay, M. (2018). Beyond access: Indigenizing programs for Native American student success, In Shotton, H., Waterman, S., & Lowe, S. (First ed.).
- Bono, G., Reil, K., & Hescox, J. (2020). Stress and wellbeing in urban college students in the US during the COVID-19 pandemic: Can grit and gratitude help?. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 10(3).
- Bordelon, T., & Atkinson, A. (2020). A Pathway for Native American Students to Access a Mainstream University for Social Work Education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 56(1), 91-104.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. Richardson, J., *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 241–58
- Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The urban review*, 37, 425-446.
- Brayboy, B. M. J., Fann, A. J., Castagno, A. E., & Solyom, J. A. (2012). *Postsecondary education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher education for nation building and self-determination: ASHE Higher Education Report 37: 5*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Brayboy, B., & Bang, M. (2017). A Study of Indigenous Boys and Men.
[Http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/A-Study-of-Indigenous-Boys.pdf](http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/A-Study-of-Indigenous-Boys.pdf).

- Brayboy, B., & Maaka, M. (2015). K–12 Achievement for Indigenous Students. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 54(1), 63-98.
- Capstick, M. K., Harrell-Williams, L. M., Cockrum, C. D., & West, S. L. (2019). Exploring the effectiveness of academic coaching for academically at-risk college students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 44(3), 219-231.
- Carney, C. (1999). *Native American Higher Education in the United States* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., Poth C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & choosing among five approaches*. USA: Sage Publications.
- College of the Muscogee Nation. (2024). Retrieved March 5, 2024, from <https://cmn.edu>
- College of the Muscogee Nation. (2024). Retrieved March 26, 2025, from <https://cmn.edu/accreditation/>
- De Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Branstetter, C., and Wang, X. (2019). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (NCES 2019-038). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/>.
- Eastman, C. (1916). From the Deep Woods to Civilization. 61-75.
- Esteban-Guitart, M., Lalueza, J., Zhang-Yu, C., & Llopart, M. (2019). Sustaining Students' Cultures and Identities. A Qualitative Study Based on the Funds of Knowledge and Identity Approaches. *Sustainability* (Basel, Switzerland), 11(12), 3400.
- Fernández-Llamazares, Á., & Cabeza, M. (2018). Rediscovering the potential of indigenous storytelling for conservation practice. *Conservation Letters*, 11(3), e12398.

- Flynn, S., Duncan, K., & Jorgensen, M. (2012). An Emergent Phenomenon of American Indian Postsecondary Transition and Retention. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 90(4), 437-449.
- Fox, M., Lowe, Shelly C, & McClellan, George S. (2005). *Serving Native American students / Mary Jo Tippeconnic Fox, Shelly C. Lowe, George S. McClellan, editors. (New directions for student services, no. 109). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*
- Grim, J., Bausch, E., Hussain, A., & Lonn, S. (2021). Is It What You Know or Who You Know?: An Information Typology of How First-Generation College Students Access Campus Resources. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 1521025121110681.
- Guillory, J. (2009). American Indian/Alaska Native college student retention strategies. *Journal of Development Education*, 33(2), 12-38.
- Guillory, R. M. & Wolverton, M. (2008). It's about family: Native American student persistence in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 79(1), 58-87.
- Hermann, S. D., & Varnum, M. E. (2018). Integrated social class identities improve academic performance, well-being, and workplace satisfaction. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 49(4), 635-663.
- Horrillo, S., Smith, M., Wilkins, T., Diaz Carrasco, C., Caeton, N., McIntyre, D., & Schmitt-McQuitty, L. (2021). A Positive Youth Development Approach to College and Career Readiness. *Journal of Youth Development (Online)*, 16(1), 74-99.
- Huerta, A. H., McDonough, P. M., & Allen, W. R. (2018). "You can go to college": Employing a developmental perspective to examine how young men of color construct a college-going identity. *The Urban Review*, 50(5), 713-734.

- Johnson, J., Paris, J., Curci, J., & Horchos, S. (2021). Beyond College Access: An Exploration of the Short-Term Impact of a Dual Enrollment Program. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 152102512110563.
- Keene, A. (2016). College Pride, Native Pride: A Portrait of a Culturally Grounded Precollege Access Program for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86(1), 72-97.
- Keene, A. J. (2014). *"College pride, native pride" and education for native nation building: Portraits of native students navigating freshman year* (Order No. 3662070). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1644795969). Retrieved from <https://login.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fcollege-pride-native-education-nation-building%2Fdocview%2F1644795969%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12964>
- Lee, L. (2020). American Indian male maturation. *Fourth World Journal - Center for World Indigenous Studies*, 20(1), 110-121.
- Luedke, C. (2020). Developing a College-Going Habitus: How First-Generation Latina/o/x Students Bi-directionally Exchange Familial Funds of Knowledge and Capital within Their Familias. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, 91(7), 1028-1052.
- Luedke, C. (2020). Lifting While We Climb: Undergraduate Students of Color Communal Uplift and Promotion of College-Going within Their Communities. *Review of Higher Education*, 43(4), 1167-1192.
- MacInnis, C. C., Nguyen, P., Buliga, E., & Boyce, M. A. (2019). Cross-socioeconomic class friendships can exacerbate imposturous feelings among lower-SES students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 60(5), 595-611.

Martinez, M., Vega, D., & Marquez, J. (2019). Latinx students' experiences with college access and preparation at college preparatory charter schools. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 18(1), 28-41.

McDonald, D., Baker, S., & Shulsky, D. (2021). Against the Professorial Odds: Barriers as Building Blocks for Educational Advancement. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 32(1), 92-131.

Murillo, L., & Schall, J. (2016). "They Didn't Teach Us Well": Mexican-Origin Students Speak Out About Their Readiness for College Literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(3), 315-323.

National Center for Education Statistics (2021). Table 302.10. Recent high school completers and their enrollment in college, by sex and level of institution: 1960 through 2020
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_302.10.asp

National Center for Education Statistics (2021). Table 302.60. Percentage of 18–24-year-olds enrolled in college, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity of student: 1970 through 2021
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_302.60.asp?current=yes

National Center for Education Statistics (2021). Table 302.62. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college and percentage distribution of those enrolled, by sex, race/ethnicity, and selected racial/ethnic subgroups: 2010 and 2019
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_302.62.asp?current=yes

National Center for Education Statistics (2021). Table 322.40 Bachelor's degrees conferred to males by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and field of study: 2018-19 and 2019-20 https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_322.40.asp

National Center for Educational Statistics (2021). Table 302.60 Percentage of 18-24 year olds enrolled in college, by level of institution and sex and race/ethnicity of student: 1970 through 2020.

Poolaw, J. (2018). *Modern Day Warriors: An Exploration of Indigenous Male Graduates*. (Dissertation).

Price, M., & Mowry-Mora, I. (2020). DACA AND THE DIFFERENTIATED LANDSCAPE FOR COLLEGE ACCESS: EXPERIENCES FROM A NEW DESTINATION STATE. *Geographical Review*, 110(4), 437-456.

Przymus, S., & Malin, K. (2021). DACA Funds of Knowledge: Testimonios of Access to and Success in Higher Education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 153819272110577.

Richardson, C. C., Gonzalez, A., Leal, L., Castillo, M. Z., & Carman, C. A. (2016). PSAT component scores as a predictor of success on AP exam performance for diverse students. *Education and Urban Society*, 48(4), 384-402.

Rios-Aguilar, C., & Kiyama, J. (2012). Funds of Knowledge: An Approach to Studying Latina(o) Students' Transition to College. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 11(1), 2-16.

Reyes, N. A. S. (2019). "What Am I Doing to Be a Good Ancestor?": An Indigenized Phenomenology of Giving Back Among Native College Graduates. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(3), 603–637.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218807180>

Shotton, H., J., Lowe, S., Waterman, S., & Garland, J. (2013). *Beyond the asterisk: Understanding Native students in higher education*. (First ed.).

Shotton, H., Waterman, S., & Lowe, S. (2018). *Beyond access: Indigenizing programs for Native American student success*. (First ed.).

- Smith, K. A. (2018). *Invisible barriers to higher education in indian country: Standardized testing*. <https://search-proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/2059376994?accountid=12964>
- Smith, L. T. (2019). In Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo, *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Still, C. (2018). Beyond access: Indigenizing programs for Native American student success, In Shotton, H., Waterman, S., & Lowe, S. (First ed.).
- Tachine, A., & Cabrera, N. (2021). "I'll Be Right Behind You": Native American Families, Land Debt, and College Affordability. *AERA Open*, 7, 233285842110255.
- Thompson, K. A., Posey, A. L., & Manshack, L. K. (2020). American Indian Social Work Students: Factors that Influence Success in Graduate School. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 17(1), 63-74.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wright, B. (1991). American Indian and Alaska Native Higher Education: Toward a New Century of Academic Achievement and Cultural Integrity.
- Wright, B. (1997). "For the children of the infidels:" American Indian education in the colonial colleges.
- Yadusky, K., Kheang, S., & Hoggan, C. (2021). Helping Underprepared Students Succeed: Minimizing Threats to Identity. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 45(6), 423-436.

- Youngbull, N. (2018). Beyond access: Indigenizing programs for Native American Student success, In Shotton, H., Waterman, S., & Lowe, S. (First ed.).
- Youngbull, N. R. (2017). *The (un)success of american indian gates millennium scholars within institutions of higher education*. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/docview/1892107959?accountid=12964>.
- Zembrodt, I. (2021). Commitment: Predicting persistence for low-SES students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 23(3), 580-606.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

My name is Melvin Calls Him Jr. and I come from the Ponca and Creek Nations of Oklahoma. I am a doctoral student in the Adult and Higher Education program at the University of Oklahoma (OU). Since high school, scholarships have paved the way for me to gain college access and I attended a tribal university for my undergraduate degree and a predominant white university for my graduate degree. My tribe provided vital scholarships each semester and has continued to support my educational journey this far. As you know, I am interested in investigating American Indian Men and College Access. Particularly, I am trying to investigate:

1. What are the stories about your college access road from your community and/or tribal nation? What supported and shaped your college access road?
2. What are the stories and experiences about your college access journey from high school?
3. What are your reasons for pursuing college and how will you contribute to strengthening your tribal nation?

If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

Could you please introduce yourself, tribe, and college or university, along with major and/or degree received?

[American Indian Men and College Access Session]

1. What experiences did you have gaining access to college?
2. How did your tribal nation help you gain access to college? In what ways?
3. What did your college access road look like from your community?
4. What type of college access programs did your school district offer? What grade did your college access programs start?
5. What scholarships did you receive to help you gain access to college?
6. How did your high school teachers, staff, and counselors help you gain access to college?
7. What have been the most difficult challenges in gaining access to college and how did you overcome those challenges?
8. What type of institution did you gain access to and enroll in? TCU or PWI etc.?
9. How did your family encourage you about college?
10. How is college viewed within your family?
11. What influenced you the most to pursue a higher education?
12. What are your reasons to attend college?
13. What type of test preparation workshops/courses did your tribe provide? If any?
14. How did your tribe support advanced placement students? In what ways? Such as any financial support for exams?
15. What does college access mean to you?

Closing

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you would like to ask me about this research study? If you want to contact me here is my contact information: e-mail: melvin.p.callshim-1@ou.edu or at cell phone: 405-404-2899. Also, I may need to contact you later for additional questions or clarification. Can I also have your follow-up contact information? I would like to

thank you for taking the time out of your day to participate in this interview. Also, I would like to email you a copy of my research study.