Transformative Learning, Tribal Membership and Cultural Restoration

A case study of an embedded Native American service-learning project at a research university

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In the United States, there are 565 federally recognised Native American tribal nations, all of which experience a host of challenges: lack of economic opportunities (Cornell & Kalt 2006; Lynch & Stretesky 2012; Tighe 2014; Weaver 2012), increased rates of mental health and substance abuse (Goins et al. 2012; Gone 2007; Smokowski , Evans, Cotter, & Webber 2014; West et al. 2012), and continued cultural loss resulting from historic practices of genocide and legal and social marginalisation (Evans-Campbell 2008; Gone 2007; Hartmann & Gone 2014; Ramirez & Hammack 2014; Writer 2001). Unsurprisingly, these negative experiences also occur within settings of higher education. Native American students' educational expectations are lower than those of other minority groups (Grande 2004; Thompson 2012) and they experience the lowest college admission rates and the highest rates of attrition (Kim 2011; McClellan 2005). Taken in totality, the social and educational statistics are staggering.

In response, the US federal government and institutions of higher education have established programs, resources and services for Native American students aimed at improving retention and preventing attrition. The US TRIO programs, for example, are federally funded outreach and support programs that provide under-represented and financially disadvantaged students with institutionalised educational support. While the programs are specifically for first-generation, low-income and disabled students, many of the participants are Native American. One such TRIO program is Upward Bound, which targets under-represented students and provides them with support to help them complete high school and enter a college program (US Department of Education 2017).

While these programs are helpful in orienting Native American students during their first years of college life, they do not address the specific historic or cultural needs of these students, which are likely to vary by tribal affiliation. Where these programs do focus on tribal culture, they are pan-Indian in nature. Thus, they fail to take into account cultural influences resulting from the world view of the particular tribal nation. A growing body

of research illustrates the importance of tribal-specific cultural support and connection for Native American students to succeed in college (Grande 2004; Guillory & Wolverton 2008; James, West & Madrid 2013; Writer 2001). Given that Native American culture is not homogenous, Fletcher (2010) has challenged tribal nations to create educational programming based upon their own epistemological belief systems, as opposed to Westernised models. It is in this vein that we consider a tribal-initiated service-learning project as a viable mechanism for linking specific tribal community needs with academic learning. This case is noteworthy because it was conceived of and funded by a tribal nation.
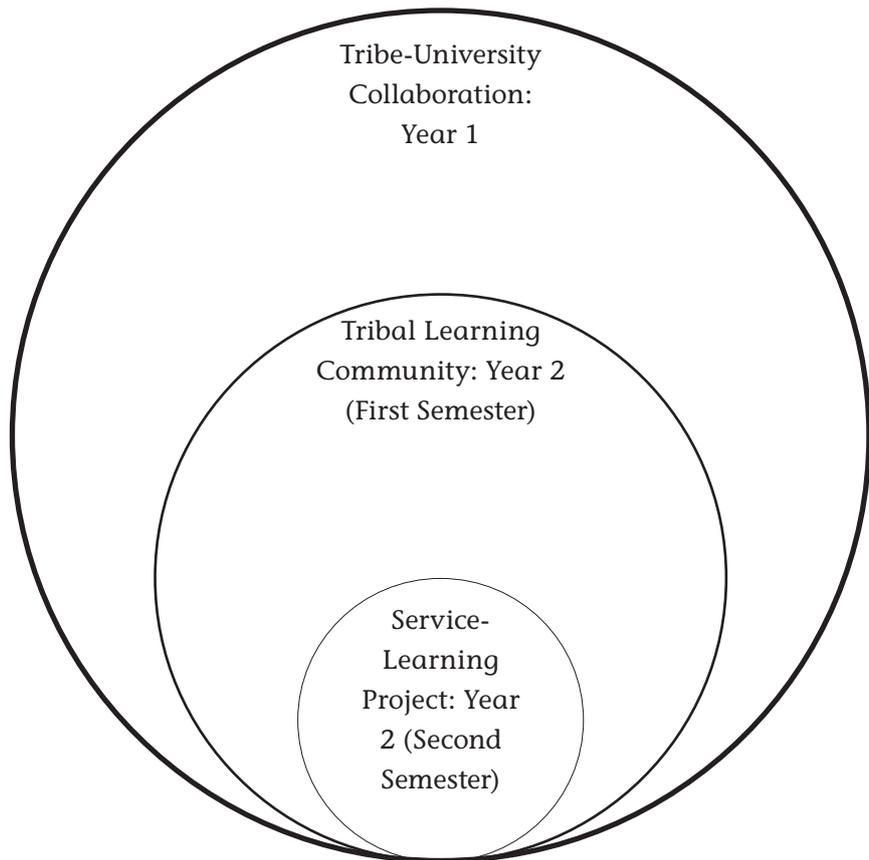
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

We contend that institutions of higher education should respond to this cultural need by facilitating the adaptation of existing models of educational resource delivery, namely service-learning, within Native American communities. Consistent with this view, Benson, Harkavy & Puckett (2007) argue that it is the moral responsibility of universities to improve the wellbeing of communities, and Fehren (2010) considers universities as intermediaries in this process. Moreover, tribal community strengths (i.e. resources and needs) should drive the process, and given the unique lived experiences of each tribal nation, the core values and goals of tribally directed service-learning projects should vary greatly.

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the development and implementation of a service-learning project embedded within a campus-based tribal learning community at the university. This service-learning project was conceptualised within the context of a community-based participatory research (CBPR) collaboration (Figure 1). CBPR involves a partnership that builds on the knowledge and skills of community members and researchers in a reciprocal manner to build capacity within the community. It has also been shown to be an effective strategy for developing action plans that help communities improve their health or education system (Adams et al. 2014; Ahari et al. 2012; Castleden, Morgan & Neimanis 2008).

In this case, the tribal nation sought out researchers at the university to develop programming and research capacity within the tribal nation. During this process, service-learning emerged as a rich means to develop culturally meaningful learning, and subsequent learning transformation, for all stakeholders (Tribal Nation undergraduate students and leaders) involved in the project. The principal research question that we address in this article is: how did tribal students and leaders come to understand the educational and cultural significance of this service-learning project?

Figure 1: Structure of collaboration

Tribe-University
Collaboration:
Year 1

Tribal Learning
Community: Year 2
(First Semester)

Service-
Learning
Project: Year
2 (Second
Semester)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transformative learning theory (Mezirow 2000) serves as the theoretical framework by which we came to understand the cultural transformation of tribal members. We assert that service-learning provided a pathway for Native American tribal members to collectively experience Indigenous-based transformative learning. This research advances the service-learning literature by demonstrating that service-learning is a culturally appropriate, highly adaptable, non-Westernised option for marginalised groups to initiate and sustain highly impactful educational experiences.

Transformative learning theory is an adult learning theory that seeks to understand qualitative changes that may occur across the life course. It places value on both psychological (individual differences) and social (belief systems) components of learning (Mezirow 1991). Habits of mind are the filters by which we process information and make sense of the world around us. According to Mezirow (2000), three conditions must be met for a transformation to occur: a disorienting dilemma, changes in initial frame of reference, and critical reflection.

Critical reflection is the process by which people make and ascribe meaning to critical incidents and life events. Perspective shifts are often the result of disorienting dilemmas, which may be a singular event such as trauma or an accumulation of experiences. In the throes of disorientation, individuals must choose to engage in critical reflection, otherwise transformation will not occur. If individuals choose to engage in critical reflection, they may emerge with new perspectives through which they view

themselves and their surroundings. According to Mezirow (2000), behavioural and attitudinal changes serve as evidence that transformational learning has occurred.

A number of transformative learning theorists have challenged the theory, as originally conceived by Mezirow, arguing that it places too much emphasis on rationality and fails to account for context (Clark & Wilson 1991; Taylor 1997). On this point, Taylor (2008) and Brooks (2001) have considered the role of constructivism by placing increased emphasis on the role of culture and its impact on meaning-making. In addition, two critical transformative learning theorists, Cunningham (1998) and Lange (2004), have examined transformations in light of Freire's (1970) theoretical conception of critical consciousness-raising.

Freire argues that minorities might become marginalised by the majority and the social structures that represent majoritarian views. Over time, marginalisation leads to oppression and false beliefs, which are created by the majority and become internalised by the minority in question. Overcoming marginalisation involves the development of a critical consciousness that will not only make them aware of the structures that limit their community but will also give them the tools for fighting injustices (Diemer et al. 2016; Gutierrez 1995). For Cunningham (1998), the transformative process remains individualised; however, consciousness-raising may entail a group of people undergoing similar processes. Lange's (2004) prime focus, however, is communal action. As she contends that transformation goes beyond epistemological shifts, her view is most conducive to tribal identity and membership.

Service-Learning in Native American Communities
Service-learning is a highly effective pedagogical tool that links community service with classroom learning. In higher education settings, it is widely employed in both student affairs and course curricula (Furco 1996; Stewart & Webster 2011). Through well-designed service-learning projects, students gain a deep sense of knowledge and a broadened world view, which may result in their challenging their own epistemological values and beliefs (Blouin & Perry 2009). Given the history of forced removal and assimilation of Native American tribal nations in the US, it cannot be assumed that tribal members will have access to and knowledge of their histories, family narratives, culture and traditions.

Indigenous service-learning involves tribal communities placing emphasis on their own unique values and world view (Guffey 1997; Roche et al. 2007) and from their tribal point of view (Lipka 1991; Semken 2005; Steinman 2011). This is especially salient as institutionalised forms of education may suppress Native American world views through the promotion of Westernised or colonised world views (Sykes 2014). In contrast, tribal service-learning may provide a pedagogical opportunity for tribal values and traditions to drive learning by providing structured

opportunities for increased awareness of cultural traditions, belonging and civic responsibility that are commensurate with the values of Indigenous communities (Hall 1991; Steinman 2011).

METHODOLOGY

In this section, we discuss why we adopted CBPR as our orientation towards the research and then describe our thinking behind the case study approach we embraced after considerable consideration. In the section that follows we discuss our research positionality and philosophical orientation as these relate to the investigation.

CBPR as an Orientation

CBPR is an approach or orientation that links community members and researchers as partners in the research process. CBPR emphasises the importance of cultural safety and requires a significant investment of time and dedication from all parties, as well as ongoing relationship building (Minkler 2005). In CBPR, the community drives the research process, including the methods used for investigation, the interpretation of data and the application of results (Metzler et al. 2003). CBPR is of particular relevance in Native American communities because the communities themselves may question Westernised education models' devaluation of Indigenous knowledge (Grande 2004). Historically, Native American communities have been wary of research as it promotes objective ways of knowing and minimises particular tribal world views and belief systems (Scheurich & Young 1997; Smith 1999).

Case Study

Case study is a widely accepted research methodology that places value on the uniqueness of a phenomenon, event or experience (Stake 1995; Yin 2009). Stake (1995) provides a three-fold typology of case study research: instrumental, collective, and intrinsic. Instrumental case studies advance a field of study, collective case studies involve a grouping of cases, and intrinsic case studies are guided by a comprehensive understanding of a case. In the latter, the case may initially be puzzling, but themes emerge through analysis. Initially, we focused on the significance of the tribal learning community; however, through reflexivity and analysis, we came to appreciate service-learning as the central force in this intrinsic case.

EMERGENT DESIGN

As indicated in Figure 1, this project spanned two years. Through prolonged exposure and an emergent design, we came to understand the case through various theoretical lenses. Case study researcher Bob Stake (1995) proposes that viewing a phenomenon from multiple perspectives ultimately enhances researcher understanding. Initially, we understood this project through the lens of historical trauma, which is the intergenerational transfer of systemic trauma (Brave Heart & DeBruyn 1998). Decolonisation literature (Gone 2008; Kirmayer, Gone & Moses 2014) challenged

us to become critical of a narrow definition of historical trauma, as it could further frame the experiences of Native Americans according to Westernised perspectives (Fletcher 2013).

Through immersion in the case, we came to appreciate the educational impacts of the service-learning project, especially given undergraduate students' testing of tribal identities and tribal leaders reflecting upon prior conceptions of citizenship. Charmaz, Denzin & Lincoln (2003) view sensitisation as the process by which researchers' senses become attuned to underlying ideas and concepts. In effect, we became sensitised to transformations occurring in real time and, ultimately, we came to understand the case through the lens of transformative learning theory. Thus, language, tone and analysis reflect renewal. In our view, this is culturally appropriate as the tribal nation views education and cultural connections as central values. As CBPR researchers, we recognise the importance of criticality in Indigenous research; thus, in the implications of this research, we consider the possible intersection of transformative service-learning and decolonisation literature.

Participants

Participants included tribal students involved in the service-learning project embedded within the learning community (n=24) and tribal leaders (n=6).

Sources of Data

As case study research seeks to gain a robust understanding of a phenomenon, researchers should include two or more sources of data (Yin 2009). In this case, data came from three broad sources: direct observations of participants, documents (emails, news articles and a radio show transcript), and participant observation and researcher field notes. Sources of data were coded and categorised independently by all three researchers, thereby establishing increased credibility. Additionally, triangulation occurred through cross-analysis between data sources. Data analysis did not begin until the conclusion of the research team's engagement with the partnership, thereby minimising conflicts of interest and research bias.

Researcher Positionality

Researchers BS and JP worked directly with the learning community students, keeping field notes. Researcher ZD conducted an evaluation of the program, which included participants' interviews and survey completion. Consistent with CBPR principles, the first author, BS, is a tribal member and was employed contractually by the tribal nation to facilitate the learning community and service-learning project. JP (an anthropologist) represented the university in the partnership and ZD (a community psychologist) conducted a first-year process evaluation of the learning community and subsequent service-learning project.

JP began working with the tribal nation in 2009 to develop a research program and from that work the idea of developing

a learning community emerged. BS and ZD began to work with the tribal nation in 2010. The first learning community began during the 2010–2011 academic year and continues to this day. Researchers still meet periodically with tribal leaders to discuss the objectives of the learning community, including current iterations of service-learning projects. The tribal nation chose to be de-identified because it continues to be engaged in partnership with researchers and the university.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

As case study research is highly contextualised, it is imperative to note the setting in which this research occurred. In this section, we highlight central features of the two institutions represented in this research: the Native American tribal nation and the university.

The University

The university is the only 'very high research activity' higher education institution in the state, as identified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. It is also the largest in the state, with a total undergraduate enrolment of approximately 30,000, which includes a Native American enrolment of over 1000. It provides a host of academic and social support services for under-represented and first-generation students. Geographically, the university is outside the boundaries of the collaborative tribal nation jurisdiction.

The Tribal Nation

In the United States, 'Indian Country' represents land that has been placed in a federal trust as the direct result of signed treaties (Baird & Goble 2008; Davis 2010; Newton 1984; Schneider 2010; Warren 2012). While some trusts are noted as reservations, in which tribal nations have sole ownership of the land, the majority of trust land in the US is allotted land. In this latter form, tribal sovereignty exists provided it is in conjunction with federal laws, and non-Indians can own property or businesses and operate on the land. The tribal nation in this case was guaranteed allotted land (totalling over 18 000 kilometres (7000 square miles) in treaties. In terms of population size, the tribal nation is quite large as it falls within the top 10 per cent of membership of all 565 federally recognised tribal nations. It has a three-tier system of government similar to the US government (executive, judiciary, legislative).

Historically, the tribal nation was located in what is now the south-east United States, which resulted in early contact with Europeans and the mixing of bloodlines. As a result, many tribal members are phenotypically light-skinned. Forced removal to Indian Territory (predominantly the state of Oklahoma) resulted in land allotments, which was a systematic effort to break communal identity and accelerate assimilation (Davidson 2011; Dippel 2014; Fletcher 2013; Foreman 1974; Thornton 1997). Today, the effects of assimilation are evident across Indian Country, as Native Americans have lost much of their language, rituals and other forms of culture.
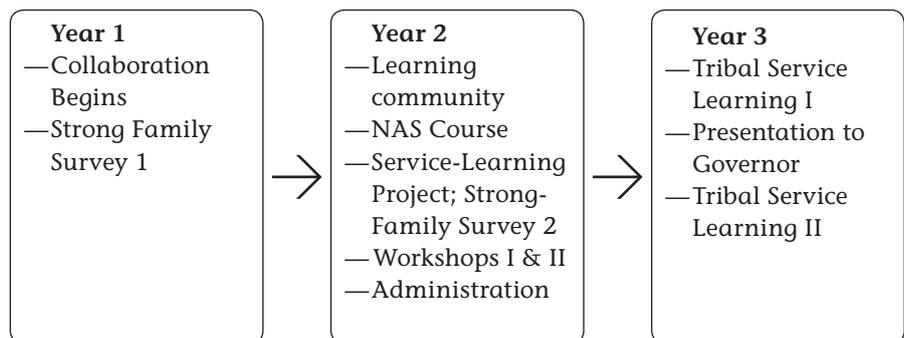
For this tribal nation, membership was legally defined by the US federal government through the Dawes Treaty (1897–1934). Thus, tribal members are dispersed across a wide geographic area and have varying degrees of contact with other tribal members. Moreover, some tribal members (including one-third of the participants in this study) reside outside these boundaries altogether. Cultural loss, then, has had significant implications for the forming of existing tribal world views, as many present-day tribal members have lost contact with their cultural traditions.

Today, the tribal nation invests heavily in the physical, mental and social wellbeing of its tribal members through varied services and programs. As a result of a recent increase in financial resources, the tribal nation is actively developing educational initiatives and programs to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of tribal members, including providing significant higher education scholarships for all eligible members. The tribal nation has extensive experience in creating a host of PK–12 educational programs (Head Start, performing and visual arts academies, summer programs, mentoring), but has only recently begun to develop programming for higher education.

PROJECT NARRATIVE: SERVICE-LEARNING TRANSFORMING NATIVE AMERICAN LEARNING

This section serves two purposes. First, it discusses the chronological progression of the case by providing detail on the learning community and an overview of critical steps in the service-learning project (Figure 2). Second, it provides a framework for analysis.

Figure 2: Progression of collaboration

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
—Collaboration Begins —Strong Family Survey 1	—Learning community —NAS Course —Service-Learning Project; Strong-Family Survey 2 —Workshops I & II —Administration	—Tribal Service Learning I —Presentation to Governor —Tribal Service Learning II

Year One: Collaboration Begins

The larger CBPR collaboration within which this study is framed began when the tribal nation requested to collaborate with the university. This relationship focused on developing a culturally appropriate health-care centre for the tribal nation. The second and third authors of this article were asked to work with tribal leaders to develop culturally appropriate health-care programs for the tribal nation's department of family services. The researchers worked with tribal health providers to develop the 'Strong Family Survey' – a brief assets assessment designed to better understand how tribal members defined a strong tribal family.

The tribal nation desired to reach out to tribal students at the university. While approximately 180 tribal members attended

the university and received tribal scholarships, there were no tribal-specific programs for students. A faculty member suggested a learning community as a means to connect with students, provide them with supports to assist them to be successful at university and possibly increase their connection to the tribal nation. A learning community is a cohort model that creates a peer-orientated community, where members come together to participate in educational or cultural activities that increase their connectedness within a larger institution (Tinto 2003). In terms of first-year college experiences, George Kuh (2008) cites both learning communities and service-learning as high impact practices for first-year college students.

Year Two: Learning Community and Service-Learning
The three authors developed a learning community that offered students access to academic support, group-based social events, opportunities for professional development with tribal members, and cultural programming designed to connect them to their tribal identity. Upon implementation, we discovered that many of our students were knowledgeable about the process of higher education. Even first-generation students quickly accessed existing university resources designed for early academic intervention and social support, thereby rendering the academic aspects of the learning community redundant. However, in contrast, the majority of students had limited exposure to tribal culture and traditions. Learning Community programming was thus shifted to promote students' need for high-impact cultural experiences. Vaughan (2002) notes the significance of collaborative environments for first-generation and under-represented groups, as it leads to joint identity development.

Participation in the learning community was voluntary and initially open to tribal freshmen at the university. Thus, tribal students in the project were self-selected. Forty tribal freshmen were invited to participate via letters, letters to parents, emails and phone. Ultimately, 24 students participated. Given the unique lived history of the tribal nation (some tribal members live outside tribal boundaries and in some cases out of the state), several of the students had not previously had the opportunity to participate in tribal activities or events.

Learning community activities took place on a bi-weekly basis on and off campus. These consisted of social and cultural activities such as the creation of cultural artefacts, community service events and field trips to tribal events. Interactive cultural events such as language classes and dance troupe demonstrations were included with experiential education in mind. For some of the students, this was the first time they were exposed to tribal language and dance. These activities were extracurricular, which became a problem as students became more involved on campus and had decreased time for communal activities. We therefore sought an institutional mechanism to allow for learning community activities to become part of their accredited coursework.

In response to this emergent need, the authors approached the Native American Studies (NAS) program at the university to modify one of its four sections of 'Introduction to NAS' for our students. They agreed, and the new course included an emphasis on this tribal nation's history and culture. In this class, the learning community participants were able to complete a research project on their tribal culture. This class helped deepen tribal knowledge for these students.

During this time, the authors met monthly with the executive committee in charge of the collaboration. Tribal leaders would learn about the progress of the learning community activities and we would all brainstorm about next steps. Tribal leaders desired an experiential learning activity to link new-found cultural knowledge and advance the importance of tribal service. Incidentally, the timing of the NAS course coincided with the second iteration of a tribal survey, which was a component of the larger collaborative partnership. We, the researchers, suggested that students could play a pivotal service role in developing a new version of the survey, which sought to assess 'What is a Strong Tribal Family'. Tribal leaders agreed, as this was consistent with goals of the course and learning community. From correspondence between an author and a tribal professional:

> *The goal of this project is to create and validate a survey that can be taken to other meeting points, listening conferences, gatherings, etc. to develop a broader understanding of strong families and how the [tribal nation] can provide support for those families...Second, this project is a pilot for service learning with the [Learning Community] students. Their participation in the project will be both an educational process and a service project for the nation. Our goal is that they will come away from the project with a greater appreciation of the helping fields and a great appreciation of the [tribal nation] as a cultural heritage and an institution.*

Thus, at the behest of the tribal nation, the authors planned a two-part workshop over the course of two days. Part I provided a brief orientation to CBPR, an overview of survey methods and a seminar discussion on historic trauma. During part II of the workshop, students worked together to construct the second-year Strong Family Survey. Students were challenged to conceptualise their own feelings of tribal identity and cultural loss, and to understand the impact of historic trauma and their family history. They learned to critique much of the history they had been taught in state schools. For instance, there was a prolonged, critical discussion on the US boarding school movement as a means to not only assimilate Native American youth but also annihilate tribal language. More importantly, the students came to understand the significance of cultural loss. In the process, they experienced solidarity, which is consistent with Freiean approaches to consciousness raising (Diemer et al. 2016).

Based upon their physical characteristics and lived experiences, students developed a question on phenotype for the

survey. This was potentially problematic given the sociopolitical issues of blood quantum and tribal membership (Demallie 2009; Green 2007; TallBear 2003; Villazor 2008). After the workshop, researchers submitted a completed survey to the tribal Institutional Review Board (IRB) on behalf of the students. The IRB considered striking out the question on phenotype. The fledgling tribal members (students), however, responded by reiterating the significance of determining if phenotype was an important aspect of a strong tribal family. The IRB allowed the question to remain.

The tribal leaders suggested the annual Children's Fair as the site for data collection. There, various service departments within the tribal nation set up booths to provide educational and interactive activities for families, including games. Thus, the atmosphere was geared towards children and family friendly. There was a host of traditional exhibitions on areas such as storytelling, dance and language.

When we arrived, the students were visibly nervous. Student-constructed surveys in hand, we crossed the red dirt arena. We brought university t-shirts as an incentive for completing surveys, which drew strong interest. We administered all one hundred surveys during the first hour. This positive response helped the students to feel more comfortable. Children, many of them would-be first generation students themselves, showered the learning community students with questions about what college was like. The students eagerly responded to questions and encouraged them to do well in school so they could attend college too. Tribal parents smiled. The tribal dance troupe, consisting of mostly elders, recognised our students from learning community activities and invited them to join in.

The group returned to the survey booth and, unexpectedly, the tribal executive committee approached, meeting the students for the first time. Up to this point, the committee had been responsible for administrative duties, but never had they interacted with participants. We facilitated the interaction by introducing students to the director and other tribal leaders. The conversation was lively. Leaders quizzed the students on their majors, previous experiences with the tribal nation, and most importantly their views on the service-learning project and learning community. Students conveyed their shared emotional experiences and newly formed tribal identities. At that moment, the tribal president (i.e. Governor) emerged. He too expressed sincere appreciation for the students making time to be involved in the project; the committee had been providing him with reports. The students were literally awestruck. They were astounded that tribal leaders were thanking them. In a tribal nation of 30,000 plus members, this was a distinct honour. The students quickly flipped the script by profusely thanking the tribal Governor and professionals for this opportunity to serve the tribal nation.

The long van ride back to campus provided the students an opportunity to reflect on the academic year. It felt like a commencement celebration. Students' remarks on being Native

American were markedly different from what they were just nine months *ago* at the beginning of the semester. Gone was the mention of blood quantum, replaced with comments such as 'I wonder … who [our] common ancestors are?' 'What are we [students] going to do next?' and 'I can't believe the Tribal Governor thanked us'. Collectively, students reflected upon the most embarrassing and fun moments of the past year. And in the process they recounted how they had grown from being nervous about not knowing their tribal history to being eager to learn more.

Year Two and Beyond
Initial funding plans for the learning community and the subsequent service-learning project were uncertain; however, based upon an independent evaluation, the tribal nation extended both. In order to continue NAS involvement in the project (making the project co-curricular), the Executive Committee made a remarkable decision to devote resources to the program in the form of a financial donation towards the faculty member's contract and allocation of tribal staff to serve as cultural experts for the course. In effect, this institutionalised the service-learning project by creating an upper-division course titled 'Tribal Service-Learning'. Thus, this case illustrates Fletcher's (2010) assertion that tribal nations should exert their own sovereignty and create their own novel programming.

The new tribal service-learning course differed from the original in a few key ways. First, it was open to university students of all tribal nations. Second, with the guidance of an instructor, students examined existing tribal programs and services, conducted an informal needs analysis and, with the assistance of cultural experts, were tasked with developing a curriculum proposal. Ultimately, participants created 'One Heart, One Beat', an experiential program designed to highlight the importance of social dance and culture. For this tribal nation and many others that experienced severe cultural loss, social dance is one of the few practices that has remained intact; thus, it has strong cultural significance (Axtmann 2001; Murphy 2007; Wilson & Boatright 2011). Tribal leaders gathered for the student presentation of their final project. Given the service-learning project results at the Children's Fair, tribal leaders had come to have high expectations of the participants. The presentation surpassed them. From field notes:

> *'They look so professional,' a tribal administrator confided to me [researcher]. I smiled, knowing she was in for a treat. The lights dimmed and we watched the student-created video 'One Heart, One Beat', which detailed an eight-week social dance program. The program was inter-generational, connecting tribal elders as instructors, students as facilitators, and youth as participants. A student explained, 'We are not the experts on social dance and feel like the kids [adolescence] would respond better to an elder*

who commands more respect. We can identify with them [the adolescents], so we see our role as bridging the gap between young and old.'

As evidence of their excitement, tribal leaders arranged for the distinction of having students present their work to the Tribal Governor and his executive cabinet.

On presentation day to the Governor and his cabinet, the students were visibly nervous, yet excited to showcase the passion they had poured into their work. At the conclusion of the presentation, tribal leaders provided a standing ovation and the students beamed with pride. On the spot, the Governor asked the students to implement the project during the upcoming summer. Thus, the course 'Tribal Service-Learning II' was created for the summer semester and students prepared a working budget and implemented the program.

ANALYSIS

In this section, we analyse the case through transformative learning theory. In doing so, we contend that service-learning became a mechanism to promote cultural restoration for this Native American community. Kitchenham's (2008) summative assessment of Mezirow's perspective of transformative learning serves as the basis of the analysis (Table 1). With this as our theoretical framework, we assess stakeholder experiences as evidence of transformation (phases categorised by case events in parentheses). Lastly, we consider institutionalisation as evidence of organisational transformation.

Table 1: 'Ten Phases of Transformative Learning & Corresponding Service-Learning Activity', adapted from Kitchenham (2008)

Phase	Transformative learning action	Service-learning activity	Participant quotes as evidence
NA	Previous frame of reference	NA (previous views).	'I had no tribal influences besides mail and financial support… it was not a constant connection' (Lance 2009).
1	Disorienting dilemma	Participants enroll in learning community and 'Introduction to NAS' and are confronted with tribal ways of knowing and new cultural experiences.	'How much are you?' (referring to blood quantum)
2	Self-examination of feelings of guilt or shame	Workshop I: Participants share oral family histories including guilt and shame over lack of tribal genealogy and culture. Students share stories about suppressed culture.	'I didn't know what it meant to be a member of the tribe.'

3	Critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions	Workshop I: Participants come to understand that their lack of knowledge is not their fault nor is it the fault of their parents or grandparents, but a product of forced cultural assimilation, i.e. historical trauma.	'We have our own dress and language....there is more to our tribe, not all Indians are the same' (Lance 2009).
4	Recognition that one's discontent and the transfor-mation process is shared; others have negotiated a similar change	Participants experience a collective 'aha' moment, in recognising similarities across their stories. Instructor-led discussion on the cultural genocidal practices of land allotment to break communal ties and boarding schools as a means to extinguish language broaden perspectives.	'We've become good friends....it's amazing to know you have that connection; it helps you realize they are there and you are part of a bigger family' (Lance 2009).
5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions	Participants question their role in promoting cultural knowledge and awareness through their responsibility for constructing the survey for the tribal nation's Strong Family research project.	'My mom said her parents didn't want her speaking our language because teachers would punish her.'
6	Planning of a course of action	Workshop II: Participants tasked with developing survey.	Not applicable because this is an action.
7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementation	Workshop II: Overview of survey methods including question development.	Not applicable because this is an action.
8	Provisional trying of new roles	Administration: Participants experience 'being' community members by attending Children's Fair, interacting with tribal members and meeting tribal professionals including Governor.	'It is really interesting; it's nice to know where you are from, and to have a cultural identity' (Lance 2009).
9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	Participants' reflections on identity and consideration of how they can contribute to the tribal nation.	'I learned about culture and was able to participate with people from the tribe; all of us are looking for ways to stay active; we don't want to give it up. It has been a successful pilot run' (Lance 2009).

10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective	Year Two and Beyond: Executive Committee continues funding for learning community, participants present to Tribal Governor, tribal nation invests in service- learning project with NAS, participants enrol in Tribal Service-Learning I & II.	'Through helping us we can help others later; the goal of the 8-week program is foster a network of support …. and to provide the kids a rich, deep cultural experience so they will feel more connected with their culture' (Lance 2009).

The Learning Community (Laying the Groundwork)

In our view, it is important to note the role of the learning community, especially cultural activities in creating connection among participants. Moreover, given the cultural focus of the case, we consider communal experiences as foundational for collective transformative learning to occur. Curriculum and cultural programming were critical, as they challenged participants' habits of mind. A student's quote that exemplifies this process are: 'I didn't know what to expect. I grew up in Dallas and the only other [tribal] people I ever met were my cousins.…we've became good friends, it's amazing how we all have that connection' (Lance 2009). This student felt that the learning community had given her an opportunity to make connections to other tribal members.

Service-Learning Workshop Part I: Phases 1–4

According to Mezirow (2000), a disorienting dilemma may be the result of a single traumatic experience or an accumulation of several incidents. In this case, we assert that the communal discourse in Part I of the Service-Learning Workshop met the definition of the latter. This discourse propelled students into dilemmas. The Executive Committee decided that the Children's Fair survey would be an appropriate project for the learning community students to fulfil their service-learning project. Thus, the curriculum of Workshop I was deliberately constructed with an orientation to the Strong Family Survey, and it provided a forum where participants could share family narratives and reflect on their significance.

An important feature of this discourse is that participants came to realise that their conceptions of identity were not unique to them, but shared among others. Due to forced relocation, breaking of communal ties and cultural assimilation, there is historical and cultural loss among many Native Americans (Evans-Campbell 2008). A by-product of this is an incomplete and fractured understanding of cultural practices and language. Through prompts, we asked the students to talk about their personal and familial experiences and knowledge of their tribal nation. It was in the telling of these stories that they began to express discomfort with their histories, thereby potentially amplifying emotional effects.

Gradually, participants began to display discontent and agitation as they shared these stories, which may speak to an individual's recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared, and that others have negotiated a similar change (Kitchenham 2008). Indeed, the emotional and shared feature of this socially constructed experience seems to have magnified meaning making. Jointly, students came to identify and define what constituted a tribal world view for them. Examples include 'My mom said her parents didn't want her speaking our language because teachers would punish them' and 'My grandmother told me the same thing'. Due to the strong rapport cultivated in the learning community, it is likely they felt safe in investigating their Indigenous identities by dredging up oral family histories.

Participants' willingness to engage in this difficult discussion challenged deeper underlying assumptions of the world. While these instances regarding language echo that very first learning community discussion on blood quantum and phenotype, they now understood that their plight of identity may not be so different from that of previous generations. For instance, when discussing the cultural loss of language, one participant noted, 'I think my great grandmother was in a boarding school', which is evidence of how the loss of valuable family histories can potentially lead to an insecure cultural identity.

Service-Learning Workshop Part II: Phases 5–7
This case illustrates that service-learning can play a crucial role in promoting transformative learning because it provides curricular pathways for students to test new roles and relationships and formulate action. The project became a conduit for collective agency, which is regarded as the efficacious belief of the group in achieving a similar goal (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy 2004). Due to collective transformations occurring as a result of disorientating dilemmas, two student characteristics that had recently served as a limitation to students' development (lack of cultural knowledge and insecurity of blood quantum) became assets. The testing and exploration of these new-found cultural identities were strengthened as students developed the survey designed to help determine 'What is a strong tribal family?'

From a CBPR perspective, the creation of the survey radically changed social dynamics by empowering students. Evidence of critical reflection can be found in their collective reflection upon their own lived experiences. This was particularly apparent in the ways that the two surveys differed. The first Children's Fair survey was faculty-driven, thus the questions were from a Westernised perspective. For example, statements like, 'A family that maintains traditions and older ways of doing things' (traditional) and 'A family that consists only of immediate family members, a nuclear family (e.g., only parents and children)' (Western) were both listed. When the students developed the second survey, it looked very different.

The student or tribal-driven survey was more focused on collective history and relationships. For example, the students developed several questions about history, such as 'strong families pass on family history, learn from their elders, participate in ceremonies and pass on values through storytelling'. The students were also interested in the relationship between strong families and their connection to the tribal nation. Sample questions included: strong families 'see each other often' and 'do activities together'.

Given their ongoing transformation, students created questions regarding cultural identity and phenotype, which drew ire from the tribal nation IRB. Upon reviewing the survey items, the IRB flagged a few of these items and requested revisions. Students agreed to change every item that the IRB had flagged, except for the phenotype question, as they believed it represented a significant issue for tribal individuals and families. Tribal leaders and the IRB finally agreed to the question. The inclusion of this sensitive item is evidence of students becoming empowered to play a role in tribal relations, as well as tribal leaders' expanded notions of tribal membership. Ultimately, having tribal members – the students – develop the survey proved to intensify the CBPR effects of the collaboration. This second survey serves as evidence of the students reflecting upon their family histories and connection to the tribal nation.

Service-Learning Implementation – The Children's Fair: Phases 8–9

Survey development provided students with a means to give back to the tribal nation by trying on the role of citizen. From this view, approval from the IRB and tribal leaders served as a means of acceptance and validation. While the workshop experiences facilitated a collective realisation that they had something of value to contribute to the tribal nation, implementation of the survey at the Children's Fair heightened this sense of civic responsibility and provided an opportunity for students to interact with tribal youth, elders and leaders. These interactions reinforced their cultural identities and validated their perception that they could contribute to the tribal nation in a beneficial way. One student noted: 'I learned about culture and was able to participate with people from the tribe'. And, another: 'All of us are looking for ways to stay active; we don't want to give it up. It has been a successful pilot run.' Thus, developing the survey and implanting it as a service-learning project helped solidify their transformation from students to tribal members.

The service-learning project served to raise the collective consciousness of tribal students, thereby fostering epistemological shifts in perspectives necessary for transformative learning. This process of critical reflection resulted in deep cultural connection and subsequent transformations. Consistent with transformative learning theory, Martin (2007) weighs the importance of culture, identity and education. She contends that identity is contextual,

may take on multiple dimensions and is heavily influenced by culture. This can be seen in the discussion on the way home from the community fair, as students actively reflected on tribal culture, learning and identity.

Year Two and Beyond: Phase 10

As this research is embedded within a larger partnership, in this section we consider three additional forms of evidence that service-learning provided a pathway towards cultural restoration in this case. This approach is consistent with transformative learning theory as it focuses on psychological, attitudinal and behavioural facets of change (Mezirow 2000). Thus, it is necessary to look beyond the service-learning project to seek behavioural evidence of transformation.

First, at the conclusion of the service-learning project, students volunteered to become peer mentors and completed two three-credit hour courses (each three-hour course is one semester worth of credit) to develop a program for tribal youth. As they continued coursework and career preparation, they were fully committed to integrating their new identities with their former sense of selves. Martin (2007) refers to this process as 'gift recirculation'. For her, the linkage of identity and education creates powerful experiences, and being so moved, individuals yearn to share them with others.

Over the course of one short academic year, many students incurred rapid transformations. Initially, a common shared feature among them was that they perceived little opportunity to give back to the tribal nation. Recirculating the gift of cultural identity through collective action (through Service-Learning I & II courses, presentation to the Tribal Governor and being relied upon to implement an eight-week summer program) became a powerful force for solidifying transformations.

Second, the development and implementation of One Heart, One Beat provided the students with an opportunity to articulate their vision of a remedy for intergenerational cultural loss. Engaging in social dance was an emotional experience, which they wished to share with other tribal adolescents. Viewing themselves as facilitators and tribal elders as teachers suggests an ontological shift from Westernised individualised education towards communal education. This echoes the research on transformative and restorative learning by Lange (2004). Rendering elders as teachers is consistent with tribal ontological beliefs in cultural renewal and in preserving Indigenous ways of knowing.

Third, the service-learning project unexpectedly galvanised all stakeholders to continue collaborative work: both the tribal nation and the university institutionalised components of the project across multiple years. Specifically, the learning community is now in its fifth year and has expanded to two additional higher education institutions in the state. The Native American Studies program at the university extended the permanent service-learning course, and it remains opens to all students, not just this tribal

nation. Institutionalisation is regarded as evidence of sustainability in higher education environments (Yarime et al. 2012). In addition, as Mezirow (2000) and others consider behavioural change as evidence of transformation, we highlight the importance of organisational institutionalisation and consider it further evidence of cultural transformation. Finally, service-learning has also become an institutionalised practice for the tribal nation, as it remains nested within the learning community model.

CONCLUSION

This case has significant value for Indigenous nations seeking to exert sovereignty as well as other communities that, through oppression, have experienced marginalisation, especially in educational settings. We contend that service-learning is a significant mechanism whereby disenfranchised groups can advance their own values, as well as notions of communal education and tribal membership, in higher educational settings and beyond. For Indigenous communities, in particular, it is important to underscore that service-learning can be culturally appropriate if it places value on non-Westernised epistemology and values, and the lived history of specific tribal nations (or communities).

As discussed in this case, tribal nation community needs (and thus service-learning projects) will vary based upon a community's strengths and challenges. For example, this tribal nation has exerted its sovereignty by developing a strong infrastructure and extensive resources; however, the challenges of developing an educational model appropriate for higher education and shepherding tribal identity tacitly guided the evolution of this service-learning project. Thus, for this tribal nation, service-learning came to foster cultural connection and transformation by linking life experiences, cultural identity, and views of service and tribal membership. It is likely that other tribal nations or communities may choose to focus on economic or health needs, or a host of other pressing needs.

In our view, this case, in particular, teaches us two key lessons. First, we cannot assume that students from marginalised communities possess the cultural knowledge to meaningfully engage in service-learning, even within their own communities. As such, to increase the likelihood of service-learning being transformative, community members and educators should work in tandem to provide relevant learning experiences epistemologically grounded in community values (Blouin & Perry 2009; Guffey 1997). Second, tribal identity is cultivated through experiential activities. Not only did service-learning cement participants' notions of service and giving back, but it also expanded the tribal leaders' views of what young tribal members are capable of achieving, as evidenced by their willingness to green light the courses Service-Learning I & II.

This research also expands upon notions of critical transformative learning (Cunningham 1998; Lange 2004) by leveraging CBPR as a means to raise consciousness from tribal perspectives. Doing so provided a deep learning experience and cultural connection for the students, and broadened tribal conceptions of tribal membership. At the outset, cultural identities were weak, but the service-learning project provided a means for them to jointly transform and create understanding of how they contributed to a stronger tribal nation. In addition, the tribal professionals and the Tribal Governor were appreciative of the students' work and institutionalised service-learning in higher education for students of this tribal nation and others. These acts provide an opportunity for cultural restoration of the larger tribal community.

Finally, this case not only represents gains for tribal nations, CBPR research and service- learning, but provides an alternative framework to further explore the roles of historic trauma and decolonisation literature. Initially, we approached this project as a possible remedy to historic trauma (Duran & Duran 1995; Gone 2007), but the project evolved to using a transformative learning theory framework. Transformative learning theory, as a framework, does not negate the role of historical trauma; rather, understanding cultural loss creates a disorientating dilemma and medium for transformation. If the individual engages in reflection, then cultural connections may ensue.

In this vein, service-learning provides a practical, educational means to facilitate consciousness raising, which is consistent with present-day views of the decolonisation literature. For example, Gone (2008) and Kirmayer, Gone and Moses (2014) maintain that tribal nations and other marginalised groups should work towards addressing ongoing sources of exclusion and discrimination. This case challenges Indigenous educators to consider the importance of creating epistemological shifts by building cultural connection in the face of disconnection. For our participants, this created a strong antidote to colonial viewpoints. Future researchers could further explore the linkage between decolonisation, transformative learning theory and service-learning. Viewed through these lenses, culturally connected tribal members can become assets in contributing to the remediation of colonialism and historic trauma by playing a deliberate, formative role in the construction of their community's future. This case thus provides a blueprint for the application of transformative service-learning projects in multiple other contexts.

Notes: The researchers received no funding for this research. The Native American tribal nation discussed in this case continues to implement and expand service-learning projects. For these reasons it has elected to be de-identified.

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